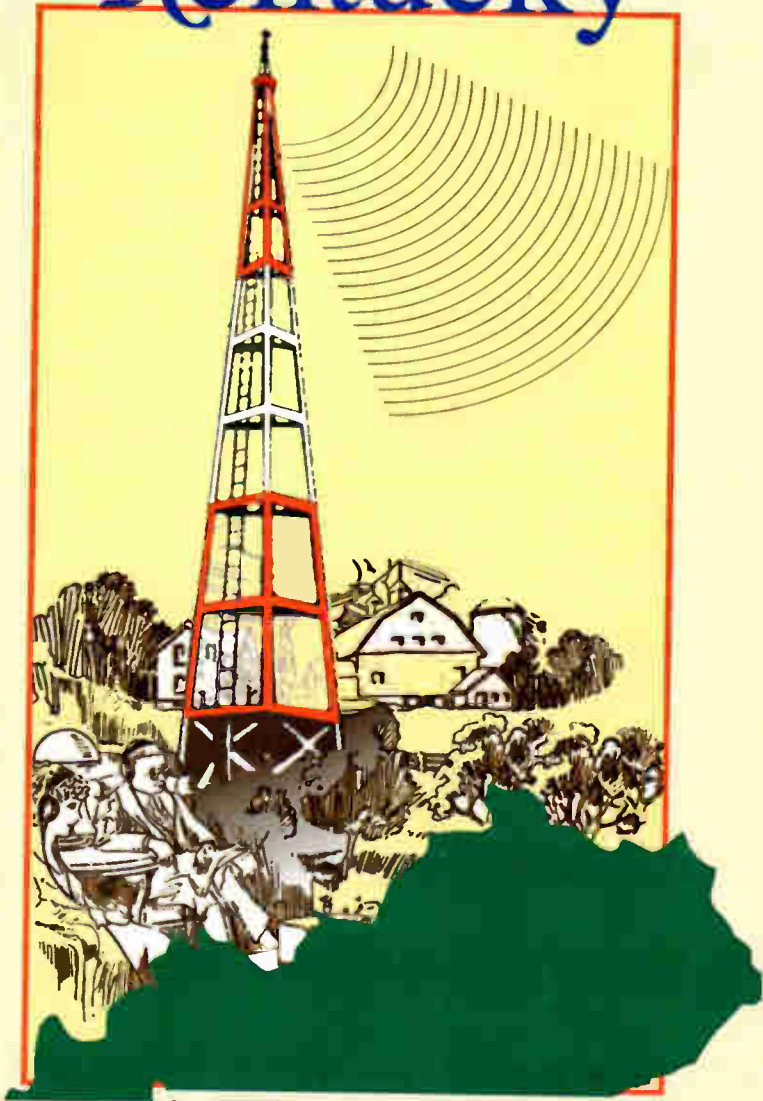


# Towers *over* Kentucky



**A History of  
Radio and Television  
in the Bluegrass State**



# **Towers Over Kentucky**

*A History of Radio and TV in the Bluegrass State*

**Francis M. Nash**



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# Introduction

The discovery of the ability to send sound and pictures through the air ranks as one of mankind's greatest scientific achievements. Perhaps no industry has impacted 20th century society more than the advent and growth of radio and television. The electronic media has literally changed our way of life and leisure, brought the world closer together and created a more informed populous.

The year 1995 marks the 100th anniversary of Marconi's initial successful experiments and the 75th anniversary of the nation's first licensed radio station. Kentucky's communication heritage is rich and, in this the 50th anniversary year of the Kentucky Broadcasters Association, it is time this history is spotlighted and a permanent record is left for posterity. For all those who have ever owned a station, keyed a mike, cued a record, had to trouble-shoot a circuit, faced a camera, edited a tape, sold spots or created a log, your story unfolds within these pages.

This history has been written not only for broadcasters to reflect and reminisce, but also so those new to the business may know the past, and the general public may understand the building of the radio and TV industry, as we know it, in our great state.

The writing style is such that, hopefully, all who read, broadcaster or not, will comprehend and enjoy the details of the way of life that is broadcasting in Kentucky.

This book has been organized in a manner that places radio, TV and the Kentucky Broadcasters Association into their own sections and divides the story into time periods. Naturally there is a degree of overlap so some separation of the data has taken place. Therefore, it may be necessary to examine all chapters to get the entire picture of a particular topic, station or profile of an individual's career.

Obviously with a work this extensive, some facts may have been missed, and information on some stations has been sparse. Every effort was made through newsletter notices, mass mailings, faxes and phone calls over a period of several years to insure that all stations and individuals had opportunity for input into this publication.

The material contained herein was compiled through research of government and station files, newspaper clippings and nearly 300 personal interviews by the author. Some magazine articles and station history booklets have been previously published and where information is cited from these authors, attribution is given within the body of the text.

I wish to thank those who cooperated with this project, especially the board of directors of the Kentucky Broadcasters Association and the “old-timers” whose encouragement and advice was invaluable.

I especially want to thank my family for their help, patience and understanding, and to them this work is dedicated.

**Francis M. Nash**

#### **THE AUTHOR**

Francis Nash is a native Carter Countian, working as a broadcaster in Grayson since 1966. He has also served as a part-time college professor for 15 years and a Christian minister for the past 27 years.



# **Towers Over Kentucky**

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# Chapter 1

## *Was Radio Invented in Kentucky?*

**K**entucky took the great leap into broadcasting when on July 18, 1922, at 7:30 p.m., Credo Fitch Harris announced to all who might have been able to hear, "This is WHAS, the radiotelephone broadcasting station of the *Courier-Journal* and *Louisville Times* in Louisville, Kentucky."

While that evening brought the state's first licensed radio station into the annals of history, many believe the history of broadcasting in Kentucky is rooted in an event 30 years earlier, when a Calloway County farmer, Nathan B. Stubblefield, picked up a device he had invented and spoke the words, "Hello Rainey" to a friend a short distance away without the use of wires. That demonstration of his "wireless telephone" in 1892 near Murray, Kentucky, has led to the claim that radio was invented in the state. Stubblefield's words to Rainey T. Wells antedated Guglielmo Marconi's "wireless telegraph" of dots and dashes by three years.

The question of whether Nathan B. Stubblefield is the true inventor of radio has been shrouded in mystery and controversy. He was a self-educated man, an experimenter who spent a great deal of time alone or with his son, Bernard, tinkering with electronic equipment and reading scientific journals, where he had learned of the work of people like Alexander Graham Bell, Heinrich Hertz, James Clerk-Maxwell and Nikola Tesla.

Recollections of Murray neighbors picture him as a reclusive and temperamental individual who demanded privacy and secrecy regarding any of his work.

From Stubblefield's many experiments and inventions, he obtained four patents. The first was a lighting device, patented in 1885. He went on to patent a mechanical telephone, what he called an electric battery, and the last patent was on his wireless telephone. The invention of the mechanical-type telephone set Stubblefield up in that business for a short time including the manufacture of the instruments and the rights to the system on a national basis, and installation of systems in Murray and a few other towns. His interest in telephones undoubtedly led to his experiments with wireless voice transmissions.

According to statements by Edward Freeman in a *Courier-Journal* article in 1939, Stubblefield actually demonstrated the ability of wireless communication as early as 1885. Dr. Rainey Wells documented the successful demonstration in 1892, and family physician Dr. W.H. Mason testified to witnessing demonstrations in that year in which Stubblefield spoke and played the French harp over the air.

On January 1, 1902, about a thousand Murray residents were witnesses to Stubblefield's invention, and that event, along with private demonstrations for a reporter, brought about a story in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.

The story reported that he had established five listening stations in various parts of the town square area, one about six blocks away from the transmitter. Then the reporter told of Mr. Stubblefield's son taking his place at the transmitter and talking in a tone of voice such as is ordinarily used in telephoning. "Bernard whispered, whistled and played a large harmonica, and simultaneously it was reported that everyone heard on the receivers and with remarkable distinctness."

Increased publicity and interest led Stubblefield to the nation's capital on March 20 for another public demonstration. He sent signals from aboard the steamer "Bartholdi" on the Potomac River to those people on the shore. The next day's editions of the *Washington Evening Star* hailed the remarkable invention of a Bluegrass farmer. Stubblefield would conduct demonstrations of the wireless telephone in Philadelphia and New York with his son Bernard assisting.

Stubblefield reported to acquaintances that he had turned down lucrative offers for the patent rights to his invention several times. However, while in New York, he did agree to participate in the commercial marketing of the device with the establishment of the Wireless Telephone Company of America. He received shares of stock in the company and was listed as a director and inventor. A fraud from the start, the company — with addresses in New York and Boston — was actually incorporated in Arizona, a territory where corporation laws were more liberal.

Stubblefield, a man of integrity, refused to go along with some of the com-

pany's schemes and concluded that the main promoters were guilty of deception and suspect in character. Disillusioned and disgusted, he left New York for his hometown with worthless stock and a bad impression of the big city crowd.

Four years after the failure of that venture, Stubblefield enlisted financial support from several men in Murray for the purpose of finally obtaining a patent for his wireless telephone. E.G. Siggers was employed as a Washington attorney and the application was filed for a patent on a practical, portable wireless telephone with transmitter and receiving equipment for telephoning from moving objects (needing no earth connections) or from local stations as desired.

The patent application was denied, based on the fact that two similar patents had been granted in 1886 and 1894 to other individuals.

Stubblefield and his attorney began the task of trying to prove his invention was worthy of its own recognition, and after several explanations, a patent (No. 887,357) was granted on May 12, 1908, for "improvements" in wireless telephone equipment.

In order to make the invention a commercial success, Stubblefield worked with a friend, politician Conn Linn, to enlist potential investors, but very little interest was found. Except for an occasional experiment observed by his neighbors, he would live out his days alone in a shack near Murray, his wife and children having left years earlier.

Two weeks before his death, Stubblefield visited a neighbor, Mrs. L.E. Owen, and asked her to write his life story. He told her he had lived 50 years before his time, and had now perfected the greatest invention the world has ever known. He declared that he had taken light from the air and earth as he had done with sound. No one knows for sure what device he was referring to but residents often talked of the bright lights and weird sounds that would come regularly from near his home. Scraps of paper and remnants of various pieces of an apparatus were found after his death, but never quite understood. On March 30, 1928, Nathan Stubblefield's body was found in the small house. He died of starvation, penniless and with little notoriety for his years of effort.

On March 28, 1930, the city of Murray honored Nathan Stubblefield by unveiling a monument in his honor on the campus of Murray State College. Dr. Rainey T. Wells, president of the college, and other early friends, along with his two daughters were among the 2,500 people attending the special ceremony. The monument is inscribed with these words: "Here in 1902 Nathan Stubblefield (1860-1928), inventor of radio, broadcast and received human voice by wireless. He made experiments 10 years earlier. The home was 100 feet west."

Conn Linn and one of Stubblefield's sons, Nathan Jr., would later attempt to trace the wireless patents with the intention of filing infringement suits and hopefully collecting damages. They asserted that all points of the suit were in order, but courts ruled the statute of limitations had expired. Linn wrote in a letter to Mr. Vernon Stubblefield in 1950, that had they pursued the matter earlier, it would have meant untold riches.

Has Nathan B. Stubblefield been denied his rightful place in history and the wealth associated with such a monumental invention as radio?

Few general knowledge history books or encyclopedias even mention his name in association with the development of broadcasting. Some media industry historians have taken brief note of the man. Erik Barnouw in his widely-respected book, *A Tower in Babel*, speaks of the mysterious figure of Stubblefield, his wireless demonstration and his patent. Sterling and Kitross in their chronicles of American broadcasting include a diagram of the Stubblefield telephone in their book, *Stay Tuned*. They devote a paragraph to his demonstrations mentioning his ground conduction and later induction methods of transmission. They make note that others had experimented with these systems earlier than 1892. A more extensive article on Stubblefield was written by Thomas Hoffer and appears in the book, *American Broadcasting*, edited by Lichty and Topping. Hoffer contends that Stubblefield most certainly broadcast voice without wire as early as 1892. The question is whether the so-called "black box" actually contained methods that would be the basis of long-distance radio broadcasting with sustained radio frequency oscillations. Or was Stubblefield working with a more primitive electronic method generally known by other experimenters of that era, and subsequently discarded in favor of better technology? He concludes it was the latter and Stubblefield did not "invent radio."

Smithsonian radio historian Elliott Sivowitch has written that while Marconi did not invent radio completely on his own, it was his successful work which would be the basis for later refinement of the system. He has explained the technical differences in Stubblefield's "telephone" and radio broadcasting. At least two doctoral dissertations have included extensive material on the Stubblefield story, one by David H. Miller and another by former Murray professor Thomas Morgan.

There are some who believe Stubblefield is the true father of radio, especially those associated with the Murray area, who have worked for decades to give Stubblefield a place in broadcasting history. *The Murray Ledger-Times* has, over the years, contained numerous articles on the story, and the *Courier-Journal* has helped to keep the memory and aura of the Stubblefield saga alive. Several resolutions have been passed in the Commonwealth

regarding his achievements, including a declaration by the Kentucky Legislature in 1944 honoring Stubblefield for his outstanding scientific contribution and public service and asserting he was the "father of radio."

In May 1961, after an impassioned speech by Murray Chamber of Commerce president James Johnson, the Kentucky Broadcasters Association passed a resolution recognizing Stubblefield as the "real inventor of radio" and presented a plaque to Johnson and WNBS station manager Chuck Shuffett so stating that belief. (WNBS radio in Murray takes its call letters from the inventor's initials.)

Murray State University has been the source of much information on Stubblefield. Patent papers, letters, affidavits and newspaper clippings are on file there and at the University of Kentucky under the title of the "Stubblefield Papers." Some radio and television feature programs over the years have briefly investigated and often sensationalized the story. Entries in early editions of the *World Almanac* and *Famous First Facts* have given credit to him for wireless telephony demonstrations and the first ship-to-shore broadcasts.

The city of Murray refers to itself as the "birthplace of radio" and L.J. Hortin, a former Murray State journalism professor, often spoke and wrote in defense of this designation. Dr. Ray Mofield, a broadcaster and former member of the university faculty, states in an article written in 1990 for the *Kentucky Encyclopedia* that he believes Stubblefield invented radio because the wireless telephone formed the foundation for later developments in broadcasting.

In 1991, Keith Stubblefield, a.k.a. Troy Cory, a California pop singer, returned to Kentucky to announce plans to establish a museum to honor his grandfather Nathan, and purchase the Murray radio station. He made several appeals to the Smithsonian Institution to establish a display to honor his ancestor. The Smithsonian officials, after witnessing demonstrations and examining the artifacts offered by Cory, agreed to accept the exhibit but Cory refused when they failed to acknowledge Stubblefield as the true inventor of radio.

Cory (Stubblefield) continued his attempts at his stated goal to rewrite history and wanted the National Association of Broadcasters to change their awards from the Marconi to the Stubblefield awards. His appeal to the Kentucky Broadcasters Association board for help met some opposition and instead of a resolution stating that Stubblefield was the inventor of radio, the KBA recognized him for his work as an early developer of "wireless" communication and declared 1992, the 100th anniversary of the Murray experiments, as "the year of Nathan Stubblefield." Governor Wallace Wilkinson joined in to set aside 1992 in his honor and stated him to be the inventor of radio.

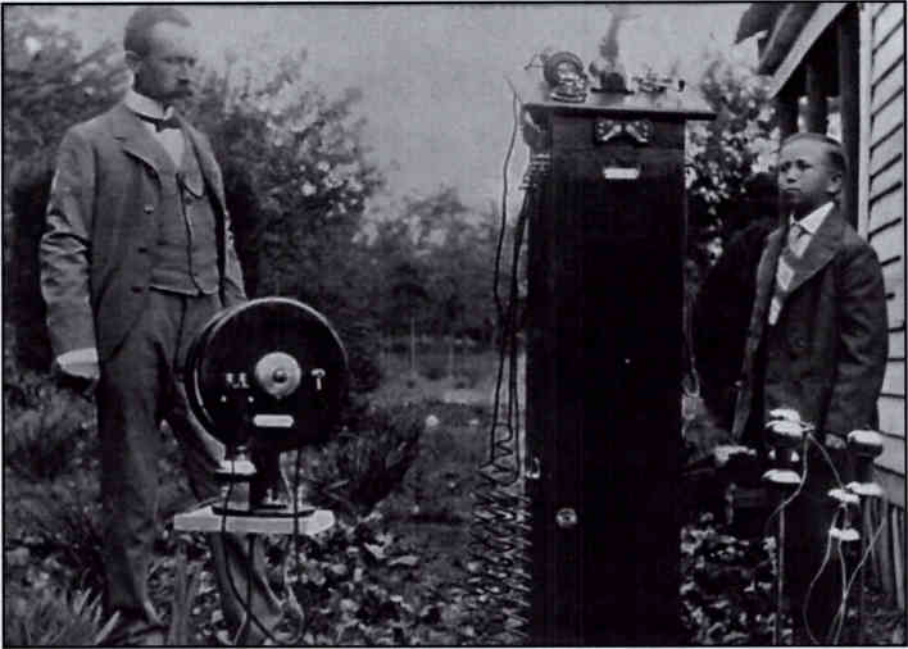


Photo courtesy of Murray State University

*Nathan Stubblefield, wireless pioneer, and his son, Bernard, with their turn-of-the-century version of the “wireless” telephone.*

Cory, in an interview with the Associated Press, said he wanted to educate the public about the real beginnings of broadcasting. He promised to get recognition for his grandfather, “the children are being educated that the wrong person invented the radio, and they don’t know that it was an American,” declared Cory. He later marketed a volume of books on radio and television history, where he declared the true story of Nathan Stubblefield was told, and many aspects of broadcasting history revised.

The flamboyant entertainer ran into legal problems in 1992, after failing to make payments for WNBS radio, which he had purchased from Chuck Shuffett. The station went off the air when all the workers walked out claiming they were not being paid, either. Criminal charges were filed against him and he was arrested at his Pasadena, California, home. Cory entered an agreement to settle the charges but later failed to appear in Calloway County court for a deposition. He finally made restitution to the former employees and agreed to set up a Stubblefield scholarship fund at Murray State University in exchange for dropping theft of service charges, after he had spent some nights in jail. He later told reporters he would not come back to Murray to follow through on his ambitious plans to honor his grandfather.



In the summer of 1992, to observe the centennial of the wireless experiments, two Murray State University professors, Bob Lochte and Larry Albert, built a replica of Stubblefield's wireless telephone and conducted a series of public demonstrations, including one on the Murray soccer field. They declared it was not their intention to revive the debate on the invention of radio, but merely to let the public decide. Lochte said that the invention was definitely wireless communication. Albert said they were able to reconstruct both Stubblefield's ground rod system and his wireless coil telephone and send signals a short distance.

## Analysis

The most complete work on Nathan B. Stubblefield and his place in history was written by Dr. Thomas Morgan in 1971. In his doctoral dissertation, *The Contribution of Nathan B. Stubblefield to the Invention of Wireless Voice Communication*, Morgan researched the issue extensively and conducted interviews with Bernard Stubblefield. Murray State librarian Charles Hinds accompanied Morgan to interview Nathan's son. Hinds says Bernard realized his dad's invention did not contain "Hertzian" radio frequency principles, necessary for radio broadcasting.

Morgan contends Stubblefield has a proper place in history, but it is not as the father of radio, because his wireless methods were not the foundation of later radio broadcasting.

The descriptions of the invention show that Stubblefield in his early experiments used the principle of "ground conduction" since his first devices required the placing of steel rods in the ground for transmission and reception. Stubblefield called this box his "earth cell" but had always felt that the ability to communicate without wires was not earthbound and continued to improve his apparatus and experiments.

In a second system, he discarded the ground rods and placed a copper wire coil that was connected to the battery and microphone. This method, known as "induction," caused a current from the primary coil to generate an electromagnetic audio wave through the atmosphere and induce current in the sister units with a coil. In essence, he had a primary (transmitting) coil and a secondary (receiving) coil, and by using a switch, he could reverse the functions and have two-way communication.

In theory, this method could carry signals several miles depending on the size of the coil. But the coil soon would become so large as to be impractical to use. Like many scientists of that day, he concluded the sound waves traveled through the electrical fluid surrounding the earth, or the "ether." It

was this second method for which Stubblefield received the patent and the phone and large coil are often seen in popular pictures of the inventor.

Therefore, concludes Morgan, the niche for Stubblefield is that of being "the first man to successfully send and receive human voice without wires."

There are those who claim others also did it, but one can well document Stubblefield as the first American to make public demonstrations. In reporting on Stubblefield's 1902 demonstrations, the *Scientific American* magazine mentions experiments by other individuals using similar techniques.

The reason he has never been credited as being the father of "radio" may hinge on the definition of radio. The word was not being used at that time, and historians have to examine what the electronic medium of radio would later become. No one person invented the media we call radio today, but many technicians built upon the work of those before them.

A review of the various radiotelephone and broadcast patents show Lee de Forest and Reginald Fessenden with more than 200 each. Marconi, Vladimir Zworykin, John Fleming, Philo T. Farnsworth, John L. Baird, Boris Rosing and Edwin Armstrong are others who would be credited with many innovative patents involving the development and improvement of AM and FM radio and television.

A close examination of the facts surrounding Stubblefield's invention and patent, indicates the waves generated with his devices were audio frequencies on a direct current, not the radio frequency waves of the modern broadcast spectrum necessary for long-distance communication. His method was not a modulation system of placing information on a continuous high frequency carrier wave.

Other scientists in that era including Marconi, who is dubbed the "father of radio," had experimented with induction methods similar to Stubblefield's, but realized its severe limitations and moved on to other broader ideas that eventually formed a basis for later radiotelephone methodology. Marconi's radiotelegraph could, of course, transmit signals across the oceans, and modulated radio frequency waves would later carry voices around the world.

Some may argue that Stubblefield's work was a beginning and that he was the real pioneer of broadcasting. However, no one actually took his patents or equipment and built upon them to advance it to modern radio broadcasting. The induction method he used was not unknown at the time, since he experienced trouble even getting a patent for his invention because of the prior work of others. By the time Stubblefield actually obtained a patent for his "wireless telephone" the science of voice transmission had already advanced well beyond his invention. Reginald Fessenden is generally credit-

ed with the first radio voice broadcast using the modulated carrier wave methods in 1906. Fessenden had also claimed a wireless voice transmission using a primitive spark gap transmitter as early as 1900. Lee de Forest's perfection of the vacuum tube made long distance broadcasting practical.

There is no evidence that any of Stubblefield's inventions contained the high-frequency modulation "radiation" methods that are at the heart of radio broadcast transmissions.

Stubblefield did not patent an original idea, namely wireless telephony, although he had spoken openly about the great potential it would have for society. His patent for improvements in wireless telephone systems is not seen by historians as being any basis for later developments in wireless voice transmission. Dr. Morgan, in his research, could find no evidence of any legal body declaring the patent rights of Stubblefield had been infringed by anyone.

Dr. David Miller, in his dissertation, *The Role of the Independent Inventor in the Early Development of Electrical Technology*, relates that Stubblefield once felt that wireless telephony could serve the purpose of sending information from "one central station to every house in the land." He realized his invention would not fare well as a public phone system since there was no means to create a private circuit. He hoped that he or someone would develop a method of tuning to individual signals. Such principles would become known and refined as radio frequencies were better understood.

Dr. Miller concludes that Stubblefield's successes in electrical technology appear to have been limited to the practical application of known principles. "His two distinctly different wireless systems were only casually related to radiotelephony which was being developed at approximately the same time," Miller states.

Nathan B. Stubblefield, of Murray, was able to transmit and receive the human voice without wires in public. Others had the ideas before him, but he actually constructed the devices and made several demonstrations.

His limited education, his eccentricity and lack of finances inhibited any further development of his electronic experiments that might have allowed him to refine his ideas and make further discoveries.

While attributing the invention of radio to a Kentuckian is more folklore than fact, Stubblefield certainly had visions about what such forms of communication might mean in the future. He is said to have proclaimed that one day his invention would be used to transmit news of every description. That prophetic message would prove more enduring than the limited technology of his invention.



## Chapter 2

### *Radio — The Pioneer Stations*

The beginning of the 20th century was a period of experimentation and refinement in the art of radiotelephone and radiotelegraph communications. In its infancy, “wireless,” as it was called, attracted many hobbyists seeking to communicate, first by dots and dashes and then by voice to others near and far over the airwaves. By 1912, the Commerce Department of the United States began issuing licenses to amateur operators, who numbered about 1,000 in that year. Call signs were assigned to stations, and their transmissions were mostly in Morse code, not intended for general audiences. These first “ham” radio enthusiasts formed the American Radio Relay League in 1915.

Early records show the first licenses in Kentucky assigned to operators in Newport. The call signs were 9BN to John Flynn, 9FL to George Hauck, and 9BB to Ervin Nattenheimer. The “9” prefix indicated the ninth district headquartered in Chicago, an area that in the mid-1920s would have more amateur licenses than any other district.

The Great War had restricted private radiotelephone usage and disrupted further refinements, but operations resumed in 1919 as the general public would soon be introduced to the great value of this medium of communication.

By 1920, more than 60 amateur licenses had been issued to Kentuckians, with a heavy concentration of them in the areas of northern Kentucky and Louisville. Operators were also active in Ashland, Somerset, Fulton, Hick-

man, Owensboro, and Lexington. Many of these operators across the country began transmitting phonograph music, news items and other advisories for the general public. Although their licenses were for private communication, these individuals were the first true “broadcasters,” disseminating information and entertainment to a listening audience.

As early as 1916, a dozen “radiographers” as they were called, were active in the Louisville area, many of them teenagers at the high school. William Virgil Jordan operated station 9LK in that year and then five years later he would undertake a project that is often considered the state’s first broadcast when in 1921 he installed radio receivers at the Waverly Hills Hospital in Louisville for patients to hear what were known as “radiocasts.” (The term “radiocast” was used for many years in all literature, instead of the current terminology “broadcast.”) His method of transmitting music consisted of holding a microphone in front of a phonograph player. Jordan continued this method of communication until he was granted a license for radio station, WLAP in 1922.

Many of the amateur rigs would be precursors to the full-scale radio stations of the early 1920s. The Commerce Department did not have a completely separate category for radio stations which has led to conflicting claims about who is credited for broadcast history “firsts.”

Numerous radio stations claim to have made the first broadcasts, including WHA at the University of Wisconsin, KQW in San Jose and WWJ in Detroit.

But by most historians’ definition, KDKA became the nation’s first licensed radio station when it went on the air November 2, 1920, with election returns, thus paving the way for countless possibilities of serving the public through radio. The station had been built by Westinghouse engineer, Dr. Frank Conrad, who started operating it as amateur station 8XK as early as 1916.

By January 1922 the Commerce Department had issued 30 licenses for the newly classified “commercial land stations” and radio fever was soon sweeping America. By July of that year, nearly 400 stations were operating at least on a part-time basis.

Kentucky was one of seven states without a station at that time, but would enter the radio era later that month, when WHAS in Louisville became the first licensed station and signed on the air the evening of July 18, 1922.

## **The First Decade**

WHAS identified itself as the broadcasting station of the *Courier-Journal* and *Louisville Times*. Newspaper ownership of this new communications tool



Reprinted with permission Courier-Journal Archives

*Kentucky radio's first engineer, J. Emmett Graft, setting up a Derby remote for WHAS radio.*

was not unusual as approximately 40 papers were operating radio stations.

Most early stations spent very little money since they could expect no direct return, advertising not being seen as a source of revenue as yet. With a newspaper's resources they were able to move into the new media venture more freely.

Robert Worth Bingham, who had purchased the *Courier-Journal* in 1918, was interested in radio and confided in his friend, Credo Fitch Harris, a desire to start a station. Harris, along with electronic engineer Emmett Graft traveled to WWJ, owned by the *Detroit News* to get a first hand look at their radio facility.

During the spring and summer of 1922, a Western Electric transmitter and other pieces of studio equipment were installed in the fireproof storage building adjacent to the newspaper's headquarters at Third and Liberty streets, and the station's long history began.

Barry Bingham, Sr. said his father Robert's conception of radio was that it could mean a lot to the people of Kentucky enabling them to hear the arts, music, and things of that nature they would not have access to otherwise. This philosophy of uplifting the cultural life of the people through radio was shared by David Sarnoff, who would later head up RCA's radio network-NBC. Sarnoff is also generally credited with seeing

the commercial value of the medium.

WHAS historical documents quote Bingham's idealism, "I want to reach to the farthest confines of the state, where a man can string an aerial from his cabin to the nearest pine tree, and setting before the fire, have a pew in church, a seat at the opera, or a desk at the university."

The *Courier-Journal* was granted license number 539 on July 13, 1922 with an allocation of 500 watts, the maximum allowed. The call letters were assigned by the government in sequential order and bore no meaning. (Later stations would be given a choice of call letters.)

WHAS, operated on 360 meters, the same as all the other stations in the country at the time, but was required to move frequency to 485 meters for giving weather and farm reports. Later that year, the government authorized operation by WHAS on the 400-meter wavelength band, as two classes of stations had been created.

By early 1923, with so many stations attempting to broadcast on the two bands, a conference was called in Washington, with major re-allocation of frequencies the result, giving more spectrum space for the new radio stations. Within twelve months after WHAS signed-on, Kentucky had seven more radio stations, but of these others, only one would survive.

WLAP was the license issued to William V. Jordan, on September 15, 1922. He had already been heard in the area on his amateur station, broadcasting from the Big Six Auto Repair Shop on West Breckinridge Street with his antenna located on that building's roof. Jordan operated the station at his leisure, mostly in the evenings. He made his operation legal when WLAP was granted the permit for 15 watts originally and then increased power to 20 watts early in 1923. Many who heard Jordan's occasional broadcasts on his amateur rig referred to "Big Six" as Louisville's first radio station.

The second actual Commerce Department license recorded for Kentucky was that of WIAR in Paducah issued to J.A. Rudy and Sons, a local retail establishment, in July 1922, shortly after WHAS received its permit. The station at 115 South Third Street began operating with 100 watts but was only on the air sporadically. The station promoted the store with the call letters by advising listeners, "It's At Rudys." WIAR was purchased by the *Paducah Evening Sun* newspaper, Edwin J. Paxton, president, in early 1923.

The newspaper created a sound-proof studio by covering the walls with old World War I army blankets. The station offered \$10 crystal receiving sets and ran articles in the newspaper on how folks could wind round Quaker Oats boxes with copper wire for tuning coils and by buying cheap crystals produce their own receivers. Volunteers kept the station going for a while, with help from the newspaper staff. Music teach-



ers offered pupils to perform, and school groups also helped provide programming for a time. Paducah author Irvin Cobb and Congressman Alben Barkley made broadcasts over WIAR. Cobb went on to become a popular network radio humorist. The station went off the air later that year, after several technical breakdowns, and the loss of the licensed operator. The station license was deleted from records, and Paducah would be without local radio service until 1930. The newspaper later sold the equipment to Acme Flour Mill in Hopkinsville for WFIW radio.

An authorization to operate another station in Louisville was granted to Dr. Edwin T. Bruce, a physician, in August 1922. Early programming was apparently irregular and only a few hours weekly, with Bruce returning the license to the government in February the following year.

There were several attempts at starting stations outside the Louisville metropolitan area, but a lack of qualified operators and funding plagued these early broadcasting efforts.

WOAK in Frankfort was in service at times from November 1922 to July 1923, owned by Collins Hardware, a dealer in radio supplies. The station's operator, John J. King, held only an amateur license and not the second-class or higher commercial technical license required at the time. The station was ordered off the air until a qualified engineer could be found and the license was deleted from the Commerce Department records in 1923.

Lack of a licensed operator also doomed Bowling Green's entrance into the radio field. The newspaper, *Park City News*, received a 100-watt station allocation in September of 1922, with assigned call letters WNAB. Circulation manager William H. Riley was instrumental in operating the station with the theme "radio in the land of the strawberries." At that time, Warren County was the center of berry production. In response to an inquiry the following June, the newspaper told the Bureau of Navigation that it had dismantled the station, when their first class operator "went north" and the newspaper determined it was not financially feasible to continue.

Lexington's first radio station was WQAH, licensed to the Brock-Anderson Electrical Engineering Co. The company, located at 235 East Main St. operated at 20 watts in 1923, but records show a cancellation of the license the following year, when the company reported it had difficulty with sustained regular programming and deemed the experiment was not in the best interest of the company.

Theodore Phillips of Winchester received authority in December 1922 for a 35-watt station, WPAP. Six months later, after reorganization of the radio dial by the Navigation bureau, the station was allowed to maintain operation, pending the contracting of a properly licensed operator. Phillips report-

ed no regular programming in January 1924 and the station was removed from the government records.

Thus in the first four years of the decade, several stations went on the air but as the novelty wore off and fiscal reality set in, most of them would fail. As newspapers and businesses began stations, many gained promotional value from the idea for a short time, but soon realized the financial drain made the ventures of questionable worth.

Many colleges and schools were involved in pioneering early radio, as they operated stations as non-commercial for educational purposes. There were none in Kentucky, however, until the advent of FM, some 20 years later.

Commerce Department records show eight stations then licensed to Kentucky in the early 1920s, but only two — WHAS and WLAP, would be shown in the national listening guides by 1925, and only WHAS would have a full-scale staff, providing regularly-scheduled programs.



Radio was soon playing an important role in the frenzied society of the “roaring twenties” but the technical problems of managing the frequency band became a burden for the Commerce Department’s Bureau of Navigation. As the band expanded to accommodate more applicants, stations would move frequency and be granted new power levels. In 1926, there were 600 stations on the air nationwide. All stations were AM (amplitude modulation) medium wave and interference was a constant problem.

In 1927, Congress proposed an answer to some of the chaos with a comprehensive radio act establishing the Federal Radio Commission. The Radio Act also set down some principles that would guide the government’s dealings with the industry. It was stated that since the airwaves belong to all the people, that radio stations must be operated only by licensed people and be regulated by the government as a public resource for the “public interest, convenience and/or necessity” — the key phrase upon which all subsequent government intervention would rest.

After national radio conferences, Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover announced a reorganization of the radio band with expansion of frequencies from 550 to 1350 kilohertz or “kilocycles” as it was called then and a plan for classification of stations. Revisions were made later and in 1941 the AM band was extended to 1600 kHz.

WHAS, operating at 750 kHz in 1924, would change to 650, then to 930, all in a span of one year, 1927. WLAP moved to 1090 on the dial in late 1924.

A third station made its debut in Kentucky in February 1927, as Acme Flour Mills went on the air with WFIW in Hopkinsville. The station was

originally given 840 kHz, a Canadian clear channel with 500 watts, but by May, complaints from the northern neighbor forced a move to 830 on the dial. Late in that same year, WFIW moved to 1150 and boasted 1000 watts, making it the state's most powerful station at the time. With a major channel reorganization in 1928, WFIW was on the air at 940 kHz.

In that same year, WHAS changed to 820 kHz, increased power to 5,000 watts, and moved its transmitter to Jeffersontown. Then in October 1929, the station received permission to up the power to 10,000 watts.

Meanwhile at WLAP, Mr. Jordan had become somewhat disenchanted with radio, the competition from outside signals, and all the various legal requirements and fees. He sought to sell his station to F.J. Markle who was to move it to Kingston, Pennsylvania. The deal fell through, however, and on June 22, 1926, Jordan sold his station for \$675 to the Virginia Avenue Baptist Church in Louisville, Lloyd W. Benedict, pastor.

The transmitting apparatus was moved to the church, where the on-air slogan of WLAP, "We Love All People" was announced but programming was limited to mostly Sunday services, a practice common for stations owned by churches during that era.

During the 1928 federal reorganization, WLAP was assigned 1200 on the dial but operated at only 30 watts. That year, the station was sold to Din-



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*Typical of early radio studios was WLAP, Louisville. The station moved to Lexington in 1934.*

widdie Lampton who had formed the American Broadcasting Corporation and began operating the station from studios at the Inter-Southern Building on South First Street.

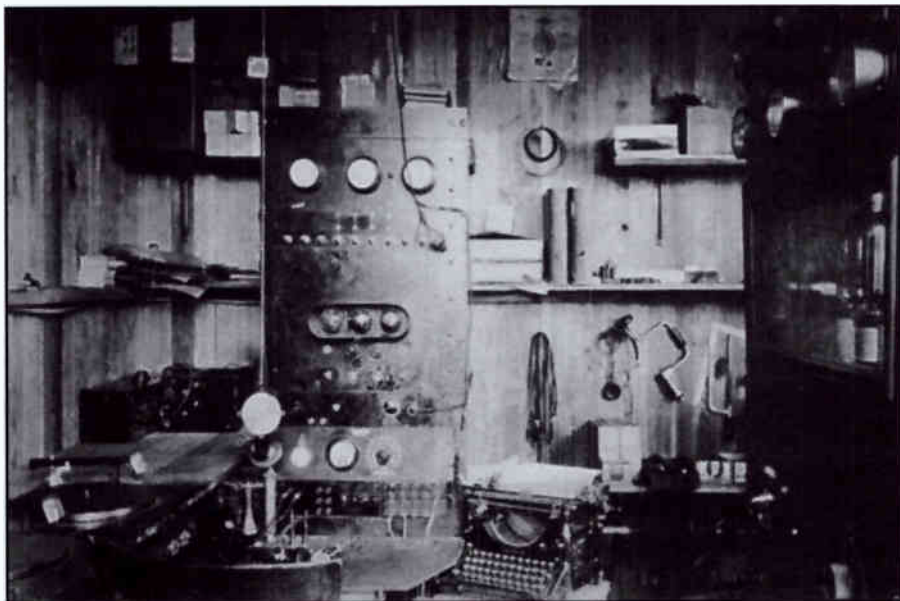
With increased operational hours in 1930, WLAP applied to increase their power to 250 watts day and 100 watts nighttime, and moved the transmitter and antenna to Phillips Lane, a site that would also include living quarters for engineers to keep the constant vigil on the operations.

Early in 1931, Lampton sold WLAP to Ralph Atlass, a co-founder of WBBM in Chicago. The studios and offices were re-located to the Speed Building in downtown Louisville. WLAP experimented for a time with a directional antenna at 1010 kHz for increased nighttime coverage of the city, but the move in frequency was eventually rejected by the Federal Radio Commission. Directional antennas would soon be proved effective, however, and see widespread use in the industry.

Lewis M. Owens, veteran technical director at the station, chronicles some of the significant events of this historic station in a booklet written in 1982, "WLAP Through Sixty Years."

The first decade of broadcasting was coming to an end when two additional stations were added to the Kentucky log.

On September 16, 1929, WCKY, owned and operated by businessman L.B. Wilson, went on the air from downtown Covington. Wilson had been



Reprinted with permission Paducah Sun

*A look at the first studio of western Kentucky's WPAD, Paducah, with original transmitter. The station went on the air in 1930.*

in a battle with WSAI for the 1530 frequency, and the FRC ruled in his favor. Ironically, fast forward to 1994 and 1530 is now WSAI, Cincinnati, in a transfer with WCKY that year!

WCKY's dedication program began in the evening and was quite a gala affair, with German bands playing and the governor of Kentucky, Flem Sampson on hand. The station floundered at first, until Wilson decided to divest himself of some of his varied business interests to become full-time manager in 1931 and worked to make it one of the fastest growing stations of the decade. Wilson was known for his wit and jovial nature among broadcasters, with "Have you heard the latest Wilson story?" being a common expression in those days.

WCKY's 5,000-watt transmitter was located in Crescent Springs, south of Covington, with studios at Sixth and Madison and often identified itself as being "one minute from Cincinnati." It was shorter than that, of course, for radio signals and WCKY had to compete with plenty of them nearby.

The Crosley company's WLW had gone on the air in 1922. WSAI began operation in 1923 from the U.S. Playing Card Company tower in Norwood. Five years later, Crosley bought that station and moved it to the same building as WLW. And by 1926, there was WKRC, WHBR and WFBE on the air, as well. WFBE survived and later became WCPO. WKRC started as WMH with broadcasts as early as 1919 by the Precision Equipment Company, but had ceased operating in 1923 to be resurrected two years later by different owners and later purchased by CBS. Crosley had actually bought out the Precision company but not the station license. In the early 1920s, of course, all the stations had to share time on the designated radio bands.

Radio service returned to Paducah in mid-1930, when the Lackey family would begin a long and storied history of broadcast service to western Kentucky. Pierce Lackey and Fred Olcott established WPAD, operating at 100 watts on 1420 kHz with studios at the Ritz Hotel. Later that same year, Houston McNutt acquired Olcotts' share of the station. WPAD signed on August 23, 1930, becoming Kentucky's fifth station.

### 1930 Kentucky Station Log

WHAS, Louisville  
WLAP, Louisville  
WFIW, Hopkinsville  
WCKY, Covington  
WPAD, Paducah

Early radio stations were primitive and operated generally as a sideline for newspapers, businesses, electronic companies, religious and educational institutions.

In 1922, the Commerce Department permitted only lower-power stations to use phonograph recordings, and those stations often consisted of a single room with a transmitter, microphone and phonograph. The larger stations, required to rely on live music, needed better facilities, many of them becoming elaborate in design. WFIW was cited in a 1927 newspaper article as boasting the most beautiful studio in the world. It was dubbed the "Golden Studio" for its gold and black motif, including gold carpet, ceiling and walls, with the huge black grand piano.

Credo Harris, in his accounts of the early "horse and buggy days of radio" in the book *Microphone Memoirs*, describes the early WHAS facility as consisting of five rooms, with a piano, organ and mike in the main broadcast studio. The first transmitter was purchased at a cost of \$10,000 and the antenna, consisting of horizontal wires and a vertical down-lead stretched between a pair of sixty-foot steel towers, was mounted on the roof of the *Courier-Journal* building. Early radio antennas consisted of horizontal wires strung between two towers in either an "inverted-L" or "T-type" configuration.

Harris would write that one could not forget the first studio, for to reach it you had to take the elevator to the top floor, go through the linotype room, to a big iron door, then traverse the area between the buildings on a high platform, passing the generator that powered the transmitter and open the door to the reception area.

Few stations were able to invest much in their operations in the days before advertising revenues and networks came along, but Harris says the dreams of the Bingham family and the resources of the newspaper enabled WHAS to eventually succeed where others failed in those rough pioneer years of radio.

To the staff of Credo Harris and Emmett Graft, was added Dorothy Kirchhubel, as secretary and office worker. She would work twenty years for the station, but admitted in an interview later with University of Kentucky historian, Terry Birdwhistell, that when first asked about taking the job she replied, "What is radio, anyway?" The Kentucky Historical Society published an article by Birdwhistell in 1981, on the early years of WHAS radio.

WHAS began with a schedule of broadcasting from 4 to 5 p.m. in the afternoon, and then from 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. in the evening. Local talent was used for all broadcasts, with music being the backbone of the station's programming. Logs indicate that 1,600 entertainers had performed a variety of acts in the first three months of operation. The station also set up a remote

line to the Alamo Theatre to broadcast the music of the orchestra while silent films were playing on the screen.

Many acts were eager to get on the airwaves and besides the popular dance bands, there were folks playing jugs, carpenter's saws, French harps, and zithers! WHAS is said to have introduced the clavichord on the air, with a microphone stuck down inside it. As if dreaming that the audience might actually be seeing them, the entertainers usually dressed formally for the occasion of the live radio performance, with station announcers in tuxedos! No station had to pay for performances at first, as folks were eager to be a part of the new show in town.

By the end of 1924, the station records reported the use of more than 4,500 performers at the studio site of WHAS.

Religion quickly hit the air and became a regular radio feature. The first service was a sermon by Rev. D.C. Wright of the St. Paul's Episcopal Church with music by the boys choir, broadcast on WHAS on July 23, 1922. Credo Harris wrote in his book about the inspiring aspects of the church services on the air that developed into an actual WHAS congregation complete with membership cards. One day, he recalled going by a local congregation's bulletin board to read a sign put up in apparent resentment of the growing popularity of religion on the airwaves, that read "God is always broadcasting!"

News was not a regular part of radio programming in those days, that being left up to the newspaper, but WHAS and other early stations often aired special events, political speeches, conventions and gave regular weather and farm reports as well as cooperating with police in the location of criminals and missing persons.

On October 31, 1922, Vice President Calvin Coolidge came on the air for what was supposed to be a 15-minute speech, but in typical Coolidge fashion, he finished up in six!

In the summer of 1924, the station threw a scare into listeners when a mock battle was broadcast from Fort Knox, spreading rumors of an invasion. This was some 14 years before Orson Welles' famous "Invasion from Mars" radio drama!

One early attempt at on-the-spot news coverage came in 1925, when the station used the newspaper accounts to tell of a man named Floyd Collins who became trapped inside Sand Cave and WHAS sent reporter William "Skeets" Miller, a small man, down inside the cave to talk with Collins on the scene, in reports fed to other stations. Collins died before he could be freed from the cave. Miller eventually went to work for the NBC network as a newsman.

Sports was a vital part of radio service and WHAS put its first scores on the air during its second day in operation, and in October 1922 carried the World Series accounts compiled from the INS teletype wire and also did a Centre College vs. Harvard football game. Later on, boxing matches would be broadcast live and by 1925, Credo Harris was doing the Kentucky Derby, eventually creating a network of 12 stations carrying his accounts of the "Run for the Roses." In that same year, at the suggestion of Emmett Graft, the station did the World Series in the form of "radio games" where people donned the uniforms of the teams at Parkway Field, and played out what was really happening by listening to the radio accounts as they were taken off the telegraph wire!

A play written exclusively for radio was aired in February 1924, and Harris spoke from the Brown Hotel to Mary Pickford in New York in the state's first out-of-town remote hook-up in March of that year.

The conduct and decorum of the radio announcing staff and guidelines of the performances were kept under close surveillance by Harris and would certainly be restrictive by standards of later years. A memo of instructions to all announcers dated 1930 prohibited any "puns, gags, joking or smart remarks" of any kind. Reading of fan mail was not allowed as was any reference to alcohol. Use of risqué songs or parodies was strictly forbidden and any profanity certainly meant immediate expulsion. Programs that discussed controversial matters were always followed by a disclaimer, and "no requests for money or articles of value may be radiocast except in a national emergency," the directive stated.

Harris was especially annoyed by the use of the word "folks" by any announcer and the utterance of it on the air could mean a quick exit for the offender! He felt that mispronunciation was worse than no pronunciation and that if God had given an eleventh commandment it would be thou shalt not be "common"—for entertainment, if not in good taste, belies its name, according to Harris' memoirs. The opening line of the WHAS Code was particularly profound — "A station's value is in proportion to the esteem of its listeners."

From the beginning, all WHAS operations had been underwritten by the newspapers. But as costs increased, the station began to investigate sources of revenue including advertising. In August 1922, WEAJ in New York had aired the first "commercials" and soon businesses and stations alike would see the benefit. When Ballard and Ballard Co. of Louisville inquired concerning messages of this sort, having heard them on other stations, WHAS reluctantly consented. This acquiescence to commercial messages was distasteful to Harris, but after receiving reassurance from the Radio Division of the Department of Commerce that there were no rules prohibiting such



announcements, the station entered the era of “commercial radio,” in 1925. Early messages could not be considered typical of commercial spots of modern radio, but mostly consisted of paid sponsorship of programs, followed by live, “soft-sell” announcements. One of the first promotions was a Chicago advertiser offering three free cigars to listeners, with the response so great the company wired the station one week later to please drop the ad.

Even after agreeing to air commercials WHAS was cautious about content, and one company’s ad was rejected after Harris felt it would be offensive to refer to a person’s “feet” on the air. Any mention of price within the advertisements was strictly taboo.

By the middle of the decade, the idea of chain broadcasting was developing nationally, linking several stations together to carry programming. RCA had formed the National Broadcasting Corporation in November 1926, and soon NBC would have a “Red” network chain being fed by WEAJ, and a “Blue” network fed by WJZ, both from New York City.

The premier of the first chain radiocast had been a spectacular live show from the Waldorf Astoria, with the New York Symphony, the Metropolitan Opera and bands and other acts live from many locations. Soon companies were eager to sponsor such shows. Bingham and Harris were impressed with the chain concept and the programming opportunities it afforded. They wanted to be a part of it, while at the same time trying not to compromise their local mission and service.

WHAS joined the network late that same year and in 1927 Credo Harris was instrumental in helping to assemble the southern network of NBC-Red consisting of WHAS, WSM Nashville, and WSB in Atlanta. The network offerings became an important part of the programming that year, although Harris assured listeners that local performances would not be abandoned.

WHAS would attract national attention and bring to reality Judge Bingham’s vision of radio as an educational tool, when in April 1929, the station began broadcasts from the University of Kentucky through studios installed on the Lexington campus. The first program opened with a radio greeting from UK president Frank McVey. The original schedule consisted of 15-minute programs, Monday through Friday at 12:45 p.m. with guests from the university presenting a variety of information.

Many of the new shows were geared to the farming community and presented by the UK College of Agriculture, but some of the first week offerings included a talk by the zoology professor and the football coach. The *Lexington Herald* reported that the programs would be discussing current events, historical incidents, music, literature, athletics, farm topics and topics of general interest to the state. An examination of the program schedules in ensu-



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*University of Kentucky Radio Department presenting programs on WHAS. Elmer Sulzer (far left) directed many of the performers and later founded UK's WBKY radio, the nation's oldest university-owned FM station.*

ing years shows that wide variety was maintained with one week's subject matter varying from "American Foreign Policy in Asia" with a professor of history to "Making Ice Cream at Home" with the school's dairy expert!

The agreement between Credo Harris and President McVey called for WHAS to install all the equipment and phone lines, with the station and the university sharing the line charges. These university programs would expand in the early 1930s under the direction of Elmer G. "Bromo" Sulzer who cooperated with WHAS in an historic milestone of that decade, the establishment of "listening centers" throughout rural Kentucky.



There was little competition for local listeners for WHAS until the late 1920s when WLAP radio began regular two-hour per day broadcasts plus the Virginia Avenue church services on Sunday.

The Louisville *Herald-Post* reported in the July 4, 1929, edition that WLAP would go on the air Friday night to attain prominence and popularity as a public servant of the Louisville community. This expanded operation in commercial programming was led by William Fariss, who came from WBAM in Nashville to be station manager, and Vivienne Adams Woolfe, program director.

The station broadcast for a six-hour period that inaugural evening, and continued to build service and gain listenership. Fariss installed facilities at the Kentucky State Fair and provided coverage of fair concerts, events and shows, and the station began an intensive line-up of live entertainment, sports scores, and news reports using the *Herald-Post* and *Time* magazine as sources. WLAP boasted its own singing groups, including popular tenor Harold S. Logan, and a drama group known as the "WLAP Thespians" under the direction of Harry Roy.

In the fall of 1929, William Thomas Owens began a stint as general manager and put remote facilities to work when inclement weather forced a speech by President Herbert Hoover indoors. With thousands gathered on the riverbank waiting, Owens and Ward Keith described the celebration taking place at the War Memorial Auditorium and brought the president's speech to the people through the river levee's public address system. Those efforts were praised in the *Herald-Post*, reporting that the station was fulfilling its slogan of being "Louisville's Own Station."

As 1929 drew to a close, WLAP started early morning broadcasts to the area, signing on at 7 a.m. and the number of employees increased from nine in October to 35 by December. The station brought listeners such stars as Walter Winchell and Will Rogers as it became affiliated with the Columbia Broadcasting System network — CBS.

WLAP carried Louisville Colonels baseball games from Parkway Field, football, wrestling matches, races, and had the honor of celebrating the city of Louisville's 150th anniversary in its studios in May 1930, with Mayor William B. Harrison and other politicians participating.

The *Herald-Post* reported that CBS chief announcer Ted Husing came to Louisville to broadcast the Derby for the 72 stations on the network, and on Derby eve was joined by WLAP microphone stars, Harold Logan and Bill Durbeck in giving a blow-by-blow description of the Mickey Walker-Paul Swiderski fight at the Jefferson County Armory, with the program sent to 63 cities.

On July 4th of that year, WLAP marked Independence Day and the first anniversary of its expanded commercial broadcast schedule with a special program of music by the WLAP Little Symphony Orchestra and an address by Lt. Gov. James Breathitt, Jr. Performers who had participated at the station the previous year were invited to join in the festivities.

In August, Harvey White, vice-president of the Inter-Southern Life Insurance Company, resigned to become president of American Broadcasting Company, the licensee for WLAP.

Listeners of the late 1920s could also tune to WFIW, in Hopkinsville,

W.B. "Billy" Anderson, Jr., president. The call letters of the station were used to typify the slogan of the parent company Acme Flour Mills as having the "Whitest Flour in the World."

One of the first announcers was the town's police judge, Alvan H. Clark, who was described as having a "delightful southern drawl." Mrs. Fred Jackson served as the program director with Sam Harness and William Roper, the engineers. After increasing power in 1928, WFIW brought in D.E. "Plug" Kendrick, as station manager and "hillbilly" on-air performer. He had earned his nickname because of the constant on-air "plugs" for fan mail. His music, along with a variety of acts, was broadcast from the station's elaborate studios. WFIW affiliated with CBS in 1929 to bring network programming to the western part of the state, and maintained an operating schedule of noon to 1 p.m.; 5 to 8 p.m. and then operated from 9:30 Sunday morning to midnight with several religious programs.

A fire completely destroyed WFIW on July 29, 1931, silencing the station until November when a new studio was built and utilized before the station was purchased and moved to Louisville in 1933.



The new medium's popularity rose quickly in the first decade of radiocasting, as more and more receivers became available. The response to WHAS broadcasts was immediate with many putting the radio on loudspeakers and encouraging folks to gather at their places of business. The *Courier-Journal* offered free radios with twelve new subscriptions.

Early sets varied in cost, looks and audio quality and ranged from the homemade crystal sets to the much more effective super heterodyne receivers, invented by Edwin Armstrong, and marketed later by RCA. Many of these cumbersome models had expensive tubes and heavy batteries. An early crystal radio receiver might cost as little as \$10, with a large tube-type model running more than \$60. By 1922 there were hundreds of manufacturing companies turning out models with Westinghouse, GE, Crosley, Grebe, and Atwater Kent, becoming familiar brands over the next decade as the quality of reception continued to improve. Atwater Kent had developed dozens of patents for improved radio reception. In 1926, electrical plug-in models reached the market, eliminating the need for large batteries.

Several firms in Kentucky manufactured radios for a time in the decade of the twenties including Sun Manufacturing and Belknap Hardware. Steve Baron of Lexington has described many of these in a special series that was published in the Mid-South Antique Radio Collectors Club newsletters.

At the end of 1921, about one in every 500 households had a radio receiv-

er but five years later surveys showed one of every six homes with a radio. In rural Kentucky, receivers were scarce, and common practice was to gather at the local store, or at the house of a neighbor fortunate enough to own a radio set, and listen to the nightly programs.

The *Courier-Journal* reported a response to the first WHAS broadcasts, from Jackson in Breathitt County, where it was said people forgot the feuds and gathered at Rifle Drug Store to listen to the voices in the air. Some were skeptical of the new medium, like one Simpsonville farmer who, after hearing the program on a WHAS receiving unit touring the area, crawled beneath the truck to see who was playing the phonograph under there!

Not all listeners were happy when radio came to Kentucky. Those accustomed to hearing shows from Chicago, New York, Pittsburgh and other distant stations could no longer enjoy them when the local station was on, since all the first stations operated on the same frequency. These complaints led WHAS to observe Monday as a "silent night," going off the air so other stations could be tuned in. Those problems were solved with the expanded band and new frequency availabilities.

Cynical folks complained about the radio "waves" causing a variety of problems from falling chimneys and weather disasters to abnormal behavior and illness! Credo Harris said one person accused him of "communing with the devil."

Meanwhile, Harris was involved in a lot of public relations work urging schools to purchase radios and demonstrating the new medium to the Louisville area. In the summer of 1923, in an unusual move, he instructed technicians to go to Mammoth Cave and attempt to pick up the radio deep inside the cavern. After three tries at various locations, they succeeded in getting an audible signal, proving to him and the world that radio waves traveled through the earth as well as the air. Kenneth Bixby, a technician who helped with the experiment, reported the cave tour guide became so frightened when he heard the music coming from the receivers, he jumped up and ran! Harris, always the experimenter, had a year earlier made a test broadcast to a moving train, as it went through a tunnel at Muldraugh Hill.

By the station's first anniversary, it reported receiving more than 64,000 letters from fans and claimed to be one of the six foremost stations in the nation. Their mail indicated WHAS programs had been heard in Australia, Nova Scotia, Honduras and the Azores.

WFIW recorded letters from every state in the union, every province of Canada, and from several Central American countries.

When WLAP began full-time programming in 1929, it was at a distinct power disadvantage for long-distance listeners and promoted itself as the

local station. A listener research poll in 1930 showed WHAS first and WLAP second in audience preferences.

Nationally and in the state, radio listening as well as the broadcaster's role in society was growing rapidly in the 1920s. As the inventors and technicians shaped the future of the industry after the turn of the century, the entrepreneurs and corporations led the way in developing a system of privately-owned stations providing free informational and entertainment services via broadcasting. It would take several years, however, before even the best-operated stations would become profitable.

While the development of radio spurred growth in new industries and services, it had a negative impact on others including sales of phonograph records and vaudeville shows.

Shortly after the first stations went on the air, periodicals such as *Radio Digest* and radio listening guides appeared, and newspapers carried columns and articles about radio offerings and station news. The *Courier-Journal* and *Louisville Times* would, of course, keep listeners abreast of happenings at WHAS, while later on, the *Louisville Herald-Post* tended to promote WLAP and WFIW.

As the number of stations and interference problems grew, government regulations increased steadily as the Commerce Department then the Federal Radio Commission attempted to keep pace with the burgeoning industry. Still there were problems with unauthorized frequencies being used, operators out of boundaries on their allotted power, and "pirate" stations taking to the air without government permission.

Early attempts at self-regulation consisted mainly of local groups such as the committee in Louisville, organized to handle listener complaints of interference or other disputes related to usage of the radio band. There was little need in the first decade for much alliance among stations in Kentucky since the numbers were so few, but nationally, radio executives joined together in 1922 to fight attempts by ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers) to extract royalties from stations for playing their licensed music. As a result of this committee, the National Association of Broadcasters was formed to become the industry's professional force for sharing technical information, lobbying, programming, legal aid and self-regulation, including the issuance of a code of ethics in 1929, designed to prevent offensive programming and fraudulent advertising practices.

## Golden Age of Radio

After that first decade, the new radio industry began to mature and stabi-

lize from the early growth pains. A more complex national law was chartered in the Communications Act of 1934, and the Federal Communications Commission replaced the old FRC in overseeing the radio spectrum. New rules and regulations governed operation of stations.

Radio that was once a novelty now became a staple of everyday life, providing solace, entertainment, and information through the years of the Depression and then war. The next 15 years would show an increase in the number of stations especially in the major population areas, an expanded system of network programming, some technical advances and an increase in both the prestige of the industry and profits of the owners.

During the early years of the Depression the number of stations in the country declined as stations became a legal and economic risk in those uncertain days. While the number of stations in Kentucky remained the same for the next five years, the call letters and locations underwent a slight change in the first intra-industry conflict in the state as WFIW in Hopkinsville sought to change locations, and WLAP opposed the move.

In 1932, WFIW, Hopkinsville asked the FRC for permission to move to Louisville. That same year, George W. Norton, Jr. had purchased WLAP radio, the CBS network switched to WHAS, and WLAP became independent. WFIW, with a better frequency and power allocation than WLAP, declared it would affiliate with NBC and bring Louisville listeners back that network's programming and provide service to the community. WLAP opposed the move and requested the power and frequency held by WFIW, claiming it was entitled to provide the regional service on that channel since it was already a Louisville station.

The Federal Radio Commission began extensive proceedings on the matter in Washington. WFIW had been owned by the Acme Flour Mill, but it was revealed at the hearings that it was under a purchase agreement to radio executive W.E. Vogelback of Chicago for \$100,000. Hearings opened December 9, 1932 with acrimonious debate between opposing lawyers for the two stations. Hearings continued until March 1933 with the Radio Commission ruling in favor of WFIW in June of that year.

During those meetings, accusations about the operations at WFIW were made, and WFIW questioned the circumstances under which Norton had purchased WLAP. Testimony was given that a deal was concocted that saw CBS purchase WLAP from Ralph Atlass, for \$50,000 then sell it to Norton for \$35,000 under condition WLAP give up the CBS network affiliation, which then went to WHAS.

After the ruling, WFIW made plans to move to a chosen site in

Louisville, and WLAP announced it would appeal the FRC decision to the Courts, which Norton said would delay the move by a year or more.

The controversy was resolved, however, when on October 25, 1933, Norton purchased WFIW, Inc., and announced WLAP would no longer oppose the move. WFIW went off the air while the 1,000-watt transmitter was hauled to the top of the Brown Hotel, where studios were built under the direction of engineer Wilbur Hudson and a 239-foot tower was erected. The station changed the call letters to WAVE, and signed affiliation agreements with the NBC-Red network. WLAP ceased operation and went up for sale.

WLAP's assets and electronic equipment were then purchased by Turner C. Rush and Alvin L. Witt of Lexington who announced the station would be moved to that city. The FRC granted permission for the move on January 5, 1934, along with a change in frequency to 1420 with power remaining 250 watts day and 100 watts night with studios at the Walton Building on Main Street. WLAP went back on the air, providing central Kentucky with new local radio service on March 17, 1934, as an independent station.

On July 22, 1936, the ownership of Lexington's WLAP changed hands when the Nunn family, J. Lindsay Nunn and son Gilmore, purchased the station. The Nunns acquired the *Lexington Herald* newspaper and had developed the policy of purchasing the radio where they had owned newspapers. The family operated stations throughout the southwest and would become Kentucky's first multiple-station owners when they also purchased WCMI radio, Ashland, in 1939.

Although the Nunns later sold the *Herald*, they maintained their control of WLAP. With Winston Clark the manager, the station moved to new modern studios at Walnut and Short streets in June 1938. Two years later more changes came with increased nighttime power and the relocation of the transmitter and tower to a site on the west side of town at Mason-Headley Road. During the national realignments of 1941, the station moved to 1450 on the dial, under the direction of chief engineer Sanford Helt.

Nunn helped form a southern branch of the Mutual network in 1939 that also included WCMI, Louisville's WGRC and WSIX in Nashville. WLAP remained with Mutual until joining NBC-Blue in 1944, which then became ABC one year later.

Meanwhile, WAVE had dedicated its new facilities with a coast-to-coast program through NBC-Red, originating from the Crystal Ballroom of the Brown Hotel on December 30, 1933, with Ford Bond, formerly of WHAS and now network announcer, hosting the show. Many officials attended the gala evening at the invitation of Nathan Lord, the new WAVE station manager. Congratulatory messages were interspersed with the music of the Henry Hal-



stead dance band, according to the news reports in the *Herald-Post*.

WHAS had ended its five-year affiliation with NBC when it broadcast its first CBS programs in May 1932. The network of William Paley was offering stations a better financial deal, giving them sustaining programs (no advertiser) free, in exchange for clearance of all sponsored shows. WHAS had been surrounded by NBC stations in mid-America and welcomed the opportunity to provide alternative programs and what they believed to be better quality news.

WHAS made some major changes as it advanced power to 25,000 watts in 1932, and to the maximum 50,000 watts in December the following year, becoming the state's first and only full-power clear-channel station. They were still operating at 830, but changed frequency to 840 kHz in 1941.

WHAS had applied for permission to experiment with 500,000 watts, but was denied because of the close proximity of WLW which had been granted the "superpower" status temporarily in 1934, for hours of 1 a.m. to 6 a.m., then later for all hours. In 1938, the Senate declared that 50,000 watts should be enough for any station, and the Commission limited WLW to nighttime full power only, finally ending the experiment completely in 1942, with the Cincinnati station returning to 50,000 watts round the clock, the maximum still allowed today.

During the time of the superpower operation of WLW, stories of unusual reception of signals surfaced daily. People declared they could hear the radio in their tooth fillings, when they opened their oven doors, just about anything seemed to act as a detector circuit!

WLW billed itself as the "nation's station" at 700 kHz on the dial. In 1925, it became the first station to place the transmitter away from the studio site. The tower and transmitter were located in Harrison, 22 miles north of the city. When the superpower experiment was approved, the half-million



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*Upon his retirement, Kentucky's first radio manager, Credo Harris of WHAS (on left) and his wife receive a copy of memoirs Harris had written, presented by Mark Ethridge of the Courier-Journal, who was first president of the National Association of Broadcasters.*

watt transmitter, the only one of its kind, was built by the Crosley engineers, containing tubes costing \$1,000 each. It utilized 22 100-kilowatt tubes with DC generators required to supply 3,000 amperes to light the filaments. The tower was 831 feet high, and an elaborate pumping and water reservoir system was needed to pipe water at the rate of 30 gallons per minute just to keep the transmitter cool!

During the 1930s, WLW had wide-spread listenership and became known as the “cradle of the stars” with hundreds of show business luminaries getting their start there. The station carried programs of both NBC-Red and Blue and created many shows that were fed to the networks including one of the most popular ones of all time — *Ma Perkins*. Virginia Payne began portraying her character for the radio series in the WLW studios.

During its superpower operation, WLW was the number one station in 13 different states, and national advertising revenues came pouring in.

Denied superpower rank, WHAS, in 1937, began work on expanding the studios and the following year was broadcasting with a new transmitter site at Eastwood on Jeffersontown Road.

A major legal war was waged in 1941, as Mark Ethridge of the *Courier-Journal* joined with other newspapers in a battle to retain the company’s control of WHAS. They successfully defeated a federal proposal to completely ban newspaper ownership of radio stations.

In 1942, W. Lee Coulson, who had been WHAS’s very successful sales manager, replaced Credo Harris as general manager. Harris’ retirement was duly noted by many officials including a citation and complimentary remarks from President Roosevelt on the public service and pioneer radio work of WHAS and its long-time head.

Meanwhile, WAVE was making some improvements, moving its transmitter site to Jeffersonville, Indiana, and going to 5,000 watts in November 1940. The station was assigned 970 kHz in the spring of 1941. Jane Morton Norton became vice-president of the station, getting more involved in its operations when her husband George was transferred overseas during the war.

In 1935, local radio service came to the eastern part of the state, with the beginning of WCMI radio in Ashland. The FCC granted the construction permit on January 29, 1935, for 100 watts at 1310 kHz to Ashland Broadcasting Company, affiliated with the *Ashland Daily Independent* newspaper, J.T. Norris, president. The original call letters, WMFP, were changed to WCMI, meaning “Where Coal Meets Iron,” before the station went on the air April 29, 1935. Ashland was and still is a steel-making center, and radio and TV service has always been closely linked to stations in the tri-state area of Kentucky, Ohio and West Virginia.

The first studios were located in the Henry Clay Hotel, with James F. Kyler, station manager and Hester Kyler, the program director. The next year, WCMI was granted 250 watts and moved to a site on Greenup Avenue that would become known as the WCMI building.

In the western end of the state, another newspaper got into the radio business, as Lawrence W. Hager, publisher of the *Owensboro Messenger and Inquirer*, formed the Owensboro Broadcasting Company and received a permit for a 100-watt station at 1500 kHz on June 15, 1937. The company had made application in early 1936, but protests had been filed by WCKY in Covington, and WGBF in Evansville. WOMI, took the initials of the morning and evening newspapers, and the company built state-of-the-art facilities on Byers Avenue and Livermore Road. The building had an auditorium for 100 people and the basement contained the largest recreational room in the city.

The permit for WOMI was modified to allow for 250 watts daytime before it went on the air February 7, 1938. The first program was live from the Hotel Owensboro, with Miss Eleanor Moore singing "My Old Kentucky Home." The University of Kentucky provided an orchestra and vocalist for the occasion. Lyle Ludwig was the first station manager and, by mid-1938, had WOMI operating daily from 6 a.m. to midnight as an independent station. In 1939, Hugh O. Potter, the recently named editor of the newspaper, transferred to radio to become the long-time general manager.



Courtesy WOMI Radio

*WOMI's Owensboro studio was considered state of the art when constructed in 1937. It was torn down in 1988 and replaced.*

By 1936, the Louisville area had a third station, as WGRC, licensed to New Albany, Indiana, opened studios there and also across the river in downtown Louisville at the Home Life Building. The call letters commemorated George Rogers Clark, Revolutionary war hero and founder of Louisville. The station was owned by Northside Broadcasting, with Arthur L. Harris, his son Charles L. Harris, Robert McIntosh and Adolph Zeller, principles. In July the station moved its transmitter to a new site near Silver Creek, east of New Albany where it broadcast on 1370 kHz.

The station suffered heavy damage in the 1937 flood and struggled financially until, upon the death of the elder Harris, stockholders brought in management help. Steve Cisler came from Hot Springs, Arkansas, and J. Porter Smith, who had worked in radio in Atlanta and Arkansas, both bought into the station, with Cisler becoming president and Smith, general manager while Parker Smith was hired in sales. The MacIntosh family of New Albany had been helping the Harris' with the station, and Cisler recalled that many of the employees were volunteering their services when he arrived. The station received a power increase to 250 watts, joined the Mutual network, began nighttime operations and in 1940 closed the Indiana studios. WGRC moved to 1400 kHz with the new 1941 channel alignments, and in 1943 was granted FCC permission to move the transmitter to the Kentucky side and change the city of license to Louisville, a move opposed by the city's other stations and not accomplished until after the war.

When Cisler entered the Marines during the war, J. Porter Smith and Charlie Harris continued in management while Cisler sold his stock. Upon returning from the service, Cisler filed suit in Federal court under the Selective Service Act to get his old position and receive back pay. He wound up, though, starting another station in the city, WKYW.

Up north, WCKY's L.B. Wilson was becoming more involved in his station. He was named to the Board of the National Association of Broadcasters and the International Radio Club. The station won a *Variety* magazine Showmanship Award in 1936. In 1939 WCKY was granted 50,000 watts of power and L.B. Wilson and Charles H. Topmiller, station vice-president, were on hand for the dedication with the pledge to continue what they called the real purpose of the station — "to provide public service."

That power increase made Cincinnati one of only four metro areas in the country with two 50,000 watt radio stations. Wilson had actually moved his studios to downtown Cincinnati, first to the Netherland Plaza and later to the Hotel Gibson. The identification on the air was WCKY, Cincinnati, and has remained that ever since. WLW objected, however, setting up a case before the old FRC, which had assumed the station IDs would be determined by the

transmitter location. WLW protested that Wilson was in Covington, but Wilson retorted, "your transmitter is in Mason, Ohio!" Wilson reportedly said he would start saying Covington when WLW started saying Mason, and so end of argument. The government began allowing city IDs where the studio existed and the majority of programming originated. WCKY had joined the NBC-Blue network at the outset, but switched to CBS in 1939.



The beginning of the decade of the forties, with improved economic conditions, brought a flurry of activity in licensing before the war caused a pause in station growth. Stations went on the air in Bowling Green, Henderson, Harlan and Hopkinsville but a big post-war communications "boom" still lay ahead. In June 1940, WLBK was started in Bowling Green, and Louisville got its fourth station as WINN radio began operations.

The call letters of the Bowling Green station stood for L.B. Jenkins, the founder, who put the station on the air, with 250 watts of power at 1340 on the dial, June 25, 1940, with a live broadcast from the Helm Hotel, sponsored by the Warren County Chamber of Commerce. The station dubbed itself the "Pioneer Voice of Southern Kentucky," being the first station in that area since the failure of WNAB. The on-air slogan, promoted the call letters to mean "Where Life Brings Joy."

Meanwhile in Louisville, D.E. "Plug" Kendrick, formerly of WFIW and WAVE, broke away from the Nortons to start his own station in June 1940, going on the air with WINN, with 250 watts at 1210 on the dial, from the studios at the Tyler Hotel at Third and Jefferson, the 200-foot tower rising above the building. By December, Kendrick had affiliated the station with the NBC-Blue network, taking some of the programs from WAVE, which had been using both Red and Blue shows. In 1941, WINN moved to 1240 on the dial. When Kendrick died suddenly in 1944, Nelle Kendrick became president, and named Harry McTigue general manager.

The Lackey brothers expanded their radio interests in western Kentucky when they became group owners, building stations in Hopkinsville and Henderson in addition to WPAD in Paducah.

WHOP in Hopkinsville went on the air January 8, 1940, and WSON in Henderson signed on December 17, 1941. Call letters of the stations were derived from their cities of license. WHEN had already been assigned; thus the call letters WSON used the last three letters of the city.

Pierce Lackey was operating WPAD throughout the 1930s calling itself the "Voice of Western Kentucky," although in 1931 it was the "Nehi Beverage Station" in deference to the ultimate commercial tie-in! The station had

expanded its facilities and moved to a new location at Ninth and Terrell streets in 1934 under the direction of chief engineer David LaBarr.

Lackey started WHOP, serving as president with Hecht S. Lackey as the station manager. Then when WSON went on the air, F. Ernest "Dutch" Lackey became general manager at Hopkinsville with Hecht moving to Henderson to take charge of that new station. Later, WHOP became the property of Hopkinsville Broadcasting, "Dutch" Lackey, president, and WSON was switched to Henderson Broadcasting, Hecht Lackey, president.

WHOP operated at 1200 kHz with 250 watts from a site constructed on Princeton Pike, northwest of the city. In 1941, the result of new treaty allocations, the station was assigned 1230. The community celebrated the return of radio after an absence of eight years with a dedication ceremony attended by political and civic leaders along with Andy Devine, screen and radio star.

WSON had the 860 kHz frequency with a power of 250 watts daytime only, with what was described as a "homebrew" transmitter put together by Paducah's chief engineer, C.G. "Preacher" Sims. The station doubled its power in 1944 and affiliated with the Mutual network the following year.

WPAD was assigned 1450 in 1941 and increased output to 250 watts. Two years later the station moved into new facilities in the Taylor Building, downtown. WPAD and WHOP both joined the CBS network in 1943.

Local radio debuted in the mountains of Kentucky on May 30, 1941, when WHLN in Harlan began broadcasting using studios constructed in a bungalow just outside of town with the 150-foot tower nearby. The 250-watt station at 1420 kHz was owned by Blandfox Radio, with R.B. "Dick" Helms and J. Francke Fox stockholders. Helms served as manager, and Fox as president. The history of the station has been written up in a poem "The Saga of WHLN" by Castle Rock Smith. It contains the interesting story of how the station came to be located in Harlan.

It seems Fox and friend Ed Blandford had traveled to Middlesboro, the town Blandford had picked to start a station. Fox did not like the dank chill in the town that rainy morning in 1940 and they drove on, finally, to Harlan where the sun was shining. They had never heard of the town, but decided to build there. Neither Fox, age 22 at the time, nor Blandford had any money so they returned to Bluefield, West Virginia, to secure \$15,000 from Fox's grandfather, then started the application process. By the time construction got under way, Helms had replaced Blandford as Fox's partner.

One other commercial station laid plans to go on the air between 1935 and 1945, but was forced to wait a while. A group of Louisville businessmen, headed by James F. Brownlee and Milton S. Trost, formed Mid-America Corporation in 1939 with the intent to start another station in the city. A

construction permit was approved on November 12, 1941 for WINK radio at 5,000 watts, giving the city five stations. However, manpower and equipment shortages brought about by the war caused a postponement, and the station would not operate until 1948 when it debuted as WKLO.

By 1945, Kentucky had twelve commercial stations on the air, out of the 930 nationwide.

### 1945 Kentucky Station Log

Louisville — WHAS, WAVE, WGRC, WINN  
Lexington, WLAP  
Paducah, WPAD  
Ashland, WCMJ  
Owensboro, WOMI  
Bowling Green, WLBK  
Harlan, WHLN  
Hopkinsville, WHOP  
Henderson, WSON

By this time WCKY was listed as a Cincinnati, Ohio, station. WBKY at the University of Kentucky was the only non-commercial station.



By the decades of the thirties and forties, radio had become more complex with programming of every variety to inform and entertain, and the rise of the networks enabled stations to fill their broadcast schedules. By 1945, all the stations in the state were carrying programs from one or more of the networks — NBC, CBS, ABC or Mutual. NBC was forced to divest itself of the Blue network, after passage of new FCC chain broadcasting rules in 1943. The network was sold and became ABC in 1945.

Mutual became the largest network in terms of affiliates, but NBC-Red and CBS had the most popular programs. Most shows continued to be broadcast live, with some produced on ETs (electrical transcriptions) running at 33 1/3 rpm. These were of better quality than the old 78 phonograph records. About half the programming continued to be music and, with the “big band” era in full swing, most stations had their own local groups that performed on the air and often advanced to network appearances.

Soap operas, so-called because the first efforts were sponsored by soap companies, became popular along with the comedy shows and radio dramas.



**John Lair, started the Renfro Valley Barn Dance in 1937, and the Sunday Morning Gatherin', one of radio's longest-running shows. Later, he built his own radio station WRVK, Renfro Valley in Rockcastle County.**

Some of the top network soaps were *The Guiding Light*, *Ma Perkins*, *One Man's Family* and *The Goldbergs*. Famous dramas included *The Lux Radio Theater*, *Buck Rogers*, *CBS Mystery Theatre*, *The Green Hornet*, *Jack Armstrong-All American Boy*, *The Shadow*, *The Lone Ranger* and *Superman*.

Comedies gained wide listenership, especially the *Amos 'n' Andy Show*, perhaps the most popular show of all time. Others included *Fibber McGee and Molly*, *Lum and Abner*, *Ozzie and Harriet*, and *The Great Gildersleeve*. Beginning in the early 1920s with the *Eveready Hour* most all major national advertisers began to sponsor a radio show and often attached their brand name to the title. The big bands all had heavy followings on radio, including Harry James, Glenn Miller and Benny Goodman. For country-western lovers, there was the *Grand Ole Opry*.

Singers and comedians made names for themselves with radio variety shows. People like Eddie Cantor and Rudy Vallee were among the popular singers. One of the all time favorites was *The Jack Benny Show*. Listeners loved Edgar Bergen, Jimmy Durante, Burns and Allen, Ed Wynn, Kate Smith and Bing Crosby. Some performers had their own shows, while many appeared on network productions like *Kraft Music Hall*, *Voice of Firestone* and *Camel Caravan*.

Many announcers and network newscasters would become household names, like H.V. Kaltenborn, Edward R. Murrow, Walter Winchell, Lowell Thomas, Drew Pearson and Red Barber in sports. When depression and war came, these individuals and others would keep the nation informed and encouraged.

A generation has fond memories of the value of radio in those days, from the reassurance of Franklin Roosevelt's "Fireside Chats," to being able to cheer with the great sports events like the heavyweight boxing matches and the World Series.

The "golden age" of radio was not all golden, but had some national problems as well. At first, newspapers sought to curtail the competition of any radio news. In 1933, all the news teletype services — Associated Press, United Press and International News Service announced they would no



longer provide news to the networks, so many of them started gathering their own news. The so-called "Press-Radio War" was not much of a battle, as eventually the wire services agreed to provide limited news to the stations. Many radio newscasters became commentators or analysts of the news itself, and when radio went off to report World War II, the news services eventually dropped all restrictions of wire access to stations.

Copyright problems started early in the radio business, since music was a mainstay of the programming. After working out a payment schedule to the composers and authors, the fees demanded by their union, ASCAP, continued to increase and amounted to about 2.5 percent of a station's income in 1936. When larger increases were announced to take effect in the early 1940s, broadcasters rebelled and helped form the rival licensing organization, BMI or Broadcast Music, Inc. For a time, stations used only music in the public domain or from BMI as they continued their dispute with ASCAP, which finally reduced their demands.

Stations filled the time not allotted to networks with local programs as a typical schedule was blocked out in 15-minute, half-hour and hour segments that may have included their own orchestra or band, talent shows, some amateur drama, church services, children's shows, sports broadcasts, cooking and other specialty programs, and of course, music recordings. The man-on-the-street interview and the call-in show became popular during this period as listeners liked to hear themselves and others on the radio.

Many music shows and their feature bands gained popularity in the state during those "golden days." One of the country's first radio singers, getting his start in the 1920s, was Bradley Kincaid from Garrard County, as the "Kentucky Mountain Boy." He sang on the famous WLS Chicago *National Barn Dance*, and later on the NBC-Red network. The program director for WLS was John Lair of Renfro Valley, Ky. who brought many folk singers up from the state to perform after he had taken the job in 1927 and began producing the show. He introduced singer Red Foley, and the first all-female group, the "Coon Creek Girls," featuring Lily Lay Ledford. Lair became known as the foremost authority on folk music and is credited with encouraging female singers to get involved in show business.

In 1937, Lair started the *Renfro Valley Barn Dance* and broadcast over WLW, Cincinnati. By 1939, the show was originating from a complex he and others had developed at Renfro Valley in Rockcastle County. That year the program went on CBS through WHAS, its popularity soon rivaling that of the *Grand Ole Opry*. It was really the first radio show of that kind being produced in the authentic rural setting, and WHAS installed a complete Western Electric studio in a log cabin for Lair's use.

Another show, *The Sunday Morning Gatherin'*, with Lair and the Renfro Valley "folks" was carried on CBS, starting in 1943, with a wide variety of entertainers. The *Barn Dance* came to an end with the demise of network variety shows in the 1950s, but the *Gatherin'* remains a part of radio schedules in Kentucky in syndication into the 1990s.

The so-called "hillbilly music," big band, metropolitan opera, classical orchestras, quartets, gospel, soloists, pop — it was all available on each station without turning the dial. This block-type programming would do radio well until the days of television prominence.

A Portsmouth singer, Leonard Slye performed in the 1930s on WCMI in Ashland. He later became known as Roy Rogers. WHLN listeners had their "Prairie Rangers," John Reedy and the "Stone Mountain Hillbillies." Marion Brock became a popular vocalist at the Harlan station.

WOMI carried "Tex Justus and His Texas Cowboys" daily while WPAD had composer Billy Bird. WLAP had Asa Martin and his *Morning Roundup*, Paul Sapp, Jenny Wells and the "Prairie Dream Boys" and on WAVE, it was "Clayton [Pappy] McMichen and His Georgia Wildcats." In the 1940s, WAVE also featured the music of Earle Keller and his Salon Orchestra, where he not only conducted live in the studio but played the piano at the same time. Gene Autry, Smiley Burnette and Dale Evans all made appearances on WHAS, WLAP and WCMI in the early years.

Miller Welch brought his orchestra to Lexington in 1936, when the Nunns invited him to the station to perform. They ended up hiring him, and he remained with WLAP for more than 20 years in various capacities.

Each station had favorites, some who achieved fame beyond the walls of the local studios, including such Kentucky natives as Pee Wee King, Molly O'Day and band leader Billy Vaughn.

Stations hired staff bands with musicians paid to work daily. Larry Pruitt was one of the first hired by WHAS, followed by Walter Davidson. Jack Turner was another popular musician at the station. At WAVE, Cliff Shaw was a well-known pianist and composer, and later became station music director.

As early as 1934, WAVE was luring performers with prizes at special talent nights it was broadcasting, and open talent night usually meant it was "anything goes."

WGRC in Louisville boasted radio's "singing fireman" as Benny Reid starred on a weekly program, *Dreamin in Dixie*, that was carried on all the Mutual network stations.



On a Sunday morning in December 1941, Dick Wade was on duty in the master control of WHAS and D.C. Summerford was the engineer. Most of the listeners had just had dinner, and the *Old Fashioned Revival Hour* was on when it was interrupted by announcer Joe Weeks with the words, "Pearl Harbor has been bombed." Kentucky's clear-channel station told the grim news, and the U.S. was at war. Radio stations became a source of immediate news from the front and a means for leaders to communicate with an anxious nation. Volumes have been written about the valuable role radio played in those trying years. The power, prestige and profits of the stations would be greatly enhanced by the war coverage.

But local stations had been heavily involved in news events and emergencies prior to that fateful day war began.

Four years earlier, stations along the Ohio River had been called upon to help rescue stranded residents from the raging waters of the infamous 1937 flood.

"SEND A BOAT" was the word passed time and again over the radio. WHAS had started broadcasting warnings early on January 21. Garbed in hip boots, raincoats and hats, announcers fanned out across the city to report live on evacuations and other problems using their shortwave radio to relay messages back to the studios. All commercial programs were abandoned on WHAS and WAVE to concentrate on the news and the task of aiding and rescuing. When the threat of lost power loomed to even the radio stations, a special Volunteer Inter-city Network for Flood Relief in the Ohio Valley was formed. In case of power failure, citizens had been told to tune to WSM in Nashville, WFBM in Indianapolis, WCKY or WLAP.

Louisville mayor Neville Miller moved his offices to WLAP in Lexington where short-wave radio contact was maintained with his city. When power



Courtesy WHAS radio

*WHAS provided live coverage of the devastating 1937 flood with shortwave transmitters. Shown here are Foster Brooks (on pole) and Pete Monroe.*

went out, phone officials worked to get a direct line to WSM in Nashville, which broadcast the bulletins, as the huge staff of WHAS and the *Courier-Journal* worked to forward messages on to the network and the short-wave stations who joined in to help the cause up and down the river. Generators and batteries were rushed in to keep phone companies and the phones at the station operating. WHAS broadcast more than 115,000 messages of aid during 187 hours of uninterrupted service, using kerosene lamps, small generators, batteries, anything to keep the effort going. Pete Monroe, one of the chief reporters, came out a national hero but there were, no doubt, dozens of others.

The station became the control center of the flood relief mission and had extra phones installed to handle the calls. Joe Fox, an engineer, recalled in an interview that Barry Bingham, Sr. remained at the station to help during the crisis. He soon became a runner for messages, and one operator, not knowing who he was, chastised him for being slow in getting back once. Somebody overheard the conversation and told the young man, "That's Barry Bingham, the man who pays your salary!" The operator almost fainted.

Rivals WAVE and WHAS cooperated in the time of emergency to assure the public was readily served by both. WAVE received a generator that was brought in by railroad flat car and quickly rushed it to a parking lot behind the hotel with cables running up the outside walls to the 15th floor studios. They returned to the air after being off three days and the lights came on again in the Brown Hotel, which could only be visited by boat. The WAVE announcers and engineers kept the station on the air around the clock, assisting authorities in the rescue operations under difficult conditions to say the least. One staffer reported catching fish in the hotel lobby!

The efforts of the stations led the editors of *Broadcasting* magazine to express the feelings of people of the Louisville area, "Thank God for radio!"

In May 1937, when WHAS received the Columbia Award for Distinguished Contribution to the Radio Art and a special citation from Congress for its reporting of the Great Flood, Barry Bingham responded in the *Courier-Journal*, "It was then we began to realize the power of radio."

Other stations along the river, including WCKY, WCMI and WPAD, made vital contributions to help people in this time of tragedy. WGRC, had just recently gone on the air when it was heavily damaged by the flood. The station elevated its transmitter on saw horses in the face of the rising waters.

WCKY went with stand-by diesel generated power and plenty of make-shift equipment to keep the broadcasts going 24 hours a day. The lack of a local station in the Owensboro area during the flood became another reason the Owensboro paper wanted to get station WOMI on the air.

WPAD remained on the air until the river waters reached the first floor of

its Eighth Street location, then with the cooperation of the Army Corps of Engineers the entire station was moved to a garage in the Avondale Heights area to continue broadcasting!

In 1939, when flooding hit Morehead and eastern Kentucky, WLAP chartered a plane to fly over the area and used its short-wave equipment to do news broadcasts on the emergency.

Thus radio became the news medium of immediacy, going anywhere to bring the events to life. Quick on-the-spot reporting and live remotes were an integral part of community service.

Stations developed mobile units and took the microphones out on the street. Burt Blackwell and George Patterson of WAVE produced a successful program of interviews beginning in 1936. They were known for posing some unusual questions to passers-by. They were forced to move the program inside to the phone lines during the war for security reasons. An observer may have thought the man in front of the WAVE studios on Broadway to be a little strange as he sat there under a patio umbrella. It was Foster Brooks doing his regular radio show. Brooks, who started in radio as a teen at WHAS, later worked in TV before becoming a comedian with his famous "lovable lush" persona.

One of the first remote broadcast units was at WPAD, where with antenna mounted on a white Buick, newspeople cruised the town originating broadcasts from various locations including an airplane and a locomotive. The relay station was licensed under the call letters WAHL and many remotes were handled by Gene Peak, station program director and salesman, who like owner Pierce Lackey, would become mayor of the city.

Ted Grizzard joined WLAP in 1935 and is remembered by listeners for his man-on-the-street and *Quizzer and the Cop* advice show for motorists, and other on-the-spot reports. It was the beginning of his long and brilliant career, which included later becoming general manager of WLAP. Early in 1941, Bill Bradshaw developed a man-on-the-street and remote reporting features at WHLN, Harlan.

Stations began to air regular newscasts along with the network offerings. WPAD set up a schedule of news from the *Paducah Sun-Democrat* paper, which aired four times daily.

Some local newsreaders/announcers would achieve fame. Paul Sullivan of WHAS, whose newscasts were carried on CBS, was rated one of the five best in the nation according to reports in 1939. Frank Edwards, who worked at WLAP and then WGRC, went on to anchor news for the Mutual Network and was listed in one publication as third-most influential commentator in the nation behind Edward R. Murrow and Lowell Thomas.

One program on WHAS received national attention during the war as Bud Abbott started *Kentucky Calls America*, an all-night show of recorded music and listener letters. He reported receiving more than 36,000 letters during the two and a half years it was on the air.

One time, Don McNeill, WHAS announcer, and musician Van Fleming spent their spare moments working on a show they were going to call *The Two Professors*. WHAS brought in a prospective sponsor to audition them and he loved it. They were on for many weeks until one day they failed to return from a trip to Chicago in time for the show. Credo Harris had them fired, but McNeill went on to host the famous long-running network show, *The Breakfast Club*. McNeill was later inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame. Two of his most popular regulars were Mary Anne Lockett and comedian Sam Cowling, both of whom had large fan clubs. Cowling had his own network show, *The Three Romeos*, with Louie Perkins and Gil Jones, all boyhood friends from Jeffersonville, Indiana.

Malcolm Greep became a popular voice of WOMI, while George Walsh and Joe Eaton handled many duties at WHAS. There was Charlie Warren at WCMI and Jerry Fordyce, the "golden voice" of WGRC. Fordyce later told a newspaper reporter that he wanted to work at WHAS but after he had pronounced "systemic" as "systematic" during an audition, he was told he might try a smaller station.

Kentucky provided several other notable network personalities for the early days of radio. Linton Wells, a former office boy at the *Courier-Journal* became a top CBS news analyst. Thomas Riley of Henderson worked for a while at WLAP and went to NBC to become one of radio's best known producers of dramatic shows. Marion Taylor, radio's "Voice of Experience" on CBS with his over-the-air advice column, was a native of Louisville.

Ward Bond of WHAS and his brother Bill Bond of WAVE both moved up to network jobs.

Males weren't the only ones on the air. Louisville had Kathryn Riddick of WGRC and Kay Egan of WAVE on the air in the late 1930s and early '40s. Later, on WAVE, you could hear Marjorie Plank, and in Lexington Lora Stansditch Crandall conducted WLAP's first women's program, *Words to the Wives*.

Cliffordean Potter of WOMI seemed to find the most enduring combination as her *Stork News* program, started shortly after the station went on the air, was sponsored by the same Owensboro dairy for more than 30 years. As "Jo-Anna" on the program, she told news of births, doing interviews with proud parents. WOMI and its owner, the daily newspaper, were involved in many communities activities. In 1940 the station broadcast a special live program highlighting the activity of the city's Ken-Rad plant, that was also

heard on WLW and WSAI in Cincinnati as part of their series on Kentucky industry. Ken-Rad started in 1922 with 20 people and became the country's largest builder of radio tubes, employing thousands.

Some network drama had a local flair, as WGRC, a Mutual Network affiliate, began a program entitled *Biff Baker*, a kid thriller about the adventures of a youthful trio on Mars. It was real sci-fi, complete with ray guns, gravity pills and rockets, with Marole Ross, a regular member of the WGRC staff, playing the lead. The serial was written daily by W.S. Lukenbill and fed to 190 stations on the network.

Live sports reports continued to find a prominent place on the radio schedules, as local stations did college and high school games. In 1934, WLAP broadcast three University of Kentucky football games. By 1936 the station had an extensive schedule of UK coverage with Ed Ashford handling the play-by-play. On March 7, 1935, Ashford broadcast the first live description of a UK basketball game. He also re-created some UK away basketball games from the newswire copy in the 1934-35 basketball season. This practice was popular for several decades in all sports when travel to away games was not possible. The announcer used his creativity and imagination to "voice" the game when actually all he had of what took place were short descriptions from the Western Union wire.

WLAP carried the high school state tournament action in 1935 and assisting Ashford were Adolph Rupp and A.B. "Happy" Chandler. Ashford also broadcast races from Keeneland and sent the Bluegrass Stakes out over the Mutual Network to 103 stations in 1939. They carried reports from Keeneland regularly and soon were using the *Morning Line* and wire service to re-create racing from major tracks around the country. WLAP dubbed itself the "Thoroughbred Station of the Nation."



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*Some of the first female announcers, Alberta Atwell and Marjorie Plank, worked at WAVE during the war years.*

By 1940, WLAP had formed the Ashland Oil-Aetna Sports Network, which continued into the late 1950s with J.B. Faulconer doing UK play-by-play sports and supplying the network with other programs like *Romance of Kentucky Quiz Show* in the off-season. That show was recorded in various communities throughout the state for later distribution. Dick Bray and Roger Baker took the WLAP mikes to Crosley Field to broadcast Reds games live.

Early in the 1940s, some stations began to expand their agriculture news into complete farm shows. WHOP in Hopkinsville was one of the first, and WHAS hired a full-time farm director, John F. Merrifield, to be followed by Frank Cooley.

Religious programs were a part of every station's schedule, some of them on daily. Devotional moments and church programs that rotated among different denominations were offered to ministerial groups, in addition to churches buying time on the air. WHAS's *Fellowship Chapel* featured various speakers from different religious groups and was on the air for decades. In 1944, Rev. Charles Burns developed a series of daily devotionals for WHAS that took a religious approach to all issues of the day. WLW's *Church by the Side of the Road* is a program remembered fondly by many.

Radio demonstrated its ability to generate funds for worthy causes when WHOP originated a radio auction idea in 1942 that went on to raise millions of dollars for student scholarships with the yearly program.

Kentucky stations were quick to allow their facilities to be used by educational institutions bringing speakers, forums and information to the public. Each station located near a college arranged for programs to be broadcast.

WHAS had set the pace early with its partnership with the University of Kentucky. These programs from Lexington continued for many years although Credo Harris told President McVey in 1939 that network pressure was forcing the station to cut back on the school's air time. The station cancelled the evening program, *Capsule of Knowledge*, after WHAS reported to Elmer Sulzer of UK in January 1940 that the station's audience rating dropped from 80 percent to an 8 percent share when the program came on. Educational programs, it seems, have always appealed to a small minority of listeners!

During the early 1930s, WHAS had also opened studios for programs to be carried from Asbury, Eastern Kentucky and Western Kentucky Teachers Colleges and Pikeville College.

In September 1936, Dr. Arthur Braden, president of Transylvania College, announced daily programs from campus would be heard on WLAP and would include musical, dramatic and educational presentations. The next year the station also began carrying UK programs that had previously been heard only on WHAS.



WOMI in Owensboro featured regular broadcasts put on by the public school system, and then later from both Brescia and Kentucky Wesleyan College. WLBJ in Bowling Green installed a direct line to the nearby Kentucky Library for a regular half-hour educational program.

With a multitude of programs to produce, commercials to run, news to report and equipment to maintain, the staffs of larger stations grew quickly during this era, from a handful in the early 1920s at WHAS for instance to more than 100 on the station's payroll in the mid-1930s and 157 by 1946. Wartime saw most stations lose key personnel to the uniform, and a temporary relaxation of operator rules by the FCC made replacements easier to find.

While there were improvements in technology, an engineer's job was still much more difficult than in the later days of radio with its more reliable equipment. A licensed operator had to be at the transmitter itself at all times, so for a station where the studio was not at the transmitter site this meant paying someone to "baby-sit" the equipment, while other engineers were assigned to run the control room and input boards, set up studios and make sure everything "modulated." The transmitters became larger with the power increases being granted and more expensive as well. There were advances in studio design with more sound-proofing on doors and walls, and three-ply plate glass windows became the rule.

Because all announcing was live, that job became hazardous to "foot-in-mouth" disease, and one had to always be on the look-out for practical jokers. A popular one that endured for years was setting fire to the announcer's copy while he was on the air. Engineers had to be on their toes about what was being said as well. In 1937, when Gen. Smedley Butler spoke during a meeting of the VFW in Louisville, WAVE was carrying the speech and feeding the network, when Butler starting using some of his "army language" and station officials were forced to pull the plug. Radio stations all over the country went silent as a result.

One faux pas occurred during the flood disaster at WPAD, when the message that a certain area of Paducah was being evacuated came off the announcer's lips as "the city is being excavated." A few expletives not permitted on the air were then heard with the microphone still open!

Extemporaneous speaking and the art of ad lib were no doubt cultivated during such incidences that required something be put on the air quick! Letting your excitement get the best of you could cause some major problems, as announcer Ed Kallay of WAVE related years later in a story about doing a Colonels baseball game and letting forth with a forbidden expletive. He thought his job was doomed when he approached manager Nate Lord the next day. Lord, upon hearing what was said, stood up with a stern expression and then suddenly burst out laughing!

As restrictions about advertising loosened, the job of sales and copy-writing became a little easier. Still it was often missionary work to sell an advertiser on the benefits of being on a particular program. Networks helped to bring revenue to stations through payment for carrying commercials and radio profited with big gains in advertising during the war years. The steady increase in audiences meant higher advertising rates. Most advertising was still being sold as program sponsorships depending on the length of the show. With network programming taking up the majority of the schedule, national sales meant major dollars for station coffers. Some stations, including WCKY, actually opened offices in New York City in the mid-1940s.

Jimmy Cox, one of the earliest radio salesman, worked for WLAP and then WAVE through the early days, then a depression and a war. Cox related in a newspaper feature upon his retirement that selling was difficult in the 1920s and '30s, and though making a 25 percent commission, he might have to sell two contracts to realize a quarter for himself. Barter sales also became prominent during the depression when cash was short. At one time, Cox said he had taken in 15 cars and a studio full of furniture and had to sell it to someone to get money for the ads!

In 1938, radio's average weekly paycheck of \$45 was among the highest of all U.S. industries. Still many Kentucky old-timers can remember working for 25 cents an hour, or for simply a meal ticket.



The golden era was marked by large increases in households with radios, as families would rather do without anything except the radio. The introduction of the Emerson table radio in 1937 was a major advance and RCA-Victor, Zenith, Motorola and Philco manufactured popular models. Radio's claim as the personal medium was proven early with the droves of letters received by the stations. Listeners contacted the stations regularly with reaction to programs and especially reports on where and how they were able to pick up the signal. WAVE even asked listeners to respond with postcards to its "tone" tests after it put a new transmitter on the air!

WHAS continued to conduct listener surveys and in 1945 reported as high as an 88 percent share of a quarter-hour audience in some rural areas of Kentucky.

Listenership had increased steadily, and stations and advertising agencies relied on research services that had developed. The Cooperative Analysis of Broadcasting or CAB based its findings on telephone recall, with ratings for shows published every other week. Another firm, Clark-Hooper also entered

the audience research picture in the mid-1930s, helping to track the most popular stations.

Still many poor areas did not have access to the magic of radio and Kentucky broadcasters found a unique way to remedy that situation. The cooperative efforts of the University of Kentucky and WHAS in establishing “Listening Centers” in rural and remote areas of the state brought national attention and acclaim.

In 1930, while 18 percent of Kentucky families owned a radio, a high percentage compared to some states, only 6.7 percent of rural farm families owned one. In all of Elliott County, according to the census, there were only eight radios.

With rural areas of Kentucky often cut off from the outside world, especially during inclement weather, the radio had the capability of enhancing the lives of people in the more remote areas, but accessibility was a major problem. Elmer Sulzer of UK believed the answer was the development of “listening centers” in these counties, where radios would be placed in community centers, schools or general stores and supervised by people who



Courtesy of George Freeman

*George Freeman, of WIKI radio in Carrollton, is one of the state’s most prolific collectors of old radios. Shown here with a working 1925 “Just Rite” model that sold for \$133.50, not including the tubes and batteries. It was manufactured in Huntington, West Virginia, by Air-Ola Radio. The speaker is a “reproducer” manufactured by Claravox of Youngstown, Ohio.*

would make opportunities for listening available to the public and assure that radios were tuned to the UK programs.

The University of Kentucky provided the funds for administering the system and WHAS helped with receivers and technical expertise under the guidance of its director of engineering, Orrin Towner. Soon various charitable groups began to contribute to the effort.

The first center was set up June 1, 1933, at Cow Creek in Owsley County and by 1936 there were 22 such centers, serving an estimated 10,000 people annually. The program continued to expand until 1940, when it was reported that 80 centers had been supplied in more than a dozen counties, with an average of 40 families served by each. Listener clubs were formed, and the radio often provided the only contact with the outside world to the remote mountain areas during the harsh winter months. The centers were in counties stretching all across eastern and southeastern Kentucky in such places as Gander, Pilgrim, Rock Lick, Soft Shell, Vest, Big Laurel and Turkey Fork.

Sulzer constructed a strict set of rules and regulations for individuals wishing to operate the centers, who were also required to contribute financially by furnishing battery replacements and maintenance. Sulzer wrote in one section of those guidelines, "The University frowns on turning a set on and letting it blare from morning to night, regardless of the program, such practice thus fostering loafing habits ... instead directors should acquaint themselves with the more worthwhile programs on the air and pass the word through the neighborhood to have people arrive at these times."

The problem with the restrictions was that most of the UK educational programs came on during the day, when folks were working. Sulzer later relaxed the rules and his definition of a "worthwhile program." He figured that even a baseball game, if they had never seen one, could be educational for the mountain folks. Keeping batteries maintained in the radios became a problem especially since some of the centers were located six or more miles away from any year-round road and could be reached only on horseback. The 6-volt A-type batteries which required regular recharging were gradually replaced with the 2-volt B-type battery or "air cell" which had a life expectancy of about six months. Sets with these batteries were sold at a discount to the university for \$25.

The "listening center" concept received national exposure through WHAS and the CBS radio network and was soon copied by other states. In 1937 the network had wanted to air a program of Kentucky "hillbilly" music, when Sulzer convinced them to do a live broadcast from one of the listening centers in Knott County. He brought the local folks to the microphone for interviews, stories and ballads. Programs of this nature brought

some reaction from many local residents who resented the area being pictured in such a “backward” way and from those who thought the university was exploiting the mountain people for publicity purposes.

For the most part, however, the “listening center” concept met with great success and positive response. At a Radio Listening Centers Directors Conference held in Gander, Kentucky, in 1938 as reported in the *Courier-Journal*, most of the specialists attending the meeting were convinced radio was bringing a civilizing influence to the Kentucky mountains. Tom Wallace of the *Louisville Times* returned from the meeting not only impressed by the beauty of the mountains, but also the innate intelligence of the people.

The university remained busy producing agricultural, educational, drama and musical programs from its new studios in McVey Hall and by 1940 was still doing broadcasts for WHAS, as well as WLAP and the Mutual Network.

Clay Gaunce, in a thesis written on the history of UK’s radio, recounts a humorous story told by Sulzer that occurred during this period. It seems that First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was to come to UK to extol the virtues of the listening centers, and Sulzer, fearing she would not arrive on time, got John Jacob Niles to do some music while they were waiting. Well, Mrs. Roosevelt showed up only a few minutes late, while Niles was into “Barbara Allen” a song of 17 verses. Sulzer remembers Niles wouldn’t stop until he finished.



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*A mountain family gathers around the radio, as WHAS and the University of Kentucky cooperated beginning in the 1930s to establish “listening centers” in rural areas.*

When it was over, Lucille Thompson asked Niles, "Do you realize you kept the First Lady of the land waiting for ten minutes?"

Niles replied, "My dear lady, do you realize that long after Eleanor Roosevelt's words are forgotten, my mountain ballads will still be sung all over the world?" Of course, he was right.

The listening centers continued operating through the 1940s, gradually disappearing, as more people obtained their own radios. The university remained active in producing programs, however, including a series on hobbies that won a national Popular Science award, and a ten-part series on venereal disease, entitled the "Hidden Enemy," which received a coveted Peabody Award in 1943 under the category of best public service program.

In 1940, Sulzer began refining his process of bringing education to the Appalachian area via radio with the start up of WBKY radio at 42.9 MHz. The frequency was far above the standard band and had been set aside by the FCC in 1938 for in-school type broadcasting. The station became a reality as a result of the cooperation again of WHAS, along with the Lee County Board of Education, and was a natural outgrowth of the university's service through educational radio. There were no stations in the state being operated by educational institutions at that time, and only two others in the country (Cleveland and New York) operating on the special band.

In 1936, Lincoln Memorial University in Harrogate, Tennessee, had received a construction permit for WLIN, and had planned to build a standard band station at 1210 kHz with 100 watts, to be licensed to Middlesboro, Kentucky, across the mountain. A year later, the FCC granted an increase of power to 250 watts and the call sign was changed to WLMU. Citing insufficient funds to construct the station, however, the university surrendered the license in 1938.

WBKY was primarily for the benefit of the 3,000 school children in Lee County, for Sulzer had envisioned a complete network of such stations throughout the area reaching into classrooms and homes as well. The dedication of the new WBKY in Beattyville was quite an event, as local and state dignitaries, including Gov. Keen Johnson, gathered on October 17, 1940, in the auditorium of the Beattyville Grade School to inaugurate the service. James Lawrence Fly, the chairman of the FCC who was unable to attend, nevertheless sent his congratulations on the innovative venture. T.L. Arterberry, principal of the high school, spoke and a band played.

Ruth Foxx, who was named the program supervisor, explained the plan of placing receivers in all the 54 schools in the county during the school year, and when school was out they would be moved to homes and become listening centers. Local programs would be included along with those being broadcast

over WHAS, which had donated and installed the equipment for the station. The school programs were to begin the next day and the station would operate for two hours each day, Monday through Friday, under the technical supervision of Bob Smallwood, who held the only radio operator's license in the vicinity. The WBKY official license was granted in March 1941.

This visionary experiment at Beattyville failed, however, mainly because of technical problems in receiving the short-wave signal in the hilly terrain on only 100 watts of power. Those problems, according to Foxx in a later published article, were never resolved and money for developing and purchasing the special receivers that were required soon ran out.

When the FCC authorized new FM (frequency modulated) broadcasting in the 42-50 MHz band and designated educational channels, the university had thoughts of reviving its radio station. UK applied to modify the station license, shifting to the frequency modulation mode, increasing the power and moving the station to Lexington and the UK campus. Even though a new station freeze was in effect as a result of the war, the application was seen as a modification of the old license and was granted.

The new WBKY began broadcasting on February 14, 1945, from McVey Hall studios, as the first university-owned educational FM station in the nation. The station received a license at 91.3 on the new FM Band in 1947, and described itself as We-Broadcast-Kentucky, thus eliminating any connection to the B for Beattyville.



FM radio had two false starts in history before the race would really begin later in the 1960s and finally overtake AM in the 1970s.

This method of broadcasting showed great promise for high fidelity and soon there were predictions of the demise of AM radio. FM had a troubled beginning after the new circuitry was invented by Edwin Armstrong in 1933. He gave first options to RCA which collaborated with him in early testing. Armstrong built the first high-powered FM station in 1939, the year the FCC decided to allow experimental operations in a band from 42-50 MHz, beginning the following year. After the war, the FCC, as the result of that testing and engineering advice, moved the band to its present 88 to 108 MHz, making those first FM receivers obsolete. Armstrong eventually sued RCA for patent infringement, a suit that was not settled until after the inventor committed suicide in 1954.

WLAP in Lexington received a permit in May 1941 to construct FM station W51SL, but it was not built at that time.

WHAS began experimenting for the FCC with FM in July 1944 at 45.5 MHz, carrying the AM programs over the developmental station W9XEK.

A transmitter, capable of those high frequencies, had been successfully built by the WHAS engineers.

The first FM announcer in the state was a woman, Rhea McColl, whose job was to sit in a converted closet studio and monitor the programming from 1 to 10 p.m. daily, breaking in to give the call sign and occasionally the time. WHAS formally dedicated the new FM station in 1945, when Barry Bingham recalled the original intentions of his father 23 years earlier, and said he was proud to follow in those footsteps in the new service to provide programs of news, education and other public service features. Mark Ethridge, publisher of the newspapers, told the audience while the new FM broadcasting was an improvement, it would not mean the end of AM. He explained the application of FM, with its limited range, "would make it a medium for a more personal link to the communities."

Long before the days of phone faxes, WHAS and the *Courier-Journal* had also operated a facsimile station, W9XWT on 25.25 MHz. The experiments began in 1940 and, by 1944, they were sending out the daily newspaper by radio to printers at home-receiver stations. Some newspapers had envisioned a future in delivering the news in such a fashion. WLAP in Lexington had worked with the Crosleys at WLW in Cincinnati in the late 1930s on the idea of facsimile, but was denied permission by the FCC in 1940 to "re-radiocast" the transmission from WLW at its current AM frequency. Despite high hopes and predictions of using the airwaves for such material, facsimile broadcasting did not prove financially feasible.

The 1930s and '40s were pretty good times for radio owners and operators. In 1940, six stations in Kentucky had reported to the FCC revenues more than \$1.2 million, with profits of \$114,664. By 1945, the 12 stations operating had revenue of \$2.8 million and profits of more than \$302,000.

By 1945, around 90 percent of all Kentucky households had radios and the industry, now 25 years old, was strong. The profits of radio stations during the war did not go unnoticed, and investors were poised to enter the field and expand the medium to areas beyond the larger cities.

The end of the war would bring new challenges and opportunities to broadcasters with the long-awaited arrival of video standards for TV and the final decisions on FM radio.



## Chapter 3

### *Radio Expands and Endures (District Summaries)*

**R**adio expansion following the war was aggressive, with towers soon dotting the landscape throughout the state, bringing service into the smaller cities and towns. A broadcast boom paralleled the baby boom, but the phenomenal surge would come later with the era of de-regulation in the 1980s and '90s.

Some Kentucky broadcasters called the radio band “overcrowded” in 1945. There were only 12 stations on the air in that year, but the number soon grew to 43 by 1950. Across the nation, at the start of the new decade, 2,086 AM and 733 FM stations were broadcasting.

Following the creation of the FM band at 88 to 108 MHz, many of the owners laid plans to get involved in the new technology and applied for construction permits. Joining WHAS with FM stations were WAVE, WGRC, WPAD and WLAP with Paducah Newspapers' WKYB also one of the first to apply. By 1950, there were 14 FM stations licensed on the commercial band with WBKY at the University of Kentucky as non-commercial.

By 1952, the FCC reported 350 FM stations had turned their licenses back in and given up on the new innovation. The FM radio game turned into a big gamble, with some big winners and heavy losers during the next two decades, depending upon the timing.

The Bowling Green and all three Louisville stations surrendered their

### **AM Station Log — 1950**

WCMI Ashland; WKCT Bowling Green; WLBJ Bowling Green; WTCO Campbellsville; WCTT Corbin; WZIP Covington; WHIR Danville; WIEL Elizabethtown; WFKY Frankfort; WKAY Glasgow; WHLN Harlan; WKIC Hazard; WSON Henderson; WHOP Hopkinsville; WKLX Lexington; WLAP Lexington; WLEX Lexington; WAVE Louisville; WGRC Louisville; WHAS Louisville; WINN Louisville; WKLO Louisville; WKYW Louisville; WLOU Louisville; WCIF Madisonville; WKTM Mayfield; WNGO Mayfield; WFTM Maysville; WCPM Middlesboro; WMIK Middlesboro; WNBS Murray; WNOP Newport; WOMI Owensboro; WVJS Owensboro; WKYB Paducah; WPAD Paducah; WSIP Paintsville; WLSI Pikeville; WPKE Pikeville; WPKY Princeton; WSFC Somerset; WMTC Vanceleve; WVLK Versailles.

### **FM Station Log — 1950**

WCMI Ashland; WBON (WLBJ) Bowling Green; WSON Henderson; WHOP Hopkinsville; WLAP Lexington; WRXW (WAVE) Louisville; WBOX (WGRC) Louisville; WHAS Louisville; WCIF Madisonville; WFMW Madisonville; WOMI Owensboro; WVJS Owensboro; WKYC (WKYB) Paducah; WPAD Paducah.

WBKY at the University of Kentucky, Lexington. WFMW did not have a companion AM station at the time as the first stand-alone FM to go on the air in the state.

licenses after broadcasting for a short time, but with little results. WAVE turned its station over to the Louisville Public Library for use as a non-commercial educational station. In Madisonville, WCIF-FM merged with WFMW in 1950, but the other original FM stations remained on the air. Of these, WPAD-FM Paducah had gone on the air in 1946, making it the oldest continuously-operated commercial FM station in Kentucky, and one of the oldest in the South.

FM stations struggled nationally, with the fire of early enthusiasm for the new medium quickly drenched by high costs, empty commercial logs and receivers that were too few and too expensive. Listeners were simply not convinced that the quality was improved enough over AM to merit the price for a receiver. FM's could operate around the clock. The propagation of the waves, radiating no farther than the horizon, meant it was strictly a local service, and while static-free, it was subject to fading. It would not be until the advent of stereo broadcasting in the early 1960s that FM would begin to attract a wider audience, and with more AM-FM receivers being manufactured by then at affordable prices, new FM stations took to the airwaves, including most of those who had dropped out in the early years.

Great strides were made in receiver manufacturing with the invention of the transistor and circuit boards to replace the bulky tubes. Radios became small and portable, available in cars, and the classic "six-transistor" radio was the easy travel companion.

Kentucky radio continued to expand in the decade of the fifties, and by 1960, there were stations in 66 cities in the state, with 87 AM facilities and 16 FM commercial stations and three non-commercial licenses. Nationwide, the FCC listed 3,431 AM and 850 FM stations.

The surge was fueled by the desire of many to get into what appeared to be a profitable and glamorous business. Small town groups formed to bring radio to their communities, and newspapers continued to opt for dual involvement in the print and electronic media. Many electronic technicians would join with other business people in establishing radio stations in the state during those post-war years.

The desire to build a station required having time, skill, money and often a lot of patience, because the process could take years when there were several applicants or problems. Many recall, though, that political pull could often speed the process.

During the 1960s, the number of AM stations increased slightly, with 16 new locations by 1970. But 42 FMs went on the air, expanding radio's reach to 84 cities in the state. The FMs were mainly licensed, as in the past, to AM station owners. The daytime-only stations wanted more complete coverage, nighttime service, which allowed them to carry local high school ballgames and evening events live, programs that previously had been taped and played the next day. The addition of a second station afforded protection from others starting up in competition against them. They generally broadcast the programming of the AM station simultaneously during the daytime, until the FCC mandated the large markets offer a percentage of separate programming.

There were, however, by 1970, nine FM stand-alone facilities, or stations that did not have a companion AM. WLRS-FM in Louisville was the first of these stations to be able to sustain operation successfully.

By 1970, other colleges had joined the University of Kentucky in funding FM radio. Some schools began their venture with carrier-current operations, stations that used the wiring to radiate the signal to the school buildings. These campus-limited stations helped provide training and often evolved into 10-watt FM licenses. A few high schools set up in-house radio studios, but no station in the state is licensed to a secondary school.

The first college FM after the war had been built in the early 1950s at Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, but it failed to attract listeners or

enough finances and went off the air. Georgetown College signed on a 10-watt FM in 1963, followed by Morehead two years later, the first regional state college to go "on the air." Eastern and Murray soon followed and while Western was a late comer to broadcasting, building its station in 1980, it increased its service with a radio network and public TV.

Louisville Free Public Library became the first library in the nation to own an FM station when it signed on WFPL in February 1950, and added WFPK four years later. For many years, the library held licenses for two radio stations and one television station. Public radio in Louisville grew again in 1976 when the University of Louisville started its own station.

While it would appear the state was being well-covered by radio signals, the total number of licenses actually doubled during the next 25 years, meaning as many stations went on the air from 1970-1995 as had been started in the first 50 years of radio's history.

To mollify groups and investors wanting access to the medium, the government began to loosen rules. With the de-regulatory climate of the 1980s, the FCC created opportunities for around 700 new stations nationwide and 25 in Kentucky with the implementation of the 80/90 docket by the FCC in 1984. This spurred a growth in FM construction, which had actually already begun a few years earlier in the state. Between 1980 and 1994, more than 60 FM stations were built in Kentucky. Despite the decline of AM's audience and station value, there were 12 new AM towers erected in that period, after the FCC had eased the freeze on additional AM construction permits in 1975.

Since 1980, however, 16 AM stations in the state have been listed as being silent, although a few later were re-activated.

Prior to 1955, there were only a couple of transactions involving radio station ownership and control. The stations were being operated by the folks who built them. The trend began to change in the late 1950s with several sales of stations in the midst of the decline of network radio and economic unrest brought about by the rise of television.

More group ownership emerged from corporations in and out of Kentucky. The Lackeys kept control of their three western Kentucky stations, while the Nunns sold their broadcast interests. The Robert Rounsaville group owned WLOU, and WKLO had been purchased by Air Trails, Charles Sawyer, president. WAVE had expanded its ownership of stations under the Norton family group, and the Roth Hook group built WRUS, Russellville. Garvice Kincaid and Don Horton formed a group acquiring other stations in the state. Newspapers continued to get into the radio business, and added to WHAS and WOMI were stations in Paducah, Bowling Green, Central City,

## Kentucky Radio Log — 1970

Fifty years after the nation's first radio station went on the air and 25 years after the end of wartime restrictions, Kentucky's radio log looked like this:

Albany - WANY, WANY-FM; Ashland - WCMI, WCMI-FM, WTCR; Barbourville - WYWY;  
Beattyville - WLJC-FM; Benton - WCBL, WCBL-FM; Bowling Green - WBGW, WKCT, WLBJ,  
WLBJ-FM; Cadiz - WKDZ; Campbellsville - WTCO, WTCO-FM; Carrollton - WVCM-FM;  
Central City - WMTA, WNES, WNES-FM; Columbia - WAIN, WAIN-FM; Corbin - WCTT,  
WCTT-FM, WYGO, WYGO-FM; Covington - WCLU; Cumberland - WCPM; Cynthiana -  
WCYN, WCYN-FM; Danville - WHIR, WHIR-FM; Elizabethtown - WIEL, WQXE-FM; Emi-  
nence - WSTL; Erlanger - WHKK-FM; Fort Campbell - WABD, WABD-FM; Fort Knox - WSAC,  
WSAC-FM; Frankfort - WFKY, WKYW-FM; Franklin - WFKN; Fulton - WFUL, WFUL-FM;  
Georgetown - WAXU, WRVG-FM (n/c); Glasgow - WCDS, WKAY, WGGC-FM; Grayson -  
WGOH, WGOH-FM; Hardinsburg - WHIC; Harlan - WHLN; Harrodsburg - WHBN; Hartford -  
WLLS; Hazard - WKIC, WKIC-FM; Henderson - WSON, WSON-FM; Hopkinsville - WHOP,  
WHOP-FM, WKOA, WKOF-FM; Irvine - WIRV; Jackson - WEKG; Jamestown - WJKY, WJRS-  
FM; Jenkins - WREM; Lancaster - WIXI; Lebanon - WLBN; Leitchfield - WMTL, WMTL-FM;  
Lexington - WBKY-FM (n/c), WBLG, WLAP, WLAP-FM, WLEX-FM, WVLL, WVLL-FM;  
Liberty - WKDO; London - WFTG, WFTG-FM; Louisville - WAKY, WAVE, WFIA, WFPK-FM  
(n/c), WFPL-FM (n/c), WHAS, WHAS-FM, WINN, WKLO, WKLO-FM, WKRX-FM, WLOU,  
WLRS-FM, WTMT; Madisonville - WFMW, WFMW-FM, WTTL; Manchester - WWXL,  
WWXL-FM; Marion - WMJL; Mayfield - WNGO, WNGO-FM; Maysville - WFTM, WFTM-FM;  
Middlesboro - WAFI, WMIK; Monticello - WFLW, WFLW-FM; Morehead - WMKY-FM (n/c),  
WMOR, WMOR-FM; Morganfield - WMSK, WMSK-FM; Mount Sterling - WMST, WMST-FM;  
Mount Vernon - WRVK; Munfordville - WLOC; Murray - WKMS-FM (n/c); WNBS, WAAW-FM;  
Neon - WNKY; Newport - WNOP; Nicholasville - WNVL; Owensboro - WOMI, WOMI-FM,  
WVJS, WVJS-FM; Paducah - WDXR, WKYX, WKYX-FM, WPAD, WPAD-FM; Paintsville -  
WSIP, WSIP-FM; Paris - WPDE, WPDE-FM; Pikeville - WLSI, WPKE, WPKE-FM; Pineville -  
WANO; Prestonsburg - WDOC, WDOC-FM, WPRT, WPRT-FM; Princeton - WPKY, WPKY-FM;  
Richmond - WEKU-FM (n/c), WEKY; Russellville - WRUS, WRUS-FM; St. Matthews - WSTM-  
FM; Scottsville - WLCK, WLCK-FM; Shelbyville - WCND; Somerset - WSCC-FM (n/c) WSFC,  
WSEK-FM, WTLO; Stanford - WRSL, WRSL-FM; Tompkinsville - WTKY; Vanceburg - WKKS;  
Vancleve - WMTC; West Liberty - WLKS; Whitesburg - WTCW, WTCW-FM; Williamsburg -  
WEZJ; Winchester - WWKY.

\*n/c - non-commercial station.

Madisonville, Hopkinsville, Pikeville, Corbin, Franklin, Fulton, Hazard and Middlesboro with stock held by newspapers.

But the most renowned takeover occurred when WGRC Louisville sold out to rock 'n' roll visionary Gordon McLendon's Texas corporation in 1958, and WAKY radio was born.

In some cities where more than one station was on the air, buyouts occurred with the two stations accomplishing a merger when it was apparent only one was going to generate the business needed to survive. Such transactions were negotiated in Lexington, Campbellsville, Middlesboro and Mayfield in the 1950s.

The buying and selling of radio stations and the growth of national groups would be a major element in tracking the history of stations nationwide over those next 35 years. The elimination of the FCC rule requiring that a station must be held for at least three years before it could be sold brought new money and investors into the radio field in the early 1980s. By 1995, national and regional groups controlled the majority of the stations in the large markets of Lexington and Louisville, but few outside corporations were involved in the small markets.

In the late 1980s and early '90s, groups such as Bristol, Trumper, Brill, Regent, Cromwell, Clear Channel, Keymarket and Stoner became active in the state. Kentucky-based groups like Mortenson Broadcasting of Lexington owned six religious stations, and Corbin businessman Terry Forcht formed Key Broadcasting Co., which by 1994 had ten licenses in five different Kentucky cities, the largest in-state group in history.

Several AM/FM combos would sell off the more desirable FM station in lucrative deals. AMs, if sold, brought bargain-basement prices and a few were simply given away.

Realizing the number of stations that its de-regulation had created and with the majority losing money, the FCC announced new ownership rules in the fall of 1992 in a major change in the radio industry. Companies would be allowed to own more than one station within a market under certain conditions, a big change from decades of allowing no overlap of signals by the same owner, except the co-owned AM and FM. The conditions were based on caps of total audience share, meaning stations with big ratings could not expand. Some complained such rules penalized success and called for eliminating all barriers to ownership. The upper limits of the stations one company could own were raised to 20 AM and 20 FM, where it had previously been twelve and before that just seven.

In addition, a new arrangement known as LMA's (local marketing agreements) permitted one station to enter into lease contracts with another for

the purpose of programming, promoting and marketing advertising for the stations together under specific guidelines. Soon, about a half-dozen such arrangements were reported to the FCC as existing in Kentucky markets. These new duopoly limits and LMA arrangements were an obvious attempt to try to save struggling stations and three years later, the overall fiscal climate in radio appeared a bit brighter but the mergers, buy-outs and LMAs had redefined radio.

Throughout the state, stations changed hands and call letters at a rapid pace from the early 1980s and on, with transactions certainly keeping brokers and government clerks busy.

With relaxation of FCC identification rules, some stations in small towns closer to larger cities began identifying with one or more nearby locations in efforts to broaden their base of support and advertising. It often became difficult to know exactly where a station might be officially licensed simply by listening, after these move-ins occurred. The rules still required, however, that stations maintain a studio within the primary coverage area of their city of license.

Of the pioneer stations, (those 12 on the air before 1945) only the Lackey family still retained ownership 50 years later of WSON and WHOP. All the other stations had been sold, some many times, with WHAS and WAVE going on the block with the dissolution of the Bingham and Norton empires in the 1980s, and WOMI being sold to group ownership in 1993. Call letters remained the same for the original stations, with the exception of WAVE (now WAVG), WINN (now WLLV), WGRC (now WWKY). WLBJ is dark, no longer in operation.

Of the second-generation historic stations (those 75 that went on the air between 1945 and 1960), by 1995 only 11 remain in the hands of the families or stockholders who built them.

More than 70 years after the first station went on the air in Louisville, the state counts 325 radio licenses, according to the *M Street Journal*. Kentucky has more stations than Indiana or West Virginia, but fewer than neighbors Ohio and Tennessee.

Stations are on the air in 140 different towns and cities owned by 180 different companies. There are 196 FM stations, of which 30 are non-commercial. Seventeen of the non-commercial stations are operated by colleges or universities, ten are licensed as religious stations, two to the Louisville library and one to a non-profit community group, Appalshop, in Whitesburg.

Most of the 129 AM stations also own a sister FM outlet, but there are 22 stand-alone AM stations in the state.

Every part of the Commonwealth is in the coverage area of several stations, with dozens of choices on AM and FM for most people. There are one or more stations licensed and physically located in all but 14 of the 120 counties in the state, but some are on the drawing board for those areas that do not currently have a station.

There are 23 cities that have four or more stations, and in major markets up to 30 or more signals may be available on the dial.

Nearly every "burg and village" has a radio station. Indeed small-market stations characterize much of Kentucky radio, with 100 — or about one-third — of all the radio licenses in the state issued to towns with populations of less than 3,000 people.

In 1995, on the 75th anniversary of radio, the U.S. had 12,000 radio stations, counting all AM, FM, commercial and public licenses.



After court rulings in the late 1930s and early '40s forced the FCC to drop its provisions for new applicants to prove construction would not cause an economic hardship on existing stations, new stations moved in after the war ready to compete. The new owners had to only make it clear they would not interfere with other signals.

While FCC relaxation of technical and legal standards helped create room in the radio spectrum for more stations, changes over the years have allowed opportunity for increased service by stations that were already on the air, as well.

Only clear-channel 50,000-watt WHAS was protected for full-power service day and night, since the AM signals in the evenings created sky-wave skip and interference. The FCC sets classifications for AM stations assigning them power and frequency and setting parameters of their operation based on clear channel, regional or local channel service, directional or non-directional.

Of the other eleven pioneer stations, nine were licensed to operate at only 250 watts around the clock, giving coverage to their city of license and a small area surrounding it. Those given higher daytime power were allowed to operate only during sunrise to sunset and even then some were required to use a directional radiation pattern and low power at night, necessitating more than one antenna.

By the early 1960s, the local-channel stations were given boosts from 250 to 1,000 watts of daytime power. Sunrise-to-sunset-only stations were eventually given a low power pre-sunrise authority to be able to sign-on at 6 a.m., and then advance to full-power at sunrise. More changes in the 1980s gave full nighttime power to many AMs and low-power authority for nighttime operation for others. Still other restrictions were dropped in the early 1990s, when clear-channel rules were revised.



In 1962, the FCC set aside specific channel allocation tables for FM stations and granted power levels for class A, B, C and D permits. Up to 100,000 watts was allowed for class C operation, but the majority of channel assignments for small towns were class A or 3,000 watts of effective radiated power, which in late 1989 was raised to 6,000 watts. The height above average terrain of the FM antenna is also factored to determine actual power output permitted. The class D for 10-watt school FM stations was later eliminated. SCA (Subsidiary Communications Authorization) for the subcarrier frequency of the FM signal was allowed and some FM stations leased receivers for background music to businesses or specialized programming.

The early 1990s also saw modifications of FCC interference standards, permitting stations easier access to higher power classes, and there was a scramble by FM stations to raise power, change frequency and get the edge on the competition, with extended legal battles resulting. Stations within each class were required to go to the maximum power allowed for that license.

Other rules changes over the years had dramatic effects on the way stations were run and the expense involved to run them. The radio industry has seen the FCC attitude go from the necessity of having a first-class licensed engineer on duty at the transmitter at all times in 1945 to unattended operation through ATS (automatic transmission systems) in a span of 50 years.

In 1953, the FCC began allowing remote-control operation of stations, meaning the transmitter could be monitored from the studio site. Operators with third-class FCC licenses with a broadcast endorsement were permitted to do this monitoring at most stations by 1964, eliminating the need for first-class engineers to be on duty at all times.

At one time, the first-class technicians made up a large portion of a station's staff, and it was difficult to get a job in radio without one. In major markets, unions permitted only these certified engineers to run all equipment, with announcers relegated to simply talking on cue. In the smaller markets, stations desired "combo-men," or individuals who would be licensed to operate the equipment and do the announcing and control "board" work as well.

To get into radio, many would-be announcers enrolled in first-class license schools that sprang up around the country, many acknowledgedly only "diploma mills" where students were taught to memorize answers for the FCC tests. Other radio schools turned out technicians that would actually help build and maintain stations around the state.

By the mid-1960s, the first-class operators were serving only as chief engineers handling maintenance or working as operators at directional stations which had tighter rules.

The de-regulatory period of the 1980s saw the FCC eliminate any testing of radio operators to obtain their license and stations could employ anyone with a Restricted Radiotelephone License to operate and maintain the transmitter, with many of the logging and meter reading requirements reduced or eliminated completely. The FCC restricted permit was obtained simply by writing for it and paying the fee.

The technology advances helped encourage the government's willingness to relax rules as transmitters and all equipment became more reliable.

Popular early makes of transmitters in the state were Collins, RCA and Western Electric with a majority of the stations using those brands. The age of transistors that created smaller and better radio receivers had also brought on a new generation of solid state transmitters and studio equipment for station owners, and many more companies got into the manufacturing business.

Through the years, radio stations began to take on a different look. The invention of the reel-to-reel tape recorder revolutionized operations, eliminating the need to do all commercials live and providing a means to play back programs at a later time and develop sound for newscasts. The first recording equipment that came out of wartime use was the "wire" recorder made popular by Webcor. The tape machines were an improvement over the wire models, although the first ones actually used a paper tape before developing the more durable plastics.

The large reel-to-reel machines like the popular Ampex and Magnecords (the "Maggie") were then gradually supplemented in the early 1960s by the tape cart machines like the Spotmaster. These small, continuous loop cartridges of tape made playing commercials and music even more convenient. Smaller, more portable cassette tape machines hit the consumer market and gradually worked their way into the broadcast studio as the quality of the equipment and tapes improved.

The old ET's and 78 rpm records gave way to the era of the smaller 45 discs and 33 rpm album cuts for music, and then to CD (compact disc) digital players by the late 1980s, when stations starting mothballing the old turntables.

Beginning in the decade of the sixties, when stations started programming AM and FM separately, most managers in the state chose automation equipment to allow for walk-away operation of one of the stations. Most of the automation designs called for all music to be on large reel tapes, and multi-cart playback units like the Carousel and Insta-cart for announcements. Switching was done mechanically on the early automation systems, but was eventually replaced by microprocessors to control the program sources. A lot of the early systems were not very reliable, however.

By the 1990s, a new generation of computers had taken over the logging, billing and office work for the station, as well as the control room. A state-of-the-art station being built might consist simply of a computer terminal to control satellite or all CD programming and insert commercials and announcements installed on the computer disks. Many AM and FM operations could be run with computer automation and little human assistance. Stations were entering the era of total digital audio, with the production done on computers and operators looking at the designs of a totally “tape-less” radio station.



By the 1980s, the FCC was seeking to help stations on the AM band compete better with FM by passing new interference parameters and requiring installation of NRSC standard pre-emphasis equipment to improve the sound. The FCC announced plans to expand the AM band to 1705 kHz to help reduce interference, and some stations prepared to move to the new channels. The NAB worked with the Electronic Industries Association to develop a better quality AM receiver and certified “AMAX” AM radios were manufactured.

In 1982, the much-touted AM stereo technology that was supposed to be the salvation of AM arrived, but it turned into a debacle when the FCC was reluctant to choose one standard method, and equipment sold to stations became useless as receivers were not compatible with the method of stereo transmission. Some AM stations, especially in major markets, converted, but were often left with useless equipment. Eventually the Motorola C-QUAM method was endorsed by the FCC in 1993, but the competing firm, Kahn, filed suit. AM stereo continued to be hampered by the lack of stereo receivers and seemingly little public demand for them.

Federal rule changes over the post-war communications era have mostly given additional freedom to stations. In 1981, the Commission granted stations a seven-year renewal period and reduced the cumbersome paperwork involved in stations obtaining a renewed license to a document of post-card size. Many of the commandments of the famous “Blue Book” of 1946 outlining radio stations’ responsibility of public service to the community were softened. The dictum that station licenses were granted if it was for the “public interest, convenience and necessity” appeared to be more easily fulfilled. Various financial and community ascertainment reports were eliminated as were requirements for specific percentages of news and public affairs programming.

The Fairness Doctrine, dictating balance in presentation of controversial issues, was removed from the books in 1987 when it was determined that

with so many stations serving communities, ample opportunity existed for all views to be heard.

Laws governing political broadcasts have remained largely intact over the years, and with stations in every area of the state, radio became the “soapbox” for election campaigns. Despite abandonment of many rules, stations were still required to address key issues with related programming. Small town radio, especially, felt community involvement and news was a barometer of their success and necessary to set themselves apart from other stations.

Rules regarding the hiring of women and minorities in radio became a part of station concerns in the early 1970s, with the Equal Employment Opportunity Act and stiff penalties put in place for violators and for stations without an affirmative action plan. The airwaves, once dominated by men, soon resounded with more and more female voices.



The greatest challenge that faced the radio medium was the competition from television with dire predictions of radio’s death when the first TV stations went on the air. The networks gradually worked their popular shows into the video medium, and as the number of television stations and their audiences increased in the 1950s, all network variety and drama was eventually transformed into television shows, with network radio left as a mere shell of its former self. For a time, popular network shows were heard simultaneously on radio and TV stations. Network advertising dollars no longer filled the bank accounts of radio stations.

Radio began to turn attention to again becoming more of a local medium and started to rely heavily on music shows as it had in radio’s infancy.

Early rock or top-40 stations based their programming on a blueprint of a small playlist of songs played over and over, quick news, hard-hitting commercials, jingles, wild promotions with plenty of “hype” and screaming deejays! Typical of such a transition was the changeover at WGRC when new owner, McLendon, announced that Louisville would go “wacky,” and the religious station became the hot rocker WAKY.

Announcers took on catchy “pseudonyms” and developed a fan following of enamored teens. Many baby-boomers reminisce about the days of rock radio, turning to the local stations by day and catching the big-city jocks on AM at night.

The arrival of rock ‘n’ roll in the mid-1950s helped radio recover from lost advertising dollars and move into an era of music format stations. The lure of dollars from record companies also brought about the infamous

“payola” scandals of 1958-59 with investigations of disc jockeys being bribed by distributors to plug certain songs.

Radio began to focus on the targeted audience with its music formats. Recorded music, once just one of many elements of radio programming in earlier days, now became the dominant feature. Besides top-40, country & western, gospel, MOR (middle of the road) pop music and rhythm & blues soon emerged as specialized programming.

Specialized radio had actually begun prior to the rock era, with the spread of so-called “Negro radio stations” — using black deejays, playing music, features and news of interest to the black community. WLOU in Louisville succeeded in developing such a format in 1951, one of the first in the country.

Still the stations in small towns sought more “consensus” programming appealing to all audiences with segments of different music, or variety “block” formats. Many would have country, bluegrass, rock, gospel and classical all on the air in one day. These were interspersed with talk shows, religious programs, local news and sports and, of course, plenty of weather information in an effort to provide “full service.”

By the 1960s, networks became top of the hour news sources with little else and many stations shed the networks as excess baggage. But later, some commentators like ABC’s Paul Harvey and CBS’s Charles Osgood would rise as stars.

Radio transformed itself from being the gathering spot for the family in the living room to the medium that could go with the new, more mobile society, a companion of music and information in the car, at home or anywhere, a local rather than a national medium to inform and entertain.

With the advent of stereo FM broadcasting and the directives in the early 1960s by the FCC on non-duplication of programming by sister stations in larger markets, the FM stations had to begin programming on their own, separate from their AMs.

WSTO-FM in Owensboro, owned by Steele family’s WVJS radio, became the first in the state to go to full stereophonic broadcasting. Many FM stations hesitated to add the expense of the dual channel broadcasting at first, some waiting years to add stereo generators.

FM formats remained mainly background-type beautiful music but when it appeared the future audience growth lay in FM, radio execs began to switch their foreground popular formats like rock and country over to FM. The late 1970s and early 1980s witnessed many of these transitions including in the larger cities of Louisville and Lexington, when WHAS and WVLK turned their easy listening FMs to all country. Ashland’s WTCR country and WHEZ-FM beautiful music, switched formats to put country on FM.

Paducah's WKYQ and Owensboro's WBKR had gone FM country earlier as had many in the smaller towns. All those stations remained at the top of the ratings heap following the big switch.

By the late 1970s, country was becoming mainstream and starting to overtake top-40 as the preferred format for stations, and by the 1990s, it was by far the most popular format in the state with nearly 40 percent of stations calling themselves "country."

The new FM era saw radio ditch the classic call-letter identification in favor of positioning themselves to people on the crowded dial using their channel numbers combined with various slogans. Station nicknames, many derived from animals, came in vogue.

Stations began giving up local control over music, relying instead on syndicated programmers, and by the mid-1980s, many satellite-delivered music services formed the basis of another major development in radio history — a return of the full-time network — as stations eliminated local deejays and found a variety of music formats on the "bird" from Unistar, Satellite Music Network, and others. Soon, many stations used these networks for programming around the clock while others went live with their own announcers only in morning-drive time.

Some broadcasters saw this move to satellite network radio as a regression away from being "local" while others pointed out its inherent improvement in quality and efficiency.

In the post-war era, as radio had moved into the smaller towns, the local station became the nerve center of the community, sending out pulses about local people, events, schools, weather information, death and birth notices, and even helping people buy, sell and trade on radio "swap shops and trading posts." The radio became a valuable asset to the community, giving businesses an additional affordable outlet for their advertising, as well. The formats were truly "down-home" in nature, and listeners began to feel as though they were a part of the station family.

Announcers with local accents talking about the issues of the day, spinning requests and dedications, finding lost dogs, broadcasting the local ballgames and pumping up charity drives — radio took pride in its ability to communicate personally. Stations went to the action with remote broadcasts, kept people moving with traffic reports and aired promotions for worthy causes and public service announcements of every variety.

Radio demonstrated time and again its ability to lead the way with assistance in times of disaster and emergency, during tornadoes in western and central Kentucky and floods in the east. Through snow, cold,

storms and troublesome times, the radio was right there with the information the public needed.

Promotions of all types were used by stations to attract listeners, particularly prize give-aways from concert tickets to vacations and cars. It became common practice to barter advertising for these “goodies” to offer listeners.

The radio station in the town was a gathering place for entertainers, with live music shows continuing to be a favorite feature of the programming into the 1960s. The radio helped fuel the careers of many aspiring artists with dozens of Bluegrass state natives going on to stardom, especially in country music. It seemed the road to Nashville went right through Kentucky radio stations. Only Texas has produced more country music greats than Kentucky.

One brand of country actually takes its designation from the state, as “bluegrass” music was played on many Kentucky stations. Ohio County native Bill Monroe became known as the “father of bluegrass music,” and Owensboro now is home of the International Bluegrass Music Museum.

With the overpopulation of the radio band by the 1980s dividing the audience and the advertising pie, many stations, especially AM, would struggle financially. FM began surpassing AM in total listenership in the late 1970s and rapidly widened the gap until many felt the standard band station was doomed. AM stations began to search for ways to survive, with some returning to simulcasting the FM signal, or taking all programming from a satellite network and fully automating. In Kentucky, some AMers reverted to “oldies” formats that reflected their “heyday” and religion or gospel also became a prominent AM programming choice. With audiences trained to tune to FM for the better music sound, all news and talk radio emerged as a viable format for the AM band, led by stars like Rush Limbaugh. Such shows became the target of criticism by other media and sociologists in the 1990s, claiming the highly charged dialogue bred social unrest and hatred, while others simply considered it a way for people to let off steam.

Many broadcasters began to note the “generation gap” in listener choices, as a number of older adults remained true to the AM dial, while younger audiences hardly knew such a band existed. Some point to “longevity” as the best AM format, meaning those with established records of service to the community remained popular, while others found little hope of success.

After the advent of TV, radio’s ratings had plummeted sharply, and the industry worked to carve out its niche in American society. The success of the top-40 stations and the owners’ ability to adapt stations to meet community needs for entertainment and information helped re-establish listenership. Morning and afternoon commute times soon became peak radio hours, and it was imperative to keep strong personalities on duty during those periods.

The deejays and the music became bolder and bawdier as radio adapted to the "liberated" generations of the sixties and beyond. The codes of conduct of pioneer stations were a distant memory. Stations in the conservative Kentucky climate of the "Bible belt" were more restrained with few "shock jocks." But many radio program directors worried about song lyrics that seemed to push the limits of decency.

The influence of the music "video" age and emergence of cable TV networks such as MTV and the Country Music Television on society, radio and listening habits cannot be denied.

Format changes became commonplace as stations played a type of roulette searching for the right combination to make the listener choose their button over the dozens of others available. The ratings book marked the all-important measure for station success, especially in the major markets. From several ratings systems in early years such as Hooper and Pulse, Arbitron eventually succeeded as the main player in the game of presenting stations with the good news or bad news on the makeup and numbers of their audience.

After the decline in overall ratings in the 1950s, radio started to rebound and listening was at an all-time high by the time the medium celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1995. Radio reaches 95 percent of the population in a given week, with average listening exceeding 21 hours per week.

Many Kentucky stations continued to turn profits even after the slump of sales and network revenue in the 1950s, but their number was fewer. The FCC reported that more than 40 percent of the stations in the nation lost money in 1960. Total revenue in the state increased 200 percent from 1945 to 1960, with seven times the number of stations. Profits were up only 25 percent during the 15-year period, however. Between 1970 and 1980, according to FCC figures, the total profits for stations in Kentucky fell by 50 percent even though there were 100 more stations and three times the total advertising sales among those stations. Radio's advertising rates often fluctuated with the economic trends and the competition.

The post-war advertising climate became different for radio salespeople. Beside convincing people of the value of radio, they now felt the pressure of selling against other radio stations and television. The network spots no longer filled the logs, as local sales had to generate the revenues to function.

Leaving behind the program sponsorship formula of the 1930s and '40s, stations developed rate cards for spot announcements of 30-second, 60-second, or 15-second ads. Out on the street, many of these rates started to tumble when stations were faced with other stations underselling them. It was-



n't unusual for a small market station to offer commercials for \$1, or as old-time salespeople would say, "A dollar, a holler!" The competitive atmosphere grew even sharper through the years with more and more stations and media options open to businesses.

While radio's share of total advertising dollars spent nationally declined steadily in the 1950s, it stabilized at 7 percent of total spending far behind television and newspapers, however. Advertisers, especially in major markets, began to use radio for narrowcasting, reaching a specific target audience. Total revenues for advertising, buoyed by more than 10,000 commercial stations now in operation, hit an all-time high in 1994.

Small-market stations started to see downward slides in revenue by the early 1980s, with competition from high-power FM signals and more listener options causing audience erosion. Many of the long-standing Main Street radio clients also began to disappear, bought out or forced out by national chain stores that ignored local radio in favor of national advertising.

The lack of profitable operation, with a majority of stations operating in the red, is cited by many long-time broadcasters as the reason for a decline in service to the local community. Station executives wrestled with balancing public service with private profit. Live programming, news departments and community involvement became victims in the downsizing process. Staff sizes were reduced to skeleton crews. News became limited to network, or some stations provided local coverage by simulcasting TV newscasts from the area.

Personnel turnover in sales and in on-air talent have generally been characteristic of the radio industry. Many who start in smaller markets seek the higher salaries and benefits of the bigger city. Small market stations often hired and trained high school youngsters in the radio art, giving them experience in every area of the operation. While major markets had specialty people, folks in the small stations were truly versatile performers, working in everything from sales to engineering to announcing.

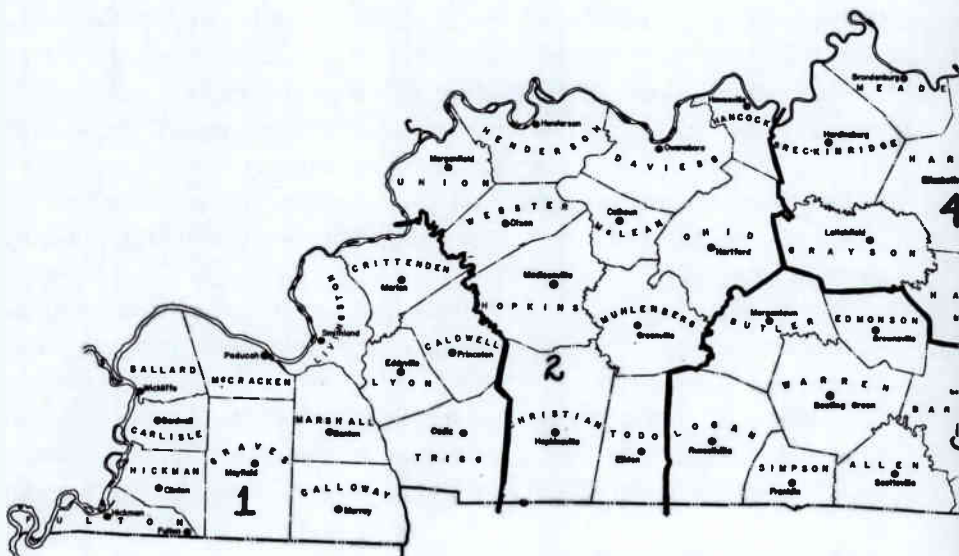
Kentucky general managers can list successful people in all professions who got their feet wet and earned their way to a better education through local radio.

Still, in many areas of the state, home-grown radio people often dedicated their careers to their small community, many have been on the air in their towns for 30 years or longer.

Through electronic advances of the communications era, the rapid cultural changes and the increased media competition, radio has proven resilient, surviving and even thriving in the age of TV and high technology.

# Map of Kentucky Radio Districts KBA

- No. District
- 1 Purchase Area
  - 2 Pennyrile
  - 3 Louisville Metro
  - 4 West Central
  - 5 Southern Kentucky
  - 6 Lexington and Northern Bluegrass
  - 7 Southern Bluegrass
  - 8 Southeast Kentucky
  - 9 Northeast Kentucky
  - 10 Eastern Highlands





## Purchase Area (District 1)

In the major city of the Jackson Purchase area, Paducah's WPAD remained in the control of Pierce Lackey with brother Prewitt Lackey serving as station manager for time in the 1950s. Pierce, whom the rest of his family called "The Kingfish," was mayor during the 1940s and always a colorful figure. A city street is named in his honor.

Ray Mofield, who later became a journalism professor at Murray State University, started at the station in 1945 and served in many capacities including broadcasting local ballgames and the state tournaments. Mofield's live broadcast from the dedication of Kentucky Dam was carried on the CBS radio network. Mofield said in a *Paducah Sun* interview that working for Lackey was quite interesting. "He was always ready to let us do whatever we wanted, as long as it didn't cost anything," he said.

Jim Youngblood was at the station in a career spanning two decades beginning in the mid-1940s and was a popular morning show personality, among other duties. Youngblood was not afraid to do comedy bits that even made fun of his boss, Pierce Lackey!

Lackey put WPAD-FM on the air in 1946 and used it to simulcast the AM programming until 1975. It did not go off the air when other FMs vanished, so its successor WDDJ is the oldest commercial FM in the state.

When Lackey died in 1967 the family sold the AM and FM station to Edward and Ruth Fritts of Union City, Tennessee, for \$158,000. Twelve years later, the Fritts purchased WDXR to shape a frequency and power switch for a more desirable signal. Fritts changed WDXR to WPAD with the frequency of 1560 and 10,000 watts daytime and 1,000 watts at night, and the old WPAD at 1450 and 1,000 watts became WDXR. That station was then sold to Bill Pollack.

After programming WPAD-FM with beautiful music, Fritts had changed WPAD to WDDJ and decided to introduce a "hard rock" format when there seemed to be a demand for the music, especially from returning Vietnam vets. Ed Taylor was program and music director and the mix helped make WDDJ-96.9 a top contemporary hit station of the area.

Fritts said he was one of the first owners to employ a nearly all-female sales staff. Many of those account executives, still active in radio today, look back to those days when others referred to them as "Fritts' angels."

In 1984 the Fritts family sold WPAD to Radio Paducah, Inc., William H. Bereman, president. Both stations have been owned by Purchase Broadcasting, R. Lee Hagan, president, since 1991, with Keith Kraus serving as sales and then general manager of the AM/FM operation.



Courtesy WDDJ, Ed Fritts

*Ed Fritts with the staff of WDDJ/WPAD in the early 1980s. WDDJ started as WPAD-FM and is Kentucky's longest continuously-operated commercial FM station, having signed on in 1946. (Fritts is in striped tie).*

WDXR radio had been started in 1957 by E. Weaks McKinney-Smith, a Paducah food broker. In 1967, the station obtained permission to up its power to 10,000 watts. The station was an NBC news affiliate with middle-of-the-road music. McKinney-Smith and his wife, Lady Sarah, worked the radio, with George Bailey, manager, and Earl Abernathy, engineer, in the late 1960s and early '70s when they joined an ill-fated venture into UHF television with WDXR-TV.

After McKinney-Smith's sudden death in 1974, his wife became owner and manager. The television became a part of KET, but she continued to own the radio station. Later she and Benton radio's Shelby McCallum sought to marry but since the signals of their two stations overlapped, ownership of both would be in violation of Federal rules.

The couple, however, sought and received permission from the Federal Communications Commission to wed on August 11, 1976, in the only marriage on record that required the sanction of the FCC. Lady Sarah recalls that the document they received clearly states the two were never to discuss the business of the stations at any time.

The station was acquired from the Pollack group in 1991 by Mason-Dixon Broadcasting, David J. Emerson, president. WDXR, left alone in the

city without an FM station, obtained the allocation from Golconda, Illinois, just up the river, and put WDXR-FM at 94.3 on the air in 1990.

In 1936, the *Paducah Sun-Democrat* had searched to find a frequency to build another radio station for the city. The flood of 1937 and the resulting damage suffered by the newspaper put the idea on hold until an application was filed in 1941. After the war, when licenses again were issued, WKYB debuted in 1946, with Ed Paxton, Jr. serving as general manager and Sam Livingston, the newspaper's sports editor also going to work at the station, and Bob Swisher became a voice of sports for the region.

"Preacher" Sims who had helped the Lackeys build their earlier stations, was the chief engineer. The station was given 800 kHz with 1,000 watts at first but in 1950 moved to 570 on the dial. The company also quickly got into FM broadcasting and built WKYC-FM in 1947. Paducah had two FM stations operating through the 1950s, when other major cities often had none.

When the Paxtons put WPSD-TV on the air, a decision was made to sell the radio station and WKYB was purchased by Bruce Barrington of St. Louis in 1957, but changed hands several times during the 1960s.

J.B. Fowler worked for many years at WKYB, and later moved to Mayfield. He was so interested in radio that he had built his own small station at age 13 and in 1942 the 17-year-old applied for a job at WPAD and was hired for 35 cents an hour. Fowler said the early days of radio meant long hours, often 80 and 90 a week when first-class operators were in short supply. But there were fun times, for broadcasters were notorious as pranksters. Fowler remembers as a young announcer being slipped two-week-old news to read for a live newscast, and being locked out of the studio as his record ran out. He got revenge one time, though, by removing all the turntables after sign-off, creating quite a dilemma for the next day's morning man!

The station in 1995 is known as WKYX-AM with news/talk format and WKYQ-FM 93 Country, and has been owned by Bristol Broadcasting, Pete Nininger, president, since 1971.

In 1973, the FM changed not only call letters, but also decided to go all-country, one of the first FM country stations in the nation, a move that proved visionary and beneficial, as "Twenty-four Carrot Country" as it is called, has been at the top of the ratings since the mid-1970s. The AM station had been country in format but then changed to top-40.

Gary Morse, long-time general manager, said the FM move was rather "scary" since there were no other country FM-only stations around.

WKYX-AM has received several news and community service awards, and was a finalist for the Billboard top-40 Station of the Year in 1977. Frank Carwell and John Stewart have been mainstays of the morning for the station.

FM disc jockeys Jay Diamond, Kent Crider and Bobby Cook have all picked up Country Music Association awards. In April 1974, Bryan Sargent etched his name in the Guinness record book with a 112 hour and 22 minute broadcast for the Cancer Society.

In the early 1970s, the three stations, WPAD, WKYX and WDXR battled hard for listeners in Paducah. While they may have been very competitive on the airwaves, the managers, Gary Morse, Weeks McKinney-Smith and Ed Fritts had to at least try to act neighborly, since they all lived on the same Paducah street!

Two other stations joined the Paducah market in the 1990s, with WCKK-FM licensed to Calvert City, and WZZL to Reidland.

Gary and Michele Kidd, who also own WMOK and WREZ in Metropolis, Illinois, just across the river, put satellite country WZZL on the air at 106.7. Stice Communications, Dwayne Stice, president, programmed WCKK 95.7 with easy listening and instrumentals, the only beautiful music station for the area. A non-commercial FM religious station permitted at 89.3 has been planned for Paducah by an association of Christian businessmen.

Mayfield radio is a story of two early industry mergers. In 1946, Mayfield Broadcasting applied for a station at 1050 kHz while Purchase Broadcasting Co. had received a permit for 910 AM. Pierce Lackey of Paducah was involved and an alliance was created to allow stock in a new station from both companies and WKTM was born.

Shortly after it went on the air, another station, WNGO, began operating in January 1947. The small town had two stations, WKTM at 1050 and WNGO at 1320, both with 1,000 watts daytime only.

WNGO whose call letters stood for "We Need God Only" was started by Rev. H.M. Suthard and Paul Mullins, with Boyce Swann as general manager. The station relied heavily on religious programs, and in fact the first song played on the station was "Amazing Grace," according to Browning Ligon, who was co-owner in the 1950s. The station was sold in 1957 to Mose Bohn, H.D. Bohn and Charles Stratton, the latter serving as station manager until 1984 when his son Roth took over. Stratton had helped to build stations in Russellville and Hopkinsville.

Ligon was a long-time teacher of the First United Methodist Church Men's Bible Class, which started a radio program, *The Widening Circle*, in October 1946 on WKTM and has been broadcasting every Sunday since

The program, now called *Radio Sunday School*, is heard on WNGO and WXID-FM in Mayfield at 10 a.m. live from the church. Rev. Roy Williams was the first teacher, but now five teachers alternate Sundays, and the class went co-ed when the numbers started dwindling. James Lowry, one of the teachers, said the theme song, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," remains the same as it was in 1946. He is aware of some other taped religious shows that have been on longer, but believes the program is the longest-running live church program in the nation. He said the church has received responses from many people, not only congratulating it for its longevity, but thanking it for being such a blessing.

The two stations, WNGO and WKTM, had merged after Bohn and Stratton's West Kentucky Broadcasting Co. bought out its competitor in 1957. WKTM had four different owners during its ten-year life. The WKTM equipment was sold off and the 1050 frequency was later acquired by Central City's WNES, which moved to that new spot from its 1600 kHz location.

WNGO put its FM station on the air in 1955 and as a daytimer AM was able to use the FM at night to broadcast ballgames. If there was no ballgame, however, both stations would shut down at sunset. The station had its own version of the "Fonz" in the '50s with deejay "Fonzie" Davis, who became popular throughout the Purchase area both on the air and off when he would appear in clown costume on station remotes.

In 1995, WNGO is still under the ownership of West Kentucky Broadcasting. The AM station has been country since 1958 with WXID-FM separating as adult contemporary for a time, but both stations now simulcast top country. The XID call sign was derived from the electronic symbol for stereo plus the ninth and fourth letters of the alphabet for 94.7 FM (XID).

WNGO has the unfortunate distinction of being flooded out twice in one year with major clean-up operations in 1983, once with twelve inches of water in the building.

Mayfield's other AM station, WYMC, debuted in 1976 at 1430 AM with Ron Gentry as manager. The station quickly got involved in community and charitable events and local news with a middle-of-the-road music format. When Gentry became Kentucky's cabinet secretary for tourism in 1990, he sold the station to his long-time sales manager, Jim Moore, who continued the adult standards music with network news and talk format.

Gentry had also started WYMC-FM in 1987 licensed to Wickliffe in Ballard County. Studios were maintained in Wickliffe but with adult contemporary programming originating from Mayfield. When the AM station was sold, the Wickliffe FM became WGKY classic rock, and all operations were moved there as Gentry's son Brian became owner and general manager.



At 95.9, the station is the only FM service located in the river counties of Ballard, Carlisle and Hickman, although another station is planned for the city of Clinton in Hickman County. The call letters, which had been in Greenville, were chosen with the family initial preceding the KY.

The small town of Wickliffe actually got its first station in January 1981 when WBCE-AM with a 250-watt daytime signal was put on the air, at 1010 on the dial. The call letters stood for the company name — Ballard, Carlisle Entertainment, indicating the two counties the station hoped to serve. Later, it moved to 1200 kHz with 1 kilowatt.

Jim Baggett was a minister in the small town when he volunteered to do a gospel show at the station. A year later, he was forming a non-profit group, Bible Time Ministries, to purchase the station, which was faltering financially.

Charles Gevedon, one of the original stockholders, helped Baggett put together the corporation to take over the station which became all gospel and religious. As it turned out, Bible Time Ministries also acquired another AM stand-alone station that had gone on the air in 1981, when Baggett's group purchased the AM 900 out of Eddyville in Lyon County. That station had been started as WEAK by a group of about a dozen local business people. It suffered flood loss and financial woes when it was purchased in 1986 by Brian Gentry, who changed the call letters to WWLK, emblematic of the "lakes." Gentry switched the country format to gospel and Christian programming. Bible Time kept the call letters and the gospel program philosophy when acquiring the station in 1989. Both WBCE and WWLK rely on time purchased by churches and donations by loyal listeners to keep the stations afloat.

The home of wireless pioneer Nathan Stubblefield honored him when the



Courtesy WXID Radio

*Charlie Stratton, of WXID/WNGO in Mayfield, stands next to his new 1970s-style automation equipment. (Note on the carousel reads: "To err is human, to really make a mess, get automation.")*

first radio station in Murray signed on in July 1948 with call letters bearing his initials, WNBS. After a lengthy battle with some other groups, the construction permit for the full-time 250-watt station at 1340 was given to George Overbey of the newly-formed Murray Broadcasting Co. He said the announcing staff would be made up of Murray State Teachers College students.

C.H. "Pete" Hulse and Chuck Shuffett, who came from Lebanon, were partners in purchasing the station in 1957. They worked together with Shuffett doing much of the selling and Hulse the engineering through the years. They have had several announcers go on to major markets, but one face most familiar would be popular game show host Pat Sajak, who got his start at WNBS.

Hulse remembers the greatest shock was one night while down with the flu, a phone call informed him the station was off the air because the tower had been hit by an airplane. Sure enough, a plane headed for Murray to pick up the college basketball team for a trip had crashed into the tower in a heavy fog, killing the pilot.

The partners operated the station until 1976 when they sold it and the sister FM station 100-kilowatt WAAW. However, they reacquired the station in 1986, but two years later, Shuffett sold the FM to Murray's WSJP radio and it was changed to WBLN, with a "blend" of adult contemporary hits.

In 1991, Shuffett entered a deal to sell WNBS-AM and low-power TV-46 to Keith Stubblefield, a.k.a. Troy Cory, who had come from California and announced spectacular plans to honor his grandfather, Nathan. But the station went off the air in December that year when Stubblefield failed to make his payments for the station or the employees' salaries. WNBS was purchased at auction later by WSJP which now operates all three of the city's commercial stations.

While WSJP is promoted as "We Serve Jackson Purchase" it can easily be the acronym for Sam J. Parker, the owner, who built the station in 1978 at 1130 kHz with 1,000 watts and 250 directional at night. The station upgraded to 2,500 and while starting with a country and gospel format is now all news and talk with a heavy sports schedule. Parker programmed WNBS as the AM country station. WBLN-103.7 soared in popularity after Parker acquired it and changed it to the adult contemporary format. Dr. Parker has had a career as a college professor but his interest in radio dates back to his days of working as a student.

Parker at one time had applied for a UHF-TV outlet for the city, but it was not built and he now owns the low-power TV-46 license acquired in 1993.

WBLN is the flagship station for Murray State University sports, with an average of five stations on the Racer network for sportscasters Neil Bradley and Sam Rickman.

When Paducah broadcaster Ray Mofield came to Murray after getting his doctorate degree, he not only began teaching, but laid plans to start a station for the college. WKMS 91.3 went on the air in 1970, operated by the students of the journalism and radio-TV department of Murray State University and soon became affiliated with National Public Radio. Murray upgraded to a 100-kilowatt station with a full-time staff that was taught and managed by Mofield for many years. In addition, with Janet Kenney as head in the 1980s, the department was active with Murray TV-11 on local cable service for the community. Mofield retired in 1991. Kate Lochte took over the management reins at WKMS, where western Kentucky news has been taken seriously. News director Anita Bugg and her staff have won numerous Associated Press state awards.

For an incredible 43 years, the Goodakers have been synonymous with Princeton radio. Leslie Goodaker and his wife Mayme started WPKY-1580 as a 250-watt daytime station. Goodaker was involved with the daily operation of the station along with Twyman Boren, who had joined him in 1959 as program director and later became general manager. Boren's wife, Betty, served in many capacities as well, with one of the Borens at the station most all of the time.

An FM station at 104.9 was added in 1969. The stations were sold in November 1993 to DART, Inc., and the FM became WAVJ-Country with oldies and talk on WPKY.

The Goodakers had simulcast the two stations using the nighttime signal to carry area ballgames, and block programming music and news throughout the day. Goodaker started in radio as an engineer at WOMI in the early 1940s. He remembers being called to the station to put it on the air at 3 a.m. in 1944 one morning. It was "D" day and the Allied invasion had begun.

He founded his own station in 1950 to cover Caldwell County for the next four decades with a simple philosophy of service he and Boren sought to carry out. Boren says news and sports were a priority through the years and the station never played commercials on Sunday, but would carry church programs. He cites dozens of young high schoolers who started at the station to go on to careers in broadcasting. Boren has seen many changes in the studios through the decades, and recalls that new innovations weren't always that reliable. In the early 1960s, he remembers the national advertising agencies sending strict instructions never to transfer their commercials to the new-fangled "carts" but play them on the air from the record.

In the far west corner of the Bluegrass state, WKZT in Fulton began as WFUL radio in the summer of 1951 under the ownership of Ken-Tenn Broadcasting. Eleven stockholders had proposed to put up a total of \$25,000 to bring radio to the city. Dr. R.W. Bushart was president with John Latham as engineer and commercial manager. In the late 1950s Paul Westpheling became president and his wife Johanna assisted as general manager. The Westphelings operated the local Fulton County newspaper and believed the daily radio complemented the weekly publication. The station was a day-timer at 1270 on the dial. The Westphelings' son, R. Paul, also got involved with the station and went on to network radio and the Voice of America.

Kenneth Turner, who as an engineer had helped build WNGO and WNBS and had worked at WCTT Corbin, came to Fulton in 1958 as engineer and he and his wife, Agnes, purchased the station in 1962. Turner sold WFUL-FM in 1982 to WENK, Inc., of nearby Union City, Tennessee. The station became known as WWKF (KF-99) with a hit rock format. The AM station was purchased in 1990 by River County Broadcasting, Charles Whitlow, president.

Turner's family and staff surprised him for his birthday in May 1988 when he came to work and discovered the call letters of the station had been changed to his initials. They had performed the legal work behind his back, and the party, complete with newspaper and TV reporters, unveiled the new logo for WKZT to honor his 50 years in broadcasting!

The station has been known for its method of local news gathering in which the station called the various police, hospital and county agencies for information. Jo Westpheling had pioneered the idea, continued by Turner, of calling around the area for news and information. The individuals answering the phone would be put on the air and asked what was going on that day and a conversation ensued. The show was dubbed "Live Wire News." Gene Gardener was the WFUL morning man and program director for many years, as the station endeavored to serve both sides of the state-line Fulton communities as well as the towns of Clinton and Hickman.

Serving the Calvert-Benton-Lakes region, WCBL took its call letters from that coverage area, and began broadcasting in December 1954 with 1 kilowatt, later raised to 5 kilowatts, at 1290 kHz. WCBL was started by James Shelby McCallum, with the sister FM station at 102.3 added in 1966. McCallum owned a theater in town and had expanded his business to other cities, including Hopkinsville where he was persuaded by Ned Breathitt to go into politics. His political connection with Vice President Alben Barkley of Kentucky is said to have gotten him his construction permit for WCBL in just 30 days!

McCallum won a seat in the Kentucky Legislature and served for 18 years

including speaker of the House during the Breathitt administration. He was involved in civic matters in Marshall County as well as politics and was also part-owner of the Benton cable system. An active Rotarian, the club conducts an auction each year on the air with scholarships awarded in his name.

McCallum maintained the presidency of his company, Purchase Broadcasting, until his death in 1987 when the station passed to his daughter and her husband, Julie and Mark Sweet. Jim Freeland served as sales manager for many years and took over as general manager in 1980. Freeland said many people of the area see the station as an example of a small market succeeding, but some weren't so sure at first. When McCallum applied for the loan to build the station in 1954, the bank included a provision that the building be constructed to resemble a residence so it could be easily converted if there was a need to foreclose!

WCBL played mostly country music from the beginning and the call letters are shown on the movie "Coal Miners Daughter" as a station Loretta Lynn called on to play her records. One of the writers of the movie was from that area. The FM station has been operated with live jocks since its inception with variety music and sports.

The desire on the part of some Christian people to have an outlet for gospel programming and music prompted the start-up of non-commercial WVHM-FM in Benton at 90.5 MHz, with one translator in Madisonville and others being planned. Heartland Ministries, Cecil Glass, general manager, operates the station 24 hours a day with Moody Bible network programs and gospel music, with the support of listeners and commercial underwriters. The station has been on the air since June 1989.

Trigg County saw its first radio tower go up in 1966, as WKDZ was started by Lake Barkley Broadcasting Co., John E. Woodruff, president. The call letters were chosen to sound like the county seat and city of license, Cadiz. Six years later an FM station was constructed with AM at 1110 and FM at 106.3. The county is located between the Lakes region and Fort Campbell. Willie Wilson, who had worked at WPKY in Princeton for ten years, became general manager at Cadiz and started his *Wake up with Willie* morning show, and became the voice for local ballgame broadcasts. Ruth Humphries, who had co-hosted a show in Hopkinsville, came down the road to start a popular Trigg County news program, which lasted many years. The station sold in 1986 and Wilson went on to work in Paducah and Clarksville, Tennessee.

Wilson looks back on the days of small town radio, when stations were proud to identify with their city, and when you listened you knew exactly where the station was located. He laments the changes happening in the

1980s and '90s, with network satellite radio and all stations sounding alike.

Gary Kidd acquired the station in 1986 changing the FM to WBZD, to sound like the station's new mascot, the "Buzzard," and went to an all-rock format. The station then switched to WBDZ for the "Breeze," going to more easy listening music. The FM station call sign was finally changed back to WKDZ AM/FM and was purchased by a local group, HAM Broadcasting in 1991. D.J. Everett of Hopkinsville bought out the stock of that firm in the summer of that year and left TV-43 in Hopkinsville in 1994 to manage the station, which now is all country.

WKDZ has been active in highlighting the local country ham festival, and promoting recreational and tourism activities at the popular Land Between the Lakes resort.

A little farther north in Crittenden County, folks started listening to their own station in 1968, when WMJL in Marion debuted at 1500 kHz with 250 watts. The company was formed by the team of J.B. Crawley, Redmon Turner and Bill Kelley, who combined to build many stations and had established nearby WMSK in Morganfield. Sam Crawley, J.B.'s brother, was installed as president. Jane Hite served as operations manager, succeeded by George Patmor. The station was sold in late 1994 to J.M. Productions with Joe and Barbara Myers taking over operation of the AM and the brand new FM facility, simulcasting an all-country format. Myers was returning to Kentucky broadcasting, where he had been active in the 1970s but had gone into the funeral home business for a time.

The FM station at 102.7 was a story of a costly legal struggle. J.B. Crawley experienced a six-year battle in Washington D.C. to get the permit after it was also applied for by a national group that had gone after more than 30 new FM licenses that had become available. His endurance paid off as WMJL prevailed for the right to build a sister FM.

## Purchase Area Station Log

Benton	WCBL AM-1290; WCBL-FM 102.3 WVHM FM-90.5 n/c
Cadiz	WKDZ AM-1110; WKDZ-FM 106.3
Calvert City	WCKK-FM 95.7
Eddyville	WWLK AM-900
Fulton	WKZT AM-1270 WWKF-FM 99.3 (Union City)
Marion	WMJL AM-1500; WMJL-FM 102.7
Mayfield	WNGO AM-1320; WXID-FM 94.7 WYMC AM-1430
Murray	WSJP AM-1130; WBLN-FM 103.7; WNBS AM 1340 WKMS-FM 91.3 n/c
Paducah	WPAD AM-1560; WDDJ-FM 96.9 WDXR AM-1450; WDXR-FM 94.3 (Golconda, Illinois) WKYX AM-570; WKYQ-FM 93.3 WGCF-FM 89.3 n/c
Princeton	WPKY AM-1580; WAVJ-FM 104.9
Reidland	WZZL-FM 106.7
Wickliffe	WBCE AM-1200 WGKY-FM 95.9

Stations listed on the same line indicate common ownership.

\*n/c - non-commercial station.

### Pennyrile (District 2)

The Pennyrile area of western Kentucky is home for **three** of the oldest stations in the state — WOMI, WHOP and WSON.

WOMI continued in the hands of the Hager family, founders of the station, with John S. Hager, Lawrence's son, as president. The station was sold in 1993 for \$2.4 million to Brill Broadcasting group of Evansville, Alan Brill, president, and Gary Exline remained as general manager.

Hager stated in published reports that the company realized growth in radio was coming through acquisitions and their commitment had always been to "a high quality single-station operation."

Lawrence Hager, Sr. had died in 1982 after an illustrious career in publishing, and Lawrence Hager, Jr. sold his stock to his brother in 1989.

Hugh and Cliffordean Potter continued to direct the affairs of the station, living in the apartment above the studios of Frederica Street (formerly Livermore Road) until their retirement in 1972. Hugh Potter died in 1986 and received many accolades for his broadcasting and civic achievements. He was founder and first president of the Kentucky Broadcasters Association and wrote several local histories including one on Daviess County.

The stations moved to a new building on property nearby in 1988. The old structure, that had housed the memories of many workers for 50 years, was demolished to make way for a shopping center.

Potter had moved WOMI quickly into FM following the war, adding WOMI-FM at 92.5 MHz in 1948, and with 60 kilowatts and a new 425-foot tower, it was the most powerful FM station in the state and much of the South. The two stations broadcast simultaneous programming for more than a quarter of a century before the FM split in 1975 to an automated country station, WBKR-FM. The move was successful, but the station gradually moved away from automation, first with live morning segment, then afternoon, and finally live, 24 hours a day in 1989. According to Arbitron surveys, the 100-kilowatt WBKR in the early 1990s was capturing about one-third of the Owensboro audience.

WOMI switched from Mutual to the CBS network in 1959 and was able to increase power to 1,000 watts in 1962. It continued to emphasize involvement in Daviess and McLean County activities, broadcasting live from major events each year and covering area sports. Beginning in 1950, a facility was established in Beaver Dam for broadcasts and communities were invited to the main studio for "good-neighbor" programs.

WOMI was known for its commentary *Editorially Speaking* as one of the few stations writing and producing editorials. These opinion programs were done by Hugh Potter and later Harold Peters. Peters worked for 40 years as chief engineer, as well as news and farm editor and morning show host. The editorials promoted everything from tourism to establishing a Florence Henderson Day to honor the singer/movie star's accomplishments. WOMI editorials are credited with forcing action for better air and highway access to Owensboro.

The AM station joined the NBC network in 1979 but by the early 1990s was changing from contemporary music to a news/talk format with NBC's Talk-net.

WBKR (Big Kountry Radio) was nominated as the Country Music Association Station of the Year in 1994 while Zack and Nick, the popular morning team, were named Personalities of the Year. But WBKR wasn't only about country music, as the station was a finalist in 1991 for the NAB national Crystal service award recognizing its community involvement.



Edith Bennett, who has served the company since 1950 in many capacities in the office and on the air, speaks fondly of her association with the Potters and the other great communicators that have come and gone at the station. "There was a magic of personal communication through that box called radio," Bennett said. But her favorite saying of all was ... "Radio is never an intruder, always a guest!" She has compiled a scrapbook of memories detailing the Owensboro "Soundest Citizen," WOMI.

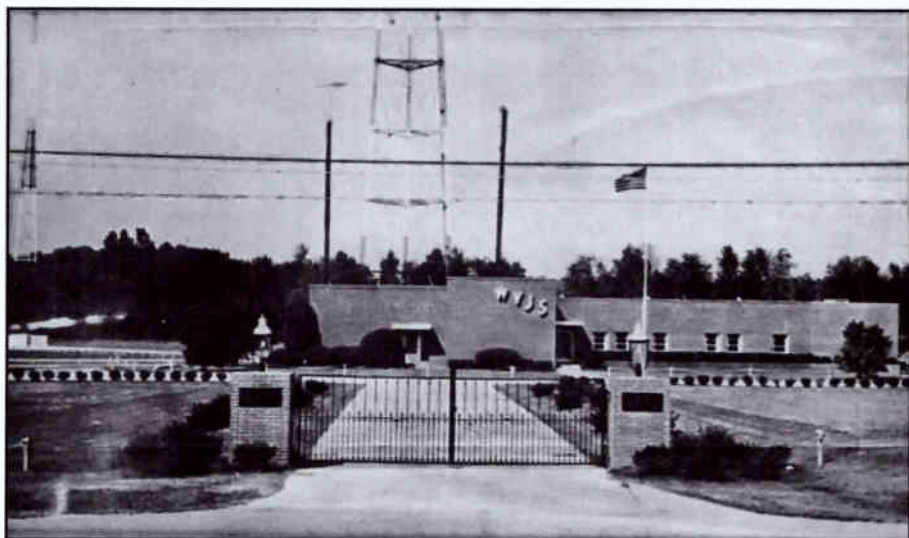
WOMI received competition for the audience when WVJS went on the air in 1947. Vincent J. Steele, the name from where the call letters are derived, formed the company, Owensboro on the Air, Inc. Malcolm Greep, once the chief announcer at WOMI, became his general manager. It had been Greep who decided the city should have another station and went to Steele for help. The next year they built a 45-kilowatt FM, operating at 96.1 MHz, to complement the 1,000-watt AM at 1420. AM was allowed an increase to 5,000 watts in 1962, with 1,000 watts directional at night.

The station immediately became active in local sports and news. In 1951, the staff helped raise funds to move Kentucky Wesleyan College from Winchester to Owensboro. In 1960 the station moved from Allen Street to new offices and studios at its transmitter site on a 26-acre tract on U.S. 60. The facility has continued to expand over the years under the direction of the Steele family.

WVJS has carried Kentucky Wesleyan basketball since the college arrived with Joel Utley doing the play-by-play of all the games since 1961. Besides the longevity of 34 years of college action, Utley's claim to radio fame is broadcasting six national championship title games for his school. KWC won the NCAA College Division (then Division II) crowns in 1966, '68, '69, '73, '87 and '90.

Utley said another great moment came in 1969 when the Panthers beat Arkansas and Ole Miss in consecutive games of the Bayou Classic in Louisiana. He has had various people assist with home games but did all the away games alone. Utley and Jim Parr have handled most of the WVJS/WSTO news through the years. Parr has worked the Owensboro air-waves since 1969.

In 1963, the FM changed to WSTO and became the first station in the state to broadcast in stereo, as it launched a separate format of easy listening and classical music. The STO in the call letters is short for "stereo." The station went to 100 kilowatts in 1966 and in 1982 began broadcasting from a new transmitter site and tower in Henderson County, unveiling a new contemporary hit format that took them to top ratings in the Evansville metro market. Brian Jackson led the team of disc jockeys, as he took over morning drive time.



Courtesy WVJS

*Owensboro's second entry into the radio field was WVJS. The sister FM was built in 1948, and later became WSTO, the state's first FM station to go all stereophonic sound.*

In 1983, the ownership was transferred to Century Communications of Connecticut. Besides the AM and FM, the company purchased the city cable system and the local TV channel run by the radio, Cable TV-2.

LeRoy Woodward, who was with the station the first day it went on the air, said WVJS/WSTO has been active in fund-raising, including a unique "Street Relief" annual radiothon to help the homeless. The studios house numerous AP awards for news and public affairs. "The station was an artistic and financial success from the start," according to Woodward. Earl Jagoe served as chief engineer for more than 30 years, and Jackie Goetz has been in the sales and continuity department since 1960.

Ray Wettstain succeeded Greep as station manager and was honored with a KBA Meritorious Service Award. He was followed by Leonard "Corky" Norcia, Jr., and in 1994, Steve Cooke, a long-time employee took over.

The adult music format on AM was replaced by all news in 1995. The music/information mix that WVJS had in the 1970s gave it giant numbers in Owensboro surveys. In 1973, Joe Lowe went on in the mornings and continues to direct the wake-up team.

Bob Steele, in looking back on the many years the two companies had stations in Owensboro, said his employees had a good relationship with the folks at WOMI, but it was very strong competition at times, "especially through the periods when both groups were applying for the TV license."

Owensboro's fifth station is non-commercial WKWC, at Kentucky Wesleyan College. The 5-kilowatt FM station at 90.3 on the dial went on the air in 1983. The station operates 8 a.m. to midnight with a student staff. The programming includes jazz, classical, news, public affairs and several hours of contemporary Christian music weekly.

Hopkinsville's WHOP had brought radio back to Christian County after the loss of WFIW and the station of "Dutch" Lackey is still in the hands of the family with his son-in-law, Roger Jeffers, who has served as general manager since 1964. The studios of the station have moved several times over the years, from the transmitter location to downtown and then back to the tower site on Dink Embry Buttermilk Road, named for the station's long-time personality.

The Lackeys built FM stations at all their facilities and WHOP-FM went on the air in 1948 at 98.7 MHz. The signal simulcast the AM until 1958 when it tried to a separate easy listening format during the daytime hours. Katherine Peden, who had served as sales manager became station director and decided to split the stations and changed the call letters to WRLX or "ReLaX" with our soothing music. It was the first attempt in the state at full separate FM programming since the demise of the early FMs in Louisville at the beginning of the decade. Veteran WHOP announcer and engineer Leo Wilson said to accomplish the idea he built what was the state's first automation system, adapting an old jukebox to automatically select and play the records.

The station later went to more sophisticated automation and returned the call letters to WHOP-FM.

Roger Jeffers said the station continues to carry all the local sports, with news, farm shows and talk on the AM and top country on the 100-kilowatt FM station. The radio auction for student scholarships also continues, more than 50 years after its first gavel went down. The station is one of the oldest continuous CBS network affiliates in the nation.

Hal King has been the dean of the Hoptown sports broadcasters, with play-by-play of high school and college sports and, for many years, a Sweet Sixteen network.

When Butler County native Dink Embry was traveling with the band "Goober and the Kentuckians" back in 1940, they wandered off on the wrong road and wound up at a filling station in Hopkinsville, where the talk of the town was the new radio station. Embry convinced "Dutch" Lackey to let his band play on the air, so they settled in. After being called off to military service, Embry returned to WHOP in 1945 to go on the air with the *Early Bird Show*.



Courtesy WHOP

*An “earlier” Dink Embry of WHOP, Kentucky’s senior radio announcer, with more than 50 years of service in Hopkinsville radio.*

Embry has celebrated a “golden anniversary” on the radio airwaves with the program that’s on from 5 to 7 each morning. Embry started out with just a half-hour, which quickly sold out and the station gave him more time. Embry said, “Hopkinsville has certainly been good to me.” The show’s secret, which has had many guests over the years, is simply good clean fun with a local flair. He admitted he doesn’t care much for all the new innovation of radio today. “My band started out recording on the old 78s, then we went to 45s, and nowadays you can’t even buy a record!” Embry also served as farm director doing the station’s extensive agriculture reports until 1993 and is a three-time winner of the Kentucky Farm Bureau’s Farm Communicator Award and was a finalist for the prestigious NAB Marconi Award.

The burger chain was not the first to offer the “Whopper” as that was the name of the WHOP radio published newsletter. It was put out for many years to keep listeners informed on network and local programs!

“Dutch” Lackey stayed quite involved in community affairs with his station because he was mayor of Hopkinsville for three terms. His daughter, Sherrill Jeffers, also held the position from 1982 to 1985.

WKOA in Hopkinsville was built by the Woods family, the owners of the daily newspaper, *The Kentucky New Era*. The station signed on in September

1954 and was managed by Charles Stratton, with Bob McGaughey delivering the first newscasts. It was a daytimer at 1480 on the dial with 1,000 watts. The Higgins family purchased the station in 1958, with William Higgins as general manager. WKOF-FM 100.3 was built in 1960 and later became WKSD, and then WKOA-FM during changes in the mid-1970s. Several veteran broadcasters of that area worked a number of years at WKOA including Don DeMarsilis and Marvin Mahoney.

The station was sold in 1977 to a group of Hopkinsville investors, with Hal King serving as manager. There have been many call letters, format and ownership changes. WKOA became WYKH — meaning your “Your Kentucky Home” — when it switched to a solid gold format in 1986 after John N. Hall III bought the stations. The next year it became WQKS “Kiss” to reflect a new urban contemporary format.

Over time the FM has programmed beautiful music, stereo rock and contemporary hit radio. That station, known as K-100, became Z-100 when the call sign was changed to WZZF in 1986.

Both AM and FM outlets were purchased by Regional Broadcasting, Inc., in 1990, which kept the AM but the 100-kilowatt FM was sold to WRUS, Inc., in Russellville to become WVVR-Country, and programmed as part of the “Beaver” WBVR chain in Bowling Green-Russellville.

Appropriately enough, Christian County has its own non-commercial Christian radio station, but that didn't happen until 1981 when WNKJ went on the air at 89.3 FM. The call letters represent the belief of the founders, that the “World Needs King Jesus.” Dr. Robert E. Amis had started a Christian bookstore in Hopkinsville in 1973 when he moved to the city to begin a surgical practice with his brother Jack. The Pennyrile Christian Community was formed as a non-profit educational corporation and the bookstore eventually expanded into a radio station.

WNKJ has been guided by the board of P.C.C. with Jim Dozier Adams, general manager. The station expanded to 24 hours and joined the Moody Network in 1987. A translator station to boost coverage is also on the air in Providence. No commercials are broadcast and support is derived solely from contributions of listeners. The goal of Dr. Amis to lift up the Lord and the Bible as the true source of wisdom still guides the staff at WNKJ.

At nearby Fort Campbell, WABD was licensed in 1963 at 1370 for day-time operation at 500 watts. Leo Wilson of Hopkinsville helped build the station and Gary L. Latham was president and general manager. Latham put the FM signal on the air in 1968. In addition to Latham, Shelby McCallum and Governor Ned Breathitt were partners in the station, whose call letters

stood for the "AirBorne Division," in honor of the 101st stationed at Fort Campbell. While licensed in Kentucky, the studios are across the border in Clarksville, Tennessee.

Don Bilyeu began work with the station in the 1960s and later became general manager, laboring until the mid-1980s. WABD was a top-40 station appealing to the soldiers and their families on base. In the late-1970s, album rock moved to WABD-FM and AM became oldies. Urban contemporary music became more a part of FM in the 1980s.

The station was sold in 1986 to Southern Broadcasting, of Clarksville, with Tom Cassetty, president and general manager. The FM station became WCVQ and at 107.9 upgraded to 100 kilowatts with a 950-foot tower and became Q-108, a gold-based adult contemporary sound with the urban format on AM.

Clarksville, some 12 miles south, is the home of three AMs and the public radio FM from Austin Peay State University. The pioneer station was WCTZ at 1400 kHz, going on the air in 1941.

In 1995, the Lackey family's WSON, Henderson, was still in the hands of Hecht's son, Henry Lackey. He carries on the family tradition, managing and announcing on the adult standards and talk station.

Following the war, the station went to 500 watts daytime only and now has low-power nighttime authority. Hecht Lackey was involved in Democratic politics, serving as mayor from 1953-1961 and was chairman of the Kentucky Board of Education. Lackey moved WSON to new studios on North Main in 1955 and the next year dropped the Mutual Network, picking up ABC in 1961 but switching to CBS two years later. William "Rusty" Russell and Art Grunewald followed Hecht as station managers, until Henry took over the reins in 1972, acquiring complete ownership in 1979. Henry also had his dad's penchant for politics, serving as state senator.

Network announcers Fred Briggs and Jim Thacker pulled shifts in their early careers at WSON. Lackey reports the station continues to do well as a stand-alone AM in a world of FM.

In 1947, WSON built a 20-kilowatt FM station at 99.5 and began simulcasting the AM signal until the early 1970s, when a rock format was instituted and the station call letters were changed to WKDQ. Lackey sold WKDQ-FM to Bristol Broadcasting in 1986. The 100-kilowatt was switched to a hot country format that garners big ratings in the Evansville Arbitron market.

A stand-alone FM arrived in Henderson in 1971, at 103.1, Herbert Gene Baggett, president of the licensee, Professional Broadcasters, Inc. The station was known as WBIC and WVAZ later, becoming WHKC and moving

from an adult contemporary to top-40 rock format when it was purchased in 1979 by Metro Radio, Vernon Nolte, president.

It was sold again in 1987 to Larry Aiken and became WGBF Radio with a sister AM, WWOK in Evansville, Indiana. WWOK-AM was actually the pioneer station in the area, signing on November 22, 1923, using the call letters WGBF at 1280 on the dial.

WGBF was started by the Finke Furniture Company and later became an NBC affiliate. The station was owned by the Leich family from the 1940s through 1975 when it sold to Nolte. Live stage shows from the Coliseum, play-by-play sports and news were standard fare on the 5,000-watt station. The *Toast and Coffee Morning Show* was a local institution for years. In 1975, WGBF became the "River City Rocker" and went to the top of the ratings for several years with its top-40 format. This came after Nolte had purchased that station and manager Don Newburg and program director Jim Wood used hype and promotion to usher in the big change.

The WGBF call letters were given to the sister FM when purchased by Aiken Communications and the AM became WWOK. The AM transmitter site is on East Morgan Avenue in Evansville, but the studios are located with the FM in Henderson. Early in his career, Larry Aiken had the distinction of being the market's first rock 'n' roll jock when he exposed listeners to the new music with his show on 1400-WEOA, broadcasting from a local drive-in on many occasions.

Listeners in the Henderson County area have been influenced through the years by other nearby Evansville metro stations including WIKY, which began service in 1947, and its sister FM, established in 1948. The founders, John A. and Betty Engelbrecht and family, continue to run the show, although the AM station has changed frequency.

In 1981, the 820 kHz, 250-watt daytime station was donated to the University of Southern Indiana and became WSWI. WIKY then purchased 1400-WROZ (formerly WEOA) with 1,000 watts. WEOA had gone on the air in 1946 as a CBS station and later tried rock music before becoming "rozy rodeo" the country station. The Engelbrecht's worked the station under those call letters, and then as WIKY-AM before changing to WJPS.

WJPS simulcasts the signal of 106.1, WJPS-FM, which is also operated by the Engelbrecht company, with son John D. as general manager.

WIKY-FM has been on the air without interruption since 1948 at 104.1 MHz. WIKY is adult contemporary, and WJPS AM/FM formats the oldies.

WIKY became top-rated in the market with full-service news to complement some of the best-remembered personalities like Max Truby, Ken McCutcheon, Emil Stephens and Jack Fox, who went on to WHAS. Dave

Hoy is the veteran news director. WIKY brought in Bob Buck for play-by-play of University of Evansville games, then Buck moved to WBKR, when the rights were secured by the Owensboro station.

Charlie Blake, who has been with the station since 1957, said the call letters for oldies station WJPS were chosen because of the association with the old 1330 AM, the rocker back in the 1960s.

That station was actually named with the initials of Louisville's J. Porter Smith, who helped establish it in October 1948. Robert Davis, who operated a chicken hatchery and farms in partners with Jesse Kennard, enlisted Smith's help in getting the station on the air for Evansville and the tri-state area. They immediately affiliated with the ABC network and brought in Robert McIntosh from New Albany to manage the new station. The 5,000-watt facility is now known as religious station WVHI-AM and has been owned by Wayne Geyer since the early 1960s.

WJPS went to a full-time rock 'n' roll format in 1958 and had ratings success with the format until abandoning it when WGBF went rock in the mid-1970s. Jerry Smith, who started in 1965 as Jim Stagg, said the "Big 1300" had the power to draw the audience and was the typical rock station with the wild jocks and sensational news and promotion. They had their own version of "Cousin Brucie" with Bruce Sommers. There was Real Rodney Russell, Bob Raleigh and Stan Clark with news. Smith said the station had several of the hot nicknames, like "tiger radio" and "color radio" and changed call letters to WKKR for awhile in the late 1970s before switching to the religious format and WVHI.

The original WVHI call letters and religious format were put on the air by Sam Angel in 1964 as an FM station at 105.3. The AM 1330 station took those call letters and format when Angel sold his FM and it became modern country WYNG in 1982, battling WKDQ for the country audience.

It's quite an intertwining commercial radio history in Evansville but there is also a wealth of non-commercial stations. Besides WSWI, there is WSPR at Vanderburg School, WUEV at the University of Evansville and WNIN, operated by Tri-State Public Teleplex, a community-based group that also runs the public TV.

Over in Madisonville, Kentucky, Pierce and Dutch Lackey had expanded their interests in the 1940s as they invested in WCIF radio and hired T.E. Brewer as general manager. The station went on the air in 1947 at 730 kHz with 250 watts daytime. The Lackeys quickly built an FM sister station and debuted WCIF-FM in 1949 at 104.9 MHz.

However, about the same time, the newspaper had formed the Messenger Broadcasting Co. with the intent to build a station. They constructed WFMW-FM at 103.1 signing on Easter Sunday in 1949. The FM-only sta-



tion broadcast for a year, until they purchased the Lackey company in 1950, and Madisonville radio became WFMW AM/FM, signing the original WCIF-FM off the air for good and taking over 730 AM, then later changing to FM 93.9 MHz and raising power.

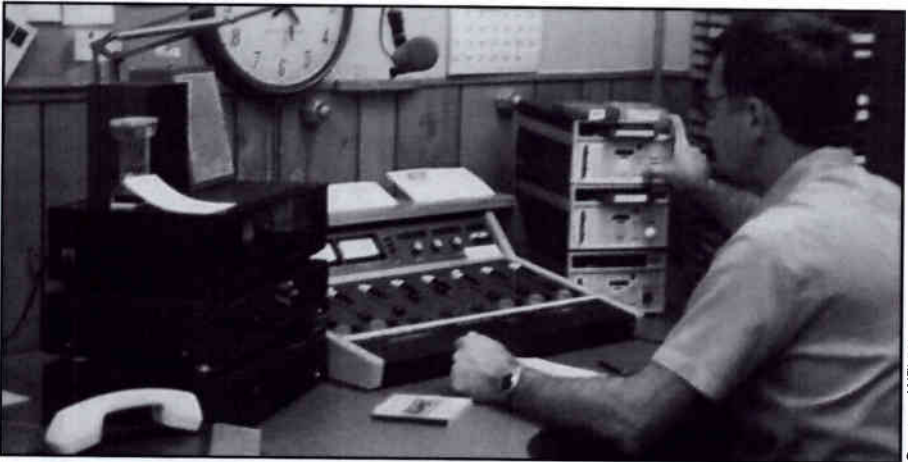
Edgar Arnold, Sr. was president, Hubert M. Wells, general manager and Elmer Kelley, sales manager of WFMW. In 1951, the KBA called the station a “model” operation and appointed a committee to examine it and report to other members.

In 1962, Kelley and Wells purchased the stock of the newspaper/radio, and became co-owners and operators until Wells sold out to Kelley in 1970, and became an executive with the Chamber of Commerce. Wells had become widely known for his 7 a.m. newscasts to the people of Hopkins County.

Elmer Kelley was actively involved with the stations through the years. He had worked for the *Madisonville Messenger* following his return from military service. Kelley created many programs but his great love was broadcasting play-by-play of the Madisonville Miners of the baseball minor league and basketball and football games for local high schools.

On November 19, 1970, winds blew down the WFMW tower, disabling the stations. But by 10 a.m. the next day, the AM was back on the air with a wire antenna and the FM was being fed on local cable TV via phone line.

WFMW-FM changed call letters to WKTG in 1978 and switched from a middle-of-the-road format to classic rock, with the morning show live and satellite service the remainder of the day, and in 1993 went to 50 kilowatts. WFMW-AM remained country — as it had been for more than a decade —



Courtesy WFMW

*WFMW was the first Kentucky station to be FM only. The station soon merged with WCIF and acquired an AM. Today, FM is WKTG. Veteran announcer Bob Mays is shown in the studios.*

one of the first in western Kentucky to go all country.

In 1995, the Kelley family is still in charge with Gladys Kelley, Elmer's widow, as president, and son Bob the general manager. Bob Mays, who does announcing and play-by-play sports, Danny Koeber, who hosts the popular call-in show, and Chris Gardener, who handles local news, all have been on the air steadily since the early 1970s. Bob Simmons served as station manager for WFMW for nearly 20 years and Chuck Lee has handled technical duties since the 1950s.

That staff stability has helped keep WFMW/WKTG involved in the community activities and areas of award-winning service.

Another Madisonville station was built in 1956 by engineer Hobart Thomason and Evers Mick, who was president of Hopkins County Broadcasting. The station was acquired two years later by Conway Smith. WTTL broadcast at 1310 kHz with full-time service, directional at night. Jerry McKonly is the name familiar to listeners. He has been on the air daily since 1958. In addition, he has broadcast Madisonville and Hopkins County area high school sports since 1965.

The station was the quintessential "rocker" in the area for many years, capturing the young audience and bringing in groups from B.B. King to the Four Seasons in concert. McKonly said they starting moving away from pure rock to more adult contemporary in the early 1980s, when rock simply was no longer "clean" enough to play.

The station has whipped up many wild promotions and programs over the years, but one that got attention was the Hopkins County "Mosquito Festival" which somehow drew more than 6,000 people to celebrate or berate the bug! The station's studios were destroyed by a tornado in 1961 and the staff was forced to operate the programming from the 14-by-14 foot transmitter building, truly a "hot" 90 days, according to McKonly. A modular building was constructed in the area of the tower near the city dump, meaning the radio folks were pretty familiar with the pesky insect. The festival was a one-year wonder and the studio facilities were eventually moved to Main Street.

The operations have remained non-automated with local on-air talent through the station's history, and the Smith family is still involved with WTTL, with Val Smith serving as general manager. John Gatlin is the station's veteran news director with the pulse of the local scene. WTTL 106.9 FM was put on the air in September 1992, simulcasting the AM programming, but preparing to separate in 1995.

"Wonderful Sounds of Faith" resound from one Madisonville tower, that of WSOF, a non-commercial gospel station at 89.9 FM. The 50-member Island Ford Baptist Church operates the station, where the pastor always

does double-duty as general manager. The station went on the air in February 1977 and has upgraded to 39 kilowatts, operating 18 hours per day with funds provided mostly by listener pledges.

In the mid-1960s, the coal country of Muhlenburg County boasted five radio stations, while adjacent Ohio County had none. WMTA and WNES, both 500-watt daytimers in Central City, had gone on the air in 1955 and were owned by separate companies. This created competition and friction as both would also own local newspapers.

WMTA was started in February from studios at the Empress Hotel building in downtown Central City by the newspaper, the *Messenger-Times-Argus*, Amos Stone owner, thus the call sign MTA. The newspaper got involved in competing for the AM license after Owensboro Broadcasting Company was looking at expanding with a frequency in Central City.

WNES signed on January 1, 1955, owned by Muhlenburg Broadcasting, William D. Atkinson of Glasgow, president. Three years later, the company purchased the Greenville *Leader-News* newspaper. Andy Anderson became president of the company and Ron Beane served as general manager of the newspaper as well as the radio station. A group of county shareholders had actually applied for a license on 1380 in 1950, but it was not built.

WNES started at 1600 kHz but moved to 1050, when that frequency was given up by Mayfield. They had built the sister WNES-FM, 101.9 a year after starting the AM, simulcasting and bringing nighttime service to the county.

In 1962, WKYF-FM in Greenville signed on and added an AM station two years afterward. But the Greenville Broadcasting Co., with C.P. Stovall and his son managing the station, folded and the 1600 AM frequency was secured by businessman Hayward Spinks in 1969 to start a station at Hartford in Ohio County.

Spinks called his station WLLS for his daughters, Leesa and Leslie, and three years later built the FM station at 106.3 to provide nighttime service for his daytime only AM. Spinks then brought FM back to Greenville with WGKY-FM 105.5 in December 1981. The call letters were changed to the "hawk" WWHK and in 1994 it was simulcasting the adult contemporary programming of the two sister stations in nearby Hartford. Lloyd Spivey, Jr. has been the keystone of the operations serving as manager and announcer for the stations since their birth.

Another Ohio County station is slated to begin service with a license for 102.7 FM in Beaver Dam having been issued.

In Central City, since the end of the Amos Stone era of WMTA in 1985, the station has been operated by Edward Thomas and then Bryan Smeathers.

It had a brief call letter change to WTBL, then went silent for awhile in the early 1990s before returning to the air as WMTA, with a format of news/talk.

The old WMTA hosted Muhlenburg County natives, the Everly Brothers, Phil and Don, who sang regularly there along with other music luminaries Merle Travis and Dave Rich. Buck Trent and Roy Clark produced a syndicated weekly radio program from the WMTA studios. Long-time deejays John Tooley and Bobby Anderson are remembered for their work by folks in the area.

WNES AM/FM simulcast until the early 1980s when a power increase to 50 kilowatts brought about a change to a hit rock format and call letters to WKYA. Legon McDonald was station executive in many capacities through the years and Andy Anderson, Jr. began working with the company after his father's death in 1971. The FM is now 100-kilowatt WQXQ with adult contemporary music targeting the Owensboro market.

Ron Beane had a 35-year career with WNES radio and the companion newspaper. The company acquired more newspapers but limited radio ownership to Central City, where the staffs often shared news stories but operations were kept separate.

The entrepreneurial and engineering team of J.B. Crawley, Redman Turner and Bill Kelley landed in Morganfield in 1960, starting WMSK 1550 as Union County's only station, with Crawley serving as president. Seven years later, the FM was powered up on 95.3 MHz to provide nighttime service for ballgames and simulcast the AM. The station was mostly top-40 in the 1960s but later switched to country.

Bob Hite served as manager and started a local news show. He became mayor, county judge and later went to work in the Wilkinson administration in Frankfort, but returned to continue providing local commentary for the station. Don Sheridan as salesman and general manager and Joe Greenwell as chief engineer have been mainstays of the staff for years. Crawley, said Sheridan, has the "radio voice" people admired and has done the bulk of announcing work for WMSK.

Election day 1972 brought Hancock County its first radio station, with the initiation of AM-1140, WKCM. The station was owned by Bayard H. "Bud" Walters. Ten years later, a frequency change and power increase was granted and WKCM became 1160 with 2,500 watts day and 1,000 watts directional at night. The station call letters — "Western Kentucky Country Modern" signified its decision to play country music and it remains total country in format, later becoming one of the first SMN (Satellite Music Network) affiliates. The station lost its tower in a January 1976 afternoon wind-



Courtesy Cramwell Group

*The computer is the centerpiece of the radio control room of the 1990s. Bud Walters (left), who expanded his radio interests into group ownership, looks over new facilities with Paul Daniel, Owensboro manager.*

storm, but was back on the air the next morning with a makeshift antenna, and nobody was injured in the incident.

WKCM brought live talk shows to Hawesville, Lewisport and the Perry County, Indiana, area across the river. Phil Eans, who was station manager and “Phone Club” show host, a buying and selling call-in feature, said the most unusual story came after his casual comment one morning when few people were calling. Eans remarked that he would like to have “a goat for Christmas.” Well, some sneaky listeners provided him with just that, complete with a bow around its ears!

It took 18 years to add a FM to Walter’s WKCM, but when he did he actually got three. Faced with other applicants for an allocation in Hawesville, he decided to build on the 102.9 channel available in Cannelton, Indiana. That became WKCM-FM in the summer of 1990.

Meanwhile, WLME (105.7) was licensed to Hawesville, but Walters arranged to lease the station in one of the first LMA (local marketing agreements) in the state. He purchased the station in 1994, changing it to WKCM-FM 105.7 country and turned WKCM-FM into WLME-102.9, while upgrading it to 25 kilowatts, moving its tower to Kentucky and changing it to an oldies station.

The two FM’s and one AM are operated out of Hawesville with Paul

Daniel overseeing the management of these as well as WBIO which is licensed to Philpot. Daniel had managed at WBKR/WOMI in Owensboro for several years.

The Philpot station serves the Owensboro area as the ID indicates — “We Believe in Owensboro.” In late 1993, the station began operation after the original construction permit was purchased from Ruth Steele. WBIO is satellite country.

Over the years Bud Walters has added to his ownership in radio forming the Cromwell group with 16 outlets in five basic areas by 1995, with home offices in Nashville. Walters says he often calls on Kentucky engineering experts like Clarence Henson and Chuck Anderson, and his legal advisor, John Garziglia, as he strives to upgrade the stations. In 1993, the group built eight stations.

Besides owning the Winchester, Kentucky, AM/FM for more than ten years, Cromwell has stations that serve portions of Kentucky from Dickson and Clarksville, Tennessee.

Before Hawesville built its own station, folks in Hancock County had an AM signal from across the river in Tell City, Indiana. WTCJ-1230, with James R. Brewer at the helm, began serving the public in 1948.

In 1972, Doug Hamby, who had worked in sales for WOMI for more than ten years, had the task of taking the place of Hugh Potter as general manager. Four years later, he decided to start his own station in Webster County and founded WHRZ, with call letters indicating the three stockholders of the company, Tradewater Broadcasting, Hamby, J.P. Rhoads, and Jim Zimmerman. The station went on the air at 97.7 MHz with a contemporary format and was the only station in the county. Hamby switched the station to all-country in 1983. In 1991, he moved the tower seven miles north and opened studios and offices in Madisonville.

By 1995, WHRZ was maintaining two studios with Providence serving as site for Webster County news broadcasts. Hamby says the station’s philosophy has always been to emphasize news and public service, instincts he learned from Hugh Potter. He said Potter looked at more than just the “bottom line” in operating the station. Hamby regrets some radio stations have gradually moved toward just becoming on-air “juke boxes” with music and little else.

In the southern part of the district, it was once called WAM radio when WOAM was owned by country music singer Ernie Ashworth. The station in Elkton in Todd County is not far from Nashville and Ashworth had purchased the facility from Jim White. White put the 1070 AM 250-watt station on the air as WSRG in July 1977. It later went to 500 watts and eventually

was purchased by Marshall Sidebottom, who took over in January 1989.

Sidebottom, who was at WIRV in Irvine, heard they were actually going to auction off a radio station in Elkton and out of curiosity headed south. He returned to Irvine, thinking he had been outbid in the sale, but received a call from Ashworth a week later to see if he was still interested. Sidebottom said he was but would only pay the amount of his first bid. Ashworth, eager to dispose of the station, agreed and Sidebottom had himself a sweet deal and moved his family to Elkton and ended up selling WIRV. He and his son Brian handle much of the operation of the now all-gospel station that has become WEKT radio.

### Pennyrile Station Log

Central City	WMTA AM-1380
	WNES AM-1050; WQXQ-FM 101.9
Elkton	WEKT AM-1070
Fort Campbell	WABD AM-1370; WCVQ-FM 107.9
Greenville	WWHK-FM 105.5
Hartford	WLLS AM-1600; WLLS-FM 106.3
Hawesville	WKCM AM-1160; WKCM-FM 105.7; WLME-FM 102.9
Henderson	WSON AM- 860
	WKDQ-FM 99.5
	WGBF-FM 103.1
	WKPB-FM 89.5 n/c (Western Ky. University)
Hopkinsville	WHOP AM-1230; WHOP FM-98.7
	WQKS AM-1480
	WVVR-FM 100.3
	WNKJ-FM 89.3 n/c
Madisonville	WFMW AM-730 WKTG-FM 93.9
	WTTL AM-1310; WTTL-FM 106.9
	WSOF-FM 89.9 n/c
Morganfield	WMSK AM-1550; WMSK-FM 95.3
Owensboro	WOMI AM-1490; WBKR-FM 92.5
	WVJS AM-1420; WSTO-FM 96.1
	WKWC-FM 90.3
	WBIO-FM 94.7 (Philpot)
Providence	WHRZ-FM 97.7

Stations listed on the same line indicate common ownership.

\*n/c - non-commercial station.

### Louisville Metro (District 3)

Shortly after the end of World War II, the number of commercial stations in the Louisville area increased by two, as WKLO and WKYW were added to the four already on the air, WHAS, WAVE, WGRC and WINN. Fifty years later, the radio listings would be a tangled web of outside group ownership, duopolies and LMAs that numbered more than 30 stations.

Kentucky's first radio station, WHAS, continued its service to become one of the most-admired and honored stations in the United States. The Bingham had actually proposed to sell the station in 1948 to the Crosley Corporation for \$1.9 million. The transaction was disallowed by the FCC the next year because of the close proximity of Crosley's WLW, Cincinnati.

In 1947, Victor Sholis began his nearly 30-year career in management at WHAS radio and later TV. The studios and offices were moved to Sixth and Broadway in 1949, and finally to the large combination radio and TV building on West Chestnut Street in 1968.

When WHAS-TV went on the air in 1950, the station personnel launched into a period of double-duty, and the operations were basically combined through the years until the radio and TV were sold to separate companies in 1986 when the Bingham family sold the newspaper and broadcast stations. The TV was purchased by the *Providence-Journal* company, while Clear Channel, Inc. of San Antonio bought the radio stations for \$20.05 million, although agreement was reached to maintain the still common call letters and studios.

Barry Bingham, Sr. and then Barry Bingham, Jr. continued to maintain the philosophy and mission of Judge Robert Bingham in operating the stations during those decades of ownership. They received assistance from numerous notable veteran broadcasters who held management capacities that usually included radio and TV duties.

Besides Sholis, there was Sam Gifford in programming, and Neil Cline and Jim Topmiller in radio sales and management. Hugh Barr came on in radio management to make some major changes in the late 1960s, then later Ed Shadburne and Robert Morse. Bob Scherer, who had worked for the company since 1963 in sales, became vice-president and general manager in 1985 and remained in charge under Clear Channel ownership. Jerry Solomon, who started in the 1960s, remained with the new company in sales management. Orrin Towner served the Bingham for more than 30 years, overseeing the technical facets of WHAS.

The block programming and CBS network offerings highlighted the decade of the fifties for 840 radio, with emphasis on news and information.



Popular and enduring personalities on shows of that era and into the sixties were Jim Walton of *Coffee Call*, aired before a studio audience of 150 each day. The lineup also boasted Bud Abbott with *Abbott's Habit*. Jim Lounsbury took over *Kentucky Calls America*, the popular nighttime show, that got one listener in Lebanon, Kentucky, thrown in jail one night for playing the music too loud. According to news reports, he was arrested for disturbing the peace so late at night. Three WHAS representatives went to pay the \$14.95 fine for him and gave him a set of headphones so he wouldn't disturb anyone!

WHAS continued its live music with Herbie Koch on the huge radio organ being a favorite feature, along with other station musicians and vocalists such as Cowboy Randy Atcher. Comedy moments highlighted the shows of "Cactus" Tom Brooks, and Paul Clark was chief WHAS announcer, with a voice Barry Bingham, Jr., has complimented as being one of the most distinctive in radio. Ken Meeker's work earned him state-wide acclaim when he syndicated his *That's the Story* program.

UK games in those days were called by George Walsh and Phil Sutterfield before Cawood Ledford arrived on the scene to begin his career as the voice of WHAS sports and the "Cats." Van Vance joined the team in 1957, working with Ledford on radio and TV coverage, and called state tournament basketball. Vance began his radio career in Glasgow in 1952 and came to WHAS as an announcer and back-up sports man. He was the voice of Kentucky's professional ABA team in the 1970s, the Colonels, earning sportscaster of the year honors for his work.

WAVE's Ed Kallay had been doing University of Louisville basketball, then later Jack Tennant, when WHAS won the rights and became the flag-



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*Jim Walton's Coffee Call show on WHAS was broadcast each day before a live studio audience. He also yearly hosted the "Crusade for Children." Here he gets a piece of cake from Mrs. F.H. Linkenberg, president of the Louisville Radio Council in 1950.*

ship of the nine-station network in 1981. Vance took over the play-by-play duties and the first two seasons found himself in the Final Four with the Cardinals, and then a national championship in 1986. Vance said that ranks as one of the most exciting moments of his career, along with the 1983 UK-Louisville "dream game" and being a part of the 1994 induction of Louisville coach Denny Crum into the Hall of Fame in Springfield, Massachusetts. He has also enjoyed the Kentucky Derby assignments. Vance continues to call Cardinal basketball with Jock Sutherland, while Paul Rogers, a 20-year WHAS veteran, does Louisville football.

Local farm news has always been a mainstay for WHAS, and following Frank Cooley was Barney Arnold as farm director beginning in the mid-1950s. Arnold's rapport with farmers and the community earned him a wide audience and three Farm Bureau Communicator awards. One Hooper survey in the early 1950s indicated four million people heard the agriculture news on WHAS.

Later, Fred Wiche moved from news reporter to farm director and in the early 1970s expanded the reports to include the popular lawn and garden features that continue daily.

WHAS dropped its CBS affiliation in 1959 and created programs from independent news sources. In March 1963, ABC news came on board for one year before a return to CBS until 1984 when the station signed up with ABC again.

One of the nightly shows developed after going off the network in '59 was *Juniper 5-2385*, a call-in talk show with Milton Metz, that later became known as *Metz Here* and remained on the air until 1993. His program is cited as having impacted many issues in city and state politics for more than three decades. Metz said they changed the show name when phone numbers went to all digits and the management philosophy at WHAS altered some to allow for more promotion of individual personalities. Metz used his common sense in guiding him through what was new radio program territory back then, striving to make the call-in show a good forum for discussion with a variety of guests and topics.

While radio talk shows became the rage of radio in the '90s, Metz said his program was not as "ideology driven" or "opinionated" as today's very political talkmeisters. "I tried to remain neutral and give balance without being wimpy, of course," Metz reflected. He might express an opinion when a caller really got out of line. "El-Metzo," a moniker that stuck with him after being dubbed as such by afternoon jock Jeff Douglas, believed the worst part of doing such a show was trying to cover the time when calls were slow or equipment failed! One governor, Martha Layne Collins once sent a message that stated that tuning in nightly and hearing "*Metz Here*" gave listeners the feeling that despite the problems that day, "all is well with the world."



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*Beginning in 1969, WHAS took on a “personality-oriented” sound. Some of the key players were (left to right) Jerry David Malloy, veteran morning man Wayne Perkey, Jack Fox and Gary Burbank.*

In 1966, WHAS flexed its muscles against the federal powers, when FCC records indicate it refused to pay an imposed fine for failure to properly identify a political sponsor. The appeal wound up in court with judgment in the station’s favor.

WHAS began adapting programming in the late 1960s and early ’70s to more high energy disc jockey shows and adult contemporary music, instead of the “chicken rock” that had been played. They began by hiring Wayne Perkey in 1969 to become the wake-up man, then putting Gary Burbank on afternoons in 1976. Burbank, considered one of radio’s most creative talents, later moved to WLW in Cincinnati and produced nationally-syndicated shows such as *Earl Pitts-American* using his many voices and on-air bits.

Lamponing others became the characteristic of another familiar Louisville deejay, as Terry Meiners dominated afternoon ratings in the early 1990s. Politicians were his favorite targets, but no one escaped his sarcasm, and in a 1991 poll he was the second most popular and recognizable city figure behind only the mayor.

Perkey became a local celebrity, hosting many special events including the Miss Kentucky pageants. He has referred to his job as simply directing the morning team’s “carousel of information” that includes traffic reports, news, sports and weather.

Information about the 1974 tornado made Dick Gilbert of WHAS a household name, with his tracking of the twister from the traffic copter making national news.

Emphasis on news and community service was the hallmark of Bingham media efforts with the news department creating award-winning documentaries, live news coverage, yearly comprehensive presence at the State Fair and public awareness campaigns. The annual WHAS radio and TV *Crusade for Children* is the longest-running locally-produced radio-telethon in the country, beginning in 1954 and continuing to raise millions of dollars directly affecting the lives of children across Kentucky and southern Indiana.

Victor Sholis called the Crusade the crowning accomplishment of his long career at WHAS. Funds are distributed by a special foundation. In 1965, Grady Nutt, then a young minister, summed up the Crusade's purpose by using the call letters to say "We Have All Shared." TV-radio personality Jim Walton emceed until his retirement in 1979.

The FM story at WHAS is a checkered one, with the first experimental station becoming commercial WCJT-FM in 1947, changing call letters to WHAS-FM before finally turning it all off in 1950 after it became apparent FM wasn't getting anywhere in building an audience. Barry Bingham, Jr., was quoted in a *Courier-Journal* article about the demise as saying, "We lost our shirt."

In 1966, WHAS-FM returned to the air at 97.5 with 100 kilowatts and beautiful music. In 1975, the station tried an all-news strategy with WNNS-FM, which didn't work either. Finally in 1977, WAMZ-FM debuted, with the AM standing for "America's Music," and top country hit the Louisville FM dial with an automated system. The automation gave way to live deejays with the hiring of Coyote Lee Calhoun in 1980, and the ratings have climbed upward to the top every since. The FM sister eventually replaced WHAS-AM as number one in the market, pushing the senior station to number two. In 1986 and 1992, WAMZ was the Academy of Country Music's Station of the Year, and in 1994 Calhoun was a Marconi Award winner as Large Market Personality of the Year. He has also been the Country Music Association Personality of the Year and *Billboard* magazine's Program Director of the Year.

WHAS has been one of the most prolific award winners in radio. Those awards include several Peabody honors starting with the *Wake Up Kentucky* program in 1945 and an unprecedented three Peabodys in four years in the 1980s. The news department has won DuPont awards, AP best news, National Radio and TV Directors Headliner awards, *Billboard* magazine awards for Station of the Year, Kentucky Broadcasters Association recognition, Eclipse awards from the horse racing industry, Edward R. Murrow awards for best news department in the nation, Advertising Club awards,

farm, sports and public service recognition from a variety of organizations. WHAS is one of a handful of stations with three NAB Marconi awards, winning Station of the Year in different categories.

In 1994, WHAS/WAMZ acquired marketing rights to a third station with WKJK, a 50-kilowatt FM station at 98.9 in Salem, Indiana.

The biggest setback in the nearly 75-year history is described by chief engineer Larry Baysinger, who has chronicled the technical history of the station. A violent windstorm toppled the 654-foot tower, destroying the antenna in April 1985. The station was forced to low-power operation for more than seven months.

The second-oldest Louisville station, WAVE, continued its success with the resources and guidance of the Norton family. WAVE began Kentucky's first TV station in 1948, and radio people wound up in front of the cameras and well as behind the mikes. Nathan "Nate" Lord was manager of the radio then TV operation. The station moved to a beautiful new radio-TV complex on South Floyd Street in 1959. Jim Caldwell began managing all radio affairs beginning in 1964.

With the selling of the Norton (Orion Broadcasting, Inc.) properties in 1981, the radio was purchased by Henson Broadcasting, Inc. of Louisville, and the call letters changed to WAVG, since the TV and radio were no longer co-owned. The Henson family sold WXVW in Jeffersonville and WORX in Madison, Indiana, but retained WLRS-FM.

In 1988, WAVG-WLRS were sold to Radio One, Inc., Toney Brooks, president, and then in 1991 WAVG-AM was obtained by Sunnyside Communications, Charles J. Jenkins, president, who also then owned WXVW-1450 AM.

WXVW had gone on the air in 1961, with Keith Reising and Clarence Henson in partnership. When Charlie Jenkins came from WSAC to work at the station in 1965, he began a long career as the Louisville stalwart in local sports. WXVW got involved in carrying local high school sports and for decades was the only metro station involved in such programming with Jenkins and Ted Throchtmorton calling the action of the feature games each week.

Jenkins also broadcast the first American Basketball Association game of the Kentucky Colonels. According to Jenkins, WAVE had the broadcast rights, but had previous commitments the night the Colonels traveled to Indianapolis for the first game, and WXVW carried it, the only game they ever had on for the pro team. WXVW is now an all-sports station for the Louisville area.

WAVE remained the NBC network outlet following the war and developed many popular local programs that were soon carried over to television. Louisville announcing and news legends like Bob Kay, Ed Kallay, Liv-

ingston Gilbert, Ryan Halloran and Bill Gladden were heard on WAVE radio and Channel 3. More than twenty years after WAVE signed on in 1933, staff-accompanist Cliff Shaw, chief announcer Burt Blackwell and engineer Wilbur Hudson were still with the station. Doug Atwell, a technician who later became chief engineer, served WAVE for 46 years.

Another early radio-TV announcer/technician, Bernie Holtman, became director of all Orion Co. engineering in 1976.

The history of the WAVE radio was one of extensive news coverage with Rodney Ford heading the department from the 1950s into the '70s. With the staff and resources of the top-rated TV news, WAVE radio was able to keep listeners informed. In 1955, Radio 970 staged eight hours of continuous election coverage of the governor's primary. During the flood of 1964, a "Flood Information Center" was set up with reporters feeding information to listeners as well as the mayor's office and Civil Defense headquarters. WAVE expanded in the mid-1960s with bureaus in Frankfort and the introduction of traffic copter reports.

In sports, WAVE carried Reds baseball and Ed Kallay did University of Louisville games and in 1978 became the city's affiliate of the new Kentucky Network.

In 1955, the station began producing farm shows, many direct from its own farm, and Jack Crowner became the voice for agriculture, three times winning Farm Bureau awards as well as earning the station citations for State Fair coverage. The station has amassed numerous honors through the years. Bob Kay received what was once considered the "Oscar" of announcing, the H.P. Davis national award. Kay was often called upon to host network broadcasts, including the famous *Harvest of Stars* in the late 1940s and early '50s.

WAVE took several *Variety* magazine awards for shows and documentaries, as well as Ohio State Institute awards for educational and public affairs presentations. There have been yearly AP awards in every major category, CLIO and ADDY and local ad club awards for commercials and KBA citations. In 1975, the station started an annual Leukemia Radiothon, raising thousands for cancer research.

Louisville stations lured listeners with cash giveaways, and the biggest prize was a gift of \$100,000 as in 1982 WAVE held a drawing for all those who had listed the 97 reasons to listen to AM 970 that had been given out on the air over the previous months.

By the early 1970s, WAVE was the middle-of-the-road format station, with top city ratings in adult demographics. One afternoon drive deejay, Pat Murphy, is remembered for giving listeners many laughs and taking part in St. Patrick's Day activities including being the grand marshall of the parade

in 1975. He later led a trip to Ireland, where he carried the “WAVE Country” banner in the Dublin parade.

The new owners in 1981 moved WAVE toward more adult contemporary and later went with NBC talk-net at night. The year 1988 saw a switch to an “oldies” format with local announcers eliminated in favor of satellite network music. When Charlie Jenkins purchased the station in 1991, the “Music of your Life” nostalgia format was introduced.

The WAVE, Inc., journey into TV was a successful and historic one, but its trip to the FM dial was short-lived when it put WRXW at 95.1 on the air in August 1947 with much hoopla as a sports and culture station. The format of classical and light-concert music also included coverage of play-by-play sports — particularly Louisville Colonels minor-league baseball.

While the station lasted longer than the other two Louisville commercial FMs, WRXW gasped its last breath in September 1952 and donated all equipment to the Louisville Public Library, where it became the library’s second non-commercial station, WFPK.

WGRC radio crafted some major changes in its license following the war, as it moved the transmitter and tower to Jeffersontown in Kentucky with a power increase to 5,000 watts during the day and 1,000 watts at night, switching to 790 on the dial. The changes met with some opposition from other Louisville stations, causing legal delays. The station continued to air Mutual programming and developed a morning show with Jerry Fordyce and several local news and public affairs programs including the *Tri-City Forums* discussing issues of interest to Louisville, New Albany and Jeffersonville.

In 1947, Charles Harris and J. Porter Smith decided to join WHAS and WAVE and built a companion FM station, WBOX, The Louisville Music Box as they would call it, at the assigned frequency of 100.7 MHz with an antenna on top of the Home Life Building. The format of “better” music and sports was changed three years later to become the “Voice of Religion.” WBOX offered time on the station to churches at a rate that was designed to cover costs and then allow some money to go back to participating churches. The Louisville Council of Churches, with some 30 participating congregations, set up a committee to work with the project and handle the business end of the unique cooperative effort. FM stations had been a dead expense for their AM affiliates, and the idea was designed to keep WBOX operating and at the same time serve the churches and a particular audience.

It was perhaps the state’s most innovative effort to save separate programming for FM, but it didn’t work either, and WBOX became another tombstone in the Louisville FM graveyard in 1951. Many of the religious

programs did find new life on WGRC-AM, and the station management had developed a strong tie with the church community. In fact, when the local Baptist association began sponsoring the Mutual baseball games, replacing the beer commercials, WGRC received national attention when it announced it would drop all alcoholic beverage ads completely.

In the mid-1950s, beset by the decline in network radio, Gordon McLendon, an uninhibited Texan, was converting stations nationwide to rock 'n' roll. With a storm of "ballyhoo" and promotion, he came to Louisville in 1958 and purchased WGRC from Harris and Smith for \$720,000, brought in announcers from Texas and New Orleans, changed the call letters and for two days the first week of July played one song over and over on the air — "The Purple People Eater Meets the Witch Doctor." McLendon, who is now in radio's Hall of Fame, called the stunt good business and told the media that Louisville is aware now that "we have arrived!"

It was the birth of WAKY, the rock revolution had come to Kentucky and radio was never really to be the same. The young audience was immediately attracted to the station, and for the next two decades WAKY, pronounced on the air as "Whackie," hit ratings heights among that demographic group, in just a matter of months taking the station from sixth place to first. It was a world of hot hits, short newlines, rapid-fire commercials and hard-sell, fast-talking deejays, and it worked. Adults tended to think the names and antics of the jocks "weird" and the rock music appalling.

The McLendon Corporation sold WAKY to a subsidiary of Lin Broadcasting Co. in 1962 for \$1.35 million. Frederic Gregg, Jr., was president of the Nashville-based group. Gregg was also a part of the group that had owned WLAP in Lexington for a time. WAKY continued to ride the crest of rock music's popularity through the 1960s and into the '70s under different general managers. The station received national publicity as a prime "break-out" station, highlighting its willingness to give new songs airplay and having the uncanny ability to pick the winners. The common lore of the day was rock stations all over the state and region were monitoring WAKY to catch what it was playing.

WAKY specialized in wild promotions to attract audience interest. One created some school pride, a cleaner community and a mess at the station! The station promised a dance and a trophy case to the school that collected the most litter. According to published reports, WAKY program director Johnny Randolph thought they would get about 100,000 cans. The winning school, New Albany High, alone turned in almost 20 million! In all, more than 46 million bottles and cans were collected. Needless to say, it all went quickly to the landfill.



"Bill Bailey won't you please come home" was the WAKY rallying cry when the station brought popular WKLO personality Bill Bailey back to the Louisville market in 1970. The "Duke of Louisville," as he was known, had left WKLO for WLS in Chicago and a big city contract of \$500,000 for five years. He returned a year later when he couldn't take the hassle or the management policy there. Bailey told reporters back then that WLS didn't want him to talk, and "they played all that teeny-bopper music." He declared he wanted to enjoy what he did, and WAKY offered him a nice contract and a chance to ad-lib commercials. Bailey, who liked to project himself as a common, ordinary guy, the "voice of the working slob," was top-rated at WKLO and quickly grabbed the morning audience for WAKY with his gravel-voiced, brash style.

WAKY's heyday saw many of Kentucky's finest grace the Fourth Street studios, including Bailey, Randolph, Weird Beard (Carl Markert) plus Coyote Calhoun and Gary Burbank, who both later moved to WHAS. Newsman Glen Bastin moved from WHAS to WAKY as news director in the 1970s. Bastin later produced a state-wide syndicated show, *Pondering Kentucky*, that won critical acclaim. Joel Thorpe was sales manager, then later general manager in the mid-1960s when he commanded a staff of more than 30 people, including seven full-time newsmen.

Rock stations made big money, and in 1970 it was estimated that WAKY had gross billings near \$1 million, as did other Louisville powers WHAS, WAVE and WKLO. FCC reports did not break down individual stations, but showed that year the Louisville stations totalled nearly \$5 million in spot sales.

Just as WAKY had risen to the top with rock, its decline paralleled the changing of the rock music scene and the aging of its core audience. Although the station grew with the audience, revising its style with more news and community involvement, the handwriting appeared to be on the wall for AM rock stations in the FM stereo world.

Rating books show that Louisville, however, was one of the last major markets to succumb to FM dominance, with the top AM stations remaining strong well into the 1980s.

By 1988, WAKY was actually duplicating its FM sister WVEZ satellite light and easy format. The legendary station that personified the crazy days of rock radio had changed formats several times but finally passed away into the annals of broadcast history, giving up its call letters then and becoming WVEZ-AM. The call sign was quickly snapped up by WGRK and lives on at the Greensburg station.

WAKY had made several attempts at obtaining an FM companion, including offers for WLRS-FM in the late 1960s and applying for 103.9, a permit that

had originally been owned by WSAC in Fort Knox but was finally built as WFIA-FM in 1974. Clarence Henson had agreed to sell WLRS-FM to WAKY, but the contract called for consummation of the deal within six months, a deadline not met, and Henson decided to hang on to the station. Lin Broadcasting sued him for a million dollars, an action Henson called, "flattering for them to think I would have that kind of money," which they didn't get in the end.

Call letters of the famous 790 signal were changed again to WWKY in 1989 with country music, but switched to news/talk in 1991, and the station was taken over by Prism Radio Partners in 1993 along with WVEZ-FM.

WVEZ-FM actually began in 1967 as WKRX-FM 106.9 with Keith Reising, company president and general manager. The 50-kilowatt easy listening station was acquired by Stoner Broadcasting in 1974, then later became the sister operation to WAKY.

With few stand-alone FMs around when Reising started the old WKRX, some people thought he was "nuts" according to Reising, who admits it was tough selling spots. He remembers going into car dealers to solicit ads, only to be told that if cars don't have FM nobody must listen to it. Reising succeeded in starting and selling other FMs during the next 25 years and said it has all "turned out pretty good."

By 1994, Prism Radio Partners of Tucson, Arizona, had purchased the newest Louisville FM, WTFX, (The Fox) album rocker at 50 kilowatts, adding it to the fold.

The allocation for that new 100.5 frequency had brought 27 applicants to the table in 1989. A decision among themselves was made to hold an auction, and 17 showed up at a downtown Louisville hotel, prepared to bid. Tom Joyner's bid of more than \$2 million was the winner. The money was divided among the others, and Joyner was left alone to apply for the license. He has written a book on his experiences with station construction, and the one in Louisville proved to be frustrating with delays and problems with tower space. The station was sold to Prism and did not open for business until 1993.

Louisville's fourth oldest station, 1240-WINN, was the city's ABC affiliate in the post-war years, but dropped that liaison in 1950 for an independent pop music-oriented format. WINN soon joined the Liberty Broadcasting Network, although it vanished in 1952. Oddly enough, Liberty had been built into a large system by Gordon McLendon based on sports broadcasts from major league baseball parks. When the Justice Department ruled the rights were to be controlled by the owners, the network lost programming and folded. That failure led McLendon to turn his attention to shaping rock 'n' roll stations.

Harry McTigue, who had served as general manager, became president of the corporate owner, Kentucky Broadcasting, and in the mid-1950s WINN was operating around the clock with a personality music format and some religious programming. Neil Savage anchored the news desk.

In 1955, the corporation was turned over to a new owner, WINN, Inc. with principals Harold Kaye and Emil J. Arnold, who paid \$63,750 for the station. Glen Harmon, general manager, bought the station in 1958.

In 1962, WINN received FCC permission to raise power from 250 to 1,000 watts and that same year was acquired by Kentucky Central's Bluegrass Broadcasting stations, and sportscaster Claude Sullivan became general manager. Studios and offices were later relocated to Third Street, downtown in the Fincastle Building.

In 1968, WINN debuted a full-time "countryopolitan" music format. Several veteran Kentucky broadcasters have worked in management at WINN over the years of the Bluegrass Broadcasting ownership. Besides Sullivan, Jim Nathan, Ted Grizzard, Hart Hagan and Art Grunewald headed up the operations at different times. WINN had good ratings with its country music formula, and announcer/program director "Moon" Mullins became a respected voice in country music circles.

The station was sold in 1979 to John T. Rutledge and Charles Legette, who had put an FM station on in Jeffersonville. They tried a "big band" format for a time before Full Force Broadcasting bought the AM in 1984 and the call letters were changed the following year to WLLV.

The station converted to a black gospel format and affiliated with the National Black Network. It was purchased by Almighty Broadcasting Company in 1993, Archie Dale, president.

Harry McTigue, who had resigned at WINN because of health problems, went on to work out of his Louisville home forming Kentucky Radio Sales, a station representative firm. At the suggestion of Bill Betts of Maysville, McTigue used his experience to help other Kentucky stations make contacts with national advertising agencies. Kentucky radio was growing, and personnel at most small stations had little time or money to call on national or regional clients. McTigue's firm filled a need, and he successfully conducted business until his death in 1965. His widow Nancy then contacted J. Porter Smith, who had retired after selling WGRC, and Smith and his wife, Dorothy, continued to represent many Kentucky stations for years, helping advertisers place their buys on stations throughout the state.

After Kentucky Radio Sales ceased operation, large numbers of Kentucky stations associated with Regional Reps with offices out of Cincinnati.

A fifth radio station for Louisville had been authorized by the FCC in 1946, and the following year WKYW signed on at 900 kHz with 1,000 watts. Radio Kentucky, Inc. was formed with F. Eugene Sandford as president, Edward Weldon and Steve Cisler, vice-presidents. WKYW was quickly dubbed "the Noah's ark station" by the press and received quite a bit of curious attention when Cisler decided to take some army surplus pontoon barges and set the transmitter building on them so it all would float in case of flood.

The transmitter and tower were located on River Road near Zorn, in swampy area for good radiation, but susceptible to flooding. Studios were on West Jefferson, downtown. Cisler, formerly of WGRC, was an army veteran and was able to get priority on surplus property and claimed a complete Western Electric packaged station, transporting it from San Francisco. They bought the 320-foot tower from WBZ in Boston.

The trio of owners later brought in Parker Smith, another WGRC vet as sales manager, and in 1952, added Paul Ruhle in programming and news. Ruhle had been an announcer at NBC and had started in Kentucky in the 1930s at WCMI in Ashland. *The News According to Ruhle* became a regular daytime feature and George Stratton one of the top announcers.

WKYW had always billed itself a "good music" station, but with increasing popularity of rock, ratings in the early 1960s slipped to rock bottom.

A switchover occurred in September 1965, as WKYW became WFIA with the call letters meaning "With Faith in America." Bob Gardner announced the station would become "religious-oriented" in programming. The station had conducted a survey that indicated religion was the third favorite type of programming behind music and news, and without a full-time religious station in the Louisville metro area, the conversion decision was made. As "Inspirational Radio," a format of religious music and Christian teaching was instituted, WFIA became the top Christian station for the next 30 years. Studios for WFIA and the sister FM are located on South Third Street. The station was acquired by Doug Kahle's Radio 900, Inc., with Russell Manship, general manager and they built the FM station at 103.9 in 1974.

WFIA-FM evolved to WXLN-FM, adult contemporary, later switching to Christian contemporary music. Kahle sold the properties in 1990 to Jim Kincer, and the FM became WZKS. Another call-letter change shortly made it WQLL with a 1970s-based oldies format.

Control of WFIA-AM switched to the group owner Terry Jacobs' Regent Communications in 1995. It was the Covington-based conglomerate's fourth Louisville area station acquired in little more than a year, after purchasing WHKW in Corydon, Indiana, and WDJX AM/FM. A local market-

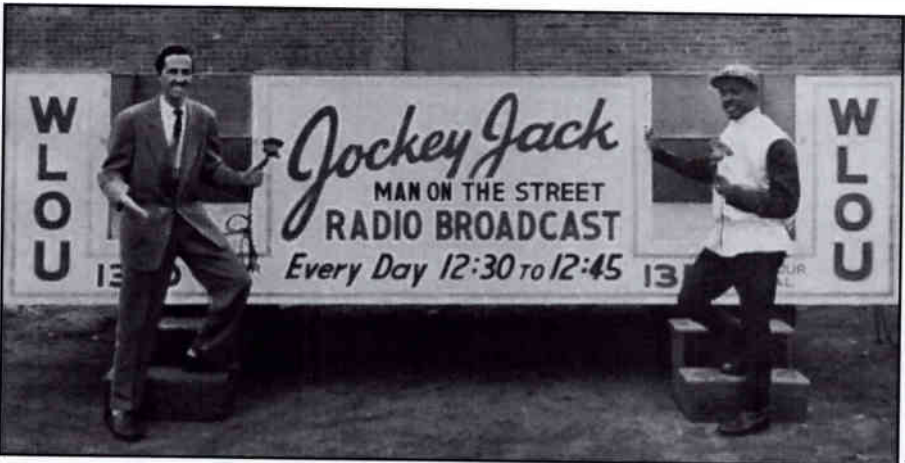
ing agreement was also reached to manage WQLL. WHKW (The Hawk) had gone on the air in 1994 at 107.7 with a country format.

By 1948, Louisville listeners had more choices on the AM dial. Going on the air just days apart as the city's sixth and seventh stations were WLOU and WKLO.

WLOU was started by Mrs. John Messervy, president of Louisville Broadcasting Co., and went on the air November 19 at 1,000 watts daytime operating at 1350 kHz. The station and tower were located between Third Street and Parkway Field, the home of the Louisville Colonels baseball team. With the slogan of "Louisville Listens to LOU," the station set out to fill what it saw was a void in local programming. It did not affiliate with any network and featured talent shows, local talk programs, round-table discussions, a morning disc jockey show and even a female deejay, Christy Clark.

Then, in July 1951, WLOU suddenly announced it would suspend operations, train a new staff during the silent period and resume broadcasting as a station programming completely for the "Negro community." Robert W. Rounsaville purchased the station for \$40,000 and it resumed broadcasting October 21, 1951, with a format of largely blues and spirituals.

The first voices heard under the new owners were Dorothy Howard, a.k.a. Louisville Lou, Johnny Wickliffe and Jack Gibson of Atlanta. Rounsaville owned stations in Atlanta and in Elizabethton and Cleveland, Tennessee. Lee Smith did an air shift and served as sales manager for the new



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*In 1951, WLOU announced it would become Kentucky's and one of the nation's first stations to specialize in "programming and music for the Negro community." Larry Dean and Bill Summers are shown on a remote. Summers later became president and general manager.*

station. Rounsaville was quoted in the *Courier-Journal*, "Many cities have stations which are now programmed for the Negro listener, and have been very successful. We hope to win a place for WLOU in the life of the Negro community around Louisville."

The FCC had previously frowned on granting licenses for such stations targeting a specific segment of the community but had started shifting policy. WLOU increased power to 5,000 watts and remained a Rounsaville station until bought in 1972 by long-time employee, William Summers III, who had become general manager.

Rounsaville was one of radio's first group owners and bought, operated and sold 42 different stations during a 40-year period beginning just before World War II. In the 1960s he built the nation's biggest black-oriented group. He also started top rocker WQXI in Atlanta in the 1950s and sold it to *Esquire* magazine for \$1.9 million, a price that shocked the radio industry of that day.

Bill Summers, who began working there in the early 1950s, operated WLOU until he sold it to national publishing firm Johnson Communications of Chicago in 1982. John H. Johnson became president, and Summers worked as a consultant. The station continued to be the voice of the black community with its news and public affairs programming. The music became more of the urban contemporary genre beginning in 1984.

WLOU had one of Louisville's first husband and wife teams in the 1950s with Jimmy and Kathy Curry Carter. He was program director and deejay, while she handled the women's and community news programs. In 1969, Summers announced Betty Rowan would head his news department at WLOU, the first minority woman in news director position for the city.

Ed Shadburne was station manager in the late 1950s and remembers personalities like "Shobee" Tobe Howard, Cliff Butler and Jimmy Rucker. Others who started on WLOU included TV personalities Ray Shelton, Wilson Hatcher and Jim Norris, a.k.a. Tom Kennedy.

The construction permit for a Louisville station at 1080 on the dial had been issued in 1941 for WINK, but the war prevented its construction. The permit was reissued in 1947 to Mid-America Corporation with James F. Brownlee, president. WINN radio had also applied for the channel with 5,000 watts during the day and 1,000 at night. The Commission granted it to Mid-America, though, and a four-tower array for directional operation was constructed in New Albany with studios in the Henry Clay Hotel.

The new signal was called WKLO and signed on in November 1948, as an independent station with Joe Eaton, formerly of WHAS, as general man-

ager. Its first major broadcast was a Male-Manual football game. The station joined the ABC network in 1950. Jean Clos with commentary, the *Clos Look*, became a regular local feature.

After suffering losses with its brief attempt at WKLO-TV 21 in 1953, the company was purchased by Great Trails Broadcasting, Charles Sawyer, president, in 1955. Sawyer received WKLO radio and the TV permit for \$350,000. Sawyer, an Ohio publisher, also owned stations in Dayton, Columbus, Springfield and WCMI in Ashland, under the Air Trails network group. He was a well-known businessman and government figure, holding ambassadorships for the United States, and was Secretary of Commerce under President Truman.

Shortly after WAKY rocked the city with its changes, WKLO began challenging for the listeners by instituting a personality-oriented hit music format as well. Beecher Frank had started building an audience for the station among the teens as early as 1955 with his evening show.

WKLO's popularity was at its height in the mid-1960s, and in 1967 it was one of 20 stations to receive a Radio-TV Mirror award for local programming for its morning show with Bill Bailey. Bailey was from New Bern, North Carolina, worked with communications outfits in the service and held several jobs before landing in Louisville in 1965. His ability to make people laugh was his forte, but he admitted he was afraid of coming to a top-40 station because he didn't sound like the typical rock announcer. He told a *Courier-Journal* reporter, "I don't sound like I'm sitting on a tack all the time." He also once claimed, "I have the largest audience any disc jockey ever had in Louisville."

Indeed, for many years WKLO and WAKY together would garner two-thirds of the total audience in the Louisville area.

Others during that era making WKLO a rock favorite included Lee Gray, Carl Truman Wiglesworth and Jim Rivers. Certainly one of the most inspirational announcers was Dickie Braun, who worked at WKLO and later at country stations WINN and WAMZ. Despite his physical handicaps, others speak of his upbeat nature and dependability, setting a positive example for other jocks in the market.

In 1962, WKLO had built its FM station at 99.7 utilizing the abandoned TV tower and duplicated the AM programs in the day, with selections of show tunes and orchestra music at night. Louisville had no commercial FM stations on the air at the time. Under new FCC guidelines on non-duplication of AM/FM programs, general manager Ernie Gudridge started separating more WKLO programming in 1966. The station moved into showcase studios downtown at West Walnut Street (now Muhammad Ali Boulevard) in 1965.

Several changes occurred at WKLO starting in 1974 when the FM raised power, call letters were switched to WCSN and a beautiful music format was installed. Four years later, both stations' call letters were replaced by WKJJ with the FM nicknamed "KJ-100." That year, 1978, a "lateral replay" method of programming was adopted whereby the AM aired programming of the FM station eight hours later during drive time. The top-40 hit format was featured on both stations.

The experiment did not last long, and in 1980, the AM became WCII and started its own contemporary country format, which it dropped in 1987 in favor of "pure gold" satellite programming. After the Sawyer family sold the station in 1988, it underwent several group owner and call-letter changes in the 1990s, becoming WDJX-AM, news-talk, then WRES after being purchased by Regent Communications.

The FM-WKJJ went to WDJX for its call letters in 1985. Its rock format with an urban contemporary flair made it an immediate hit with the younger crowd, and it became the top-rated station in that category in the Louisville surveys.

Another entry on the Louisville AM dial came in 1958, when WTMT signed on the air as a daytimer at 620 kHz. Studios were in the IBM Building on Fourth Street with the transmitter and tower northeast of Jeffersonville. Earl Hash was president of Jefferson Broadcasting Co., with Lee Stinson, sales manager. Stinson rose to general manager and purchased the company in 1974. The station transferred to new facilities at Second and Broadway in 1980. The call letters represent the philosophy of how the original stockholders planned to operate — With Thought, Maturity and Taste! Loyalty should have also been included in that, because WTMT has become a rare breed, remaining loyal to its country music format, style and call sign since its beginnings.

In a world of FM, WTMT is a stand-alone AM in a major market with its original 500 watts, yet it has survived. Lee Stinson, Jr., who started at the station in sales in 1978 and succeeded his father as president and general manager when Lee, Sr. passed away in 1995, said it has often been tough, but they made it happen through hard work.

Much of the ability to persevere could be attributed to the elder Stinson's talent in sales. According to those in the Louisville market, he was quite a persuader, and even though he might often have been the fifth station to go into a business in a six-station market, Stinson would be the one to walk out with the order! The company had a chance to purchase an FM construction permit in the early 1960s, for 95.7 in Jeffersonville, Indiana, for \$10,000 but



decided there was no future in FM. That permit would later become rock station WQMF, which in the mid-1980s sold for around \$5 million!

WTMT has found its niche in the market, however, with not only country music through the years, but thoroughbred racing. The station features race results and live races from around the top tracks in the nation, and remotes from Churchill Downs. The younger Stinson said the station has also attracted a good audience with its NASCAR network since the mid-1980s.

In February 1946, Clarence Henson of WHAS was joined by fellow engineers Russell Warren and Bob McGregor in forming Electronic Laboratories, Inc., and began training TV and radio technicians at their Louisville Radio School at Fourth and Jefferson streets. Henson had started his career with a job at Arkansas' John Brown University station, KVOH, and worked at WHAS before spending time in the service. Their idea of teaching students to work on television sets proved valuable, although the School Board questioned such a class at first, since there were no TV stations around!

The school would challenge the standing authorities in another incident that helped bring down the old Kentucky Day Law. Army veterans were being trained for new jobs, and a black student had applied. Henson interviewed the student and admitted him even though it was supposed to be against the regulations to have integrated classes. L.R.S. continued to turn out engineers with its rigorous course work, and in October 1964, Henson started Louisville's first successful, stand-alone commercial FM station.

When WLRS first signed on, he felt the main purpose would be as a training tool for his students, but it became much more.

The station, at 102.3 FM and 3 kilowatts, limited its number of commercials, and kept them low-key, with music in the foreground and announcers in the background. The station touted its appeal to better-educated, higher-income households with its stereophonic signal, the only one in town.

The WLRS move was a courageous one but not the first attempt to revive commercial FM in the city. WKLO was on FM with mostly simulcast programming, but a good music FM station had been tried in 1959 by William F. Johnston and the venerable Steve Cisler.

Cisler had operated a "good music" station in San Francisco and had returned to the city, believing the time for such a venture in Kentucky had come. They received a construction permit for 97.5 MHz with 35 kilowatts, using the old WBOX antenna on the Home Life Building. They proposed to offer no newscasts, just good music for the "adult, educated group." Non-commercial WFPL and WFPK were the only stations on the Louisville FM dial at the time.

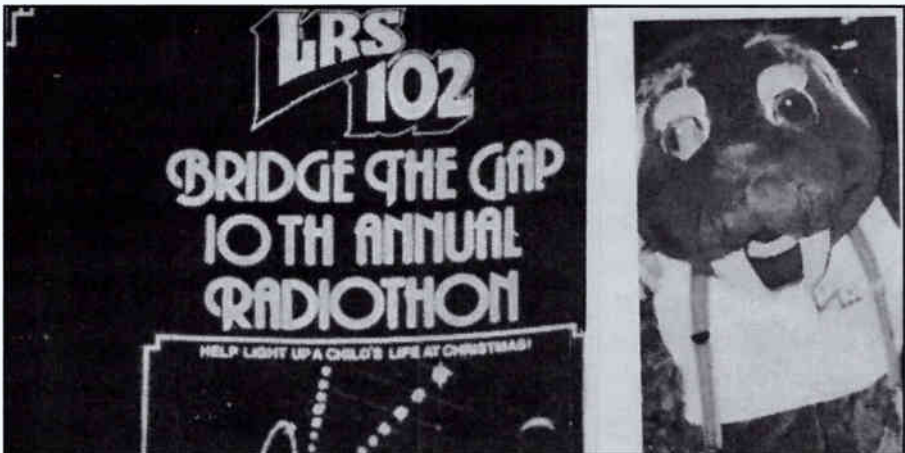
Cisler originally planned to call the station W-EAR, highlighting its appeal to the human ear, but settled on the call sign WLVL-FM. He experimented with a type of stereophonic signal, with listeners clued to tune the station and WKYW or WINN-AM to get the same program and a stereo effect. WLVL was not a commercial success and went off the air two years later. The frequency 97.5 later would be used when WHAS returned to the FM scene.

Ed and Louisa Henson became more involved in the family station, WLRS, in 1974, and the music became hit rock, a format that eventually took them to the top of the ratings in 1978. Ed Henson said it marked the first time in the nation an FM rock station had placed first in an Arbitron survey, a trend that would continue, of course, as the era of FM dominance was under way.

The WLRS program director during the 1970s and early '80s was Lee Masters, who went on to become general manager of cable's MTV.

Two disc jockeys hired were Ron Clay and Terry Meiners, who began to attract quite an audience with their antics. In a major coup in 1983, though, they were hired away by WQMF, and the Jeffersonville rocker started a trek to the top of the rock ratings. Drake Hall was another 102 FM jock that may be remembered as the paragon of '70s "cool."

WLRS adopted the "walrus" as a mascot to personify the call letters and was heavy into promotions and give-aways during those two decades. The station once dropped 3,000 one-dollar bills out of a helicopter to some 15,000 people waiting below, shot off a 30-minute fireworks display on a barge in the river one Halloween night, and even produced some albums featuring



Courtesy Henson Media

*Louisville's WLRS started as an FM for the Louisville Radio School, but became the first metro FM to top the ratings with its top-40 format. Heavy promotions with the Walrus mascot and "Bridge the Gap" Christmas Gift Campaign which lit up the railroad bridge were part of the station's community involvement.*

local artists. For ten years, the station conducted the Christmas toy drive, "Bridge the Gap," distributing as many as 50,000 toys to the needy each year.

In 1995, WLRS features a gold-based adult sound, owned by Beck-Ross Communications.

In 1966, J.W. "Woody" Dunavent was ready to challenge the idea that FM was only for "good music" as he proposed to play a variety from jazz to country to rock 'n' roll on the new station licensed to St. Matthews and located on Linn Station Road. The sign-on brought a sigh of relief from Dunavent, who had started work in the station in 1962 but ran into problems in the suburbs, where people didn't care much about having a tower as a neighbor in the Woodlawn Park area. He finally got St. Matthews to annex his property and agree to the station.

WSTM went on the air as a class A-3,000 watt station at 103.1, with Dunavent operating it and his AM-WSTL in nearby Eminence, Kentucky.

Bob Gardner served as the general manager for a time, then the station was sold twice in the mid-1970s. Capitol Broadcasting with Bill Summers, president, changed the calls to WNUU with an adult contemporary format. Following several ownership and management changes, the station was controlled in 1994 by group owner, Excelsior Corporation. The format moved to all gold music and as WRKA, Oldies 103, filled a need and captured good ratings.

One popular announcer at the station, John Ramsey, got some publicity in a scary way in 1994, when the hot-air balloon he was riding in got entangled on a power line above I-64. He and the pilot were rescued safely.

Radio stations across the river in Jeffersonville and New Albany are included in the Louisville audience rankings and have drawn listeners through the years.

Besides WXVW, WQMF 95.7 is licensed to Jeffersonville. WQMF is owned by Otting Broadcasting, John Page Otting, president and general manager. Otting, who worked at WKJJ, also operates WQNF, originating rock programming that is fed to both stations. WQNF is licensed to Valley Station in Kentucky and is a 3,000-watt facility at 105.9. It was actually started in 1993 as WVSL by Keith Reising and Mary Shelton, then leased to Otting.

WQMF had its origins as WQHI (HI-95) in 1974 built by John Rutledge with Charles LeGette, general manager. The station was changed to WQMF when purchased by Frank "Bo" Wood, whose family owned WEBN in Cincinnati. It was acquired by Otting in 1986 and operates from studios at Dupont Circle in Louisville.

New Albany's WDGS, urban contemporary station at 1290, is operated by

BBH & H Broadcasting, Archie Dale, general manager. It was WREY when it went on the air in 1966 as a 500-watt daytimer programming beautiful music.

WOBS-AM 1570 was once WLRP with roots dating back to June 1949. It later was changed to WHEL, a country music station in the 1960s. A change was made to religious programming in 1976 when Dale, as program director there, instituted a mix of southern gospel and black gospel favorites and the call letters became WOBS.

In 1995, it remains religious-oriented, owned by George Zarris' Cross Country Communications of Clarksville. He purchased it in 1993, calling it WZCC, but changed the calls to WXLN and operates it with sister station WXLN-FM out of Eminence, Kentucky. That format is also gospel at 105.7 on the dial, signing on in 1988. Zarris also holds the license for WBUL in Shepherdsville, which is silent.

In suburban Louisville, stations are licensed to Jeffersontown and Newburg. In 1978, WZZX-FM went on the air at 101.7 from studios on Shelbyville Road with Charles D. Patyk, president, and Mark Thomas as station manager. Thomas had been at WHAS, and later returned to that station to become sales manager. The Jeffersontown station tried different call letters and formats including WJYL as the easy listening station and then WLSY when sold in 1992, becoming urban contemporary.

But a merger put both Louisville area urban contemporary stations under the same umbrella. WGZB, "the Bee," licensed to Corydon, Indiana, but with studios in Louisville, became the companion operation for WLSY. WGZB, at 96.5 with 3 kilowatts, was started in 1988 by Power Communications, Rod Burbridge, general manager.

The full-time CNN radio network became a part of the Louisville radio menu with WXKN-AM radio 680 hitting the airwaves, licensed in 1992 to River City Communications. Some other AM stations had been planned for Louisville during the late 1980s, including one licensed to Pleasure Ridge Park, but never switched on.

Obviously aided by the success of rock 'n' roll, the FCC revenue records showed a marked improvement in the financial status of stations in the Louisville market in the decade of the sixties. Nine stations in 1960 showed a loss of almost \$95,000 on sales of \$2.8 million. By 1970, the total revenue had risen to \$4.9 million with profits of \$58,000 for the eleven stations reporting. The Louisville market figures for 14 stations in 1980 showed a profit of nearly \$900,000 on sales of \$5.9 million.

By 1995, Louisville was the 51st ranked Arbitron radio market in popu-

lation with estimated revenues of more than \$30 million according to *Radio Business Report*. The new LMA/duopoly rules had brought a tremendous exchange of activity in acquisitions and sales management takeovers beginning in 1993.

In 1968, the *Louisville Times* carried an article about the number of radio stations available on the dial in the city. The headline proclaimed a "Full Dial" with waves from 19 stations. If the dial was full then, it is bloated now, with 29 stations actually licensed to the Louisville-Indiana metro area and dozens more coming in from surrounding territories.

Despite the numbers and competition for listeners, the Louisville area stations have cooperated for many years with their own professional association. It was established in 1976 as LARS, Louisville Area Radio Stations, then became known as the LRBA, Louisville Radio Broadcasters Association. The group works together as a lobbying and liaison group with government and other associations. It has been particularly active in "selling radio" and working with larger firms and chains as a proponent for the benefits of radio advertising. In 1992, Louisa Henson was hired as executive-director for the group.

The plate is truly full when it comes to public broadcasting in the Louisville area. The nation's only dual library operation, at the Louisville Free Public Library, began early when WFPL went on the air in February 1950 in the educational band at 89.3 MHz. Mayor Charles Farnsley and library director Clarence "Skip" Graham learned the FCC had set aside frequencies for such non-commercial stations and installed the 10-watt transmitter at the library. They dubbed the station the "Timmy" because it was truly a Tiny Tim in the radio business. It was estimated there were about 45,000 FM sets in the area but if you didn't have one, you could check one out at the library, along with the books, films and recordings. The station broadcast information programs and classical music, and everything was repeated seven times. Dorothy Day was librarian and station manager for more than 20 years and said the programming was exactly the same for seven consecutive days, so if people missed something they could hear it the next day.

A closed-circuit system was used to broadcast educational programs to schools from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. In 1952, the station increased power to 250 watts and also acquired a 3,000-watt transmitter from WAVE when it closed down its commercial FM station. The library used it to start up another station, WFPK at 91.9, and transferred all the classical music to the new channel. WFPL took on an all-information format.

Day said she got involved in the radio operation by accident when one

night they needed a substitute to work the "board." They gave her an hour training and she said she spent the night "pushing buttons and working my needlepoint."

For years, WFPL remained at just 150 watts, while WFPK was the stronger sister at 20 kilowatts. Since the late 1970s, both stations have been full-power at 100 kilowatts, with WFPK as the 24-hour classical and new age music station and WFPL carrying news, public affairs and National Public Radio programming.

At the time WFPL signed on, there were two other area FM non-commercial stations in operation, WSDX at the Southern Baptist Seminary, and WNAS at New Albany, Indiana, High School. The seminary's station did not last, but WNAS has been broadcasting since 1949 at 88.1 MHz, staking claim as the nation's oldest high school owned-and-operated station.

The University of Louisville's FM station grew out of gifts from the Bingham family of cash, equipment and tower space, enabling the college to put the station on the air in December 1976 with 35 kilowatts at 90.5 FM. WUOL went to 24-hour broadcasts, with improvements, ten years later. Classical music drew listeners to their spot on the FM dial. Jay Landers was with the station at the start and labored in management until 1994.

A famous alumnus of WUOL and Louisville native, Bob Edwards, had started his career at WHEL in New Albany. In 1974, he became co-host of the National Public Radio program *All Things Considered*, where he met fellow Kentuckian Noah Adams. Edwards was named the host of the new NPR early show *Morning Edition* and in 1986 conducted a three-day audio tour of his hometown on the NPR network.

With three public stations in the city, talks began in 1993 on a possible merger of WFPL, WFPK and WUOL to save dollars on operation and fund-raising. While all the stations have seen growth in audience and budgets through the years, the duplication of some services is obvious. Gerry Weston, for many years manager of the library-owned stations, was named president of Public Radio Partnership, a non-profit group formed to facilitate the merger.

The stations will remain separate in programming and identity but will have many management and office operations in common. The WUOL tower is in New Albany, and the library stations' antennas, downtown, but planning began in 1994 to put all the antennas on a common "stick."

In 1988, another FM non-commercial channel was added in Louisville when WJIE went on the air at 88.5 MHz. The contemporary Christian station is licensed to Evangel schools, Okolona, as a non-profit corporation with studios on Fern Valley Road.

## Louisville Metro Station Log

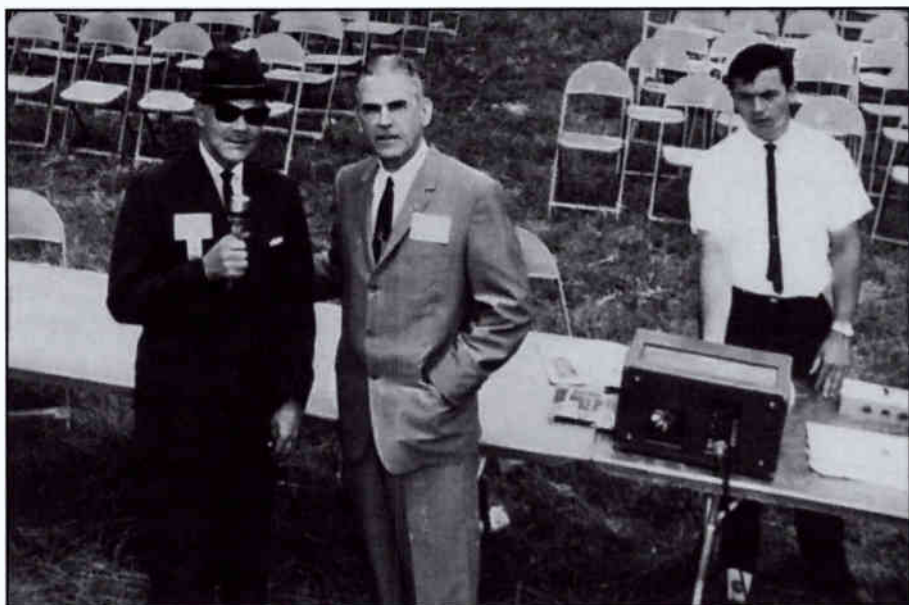
Louisville WHAS AM-840; WAMZ-FM 97.5; WKJK-FM 98.9 (Salem)  
WAVG AM-970; WXVW AM-1450 (Jeffersonville)  
WWKY AM-790; WVEZ-FM 106.9; WTFX-FM 100.5  
WFIA AM-900; WQLL-FM 103.9; WHKW-FM 107.7 (Corydon)  
WRES AM-1080; WDJX-FM 99.7  
WTMT AM-620  
WXKN AM-680 (Newburg)  
WLLV AM-1240  
WLOU AM-1350  
WDGS AM-1290 (New Albany)  
WXLN AM-1570 (New Albany)  
WRKA-FM 103.1 (St. Matthews)  
WLRS-FM 102.3  
WQMF-FM 95.7 (Jeffersonville); WQNF-FM 105.9 (Valley Station)  
WLSY-FM 101.7 (Jeffersontown); WGZB-FM 96.5 (Corydon)  
WFPL-FM 89.3 n/c; WFPK-FM 91.9 n/c  
WUOL-FM 90.5 n/c  
WNAS-FM 88.1 n/c (New Albany)  
WJIE-FM 88.5 n/c

Stations listed on the same line indicate common ownership.

\*n/c - non-commercial station.

## West Central (District 4)

The first radio signal originating from this region of the Bluegrass state was radiating from the tower at WTCO in Campbellsville in March 1948 with studios located at the Citizens Bank Building. The South Central Broadcasting company with H.T. Parrott as president and James Shacklette as general manager brought it into existence. Two years later, Redman Turner formed Taylor County Broadcasting to put another station on the air in the city. WLCK operated at 1450, and WTCO at 1150. Clifford Spurlock bought into WTCO and became manager in 1954, but one year later helped to arrange a consolidation of the two stations. Stiff competition in such a small town meant changes were necessary. WTCO assumed the 1450 frequency which had 1,000 watts the



Courtesy Tommy Kerr

*Tommy Kerr interviews congressman William Natcher at the opening of Green River Dam. Kerr spent 30 years getting the stories for WTCO, Campbellsville, then later worked for WGRK, Greensburg.*

daytime and the 1150 station at 250 watts full-time, was put on the air the next year in Munfordville, which had desired a station.

WLCK's call letters were later used in Scottsville when Turner and J.B. Crawley built that station in 1958. The new Campbellsville station reorganized as WTCO, retaining the Taylor County Broadcasting corporate name from which the call sign was derived.

Harvey Kingsbury directed technical matters for the station beginning in 1954, and the FM station at 104.1 MHz was built in 1965 to duplicate programming of the AM and bring nighttime radio service to town.

One of the most colorful of the announcers on Campbellsville radio was Tommy Kerr, whose on-air presence in Kentucky encompasses the 1950s to the 1990s, at WTCO then later at Greensburg. For more than 30 years he attracted listeners, often using sound effects to get his points across and when he got tired of the music, sang a little himself.

As the "Old Prospector" he played sounds of the trail, had a morning and noon "round-up" show and did the farm broadcasts for the station. Kerr felt live broadcasts were important and went to great lengths to get on reports from county fairs, tobacco markets and cattle shows. One such attempt gave him his most "hair-raising" experience when he was struck by lightning



while standing on the bed of a cattle truck in a storm holding the mike! He is a past recipient of the Farm Bureau Communicator state award. Kerr was sales manager for many years and remembers writing up good package deals for \$1.50 a spot in the early days. His stated philosophy was simple, "to make people feel a part of the radio and be of service."

In 1978, controlling interest in the corporation was assumed by local businessman, Lowell Caulk. The station had been broadcasting block programming with segments of rock, gospel, country and easy listening, with news and sports coverage.

Caulk made wholesale changes in personnel and modernized the equipment and studios, adding stereo, in anticipation of the biggest change of all, new call letters and new format. On May 5, 1980, folks woke up to a new sound Q-104, WCKQ. Older listeners were quick to voice their displeasure with the make-over by sending letters to the newspaper and calling the station. But Q-104 Rock continued to spark interest with promotions and community involvement and one year later gave the AM a facelift, becoming WKXJ "Kicks Country" with satellite country format.

In November 1985 both stations were sold to businessman George E. Owen, Jr. In 1988, on the 40th anniversary of the station, Owen, in a move celebrating radio heritage, changed the call sign back to WTCO. Jim Jackson was named as general manager for both stations.

The old and new WTCO's have kept a hand in local community events. In 1994, the FM morning man, Trent Ford, and radio veteran Tom McClendon started a spontaneous fund-raiser, when promoting a Jaycees Monte Carlo event, they began selling songs to listeners who wanted to contribute but couldn't attend the fund-raiser. Before it was over, the station added almost \$4,000 to the coffers for the Jaycee project that was turned over to Kosair Children's Hospital in Louisville.

In the 1990s, Owen's Heartland Broadcasting launched further improvements, making application for a WCKQ power increase and acquiring nearby Russell Springs FM 92.7, calling it WTCO-FM with an all-country format. However, in 1995, he sold 92.7 to Shoreline Communications, Mark Royce and Michael Harris.

Another Campbellsville FM was added in 1994, with WVLC-99.9 licensed to Patricia Rodgers, and began broadcasting with all digital equipment at 25,000 watts. The call letters stood for the "Voice of Lake Country," with the tower some 14 miles from the studios, licensed to Mannsville.

Elizabethtown radio has produced some noteworthy people in Kentucky including U.S. Senator Walter "Dee" Huddleston, who became manager of

WIEL in 1952. An attempt to get a frequency at 1450 had been denied by the FCC in 1949, but Elizabethtown Broadcasting stockholders were able to get permission for their station three years later at 1400 kHz with 1,000 watts.

Five men originally purchased stock in the company, with Judge William Hodges, president. The Hodges heirs and heirs of C.A. Diecks still are majority shareholders. Huddleston served as manager until 1972 when he was elected to the Senate, and Bill Walters, who had been sales manager took over. Huddleston said he made \$150 a week when hired in 1952 with a bonus for any profits the station made. He said E'town listeners well remember announcer Bill Harris and Dick Curtis with all the sports and play-by-play. Tom Baldwin served him as chief engineer through the period. The station went from block programming to contemporary music with heavy periods of local news often up to four hours a day with Bill Earle, news director. Ron Boone came on board in the early 1970s in news and later went to WRZI, radio neighbor in Elizabethtown.

In 1976, Walters arranged the purchase of former WLCB-FM in Hodgenville and changed it to WKMO, which became the all-country sister station of WIEL. Joe Myers' Lincoln County Broadcasting had built the station at 106.3 in 1974. Charlie Harper came to E'town to serve as president and general manager of the dual WIEL/WKMO operation in 1989. WIEL is now all news/talk and the only AM station in Hardin County.

WSAC, the other standard broadcast station in the county, was moved north to Bullitt County as WBUL after W & B Broadcasting, Bill Walters, president and Mike Baldwin, general manager, purchased the AM and WSAC-FM in 1984. They sold off the AM, and WBUL eventually became inactive, while the FM changed to WASE. Walters was returning to the city after owning and operating WEKY in Richmond, and Baldwin had been a salesman for WIEL since the early 1970s.

WSAC-1470 had been founded in 1955 as a 1,000-watt daytimer by Byron Cowan and Gerald W. Howard, with Cowan as president. Bill Harris was general manager and James R. Cowan, sales manager. The station, located at the entrance to Fort Knox, had call letters standing for "We Serve the Armored Center." The mostly rock programming was aimed at the large military compound.

When it went on the air, WSAC had one of the finest studios anywhere, according to Greg Happel, who engineered for many stations in Kentucky. Byron Cowan used his mobile unit extensively to cover news, and in 1957 was assigned a position in Queen Elizabeth's motorcade when she made a state visit to Williamsburg, Virginia. The exclusive coverage was given because a Fort Knox unit served as honor guard.

Cowan took over as manager in 1957 and began writing and broadcasting editorials, many often controversial. In 1964, he became nationally-known for a campaign the station launched against the deplorable conditions in several Hardin County schools. Cowan won several other national and state awards for his editorials he aired regularly, one year broadcasting more than 150 of them. But, he admitted they cost the station advertising dollars when he stepped on the wrong toes. He was threatened many times with harm and harassed with suit attempts. He often vilified his fellow radio operators, pointing out their misgivings.

His experiences may point to the reason most stations don't often get involved in editorializing. The FCC's attitude toward editorials shifted from not allowing stations to be advocates prior to 1949, then encouraging stations to take stands, while allowing for responses from opposing opinions.

WSAC-FM was started by Cowan in 1967 at 105.5. It later was called WWWW, progressive rock, starting in 1978. The station was then converted to WASE when purchased by Walters who opted to program it with a more Elizabethtown and regional flair. A lite rock format was switched to country in 1992.

Another FM station, WLVK-103.5 licensed to Radcliff in Hardin County, was built by Walters and Baldwin, but by 1995 was not on the air, pending legal hearings brought on by other area stations raising questions about the dual ownership of the two FMs.

In Elizabethtown in late 1969, Bill Evans joined a small group of state broadcasters operating FM-only stations, when he came from working in Louisville with Keith Reising to build WQXE.

WQXE started at 106.3 MHz, later moved to 100.1 and then 98.5. It was Elizabethtown's first FM and the partners chose a blend of adult contemporary music for the format. Evans selected the call-letter combination because he had heard a station in Georgia while attending Elkins Radio School that called itself "Quicksie." He vowed that if he ever owned a station, he wanted to arrange the calls so the same nickname would be appropriate. Besides the music, Evans believes a formula for success of the station has been the service philosophy of "doing some good in the neighborhood." The station has worked to raise money for many causes in the region. Country music star John Conlee had a deejay shift with "Quicksie" in the early 1970s. George Bratcher is another name linked to E'town radio, working at WQXE and other area stations.

Evans and Reising branched out in 1983 by purchasing WLCB-AM 1430 in Hodgenville and operating it for six years. It was assigned to the town of Buffalo and had been a country station since going on the air in 1974 with

1,000 watts, as one of the few AM stations assigned in the state during the decade of the seventies. They changed the call letters to WXAM for X-citing AM radio, and went to a lite rock format.

WXAM is now owned by Broadcast Partners, Inc., Mark Goodman, president and general manager, who operates it, along with WRZI, a lite adult/contemporary FM station licensed to Vine Grove at 101.5 MHz. WXAM is heavy with Larue County news and school sports.

The permit for WRZI was originally obtained by Keith Reising for Buffalo, but finding it would fit in Hardin County, he moved it to Vine Grove and sold out to Goodman who went on the air in 1994. The WRZI studios are in Elizabethtown and WXAM is operated out of Hodgenville.

Goodman for many years was a studio engineer for the Pepper-Tanner Company in Memphis, Tennessee. That company was very active in Kentucky, selling many stations their first production libraries and jingles.

The Bullitt County FM station, 105.1, at Shepherdsville began as a construction permit for WWQE in 1992 but was obtained by Owensboro on the Air, which started it up as rock-WEHR.

Chuck Shuffett and Pete Hulse had been in Glasgow working in radio when they decided to head north and start a station in Marion County, each of them putting up \$7,500. They built WLBN in 1953, constructing the concrete building that housed the station themselves, block by block. Hulse looks back at what must have been quite a site, two old country boys, trying to put together a dream. One of the first announcers was Alan Baker, who would begin a career stretching over 40 years for the station, in programming, sales and news.

Hulse and Shuffett sold the station to a group of Elizabethtown stockholders forming Lebanon-Springfield Broadcasting in 1957, and J.T. Whitlock became general manager. "Dee" Huddleston of WIEL was part of the ownership that upgraded the 1590 AM station to 1,000 watts and built the companion WLSK-FM at 100.9 in 1979.

Whitlock purchased the station with J.B. Crawley and Cherry Gibson in 1985. Gibson, a native of England, had started in radio doing local news and homemaker programs. WLBN became a central source of news for Marion and Washington counties and later sports on FM. The two stations have programmed separately a majority of the time, eventually going with country on FM and adult contemporary on AM.

Whitlock's community connections in the town that is in the "center of Kentucky" netted WLBN accolades for its service locally. Whitlock's career of involvement as Kentucky Broadcasters Association executive director

made him one of the busiest broadcasters around and a key figure on many state government committees.

The Lebanon-Springfield area saw a new station enter the market when WMQQ was built in Springfield in early 1989 with partners Henry Lackey and Ed O'Daniel, who were both in the Kentucky Senate. Margaret O'Daniel took the general manager post and the station went on a satellite oldies format at 102.7 FM. Lackey later sold out his shares to the O'Daniels.

When South Central Broadcasting Company merged in Campbellsville in 1955, the 1150 frequency was moved to Munfordville in Hart County and WLOC went on the air in June 1956, with J.W. Pickett, manager. The call letters designate the area as "Land of the Caves." The company sold the stock in 1960 to Jim Berry who then built WLOC-FM in 1964 at 102.3 MHz. When you tuned to WLOC, you were likely to hear Berry, who wore most of the hats at the station, as well as being the mayor of the town. Berry got help in sports later from his son Joey. Wayne Sims handled the technical duties for nearly 30 years. The station simulcast AM/FM with a variety format, including gospel on Sunday.

One program called *Chittlin' Time* would produce the popular country group of the 1990s, The Kentucky Headhunters, who appeared on the station and recorded a video there. Another live program on the station originated from Hodgenville's Lincoln Jamboree, where a host of stars have performed. The jamboree has been operated by Joel Ray Sprowls for more than 40 years. Sprowls worked the airwaves for WTCO and WLOC.

The radio company suffered some financial and legal problems following Jim Berry's death and the stations were obtained at auction by the South Central Holding Company in 1992 and became inactive.

Andy Anderson, who owned a chain of movie theatres, was part of the company that held a construction permit for 1320 in Hodgenville in the early 1950s. They decided, however, to build the station in Bardstown, as WBRT and went on the air in December 1954. It was sold to Lawrence Adams just two years later, and in 1966 was acquired by a group of investors forming Nelson County Broadcasting, Ronald Felty, president.

Tom Issac, who worked news, sales, and programming for the station since the mid-1960s, eventually became president and majority stockholder in the company and put WOKH on the air in 1979 as the sister FM with adult contemporary music, making his AM-WBRT top country. WBRT at 1320 is a 1,000-watt daytime, and WOKH, at 96.7 features the station's extensive sports programming.

WOKH stands for "My Old Kentucky Home," Bardstown's top tourist attraction. News and information have been strong suits for the Bardstown stations, with large blocks of local and county news daily. Award-winning coverage has been provided by the staff including a 1979 live broadcast of President Jimmy Carter's "Town Hall" visit to the city, sending feeds to stations around the country. Lou Mattingly, veteran sales executive, also hosts the popular *Community News*.

January 1959 saw Leitchfield's WMTL debut at 1580 with 250 watts. It was owned by Rough River Broadcasting with James Shacklette as general manager. The station has been controlled by owners from three prominent Grayson County families over the years. Porter Wallace became early president of the corporation, succeeded by Judge Kenneth H. Goff, who became owner in 1976, and in 1994 Mark and Dennis Buckles formed Heritage Media to buy the AM and FM.

The full-service AM was joined in 1967 by the FM at 104.9. Several Kentucky broadcasters who went on to station ownership, including Bill Evans and Jim Wooley, labored at Leitchfield in the early years. Through the various changes though, one stable factor has been Dave Thompson.

His name is usually mentioned in the same breath as WMTL. He came in 1966 from WANY and has remained on the air since. He signs the station on and often signs it off with his sports play-by-play at night of local high school games.

In 1978, a decision was made to separate the FM becoming WKHG (Judge Goff's initials) and program adult contemporary. WMTL remained country and both eventually went to CD automation with live morning segments. Ten years after the separation, a new tower was erected and AM received a power boost to 500 watts while moving to 870 on the dial.

They built the FM first then the AM, the reverse of normal order, for Brandenburg radio. The stockholders of Meade County Broadcasting signed WMMG-FM on the air in August 1972 at 93.5 MHz. With an AM construction freeze imposed by the government, an AM station had to wait until 1984, but made its debut as a 250-watt daytimer at 1140 that year, simulcasting the FM programming.

James Greer and Chester Medley were two of the several shareholders and proponents of getting radio for the town. Greer became judge-executive, and Medley served as the station's general manager for a time. Joe Myers was the first G.M. The owner's initials are involved in the call letters which were often promoted to say "we make Meade County grow."

The young station suffered a setback two years after going on when the infamous 1974 tornado struck. Bob Jones was serving as news director when his town became the focus of national news. Unfortunately, he couldn't do much reporting as the storm that ripped through that area destroyed the station. A mobile home at the high school housed the temporary studios with a 15-foot antenna to basically cover the city until reconstruction was completed on the original site.

Jones recalls the tower was guaranteed not to be blown off its foundation. The foundation stood, but the top beacon of the twisted tower was driven three feet into the ground by the swirling winds!

Jones served as manager for several years, left, then returned to WMMG in 1994 when the station was purchased by businessman Chris McGee. A few months after buying WMMG, McGee also acquired WOCC-AM 1550 in Corydon, Indiana, with plans to feed that station from his Kentucky signal.

WMMG AM/FM has been mostly country, although some other formats have been tried. Local sports is carried in the evening, and for about five years in the 1970s, Bob Jones was known as the "voice of the Kentucky Bourbons." The Bourbons, playing out of Louisville, were the state's professional slow-pitch softball team. WMMG, with a signal into Jefferson County, began carrying the home and away games, and did quite well with them, according to Jones, when softball popularity was at a peak in those days.

Jim Wooley and Jo Ann Keenan had worked for WHIC in Hardinsburg, and both had been managers there. In 1992, they formed a partnership to compete against their former station. WXBC went on the air at 104.3 MHz with digital studios and a blend of country, lite rock and oldies, and took on local news and high school sports. They were soon grabbing a good share of the county audience.

WHIC-FM had become a class C with a more regional focus and country music. WHIC-AM had been a part of Breckinridge County since 1968 when the 250-watt daytimer signed on at 1520. Two years later, the FM began simulcasting the variety format at 94.3 MHz.

Wooley had been manager for the stockholders of Breckinridge Co. Broadcasting for much of the early history of the station. Keenan started as program director, later becoming station manager. Alan Aldridge, who went on the Kentucky Network, was news director and farm reporter in the 1980s.

In 1982, Terry Forcht purchased the stations as he began acquiring radio properties and forming his Key Broadcasting group. By this time, WHIC-AM had obtained its power increase to 1,000 watts.

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cations for the FM, planning to expand coverage. In 1994, AM/FM was total country, with 50 kilowatts for WHIC-94.

Completing the area radio picture is non-commercial WBFI, owned and operated by the Bethel Fellowship Church and Christian School in McDaniels. It went on the air with 5 kilowatts at 91.5 in 1987 and maintains an evening schedule, seven days a week with a volunteer staff. The station was started primarily as an educational tool for the school and an outreach ministry of the church which broadcasts local programs in addition to its religious network offerings. Business underwriting and donations help provide the funding.

In the southern area of the district at Greensburg, investors formed VEER Broadcasting to establish WGRK. It signed on March 1972 after engineers Jim Hay and Robert Towers bought out the stock. Hay took sole ownership two years later. Mike Wilson, at age 21, became general manager when the station went on the air, and bought into the company in 1976. A variety of rock and country was heard at the 1540 spot on the dial, and in 1977, FM was completed and simulcasted at 103.1 MHz.

In 1987, Wilson split the stations with WGRK-FM going country and the AM using satellite gold format. The two simulcast part of the morning hours. The AM now has some of the most coveted call letters in the state, WAKY. Wilson grabbed them, the day after the famed Louisville station relinquished control.

Disaster befell Wilson and company in 1976 when a fire gutted the building, throwing them off the air for a week and requiring temporary studios to be set up in a mobile home. Wilson said the fire apparently started when employees emptied an ash tray in the trash in haste on New Year's Eve. They were in a hurry to leave because the phone was ringing off the hook, as the AM daytimer was mandated to sign off the air at sunset while broadcasting the University of Kentucky football game at the very moment a local boy, Mike Deaton, was getting into the Peach Bowl with 20 seconds remaining!

WGRK took on a female flavor in the early 1970s when it was one of the first stations with three women deejays, including Wilson's wife, Joy, who remains at work at the control board and in sales.

"From My Deathbed to the Nations" is the title of the booklet written by Don Powell chronicling the story of radio station WJCR and their worldwide shortwave stations. It stands for "Where Jesus Christ Reigns" and Powell gives credit to the Lord for saving him from heart disease to fulfill his dream.

The 100-kilowatt, non-commercial FM at 90.1 went on the air in February 1990 programming mostly southern and country gospel, and has translator booster stations in Owensboro, Hopkinsville and Clarksville, Tennessee.

Powell had been an evangelist all his life in the U.S. and overseas, when he and his wife Gerri went looking for real estate anywhere they thought they might be able to establish a radio station. They ended up coming from Florida to Hart County in 1986, not knowing a single person to take up residence on a 256-acre farm and make plans to start a station. Those plans had to be put on hold while Don Powell recovered from heart surgery and a bacterial infection that doctors declared terminal. The applications were re-filed with the FCC in 1988.

All the towers for their two shortwave stations and the FM are located right on their property near Millerstown, where they operate the non-denominational facility with the help of Gary and Wanda Richardson, Stan and Mary Weisbrod, plus some other paid staff and volunteers.

The Powells put up everything they had and obtained a bank loan to start the project they believed God was guiding. No large group backs the effort, just listener support and as the Powells say, "help from above." The Powells still had the goal of broadcasting to the world and had considered satellite when they learned that two-thirds of the world listen to shortwave sets.

The shortwave station frequencies, rented from the FCC, are directed one on the 21-meter band to China and the other at 41 meters to Europe and have been broadcasting since 1991. The programs are heard in more than 148 countries according to letter response. With the help of Chinese friends in Florida and in Kentucky, the stations broadcast much of the programming in the native Mandarin Chinese. Tape automation systems and some simulcasting allow the Powells to operate all three stations. WJCR is laying plans to construct TV channel 65 in Elizabethtown to add to their unique broadcast ministry.

## West Central Station Log

Bardstown	WBRT AM-1320; WOKH-FM 96.7
Brandenburg	WMMG AM-1140; WMMG-FM 93.5
Campbellsville	WTCO AM-1450; WCKQ-FM 104.1; WVLC-FM 99.9 (Mannsville)
Elizabethtown	WIEL AM-1400; WKMO-FM 106.3 (Hodgenville) WQXE-FM 98.5 WKUE-FM 90.9 n/c (Bowling Green, WKU) WRZI-FM 101.5 (Vine Grove); WXAM AM-1430 (Buffalo)
Fort Knox	WASE-FM 105.5; WLVK-FM 103.5 (Radcliff)
Greensburg	WAKY AM-1540; WGRK-FM 103.1
Hardinsburg	WHIC AM-1520; WHIC-FM 94.3 WXBC-FM 104.3
Lebanon	WLBN AM-1590; WLSK-FM 100.9
Leitchfield	WMTL AM-870; WKHG-FM 104.9
McDaniels	WBFI-FM 91.5 n/c
Munfordville	WLOC AM-1150; WLOC-FM 102.3
Shepherdsville	WBUL AM-1470 WEHR-FM 105.1
Springfield	WMQQ-FM 102.7
Upton	WJCR-FM 90.1 n/c

Stations listed on the same line indicate common ownership.

\*n/c - non-commercial station.

## Southern Kentucky (District 5)

On December 6, 1991, WLBJ, the "Pioneer Voice of Southern Kentucky," was silenced. The station signed off the air as Dean Maggard, engineer and general manager who had been with the station since the late 1950s, announced it was being closed for economic reasons. Bahakel Communications of North Carolina, the owner, was selling the sister FM station, WCBZ, to Target Communications of Georgia. Maggard told the local news media that "AMs are a dying breed over the country. You can hardly give them away."

WLBJ had moved to 1410 on the dial in 1950 when it increased power to 5,000 watts, under the direction of general manager Ken Given. He had operated the companion WBON-FM until taking it off the air in 1954. Cy Bahakel, a group owner, purchased WLBJ from L.B. Jenkins in 1955, for

\$60,000, taking control January 1, 1956. The FM at 96.7 was put back on the air in 1965.

WLBJ was one of the first affiliates of the Mutual network and utilized that programming along with many live shows in the late 1940s and early '50s, with music by such groups as Odis Blanton and the Blue Star Rangers, and Jim Sacka and the Hilltoppers. Blanton stayed on as announcer and salesman. Joe Hamilton was chief announcer beginning in the mid-1940s, later moving to Louisville where he showcased his wit and storytelling on the program, *Hamilton, Ky.*

The block programming on WLBJ gradually changed to rock, then country and in the latter years, nostalgia music. The loss of the station in 1991 was particularly sad for the senior citizens of the Bowling Green area who expressed their regrets in letters to the editor at not having a true "oldies" station any longer. Maggard had separated the AM and FM stations in 1979 with automated adult contemporary programming for the FM, which later changed its call letters to WCBZ.

WLBJ was one of the first stations caught in the middle of some alleged political shenanigans. In August 1949, the station aired election tabulations live, but had left the mikes on in the room after counting had recessed that night and boxes were sealed. The next day, a tape was played that apparently recorded sounds of tampering with the boxes after hours. Later, the losers in the race filed suit charging election law violations, and the four ballot guards sued the station, claiming defamation of their character!

After purchasing WCBZ, Target converted the station to WBZD, taking the logo of the "Buzzard" after Cadiz, Kentucky, had dropped it, and started playing rock music. Much to the chagrin of many of younger folks in the community, the station abandoned that format in 1993, about the same time another station in the city, WDNS, switched from classic rock to country, leaving Western Kentucky University students and rock fans without an FM station in town!

WBZD then became a more land-based animal, the "Beaver," with the Russellville call letters WBVR moving to the Bowling Green station under a unique networking arrangement where country programming originated from new owners, WRUS studios in Russellville, feeding the transmitters of WBVR in Bowling Green and WVVR in Hopkinsville.

The Russellville FM 101.1 frequency with 100 kilowatts which had been known as the "Beaver," was changed to WJCE, "The Juice" with urban contemporary programming. That station is now owned and operated in conjunction with Nashville's WLAC, and targeted to that metro market.

Shortly after the war, WLBJ was joined in the market by WKCT radio, signing on November 1947 at 930 AM licensed to the *Daily News*. The trans-



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mitter was located in the skating rink of the Beech Bend Park. The 1,000-watt station received directional 500-watt authority for nighttime broadcasts in 1950, and went to 5,000 watts daytime in 1983. The newspaper has maintained the ownership through the years, headed during the time by J. Ray Gaines and then John B. Gaines, as president.

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represent anything, although a lot of folks thought they were pretty close to standing for the Western State Teachers College, as the local university was known back then. When rules required a first-class operator at the transmitter, West remembers taking bookkeeping work from the station to the evening job to try to stay awake while monitoring the equipment.

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With WLBJ getting the head start, WKCT struggled in the early years for listener support in the community, but a strong commitment to local and farm news soon enabled them to get their fair share of the adult audience and earn several AP news awards through the years with Al Arbogast, the local respected news voice.

WKCT is the only Kentucky station that applied to experiment with the new expanded upper band AM frequencies, approved by the FCC.

Bowling Green's third station arrived on the scene at the height of rock 'n' roll, and was soon capturing the teens' ears with its beat. WBGN, 1340 with 1,000 watts day and 250 night, was started by Bowling Green Broadcasting, J. Paul Brown, president, and went on the air in November 1959. However, a buyout occurred in 1963, with Bob Proctor leaving WLBJ to become managing partner. Brown remained as chief engineer for many years. Proctor was joined by Bud Tyler and Barry Williams, both whom labored on the air and then in management through the station's history.

Two other key figures in Bowling Green radio have been Gene Holly and Hank Brosche, both with stints at WKCT and WBGN. Holly was known for his ability in programming and working with the students and young people, teaching many who have gone on to success in major markets. Brosche was a top-flight account executive and sales manager.

WBGN's format was not just rock, but heavy community promotion as well. Their walk-a-thons annually drew hundreds of participants in the mid-1970s, raising many times more than \$15,000.

In 1986, a local group, Hilltopper Broadcasting, started WBLG-FM, licensed to nearby Smiths Grove. Those call letters had belonged to the Lexington AM. The 50-kilowatt station went adult contemporary and took the nickname the "Gator 107." WBGN-AM was purchased in 1988 and both stations are now under the auspices of Hilltopper, Inc., Wes Strader, president, and Barry Williams, general manager.

Strader is best known as the voice of Western Kentucky University sports. He started doing games for WKCT in 1964, when both LBJ's Bud Tyler and BGN's Bob Proctor were also doing the play-by-play for their stations. Tyler went to WBGN, and WLBJ dropped the games, leaving Tyler and Strader following the WKU action and battling for listeners and sponsors for more than 15 years until the university put the games up for exclusive rights bidding in 1982. Strader said folks saw them as strong competitors, but they were actually good friends, usually riding to the games together. Strader now calls all action for the Hilltopper network of up to a dozen stations, and Barry Williams has done Lady Topper games since 1982.

Strader said his biggest thrill was seeing Western beat UK and go to the Final Four in 1971 with Jim McDaniels. He was also there earlier when the first black players debuted in the OVC with the great team of Clem Haskins, Dwight Smith and later Greg Smith. The biggest tragedy in Strader's mind was certainly the auto accident in 1967 that killed Dwight Smith on the verge of his pro career. Strader said his relationship with all the Western coaches through the years has been "tremendous."

In addition to college hoops, Strader had a string of 32 consecutive Kentucky state tournaments called, often going from the Sweet Sixteen to a college game and then back. The sports world has considered Strader a great play-by-play man, but as a farm boy from Hiseville, population 350, he said he never wanted to head for the big markets, content with the closeness of small-town life. "I just love it here," declares Strader, who hopes to continue to bring folks Western games as long as he is healthy.

Bowling Green is home to the state's most extensive network of non-commercial public radio stations, headquartered at Western Kentucky University.

WKYU came on the air in November 1980 at 88.9, as the first public radio station for the area. Dr. Chuck Anderson, who had started with the university in 1967 as a teacher, got the school involved in radio with a campus carrier-current station in 1975 and laid plans to expand to full-service FM. He guided the work of the Communications Department in building the new station. The call letters fit the situation perfectly but were rather hard to obtain, since Anderson had to get release from the Coast Guard, which owned the call letters for a ship at sea.

The 100-kilowatt WKYU was joined in 1985 by satellite station WDCL FM 89.7 Somerset, also 100 kilowatts with transmitter and tower in Adair County to serve that southern Kentucky region rebroadcasting the programs of the parent station. Five years later, the university's network was broadened with additional stations in the Henderson-Owensboro market at 89.5 WKPB, and Elizabethtown 90.9 WKUE. The Henderson call sign designates Western Kentucky public broadcasting, the Elizabethtown stations adds the "E," Somerset is actually named for a person, Daniel Cole, chairman of the Western board that Anderson said has been very supportive of all the communications faculty's dreams and plans. Those plans also bore fruit with WKYU-TV, public television on campus, in 1989.

David Wilkinson has been radio manager since 1980 and oversees the network and the extensive news, and local public affairs programming offered by the stations in addition to the National Public Radio shows. Music ranges from classical to jazz and folk. WKYU radio has received



several state KBA and AP news honors and a national award for an agriculture documentary.

Many Western students receive training and experience on the student-operated 100-watt station, WWHR-FM 91.7, which signed on in 1988, with rock and alternative music.

Bowling Green's other non-commercial station has a slightly different mission, as the Christian Voice of Kentucky WCVK came into being in 1986, with Joseph Timberlake, minister of the First Assembly of God Church, as president of a new non-profit group seeking to bring Christian radio to the area. Contemporary Christian music and teaching programs are a part of the daily schedule. The station operates at 14 kilowatts on 90.7 MHz with an additional translator installed in Owensboro in 1993. Dave Queen, general manager, said the budget pays a staff of announcers, which often includes many WKU students. Support is received from donations and underwriting.

One of the first post-war stations in the state was Glasgow Broadcasting Company's WKAY (With Kentucky Around You), going on the air in September 1946 with Gordon Brown, president, and Bill Vaughn, manager. The original board of directors, led by majority stockholder Guy Comer, agreed that any profits from the station for the first five years would be donated to Glasgow Community Hospital. The 250-watt station operated at 1490 kHz, and with steel in short supply after the war, the first 150-foot tower was built by Ed Lockwood, engineer, out of old cast iron oil well casings.

The station was located about a mile out in the country on Happy Valley Road, an area that 50 years later, folks figure is actually closer to being downtown Glasgow! Despite not being associated with a network, the station managed to carry some of the early popular shows for the people such as *Amos 'n' Andy* and *Bing Crosby*. The Lions Club began a radio tradition with auctions at WKAY in 1947, raising money for the Polio Foundation.

Clovis Sadler arrived at WKAY in 1948 and his wife Moena started in 1953. They were the main force behind the stations, later joined by son Reggie. They became full owners of the AM station and WGGC-FM in 1971.

Through the years, Sadler and engineer John Wood had been technical innovators, building the FM facility in 1961 and often piecing together equipment from parts and making ideas come to life. The AM station upgraded to 1,000 watts day and 250 night. They gradually increased the power of the 95.1 station through the years, and by 1985 were 100 kilowatts.

Separate programming was employed on the FM in the early 1970s, becoming one of the first southern Kentucky stations to put country on FM,

with WKAY remaining middle-of-the-road music. The FM call letters stood for Glasgow's Guy Comer. Comer was a noted businessman and owned, among other interests, the National Stores chain out of Nashville.

Another name associated with WKAY has been Hank Royce, who worked at the station starting in 1953, hired by program director Carolyn Biggers, who later became his wife. Royce was a well-known sportscaster, including many years doing the state tournaments for the Glasgow area.

Royce's son, Henry, who had started in radio at competitor WCDS, returned to Glasgow in 1988 to purchase the hometown station changing it to WCLU, a full service AM, with plans to build a new FM at 94.1 MHz. Royce moved the studios to West Main Street in Glasgow while the tower is still at the original location. The WGGC-FM studios are at the AM tower site and remained under the ownership of Moena Sadler, but were leased in 1994 to Bill Evans of WQXE, Elizabethtown, to operate the country giant. The FM transmitter and tower had been relocated at Meador in Allen County when the station was upgraded to higher-powered class C.

Royce's call letters for WCLU actually are taken from his children's names, and had earlier been in use by the Covington station.

Glasgow's second AM station was born October 1962. WCDS 1440 was owned by John Barrick, who had been sales manager at WKAY. Ten years later, 105.5 FM joined the family as WOVO. The Barricks were active in the station for nearly 30 years before selling in 1990. John named the station for his wife Sarah, and their children, Christy, Cindy, David and Danny — WCDS. Sarah served as general manager through the ownership period, with sales assistance through all those years from Ann Morgan. John worked the news, sports and public service end including owning his own helicopter for local news coverage. In 1967, the station became the first to utilize weather radar, black and white at the time.

The AM station was block programming with a variety of music. Barrick said the station tried to do a lot of different things, "whatever others weren't doing." For example, while the other stations had all religion on Sunday, Barrick donated one hour to a local church and then ran "good music" programs the rest of the day. When the FM went on the air, the block programming concept moved to WOVO, and WCDS became country.

The station involved itself in many community promotions and won several AP awards for news. One fun event they conducted was having people jump into the station's portable jet-air booth and try to catch all the dollar bills you could in an allotted time. The booth toured the grand openings and special events in town.

When the stations were purchased by Ward Communications, WOVO

became WWWQ, contemporary hit radio. It had upped power to 25 kilowatts and moved to 95.3. WCDS-AM was heavily damaged by a tornado in 1991, and has never returned to the air.

In Adair County, Columbia's WAIN radio was started by Tri-County Broadcasting, S.C. Bybee, president, in 1951 at 1270 at 1,000 watts. Oris Gowen was program director, and Lanier Burchett was commercial manager. Lewis Owens served the station as chief engineer before moving to Lexington's WLAP. WAIN became the only commercial station in Kentucky where controlling interest was owned by a college.

Rev. Clifford Spurlock, a graduate of Lindsey-Wilson College, decided to donate some of his stock to the school, and they opted to purchase some as well, later also buying out Bybee. The presidents of the college then actually served as president of the board of directors. Spurlock continued to help the station, and also did religious programs for them for several years. In addition, there was a direct line to the college for the morning broadcasts of their chapel services.

But the station was a commercial operation, and a successful one, paying dividends for the college through its period of ownership of more than 20 years. Ed Cundiff was in management through that time, and had started with the station in 1957. He was able to build new studios and also put on WAIN-FM in 1968 at 93.5 to bring the county nighttime service.

Cundiff was a busy man, working news, air shifts and sports, doing not only local and surrounding county high school games, but also Lindsey-Wilson action. He left in 1978 to take over the reins at WLCB in Hodgenville and later worked for the state park system.

By 1983, the stock had been obtained by Terry Forcht's Key Broadcasting Group, and the AM/FM country facilities have been guided by Louise Wooten since 1987.

WRUS-610 AM in Russellville went on the air in August 1953 with Roth Hook, president of South Kentucky Broadcasters, the licensee. Hook, a group owner, along with Charlie Stratton built the station. W.P. Sosh became involved two years later and was president and general manager until the station was turned over to his son, long-time program and sports director, Lon Sosh, in 1983.

WRUS-FM was put on the air in March 1965 at 101.1 MHz. The 100-kilowatt FM station later separated as rock station WAKQ. Keymarket Communications acquired the stations two years later and FM became country music power WBVR "The Beaver" with Bill McGinnis, general manager.

McGinnis and the group then masterminded a change that had WRUS, Inc., acquire 100.3 Hopkinsville, and 96.7 in Bowling Green, switching the calls to WVVR and WBVR respectively, programming both from Russellville. Keymarket took the FM 101 to Nashville with an urban format.

For years, Russellville had the tallest Kentucky radio tower at 1,047 feet. The new FM 101-WJCE, farther south in Tennessee, stretches 1,289 feet.

W.P. Sosh's name has been associated with Russellville radio since the mid-1950s, but most people called him "Winkey." He said he got the name because he was a basketball official for 23 years, and "I guess people thought I could only see out of one eye!"

Don Neagle has been with WRUS since 1958 in news, sales, as an announcer and later as manager of the AM-talk radio. Neagle started out at \$65 a week and thought he was rich. He reports the emphasis for the station has always been news with ballgames at night. In the early 1960s, the station had segments of country in the morning, pop in the afternoon and easy listening at night. He remembers one problem was exactly how to classify Elvis Presley. They finally decided to play him on all the shows.

The newspaper in Simpson County is called the *Franklin Favorite* and the radio station, started by the paper, would like to feel that's the way listeners feel about them. The city weekly, the seventh oldest newspaper in the state, put WFKN radio on in April 1954, with L.L. Valentine, president and general manager. Twenty years later the station was acquired by the *Gleaner-Journal* of Henderson when the newspaper properties were sold. The radio remains controlled by the local newspaper as a stand alone AM at 1220 with 250 watts with studios located downtown, adjacent to the commercial printing and newspaper headquarters.

Henry Stone, who started at WKCT, came to work at WFKN as news director in 1963. Stone is now general manager of the station that plays a variety of music but rests its success on local news and sports. Stone said the station could never locate an FM frequency for use or find a way to increase power. In the county of 15,000 people it is the source of daily news supplementing the weekly paper. The advertising departments are separate, but they often work together on news reporting. The station in years past has taken many AP awards in every major category and was a state Elkins Award winner for public service in 1967.

Three generations of Specks have kept radio station WANY modulating during its lifetime, which began in October 1958 in the small town of Albany. Darrell Speck had developed a thirst for radio while working for the

Monticello station and playing in a band. When he returned from a hitch in the Navy, his dad Cecil had a surprise for him — he was building a station for his son to work! More than 30 years later, Speck had just retired when he got a call with another not so good surprise — the station's control room equipment had been stolen overnight.

In the intervening years, though, things were more routine for the family. Welby Hoover, who had interested the younger Speck in radio, served as the station's first manager, but moved later to start his own station in Jamestown.

WANY operates at 1390 as a 1,000-watt daytimer, with the FM station at 106.3 joining it in 1966. The stations have simulcast through the years with variety block programming, then mostly country and gospel. Darrell Speck worked as program director, morning man and general manager until his retirement in 1990, when he sold out to two of his sisters. Randy Speck, Darrell's son, has worked at the station since 1977 in news and programming. Elmer Goodman took to the air with a regular live broadcast from nearby Burkesville, and was the popular evening bluegrass deejay for nearly 30 years. Carl Story, a bluegrass/country star, worked at the station for a time as well. Sid Scott has worn many hats for WANY since the beginning, including sports play-by-play, sales, engineer and manager.

Darrell Speck said, "we made a living, but certainly didn't get rich" with the station that became a labor of love for a Clinton County family in the town that's always first in the Kentucky radio logs — alphabetically.

When Campbellsville station WLCK merged with WTCO, the frequency went to Munfordville, but the call letters wound up in Scottsville, where State-Line Broadcasting Co. was formed with Redman Turner, president. Turner and J.B. Crawley brought the town radio service at 1250 kHz with 500 watts in February 1958. Never mind that the call letters meant "We love Campbellsville, Kentucky" — the love was for Scottsville, now.

Bobby Colvin, then Joe Hite and Danny Tabor, had terms as air personalities and general manager until Tabor purchased the station from Crawley in 1985. The FM station had been built in 1967, and Tabor changed the call letters to WVLE for "the 'ville," the shortened version of Scottsville often used by local folk. Tabor soon went to satellite country on 99.3 FM and the AM format was transformed to southern gospel and religion utilizing automation equipment originally purchased for the FM. Tabor, who got started in radio at age 15, has made the station his career, working the streets in sales and from sign-on to play-by-play sports at night providing hometown radio for the southern border community.

Certainly the true “Mom and Pop” radio operation is found in Monroe County at WTKY, Tompkinsville. J.K and Bernice Whittimore can’t remember when they have had a vacation together, or a day off for that matter. Whittimore’s philosophy was to keep overhead at a minimum. One day, a Department of Labor official visited the station to talk with the employees. Whittimore replied that the only one working besides him was his wife at the front desk. Yes, for six years, they operated two separately programmed radio stations seven days a week, 18 hours a day with no employees but themselves.

WTKY-AM 1370 was started in 1960 by WMCV, Inc., the proposed call letters that included owners initials. Some partners dropped out and W.H. and Joe Clark built the station and operated it until sold in 1970 to Whittimore. WTKY-FM went on the air the next year at 92.1 MHz. Whittimore, an engineer, had worked in Tennessee and in Bowling Green, when he bought the station for \$20,000. They used automation to help keep the stations going between 1976 and 1982 with just the dog the only other one that needed to show up each day. They had country on AM and easy listening on FM.

They sold the stations in 1982 and were ready for a rest. While his wife made a trip or two, Whittimore just took it easy. They had to take the stations back two years later and came out of retirement to work WTKY again, and this time even bought another station, WVFB, across the border in Celina, Tennessee.

Whittimore said he just “enjoys the work” and has kept his sanity by constantly tinkering with equipment and projects.

WJRS-FM 103.1 in Jamestown became one of the few FM-only stations in the state in 1966 when it signed on in September of that year. It was licensed to Russell Co. Broadcasters, Richard Fryman, president and chief engineer. Another group from Science Hill held the construction permit for an AM station in Russell Springs and put 1060 WJKY-AM on the air in 1967 but encountered problems.

Welby Hoover, who had come to manage WJRS, became owner of both the AM/FM in 1970 and the Hoover family name would be attached to Jamestown-Russell Springs radio for the next quarter-century.

Hoover had started as an announcer at WFLW in Monticello and worked in Scottsville, Albany and Leitchfield before settling in the Cumberland Lake region. He quickly became involved in many civic matters and Republican politics. He narrowly lost a race for state representative in 1971, served on Jamestown city council, in Congressman Rogers’ field office, and then won a seat in the Kentucky General Assembly in 1986. He passed away, however, in December of that year. His wife won a special election for the seat and served one term. Mae Hoover had worked with her husband at the radio sta-

tions through the years, and assumed the general manager position.

Welby Hoover had involved his stations heavily in the communities with local news and projects like the Fourth of July celebration in town, a food drive for the needy each Christmas and in 1974 organizing a radio-thon for tornado victims. He was honored by the Jaycees, Lions, Kiwanis, Fair Board and other groups for his service.

Hoover made some technical moves with his stations changing FM to 104.9 after erecting a new tower, and getting 2,500 watts for the 1-kilowatt daytimer. In 1995, both WJRS/WJKY are beaming country music, but for many years it was country on FM and AM programmed middle-of-the-road, then oldies.

Russell Springs saw another AM radio beacon go on in 1982 with WIDS at 570 kHz and 500 watts. The station is silent now. It was started by Communication Ideas, Wes Bottom, president, but changed ownership four times in just over a decade with Gil Hammond purchasing it in 1995 with plans for restarting the signal as a gospel voice.

Joe Myers built Morgantown's WLBQ in 1976. He sold the stock of Butler County Broadcasting to Mayor Charles Black in 1979. Black and his wife, Mary Alice, with help from son Mark, have been in charge of the station at 1570 on the dial since then. Black, a former high school band director, has remained mayor and listeners have remained loyal to the AM-only station that has investigated a sister-FM but never adopted one. Folks rely on the local signal for Butler County news, sports and information and a variety of music from the station that is another radio family affair.

WLBQ is one of seven stations in the state limited to the 250-watt allocation. All the others, except Franklin and Morgantown, have co-owned FMs.

Ray Mullinix started in sales at WANY in Albany, and in 1975 moved to Cumberland County to manage a new station, started by WKYR, Inc., in Burkesville. Five years later, he owned majority stock in the firm. WKYR-FM was built in 1988 at 107.9 to supplement the country daytimer 1570 AM, with 1 kilowatt. WKYR brought network news to the area with ABC and set up live reports for local news happenings.

Mullinix mixed some politics with business and in 1988 was elected to the Kentucky House of Representatives from the district. Louise Curtis has handled operations for him at the stations while he attends to legislative matters, the family farm and other interests.

An electrical fire in September 1994 caused extensive damage to the equipment and building, forcing the AM off the air, and FM operations were shifted to a mobile home.

Mullinix continued to win re-election and he said his political career has been enjoyable. Perhaps more enjoyable than radio has become, as he observes that the business has changed greatly since the mid-1970s, with the entanglement of so many stations everywhere you turn and a reduction of home-owned businesses.

In Barren County, north of Glasgow, WKVE went on the air in Cave City in 1975, when Bowling Green partners headed by Barry Williams formed Twin City Broadcasting. The AM-800 station went on the air but was sold to Rick Dubose in 1981 and then acquired by Newberry Broadcasting, Steve Newberry, president, in 1984 and changed to WSMJ.

Newberry built a sister station in 1988 at 106.7 FM, WHHT for the “hot hits” format. He then worked with engineers and attorneys to formulate a move up in power and down on the dial to 103.7 for WHHT and also built FM stations at Horse Cave to the north and Edmonton to the east. He sold WSMJ-AM, which is now listed as dark.

WKNK, “kicking country” in Edmonton, went on the air in April 1990 at 99.1 MHz. WXPC 106.7 in Horse Cave began operation with an oldies format in 1994. Manager Dale Thornhill and Newberry’s wife, Vickie, who have been with the company since its inception, handle operations at the stations. WXPC and WHHT have offices and studios in Glasgow. In 1995, Newberry laid plans to sell WKNK to Edmonton investors.



## Southern Kentucky Station Log

Albany	WANY AM-1390; WANY-FM 106.3
Bowling Green	WKCT AM-930; WDNS-FM 98.3 WLBJ AM-1410 WBGN AM-1340; WBLG-FM 107.1 (Smiths Grove) WBVR-FM 96.7 WCVK-FM 90.7 n/c WKYU-FM 88.9 n/c; WWHR-FM 91.7 n/c
Burkesville	WKYR AM-1570; WKYR-FM 107.9
Cave City	WHHT-FM 103.7
Columbia	WAIN AM-1270; WAIN-FM 93.5
Edmonton	WKNK-FM 99.1
Franklin	WFKN AM-1220
Glasgow	WCLU AM-1490 WCDS AM-1440; WWWQ-FM 105.3 WGGC-FM 95.1
Horse Cave	WXPC-FM 106.7
Jamestown	WJKY AM-1060; WJRS-FM 104.9
Morgantown	WLBQ AM-1570
Russellville	WRUS AM-610 WJCE-FM 101.1 (Nashville)
Russell Springs	WIDS AM-570 WTCO-FM 92.7
Scottsville	WLCK AM-1250; WVLE-FM 99.3
Tompkinsville	WTKY AM-1370; WTKY-FM 92.1

Stations listed on the same line indicate common ownership.

\*n/c - non-commercial station.

## Lexington and Northern Bluegrass (District 6)

WLAP, the "Voice of the Bluegrass," was joined by two other stations in Lexington and one in Versailles shortly after the end of the war. Those four stations would soon become just three, and those three AMs and later their FM counterparts comprised the Lexington radio log for more than 40 years. Many stations licensed to smaller surrounding communities such as Georgetown, Nicholasville, Paris and Winchester have sought to identify with and operate from Lexington.

In 1946, WLXG and WLEX went on the air, and WVLK, licensed to Versailles, signed-on in 1947. By 1952, WLEX and WKLX had merged, taking the WLEX call letters but the frequency and power of WKLX and WVLK had moved to Lexington. In 1958, WLEX was sold and became WBLG.

Through those changes, the call letters of Kentucky's second oldest continuously licensed radio station, WLAP, remained the same but its ownership changed hands many times.

J.E. Willis, who worked as salesman, became general manager for WLAP in 1947 and three years later, he and engineer Henry Locklar worked to complete a major change for their station. They moved from 1450 to 630 on the dial and increased power to 5,000 watts daytime and 1,000 watts directional at night. The antenna system and transmitter building were erected on a new site on Russell Cave Pike. Later on, in 1958 the studios were relocated to Upper Street.

WLAP had coveted more desirable power output for several years, and in 1940 was denied authority to move to 1270 kHz with 1,000 watts. The later proposal to move to 630 with 5,000 watts was challenged before the FCC, as WCPO in Cincinnati and a new station in the Queen City also wanted that frequency. Final authorization for WLAP to make the change was given FCC approval in 1948 following several hearings.

After receiving an FM construction permit in 1940 but not building the station within the old band, WLAP obtained a permit for 102.3 MHz in 1946, but again did not put the station on the air. The third try was a charm, however, as WLAP-FM went on the air October 24, 1950 at 94.5, and remained on the air as the only commercial FM in the Lexington area during the 1950s.

The station's wild ride of ownership changes began in 1957, and the staff would work under four different parent firms over the next six years, starting with Community Broadcasters who purchased the AM, FM and construction permit for WLAP-TV. The group consisted of Frederic Gregg, Jr., Harry Feingold and Charles Wright, with Gregg becoming general manager. They sold a year and half later to John B. Poor of RKO, New York, who then sold out in 1961 to Thoroughbred Broadcasting, Inc., with William R. Sweeney, president. Two years later, the company was bought by a group headed by Dee O. Coe for \$475,000, which was \$75,000 less than the Sweeney group had paid for the properties.

In 1967, Paul Lindsay of Chicago purchased the majority stock and became president. The balance of the stock was purchased in 1968 by Illinois Broadcasting Company (Merrill Lindsay, chairman) and the license was transferred to that group owner's name.

In 1974, under IBC ownership and with Jim Allison as manager, the studios were moved to the transmitter site on Russell Cave Road. The FM power was increased to 50 kilowatts with a new stereo rock automated format. The studio move was a welcome relief for some, as one office tenant of their downtown building had filed suit against the station complaining of “obnoxious noises” coming from the radio suites.

In 1987, the two stations were acquired by group owner Trumper Communications of Chicago. Jeffrey Trumper served as president, and Dan Dorsett became general manager.

Listeners from the 1950s will recall WLAP had Frank Faulconer in the mornings with June McCullough the first female co-host. There was the *Talk of the Town* program with Ann Jones. J.B. Faulconer continued to handle sports and UK play-by-play, followed in 1955 by Earl Boardman. WLAP specialized in reporting on the horse industry and the racing scene.

The station began sponsoring an annual Easter Egg Hunt, each spring with candy eggs and prize eggs redeemable at area businesses. By 1960, the average attendance had grown to more than 10,000, according to historian Lewis Owens.

After leaving the ABC network and block programming schedule of the 1950s, WLAP became known for “middle-of-the-road” music but had rock for teens at night. WAKY in Louisville dominated daytime ratings, but had to go directional at night. Lexington responded with some popular rock shows each evening, including *Denny’s Den* with Denny Mitchell on WLAP and WVLK. Billy Love had a big audience at night for rock before he moved later to Louisville and Owensboro. Lexington listeners will remember Herb Oscar Kent and later Fred Gooding.

WLAP tried NBC then later CBS news affiliation. In the late 1980s, with AM ratings evaporating, WLAP went to satellite-delivered “oldies” music. In early 1994, another change brought a brief try at an all business-news format, but that was dropped in favor of becoming Lexington’s only all sports/talk station, as Sports Radio-630 with call-in shows, network sports and Reds baseball.

WLAP has won several awards for its news and public service efforts through the years. A *Lexington Herald-Leader* editorial praised the station for its work when it was able to remain on the air during the tornadoes and storms of 1974 that created a seven-hour blackout. Personnel from other stations joined in to assist in the effort of keeping people informed.

In 1965, WLAP started a talk show with *Sound Off 630* hosted by John Duvall, who later became vice-president of WLEX-TV. Eric Stevens revived the *Sound Off* show in 1980, tackling issues and calls on the morn-

ing shift. Popular Lexington announcer Dave Murray worked at WLAP and cross-town at WVLK.

Craig Cheatham received the Kennedy Journalism Award in 1987 for his two-week news series on a previously untouched subject, child sexual abuse.

With the non-duplication requirements for FM in the early 1960s, WLAP tried a separate rhythm and blues and black gospel format targeting the minority population in the Lexington market. With commercial sales slow, the company began moving more to a rock mix by the mid-1970s, and away from the black format.

The stereo rock proved successful and by the early 1980s, the station was grabbing top ratings for the market and had gone from automation to some live segments with a now 100-kilowatt signal.

The Power 94.5 rock playlist mellowed some as the station changed call letters in 1993, becoming WMXL, "Mix 94.5" with a more adult-contemporary blend of hits.

The first competition for WLAP came from WKLX in February 1946, then WLEX began broadcasts in November that same year.

WKLX was founded by a group of stockholders first known as Kentucky Broadcasting, then as Fayette Broadcasting. They built the station for an estimated \$50,000 and were given 250 watts at 1300 kHz. Some realignment of the holdings of the station occurred in 1947 as Edward Prichard, local dairy operator and farmer, purchased additional shares. Philip Ardery remained president until 1949 when Prichard took over. Ted Grizzard had been hired as general manager in 1947. Studios started out in the Phoenix Hotel, but later were moved to the Campbell House. Some of the early personnel included Claude Sullivan, Jack Brooks and chief engineer Bill Younts.

Meanwhile WLEX radio was signing on at 1340 on the dial. Central Broadcasting Company had been formed as the licensee, with J. Douglas Gay, Jr. as president. The station was constructed in a converted World War II quonset hut situated on Russell Cave Pike.

With four stations in the market, including WVLK in Versailles, it was apparent some consolidation would be necessary for survival, so when WKLX stock came up for sale, WLEX purchased the outstanding shares for \$70,000 with FCC approval coming in August 1952 contingent upon WLEX surrendering its license for 1340 AM. Central Kentucky Broadcasting, with Gay and H. Guthrie Bell as primary stockholders, now held the license for WKLX. They changed the call letters to WLEX and the station was heard on 1300 kHz with 1,000 watts utilizing the Campbell House studios for two years until moving into facilities on North Limestone.

The three stations were adversaries, fighting for every dollar, and in 1953 WLEX had even filed a suit against WVLK, charging the station with carrying ads that contained misleading information about products!

Bob Kimbro was program director for the young WLEX and for a time lived in a house near the quonset hut and tower. Jean Clos was the first manager. Jim Lounsbury as announcer and Mark Halleck with sports were other early personalities. Later, Cawood Ledford moved from WHLN in Harlan to become sports director and along with others on the staff would also help start the new WLEX-TV beginning in 1955.

Kimbro remembers the station obtaining the new wire recorders that became available after the war. The equipment enabled personnel to record program segments, but was often frustrating to operate. The station carried the big bands live from Joyland Casino in Lexington, a popular dance and music spot. But they were not the first WLEX to go “live” from Joyland though, as a “pirate” station using those call signs had worked from that site a few years earlier, soliciting business over the air. The operators were shut down by the government.

Earl Boyles became vice-president and general manager for WLEX in 1954 and helped lead the company in putting the TV station on the air the following year. In 1958, struggling to keep the new UHF television station going, the company decided to sell the radio station to Roy B. White, Jr. for \$255,000, and in May of that year the call letters were changed to WBLG, signifying Lexington in the “Heart of the Bluegrass.”

Jim Tomblin served in sales and management capacities and Ed Van Hook in programming and news for many years for WBLG. The desire was to be known as the “good-music” station. Buzz Riggins was one of the 1960s morning men, and Dale Wright began Lexington’s first popular talk show, which he later took to Nicholasville and WNVL. Terrell Whitaker had a talk show on TV and radio, as many of the WBLG folks did double duty when TV Channel 62 later went on the air.

WBLG was sold in 1974 to Village Communications of North Carolina, James A. Heavner, president. It actually went for \$20,000 less than White had paid for it 16 years earlier according to FCC records.

Village Communications also purchased WLEX-FM for \$250,000 that same year and soon debuted the album-rocker WKQQ (Double Q). The selection of call letters with “Q” began a new trend that caught on nationwide.

Central Kentucky Broadcasting (Gay-Bell company) had gotten back into the radio business when it put WLEX-FM on the air at 98.1 MHz in July 1969. The station was run from the TV studio with a tape-automated stereo rock format, but persistent problems with the equipment helped

prompt WLEX to sell and get out of radio for good.

Village Communications ran WBLG for five years before selling to Wendell and Donna Triplett. The station had gone to 2,500 watts daytime power with 1,000 directional at night. The Triplett's changed the call letters to WTKC and unveiled a country music format from studios on West Main Street.

WTKC was sold to Walter May who began formulating his financial plans to buy the station in 1981 and put together a package with help from the Urban County government, which gave approval for tax-exempt industrial revenue bonds to be used for the purchase. With the rationale that jobs and a community station were involved, it became the first such usage of the bonds for radio station acquisition. May reflected later that the station had good ratings with its country sound, but about a month after he obtained it, WVLK became K-93 Country, eroding the audience as listeners became attracted to country on the FM dial, making it difficult for WTKC to compete.

May sold the station after three years of operating it to L.M. Communications, Lynn Martin, for the assumption of his remaining debt on the loan. Dave Curtis became general manager and announced a solid gold music format and new call letters, WLXG. In the 1990s, the station adopted the news/talk format which yielded its first ratings boost in years, featuring popular hosts like Rush Limbaugh, et. al, and a locally-produced show with Keith Raines.

Village Communications continued to operate WKQQ-FM from automation until 1977. Then with irreverent announcers, wild promotion and the album-oriented rock format, "Double Q" quickly captured the lion's share of the young adult audience, as it went live. The station had set up shop in the building on New Circle Road that had once been WKYT-TV.

Dave "Kruser" Krusenklous, who started with the station in 1978, relates the whole philosophy from office to on-the-air was to have a good time. On the occasion of a newspaper story on its 20th anniversary, Keith Yarber, general manager, characterized the station as being the people who "shake everything up in the town." "Kruser" on Double Q in the morning has been a habit of many Lexington listeners since the early 1980s.

The station can elicit both cheers and jeers for some its off-the-wall contests. They have given away breast implants and a vasectomy, sponsored a pregnant bikini contest, and in 1991, caused the most uproar with their own "Breeders Stakes." The station put couples, who were trying to conceive, at a downtown hotel in a contest to see who would become pregnant first, with a Bahamas vacation on the line! Not all the community involvement was for laughs, as WKQQ has been nominated for an NAB Crystal Award for its public service efforts.

Several ex-Double Q jocks have settled in other places including Terry Meiners in Louisville after he was in Lexington four years. Andrea Sayre

went to country as K-93's morning host, and Curt Mathies, who was on the air for seven years, became much more prim and proper as music director of public radio WUKY.

The zaniness was successful as WKQQ stayed near the top of the Lexington ratings in the era of FM dominance. FM rockers like "Double Q" were in many ways reminiscent of the AM "top-40" stations of the late 1950s, challenging the norm, although the environment some 30 years later would be much more permissive.

In 1947, Baseball Commissioner A.B. "Happy" Chandler built a radio station for his hometown, Versailles. Chandler had also been governor and U.S. Senator from Kentucky. The studios were in Versailles, but the company also maintained offices in Lexington. The station went on the air November 26, with Chandler throwing the switch to start up the 1,000-watt transmitter operating at 590 kHz. The Bluegrass Broadcasting Company had been formed with Chandler as president and W.S. Lukenbill, formerly of Louisville, as general manager. Paul Dunbar was chief engineer in building the station, beginning a career that would encompass many later improvements at the station for which he worked more than 40 years. The station identified itself with both cities with call letters, WVLK.

Only one year into his new project, however, Chandler agreed to sell to Scripps-Howard of Cincinnati, which proposed to move the station to Ohio, replacing their WCPO facility with a new frequency and power. Scripps-Howard had at the same time been seeking the 630 channel that was being applied for by WLAP. Neither deal was consummated for WCPO, and controlling interest to WVLK would eventually be purchased by local real estate developer Garvice Kincaid in 1951. Kincaid moved the main studios from the library in Versailles to Lexington, first at the Lafayette and then to the Phoenix Hotel on Main Street.

He began to assemble a staff that would impact broadcasting in central Kentucky for the next 20 years. Ted Grizzard, who had managed WLAP and WKLX in the city, became program director, and Don Horton was named general manager. Grizzard also had sports duties primarily with high schools and later helped to tutor such announcers as Jim Host, Van Vance and Tom Hammond, who all became great sports people in their own right.

Some might have thought he was starting them a little young when they heard 12-year-olds Richard Weaks and Lawrence Yates, Jr. doing a GraY youth basketball game from Henry County in 1949. They had appealed to Grizzard at the old WKLX to do some games, and he agreed, but had them actually do the play-by-play!



Courtesy WVLK

*Ted Grizzard (l) and Claude Sullivan (r), two of the state's most-remembered voices. Grizzard managed WLAP, beginning his career in the 1930s, there, and working later for WKLX and WVLK. Sullivan was the voice of UK sports on WVLK for nearly 20 years and did play-by-play for the Cincinnati Reds.*

Claude Sullivan became sports director and voice of Kentucky Wildcats football and basketball for WVLK during the 1950s and '60s. Sullivan had started in radio as a teenager in Ashland. He would later follow Waite Hoyt as the announcer for Cincinnati Reds baseball from 1963 until his death in '67.

Arty Kay was brought on board to wake up Lexington with his morning show, a chore he would have until 1972. Commercial manager George Webb began implementing the new trend in radio sales, rotating spot announcements instead of straight sponsorship of programs.

But the big change came when WVLK went rock 'n' roll, a decision made by Don Horton, but challenged by Grizzard, Kay and much of the Lexington religious community as well. Those protests aside, the station joined WAKY and others around the country turning to the new format, one that would spur advertising sales and listenership. Like the others, ratings quickly jumped for 590 radio and although Louisville's WAKY remained popular even in Lexington for years, WVLK eventually took ratings honors. Ironically it was at WVLK that the legendary Bill Bailey, of WAKY fame, would end his career in 1994. He had been brought back with Johnny Randolph for a reunion program and was hired to work the afternoon shift, retiring after four years at age 63.



The AM format had become more adult contemporary over the years with ABC news as well as extensive local news, sports and public service efforts.

Just as the shift to rock helped WVLK, a changeover at its sister station WVLK-FM took that station to the top of the ratings, when in August 1982 it became K-93 Country overnight and quickly doubled its audience.

WVLK-FM had been the city's easy listening music station. It went on the air in 1961 at 92.9 FM. The original 32 kilowatts were increased to 50 and then 100 kilowatts with the antenna located on the Channel 27's TV tower, more than 850 feet in the air.

The change to country from the beautiful music was not popular with everyone, as angry protest letters were filed with the station and local newspapers.

K-93 began with an automated tape programming and rode the country popularity wave as the area's only FM country station. Later, the station made the transition to a compact disc/live announcer studio combination, with Matt Austin as program director.

Earlier, Kincaid and Horton began expanding their radio interests in the late 1950s to other stations in Kentucky, Florida and Ohio as the Horton-Kincaid group. Many of these were sold, but Bluegrass Broadcasting Company under H. Hart Hagan would acquire others and purchase WKYT-TV. Bill Stakelin, who managed WVLK then WHOO in Orlando, became vice-president of the company and moved on to be chief executive officer of the Radio Advertising Bureau.

Ray Holbrook, who had worked in sales at the station in its early days, was brought in from Danville to become general manager from 1968 to 1971. WVLK had been in danger of not having its license renewed when in 1968 the FCC raised what it called "serious questions" about certain billing practices and commercial time standards at the station. The FCC announced hearings on the matter and Holbrook was called on to work in satisfying the concerns of the Commission and get the station back on track with renewal, with the FCC finally voting to approve license retention.

Some 15 years later, the license would come under attack in a suit filed by African-American groups against WVLK and WLAP radio. The charges were investigated and resolved in WVLK's favor and the action dismissed.

Bluegrass Broadcasting came under the umbrella of Kincaid's Kentucky Central Life Insurance firm in 1976 and three years later moved into modern new studios and offices in the Kincaid Towers, downtown.

Ralph Hacker, who had worked at WVLK in sales and sports since 1965 and as color commentator on the UK Network with Cawood Ledford beginning in 1972, became the general manager of WVLK AM/FM in 1974, and has led the station since that time.

Some of the other WVLK notables with lots of airtime were Bill Cody, who went on to Nashville radio, and “Captain Tag” Veal, for years the helicopter traffic reporter. In the early days there was announcer and newsman Reynolds Large, whose stepson Jack “Catfish” Pattie later became the popular air personality from the late 1970s into the ’90s. Large worked at several central Kentucky stations, while Pattie became one of Lexington’s most enduring radio stars.

WVLK seemed to be blessed with sales people who stayed around awhile, including Connie Joiner, vice-president of sales, with the station since 1969, and Lee Harper, who began as an account executive in 1962. The sales staff put together a rather unusual package in 1983, when in a recession period it offered \$10,000 worth of free advertising to any business that created 15 jobs or any existing business that added 30 jobs during the year.

Promotional stunts on billboards seemed to be popular in Lexington, as Robert Lindsay of WVLK vowed to live on one until Kentucky hired a basketball coach, they did — Rick Pitino! In 1994, “Roadkill” Kessler of WKQQ swore to camp on one until the Kentucky football team won another game — they didn’t!

Since the purchase of Channel 27 by Bluegrass Broadcasting in 1967, the radio and TV have often worked together in not only UK sports, but in news



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*Three disc jockey legends ... WVLK’s “Catfish” Pattie interviews former Louisville rock jocks (WKLO, WAKY) (l-r) Johnny Randolph and Bill Bailey.*

and other coverage. The two “Ralphs” — Ralph Gabbard at WKYT and Ralph Hacker at WVLK — have often been seen as the most powerful people in Lexington media since the mid-1970s. They had actually known each other much longer, meeting for the first time in 1956 while grade schoolers in Madison County, and they have been close friends ever since.

The radio/TV staffs would be surprised with news in 1993 that their successful stations had been ordered sold by the state after the insurance commissioner was forced to take over the financially troubled Kentucky Central Life Insurance Company, the parent firm of WVLK and WKYT-TV. The stations would go to the highest bidder.

General manager Ralph Hacker immediately put together a group of investors, including staff people, and formed HMM, Inc., to become the successful bidder at \$11 million and announced that the station would continue to operate as normal with no major changes.

While only three commercial AMs and FMs were officially licensed to Lexington until the early 1990s, other stations in smaller towns nearby went on the air with AM stations beginning in the mid-1950s. These broadcasters would work to serve their local area and battle for audience in the shadow of the towers of Lexington. Paris to the northeast, Winchester to the east, Georgetown to the northwest and Nicholasville to the south all had their own stations and by the 1980s had built FMs that would become more valuable when operated as Lexington stations. In each case, the four FM stations of these towns started identifying with the bigger city with relaxation of ID rules in the 1980s.

The WKLX call letters were resurrected when a new station in Paris went on the air in 1955 at 1440 AM with 1,000 watts. The station may have the record for most call-letter and ownership changes for a small town.

D.C. “Dave” Stephens of WPRT Prestonsburg owned the station when what would be one of Kentucky’s best-known broadcasters, Walter May, was just a young deejay working for \$1 an hour.

All the employees had been fired when they had protested the manager being laid off. May agreed to stay on, however, not knowing that for the next two weeks he literally would run the station by himself from sunrise to sunset on the daytimer, with no other people. Stephens had promised to send help from Prestonsburg, but May finally ended up hiring some part-timers from UK after he grew weary. He said listeners thought his air shifts were some sort of try at a record, and as a result, advertisers became interested. He became the manager of the station at age 20, but Stephens sold it in 1958

and May went to work for him at WPRT.

In 1964 James Withrow made a call-letter change to WPDE after he purchased it and four years later developed the FM station to duplicate programming. The new FM was class A- 3 kilowatts at 96.7 MHz. Both stations were later known as WBGR "Bluegrass Radio" when William Brown was general manager. It was later called WILP, then became WRPZ trying urban contemporary music in the 1980s, but finally went off the air.

The station was revived as a religious affiliate of Somerset Educational Foundation in 1993 and took the WYGH call sign. It sold one year later to Gil Hammond, becoming a southern gospel station with some joint programming with WIOK in Falmouth.

Through many changes, Paris became much like a stepping stone for aspiring broadcasters on their way to the Lexington market, or college students, seeking to get a taste of radio.

The sister FM was purchased in 1984 by Lynn Martin and became an adult contemporary station targeting Lexington as WNCW. The call letters were later changed to WCOZ for "cozy" 96.7 with soft rock hits. Martin arranged a frequency and power change to 50 kilowatts and moved to 96.9 on the dial to become WGKS with the slogan KISS 96.9. Having also acquired WLXG in 1984, all operations were moved to Greendale Road in Lexington to operate as sister stations.

Winchester Broadcasting Co. was formed in 1954 and WWKY went on the air in October of that year at 1380 with 1,000 watts with Charles Drew as the general manager and program director. Marvin Thompson had sought a license for the city as early as 1952.

Under the corporate name WWKY Inc., Don Horton became president in 1960 and Gerald Cashman was general manager. The station programmed mostly contemporary music, but some country with news, sports and specialty programs including a morning talk show hosted by Margaret Kagin, a.k.a. Kitty Clark, who was on the air for more than 20 years.

Horton's widow, Wilda, took over as president of the company upon his death in 1967. She sold out to Bayard "Bud" Walters in 1984 and late in 1985 the station went to 2,500 watts and became the only all "horse" format radio in the nation. WHRS programmed news and information aimed at thoroughbred farms and their associated interests. The idea received a lot of publicity and initial acceptance, but the horse industry itself hit upon hard times during that era and the programming was abandoned in favor of nostalgia, big band music by January 1987.

Walters' Cromwell group had also purchased the Winchester FM station

in 1981 and changed the call letters to WFMI. The original calls were WKDJ-100.1 licensed to Dave Greenlee in 1974, who built and operated the station as a stand-alone FM for awhile out of studios in a local shopping strip then later from his home.

When Cromwell obtained the station, Larry Trimmer, who had been at Walters' Hawesville station, was named general manager for the AM and FM. He put together a plan to move the FM tower closer to Lexington and adopted a contemporary hit format that got the station high marks among the young adult/teen demographics. The station adopted the "Fox-100" logo as WFLX.

In 1994, 100.1 became WWYC "Young Country," Lexington's second country FM station. Trumper Communications had purchased the station and the plan to increase power to 32 kilowatts was completed. It became the third horse in their radio stable, along with WLAP AM/FM.

The Winchester "horse station," WHRS-AM, was also sold by Cromwell in 1992 to Tim Smith. Smith had been with the station since 1973 in sales and management capacities. He changed the format to country music, but then in August 1994 opted to go all news-talk with the Florida-based Peoples Radio Network of Chuck Harder. The call letters were switched to WLNT-Winchester-Lexington's News/Talk station.

In Georgetown, Robert Johnson put WAXU on the air in 1957 at 1580 with 250 watts daytime only. Its original call was WGOR.

Lexington TV anchors Billy Thompson and Jim Stephens got their start at Georgetown. By the early 1960s the small-town neighbor was challenging some of the big-city towers for audience and doing well. Jack Webb was program director who became "Jumpin Jack" on the air. "Wild Willie" in the afternoons was actually news director Bill Stakelin.

WAXU-FM 103.1 was built in 1973 with 3 kilowatts to duplicate AM which had become the all-country station for the market by then. Since it was at the top of the dial, WAXU billed itself the "top-gun" and Hank England was a deejay remembered as one of the "sharp-shooters."

Johnson, meanwhile, had also built the Georgetown cable TV system. When the big switch came in 1982 and WVLK-FM became the country giant, Georgetown countered by going to more easy listening, later to big band and then a nostalgia music format as WBBE. FM became WRMA, then later WMGB with adult contemporary hits.

Johnson served as general manager and Dave Griffith as sales manager through those years, and the stations sold in 1989 to Kentucky Radio Partners. The studios were moved to Lexington with a doubling of power and a move to 103.3.

The call letters were changed to WTKT "The Cat," with an all-oldies format for 103 as the Catmobile cruised the streets promoting the sound of the glory days of rock.

AM tried a classic country sound before deserting it to go back to WBBE and nostalgia music.

Village Communications, owner of WKQQ, purchased WTKT in 1994, and after surveying the community, decided to keep it an oldies station.

To the south in Nicholasville other stations sought to become a player in the Lexington market. The first AM station went on the air in 1961 as WNVL, 1250 kHz with 500 watts as part of the Lackey station group, with long-time WHOP director Katherine Peden as president and the first woman active in station management in the state. When Peden moved into state government, Charlie Esposito became her general manager through the 1960s until the station sold to Greater Kentucky Broadcasting, Walter May, president. Cindy Sargent, May's daughter, became the station's second female manager and WNVL was playing top country. Bill Laney pulled the morning shift for many years and Al Snyder's work earned him the Country Music Association's personality of the year award in 1982. WNVL has worked for more than 20 years with the Lions Club charity radio auction and has raised thousands with the "Feed the Needy" program.

May got out of the ownership in the late 1970s in a swap with his Pikeville partners of station holdings, obtaining full ownership of WPKE and WTJT in Jellico, Tennessee, with the corporation retaining the Louisa station, WVKY and WNVL, with Henry Stratton as president. May then sold the Jellico station in 1981. Bill Laney purchased WNVL in 1987.

In August 1988, a new Nicholasville FM, WCKU 102.5, began operating under Nicholas Co. Communications, Inc., with Laney as president and the noted talk-show host, Dale Wright, as program director. Both the FM and AM station sold to High Media Group in 1989. WCKU-FM was urban contemporary and WNVL remained country.

In 1991, Laney reacquired WNVL-AM and the music turned to adult standards. Meanwhile, Clark Communications of Maryland had purchased WCKU and in 1994 announced it would drop its black-oriented urban format for a 1970s oldies flavor and become WLRO. That action met with loud protest from the black community, who claimed the station was ignoring a large and loyal audience. Indeed the ratings indicated a basic third place for WCKU but it was much farther down the line in gross sales.

WNVL immediately stepped-in to say it would adopt the urban format for AM-1250.

Laney believes with the increased competition, radio is not as much fun in the 1990s as it was 30 years ago, with the man-on-the-street reports, ball-games and more creative programs. Like most stations near a larger market, Nicholasville tried to sell in Lexington and Laney said they were successful with that, but not as successful in keeping salespeople who would often move on once they got some experience.

Religion filled the Lexington airwaves with the development of WJMM, Versailles in 1973 by Rev. Jack Mortenson. Mortenson created a network of stations owned by his company, which is a for-profit group specializing in commercial stations with Christian formats. The company, which started with one station in Canton, Ohio, in 1961, was organized as the Tower of Faith network by Dr. E.M. Mortenson. Mortenson decided to invest in radio when his religious broadcast was taken off the air at a station that had switched formats to rock 'n' roll. The company has since owned ten different stations at one time or another. The first one in Kentucky was actually in Erlanger, WHKK, which had been purchased in 1968.

A philosophy of involvement in news and community affairs as well as religious programming is followed by other stations in the group including Huntington, West Virginia's, WEMM, which serves the northeast Kentucky area and Lexington's WJMM.

Jack Mortenson said the impetus for the central Kentucky station was the lack of any Christian format on the car radio, as he was driving from his Huntington to Erlanger facilities. The decision was made to locate in Lexington and an FM construction permit of WMLV that had been issued for Versailles was purchased. WJMM, (the initials of the president) was inaugurated at 106.3 and got a sister AM in 1986 when Mortenson built WCGW 770 AM, licensed to Nicholasville.

The two stations became co-located on Versailles Road west of Lexington. The Mortenson group stations numbered six in 1995 with the company headquarters also in Lexington. Mortenson Broadcasting's goal is to keep the home sacred, inspire the listeners and be "an extension of the church with its music and community involvement activities that include many charitable events." Several national personalities such as James Dobson are heard each day.

The two Lexington area stations sell commercial announcements, program time and since the 1970s have made good money for the company. Mortenson has said the early years for him and his father were a struggle at times with long hours, but it has paid off. The company branched out in 1994 with a religious newspaper publication for Lexington and began a children's network using the FM station subcarrier frequency and leasing receivers for families to pick up the programming.

WCGW is more country and southern gospel oriented with its music and WJMM features a contemporary Christian rotation. The stations are managed separately by faithful employees, Ed Wright at WJMM and Dennis Smith at WCGW.

A new addition to the radio log was proposed by the FCC in the late 1980s with a declaration that Lexington was an under-served large market. A prized 50-kilowatt station could be constructed at 104.5 and many applications resulted. Jack Givens, former UK basketball great, was majority stockholder of the company receiving the construction permit and would serve as general manager. "Goose" Givens dubbed the station WJGG. It is as yet, not on the air, having encountered difficulty with tower sites.

Other Lexington area stations are also pending, with an AM 1040 license for the community of Athens and frequencies at 920 AM and 107.9 for Midway. WKYI-FM at Stamping Ground and WVYI in Wilmore in 1995 were set to become religious stations of the Vernon Baldwin group of Ohio.

WVLK's Ralph Hacker states Lexington is certainly not "under-radioed" any longer, if indeed it ever was. The result of stations in surrounding towns, moving into the metro market, means the smaller outlying communities are no longer being served by a "home-town" station. Most of the city's stations are controlled by outside ownership, which has often meant knowledge of and service to the local community charities and organizations is reduced.

Lexington has shown an increase in sales over the years but margins of profits were thin. In 1960, the three stations reported revenues of nearly \$719,000 with profits of \$18,766. According to FCC figures, the revenue for 14 stations of the ADI in 1980 totalled \$5.9 million, with a profit of \$58,000. Lexington is ranked 125th among the nation's Arbitron markets and includes Bourbon, Clark, Jessamine, Scott and Woodford counties.

Cable radio also serves the Lexington market and the Fayette County Urban League was granted a frequency at 105.3 to operate what is a unique community station. Volunteers staff WTLA, (We're the Listener Alternative) started in 1983 with music and programs directed to the black community from studios on Georgetown Street.

A subscription radio service for the blind called "Radio-Eye" was instituted in 1990, with several area radio voices volunteering to read to the vision-impaired via radio each day.

Certainly the honor for being the longest-running show in Lexington would have to go to a man who operated his own station, so he was in no danger of being fired for bad ratings! From 1963 to 1991 he was on five days a week and as "Cowboy" Steve Taylor wrote, played and sang country



songs and spun the platters, too from his "1-watt radio station." He called it the Community Neighborhood Station (WCNS) and it was located, well, wherever Taylor happened to be living at the time!

Kentucky's early efforts at non-commercial educational radio centered in the activities of the Louisville library and at the University of Kentucky, where WBKY established itself at 91.3 in the new FM band in 1947 with its transmitter and antenna at McVey Hall on the Lexington campus, with well-equipped studios. The station was on the air, nightly for three hours, five evenings each week.

Educational radio patriarch, Elmer Sulzer, took a job at Indiana University in 1952 and was replaced by O. Leonard Press as manager. He established a student management system and began allowing music students and others on the air, not just the radio arts majors. Press left WBKY in 1963 to begin work on the proposed new educational TV network for the state.

Don Wheeler took charge of the station in 1965 and remained manager until 1989. Wheeler brought several changes and improvements as the station was transformed from a student lab operation with a variety of often undisciplined shows to a full-fledged NPR public station. Those stations nationwide were attempting to shed the "educational" terminology in favor of being known as "public radio" presenting an alternative in music, news and public affairs.

In 1971, WBKY became a charter member of the National Public Radio network and at the same time upped the power to 50 kilowatts and moved the transmitter and tower to Clay's Ferry. Wheeler had been involved in the planning of the new national network.

Production and syndication of programs was resumed, much like the early years, and a full-time professional staff was hired including many top local commercial people like Pete Manchekis, Bob Cook and Reynolds Large.

Roger Chesser, who had been with the station since 1983, was named general manager in 1989, succeeding Wheeler, who retired from the university in 1990. On October 1, 1989, WBKY became WUKY, incorporating the university name into the call letters, and in January the following year, Don Wheeler threw the switch on a new transmitter to put out 100,000 watts, increasing the coverage of the station with the antenna on the WDKY-TV tower in Garrard County.

With its radio department and as the only college station in the state for nearly two decades, WBKY was the training ground for dozens of Kentucky's top broadcasters. One such alumni would later be heard on the station via network, as Noah Adams of Ashland became a host on the popular

NPR daily program, *All Things Considered*. Adams, who started in radio in 1973, is credited with building the audience for the show and developed many award-winning stories. He has also made a reputation for himself as an author with a book of essays and a journal about his experiences with *A T C*.

With the transformation of WBKY into a fully-staffed professional station, the opportunities became limited for student work. This dilemma resulted at many universities that became Corporation for Public Broadcasting stations. While broadcast students had some internships, these were no longer "student-run" stations. Some colleges had campus-limited carrier-current facilities for aspiring announcers to get their feet wet, and other institutions limited student training to studio classes.

One solution was another low-power station where students had freedom to develop production and creative skills. In 1988, this happened both at Western Kentucky University and on the UK campus where students started WRFL — Radio Free Lexington, at 88.1 with 250 watts. Grants from the city and the student government association helped make WRFL a reality. Student energy is turned loose, and alternative programming flows forth 24 hours a day — everything from rap, jazz, psychedelic, blues, all kinds of rock 'n' roll and even country and Christian music for the diverse interest of the campus population.

Nearby Georgetown College has the distinction of having the state's second oldest college-owned radio, when WRVG took to the air in October of 1963 at 90.1 and 10 watts. Some students there had actually built the first station in 1951 for \$4.50, using spare parts, and began sending messages by wire to dorms from a studio in Giddings Hall.

Starting in the early 1980s, the FCC began phasing out the 10-watt license, giving these stations opportunity to move out of the protected 88-92 MHz public FM band space and remain 10 watts or upgrade to at least class A-100 watts.

Georgetown students run the now 150-watt station at 89.9 with a variety of popular music and specialty music programs. Rick Leigh served as faculty advisor and staff member for more than 20 years before retiring in 1992, announcing plans to start a commercial FM station.

## Lexington Station Log

Lexington      WLAP AM-630; WMXL-FM 94.5; WWYC-FM 100.1  
WVLK AM-590; WVLK-FM 92.9  
WLXG AM-1300; WGKS-FM 96.9  
WKQQ-FM 98.1; WTKT-FM 103.3  
WBBE AM-1580 (Georgetown)  
WCGW AM-770; WJMM-FM 106.3  
WNVL AM-1250 (Nicholasville)  
WLRO-FM 102.5 (Nicholasville)  
WLNT AM-1380 (Winchester)  
WYGH AM-1440 (Paris)  
WJGG-FM 104.5  
WKYI-FM 99.1 (Stamping Ground)  
WVYI-FM 96.3 (Wilmore)  
WAHY-FM 107.9 (Midway)  
WUKY-FM 91.3 n/c; WRFL-FM 88.1 n/c  
WRVG-FM 89.9 n/c (Georgetown)

Stations listed on the same line indicate common ownership.

\*n/c - non-commercial station.

Radio in the state capital came to life again on March 18, 1946, when WFKY began its history from the East Main Street studios. 1490-Frankfort is the oldest of the post-war stations still in service. Started by a group of local stockholders under Frankfort Broadcasting Co. Marshall Peace, was program director and later general manager. The station announced it would strive to bring news from state government and aligned itself with the Mutual Network.

By 1948, Garvice Kincaid had purchased an interest and in 1952, Ken Hart became president of the stockholding group. In 1959, C.A. "Bud" McClain took over as station manager.

William Clay, R. J. Reynolds and William R. Reynolds, who also owned WMST in Mount Sterling, purchased the station in 1962, with Bob Doll becoming executive vice-president of both stations and in 1964 taking over as general manager of WFKY.

Power was increased to 1,000 watts for the daytime station in 1963 and a companion FM was built in 1967, at 104.9 with 3,000 watts. The FM station gave new life to the old Louisville call letters, WKYW.

WFKY and WKYW were sold in 1974 for \$450,000 to Capitol Communications, with J. Edward Janeway, vice-president and general manager. Reo-Cap, Inc., with Donald C. Rowley and Richard Rowley, officers, acquired the company in 1981.

In 1993, the stations moved into new quarters at 120 Mero Street, with WFKY mostly news/talk and WKYW programming adult contemporary.

Quite a few top jocks of Lexington and other markets got their start in Frankfort, but one stayed a long time.

Russ Hatter, a winner of the KBA Community Affairs Award, is the dean of morning men in central Kentucky and one of the longest-running shows in the state, going on the air at WFKY in 1965. He started at Grayson as the "Mad Hatter" and said he has been a "wake 'em up and get 'em going kind of guy" all these years, opening the mike at 5 a.m. to start folks on their way. Hatter learned from Bob Doll that "name dropping" is the key to making people feel at home with your station. He incorporates as many promotions as possible to get people's names on the air, recognize them and talk "one on one." "That," said Hatter, "is the real purpose of radio — communication."

He has built quite a following through the years including several hundred he calls the "5:30 club," those people who are really up early with him. He has also run into his share of unexpected statements and unwanted words on the air, while doing live shows, everything from man-on-the-street to reports from the Governor's Derby Breakfast.

Hatter admits to his share of pranks and has kept a journal of some of the wild happenings. In Grayson, once, he remembers first understanding the power of radio when he devised stories of "oryx" kills and sightings, having dreamed up this fictitious animal. People believed it, though, and were soon calling in their own reports of the beast! And although people have pulled a few gags on him he says he has never "lost it" on the air, even when one female co-worker in Frankfort once took her shirt off while he was reading the news!

The new kid in town arrived in Frankfort in 1977, as WKED went on the air; the "new kid" slogan was to be reflected in the call letters, but KID was taken. The 1130 AM station had a 500-watt signal and was owned by D and R Broadcasting, with David Rogers and Dave Roederer, who also worked in Lexington TV. It hit the airwaves with a hot contemporary sound. The station starting building its news stature with coverage of the flood in the state capital in 1978, remaining on the air during the disaster to inform listeners. Since that time, WKED has won several Associated Press news awards.

Leigh Allan came from Illinois and purchased the station in 1981 and switched on satellite country. The sister station went on the air in 1991, at

103.7, after a nearly five-year struggle for the license. Allan put an adult contemporary format in place for the FM. WKED AM/FM operates from studios on Main Street in the state capital.

South in Anderson County, the dream of local radio in the mind of Finley Willis finally became a reality in May 1993 after several years of planning and preparation. WKYL-102 in Lawrenceburg began broadcasting with modern studios in the Industrial Park. A 24-hour format of soft adult contemporary was chosen along with a schedule of local news and sports.

Northern Kentucky towns, of course, had been covered since the early days of radio by the pioneer Cincinnati area stations, WLW, WSAI, WKRC, WCPO and WCKY. Added to those stations on the Kentucky side of the river in the late 1940s were WZIP and WNOP.

On October 5, 1947, Arthur Eilerman announced that WZIP was on the air, owned and operated by three northern Kentucky citizens and not associated with any group of stations. He stressed the station would serve the Covington area to develop the cultural, social and economic life of that city. Three applicants had actually sought the license, including one group with Bernard Eilerman, Arthur's brother. Charles Topmiller, a Bowling Green native and engineer at WCKY, was to be the station manager of WZIP, but resigned before the station went on and become general manager at WCKY.

The WZIP tower was located in a low area by the river, near where I-75 now passes through Covington. It was powered by the 250-watt transmitter at 1050 on the dial. Ironically the studios were at the same location as the old WCKY at Sixth and Madison.

In 1970, Joe Rice, a Cincinnati area veteran engineer, compiled historical documents into a volume that tells the story about some of the radio in that area. Included is a series of newsletters published by Mrs. Arthur (Carmen) Eilerman about the progress of the new station. She became a popular radio personality with her show and highly visible in community work. *Carmen's Corner* sponsored many worthwhile projects including a foster parent group that reached out to help children even in other countries and bought a building for establishment of a school for mentally retarded kids. Eilerman received numerous awards including the "Woman of the Year" in 1953. The station did not affiliate with a network and had a variety of local music and public service programs targeting the Covington area.

In 1957, ten years after its debut, WZIP was sold to Ed Weston and Len Goorian, formerly of WCPO, who announced changes in format and a relocation of studios to Cincinnati. One year later it was advertised the station

was for sale again for \$225,000. Ownership changed several times, and the mission of local Covington radio was just a memory.

In 1995, 1050 AM is known as WTSJ, with power now at 1 kilowatt and a format of contemporary Christian and black gospel music, owned by the Guardian Communications group.

In 1965, Covington made a third try at keeping a station to call its own, as Kenton Broadcasters, with Irv Swartz president and general manager, started a daytimer at 500 watts, WCLU-1320. Swartz brought in some familiar Covington radio people to serve on staff and began an all-country music format which he maintained until switching to contemporary hit music in the mid-1980s. Swartz introduced a computer-controlled method of selecting his songs for airplay that was one of the first attempts at a high-tech playlist. He sold the station in 1987 to the Richard Plessinger group. The call letters were changed to WCVG, and by 1994 it had become the black gospel station for the metro area.

Murphy's Law of what bad can happen will happen seemed to be in effect for James Lang of Newport, as he laid plans to start a radio station in that city. After receiving a construction permit for 1180 kHz, work on the station, WWNL, commenced. A disastrous fire destroyed everything, then the FCC changed plans and rescinded the frequency. Lang, still determined, hired a firm that had a woman engineer, unusual for that era, and she helped apply for a directional channel with 1,000 watts at 740 kHz.

Thus a new station, named WNOP, was started on August 21, 1948, with studios on Monmouth Street, with dignitaries on hand, including A.B. "Happy" Chandler. Programs from at least four networks were carried at different times, including Gordon McLendon's Liberty Network, which later folded. One WNOP program lasted much longer though, the *Hall of the Masters*, an afternoon of classical music. Joe Rice writes that a person who gave lots of moral and program support to WNOP was Rev. Maurice Coers of the Immanuel Baptist Church who had religious programs with the station since its beginning. Cincinnati announcing legends Ray Scott and Leo Underhill worked on Newport radio and at WCKY. Oscar Treadwell was another one logging lots of air time.

Ann Lang served as general manager in the early years and the Langs owned the construction permit for a television station before selling it. They sold the radio in 1972 to Albert Vontz. The station featured a combination of jazz, blues and comedy into the 1980s, and became known as the "Jazz Ark." A fire had destroyed the studios in the "night-spot" district of Newport in 1973, and they literally moved to the river, floating the station on blue metal drums on the Ohio within sight of the Cincinnati-Newport



Courtesy WCKY

*When WCKY, Covington-Cincinnati, became one of the first major stations to abandon network shows in favor of more music deejay programming, thousands of favorable letters were received from all around the country.*

bridge. Special designs for the turntables and equipment kept the rocking of the river from disrupting the music. Ray Scott said WNOP became one of the top commercial jazz stations in the country. He was interviewed by TV officials when studies were done to cast the “Johnny Fever” character on the “WKRP” television sitcom that was set in Cincinnati.

Later, new studios were built in Cincinnati, and a format of satellite CNN was tried before returning to its heritage of jazz.

WCKY, the Covington area’s original station, moved forward with a decision to drop network programming in 1945. More local air personalities and shows came into the picture, and the listener response was overwhelming with station records indicating nearly 600,000 letters received from folks around the country voicing approval. But they also received hundreds of protest letters from church groups when they cancelled the contracts of 18 church programs, saying the shows had little audience.

There was Wayne Bell, Paul Miller, Virginia James and the *Vee James Show*, Rex Dale and his *Make Believe Ballroom* was popular and Dale went to WKRC radio/TV as a top personality. The all-night country music deejay was Jimmie Logsdon. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, WCKY’s Nelson King was named “America’s number one Hillbilly disc jockey” in a nationwide poll seven different years. Paul Summerkamp worked at WCKY and WKRC in news and sports, and is also remembered as the public address

voice at the Reds games.

In 1951, owner L.B. Wilson bought a second 50,000-watt transmitter and installed diesel generators for back-up power. just to ensure 24-hour uninterrupted service. Labor unrest and a walkout of union technicians did interrupt matters for Wilson in those days, however, and some workers and announcers went elsewhere.

When Wilson died in 1954, he willed the station to his faithful employees, including president Charles Topmiller and station manager Jeanette Heinze, Essie Rupp, Thomas Welstead and others. They sold the station after running it for more than a decade.

Bruce Still, veteran operations manager, reports 1530-WCKY was sold again in 1976, and in 1994 was controlled by C.R. Acquisitions, Chuck Reynolds, owner. In a transfer of call letters, he explains, WCKY is now 550 AM on the dial, what was once WKRC, and 1530 kHz became WSAI. The former WSAI position of 1360 AM became WOAZ.

WCKY continued to offer full-service radio and was named **large market Station of the Year** in 1993 at the NAB Marconi awards.

WLW has been honored with a Marconi as well. After the war, the legendary station continued to rock away as the "cradle of stars" producing many network shows, and sending performers on to fame including Rosemary Clooney and Andy Williams. The Crosley Manufacturing Company and the radio stations came under the umbrella of AVCO in 1947, and Powell Crosley made the statement, "I never dreamed when we first went on the air that radio would grow to be such a servant of the people, the medium for entertainment and information it has become."

WLW, WCPO and WKRC quickly became involved in television in the late 1940s to bring the new medium to Northern Kentuckians, and the staffs of radio and TV were interwoven as many of the popular radio programs became a part of local TV. It would be dual-careers for the workers for many years.

Later, through the era of FM, WLW still managed to stay near the top of the ratings with its news and personality format and Reds baseball for Kentucky fans. In the late 1960s and early '70s, under manager Charlie Murdock, adult contemporary music and more personalities like Jim O'Neill, the "Music Professor" i.e. Jim LaBarbera, and Jim Morris kept listeners entertained and they remained in Cincinnati radio for years. Then Gary Burbank arrived from Louisville to work his wit and wisdom.

The Jacobs family (Jacor Communications) purchased WLW and the sister FM which had become WEBN, an album rocker. By 1995, Jacor had bought or was in management and sales arrangements with six other Cincinnati stations including WCKY, the former WKRC and WSAI.



WSAI-1360 was the popular rock 'n' roller of the 1960s, and the jocks like Dusty Rhodes, Dick Wagner and Paul Purton spun the hits and pitched it to help bring the Beatles to Cincy.

Taft Broadcasting's WKRC-550 was middle-of-the-road in format with full-service news and a big morning show in the metro with Stan Matlock, as host of the *Magazine of the Air*.

Don Webb was the newsman there and later worked for WLW, beginning in the 1980s. Webb started in Cincinnati radio in 1943 and notes the many changes in news gathering. In the early years with union engineers, a news reporter "couldn't touch a piece of equipment." Nowadays, he said, "you do it all." As with many reporters, the big events are indelibly etched in memory, like the afternoon he had just sat down to a nice lunch, but didn't get to touch it as the call came in that President Kennedy had been shot. Then, on that Sunday of the Oswald shooting, things got so frantic, he just took a mike in hand and read it straight from the wire! Webb said many wonderful people have worked with him in the Cincinnati stations over the years.

WKRQ — WKRC's sister station — became a top hit rock station with the rise of FM as Q-102, featuring Jim Fox as the key morning man.

Another early station familiar to Kentuckians, WCPO, became WUBE — and with its co-owned FM made country music its specialty.

Many more stations have been added to the north shores of the Ohio River, and the Cincinnati ratings area which includes Campbell, Boone, and Kenton Counties in Kentucky is the 32nd largest radio market and has more than 20 different rated stations.

The area in between the triangle of Lexington/Frankfort-Louisville-Northern Kentucky was home to only two early AM radio stations, at Eminence in Henry County and Shelbyville, in Shelby County until Florence came on the air in 1984.

WSTL in Eminence was owned by "Woody" Dunavent and beginning in 1966, he operated it as a sister station to his St. Matthews WSTM until sold in 1974. WSTL had gone on the air in 1956 with 500 watts at 1600 kHz. The Eminence station has seen many management switches since Dunavent sold out.

Programming was mostly country with news and farm features. In 1986, Stuart Bass purchased the facility, changing the call letters to WKXF. In 1988, he obtained the license for an FM at 105.7 with 3 kilowatts and began a rock station separate from the country AM.

In 1990, both stations were purchased by Midwestern Broadcasting, Inc., with the FM becoming WXLN, a contemporary Christian station, and

George Zarris obtaining it two years later. WKXF-AM was sold to a local group of investors with Jesse Harris, general manager. The country format on AM was switched to southern gospel in 1995.

The Shelbyville station was built by J. B. Crawley, with partner Bill Kelley in 1964. It was one of eight stations Crawley had been involved with in western and central Kentucky through the years. He brought in Dean Harden to manage the 250-watter at 940 AM, and Harden kept the operation humming through the years, getting involved with local public service efforts, farm and community news and earning the KBA Meritorious Service Award for 25 years of untiring labor at WCND.

Harden had loyal assistance from Davis Shouse as chief engineer and later Davis Shouse, Jr. in programming and management. In 1989, WCKP-FM 101.3 went on the air to duplicate the AM country and news format.

Shelby County Broadcasting, R. Lee Hagen, president, and Sheila Hawkins, general manager, took over the stations in 1992, and the FM became known as WTHQ.

One of the early entries into the "FM-only" radio world was built in Carrollton in April 1968. Several investors, some with stock priced as little as \$1, formed Titan Broadcasting, and WVCM debuted. The call letters stood for "Welcome Voice of Country Music." Dwight "Red" Moreillon and Charlie Cutler worked together to build the station. Moreillon spun records as the "ole country boy." They later collaborated to build another station up the river, WKID, in 1974 in Vevay, Indiana, that serves the Warsaw, Kentucky, area.

Moreillon hired his son-in-law Jack Fultz to manage the station. During the tornadoes and storms of 1974, WVCM was able to broadcast vital information when WORX in Madison, Indiana, lost power. They went non-stop for four days, and later helped coordinate a fund drive for disaster relief.

In 1979, Robert "Pete" Doan purchased the station, took it off the air and laid plans for improvements. The short stick was replaced by a 200-foot tower, with power increase and new equipment. He debuted the station on New Years Day 1980 as adult contemporary WIKI.

George Freeman, who had owned stations in Texas, Michigan and New Albany, Indiana, bought WIKI in 1984 and turned it into a 24-hour country station with a new frequency and tower site. The station began broadcasting at 95.3, the former Falmouth frequency obtained in 1993. Freeman has offices in Carrollton and Madison, Indiana.

WORX-FM 96.7 in Madison had been built by Louisville's Clarence Henson in 1950 with the AM station started in 1956. FM licenses were

more easily obtained, thus the FM preceded AM. Henson actually sold the FM but bought it back when the AM station went on at 1270 kHz. Radio veterans like Herb Arms and Dick Whitty worked for WORX.

During the period of FM-only operation in the early 1950s, few such stations existed. One of the promotions to build FM listenership was to get farmers to buy FM radios and play the soothing easy listening music, claiming it helped the cows produce more milk!

Henson sold WORX AM/FM to Paul Knies in 1981.

The FM station at Erlanger, WHKK, was already a part of the Mortenson religious broadcast group, when other FMs in the region began laying plans for development in the 1970s.

WHKK had gone on the air in 1965 as one of the first Kentucky FM-only facilities. It was built by Kenneth Thomas and called WKKY-FM, 100.9 MHz.

Mortenson sold the station in 1986 to group broadcasters Inter-Urban, Inc. where it became WIZF "The Wiz" and religion was replaced by urban contemporary music in quite a transition in the format spectrum. WIZF soon became a top-rated station in that format for the Cincinnati market.

WHKK in Erlanger had been involved not only in Christian music, but with news and local sports for northern Kentucky. Dale McMillen, worked sales, news and sports for Erlanger and was active in sports and management later with other stations in the northern counties.

The 95.3 frequency that went to Carrollton had been in Falmouth as WIOK, when in a series of channel moves in 1991, power was upped to 6 kilowatts and dial position of WIOK moved to 107.5.

The Falmouth station had been issued a construction permit back in 1969, but did not go on the air until 1978, as Norkey Enterprises' WNKR. The station went silent but was returned to the air in 1981 by Martin Kuper as WIOK, a country station for Pendleton and surrounding counties.

It was acquired by Amber Broadcasting, James Stitt, president, in 1987, which also owned WMLX-AM in Florence. The Florence station at 1160 with 1 kilowatt was built in 1984 by John L. Pierce as WKFB. In 1994, after a couple of ownership transfers, the station is WBND-Country and is being managed by Grant County Broadcasters of Williamstown.

Meanwhile, WIOK in Falmouth was obtained by Gil and Jan Hammond in 1991 and became southern gospel. The Hammonds also took over the Paris AM station.

The Grant County station, WNKR, took the old Falmouth call sign and operates at 106.5 MHz. Ron Lawson became general manager of the WNKR/WBND facilities. WNKR went on the air in 1992 licensed to Williamstown-Dry Ridge.

The only non-commercial station in the northern Bluegrass is at Northern Kentucky University in Highland Heights. WNKU went on the air in April 1985 as a NPR network station at 89.7 with 12 kilowatts as the only public station in the country featuring primarily folk music. The format has since moved more toward complete adult alternative programming while still maintaining some folk music shows. Maryanne Zeleznik has handled news and public affairs for the station since its beginning.

A public station once beamed from Frankfort's Kentucky State University. It was actually licensed to Black Communications, Inc., with William Taylor, general manager, who leased facilities to locate the station on campus. WVBA was only on the air from December 1983 to May 1985 before the administration terminated the agreement.

### Northern Bluegrass Station Log

Covington	WCVG AM-1320
Carrollton	WIKI-FM 95.3
Eminence	WKXF AM-1600
	WXLN-FM 105.7
Erlanger	WIZF-FM 100.9
Frankfort	WFKY AM-1490; WKYW-FM 104.9
	WKED AM-1130; WKED-FM 103.7
Falmouth	WIOK-FM 107.5
Florence	WBND AM-1160
Highland Heights	WNKU-FM 89.7 n/c
Lawrenceburg	WKYL-FM 102.1
Newport	WNOP AM-740
Shelbyville	WCND AM-940; WTHQ-FM 101.3
Williamstown	WNKR-FM 106.5

Stations listed on the same line indicate common ownership.

\*n/c - non-commercial station.

### Southern Bluegrass (District 7)

This area of the state comprising a KBA district had few stations in the formative years of the industry but is the home of the first FM religious station, and now gospel is a popular format of choice in the region.

The first AM station was WHIR in Danville in 1947, and by 1960 towers were erected for stations in Richmond, Harrodsburg, Mount Vernon and Irvine.

W.T. Issac was president and general manager in the infancy of WHIR in Danville, which went on the air in October 1947 with 1,000 watts at 1230 kHz. Issac and David B. Highbaugh formed a partnership to bring radio to the city. They operated the station together for more than a decade until a new corporation, WHIR, Inc., was formed in 1959 with several Lexington area stockholders, and Ray Holbrook became president and general manager. He guided the station through the decade of the sixties, before moving to WVLK in Lexington and was succeeded by Jack Farmer.

The sister FM station, 107.1 MHz, was put on the air in 1969 with beautiful music, later changing its call letters to WMGE, while AM was top-40. One person went through the many changes at the station and remained as the name most often associated with Danville radio, Raymond Ramsey. His career started as a beginning announcer with WHIR in the 1950s.

Steve Bertram was another familiar voice on local and Centre College sports, and Jim Parmon assumed management duties in the late 1970s after Glen Goldenberg had become president of Boyle Co. Broadcasting.

In 1987, veteran WHAS morning man Wayne Perkey became owner of the Danville stations, WHIR/WMGE, and three years later took on another partner, his old rival from WAKY in Louisville, Johnny Randolph.

Randolph was coming from cross-town rival, WKLO-AM, oddly enough a station that had the call letters of another former Louisville rocker. The new Danville station originally had call letters of WOOP and "oops" might have been an omen because the station did not survive. Honus Shain had built it in 1980 at 1000 kHz with 1 kilowatt, but it struggled and went dark two years after Randolph, who had been managing, left to join the competitor. The station was dismantled and the license surrendered to the FCC.

Perkey's WMGE-FM had switched to top country and Randolph took over as program director. WHIR-AM served the Boyle County area with a wide variety of programming with local news and sports and was yearly sponsor of the big balloon race in town during the Brass Band Festival.

In 1995, Perkey sold his stations to Hometown Broadcasters of Lancaster, owners of WRNZ. The new team announced plans for some renovations and made WMGE classic country. One thing they didn't need to change — they found the original 1947 vintage AM transmitter still operational as the back-up!

WRNZ was started by Rob Schiebly, president of the Hometown group, who brought several of the stockholders with him from the Greenup, Kentucky station to Lancaster in 1988 and signed the FM station on in October

at 105.1 with a lite rock format. Steve Hayes, former Lexington and Huntington market deejay, became general manager. The station switched later to an all oldies format.

The very first Lancaster station was AM-1280, a 1-kilowatt, switched on by South Bevins in 1966 as WIXI, with a country format. Bevins ran the station until he sold out to a local partnership ten years later.

In 1982, WIXI boasted the first all-female staff in the state. Five female employees operated the daytimer with Sandy Gooch, manager. The station changed call letters to WKYY shortly thereafter, and in the late 1980s became southern gospel.

**WKYY is currently listed as silent, no longer broadcasting.**

Madison County's first station was 1340 WEKY, formed by stockholders in 1954 with studios in the McKee Building. O.C. Halyard served as general manager, salesman and sports director. Many of the state's prominent owners and air personalities have come through WEKY during their careers. With its setting as a commercial station in the city of Eastern Kentucky University, the station has fostered growth and development of many of these individuals while they were students.

J. Francke Fox of Harlan purchased the station in 1961 and sold it to Fred and Jean Hensley five years later. The top-40 format had campus appeal through the late 1960s and early '70s.

Across town, WCBR had become the country station when it signed on in 1969 with 250 watts at 1110 kHz. J.T. Parker of Kingsport, Tennessee, bought out his partner, Palmer Young, a little more than a year after the station went on the air.

**WCBR-FM was then built in 1972 at 101.7 MHz, duplicating the AM programs.**

Both city stations made ownership changes in the late 1970s. WEKY was sold to Radio Richmond, Bill Walters, president. WCBR was acquired by a corporation headed by George W. "Bill" Robbins in 1975, with David Humes joining him three years later. Al Weaver, who had worked for WEKY in programming, news and sports, came over to WCBR. Robbins, an attorney, has served the community as judge-executive, county attorney and city commissioner. Humes, an engineer, had also been involved in building other stations, including new studios at Campbellsville and Columbia.

Humes, now general manager, worked to get permission in 1995 to take the FM station to 25 kilowatts. WMCQ had become the oldies station for the area beginning in 1985 and prior to that had also been called WBZF.

WEKY remains AM only and in 1993 Bob Spradlin, who had worked in

Richmond early in his career, took over WEKY to begin a dual-city effort with his Berea AM/FM.

WMCQ, as Richmond's FM, has sought to keep Madison County listeners in touch with local weather and community information. George H. Robbins, Bill's son, serves as sales manager.

Greg Stotelmeyer started at WEKY in 1979 and became the voice of Eastern Kentucky University Colonel sports. He has followed Eastern for the station since that time with the exception of a three-year period when WCBR held the rights. Ed Huckleberry worked news for WEKY for a time after coming from Irvine and later anchored the Kentucky News Network. Former WCBR jock Jerry House moved to California, where his production company now distributes a popular country countdown show.

In 1968, Eastern Kentucky University began its college-owned station, with WEKU going on the air with 50 kilowatts at 88.9 MHz as James Harris headed up the media services. Fred Koloff became director of the radio in 1969 and also supervised the closed-circuit campus television run by the students. Loy Lee became music director back then and worked through the years as on-air announcer and assistant to several station managers.

In 1977, the station's transmitter facilities at Clays Ferry were destroyed in a fire, necessitating low-power operation for more than five months. Tony Donoho, station manager, announced a return to full power in September with a special Octoberfest programming campaign.

WEKU has served up a format of classical, jazz, news, public affairs and NPR network programs to public radio listeners in central Kentucky. In the early 1980s, the university began laying plans to bring that programming to areas of eastern Kentucky.

A grant of \$85,000 was awarded by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to help establish WEKH-FM in Hazard. A study by KET had identified an area of southeastern Kentucky that was underserved by public radio's alternative programs. The channel 90.9 was assigned with 33 kilowatts on the application filed in 1982. The satellite station began rebroadcasting WEKU's signal in August 1985, serving about 17 counties from its antenna located on the KET tower on Buffalo Mountain in Hazard.

When Bob Martin came to Harrodsburg as the leader of a rock band in 1956, he wound up with a job at WHBN radio. Four years later he owned the station, and three years after that he married Jo Ann Warner, who had worked there since 1955. The station has been the domain and daily concern of Bob and Jo Ann ever since. WHBN-1420, with 1,000 watts, was actual-



Courtesy WHBN Radio

*Bob Martin of WHBN, Harrodsburg, has worked the airways there since 1955, later buying the station and becoming involved in all aspects of the community.*

ly built in 1955 by Pete Hulse and Chuck Shuffett, who came from Lebanon.

Martin put the FM station 99.3 on the air in 1969 to simulcast and give him nighttime service. Radio studios are in the old opera house in the center of town, and Martin has tried to put his station in the center of Mercer County activities through the years.

WHBN has been especially effective in helping raise Cancer Society funds each year, winning WHBN state-wide recognition. The “Community Love Tree” in the station lobby at Christmas has grown into a huge charity with Martin playing Santa Claus each year. He has received many local honors for his efforts and the station has made him a “good living” through the decades.

Martin said probably the strangest event he ever sold was coverage of a week-long bowling tournament, back in the early 1960s, that was taped and then played back all afternoon the next day when a new bowling alley opened up. Other more typical programs have included radio auctions, high school sports, complete coverage of the county fair and sponsoring a fiddlers contest each summer.

Mary Chambless has been a part of the program schedule since anyone can remember with her women’s news, and John Brock has been another familiar radio voice for folks in that area. Tom Devine has kept the technical aspects running smoothly through the years.



WHBN played a little bit of all the music styles for many years before leaving the block programming to go with country music. Obviously, the Martins have seen few days off in the years since landing radio jobs in Harrodsburg.

In Rockcastle County, home of Renfro Valley and the site of Kentucky's great country music tradition built by John Lair, a tower was erected in 1957 with the help of area farmers and a pair of mules! Lair started his own radio station in the valley, licensed to nearby Mount Vernon. WRVK signed on with 500 watts at 1460 on the dial and was owned by Lair with Tom Hargis as vice-president and general manager.

Pete Stamper spent more than 20 years helping Lair at the radio and in production at the Renfro Valley music complex. Stamper said since the radio was a daytimer, they couldn't carry the live barn shows, but Mr. Lair loved to spotlight the performers and many of them helped out at the station.

News of the station's opening appeared, of course, in the *Renfro Valley Bugle* that carried all the news of the "Valley" and continues to do so to this day.

The music was country, of course, and between 11 a.m. and noon each day, Lair did his own *Newspaper of the Air* show. He gave the news and farm reports, and there was a sports page and homemakers page. Lair even had the comic section, as Ole Joe Clark and Russ Fisher came on with *Confusin' the News*. Others, like Slim Miller, Wayne Hensley and Claude Sweet, worked the radio, which used the same studio equipment that had been installed by WHAS for the network shows in 1939.

The radio was sold with the rest of Renfro Valley to Hal Smith and country singer Hank Cochran in 1968. Larry Burdette later became general manager, and he bought the station in 1988. Its format remained true to country.

Mount Vernon's first FM construction permit at 102.9 has been issued but the station has not been built.

Lair reacquired ownership of the music complex in 1976. He died in 1985 and in 1990 a local group incorporated Renfro Valley Folks and began rebuilding the entertainment center.

Another name associated with Renfro Valley is Jim Gaskin, who had come to work for John Lair in 1979 and took over hosting the weekly *Sunday Gatherin'* radio program in 1983. Gaskin has said Lair was a natural for radio because he knew what the human imagination could do and he influenced all those around him.

Gaskin was heavily involved in radio himself as he purchased WIRV in

Irvine in 1965. The station had been built in 1960 by South Bevins at 1550 kHz with 1 kilowatt. Jack Dial assisted Gaskin for many years until the station was purchased in 1976 by Jim Hay of Jackson.

Marshall Sidebottom began managing the station and ended up becoming president. His sales manager, Kelly Wallingford, then purchased the station when Sidebottom moved to Elkton. In August 1991, local FM service came to Estill County as WCYO went on the air. The country format of AM was switched to 106.1, and WIRV became oldies.

Lincoln-Garrard County Broadcasting Co. was formed to build a radio station in Stanford. WRSL went on the air in November 1961 at 1520 kHz with 500 watts, with the call letters being a combination of the first names of founders, W.G. Morgan, Ray Doss, S.C. Bybee and Lanier Burchette. Burchette had been a part-owner of WAIN in Columbia when he decided to apply for a license in Stanford and enlisted help from Bybee and Doss, who had also been in Columbia, and from Stanford businessman Morgan, who provided the land for the station construction.

In 1965, Calvin Smith became a partner with Burchette and then obtained full ownership four years later. Smith had started out as a school teacher and coach after graduating from Eastern, but decided to enter the radio business at WFTG, London in 1956, and soon wound up at WWXL in his hometown of Manchester earning \$45 a week. His radio career would take him to many stops, including Somerset, Pineville, Barbourville and Corbin.

Smith's varied radio career also included ownership of the Liberty station, a TV station in Crossville, Tennessee, and involvement in several other Kentucky applications.

Smith worked in Frankfort for state treasurer Frances Jones Mills in the late 1970s and made an unsuccessful bid for state representative.

The story of WRSL is mostly about the Smiths and Jones — Arvil "Plow" Jones that is, although Jim Gaskin operated the station from 1976 to 1982.

Jones, who was stricken with polio and walked with the aid of crutches, had been a boyhood friend of Smith's. He had worked with Smith at other stations and finally settled in Stanford, where for 30 years he was the mainstay of the staff and developed the *General Store* show from a typical swap shop feature into a popular call-in program, where Jones was able to use his personality and neighborliness to keep listeners entertained and involved.

Jones had the true Kentucky work ethic, as for a time he would work the morning shift in Stanford and drive to Liberty to do an afternoon show!

WRSL began mostly country music in 1967 after leaving the block programming format. The FM station at 95.9 was built in 1967 and began

simulcasting the country music and providing nighttime service for live local ballgame coverage. The FM programming was separated from AM in 1982 with FM remaining country and AM becoming gospel and religion.

One might say that Calvin and Ruth Smith raised their own radio staff, with only daughter Amy Lu not gaining on-air experience at WRSL. The five Smith sons all had plenty to do at the station through the years. The oldest, Calvin Lynn, is on-air personality and operations manager; David Lee is engineer and Joseph is an announcer. Phillip also worked for several years at the station and in 1994 Jonathan, a Chicago attorney, purchased the stations from his mother, who had inherited the property upon her husband's death in 1987.

J.B. Crawley, Bill Kelley and J.T. Whitlock joined forces to build Casey County's first station, WPHN-AM 1560 in 1963. Since the town was Liberty, the station call letters were taken from the man who wanted to have it or die, Patrick Henry! Crawley hired his brother Sam to manage and go on the air. He learned quickly the well-known hazard of radio, that of dedicating songs, especially if you are new in town. He sent out a song dedication to a local police officer, but the lady mentioned was not the man's wife!

Local folks George and Malcolm Wolford were also involved in the station, but in 1968 WPHN was sold to Calvin Smith from Stanford, who renamed it WKDO, and the studios moved from downtown to Highway 70 East.

Carlos Wesley, who had been employed as station manager, purchased WKDO in 1972, and he put the FM on the air in 1977 at 105.5 MHz. In 1983 he received FCC approval to increase the small 250-watt signal to 1,000 watts.

The operation became a Wesley family tradition. Louise has served as station manager, with son Rick and daughter Carla helping out with many aspects. A new building was built in 1982 to house the AM/FM. Wesley wanted to get the station away from the Green River, which flooded periodically. During one such flash flood, water rose so quickly that announcers had to get out by boat or swim. Such calamities prompted Wesley to build new studios on Dry Ridge Hill.

The station has been heavy on country music through the day with rock in the evening. In 1991, a power upgrade caused a channel change to 98.7 and WKDO now boasts a 25-kilowatt signal.

The small town of Beattyville in Lee County is home to 102.1 WLJC (Lord Jesus Christ), Kentucky's first all-Christian FM radio. Forest Drake and Hour of Harvest, Inc., debuted the station on May 12, 1965. It was originally 102.3 and among the first stand-alone FM operations in the state.

Drake, a local minister, said he had been given a vision for it for more than ten years, but start up was plenty difficult. Equipment companies

would not consider faith in God as collateral!

Once on the air, the station was hampered by the lack of FM radios in that area in those days, and Drake placed some FM receivers in needy homes.

Drake went on to start an AM Christian station in Stanton in 1975 but sold it when, in 1986, he started up the first Christian TV station in the state at the site of the radio station. Chapel services from the studio, gospel music and preaching programs have been a part of the daily fare for the station. Evangelism, Christian radio and TV have been a family affair for the Drakes, with Margaret and son Jonathan working at the station in producing some local community shows and with Jonathan eventually assuming the management position.

Donald Drake, Forest's brother, and his wife Mildred hoisted the Christian radio banner and carried it to the Danville area. After much prayer, Drake began pursuing the license for Junction City. He ran into several problems including a competing application, which he was able to buy out before hearings began. Then there was the matter of money for equipment. Drake was forced to mortgage what he had to get the necessary start-up capital, and unexpected donations began coming in. He bought a run-down piece of property near the church parsonage on which he built the station, with studios in the basement and his living quarters upstairs. Jim Gaskin began assisting him in sales and programming.

WDFB went on the air on May 20, 1985, at 1170 AM.

Drake's ministry organization, Alum Springs Vision and Outreach, built a companion FM in 1992, that was operated as non-commercial at 88.1 MHz with southern gospel music, supported by listener donations. He has provided several national religious networks for listeners as well as local Christian broadcasts.

The town of Berea is about 25 miles south of Richmond. It was in Berea that WKXO radio began in July 1971 at 1500 kHz with 250 watts. Twenty years later, the two towns would be linked up with a unique morning show on WKXO and WEKY after Bob Spradlin purchased both stations.

Honus Shain, a proficient engineer, often constructed and marketed his own studio equipment, built stations and did engineering work for others. He had started WKXO.

Spradlin acquired the Berea AM in 1982 and ten years later was able to sign-on the FM station to supplement the low power AM. Spradlin continued as manager of WMST in Mount Sterling for three more years before going to Berea full-time. He had pursued a plan with others to start a station in Flemingsburg before deciding to buy Berea.

When the FCC's 80/90 docket window opened for his area, he found four others who wanted the 106.7 FM frequency he needed for WKXO. He finally prevailed and then in 1993 bought the struggling WEKY in Richmond. The Berea station had been owned by Roger Oliver and Jim Tillery from 1975 to 1982. Originally a contemporary hit station, Spradlin took it to top country and instituted more local news and information.

A *Morning Mix* show that was devised for the combo operation has announcers at WEKY in Richmond and WKXO in Berea joining the stations for talk segments periodically each morning, then splitting for their separate music since WEKY plays a more contemporary blend. They time their music to set up for the next link up for the information exchange between the two cities.

At the southeastern end of this radio district, WWAG is the only station in Jackson County. Located in McKee, the southern gospel-religious station went on the air in 1990 after the Baldwin Group Broadcasters had obtained the construction permit for 107.9 MHz.

In 1994, Dan Brockman formed Dandy Broadcasters, Inc., to purchase the local station and changed the format to top country.

### Southern Bluegrass Station Log

Beattyville	WLJC-FM 102.1
Berea	WKXO AM-1500; WKXO-FM 106.7
Danville	WHIR AM-1230; WMGE-FM 107.1 WDFB AM-1170; WDFB-FM 88.1 n/c
Harrodsburg	WHBN AM-1420; WHBN-FM 99.3
Irvine	WIRV AM-1550; WCYO-FM 106.1
Lancaster	WKYY AM-1280 WRNZ-FM 105.1
Liberty	WKDO AM-1560; WKDO-FM 98.7
McKee	WWAG-FM 107.9
Mount Vernon	WRVK AM-1460
Richmond	WEKY AM-1340 WCBR AM-1110; WMCQ-FM 101.7 WEKU-FM 88.9 n/c
Stanford	WRSL AM-1520; WSRL-FM 95.9

Stations listed on the same line indicate common ownership.

\*n/c - non-commercial station.

## Southeast Kentucky (District 8)

The broadcasting bandwagon rolled into this part of the state in 1947 as stations went on the air that year in Corbin and Somerset, and the next year in Middlesboro.

The *Corbin Times Tribune* put WCTT on the air on May 5, 1947, with J. Springer Robinson as president and John L. Crawford served as general manager of the company. Wallace Robinson was the first station manager, with S. G. Hembree, sales manager. The station remained under newspaper ownership until 1982. The Crawford family maintained control of the station, however, buying WCTT when the newspaper properties were sold.

WCTT originally operated at 1400 kHz with 250 watts, but engineer Kenneth Turner helped the station obtain a 1,000-watt directional allocation at 680 on the dial, after he had come to work at the station in 1949. To come up with the necessary land for the additional tower and needed radial space, they had to buy a large farm near Woodbine. But Mr. Crawford had always wanted a farm anyway so the purchase was made and the construction began on the towers and the studios went downtown, sharing space with the newspaper.

WCTT's building contained an auditorium to seat several hundred people and became an origination point for many state-wide broadcasts by such notables at John Sherman Cooper, Thruston Morton and other politicians.

One of the engineers helping with the frequency change project was Tom Baldwin from Elizabethtown, who then helped work that channel, 1400 kHz, into another project for the new station at E'town which went on the air in 1950.

WCTT added the FM station at 107.1 with 3 kilowatts in 1967, later increasing to 50 kilowatts and moving to 107.3 MHz.

Jim Lee Crawford became vice-president of WCTT, getting more involved with the station in 1982, and his son, John Crawford II, worked as station manager.

The AM and FM stations have been programmed separately with country the format of choice on AM. The FM started out as classical and orchestra music, then moved more toward adult contemporary in the early 1980s.

Besides associating three generations of Crawfords with WCTT, folks since 1947 have also thought of the Bailey family, as in the Bailey Country Store of Williamsburg, a few miles south. A daily morning program has originated from that store. The Bailey's show from 8:30 to 9 a.m. each morning has become an institution in that neck of the woods. The family patriarch, Virgil Bailey, started the show and over the years four sons have manned the air chair in the mornings — Bob, Ed, Bart and Joe Bailey have kept the tradition going.

The radio show was a sideline. Their livelihood was really the general store, which sold a little of everything, which is about what the show dispensed to the listeners, a little of everything! Lost dogs, yard sales, home-spun humor, advice, community notices, buy, sell or trade was all a part of the daily radio fare from the small studio upstairs at Bailey's Country Store. Its longevity in Kentucky, as a regular daily radio show, would be matched only by Dink Embry's *Early Bird* program.

The store generally received anywhere from 60 to 70 calls a day from people offering items to be mentioned on the show. Joe Bailey has said one of the more unusual requests was the man advertising one time for a wife. Then there was the person who wanted to trade a once-used wedding dress for a baby crib!

WCTT veteran Loren Hooker said the program succeeded because it relates to the rural people of their tri-county service area, Laurel, Whitley and Pulaski counties. Hooker has served WCTT since the early 1960s, as station manager and as the respected news voice. He said the big change in town is so many stations trying to sell Corbin, "it's about like a big-city market these days with the competition." Johnny Reeves was hired in sales and has stayed with the station for 35 years, because as he puts it, "I like the people, and the town." Reeves worked many hours on the air, sometimes six and seven a day entertaining and informing Corbin folks.

WCTT carried Corbin high school sports, as well as Cumberland College activities through the years.

Corbin's second entry into the radio field came in November 1961 as WYGO signed on the air with 5,000 watts at 1330 kHz. Tri-County Broadcasting company was formed and Don Mills and Cal Smith managed the operation before the station was sold in 1965 to James C. Vernon. He built the FM station two years later at 99.3 MHz, and was able to boost power to a 50-kilowatt operation in 1987, moving to 99.5 FM.

WYGO was more of the pop/rock music station with ABC news. Some of the more memorable announcers were "Cotton" Sasser, Bill Slone on the air and in sports and sales, and later on, David King. Linda Sawyer handled traffic and operations for the station since the 1960s. Jim Vernon sold his station in 1989 to Dallas Eubanks, local cable TV/electrical supply owner. Eubanks changed the call letters to WKDP with FM becoming country and AM going oldies and talk.

Both stations were involved in the annual "Nibroc" festival activities, (Corbin spelled backwards) that happens each August in town.

In 1995, a sale was announced putting all the stations together under one



**Somerset's WSFC/WSEK received the state's first NBC Network satellite as a new era began in 1982. Pictured are (l-r) Nolan Kenner, Mgr., Kenneth Chestnut, Engineer, and Gib Gosser, News Director.**

roof, as WCTT was sold to Eubanks Broadcasting and the Crawford family ended its long-standing ownership of Corbin radio.

Non-commercial radio has been in the Corbin area at Keavy since 1984, when WVCT, owned by the Victory Training School, Charley Sivley, president, started a station at 91.5 MHz. With a combination of education and religious programming, it operates as a class A with 113 watts.

In Somerset, WSFC-1240 went on the air December 14, 1947, with five investors putting up a total of \$59,000 to construct the station. Alonzo Carter served as president of the company and was on the air with special ceremonies that first day to explain the desire of the station to serve the community. Several local dignitaries and guests participated in the dedication and observers considered the new building to be impressive, located two miles north of Somerset. The management declared that "We Stand

for Courtesy, Cooperation, Christianity," thus the call letters WSFC.

Mike Layman came from Pikeville to be the president and manager of the station, leading it through its infancy from the early 1950s, until the mid-1960s.

Some of the early, well-remembered programs include Bob Haney's *Man on the Street*, *Nursery Time* with Johnny Hartnett, who broadcast live the new births from the local hospital. There was *Mailbox Roundup*, and extension news with Hugh Hurst and Louise Craig for more than 25 years.

The First Baptist Church began live nighttime services over the air in 1948, and has continued uninterrupted, the second-longest running broadcast of its type in the state. The program is now simulcast on AM and FM.

The FM station signed on in 1964 at 96.7 with 3 kilowatts under the direction of engineer Bob Shoopman who had been there when AM started. WSFC-FM started out playing background music, but became one of the



first FM country stations when it was christened WSEK in 1966 and has been country ever since.

Swartz Media, Bill Swartz, president, had acquired the stations in 1966, and Jim Brown became station manager. Brown guided WSFC-WSEK until 1974, when it was sold to group owner, Shamrock Communications of Virginia and Brown moved to WTLO.

In 1975, Nolan Kenner became general manager, and five years later was forming First Radio, Inc., to purchase the stations, returning it to local ownership.

Don Orwin was one of the first announcers, then became program and sales director, and later started up the Somerset Community College station, WSCC, a 10-watt FM in 1967. He taught and managed there until 1993 when funding cutbacks forced it off the air.

Wanda Hudson, who has been with the station since 1960, said some others who were popular over the years have been Jack Rickert and Jerry Padgett, who was program director and sports announcer. News and mobile units have been a part of the station's efforts since the beginning. One newsman in the 1960s, Jack Baker, took his job so seriously many times he arrived to report on fires before the fire department got there, until the department obtained a restraining order, prohibiting his mobile unit from being on the scene. He also apprehended a stabbing suspect once, broadcasting the details from his panel truck while he was transporting him. The police heard the report, pulled him over and took charge!

The station has won several AP news awards over the years, and as an NBC station, became the first in the state to receive that network's programming by satellite when the dish was installed in 1982. Kenneth Chestnut, engineer, noted the big difference in sound with the new systems that were then coming to stations around the state.

In 1992, First Radio began increasing its reach with 27.5 kilowatts at 97.1 on FM and entered into LMA agreements leasing the nearby Burnside radio stations. The market had become pretty crowded with the addition of licenses for WKEQ-AM 910, a 500-watt daytimer, in 1984, and then WJDJ-FM in 1985 at 93.9 MHz with 3 kilowatts.

Lenn Pruitt leased the facilities to Kenner, in one of the first such arrangements in the state. Kenner uses live programming in the mornings and satellite networks for the remainder of the schedule. According to Kenner, the FCC allowing such agreements was "the best thing that could happen." It permitted programming to be sustained at reduced cost, consolidating other operations and thereby rescuing many stations.

Eleven years after WSFC debuted, Somerset had become a two-station

market, with WTLO entering the picture at 1480 with 1 kilowatt in November 1958. Pulaski Broadcasting Corporation was formed. Oris Gowen was general manager and Ervin Buis was president of the company.

Jim Brown purchased the station in 1974 and has served as president and general manager since that time, nurturing a successful stand-alone AM station he said is now targeted, in the 1990s, to the retirement community that has built up around Lake Cumberland and the Somerset area, with plenty of local news and the ABC Stardust nostalgia music format.

WTLO employed a full-time news department soon after sign-on and the first female newscaster in the area was heard in 1960 when Betty Burke started as a reporter. Another lady, Millie Dickinson was on the air for more than 25 years with the popular *Here's Millie* program.

The "Woopie" class — Well Off Older People — has become the niche audience of WTLO. The station has gathered many news awards in its history and for a period of five years, beginning in 1977, also operated local TV-8 cable for Somerset viewers.

A new FM assignment for Somerset was licensed in 1989 to a partnership involving Walt Williams, who eventually formed Williams Communications to take full ownership in 1992, with Melinda Williams as vice-president and sales manager and Walt as general manager.

WLLK with its 3-kilowatt signal is at 102.3 on the dial and features adult contemporary music.

It was with the "Help of The Lord" that WTHL-FM was put on the air in July 1987 as a non-commercial religious station at 90.5 on the dial. S. David Carr was president and manager of the Somerset Educational Foundation formed to begin the radio ministry that is supported by business and individual underwriters.

Moody network offerings are heard daily along with beautiful music, educational and religious programs and gospel music shows. In October 1994, a King of Kings network was established to begin feeding religious programming to other stations.

The historic Cumberland Gap area saw two towers go up in 1948 with the construction of WMIK and WCPM, with the latter soon selling out to the former.

The Federal Communications Commission granted a construction permit for WWPB, Middlesboro, in 1947 to Pinnacle Broadcasting. But after some legal problems with one of the stockholders, the permit was cancelled and given to the losing applicant, Cumberland Gap Broadcasting for the 250-watt station at 1490. That company was a subsidiary of the *Middlesboro*

*Daily News* and the station became WMIK. It bought out the competition at WCPM, which had been started by Elmer Smith with Walt Gaines, manager. WMIK obtained the frequency 560 kHz and 500 watts in 1950 and the WCPM call letters were later used in Cumberland.

WMIK struggled for a time financially, until a new management team made some changes in the music, reducing the amount of classical and increasing country-western. They dropped the Mutual Network in favor of more local news and announcers. Maurice Henry, publisher of the newspaper, managed the station first as an employee then as the main stockholder in the radio and newspaper companies.

WMIK went all-country, and the FM came on in 1971 at 92.7 with a top-40 format, programmed separately.

In 1976, Maurice and Helen Henry and Mrs. Robert Kincaid sold the station to Kay Henry Ballard and James Ballard. Jim Ballard had worked in sales at the station since the mid-1960s, and took over as general manager.

The AM/FM stations were sold then by Ballard in 1991 to the Middlesboro Binghamtown Baptist Church. The congregation had been on the air with a weekly program each Sunday and began operating the stations as southern gospel and religious, raising power on the AM from 500 to 2,500 watts.

Henry said religion had always played a key part of the station, as one of the largest single clients was W.W. Nails, who was on the air with a program seven days a week.

In the mid-1970s, Jimmie Branham served as program director and announcer and came back in 1994 to help manage the station for the church. John Cawood, Bill Baker and Webster Taylor, along with engineer Tag England, were faithful WMIK employees.

WMIK had eliminated the competition in the late 1940s, but it returned in the late 1960s, as WAFI signed on at 1560 with 1,000 watts, Walter Powell, Jr., president and general manager. WAFI came on the air in March 1969 with a variety format to serve the tri-state area of Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia with more power than its cross-town neighbor. The station was sold in 1976 to Country-wide Broadcasters, Bud Carrigan, president and general manager, and the station became WFXY with a rock format.

Five years later, Warren Pursiful, who had worked in radio as a teenager at WANO in Pineville, bought WFXY which changed to 1490 kHz, and by 1995 also controlled a sister, FM-WXJB at 96.5 licensed to Harrogate, Tennessee. He also obtained his old station WANO. WFXY-WXJB are operated from studios on Cumberland Avenue in Middlesboro with adult contemporary on AM and country on FM.

Harrogate-Middlesboro, as sister cities, are also served by WSVQ-740

AM, and at Lincoln Memorial University, 91.3 FM public radio went on the air in 1987.

Three stations in this region began business in 1955, with towers erected in London, Barbourville and Monticello.

“Where Fine Tobacco Grows” is London, Kentucky, and that meant the station should be called WFTG, as Elmo Mills signed on September 1, 1955, with 250 watts at 1400 kHz. Mills had been a car dealer but bought the construction permit from Charles Trivette the year before to get into broadcasting. He later expanded with his brother Jack into the Cumberland station, WCPM.

Russell Henson worked as engineer for Mills for more than 20 years after helping to build the station, which received a power increase to 1,000 watts in 1963, with 250 at night. WFTG-FM signed on at 103.9 in 1970 with a MOR format while the AM played mostly country.

In 1978, the FM was changed to WWEL country and AM went to adult contemporary. Raymond Asher, with the station since the beginning, said the new call letters used Mr. Mills’ first name letters, but they promoted the idea of “Welcome to Country Music.” In fact, it was the only stereo FM country spot on the dial for many years as folks traveled down I-75 from Lexington to Knoxville. Mills sold out in 1992 to the Key Broadcasting group.

Asher said one of the strangest promotions was when they had an airplane fly over town, dropping paper plates with listeners encouraged to pick up the “flying saucers” and redeem them for prizes. It was to introduce a new programming concept they had started called “family fare.” In 1957, Mills decided to try a formula of playing pop, oldies, country, and easy listening, all mixed together instead of the usual time blocks. He kept the two traditional religious segments at 9 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. each day.

Both AM and FM are now programmed with country music, plus Laurel County news and sports.

WMAK in London entered the media picture in 1981 at 980 kHz on the dial. That frequency was first assigned as a license for the town of Pittsburg, north of the city as WLPQ, then became WKPJ. In its brief history, there have been three transfers of ownership of the AM station and essentially a move to London for identification and studios.

Gizmo Broadcasting, with James Parks, CEO, obtained the facility in 1990 trying a satellite oldies format, then going gospel. It was one of nearly a dozen AM-only stations in the state that signed-on in the decade of the eighties, but found stability difficult.

Another AM station within this radio district found the going rough. WALY in Gray, near Corbin came on in 1984 at 1590 kHz, with 500 watts, daytime. It sold to David Carrier of Crown Communications in 1986 and became WKYZ. The station was listed as silent by the FCC in 1992 and 1993, but by 1994 had reported a resumption of operation.

Records also show an FM construction permit at 92.5, pending for the London area.

Barbourville radio went on the air in 1955 as WBVL with Dwight Brown, owner of Brown Radio/TV and an electronics whiz building the station at 950 kHz with 1 kilowatt.

Homer Lee Jackson started working in the late 1950s and developed a popular country music show. Jackson, who went on to serve 12 years as county judge, loved to sing a little on the air, too, if needed. He must have won over several people since his politics were Democratic in a Republican county!

Jackson still has some of the old station promos, recorded by the “real” early country greats, like Patsy Cline, Cowboy Copas and Jim Reeves. Barbourville Community Broadcasters purchased the station in 1966 and Elmer Engle became president.

Three generations of Engles have been involved in managing the station since then — Elmer Engle, who is still active in his photography business, Jimmy and Mildred Engle, and now their son, Chad Engle.

Jimmy Chaffin, became a popular morning man for the station that was changed to WYWY. Chaffin also served as station manager, and in 1974, the FM was added at 93.5.

WYWY-FM tried big band and easy listening in the daytime with rock for the teens at night. Later on, AM went country and FM became adult contemporary. With the FM rule changes in the 1990s, the Engles were able to find a way to up power to 25 kilowatts by moving to 96.1 on the dial, where they put the top country format, while turning the AM station to southern gospel.

Monticello radio also got under way in 1955 and wound up being a family affair. WFLW was actually started by the folks at WTCO in Campbellsville, Clifford Spurlock and James Shacklette, principals forming Wolf Creek Broadcasting. Originally assigned 1570 with 250 watts, it was purchased the next year by Fred Staples with son, Stephen Staples, becoming program director. They moved to 1360, broadcasting with a full kilowatt.

“Where Families Listen Wisely” was the call-letter meaning, and the station family has operated it wisely with the bulk of the local audience still tuned to WFLW. The staff has been just as loyal with Bob Glover, as on-air

personality and Eddie Neal doing news for the area since the early 1960s. Stephen Staples became noted for the local play-by-play sports.

Stephen, Jr., who is now general manager, said the family philosophy has been just plain "hometown radio" with every service possible from birthday time to trading post to helping churches, clubs and local organizations and all with voices folks have grown accustomed to over the years. Hal Rogers had an announcing shift on WFLW, but later chose a career in politics and as the representative for southeast Kentucky in Congress.

The FM station opened shop in 1965 at 101.7 MHz with taped beautiful music, but switched to adult contemporary in 1974. Staples says they have maintained the AM and FM separate since the beginning to maximize service. The FM, WKYM is still hit adult contemporary and WFLW plays country and gospel with computer-assist studios.

When the 1974 tornado struck the area, the Staples helped put together a network that included Columbia and Jamestown radio to aid victims. More than \$100,000 was raised by the radio crusade.

A new FM license was granted to Monticello in 1990, as WMKZ 93.1, began operating with Glen Massengale, president of Wayne County Media, Inc., and Joel Catron as general manager. The network is USA with the format — country music.

In 1956, one year after radio arrived in Monticello, London and Barbourville, Clay County had its own station with WWXL established in Manchester, by Wilderness Road Broadcasting. Some of the individuals involved included Rev. Clifford Spurlock who started the station but sold out in 1958. Cecil Corum, Squire Baker, and Joe Tigue, who served as president, were involved and Roy Redmond was installed as general manager.

WWXL-AM was 1,000 watts daytime and 250 night, at 1450 and the sister station was built in August 1967 at 103.1 MHz. Redmond moved on to Maysville and Lucy Howard became the first female sales and general manager of that area. Later Opal Howard and Martha Rice could probably lay claim to being the first female sportscasters in the state as they began doing, what else — Clay County girls basketball, starting in 1973.

In the early 1980s, WWXL was country and FM had gone rock 'n' roll with a flair, as stock in the station was acquired by William Hensley and then William and Janisse Bishop. The rock was silenced and religion took its place when WWXL AM/FM were purchased by Vernon Baldwin in 1987. The Baldwin group owned Christian stations in Ohio and Kentucky. Lonnie Marcum, who had been involved in other area stations, was named general manager. The FM became known as WWLT and the stations are Christian in format.

Manchester's other AM station, WKLB at 1290, was built in 1981. Larry Barker runs the show as a modern country format with a 5,000-watt signal with Lynda Barker serving as program director.

Another FM station in the county debuted October 1989, after Joe Burchell had obtained the license for 105.7 MHz. Burchell had worked the mornings on WWXL in the 1970s, and did play-by-play sports. He also did an air shift for WKLB before starting up his own station. WTBK-FM became sports-oriented with Earle Owens joining Burchell in working local sports and community activities. The station programs a classic rock format.

In 1970, a permit had been granted for a Manchester AM at 1010 with call letters WMEV, but it did not survive.

South to Bell County and the Pine Mountain area, Pineville's first station was called WMLF, another station license owned by Charles Trivette but quickly sold to his manager, South Bevins one year after it had gone on the air. WMLF, with its call letters saluting the Mountain Laurel Festival, started in 1957 and operated at 1,000 watts day and 250 night, at 1230 kHz. It played a diversified format emphasizing country music. Bevins changed the call letters to WANO, cutting the ties with the festival name. WANO is silent now, pending sale.



Courtesy WWXL

*Martha Rice and Opal Howard (WWXL, Manchester) calling Clay County girls basketball in 1973, proving ladies can do play-by-play, too.*

WANO was purchased by Jimmie Branham in 1985. Branham had been around southeast Kentucky radio for years and probably expresses the sentiment of many small-market broadcasters when he said that if a person worked as hard in any other business for so many years, they'd be rich!

In 1973, John McPherson had established WTJM, as the FM station in town at 106.3 and named with his children's initials. He is still in charge at what is now real country WRIL, the new station ID. In the mid-1980s though, it was WZKO after being sold to Bud Carrigan, and there was another transfer in 1986, to Jimmie Branham's Pine Hills Broadcasting, to begin dual operation with WANO-AM. McPherson came back to take over in 1994. In the interim, he owned a station in Sullivan, Indiana.

A native of Bell County, McPherson's life in radio is a lesson in determination and overcoming a handicap to have a career in a profession that might seem unreachable for someone who is blind. He lost his sight completely as a teen, but got involved in radio announcing in the Baltimore area while in school and returned home to start a station. McPherson said everyone was very kind and helpful and the station has been well-received.

McPherson has learned ways to participate in all aspects of broadcasting. He writes out his copy in braille and reads from it on the air. He not only owns the station, he has managed, sells advertising, and even does some technical work. While he stays away from the high-voltage equipment, he does make other repairs using talking voltmeters and calculators and has even mastered the art of soldering wire, though sightless!

McPherson is living proof that the aural medium doesn't necessarily require visual skills.

Near the Kentucky-Tennessee border, a radio tower went up in Williamsburg in 1959 with stockholders forming Whitley County Broadcasting. Leon Buck became president and sales manager with Keith Buck as general manager, and Johnny Reynolds, who would later become mayor, serving as promotion director of WEZJ.

The Bucks ran the station until they sold out to engineer Honus Shain in 1975. The Estes family then acquired the station stock in 1980 and obtained an upgrade in 1985 to 2,500 watts day and 500 nighttime, improving the previously 1,000-watt daytimer at 1440 AM.

Paul Estes served as general manager and his wife, Theresa, as news director. She took over the station's 7 a.m. morning *Live Wire News*, an hour-long survey of county offices, and area leaders who are put on the air for the daily reports.

One of the first programs on the station was *the Old Country Church* with



Cecil Raines and his wife, who have not missed a live program from the chapel in the studios since that time. David Estes works on the air and as music director. Being active in 4-H clubs in the region has earned WEZJ state-wide "Station of the Year" honors from UK extension 4-H, among other community awards.

The station has become home to enough sports for any fan, with Whitley County and Williamsburg coverage joining their UK and Cumberland College games.

WEZJ has always majored in country music programming and in 1990 104.3 FM hit the airwaves to simulcast the AM.

The Estes family was involved in operating the local origination cable channel-3 from 1982 to 1991 until it was sold to Cumberland College.

Another AM station came to town in September 1981 with WEKC and its adult contemporary music format. Monte McAnally was president and chief engineer. McAnally served as chief technician at several stations in Kentucky, starting at WYGO in Corbin. At 710 on the dial, his station had 250 watts daytime authority only, but later he engineered an increase to 1,000 and then 4.2 kilowatts. The format was switched to country in 1987.

In 1992, he built a sister FM station with co-located studios, but the license was actually in Jellico, Tennessee, across the border. WEKX, at 102.7 with 6 kilowatts, features a satellite good-time oldies format.

McAnally sold both stations to Hindman Broadcasting's Randy Thompson in 1993, and Rick Campbell, who was with Thompson in Pikeville and Hindman, became manager.

West of I-75 in Whitley City, WHAY went on the air December 1990 at 105.9 with 3 kilowatts. Tim Lavender is the licensee of the FM and Dave Shelley is manager of the satellite real country format. WHAY also carries high school and UK sports with live morning shows and has oversight of the local cable channel 12 for the town.

Country on the AM dial is gone now in the McCreary County town, as WEQO-AM was deleted from FCC records in 1992. It was licensed in 1975 with William Carrigan, president. He sold to his manager Marc Beaubien in 1979, who operated it for several years at 1220 kHz with 1,000 watts.

Lavender's company had purchased the assets of the AM station with the intent to operate as AM/FM, but problems with getting the actual license transferred prevented it and now the channel is no longer available for that area.

## Southeast Kentucky Station Log

Barbourville	WYWY AM-950; WYWY-FM 96.1
Burnside	WKEQ AM-910; WJDJ-FM 93.9
Corbin	WCTT AM 680; WCTT-FM 107.3 WKDP AM 1330; WKDP-FM 99.5 WVCT-FM 91.5 n/c (Keavy)
Gray	WKYZ AM-1590
London	WMAK AM-980 WFTG AM-1400; WWEL-FM 103.9
Manchester	WKLB AM-1290 WWXL AM-1450; WWLT-FM 103.1 WTBK-FM 105.7
Middlesboro	WMIK AM-560; WMIK-FM 92.7 WFXV AM-1490; WXJB-FM 96.5 (Harrogate, Tenn.)
Monticello	WFLW AM-1360; WKYM-FM 101.7 WMKZ-FM 93.1
Pineville	WANO AM-1230 WRIL-FM 106.3
Somerset	WSFC AM-1240; WSEK-FM 97.1 WTLO AM-1480 WLLK-FM 102.3 WSSC-FM 92.1 n/c WTHL-FM 90.5 n/c WDCL-FM 89.7 n/c (Western Ky. Univ.)
Whitley City	WHAY-FM 105.9
Williamsburg	WEKC AM-710; WEKX-FM 102.7 (Jellico, Tenn.) WEZJ AM-1440; WEZJ-FM 104.3

Stations listed on the same line indicate common ownership.

\*n/c - non-commercial station.

## Northeast Kentucky (District 9)

Ashland's WCMI, northeast Kentucky's first, was a popular station for Kentucky's radio entrepreneurs, as it was owned by four of the state's early active radio groups. In the fall of 1953 the station was sold by the Nunn group to Great Trails Broadcasting which had purchased WKLO in

Louisville. Charles Sawyer was president and he acquired 70 percent of the stock while Gilmore Nunn retained 25 percent and five percent of the shares were given to station employees. Charles Warren, who had been an announcer and salesman in the 1940s, was general manager from 1947 until his death in 1953, whereupon W. Richard "Dick" Martin assumed the post. Martin began work at WCMI in 1947 and would later purchase the station, but not before it was bought and sold several times.

From 1956 to 1960, the license was transferred three times, first to Edwina Company, George Clinton, president, then to Frederic Gregg, Jr. again making WCMI a sister station with WLAP, as it had been with the Nunns. Finally in 1960, the Kincaid-Horton group of Lexington bought the AM and FM station for \$163,000, and O. C. Halyard was made manager.

In 1959, WCMI had opened a Huntington, West Virginia, studio and in 1962 an increase in power to 1,000 watts was granted.

Dick Martin returned as the general manager in 1966 after Robert and Charles Levinson purchased the station. In 1970, they sold WCMI-FM to Martin for \$50,000 and the call letters were changed to WAMX.

WCMI-FM had been licensed at 93.7 in 1948 and began duplicating the AM programming, a practice that continued with 50 kilowatts and later stereo operation. It began separate music scheduling as one of the first affiliates of the new American FM Radio Network in early 1968.

Meanwhile, after the AM station had changed hands a couple more times, Dick Martin bought it as well in 1979, bringing the two stations back together as WCMI and WAMX-FM.

Martin had operated the FM as a hit rock station and with its popularity at a peak, sold the station in 1983 to group owner Stoner Broadcasting for \$1.75 million and operations were moved to Huntington, West Virginia. Left without an FM sister station, the company acquired WCAK-FM in 1985 from Mike Kilgore and changed the call letters to WKQI, making it an adult contemporary station, while WCMI became gospel with news and talk.

WCAK-92.7 MHz had been put on the air from the Boyd County seat of Catlettsburg in 1972 by Hal Murphy, who ran the station with a country and variety format with local sports and news before selling to Kilgore. Murphy, who had been a colorful air personality on WIRO in Ironton, Ohio, became especially popular for his promotions and appearances on St. Patrick's Day and patriotic holidays.

In 1988 Dick Martin became mayor of Ashland and his son Richard Martin, Jr. (Dicky) took over as general manager of the Ashland stations and the call letters of WKQI were changed to WCMI-FM.

In Huntington, WAMX-FM had doubled power in 1985 to 100 kilowatts



Courtesy WCMI

*Eastern Kentucky's first station was Ashland's WCMI. Since 1947, Dick Martin (right) has been involved in much of the station's history. He's pictured here introducing Gene Autry to the early 1950s audience.*

and later became WRVC, changing from hit rock to adult contemporary, then to the "River Cities" oldies station.

In 1995, Martin of WCMI-AM/FM and Mike Kirtner, president of WRVC-AM/FM announced that their four stations would merge, ironically bringing the old WCMI stations together again.

The call letters of WCMI-FM were changed to WRVC, taking over the oldies format, and 93.7 FM became WDGG, "the Dawg" bringing the tri-state area another country format. The complicated move also actually brought together the tri-state area's two oldest stations, WCMI and WRVC as WRVC-AM 930 was originally WSAZ.

WSAZ was the first radio station for area listeners, going on the air in late 1924 after having been moved to Huntington from Pomeroy, Ohio. Although the call letters were assigned by the Commerce Department, some say the slogan of the station was WSAZ — "worst station from A to Z." The station was later acquired by Huntington Publishing and gave birth to the area's first TV station, Channel 3. The radio had occupied several frequency channels in the early years, finally being assigned 930 kHz in 1941. The station became WGNT when purchased by Stoner Broadcasting in 1970, then later WRVC.

The storied history of WCMI includes many recognizable broadcast names who enjoyed stints at the station. There was TV network star Chuck Woolery and Noah Adams of the NPR network started there as Don Adams. Huntington TV personalities Bob Smith and Jule Huffman are WCMI alumni.

One colorful deejay of the late 1940s and '50s was Buddy Gumm and when WCMI became an area rocker in the 1960s, there were others who folks remember like John Thacker and "Tricky Ricky Cool." They vied for the teenager's ear with WKEE-800 AM in Huntington, which had Jack O'Shea, Jimmy Mack and the "Flying Dutchman," Jim Schneider, who went on to country music and mornings on WTCR. O'Shea is the dean of the area deejays, staying behind the mike into the 1990s. WKEE had turned to rock 'n' roll and changed call letters, originally being WHTN, when signing on in 1947.

When broadcasting from the old Ventura Hotel studios, WCMI jocks had their version of "color" radio, as lights that were visible in the street indicated what type of song was playing, like blue for mellow or red for "hot!"

Many WCMI folks like Bob Gilmore, Bill Campbell and Don Rees stayed around a long time in announcing and engineering.

Dick Martin, Jr. took over the sportscaster reins from his dad in 1975, doing Ashland games, including the Sweet Sixteen each year. WCMI tried doing other high school's games in their area with different approaches through the years, including a round-robin broadcast, going from one game to the other, and then even dividing two games between the FM stereo channels (left and right) of the signal. Martin said neither proved popular.

Dick Martin, Sr. has been around Kentucky radio for nearly 50 years, and believes the merger of the Ashland and Huntington stations seems to be the wave of the future. "One independent station can't function successfully these days," Martin said. "The de-regulation and additional stations appear to point toward more consolidation."

Ashland's other early station was WTCR which went on the air in 1954 as WWKO-1420. The call letters represented the three adjoining states and was started by States Broadcasting, Inc., with Charles Trivette and Herman Dotson from southeast Kentucky. The next year, the stockholders were bought out by Connie B. Gay. He changed the identification to WTCR for "town and country radio" and began moving to the all-country format.

While rock 'n' roll was sweeping the nation and radio was finding financial success with it, Gay became a promoter of country stars and country music radio, a format of choice of only about 100 stations at the time. Gay owned as many as 11 stations at one time and helped promote the careers of stars like Patsy Cline, George Hamilton IV, Jimmy Dean and Grandpa

Jones, and was a founding father of the Country Music Association in 1958.

Gay also started WVQM-FM, Huntington, West Virginia, in 1966 as the area's first stereo station, later changing it to WHEZ and bringing beautiful music to area listeners.

WTCR engineer Eddie Walters who had a career that spanned nearly 40 years, also served as morning announcer for many years in the 1950s and '60s, along with John Simpson, "Cousin Johnny." He is now Judge Simpson and he recalls that their first meeting wasn't too pleasant, however, when while broadcasting from their Huntington studio, the transmitter went off and he made some remark about needing a good engineer, not knowing Walters was standing behind him! Walters built the FM station and engineered the move of WTCR from outside Ashland to a new location at Catlettsburg in 1976.

A country station in the early 1960s was considered "hillbilly" but WTCR played host to many of the rising stars through the years and when country suddenly became "cool" starting in the late 1970s, WTCR was there to ride the wave.

But with FM becoming the band of choice, new group owners CRB Broadcasting made the big move in 1982, switching WHEZ and WTCR with 1420 becoming beautiful music on AM, and 103.3 FM announcing an all stereo-country format. The stations also exchanged call letters, but in 1986, after duplication rules by the FCC were relaxed, the two stations combined to become "double country" WTCR-AM/FM. Dave McLain was program director and continues to pull an on-air shift. Chuck Black took over the morning beat and still answers the wake-up alarm.

WTCR-FM, with a 50-kilowatt signal, began identifying more with the entire tri-state area in sales and promotion. The success of WTCR-FM paralleled that of other FMers switching to the country format and finding fans among the aging baby boomers and even the teens.

The station became an immediate ratings hit and has been king-of-the-hill since then. Several times in the 1990s, WTCR's share of the Huntington Arbitron market has been so great as to make it one of the top-rated stations in the country!

The station has been a finalist for medium-market station of the year honors from the Country Music Association on seven occasions and received a *Billboard* magazine Station of the Year nomination in 1988. The advertising and news departments have also seen many honors over the years, including AP news awards in both Kentucky and West Virginia.

In 1994, a move back to split programming was made, with WTCR-AM featuring a more traditional blend of country and carrying Huntington minor league baseball and hockey. Mike Tussey became program director, a home-

coming of sorts. He had worked at several area stations, but as Mike Todd, was an announcer/program director for WTCR in the early 1960s.

Other stations have been added to the Ashland market, including another AM in 1987, at 1040 with 2,500 watts, WOKT, at Cannonsburg in rural Boyd County. The group owner, Baker Family Radio, licensed the station for religious network programming, Edward Baker, president, and Brian Correa, general manager. In 1994, the company was working to build an FM by purchasing the construction permit of Henson Media's Garrison, Kentucky, allocation in Greenup County.

Another FM construction permit has been issued, also for Boyd County, to Westwood where a station WLUA has been in the planning stages.

One historic Huntington station is now silent. WWHY started in 1946 at 1470 kHz, but in the 1980s, after several format and call-letter changes, went off the air with the equipment and license donated to Marshall University as WHRD. The university had non-commercial, WMUL, started in 1961 at 88.1 MHz.

Another early tri-state station was Ironton, Ohio's, WIRO-AM, going on the air in 1951. The station was operated by engineer Ken Auble beginning in 1962 and he built a sister station, WITO-FM in 1973, later using automation to separate the facilities.

When WHEZ in Huntington dropped easy listening, WITO picked up the format and became WMLV.

Greenup County is included in the Huntington metro area, and residents there got their own station when founders declared "We love Greenup County" and signed on with those initials WLGC. The local corporation, with Philip Bruce Leslie as president, Terry McBrayer as vice-president and Rob Scheibly as general manager, brought the station to life in September 1982 as a mix of rock and country with local news and sports, at 105.5 on the FM dial.

Realizing the possibility of dropping in an AM channel in the area, the company acquired it themselves and fired it up in 1985 at 1520 kHz with 5 kilowatts to duplicate the FM in stereo AM as well. The "Twin Stereo" WLGC was promoted for the region. Mark Justice became program director and morning personality on his *Breakfast Club*.

In 1984, Scheibly learned of the chance to go to the new C-3 classification at 25 kilowatts on FM. Seven years and many legal hassles later, WLGC accomplished it and became an all-country station with a more regional philosophy at 105.7 MHz. The FCC granted the upgrade in a choice over an Athens, Ohio, station, when it established the logic that the station providing the most new service to the most listeners should receive the

authority. The principle was later referred to as the "Greenup doctrine."

The AM and FM stations were separated in 1989 and AM became WTCV (Christian Voice) with Ron Bell, local gospel deejay taking over sales and programming. The idea was scratched in favor of becoming network sports-talk in 1993 and changing the call letters back to WLGC.

The station has always sold in communities across the Ohio River, especially in Scioto County, where Portsmouth stations WPAY and WNXT are located.

WPAY would have been the first station many folks along the river had heard, as it went on the air in 1935. The station was actually an outgrowth of the old WHBD in Mount Orab, Ohio. That station was purchased by M.F. Reuben and moved to Portsmouth as a 100-watt station, located above the Shelby Shoe Company. The Shoe Company built new studios for the station in gratitude for the help WPAY had given them in getting word out for help in moving their supplies and equipment during the 1937 flood which inundated the city.

WPAY-FM went on the air in 1948, for most of its history duplicating the AM country, gospel, bluegrass and news/sports format, and became the first 100-kilowatt FM station in the region. The variety scheduling was jettisoned in the late 1980s for a Power Country-104 format.

WNXT radio at 1260 had joined WPAY in the Portsmouth radio log in 1951 with the FM added in 1963. WIOI at 1010 AM was established in New Boston in 1959.

In 1950, this area of the state had just two stations, WCMI and WFTM in Maysville. WFTM went on the air a minute after midnight into the new year 1948 at 1240 on the dial, just hours after receiving final approval from the FCC. James M. Finch, Jr. and Charles P. Clarke, owners of the Standard Tobacco Warehouse Company, had actually decided to start a station several years earlier, but the war put everything on hold. When the time came, they brought in an experienced radio man, J.W. "Bill" Betts, to handle it. Finch, while stationed at Fort McClellan, Alabama, had met Betts and his wife and decided he was the man for the job when the station got under way.

The call letters WKYO were originally proposed, but after getting a release from a Buffalo police station, they got the call signs they really wanted — WFTM, "The World's Finest Tobacco Market."

The first studios were located in the warehouse and initial output power was 250 watts, later raised to 1 kilowatt. The Finch-Clarke team built the FM station in 1965 at 95.9 and also constructed the city cable TV system which the radio folks helped operate.

Hal Sagraves, engineer and one of the first on the air, said Hank Thompson's



“Smoke, Smoke that Cigarette” was appropriately one of the first songs played.

One of the early programs *True to the Farm* has endured since the outset, first with Colonel J. Scott True then Bill Stewart as host, keeping listeners informed about agriculture news. Others recall the *Twilight Lady* played by Dorothy Wood and sports with Coach Earle D. Jones.

Music director Robert Roe has written a booklet about the folks at WFTM, and recalls that the station has been a springboard for talent to move on, like Rosemary and Nick Clooney and Walt Maher, all achieving fame in Cincinnati television. Yet many have become legends right at home with their radio work through several decades, like Charles “Bud” Boyd with the morning show and yeoman sportscasting work. Don Stahl, Danny Weddle, Lawrence McGill and Mayor James Lang are familiar voices to the mid-Ohio Valley. Stahl worked sports and state tournament action for WFTM and the station is a long-time Reds baseball affiliate.

Joe Gillispie, Jr. served in the technical department for both radio and cable TV, and the station has had just three managers with Roy Redmond succeeding Betts in 1960, and Doug McGill since 1987. The ownership has remained stable, with Finch’s son, James A., now serving as president.

The music has been geared to please a number of tastes, with block programming, religious, country and popular and community involvement features.

In 1954 the Morehead Broadcasting Co. received a construction permit to start a station at 1330 kHz, and WMOR signed on in February 1955. J. Earl McBrayer as president and William “Bill” Whitaker as general manager and Earl Young as chief engineer. Those positions remained unchanged for the next 30 years. Ten years after the AM start-up, WMOR-FM was up and running at 92.1, simulcasting in the daytime and adding nighttime coverage and local sports.

Bill Whitaker, who described himself as a country boy from Letcher County, became an integral part of the community and its economic development until his retirement in 1988. He said the radio station was quickly accepted by the community and businesses and made money from the first week in service. Located near the Morehead State University campus, the station employed students as announcers, program directors and salespeople. The experience helped foster their careers in and out of broadcasting. Many of the faculty and administration at the university pulled board shifts at WMOR. Country star Tom T. Hall worked for a time at Morehead and nearby Grayson.

Jim Forrest came to work at the station in 1982 and by 1988 he bought majority interest in the company. In 1984, the AM and FM were split for the

first time. The FM became rock to point toward the college audience, but when rock music turned more to rap, Forrest decided to go satellite with an adult contemporary format. A number of programming formulas have been tried on the AM station, finally settling on continuous gospel, being sponsored primarily by a local church.

Forrest, a play-by-play man, joined Dick Martin, Jr. in Ashland in 1985 to form the Schoolboy Network for state tournament games and went deeper into sports in 1994 by purchasing rights to all Morehead State games and originating the Eagle Network after years of the games being heard on the college station, WMKY.

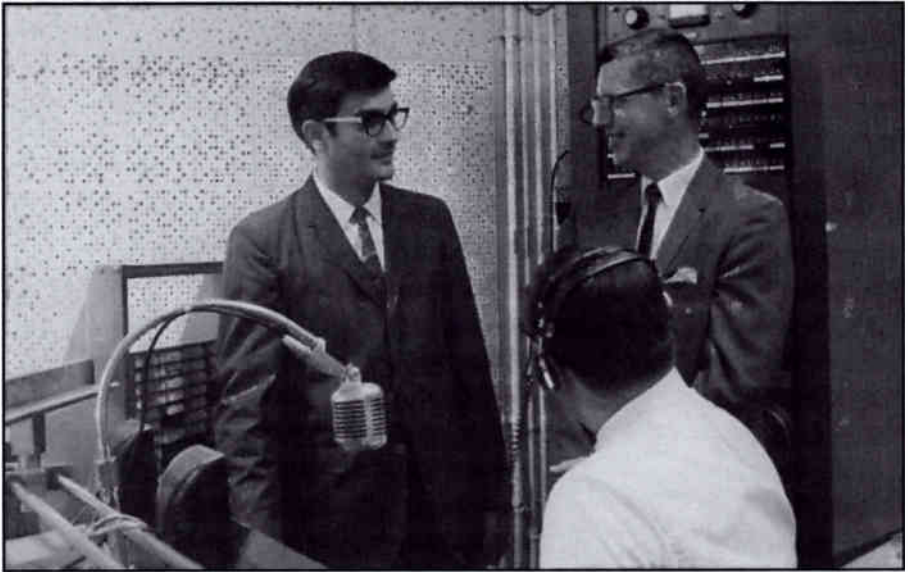
Morehead State University's non-commercial station was inspired by a student term paper in the 1950s and became the public radio voice for Eastern Kentucky. Don Holloway's idea for a campus station caught the attention of President Adron Doran, and in 1965, MSU became the first regional state college to build a 10-watt FM facility. Holloway became the first manager of the station that utilized 91.1 on the non-commercial band and four years later WMKY was the first low-power college station in the country to receive a grant from the Department of Health, Education and Welfare to help upgrade service to 50,000 watts. That new facility, broadcasting at 90.3 MHz, was dedicated in 1970 and WMKY became a part of the National Public Radio network.

WMKY had already proven itself interested in serving the Appalachian area when it established an "Adult Radio" series of informative programs in 1968 with distribution to area commercial stations. It would be the first of many documentaries and news broadcasts focusing on the people and needs of the mountains. WMKY has received several awards for its productions through the years, including KBA's Community Involvement plaque, and has been active with KBA sales and communications training.

In 1971, Holloway was named to the NPR board and in 1973 Larry Netherton became station manager after Holloway received an appointment in the Telecommunications Center. Netherton has guided the station since that time, with moves to a new studio building in 1980 and expansion of the professional and student staff.

In the late 1980s, Netherton had investigated the need to expand services and create a satellite station to serve the Big Sandy area with public radio. The university applied for a construction permit for a Paintsville area channel that was available. The 94.7 frequency was granted by the FCC, however, to commercial station WKLW.

Many familiar Kentucky broadcasters have learned the trade at the WMKY studios and some went to national networks including Tom Martin, who became the AP Radio Network first anchor and later ABC fill-in for Paul



Courtesy WMKY

*WMKY-FM in Morehead was Eastern Kentucky's first non-commercial station, established in 1965. Manager Don Holloway (left) talks with Morehead State's Humanities Department head, Dr. J.E. Duncan, in the control room.*

Harvey. Don Russell moved to the University of Louisville Cardinal TV Network and to producing several nationally-syndicated sports shows.

Estill Reed Anderson had been an engineer in Somerset, Richmond and Lexington. He was somewhat concerned that rule changes might mean first-class operators would not be in great demand and decided to build his own station. His wife Ann recalled they had an opportunity for a license in either Mount Sterling or Cynthiana. Figuring a new highway system would be built north from Lexington, the Harrison County town would be the best location. As fate would have it, Mount Sterling got the interstate and Cynthiana was bypassed. In another irony, Anderson had brought Bob Doll from Richmond to help with his new station and Doll later moved over to the Mount Sterling station to manage it.

WCYN has been the Anderson family domain since its premiere, September 1956 at 1400 with just 100 watts, because the normal 250-watt assignment would have caused interference with other stations. But Bob Doll recalls the signal had surprisingly good coverage back then.

Reed Anderson was president with his father, Silas Anderson, as vice-president and Ann Anderson as secretary-treasurer. By June 1970, the class A, FM station at 102.3 was duplicating the AM, which had by then been

able to increase to 500 watts day and 250 night. The station offered up a variety of block programming, with farm news and an emphasis on local news and sports.

Anderson built the Cynthiana cable TV system as well, and the station controlled channel 6 for a couple of years until the system sold. A new tower was erected in 1991 and AM was operating at 1,000 watts at night, twice as much as daytime power, a rare occurrence indeed, for a radio station. WCYN was not given the FCC's allowable increase in 1962 to 1,000 watts because of signal interference, but was granted the automatic nighttime increase to local AMs in the 1980s.

You might call Cynthiana, "log cabin country radio." The home of WCYN is more than 200 years old, a log house that has its own historical marker as the first county courthouse, a place where Henry Clay practiced law in 1817. The city's first newspaper was also housed there as well as the print shop that produced the first edition of *Guthrie's Arithmetic*, published west of the Alleghenies. WCYN located there in 1973 and the modern radio studios upstairs contrast with the pioneer decor in the lower level.

Some early announcers included Walt Turner in programming and news, Bob Chandler, who went on to be vice-president of Greater Media, Inc., and Truman Wiglesworth, who later became a leader the National Talk Radio Association.

Ann Anderson, who had worked part-time for the station, took over after her husband's death in 1989 and Gary Anderson became vice-president. Betty Gayle has been on the air and serving the station in several capacities since 1962. Anderson said they have tried separating the stations completely, but with little success. FM automation equipment was purchased in the late 1970s and is still around but not used now that the AM and FM simulcast country punctuated with news and talk.

At the gateway to the mountains, Mount Sterling's WMST, began operation at 1150 with 500 watts on October 17, 1957. The FM provided nighttime service beginning in 1965 at 105.5 MHz. The majority stockholders were William Clay, R. J. Reynolds and William Reynolds, tobacco warehouse owners. Herb Arms was the first manager, then later Bob Doll.

Doll has described the city as a good radio market, and the station's efforts at reaching rural and town folks alike made it successful from the start. When Doll moved on to Frankfort when the Clay-Reynolds company bought WFKY in 1964, Bob Spradlin was installed as general manager and served for more than 20 years before he moved on to his own stations in Berea.

Spradlin separated the AM and FM operations first with middle of the road automated music on FM and country on AM. With the popularity of

country increasing in the early 1980s, and folks moving to the FM dial, WMST switched formats putting the country on FM and going live, while automating the AM with adult contemporary.

News and sports played an important role for the stations. Ron Mastin, Tom Byron and Jack Gentry were announcers who became household names in the area, with folks listening to Dan Manley for the play-by-play of all the ballgames.

Frances Denney has been with the station since day one, and said community involvement has been a big key, including the Kiwanis auction that has gone on every year. She said the station has also helped many folks move on in the business. In fact, they count 213 different people who have been on the payroll since the start.

Local stations get calls for information about most everything and Denney said she has handled many, but the most unusual was the one from a lady who had just moved to town from Florida and wanted to know if, when it got to 32 degrees in Kentucky, it was freezing, like in Florida!

Spradlin tells about one of the funniest demonstrations of the power of radio when on one April Fools Day, announcer Darryl Steppe advised the audience that the phone company would be cleaning out the lines that day and folks should take their receivers off the hook and put them in the waste basket during the morning, to keep from getting dust over the house! Well, so many people believed it, the system went down and the station received a visit from an unhappy phone company executive.

The Clay family still controls Mount Sterling Broadcasting, as Jeannette Clay Lucas bought out other heirs in 1986, and Vernice Taylor is general manager.

To the east of Maysville, along the Ohio River, another tower went up as Vanceburg began listening to WKKS in the summer of 1958. The call sign was taken from the owner and manager, Karl Kegley, who was in the Army-Navy surplus business in town. The 250-watt daytime operated at 1570 kHz. Howard Potts helped build the station and served as engineer through much of its history.

Early programming was variety with local people participating including some who even sang opera. Ralph Davis was announcing with the station in the early years and developed a popular daily sports program. Local coach Gary Kidwell continued that tradition, beginning in the mid-1970s. Kegley sold to local attorney Avery Stanley and banker Charlie Jordan in 1974 and the music had become mostly country.

Brown Communications, Dennis Brown, president and general manager, bought the station in October 1984 and constructed a sister FM at 104.9. The

transmitter and tower were relocated in 1987, when a new highway went through the city.

The AM/FM duplicate a "kicking country" format except for mornings, and Lewis County sports is heard at night. Country comes on the air live each Saturday night, as it has for years, from the local music barn, the Fly Branch Jamboree. Brown works all aspects of the station and at the local newspaper as well, where he also owns stock.

The decade of the fifties was coming to an end when Grayson joined the list of small towns with their own stations. Local businessmen along with former mayor, Dr. Harold E. Shufflebarger as president, formed Carter County Broadcasting and signed WGOH 1370 on the air in June 1959 to serve Grayson and Olive Hill. The 5,000-watt daytimer had studios at the tower site west of town that would become known as "radio hill." The stations remain under the same ownership 35 years later.

Bill Stewart was the first announcer to log on. He went on to become an ABC correspondent and tragically lost his life in 1989 in the Nicaraguan uprisings. One of the first programs was for sportsmen, *The Game Club of the Air*, with Dr. Robert C. Webb, which remained a weekly regular for 30 years.

Early music was variety, but bluegrass has always been a part of the schedule and Carmel Stevens was the bluegrass expert for more than 25 years and often welcomed Ricky Skaggs and Keith Whitley to the studio to perform live and pick out songs. Those two country stars first met at the WGOH control room. Nighttime service, Reds baseball, and live local ballgame coverage came to the county when WGOH-FM signed on in 1967 at 102.3 MHz.

Francis Nash, general manager, began work with the station in 1966 as afternoon rock personality "K J" and inaugurated the play-by-play sports coverage, working all the local games since that time with partner Tom Gemeinhart. Nash moved to host the mornings and separated the AM and FM programming in 1979 creating WUGO-FM as an automated hybrid mix of rock, oldies and country, while WGOH remained live with country and bluegrass. Both stations joined the CBS network.

Since 1982, the station has been involved in television, by programming the local cable system Grayson channel, with taped news, video messages, and some live programming simulcast with radio.

Jim Phillips, the local newspaper editor, became a radio news director in 1970 and has been the voice of local news, winning several awards including the KBA Meritorious Service plaque, and helping the station achieve numerous AP news first place honors.

"GO" radio's varied community involvement and public service cam-

paigns, including clean-up drives, charity auctions, Christmas parties and others have been written up in the "Standard of Excellence" booklets published by the National Association of Broadcasters describing the finalists for the annual "Crystal" radio awards. WGOH has been nominated three times for the national honor, and has also won KBA's Community Affairs and Involvement awards.

Turnover has never been a problem at Grayson, since the other full-timers, Faye Bush, Bill Craig and Jeff Roe, average 28 years of service.

Tragedy struck the station in March 1994 when an ice storm brought the 380-foot tower crashing down in the middle of the night. It crumbled away from the studio building and no one was injured. The stations operated with temporary antennas for the three weeks while the new tower was erected.

Grayson's Kentucky Christian College students continue to operate the state's only remaining 10-watt FM educational station. WKCC signed on the air in 1973 at 91.5, but was forced to move to the commercial band with the rule changes of the early 1980s that gave non-commercial class D stations the option to raise power or find a new frequency.

WKCC now serves the campus and community at 96.7 with network religious and local contemporary Christian music programming as well as KCC sports including, following the Knights basketball team to four national Christian College championships.

South of Grayson in Morgan County, radio got its start in July 1965, when Morgan County Industries, Dr. C.C. Smith, president, built WLKS, West Liberty. The station is under the same ownership 30 years later. A couple of other names have not changed in the history of the station, either. Chief engineer Paul Lyons and manager Glenn Woodward have been at the station since its birth. Woodward has served in announcing, sales, management, and as high school play-by-play man through all the years.

The AM station soon upped power to 1 kilowatt day and 250 night on the 1450 frequency, but had to wait until the 80/90 docket opening in the 1980s to apply for an FM.

WLKS-FM finally went on the air, January 1, 1994, with satellite country format as Kick 102.9. The AM also remained country with local news programs and the sports. The new FM transmitter and tower was installed on Ditney Ridge, a high point near the Rowan-Morgan County line giving the station good coverage in the Morehead area where a studio was also opened. Darla Rudd, operations manager, reports the FM venture met with good reaction.

WVKY stands for West Virginia and Kentucky, as the Louisa station on

the Big Sandy River went in business, December 1970, with Walter May, president and Marshall Sidebottom, general manager. May and his Pikeville partners built the station at 1270 kHz with 1 kilowatt daytime, but later May relinquished his stock and Henry Stratton became president.

As it turned out, May got the station back after it had been off the air for a time having been hampered by two major fires at its trailer studios. He made it a part of his Eastern Kentucky network in 1992, programming the station from Pikeville.

In May 1991, local Coca-Cola bottler Harold Britton had obtained the FM license for the city and built WSAC-FM 92.3 and May wound up turning the AM station over to him for the cost of a few pieces of equipment.

WSAC had gone on the air as adult contemporary, but switched to country for the AM and FM. Both are now owned by Britton's Louisa Communications.

WVKY had been successful in many areas of community involvement and taping local ballgames. Jim Bradley took over as manager when Sidebottom moved on to Irvine. The station was active in promoting the establishment of a Teen Center for the city and in lobbying for the Yatesville Lake project.

Across the river from Louisa, in Fort Gay, West Virginia, educational station WFGH 90.7 is licensed to the Wayne County Board of Education. It's the region's only high school station and has been run by students and staff since 1973.

The story of getting Fleming County its first radio is one of leaping many legal and technical hurdles. Ernest Sparkman of Hazard, with engineer Jim Hay, and A. Dale Bryant, formed Fleming Co. Broadcasting to start a station in the county. The license was issued and start up occurred in 1981 for a 500-watt directional station, located in the county seat of Flemingsburg. The station ran into interference problems with other stations, and after four years, and erecting two more towers, it was finally on to stay, broadcasting at 1060 kHz with a country format.

By 1985, with WFLE on AM, plans were in place to put a competing FM on, as a license was given to Garey A. Beckett of Maysville for WBPB. Again, legal problems and delays kept pushing back the debut, until the license was secured by WFLE for a sister station at 106.3.

The transmitter and tower were located 12 miles northeast of the city. Sign-on was August 1993 with FM simulcasting the AM programming, except for separate religious broadcasts on Sunday.

Carl Haight was hired as the general manager at the outset, and has been with the station through the difficult times and the good times, too, serving



the community with heavy doses of local news and play-by-play sports.

Beckett eventually went across the river to manage a new FM station for Manchester, Ohio, near Maysville.

With a population around 1,000, one of the smallest towns with its own station is Owingsville in Bath County. It was established by long-time WLEX-TV account executive, Hayes McMakin, with his wife Ann Thomas, serving as station manager. McMakin traveled in reverse to the normal career course in that he went from TV to get involved in radio and had the blessing of the TV-18 executives when the idea hit him. He selected Owingsville and settled in because it was out of the Lexington market, yet close enough to drive to work. WKCA signed on December 1, 1983, as one of the first affiliates on SMN satellite network country.

There was no government FM assignment for such a small town, but McMakin used engineering resources and legal help from Leonard Joyce to barely fit one in at 107.1 MHz with 3 kilowatts, a process that actually took five years. The tower had to be put north of the city to satisfy FCC requirements, but McMakin said that turned out to be an ideal spot anyway.

After getting the FCC rule-making for the new allocation, no one else applied for the frequency, and he began to wonder if that was an omen that only he thought the venture was a good idea! The station became successful, though, marketing itself to Mount Sterling, Morehead and surrounding small communities. Jeff Ray was the first sales manager and took over as the station manager upon Mrs. McMakin's death in 1990. She had developed a strong rapport with the business and broadcast community.

McMakin put automatic back-up generators at both his studio and transmitter site, enabling him to keep the public informed in all manner of emergencies. The station emphasized lots of local remotes, along with county news and high school sports. In 1994, the staff took on the additional responsibilities of their sister station, WIKO, Morehead and were preparing for a move up in power and on the dial for WKCA, to 107.7 at 6 kilowatts. WIKO was programmed satellite classic country at 96.3.

Neither of McMakin's station call letters have any particular significance. He said he chose them because, "they just have a nice flow when you say them."

In Powell County, the 1970s brought AM and FM radio service to Stanton but with different companies. WSKV went on the air in August 1974 with Dale Bryant and Charles Lynch forming Red River Gorge Broadcasting, with James W. Johnson, general manager. A combination of country in the morning then rock in the afternoon was instituted. The station at 104.9

was licensed for 3 kilowatts effective power but only needs 570 watts of transmitter output, due the the tower being on top of the county's highest mountain carrying the signal to more than 20 counties.

The station was purchased in 1984 by Walter "Bud" Parks and his wife Janice, who operate the station as country with several gospel programs.

Bud handles the morning show and Janice takes care of the office and accounting, and John Meins does the sales. Parks also has a program he calls, *Tradio*, where as you might expect, folks trade stuff via radio!

In the heart of the Red River Gorge and Natural Bridge areas, WSKV attracts local and tourist listeners and has become known also for its bluegrass music.

The AM station in town was started by Beattyville minister Forest Drake in 1975 as a religious station. Drake had built his FM religious station in Lee County ten years earlier. The Stanton station was called WBFC — We Broadcast For Christ. The 1-kilowatt daytimer was heard at 1470 AM with gospel music and church programs.

In 1982, Drake started his Beattyville TV station, so WBFC was sold to Jerry Wilson, who continued the mostly religious programming. By 1993, with a small market and AM listenership waning, WFBC was struggling and was listed as silent for awhile. WSKV actually purchased the equipment, leasing it back to WBFC.

WCAK used to stand for Catlettsburg, Kentucky, radio, but now it represents Carlisle. January 1995 brought the first station to Nicholas County, as WCAK, Carlisle, signed-on at 100.7 with country music. The fully automated facility is owned and operated by Jim Gray of Cincinnati. Gray had helped build several other northern Kentucky stations and made application for a rule-making for the Carlisle frequency in 1988. The studio is located at the transmitter site, northeast of the city.

## Northeast Kentucky Station Log

Ashland	WCMI AM-1340; WDGG-FM 93.7; WRVC-FM 92.7 WTCR AM-1420; WTCR-FM 103.3 (Kenova)
Cannonsburg	WOKT AM-1040
Carlisle	WCAK-FM 100.7
Cynthiana	WCYN AM-1400; WCYN-FM 102.3
Flemingsburg	WFLE AM-1060; WFLE-FM 106.3
Grayson	WGOH AM-1370; WUGO-FM 102.3 WKCC-FM 96.7 n/c
Greenup	WLGC AM-1520; WLGC-FM 105.7
Louisa	WVKY AM-1270; WSAC-FM 92.3
Maysville	WFTM AM-1240; WFTM-FM 95.9
Mount Sterling	WMST AM-1150; WMST-FM 105.5
Morehead	WMOR AM-1330; WMOR-FM 92.1 WIKO-FM 96.3 WMKY-FM 90.3 n/c
Owingsville	WKCA-FM 107.1
Stanton	WBFC AM-1470 WSKV-FM 104.9
Vanceburg	WKKS AM-1570; WKKS-FM 104.9
West Liberty	WLKS AM-1450; WLKS-FM 102.9

Stations listed on the same line indicate common ownership.

\*n/c - non-commercial station.

## Eastern Highlands (District 10)

This region of the state with its rugged terrain that is not very conducive to good signal coverage had one station on the air before 1945. The growth was steady during the next 25 years, then suddenly a construction boom starting in the 1980s had the radio dial filled with choices.

WHLN, the area's first station, received two power boost authorizations in the 1950s, first to 1,000 then to 5,000 watts daytime, the latter change coming in 1958.

One announcer who keyed the WHLN mike in 1947 was James T. Morgan, and in 1956 he became vice-president and general manager, a position he held in 1995, the longest tenure of any manager in the state at an individual station.



Courtesy WHLN

*James O. Morgan, Dottie Morgan and James T. Morgan of WHLN in Harlan. The family has been involved in the station since the 1950s. WHLN went on the air in 1941, the first station in the mountains.*

WHLN founders, Francke Fox and Dick Helms had split up with Helms moving to the Norton, Virginia, station they had also owned. Morgan became president of Radio Harlan, Inc., and led his station through the era of block programming, a period of contemporary music, then oldies and finally live-assist satellite network service, a move Morgan admits seems to be inevitable for small towns these days.

Morgan continues to head out each morning with live remotes, and reports on road conditions and activities in the town. He was nominated for a NAB Marconi award in 1992, and WHLN has received many AP news and KBA honors through the years. A coveted Peabody Award was given for the “calm unemotional way” the station served its community in the time of crisis, providing coverage of the 1977 floods in the city. James Morgan hands much credit to his son Jim, now vice-president of the company, along with Ron Davis, Doug Stallard and Michael Bryant for that and other community work for the station.

WHLN has been a family affair since the mid-1950s with Morgan’s wife Dottie serving as secretary-treasurer. The station has moved three times from the original location selected by Francke Fox, and is today an AM stand-alone.

The station once brought baseball to fans with play-by-play of the old Har-

lan Smokies team. Morgan said Jay Barlow, the county sheriff, was one of the most popular deejays when the switch was made to the more intense music format. Later, other announcers like Jack Hoskins also had a good following.

Morgan has also served as president of the cooperative effort that established and runs Harlan's community TV cable service.

The Helms and Fox team had gone east to Cumberland to start another station in 1951, WCPM, a 1-kilowatt daytimer at 1280 on the dial, but sold it when they dissolved their partnership. Ed Shadburne, who was then working at the station, purchased it for \$17,500 in 1956 with the owners even loaning him the down payment. He sold the station a couple of years later to Elmo and Jack Mills, for a nice profit.

The call letters WCPM had actually been in Middlesboro with a station built in 1948, but it was bought out by the competitor, WMIK.

Elmo and Jack Mills and Herman Dotson were primary stockholders in WCPM. The station sold in 1988 to George Bibb, a native of Louisville, who came to Cumberland to work at the station in 1957. Bibb said he fell in love with the people and the mountains and stayed on, serving as engineer and manager beginning in the mid-1960s.

The town of Cumberland grew as a retail center for the coal-company communities of Lynch and Benham, the latter being the site of the Coal Mine Museum. WCPM involved itself in the community through the huge July 4 celebration, and in 1972 joined others to help raise thousands of dollars in hoping to draw a medical complex to town.

Joan Calton, of Benham, was known throughout the area for her *Good News Hour* on WCPM. The show aired on Sunday afternoon for 40 years, where she sang, talked and had guest speakers and singers.

The show continues under the direction of her daughter, Jewell Shepherd. Another local favorite is Merle Dockery, who began as announcer in 1967 and continues for the station, which has programmed a variety of music, mainly country and religious in the morning, then going rock in the afternoon. It is now more pop in the morning with country at midday, as an all-country FM sister station came on-line, December 1994 as WSEH, 102.7.

The new FM has a strong signal into Virginia counties as well, since the antenna is, no doubt, the closest one to heaven in the state, sitting atop Black Mountain, Kentucky's tallest peak.

More Harlan County radio signals arrived in 1976, with WFSR 970 raising a tower in Harlan and hitting the air with country music. Harold Parsons and Don Parsons, local merchants, were founders and still owners. The AM station also began featuring CNN news and simulcasting Hazard TV news.

Another high antenna of the area is WTUK-FM, built in 1992 as a sister station, at 105.1 with satellite adult contemporary music. Not much transmitter power is needed to get the class A (effective radiated power) with the tower at more than 1,000 feet above terrain.

WKIC Radio began broadcasting on November 23, 1947 before a live audience in the old Hazard High School. The station was owned by Fred Bullard, Charlie Metcalf and Dick Goodlette. The call letters were said to indicate, "Where Coal is King." In a switch from the norm in those days, the radio bought out the newspaper, as BMG, Inc., purchased the *Hazard Herald* and combined the news reporting staffs.

WKIC-AM has operated at three different positions on the dial, starting out at 1340 with 250 watts around the clock, but moving to 1420 with 1,000 watts daytime in 1955, then another change was made to 1390 with 5,000 watts. In 1959, WKIC put the region's first FM on the air, and like its AM sister, moved three times before settling in at 101.1 MHz in 1964. The station was originally 96.5, then 94.1. and from the outset, programmed "easy listening" music separate from their AM with sports in the evening. It was an empty log for commercials on FM at the time, according to Ernest Sparkman,



Courtesy WKIC/WSGS

*WKIC in Hazard has brought listeners the state tournament since 1948. Shown (l-r) are Fred Bullard, Dick Goodlette, Mark Halleck, Mark Rudd and Finley Cisco. Halleck of WLEX did UK games. Later, Ernest Sparkman called 40 straight years of Sweet Sixteen games for WKIC.*

general manager. One listener wrote to say they liked the dinner music, the ballgames, and — no advertising! In fact the only sponsor for a long time was Watsons Department Store which got the time checks for 50 cents a spot.

In 1967, the stations sold to Sparkman, L.D. Gorman, Elmer Whitaker and Bill Sturgill, and the FM call letters became their initials WSGS. Soon after that, the format was switched to country, one of the first FM stations in the state to put country on FM. WSGS, at 100 kilowatts, remained a country powerhouse, with WKIC playing hit rock.

In 1965, Sparkman cooperated with the local cable to create WKIC-TV, a closed circuit station, with TV studios for repeat of local news and programs feeding the cable system built by Bill Gorman.

One of WKIC's early talents was George Davis, "The Singing Miner," who was so popular people would sometimes gather outside the studios to watch him do his show. WKIC affiliated with the Mutual Network programs after sign-on, switching to ABC News in 1967. Like a lot of early stations, WKIC took the mike to the streets, with Hugh Dunbar's live interviews with passers-by.

In 1957, the studios were flooded, but with a makeshift transmitter the staff kept broadcasting the emergency information. The whole scenario was rerun in 1963 with another disastrous flood.

Another claim to fame in this station's history is high school basketball. They have carried every boys Sweet Sixteen game since 1948. The early team of Dick Goodlette and Fred Bullard, gave way to Ernest Sparkman who started doing state tournament games in 1954 and continued the play-by-play duties for 40 years, calling his last game in 1994.

In 1958, Sparkman created the Eastern Kentucky Network with WPKE and WSIP for the state tourney action, feeding as many as 15 stations at a time. He was joined by Paul Fyffe of Paintsville, and then in the mid-1960s by Jay Lasslo, the latter carrying on Sparkman's tradition as play-by-play voice of WKIC/WSGS. Sparkman believes his favorite teams were the Jim Rose-led squads of the 1960s. Hazard coach Roscoe Shackelford has said, "to me, Ernest's voice was just meant for basketball on the radio."

Sparkman had played ball for UK in 1944-45 and after Air Force duty, landed a job with the station's band, the Kentucky Hilltoppers, in 1948 but also worked at other stations.

In 1990, WSGS sponsored the first appearance in Kentucky of country star Garth Brooks, bringing him to Hazard in concert.

The Sparkman family, Carolee, Shane and Faron all share in the station duties with the latter now general manager. Bob Hale has been with the station since 1969 as chief engineer.

The number of commercial stations in Hazard remained at two until the

late 1980s, when that figure doubled upon the addition of WQXY-AM in 1988 and WJMD-FM signing on in 1989.

WQXY at 1560 with 1,000 watts daytime and 500 night was licensed to shareholders of local group, Black Gold Broadcasting, with an oldies satellite format.

The Barnett family operates WJMD 104.7 with Michael as general manager, his wife Lema as program director and Rae Ann serving as music director. The religious station also offers programming from the USA Network.

While religion was an integral part of radio in its formative years and is a popular format in the 1990s, the first all-religious station in the state was put on the air June 30, 1948 in the small town of Vanclave in Breathitt County, population 75, no doubt the smallest radio market in existence.

The radio was an outgrowth of the Kentucky Mountain Holiness Association, a religious and educational organization which also founded the Mountain Bible Institute and Mount Carmel High School.

Dr. Lela G. McConnell had come to the area in 1924 when the county was known nationwide as "bloody Breathitt." Dr. McConnell or "Miss Lela" as she was known, saw the need for preparing and educating the



Courtesy WMTC

*Seldon Short, on the "board" at WMTC Vanclave, Kentucky's first all-religious station, started by Kentucky Mountain Holiness Association in 1948. Short later became general manager.*



young people and with faith and donations of land and money from interested folks, the schools were started.

The station call sign, WMTC, is indicative of the overall goal of the association — “Winning Men to Christ.” With 1,000 watts at 730 kHz, the station began operation from a serene and picturesque setting of a renovated log cabin on the ancestral acres of the historic Lovelace family.

WMTC never really intended to make money and had no funds for construction until Wilfred Fischer, a minister and member of the institute’s faculty, was given a \$20,000 check by a friend from Oregon, F. A. Boyington, who sold him on the idea of starting a station. With help from UK’s Elmer Sulzer, the plan went forward and a complete schedule of news, classical music, and of course, religious music and spiritual training hit the airwaves.

The station has always offered time and coverage for area schools and carried the preaching services from the chapel of the Bible Institute.

Fischer remained the station manager for 25 years, replaced by Seldon Short, who started working at WMTC as a student. Neither manager has changed the Christian philosophy of the operation. The station is still low key about finances with some commercials from towns nearby, and prefers to concentrate more on the message, according to Short. Workers are volunteers dedicated to spreading the good news of salvation to the region and do not solicit funds on the air, although the station receives donations to keep equipment maintained.

In 1993, Short added the 6-kilowatt, WTMC-FM at 99.9 to simulcast the signal and reach FM listeners with the special message.

Two decades after the WMTC start-up, Breathitt County had another AM station, when WEKG, Jackson, signed on in 1969 with call letters meaning “Watch Eastern Kentucky Grow.” The station also grew as ten years later WJSN was added. The AM is at 810 with 1 kilowatt daytime and FM was assigned 97.7 MHz, later switching to 106.5. Intermountain Broadcasters was the local corporation formed to bring radio to Jackson with Jeff Howell, president. The station worked to also serve nearby Owsley and Wolfe counties, which had no local radio service.

Jim Hay has been general manager and engineer from the beginning, eventually buying out the other shareholders, and through the years has helped to start other stations as well. Hay had worked for Louie King and Associates, a Tennessee consultant who built several Kentucky stations. Hay said Bill Gorman and Ernest Sparkman convinced him to come to Kentucky, where he began work in Hazard.

WEKG/WJSN have had mostly simulcast programming since 1979 with full local sports at night and a heavy emphasis on country music.

James P. Maggard, now state representative for the area, worked in news and management for over 12 years for WEKG with Mike Hay handling sales and promotion.

The year was 1949 when radio towers came to the Big Sandy area. Stations in Pikeville and Paintsville came on that year, with radio in Prestonsburg arriving three years later.

The Ward family's Cumberland Publishing Company, owners of the newspaper, entered the radio business, putting WLSI (Where Listeners Stay Informed) on the air in January 1949 from studios and tower in the river bottom along the Mayo Trail. W.J. Ward was president and Mike Layman served as general manager.

WPKE was started in July that same year by a group of businessmen who had formed East Kentucky Broadcasting Co. with Dr. O. W. Thompson as president. Jack Hatcher, one of the original stockholders, later acquired 100 percent of the stock which went to his heirs upon his death in 1960. The owners of WMOR in Morehead — Bill Whitaker, Earl McBrayer and Bill Pierce — purchased WPKE and owned it until 1965 when Walter E. May organized some business people to again gain local control of the station. Those businessmen — Herman Dotson, Henry Stratton, Hobart Clay Johnson, C.D. Roberts and T.T. Colley — would be active in building and acquiring other stations with May including Louisa, Nicholasville, and Jellico, Tennessee, May later became president of the company and WPKE.

Unlike the situations in other cities of the state where two stations going on the air about the same time were forced to merge, both WLSI and WPKE remained separate entities and retained the same call letters over four decades later.

WLSI was 900 kHz with 1,000 watts daytime, while WPKE was assigned 1240 with 250 watts full-time. Like other stations, FCC reclassification in 1962 gave WPKE 1,000 watts daytime and 250 nighttime and across town WLSI went to 5,000 watts daytime.

The relationship between the two stations has been described as cordial, even at times sharing announcers when one got in a bind. In the 1990s, as it turned out, WLSI would be run by WPKE in a management agreement.

There was very little spot rate-cutting through the years in the city and credit seems to go to Roy Alexander, one of the first WLSI sales managers, for holding fast to rate integrity. He believed that if you ran a quality operation, you could get a good price for commercials.

The Ward family and the newspaper kept WLSI going with John Ward, then Georgia Ward as chief executive, before selling to Gary Justice in 1988.

Bill and Irene Abernathy in sales and Mike Paxton, a popular country deejay, were key staff members who were loyal through the years.

WLSI with more power, seemed to get the head start on audience and was the dominant station in the early history of the city, before WPKE caught up. Leaving the block programming days behind, WPKE became the contemporary hit spot on the dial, while WLSI served up country. Country performers like the Lonesome Pine Fiddlers and The Singing Miner were regulars, and one of the popular early programs featured Helen Layman as "Miss 900."

Pikeville radio's Walter May became one of the state's most widely-known broadcasters. May had wanted to be in radio since he was five years old, according to his mother. He had heard Fred Foy announce the Lone Ranger and declared that would be his profession. While he started out announcing in 1955, it would be the management side where he made his mark. May worked at Paris, Prestonsburg and Neon before returning to Pikeville to take over the station.

WPKE put 92.1 FM on the air in 1966, and seven years later separated the programming to become country station WDHR, for "Down Home Radio." It was a move that vaulted the stations to the top and kept them there. May gives much credit to Jim Casto, his FM manager, who used the hype and promotional approaches of the rock radio genre to make the country station a winner.

Jim Hoskins was the first technical man at WPKE and stayed around for nearly 40 years helping build the FM station. One of the early top announcers was Sam Paul Combs, and those following local teams and the Pikeville College Bears know Bob Tarback as the WPKE "sports-voice" for decades.

WPKE's longest lasting program has been Lucille Smith's *Personal Touch* where, as the "Sunshine Girl" each evening since 1962, she has hosted her program of personal news, birthdays, special occasions and events in the lives of local people. She parlayed the popularity of the show into a newspaper column and on to politics. May, himself, also got involved in city politics, serving one term as mayor beginning in 1990.

May said Paul Saad was an announcer in the 1950s, with great pipes and WPKE still uses some of his voiced-IDs on the air.

One of the most exciting things WPKE was able to do was broadcast live from the Apollo moon launch in 1969 as May rubbed elbows with the network reporters. Reporting on a more local level has also been important. The station has taken several state news and community service awards and was there with live interviews when President Johnson's visit set the stage for outlining his anti-poverty Great Society program.

In 1992, WDHR received a power increase to 50 kilowatts and moved to 93.1 on the FM dial. That same year, May became involved in one of the first and largest LMA networks in the state, after approval by the FCC allowed the purchase and control of other stations in the market.

The East Kentucky Radio network was formed with the three Pikeville stations plus it took over management of Elkhorn City's WRAU and WBPA, Prestonsburg's WPRT and WXKZ, and added WVKY in Louisa which May owned. Eight stations were run from the one master control. Employees say it was "total bedlam." The lack of being able to really localize the individual stations meant confusion to the listener and to the staff. The network was abandoned after about 18 months. May chalks it up as a "mistake" that taught them that regional networking was not what radio is all about.

In 1993, May did purchase the Elkhorn City stations WBPA-AM and WRAU-FM, changing it to WPKE-FM, an adult contemporary sister for his long-standing AM. May's daughter, Cindy Sargent, is now general manager of the stations.

WRAU at 103.1 FM had been on the air since 1974 as WECL, built by Allen Epling, who added the AM station for Elkhorn City five years later with WBPA-1460 a 1,000 watts daytimer. The FM station had been sold to Gary Justice and became known as WRAU.

Meanwhile, WLSI changed to gospel music and in 1992, was joined by a sister, WZLK 107.5 FM, a country station licensed to nearby Virgie. The two stations are owned and operated by Lonnie and Kenneth Osborne.

Another tower was added to the county array in January 1994 when WXHR signed-on at 104.9 FM with a classic rock format. The license is for the town of Harold, north of Pikeville. Adam Gearhart is general manager and also works with the cable system owned by Paul Gearhart in programming the public access channel 5 for the region, with local taped news and community events.

WJSO at 90.1 is Pikeville's non-commercial religious outlet. The call letters are the initials for Joseph Selmer Otteson, who had established the Southland Bible Institute and the local religious program, the *Bible Truth Hour*. He had always dreamed of a religious station, but was killed in an auto accident in 1977. His wife carried on the crusade and finally got the station in December, 1989. The school has been moved to Ashland, and the radio station was donated in 1991 to the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

Moody operates the station automatically by satellite as part of its nationwide network.

Moody Bible's enthusiasm for radio is widely-known as the college's

varied program offerings are heard on 280 stations nationwide and on the 17 FMs owned by the school. Their activism in radio has led to several landmark decisions, including allowing stations such as WJSO to be operated via satellite. It was a Moody application in 1974 for a non-commercial FM that led to the famous Lansman-Milan decision by the FCC confirming the right of religious institutes and colleges to own FM stations in the non-commercial public band.

That particular rule-making matter sparked rumors of atheist Madelyn Murray O'Hair trying to shut off all religious broadcasts from radio. Although no such attempt ever existed and the FCC ruled in favor of Bible colleges owning stations over two decades ago, petitions against O'Hair still circulate widely today in Kentucky and other states, often showing up at stations and being promoted at churches.

It is certainly the most amazing non-issue in radio history, and the millions upon millions of mimeographed petitions sent to the FCC by people desiring to keep religion on radio fill storehouses in Washington!

The radio history of Pike County must include the influence of nearby Williamson, West Virginia, where the Tug Valley's first station actually started when WBTH went on the air in April 1939 at 1370 kHz.

In the mid-'60s the frequency changed to 1400 with 1,000 watts and WXCC-FM went on the air in 1978, as "Coal Country 97" radio with 50 kilowatts. The station focuses on many Kentucky news and sporting events with their coverage.

Early listeners heard plenty of hillbilly performers on WBTH including the Stepp Brothers, Cousin Ezra Cline and the Campbell Brothers. Alice Shein became part-owner in the 1950s and was president of the West Virginia Broadcasters Association, the first woman to hold the position. The station carried minor league baseball games and popular shows from the Mutual Network.

Built by local stockholders led by Congressman W. Howes Meade, WSIP became visible in the Paintsville community beginning in 1949 when it signed on in April. Meade chose the SIP call letters in honor of his sister. Ted Silvert, from WHTN in Huntington, and Escom Chandler became operating partners in the station in 1953 and Eugene Baldrige was named chief engineer, a title he would wear for the next 40 years.

In 1960 the station was sold, with James Cox becoming president and Paul Fyffe general manager. Fyffe gained controlling interest and led the station until 1983 when he decided to sell to Terry Forcht, who had begun

acquiring stations statewide.

The AM station at 1490 started with 250 watts, then received the upgrade to 1,000 watts in 1962, with 250 nighttime. Fyffe built the FM station, 100.1, in 1965 to duplicate programming and increased power to 50 kilowatts effective radiated power in 1973 and changed to 98.9 MHz.

One of the first WSIP announcers was Bill Barker, who came to the station in 1952 with the group Dusty Rivers and the Rangers. He stayed on for the next 30 years as deejay, and then sales manager.

Other staff members joined Fyffe in the 1960s and stayed around many years, including brother Jim Fyffe in news and sports, Robbin Mathis in programming and Bob Meek as announcer.

Jim Fyffe became the voice of the Auburn University Tigers and still does the network play-by-play. Sports has been an important part of the WSIP history and through the station's efforts, professional baseball returned to eastern Kentucky in 1978 with an Appalachian League club. Sports director Doug Ormay went on to anchor on the Kentucky Network.

Very early in its history, WSIP became involved in a fund-raising drive for the local city park, setting the pace for years of award-winning news and community involvement. It was one of the first stations east of Lexington with a full-time news department and started a community call-in talk show in 1965. One popular newscaster, Cliff Fell, moved on to Lexington television as a regional reporter.

Paul Fyffe became active in promoting Johnson County and eastern Kentucky issues with hard-hitting editorials, one time going head-on with the weekly newspaper over the proposed airport.

Fyffe, reflecting on the change in radio over the years, believes the deep involvement in the community that WSIP was known for is becoming a thing of the past as the result of deregulation. He remembers license renewal as a time you "worried whether you had programmed all the public service you had promised."

Forcht's Key Broadcasting Co. separated programming on the stations and in 1994, WSIP was southern gospel, with FM at 100 kilowatts, playing top country.

Johnson County added its third and fourth stations as WKLW-AM 600 signed on in March 1985, with Allan Burton and William Gibson forming B&G Broadcasting to start the adult contemporary and oldies station. They were able to obtain an FM license in 1993 at 94.7 MHz to duplicate the AM programming.

The line of Big Sandy stations got a third link when Prestonsburg joined the number of radio cities in 1952. WPRT-960, owned by Dave and Dora

Stephens, with Rex Osborne at work as general manager, debuted in December of that year with 1,000 watts daytime, later getting a power increase to 5,000 watts.

That station was joined in December 1957 by 5-kilowatt WDOC at 1310 with Gordon Collins as president and brother Gorman Collins as manager. The FCC had issued a construction permit earlier in the 1950s for a proposed station at 1270 to be identified as WKRF, but it was not built.

The Collins family constructed WDOC at a cost of \$60,000 and has been in charge since the opening day, with Gorman Collins, Jr. later moving into management. The FM station was established in 1963 at 95.5 MHz and by the end of the decade had upped power to 100 kilowatts, the most powerful tower in the region. WPRT built its FM at 105.5 with 3 kilowatts, in 1967.

Both FM stations duplicated the AM variety programming and news and added sports coverage at night.

The studios of the Prestonsburg stations are on the north and south ends of the same avenue, and it may have seemed like the civil war at times. The relationships between the two stations in the small community were contentious from the start and competition was keen. Salespeople were allegedly told to sell commercials for less than whatever the other station was offering no matter what.

The feud came to a boiling point in the late-1960s, when Collins accused his competitor of being behind an attempt to burn down the station. Collins said a person was charged with attempted arson, although any connection to WPRT was not proved in court. Later on, WDOC did suffer more than \$120,000 in damages in a fire, and operations had to be moved to the Collins' garage while reconstruction took place.

C. Ollie Robinson ran a popular morning show at WPRT early in its history, and also was salesman and play-by-play sportscaster for the station's local coverage. He also worked at WDOC for a time and Robinson's popularity helped him enter Floyd County politics; he later became the county court clerk.

Stephens sold WPRT in 1980 to the American Signal Corporation (Ric Darby, chairman) and it was purchased by area car dealer Ed Walters in 1987 with Jeffrey Meek as his general manager. Jeffrey and Arnold Meek bought the AM and FM stations in 1990. WPRT-FM had become contemporary hit station WKKZ.

WDOC had been named after a Collins' uncle who was a faithful physician on Right Beaver Creek that everyone knew simply as "Doc." It would be Gorman Collins who would play "Doc" on the air, though, dispensing advice in a live program during the 1960s. Election Day coverage was a big production at WDOC and Collins yearly prescribed a dose of "mare's milk"

for the losers to soothe them. Collins was in politics as county sheriff in the 1950s, but as a Republican in a Democrat county, he was the target of some not-so-kind comments from callers to the station.

People could "air it out" on WDOC if they wanted, with the *Club 1310* talk show forum established in the 1960s. There was also personality radio with "Jolly" John Trimble and Charles Spradlin as top announcers. Later on it would be Jim Ed (James Allen) as a popular deejay and Bill Lafferty served as engineer and in other capacities for the Collins' station through the years.

Folks believe a brief stay at the station by country great Tom T. Hall, was the inspiration for his hit song about spending a week inside a little old "Country Jail."

WDOC separated the FM signal in 1981, becoming rock station, Q-95, WQHY, with mostly country remaining on the AM.

Just outside of Prestonsburg, stations licensed to the communities of Allen and Martin joined the radio wars as WMDJ went on the air in November 1982 from Martin with 1440 kHz and 2,500 watts. The Allen station then began broadcasting on 100.1 MHz in 1984. The country stations are owned and operated together by Dale McKinney after he bought out partner Monte McAnally who had helped build the facilities.

For several years, Prestonsburg Community College trained would-be broadcasters with the 10-watt station WUPK, at 89.1 FM. It signed on in 1970, but went off five years later when funding ran out. Kenneth Robinson, who consulted and worked for several area stations, served as manager and instructor.

With population of less than 4,000, Prestonsburg is the smallest community in the state with four commercial radio stations and two more next door. Paintsville, just slightly larger, has four. Pikeville, with a population of 6,500, has three city licenses but seven commercial stations in the county. Over 20 commercial stations are actually licensed to serve a five-county area that has a population of less than 200,000 people.

Gorman Collins, the long-time Prestonsburg manager, has said, "The FCC has about destroyed the radio station business, because they allocate a channel for every whistle-stop in Kentucky." Others agree the economic base does not seem to be there to support so many stations while some applaud the freedom to get involved in broadcasting. The government's "marketplace" attitude of the modern era seems well at work in the Eastern Highlands. Many cite not only the increase in number of stations, making the going "rough" beginning in the 1980s, but also the growth of national chains and discount stores forcing out the home-owned businesses that were good radio advertisers.



In the Big Sandy region, though, one county, Martin, actually has no radio station to call its own, but that wasn't always the case. WFJT in Inez went on the air July 4, 1977, with John Triplett president and Mike Triplett manager. It was a country station at 1590 AM. The station was later purchased by Charles and Joel Zimmer. As a 1-kilowatt AM daytimer, it struggled and went silent. The license was deleted from the FCC records in December 1991.

In the Licking River valley, a company by the same name started a radio station with the call letters WRLV. Located in Salyersville in Magoffin County, it was launched in 1979 at 1140 AM with 1,000 watts, with Cordell Martin president and Mark Wells manager.

Ten years later, the county received FM service with WRLV-FM at 97.3 with 6 kilowatts. Pam Pack has been in operations since 1989 and the general manager is now C.K. Belhasen of Paintsville. Country and gospel have been the formats of choice, with area news and sports.

The year was 1953, when the first radio station came to the mountains of extreme southeast Kentucky, in Letcher County. But in 1995, the hills resound with signals from six local stations.

The call letters indicated the backers, Trivette, Crosthwaite and Webb as WTCW, Whitesburg, went on at 920 kHz, February 19, 1953. Later, a power increase was granted for 5,000 watts, and WTCW-FM 103.9, was added in 1964 to simulcast AM programming and offer nighttime radio to the county for live sports and evening rock 'n' roll.

Kenneth Crosthwaite was general manager and Ernest Sparkman the morning announcer, with Don Crosthwaite joining the staff in 1954.

WTCW was sold in 1956 to Folkways Broadcasting, a company owned by Grand Ole Opry greats Hank Snow and Ernest Tubb. Hank and Ernest would bring country stars to Whitesburg each August for big shows at the local drive-in theatre stage and the fairgrounds. Thousands packed in to see and hear the concerts, causing massive traffic jams in the small town.

The musicians got out of radio in 1960, selling to the manager, Don Crosthwaite. He owned and operated the station until retiring in 1985 when he dealt the station to Terry Forcht's Key Broadcasting group.

Crosthwaite put his station into the heart of community activities, raising money for a variety of causes with radio-thons and campaigns. Station involvement helped buy gifts for the under privileged, rebuild a burned school and establish county-wide ambulance service, to name a few. Crosthwaite was given the KBA Community Affairs Award and the station earned other state and local honors, covering many news stories including the tragic Scotia Mine disaster.

Country music certainly is part of the heritage, and Johnny Hall began at the station as a teen announcer, later going on to sing with such Opry stars as Brenda Lee and Marty Robbins. Estill Stewart and Jimmie Branham were both members of a group the Flat Mountain Boys. Stewart was news editor and program director, starting his career in 1954 and Branham became a familiar voice on southeast Kentucky radio.

Craig Scott and Ron Statzer (Douglas), both talented radio people, started at WTCW. Scott became a national radio group program director and countdown show host, finally heading up his own production company. Statzer went on to WAKY and WCKY radio and Cincinnati television, but was fatally injured in a hang-gliding story for ABC TV.

In 1979, FM separated from AM to become hit rock, WXXQ, Q-104, but in 1990 went country.

Gregg Yaden, who had started at Whitesburg in the 1970s, became general manager and continues to head operations. Yaden had some rebuilding to do after the December 1992 incident that put the station in an unwelcome state news story. An oil bulk plant caught fire next door and flames engulfed the station. No one was injured but the studios were a total loss. The AM was off the air for more than three months, but FM was back in service within days using loaned equipment at the tower site in Mayking.

In August 1956, Letcher Countians saw another station take to the airwaves in the coal-boom town of Neon. WNKY-AM 1480 was started by Letcher Broadcasting and Dave Craft was president. Walter May managed the station for a couple of years with Estill Lee Carter doing the announcing. In 1964, a reorganization took place under Headwaters Broadcasting Co., department store owner Hoover Dawahare, along with Charles and Bobbie Whitaker, were stockholders.

Although they weren't all directly related, the Kincer name is certainly associated with Neon/Jenkins radio. Walter Kincer managed WNKY beginning in 1962. Jimmy Kincer and Buddy Kincer, who were brothers, both worked there. Later, as a Louisville businessman, Jim got into radio ownership and Buddy became a CBS executive for a time.

In the mid-1960s, G.C. Kincer started at Neon as a janitor. He would later manage and buy the station and Jenkins radio as well. In the interim, he worked in Richmond and Lexington radio while attending college.

Charles Engle was WNKY manager through the 1970s and '80s, before moving over to WTCW in sales. He welcomed crews to film a portion of the movie, "Coal Miner's Daughter" with Loretta Lynn, in the Neon studio. Certainly country and coal have been associated with the station, along with many religious programs. In 1982, a power increase was approved from one to five kilowatts.

Down the road in Jenkins, Dr. E.E. Musgrave commissioned a station to be built for his community and in 1970, WREM-1000 kHz went on the air, from studios in town. H. Gene Sturgill was general manager, and three years later he was involved in a new company to buy it. An FM station was added in 1975 at 94.3 MHz and a variety of music was offered up for listeners. One Jenkins announcer, Fred Spears, made a name for himself as the "Fredster" and after several years moved into the Pikeville airwaves.

You look 20 years down the road and the radio scenery changed in Jenkins/Neon. The Jenkins stations got new call signs, becoming WIFX when purchased in 1981 by G.C. Kincer. The AM/FM became top-40, Foxy 94. He later changed the AM to WKVG with southern gospel and sold it to Jerry Martin in 1993 where studios remain in Jenkins.

The FM station, though, moved its transmitter and tower in 1991 to Mayking Mountain near Whitesburg with studios in that city, as it prepared to increase power to 50 kilowatts. Kincer then purchased the Neon AM in 1993, but it was silent until he sold to Frank Holbrook, who moved studios to his home and started up Christian programming.

And across the mountain in Pound, Virginia, is another FM station beaming to Jenkins. It started as WWLH, 102.3, but when licensed to Albert Kincer, brother of G.C., in 1983 became WDXC. Kincer sold it in 1989 after putting on a satellite country format.

On Thanksgiving Day in 1985 a most unique station began operation in Whitesburg, on FM at 88.7 FM. The WMMT transmitter and tower were placed on top of Pine Mountain, and fingers were crossed for few problems since the trip to the top took over an hour!

The station is owned and operated by Appalshop, Inc. and became an outgrowth of the non-profit media and arts cooperative. Word and Music from the Mountains, is the derivation of the call letters. The center was founded in 1969 and produces and presents films, theater production, recordings and other works of Appalachian culture. It is supported by public humanities and arts funding from several states as well as numerous foundation and corporate contributions including help from the National Endowment for Arts and the Kentucky Humanities Council. Public radio, WMMT, has eight translators to carry the signal throughout a four-state area.

Most of the 40 disc jockeys are volunteers and some have referred to it as "Do-It-Yourself" radio, with each shift a different twist. If variety is the "spice of life" then the station is really living! Monikers like "Starvin Marvin" and "Pop Tart," have been heard as people do their own thing on the air, everything from folk to heavy metal and blues, and even native music from many nations of the world.

The station depends on donations, as well and the main fundraiser — the “Hillbilly Nation Celebration” each year in Wise County, Virginia.

Community-based public radio in Letcher County is certainly an eclectic mix of commentary and music daily.

Jim Webb, a former college professor, is program director. Some of his poetry on anti-strip mining and other controversial themes have had mixed reactions. His homes have been destroyed by fire twice. One of them, which was located above the city in Pine Mountain, he had inherited from his father. Three years later, one he was renting was gutted and newspaper accounts reported arson suspected in each incident.

An idea spawned by J.S. Bell in 1968 brought Knott Countians their first opportunity at radio. He was pastor of the First Baptist Church, and enlisted the help of five businessmen of his congregation to start station WKCB with Robert Morgan, president. The gospel music format of the early 1970s did not support the station very well, so it was changed to country and bluegrass and Steve Blair was hired as manager. He put FM-107 with the AM-1340 in 1974 and took the stations into more local news, sports and involvement.

Visitors to WKCB got a taste of the eastern Kentucky transportation, as they crossed Troublesome Creek on a swinging bridge. The creek often lived up to its name, too, flooding and causing more than one announcer to be stranded for the night! It was replaced by a more modern concrete structure.

Walter May and Randy Thompson came over from Pikeville in 1989 and purchased the stations for \$100,000, and Thompson became manager, buying out his partner a year later. The FM power was increased and separated from AM in 1992, going to a gold-based adult contemporary music mix. The AM returned to the gospel and religion of its earlier days and Moody network programs.

Tom Cody was one of the first announcers hired at the station and remains on duty, and Charles “Butch” Hays arrived in 1980 and serves now in management for Thompson’s Hindman Broadcasting, which has expanded to Hazard and Williamsburg in group ownership.

In the Knott County community of Pippa Passes is one of the state’s most historic and unique schools, Alice Lloyd College. The college started its own non-commercial station in 1986 at 91.7 with 3 kilowatts. WOAL-FM programs contemporary and easy listening music and educational programs geared to the student body and campus staff.

Hyden is located some 50 miles down the road from Hindman in Leslie County and is the home of WZQQ radio at 97.9 owned by Shane Sparkman of Hazard. Sparkman acquired the station in 1992. The satellite hit radio for-

mat was started in 1988 with Joey Dick, president and general manager.

Prior to WZQQ, Hyden had AM radio service when WSLK went on the air in 1980. WSLK, which was owned by Ayres Shortt, featured a variety format. The station became inactive in 1988 and the license was cancelled by the FCC in April 1992.

### Eastern Highlands Station Log

Allen/Martin	WMDJ AM-1440; WMDJ-FM 100.1
Cumberland	WCPM AM-1280; WSEH-FM 102.7
Elkhorn City	WBPA AM-1460; WPKE-FM 103.1
Harlan	WHLN AM-1410
	WFSR AM-970; WTUK-FM 105.1
Harold	WXLN-FM 104.9
Hazard	WKIC AM-1390; WSGS-FM 101.1
	WQXY AM-1560
	WJMD-FM 104.7
	WEKH-FM 90.9 n/c (Eastern Ky. Univ.)
Hindman	WKCB AM-1340; WKCB-FM 107.1
Hyden	WZQQ-FM 97.9
Jackson	WEKG AM-810; WJSN-FM 106.5
Jenkins	WKVG AM-1000
	WIFX-FM 94.3
Neon	WNKY AM-1480
Paintsville	WSIP AM-1490; WSIP-FM 98.9
	WKLW AM-600; WKLW-FM 94.7
Pikeville	WLSI AM-900; WZLK-FM 107.5 (Virgie)
	WPKE AM-1240; WDHR-FM 93.1;
	WJSO-FM 90.1 n/c
Pippa Passes	WOAL-FM 91.7 n/c
Prestonsburg	WDOC AM-1310; WQHY-FM 95.5
	WPRT AM-960; WXXZ-FM 105.5
Salyersville	WRLV AM-1140; WRLV-FM 97.3
Vancleve	WMTC AM-730; WMTC-FM 99.9
Whitesburg	WTCW AM- 920; WXXQ-FM 103.9
	WMMT-FM 88.7 n/c

Stations listed on the same line indicate common ownership.

\*n/c - non-commercial station.

## Kentucky Networks

In July 1947, some elaborate plans were announced to establish the first network of stations in Kentucky. The state was responding to a request by the Federal Communications Commission and the Wartime Office of Education to work out plans for such a network.

Professor Thomas Hankins and Elmer Sulzer of the University of Kentucky worked out a proposal calling for FM stations at various points including Louisville, Bowling Green, Princeton, Murray, Owensboro, Green River Knob in Casey County, Morehead, Ashland, Jackson, Pikeville, Pineville and Covington. Colleges and trade schools in those areas would be asked to cooperate. The idea was that educational and entertainment programs could be broadcast without commercial interruption and all types of radio training could be offered to students through the facilities. Hankins and Sulzer envisioned carrying the classroom and the music hall to all points of the state. They proposed a budget of \$100,000 and designated WBKY as the key flagship station. The 1948 legislature would be asked to respond with special allocations.

The network never got off the ground, although the non-commercial public radio programming they dreamed of would become a reality and reach most areas of the state in later years through the work of individual college FM stations. Other proposals to link the college stations together, similar to the Kentucky Educational Television network, have been put forth at various times but never developed and largely rejected by those involved as being unnecessary.

Those 1947 plans for a statewide FM network with a dozen outlets would be resurrected to a certain degree for television when a state educational network of TV stations was proposed in the early 1960s and did indeed become a reality through KET.

At different times both commercial and non-commercial radio stations in the state have linked up to form ad hoc networks for the purpose of carrying specific important programs or information. Many of these broadcasts as well as the emergency broadcast system network have been expedited by the broadcasters association. (see chapter on KBA)

The cooperation during the 1937 flood and Kentucky stations forming regional branches of NBC and Mutual radio networks would be the earliest examples of any state-wide chain. Each of the 12 pioneer stations was a part of one of the four major national networks.

Kentucky stations continued to rely on national networks for news, sports and information long after dropping them as a major program source when

the variety and drama shows moved to television.

Audio feeds of the national wire services of AP (Associated Press) and UPI (United Press International) were added to the four major radio networks. The wire services began offering newscasts in addition to their printed copy through the teletype. The UPI radio network was first, followed by AP in 1974, which quickly grew to 1,000 affiliate stations nationwide. These networks were set up as paid services without commercials.

The programming service of NBC, CBS, ABC and the Mutual networks were offered to stations on a barter basis, where network commercials were cleared by the local station in lieu of fees for services.

When satellite interconnects became commonplace and stations began looking at cost reduction measures, new complete music and news networks began emerging nationally in the 1980s, and many Kentucky stations joined, reducing or eliminating their local announcing and music.

The news wire services have been a type of national and regional printed network that stations have relied on since radio began to get involved with news and information. The AP, which now has more than 300 bureaus around the world, began serving Kentucky stations with a broadcast wire in 1942, although AP in Louisville dates back to 1900, when it started with a two-man staff and a handful of Morse-code operators serving newspapers in the state. Bureaus were established in Frankfort in 1923 and in Lexington beginning in 1940.

George Hackett has been with the Louisville office since 1944 and became state editor in 1955. He worked the broadcast wire in the old days when there were just a few "splits" in the evening on his shift. News was sent by keyboard operators who punched the tape that fed the teletype system. Hackett remembers the operators would keep you on your toes, tossing back any copy that just didn't make sense. Fifty years later at AP, Tom Watson has advanced technology, including computers and satellites, to feed the nearly 100 stations in the state on some type of AP broadcast wire service.

Watson was news director at WAKY, Louisville, before joining AP. He said there was talk of starting a state radio network in 1973 but after that didn't materialize he remained at the bureau, advancing to broadcast editor.

The AP affiliate numbers have increased through the years but not at the same pace at the total numbers of licenses, with many small-market stations opting to do without wire news or rely on audio networks, local news or simply carry very little news.

Through the years AP, UP and INS (International News Service) competed for affiliates. In 1958, UP and INS merged to form UPI. A check of stations in 1952 showed 15 AP subscribers, nine UP, and one station, WHAS,

with both. Fifteen years later in 1967, AP had a total of 79 stations in the state. The AP generally held the edge and by 1990 was the only wire service offering a state news bureau, the United Press having encountered financial problems in the late 1980s and finally filing for bankruptcy. Stations sometimes switched back and forth looking for the best deal on the monthly rate.

Watson explains the wire still relies on news to be called in from member stations, but the total number has declined from the earlier days, when one year, for example, WAKY contributed more than 1,000 stories! College stations have become good contributors in recent years.

As for bureau chiefs, Hackett said none of them hung around very long, with the average stay at about three years. Ed Staats, current AP chief, holds the record for longevity in the Louisville office.

The first real permanent state audio network did not come about until 1978 when the Kentucky Network was instituted. Several states had formed these regional networks for the purpose of delivering a state newscast. From studios in Jeffersontown, the network began service April 3, that year sending information down phone lines to 20 radio stations. Steve Hill was general manager, Tom Stevens headed operations and Robin Hughes served as news director. Stan Cook delivered the first state-wide newscast.

The network was owned by Financial Institutions Service of Nashville which had started the Tennessee Radio Network three years earlier. The Kentucky Network was not an immediate hit with advertisers and went many weeks playing nothing but public service announcements. The first commercials were for the Federal Land Bank and Red Man Chewing Tobacco.

The network had newscasts, sports, weather, agriculture reports actuality feeds and several feature programs. The Sweet Sixteen basketball tournament games were offered beginning in 1979 and the next year, the contract for UK games was secured with a successful bid of \$168,000 beating out Host Communications. The network held the rights through the 1989 season when Host regained them.

The cost to win the bid in 1983 for the network escalated to \$319,000 topping Host's offer of \$317,700! The chairman of Financial Institutions had selected the figure because of his lucky number 13 — 3 plus 1 plus 9 equals 13.

The Kentucky Network began delivering programming by satellite in 1985 and now also offers separate wire copy service along with a Kentucky Ag Net, for farm and agribusiness news with Jack Crowner and Alan Aldridge.

The network sold to Brookmont Communications in 1984 and the name was changed to American Network Group two years later. Tom Stevens had



been named general manager in 1980. Dick Farmer was network news director from 1986-93, followed by Gary Elder.

In the mid-1980s, Alan White took over the operations desk and Art Grunewald became sales manager. By 1995, the name had been changed to the Kentucky News Network (KNN) with 98 radio station affiliates in the state. Bureaus had been established in Frankfort with Tony McVey and in Lexington with Heather Braun.

The Kentucky Network was purchased in 1992 by Clear Channel, Inc., and shares space with that company's radio stations WHAS/WAMZ on Chestnut Street in Louisville.

Kentucky stations have participated in so-called unwired commercial networks developed by the representatives to advertising agencies. The goal was to offer several of the networks stations for the purpose of placing commercials only. Some that have had widespread participation have been the Keystone network, Tobacco Radio and Hometown Radio net.



Other seasonal networks provide stations with sports programming. In the summer it is baseball. Several western Kentucky stations have carried the St. Louis Cardinals, but the Cincinnati Reds have been the most popular for Kentuckians. The Reds actually operated their own radio network for many years before selling their rights to the highest bidder. Waite Hoyt, Claude Sullivan, Al Michaels and then Marty Brennaman and Joe Nuxhall have been behind the mike. Nuxhall began in 1967 and Brennaman replaced Michaels in 1974. The rights for Reds games were purchased by WLW in 1986 and the station became head of the network. There were 15 Kentucky radio affiliates in 1994, about half the number counted during the "Big Red Machine" era of the early 1970s. In 1975, the Reds had 101 total stations carrying the games.

In the winter, Kentucky regional networks offer college sports, and the University of Kentucky Wildcats have been the giant with one of the largest college radio networks in the nation. The total number of affiliates in 1994 was at 102, down some from the peak of 120 in the 1970s.

Actually the UK Network did not come into existence until the 1968 football season. That was the year the university decided to consolidate coverage and sell the rights to one group, instead of having many stations individually do games.

Russell Rice was the sports information director and he and athletics director Bernie Shively put the rights up for bids, won by the G.H. Johnston Agency in New York for \$39,000. A successful bid 25 years later would require a tidy sum of nearly a million dollars.

Cawood Ledford was behind the mike for those first games, a spot he would

hold until his announced retirement at the end of the 1992 basketball season.

Ledford, a native of Cawood, Kentucky, started working the Kentucky games when he came to WLEX in Lexington from WHLN in Harlan in 1953. He began working sports for radio and UK games that year and later for the new WLEX-TV. At the time, J.B. Faulconer was calling the "Cats" on WLAP and the Ashland Oil-Aetna Network, and Claude Sullivan was on WVLK and the Standard Oil Network. In addition, Phil Sutterfield was doing the games for WHAS. Listeners had plenty of choices for the games. Jim Host and "Dee" Huddleston were announcers in forming a Kentucky Central Insurance Network, for a time.

Others who have called the UK action include the first man, Ed Ashford of WLAP, and another early sports director of WHAS, George Walsh. There was also Earl Boardman of WLAP and Mark Halleck and Bill Sorrell of WLEX, which became WBLG.

Ledford moved to WHAS in Louisville in 1956 to begin a long career with the radio and TV station as sports director. He and Claude Sullivan had the longest tenure as the "Voice of the Cats." Sullivan in Lexington and Ledford in Louisville may have vied for listeners on their networks, but were actually good friends and many times traveled to games together.

Sullivan came to the new WKLX in Lexington in 1946 and started doing UK games the following year. He joined WVLK in 1952 when WKLX was bought out by WLEX, and continued to call the action until 1967, when he succumbed to throat cancer. In 1969 a flag pole at Stoll Field was dedicated by the Kentucky Broadcasters Association in his memory with the words, "an uncommon man who retained the common touch whose excellence in his profession and whose qualities of humanity continue to guide and challenge all broadcasters."

Thus, Kentucky has been home for two of the better sportscasters in radio, Sullivan and Ledford, and it was the impossibility of choosing between them that kept the university from forming an exclusive network before 1968.

When they did, it would be Cawood, of course, who continued to enjoin the fans to take notice, the game was on the air, with his "Hello everybody, this is Cawood Ledford." The rights for the UK games, since the Johnston Agency originally had them, have been held by Host Communications, the Kentucky Network, then Sports Communications, a joint venture with Host that included WKYT-TV, WVLK and WHAS radio.

While more and more live network TV and cable coverage brought UK games into homes, it was the radio network that truly helped build the frenzy for UK sports. Big Blue basketball especially became a religion and Cawood



Courtesy WWLK Radio

*Two of Kentucky's most recognizable broadcasters ... Ralph Hacker and Cawood Ledford. Ledford was the voice of the UK Wildcats for 39 years, and color man Hacker replaced him on play-by-play in 1992.*

Ledford was the chief evangelist. When he retired after 39 years, the accolades poured in from around the sports world. As quoted in the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, Athletics Director C.M. Newton referred to his retirement as a "tremendous loss for everyone associated with the UK program." Jim Host said he had never met anyone he had respected any more for his impeccable character and integrity. His color man for 20 years, Ralph Hacker said, "to millions, he is the University of Kentucky." As to his announcing ability, everyone considered him the best, and he goes down in history as the most recognized broadcaster in the state by the general population.

Cawood Ledford's laurels include more than 20 "Sportscaster of the Year" honors, Kentucky Sportsman of the Year, having a UK basketball jersey retired in his honor in 1991, as well as being named to the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame, to name a few.

Since leaving WHAS in 1979 to form his own production company, he also published a newspaper, *Cawood on Kentucky*, and did radio and TV commentary. His books on the experiences at UK were immediate best sellers and outlined some of his favorite teams, stories and top players. Ledford, upon his announced retirement, said it's hard to give up something you enjoy doing so much, and in closing out the pages of his book, *Hello Everybody, This is Cawood Ledford*, he borrowed words from Coach Adolph Rupp, thanking "all those who traveled the glory road with me, its been a memorable journey."

Ralph Hacker, friend and partner since 1971, assumed the unenviable position of succeeding the legend as the UK Network play-by-play announcer, beginning in the 1992-93 season. Hacker had also worked UK television and regional networks as well. After receiving some early doses of fan criticism on his radio play-by-play, Hacker said he solicited advice from Ledford, Bill Sorrell and J.B. Faulconer. He said Ledford would give pointers, "only if I asked."

Hacker was joined on the air by Charlie McAlexander and Dave Baker, then former UK great Kyle Macy became color commentator for the 1993-94 season. Tom Devine as engineer and Dick Gabriel on color have been a part of the UK radio team for many years.



As radio celebrates a diamond jubilee, a new day seems to be dawning. The predictions of radio's demise at the start of the TV era proved to be premature for sure, as stations adapted and survived through many changes.

Now, just as the improved transmission methods of FM drew many listeners away from the AM dial, the world of new digital stations and advanced technology appears on the horizon to once again challenge broadcasters to expand and endure.

In addition, new laws, allowing unbridled freedom for station ownership growth and consolidation are being enacted, making the radio marketplace much different than in past years.

While no one knows precisely what the future may have in store, radio's tremendous influence on society in the past 75 years seems undeniable. Surely, the lives of Kentuckians have been made better and more enjoyable by those modulated waves carried to every corner of the state from the towers over Kentucky.

## Chapter 4

### *TV — The Pioneer Stations*

The years following World War II brought about numerous changes in the media industry, changes that had a dramatic impact on American life. Besides the growth of AM radio to towns of every size and the approval of FM broadcasting, television finally arrived.

The dream of having radio with pictures had been around since before the turn of the century and experiments had been going on for nearly as long. While the technical capabilities had been demonstrated, a standard was not set for formal license issuance until after the war.

Prior to that, experimental stations were in operation even back in the 1920s. There were no sets available commercially, but late in that decade newspaper accounts tell of five Owensboro boys putting together what was that area's first television set from mail-order parts and later said they watched one of the experimental programs broadcast from New York. The teenagers had also built some of the first radios. Two of the boys, Herman Batt and Robert Field, would become successful engineers.

In 1945, only six TV stations were on the air, and none in Kentucky. Stations were located in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and Washington, plus the General Electric station in Schenectady, New York, all were broadcasting a few hours a day. More than 100 other stations would go on the air before and during the FCC-imposed freeze on construction permits from September 1948 until April 1952. The 108 stations that had per-

mits approved and began operation during that time would have a monopoly until the freeze was finally lifted. The government called for the freeze in order to review channel assignment policy, deal with interference problems, as well as review color TV and other technical standards.

Two stations in Kentucky had construction permits issued before the four-year hiatus in licenses and were able to begin operation. WAVE in Louisville went on the air in 1948 and WHAS followed in 1950.

Radio station owners and operators led the way nationwide into the new medium, and the same was true in Kentucky as the Norton family of WAVE radio and the Bingham family at WHAS started the state's first two TV stations.

WAVE-TV carried its official opening program on November 24, 1948, Thanksgiving Eve, the first television station in the state and the 41st in the nation. George Norton, Jr., owner, and Nathan Lord, general manager, were responding to advice they had heard from David Sarnoff at the NBC radio meeting in 1946. Sarnoff told radio owners to go back and get a TV license as soon as they could. Launching a TV station at the time, however, was a calculated risk since the financial viability of the medium was unproved and there were few receivers.

WAVE transmitted from 334 East Broadway with 24,100 watts on channel 5. Five years later, a move was made to channel 3 with the federal realignment, and a new 660-foot tower in New Albany, Indiana, was put in



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*Kentucky's first television broadcast November 24, 1948, WAVE-TV Louisville. The variety show featured announcer Burt Blackwell and comedian O.B. Carpenter (at center) as well as others.*

place for the now 100,000-watt station. The station had mostly RCA transmitting and studio equipment.

The first show originated from a set designed to look like a Kentucky barn and featured Clayton "Pappy" McMichen and the Georgia Wildcats, the popular radio band, Norma Jarboe, a ventriloquist, a group of dancers, a mixed quartet and comedian O.B. Carpenter. On the air briefly for the initial show were George Norton and the mayor, Charles Farnsley. Burt Blackwell, who had brought WAVE radio on the air with his voice 15 years earlier, served as the host.

The city's second TV station went on the air March 27, 1950, when WHAS finally began following many construction delays, with the permit that was granted in 1946. Their radio engineers had been experimenting with television as early as 1939. Barry Bingham, president of WHAS radio, believed the times were changing and the communications industry had to move into television. WHAS-TV signed on with 9,000 watts on channel 9 and shared studio space with its counterpart in radio and the *Courier-Journal* in the headquarters at Sixth and Broadway, where the TV tower was erected. Three years later, WHAS moved to channel 11 to prevent interference with Cincinnati and increased to 316,000 watts, the first full-power station in the country. (Maximum allowed VHF station power; later UHF (Ultra High Frequency) maximum power would be set at 5 million watts.) WHAS used a GE transmitter and antenna with GE and Dumont camera and studio equipment.

WHAS's premier day began at 2 p.m. with "Multiscope," a myriad of test programs, newsreel, films and the *Fred Waring Show*. At seven that evening, the special introductory program went on the air for 90 minutes followed by the first newscast with Dick Oberlin and Pete French, sports with Phil Sutterfield and Jimmy Finnegan, and Frank Cooley doing the weather. Victor Sholis, station director, introduced the staff and dignitaries, and outlined the philosophy of quality programming the station was bringing to the airwaves. Announcer Bud Abbott had the crew and audience laughing as he tried to explain the technical aspects of television!

It is estimated that about 25,000 TV sets were in use in the Louisville metro market at the time. Many brands were available with a small five to seven inch screen selling for around \$300 to \$400. Dealers would often have sets operating in the windows and folks gathered at the storefronts to watch their favorite shows. The first TV in a neighborhood usually meant an influx of friends and acquaintances dropping by at the time of a popular show. Sets produced the small black and white picture and were manufactured with VHF channels 2 through 13, an adapter being necessary to later add the UHF channels.

By the spring of 1952, the Federal Communications Commission had decided on the realignment of the television spectrum, ended the freeze and approved additional frequencies for UHF band of TV channels 14-83. The frequencies above 69 were later dropped.

The Commission made the decision to allot VHF and UHF channels within the same community, a ruling that would have repercussions in the state and the nation.

In 1952, official word arrived that Louisville would receive the two VHF stations already in operation but shifted in channel position. A VHF frequency would be allocated for Paducah, and one in Bowling Green. Those channels 2-13 were very desirable with a large pool of applicants and heavy competition for the licenses.

Other cities would get opportunities for UHF stations. These cities were-Ashland, Campbellsville, Corbin, Danville, Elizabethtown, Frankfort, Glasgow, Harlan, Hazard, Hopkinsville, Lexington, Madisonville, Mayfield, Maysville, Middlesboro, Murray, Owensboro, Pikeville, Richmond, Somerset, Winchester and two UHF assignments for Louisville.

Within the next ten years, many groups proposed to establish some of these stations, and several construction permits were issued. But most were not built and permits lay dormant or extended for several years. There was an element of fear associated with starting a UHF station. It was difficult to challenge the VHF stations and few sets were being manufactured to receive the upper-band channels. The UHF frequency stations, because of the nature of the high-frequency signals, had less coverage and required much more power output for that coverage. The hilly terrain in many areas of Kentucky just made wave propagation even more difficult. At the peak in 1954 there were 150 UHF stations on the air in the country, but by 1960, one-half of those had gone dark, no longer broadcasting.

In Kentucky, interest was expressed in all the cities where allocations were allowed. WFTM radio in Maysville received a construction permit for WBGT, Bluegrass TV-60, but it was not built. A permit for channel 59 was granted to Polan Industries for an Ashland station first known as WPTV, then WALN, but the station did not operate since nearby Huntington, West Virginia, had been allocated two VHF channels. One of those, channel 13, had been applied for by Air Trails, Inc., licensee for WCMI radio in March 1954, but faced with a legal battle with a Huntington radio station, they withdrew their application and WHTN-TV went on the air in October 1955.

James G. Lang of WNOP radio in Newport received a construction permit for a station on channel 74, but was not put on the air at that time.



Owensboro radio stations WVJS and WOMI both sought channels for that city, as did Aircast, Inc., of Louisville, Stephen Bellinger, president, which had a construction permit for WKYT-TV then for a short time. It was first listed as channel 14, then 62. The channel 14 frequency was eventually obtained by Evansville's WFIE, in a swap. That station had been put on the air by the Grand Carlton Corporation (Jesse Fine & family) as channel 62 in November 1953, but was sold in 1956 to WAVE-TV, Inc., of Louisville. WAVE and WFIE were co-owned until all Norton properties were purchased by Cosmos, Inc., in 1981.

While the station's WFIE call sign means "First in Evansville," the first station actually in the area was Henderson's WEHT across the river, which signed on as Kentucky's first UHF station. Ohio Valley Broadcasting, Inc., — with Henderson mayor and WSON radio's Hecht Lackey serving as general manager — along with two other local groups had applied for channel 50 with Lackey's group winning the license. The station was built on Marywood Hill in Henderson and signed on September 17, 1953. A grand opening ceremony was held that Sunday afternoon marking the official start of the state's first TV station outside the Louisville area. Congressman William Natcher and Senator Earle Clements headed a group of politicians attending along with area civic leaders and radio station folk from the region.

Several musical selections were featured and newspaper accounts indicated a few minor glitches, such as no sound at times, some camera shots of walls, and one commercial about shoes with the picture of furniture! At first, the station operated only in the evening from 5 to 11, but by 1956 was starting the day at 9 a.m.

Lackey had attended a CBS-TV seminar with his brothers the previous year and while lukewarm on the idea of television at first, he joined with local business investors and those from the Memphis-based Malco Theatre group in starting the station. A study commissioned by the men had indicated they could expect gross revenues of approximately \$35,000 per month. The FCC at the time was estimating revenue for TV at an annual mean of \$6.28 per television set covered by your signal.

Lackey left the station the following year, though, to concentrate on radio only. The station struggled with selling advertisers those first years, mainly due to resistance from Evansville merchants in buying spots on the station in little Henderson, Kentucky. The station later received FCC waiver of the identification rule and even though the studio and transmitter was still located in Henderson, it began to identify and list itself as an Evansville station, and was operated by Ohio Valley in conjunction with their CBS radio station, WEOA, in that city. A power increase was granted in 1956 from 11

kilowatts to 204 kilowatts with new transmitting equipment installed.

WEHT-TV was sold late that year to the Cincinnati-based Hillberg Corporation, Hank Hillberg, president, for \$820,000 and in 1964 was acquired by the Gilmore Broadcasting group when a channel move was made to TV-25.

Elmer Chancellor, the long-time chief engineer, said WEHT affiliated with CBS, although it carried programs from the other networks before other stations came to town. WFIE became the NBC affiliate and WTVW-TV 7, which went on the air in 1956, eventually taking ABC programming. A station in nearby Princeton, Indiana, had operated for awhile as an independent on UHF-channel 52 but reverted to construction permit status in 1954.

Brod Seymour, one of the Henderson station's first news directors and later program director, has said that some Henderson folks still resent the station moving in spirit to Indiana while being in body in Kentucky.

The Evansville market was unique in that two UHF stations actually went on the air before the VHF. The VHF license was tied up in legal matters, first in hearings with four applicants, then because the FCC sought to move the allocation out of the city. John Schuta, engineer with Channel 7 since 1956, remembers that it was the early 1960s before the station got its official license to replace the temporary 30-day permits.

The officials at Channel 7 fought the FCC's "deintermixture" plan of moving the VHF out of the city arguing that the UHF stations were doing quite well in the market with a "V" in town, and no changes were necessary.

The ownership of the WTVW has changed several times over the years with the original group of Evansville TV stockholders selling out to Polaris Company. It then went to Fuqua Industries with Indiana Partners, Charles Woods, president, making the purchase in 1980.

Anxiety over operations at Channel 7 brought on by the plan to make Evansville an all-UHF city would impact Kentucky's other early UHF station that went dark not long after its sign-on.

Louisville station WKLO-TV had begun operation on the UHF band on October 18, 1953, as Kentucky's fourth station, with studios in the Henry Clay Hotel on Third Street. The station was started by Mid-America Corporation, licensee of WKLO radio, James Brownlee, president and Joe Eaton, general manager. Channel 21 had problems financially, however, trying to compete with WHAS and WAVE. Viewing the station required a UHF converter be added to sets and installation of a special antenna. Converters could cost anywhere from \$10 to \$50 depending on how many channels you wanted. WKLO carried programs from both the ABC and the Dumont networks and some local programs using the radio station personnel.

Without many viewers, advertisers were reluctant, of course, to buy time.

The station was forced to suspend operations April 20, 1954, after just six months, reportedly losing nearly \$200,000. Great Trails Broadcasting, Charles Sawyer, president, purchased WKLO and continued to hold the license, seeing a glimmer of hope for resuming broadcasting in 1957 when a new policy was announced by the FCC.

That proposal was the result of the Commission realizing the problems of VHF and UHF stations operating in the same city of license. The plan of "deintermixture" was devised in an attempt to create either all VHF or all UHF cities. The government proposed to move channel 7 from Evansville to Louisville, so WKLO promptly announced it would seek to resume operation on the new frequency. The federal policy, however, met with strong opposition from many circles, including WTVW in Evansville which would have had to move to channel 31.

The courts negated most of the FCC attempts at "deintermixture" and WKLO did not return to the airwaves. The station changed call letters to WEZI and was sold to South Central Broadcasting, with Steve Cisler local liaison, in the mid-60s, but the station was not built then. It finally went on the air as WBNA-21, more than 30 years after it was originally licensed to Louisville.

The failure of WKLO had the effect of discouraging other radio operators in the state who had planned to enter the TV field. Earlier in Louisville, WKYW radio had investigated the possibility of seeking the other UHF channel for the city, and there was some talk that WGRC would try. Then, in January 1953, WLOU radio owner Robert W. Rounsaville announced plans to build a station after he was granted a permit for WLOU-TV 41. Officials said it would be the first Negro TV station in the nation. Manager Lee Smith had envisioned programming patterned after the radio station, aimed primarily, he said, at the Negro community. The station was to be located at 2549 South Third Street with a 260-foot tower. While WLOU's radio specialized format flourished, the TV plan did not and the station never commenced broadcasting.

It was reported that the Rounsaville Corporation, active in media in many states, was waiting to gauge the success of TV ventures in Georgia. The construction permit changed call letters over the years, being listed in records as WXQL and WTAM, and eventually was sold and went on the air in 1971 as independent station WDRB, Louisville.

In Owensboro, both radio stations and Henderson TV had their sights on VHF channel 9, which had been assigned to nearby Hatfield, Indiana. The channel was eventually designated for educational use by the Commission, though, and licensed to the Evansville School Board, then later to Southwest Indiana



Courtesy Paducah Sun

***Groundbreaking for Paducah's WPSD started by the Paxton family's newspaper. Channel 6 went on the air in 1957. Shown are (l-r): Joe Mitchell, engineer Ernest Pell, Edwin Paxton Sr., Edwin Paxton, Jr. and general manager Sam Livingston.***

Public Broadcasting as WNIN in Evansville, with transmitter in Chandler.

UHF-TV succeeded in Louisville, seven years after WKLO's death, when WLKY-TV 32 went on the air September 16, 1961. A group of independent businessmen had formed Kentuckiana Broadcasting, George E. Egger, president, to obtain the license and put the station on the air. It was introduced on that day at 2 p.m. with a dedication program, *Kickoff 32*.

Richard Shively was vice-president and general manager and was assisted by operations manager Bob Taylor and chief engineer Paul Kelley. Shively estimated that about one-third of the sets in Louisville at that time could receive the UHF signal. WLKY lobbied hard with local electronics firms on the value of all-channel sets and UHF converters. All the UHF stations would soon benefit from the all-channel TV law requiring sets sold in the U.S. contain capability to receive both bands, effective in 1964.

Part of WLKY's ability to compete came from obtaining full ABC network affiliation. Some of that network's programs had been previously divided between WHAS and WAVE. Pete French and Jimmy Finnegan, who had helped inaugurate WHAS, worked the first WLKY newscasts and Mary Blandford was the first weathergirl and did a women's show and Saturday night music program. Ed Shadburne became sales manager and then general manager in 1963.

WLKY-32 not only stayed alive against the VHF giants but became one of the first UHF stations in the country to truly succeed in a previously all-VHF market.



Early in 1952, several Lexington radio stations began planning their move into television as WLAP, WLEX and WVLK applied for TV permits, although only UHF frequencies had been assigned to the Central Kentucky city. *The Lexington Herald* also reported at the time a group of 25 business leaders, led by advertising executive Ken Hart, was proposing to build a station and locate it at the Phoenix Hotel. They decided to wait, though, on the possibility of a VHF channel after seeing economic difficulties encountered by other start-ups, and realizing the FCC was looking more favorably on applications coming from radio operators.

Work began December 1, 1954, on Lexington's first television station, constructed on Russell Cave Pike. Both WLEX and WVLK radio had applied for what was originally designated as channel 33. WLEX radio was awarded the license for TV channel 18.

After several weeks of testing, central Kentucky's first station went on the air officially March 15, 1955, with a 1-kilowatt transmitter and just one remote-controlled GPL studio camera. John Douglas Gay, Jr., Guthrie Bell, and William B. Gess, partners in Central Kentucky Broadcasting Co., wanted to bring Lexington local TV service, and general manager Earl L. Boyles announced the new station would operate each day from 4 p.m. to midnight.

The debut night was to feature Governor Lawrence Weatherby christening the "pioneer station" of the Bluegrass wearing a coonskin hat. It seems, though, the station had trouble finding a hat, finally receiving one from Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee by mail! One of the stars of the opening program, Snooky Lanson of NBC's *Hit Parade*, arrived late to the station, when a Lexington cabby took him to WLAP radio, not knowing where any TV station in the city was located! More than 100 dignitaries were in the audience, including Mayor Fred Fugazzi and County Judge Dan Fowler, with Jean Clos serving as master of ceremonies.

Harry Barfield, sales manager and later general manager, often remembered the fears of failure because of the problems of WKLO. WLEX-TV did have some rough times early and the company eventually decided to sell the radio station in 1958, in order to pump new money into their TV investment.

On May 28, 1957, the Paducah area received local television service when WPSD broadcast its first eight hours of programming. The Paducah

newspaper, owner of WKYB radio, had battled Columbia Amusement Company for the channel 6 assignment, and the newspaper finally won it in competitive hearings before the FCC, a process that lasted more than four years.

Edwin Paxton, Jr. of the Paxton family-owned newspaper had applied for the allocation along with Pierce Lackey of WPAD radio, and Leo Keiler of the amusement and theater company. Lackey dropped out and the Commission granted the license to Paxton after seeing some problems with procedures in the Columbia theater operations. The awarding of the license was an unusual action since it was a Republican commission giving the only VHF-TV channel in the city to the only newspaper in town, the *Sun-Democrat!* The newspaper decided to sell its AM and FM radio stations in order to prevent having a complete media monopoly and avoid resentment from others in the radio community.

Later in 1957, a second Lexington station commenced operations as WKXP-TV went on the air September 30, after several days of testing. The station was owned by Community Broadcast Partners with Frederic Gregg, Charles Wright and Harry Feingold, principals. They had acquired the construction permit for WLAP-TV 27, when purchasing the radio station from Gilmore Nunn.

WKXP proclaimed it would become "Central Kentucky's full-time station," and planned to broadcast from 8 a.m. until midnight daily. The studios were located in a Quonset hut at 1087 New Circle Road, N.E. The first day's programming began with *Sights and Sounds of Lexington* with Frank Faulconer along with Henry Allen and Elizabeth Ayres at the desk. Frank was the brother of radio's J.B. Faulconer.

The addition of Channel 27 to the Lexington market increased the demand for UHF sets and brought larger viewership to both of the city's stations.

Community Broadcast sold WKXP to Cincinnati's Taft Broadcasting Co., a group owner, in May 1958, after only a few months of operation. The call letters were changed to WKYT, after that sign had been relinquished by Owensboro, and money was pumped into the Lexington station with new equipment and transformations in programming and philosophy.

WVLK radio, Lexington, with partners Garvice Kincaid, Donald J. Horton and Frank G. Trimble, had proposed to buy WKXP for \$275,00 before it was sold to Taft, according to published reports. The Kincaid company, Kentucky Central, would later acquire the station from Taft.

WFPK, Louisville was Kentucky's first non-commercial educational TV station, going on the air in September 1958, as the 28th public station in the nation. It was licensed to the Louisville Free Public Library, thus the call-letter designation FP. The transmitter and tower were located at the library downtown, but the programming was actually the responsibility of the Jef-

erson County Board of Education. Channel 15 operated with 12,000 watts and had studios at Hawthorne Elementary School in Louisville and at United Electronic Labs in Shively, where WLKY-TV 32 would later locate.

The station operated, at first, only during school hours, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. with various educational programs for the classroom. Some men of vision, including Richard VanHoose of the county school system, Omer Carmichael of the city schools, Philip Davidson, president of the University of Louisville, and Clarence Graham, executive director of the library, had in 1951, requested a channel for the city to be set aside for educational use.

The station, like many non-commercial facilities in the nation, received help from the Ford Foundation and was an outgrowth of a closed circuit TV pilot project in 1957 in which WAVE-TV also assisted.

Three elementary schools, Hawthorne, Camp Taylor and Jefferson-town, participated in the educational programming at first. The project proved, through testing, that television could be successful as an instructional tool in the classroom. WFPK was supported in addition to foundation grants, by contributions from other groups, WAVE, and later WLKY and United Labs.

Southern Kentucky's first station became a reality when WLTV Channel 13 in Bowling Green went on the air, June 3, 1962, under the permit issued in 1959 to Argus Broadcasting, George A. Brown, president. Brown and his brother-in-law, Joe Walters, had in 1957, become interested in the channel available to the city and formulated a plan that finally won FCC approval over other applicants because it involved local ownership.

The station was built high in the hills of Hadley, Kentucky, about 12 miles outside Bowling Green and would basically fill a hole in TV coverage between Louisville and Lexington to the north, Nashville to the south, and Evansville to the west. The station relied on old movies, films and plenty of live programs, thus the moniker "Wonderfully Live Television - WLTV."

The opening day began with a film of the national anthem that the operator forgot to cue, and the first pictures for the public were the open title frames and the countdown numbers beginning with the "8" ball!

By the time the decade of the sixties began, television was permanently etched in the American way of life and leisure. There were 580 stations on the air in the United States by 1960. In Kentucky, WAVE, WHAS, WLEX, WKYT and WPSD were operating as commercial stations with WLKY and WLTV to come on the air shortly thereafter, and WEHT now calling itself an Evansville station. WFPK was the state's lone non-commercial outlet.



The function of early Kentucky TV stations was the adaptation of radio procedures, programming and people to the new visual medium, since the first commercial stations were sister operations of radio. The radio folks did double duty and gradually learned about such new elements as camera angles, lighting and props. Where once they were just voices, they now had to learn to perform before cameras. The early programming, network and local, was an attempt to carry over and fit popular radio fare into television.

The majority of early shows were, of necessity, live, a throwback to early days of radio. Since videotape was as yet a distant dream, it was difficult to preserve programming. Programs were often saved, reused and shipped to network affiliates through kinescope recordings, capturing on film the image of the television camera tube. These were poor quality reproductions, however, and industry researchers were always working toward a practical method of taping. The stations relied heavily on filmed travelogues, newsreels, and older movies. Hollywood, fearing the new competition from the television medium for its theater audience, seldom released any recent hits for airing.

The radio networks — NBC, CBS and ABC — began in the early 1940s planning the move to the video medium and were able to carry over radio shows into their newly-established TV networks. A fourth network, Dumont, operated for a time until it became apparent most markets would have only three stations. In cities with less than three, there was opportunity to choose shows from different networks, and some radio and TV programs were simulcast (carried on radio and TV at the same time).

One of the first network shows was *Texaco Star Theatre*, launching the career of Milton Berle, who became known as “Mr. Television.” The vaudeville type format of the *Ed Sullivan Show* made it one of the most popular of that first decade. Quiz shows and game shows hit the television screen, many carried over from radio. *What’s My Line* was one of the first, then there was Groucho Marx’s *You Bet Your Life*, that offered gags and questions.

Network shows were created that catered to kids, with Miss Frances and *Ding Dong School*, being the 1950s’ version of *Sesame Street*. Kids of that era won’t forget *Kukla, Fran and Ollie*, and Buffalo Bob and *Howdy Doody* time in the peanut gallery, and *Captain Kangaroo*!

Themes of popular movies, such as cops and robbers, and detectives would be translated into the television schedule with hits like *The Untouchables*, *Dragnet* and *Perry Mason*. Westerns like the *Lone Ranger* went from radio to TV, and were joined by *Hopalong Cassidy*, *The Cisco Kid* and *Gunsmoke*. The half-hour situation comedy became a winner for the networks paced by the popularity of Lucille Ball and *I Love Lucy*. As radio “soaps”



gradually disappeared, finally leaving the audio networks in 1960, these serial stories became a part of daytime television, and many of the old radio network star performers found a home on the TV networks with evening shows and people like Arthur Godfrey, Bob Hope and Perry Como gained prominence.

The network battle for early evening news viewers began early in the 1950s. John Cameron Swayze was replaced by the NBC team of Huntley and Brinkley who fought for audience ratings with Douglas Edwards on CBS and John Daly from ABC. The TV networks gave local stations opportunity to carry national and international events, from cold war clashes to election campaigns and sports classics. The networks truly brought a new world of entertainment, culture and information into the American living room.

CBS began with the radio concept of fully-sponsored programs while NBC soon tried the more independent notion of taking program development out of the hands of sponsors and agencies and selling the show to many different advertisers. Two of those early ventures would become the capstones of their schedule, the *Today* and *Tonight* shows.

The first network shows were sent to affiliate stations by mail and were aired the next day, until the various cities were wired with coaxial cable service, enabling them to carry video signals live from the network owned and operated stations in New York, which served as flagships for feeding the programs down the phone lines. When the networks were not providing programming, local stations would use their imagination to fill in the time with local news, live talent and music shows, specialty programs, children's shows, remote sports broadcasts and any films or movies they might obtain through syndicators.

Local commercials were few and far between in the early days and all were done live. The studio props had to be set up for each spot and then switched for the next program or commercial. One of the early innovations was putting all staging on wheels for the quick-change operation. Just about every early TV announcer has recollections of commercial bloopers while trying to conduct a live spot. It wasn't unusual for staff members to try to break up the person on the air, and prop failure, spillage, studio noise and forgotten lines made laughter pretty commonplace while watching those first television commercials.

The pioneer stations in Kentucky were on the air during the evening hours only, five or six days a week, then gradually expanded to afternoons and eventually full-time operation.

In the first months after its November debut, WAVE put together many "firsts." On the second day of operation the station broadcast the tradition-

al Thanksgiving Day Male vs. Manual High football game live, setting the stage for play-by-play sports to become a standard in the TV lineup. WAVE also brought fans coverage of boxing, hockey, basketball, baseball, wrestling and horse racing. The first sportscasters were Don Hill and Bill Goodman, who also did Louisville Colonels home baseball games and in 1949 the station produced the first Derby telecast with Joe Palmer and Bernie Bracher.

By early 1950, WAVE had expanded to a seven-hour daily schedule and two years later would be on the air from 7 in the morning until 11 at night. The construction of the Bell system coax line connecting Louisville with Indianapolis in late 1950 was a major gain, enabling WAVE to carry the network shows live and to feed programs from Louisville to the networks as well. The station joined the NBC network but also carried some shows from ABC. WHAS-TV was, like the radio station, a CBS affiliate when it went on the air in 1950. Both TV stations had access to the coax link, which cost the phone company some \$35,000 per mile to install with amplifiers needed every eight miles. Video signals could not be sent over standard phone lines; thus for stations to interconnect around the nation, the special cable had to be laid.

Long-time WAVE radio people began dual careers that meant long, grueling hours, learning on the job, and overcoming many problems associated with the new industry. The stations shared newspeople, working together in covering local events for radio and TV. George Patterson was program director and Jim Caldwell would become the state's first TV news director, producing nightly newscasts. News in those primitive days was simply read from a script with few visual aids and no modern teleprompters or even cue cards. Polaroid pictures were often shown to illustrate a news story, and Caldwell even recalled sticking the camera out the window once to catch a nearby fire in progress!

Livingston Gilbert was the state's first newsreader and remained at the top of the Louisville TV scene for over three decades. Announcers Bob Kay, Ryan Halloren and Ed Kallay with sports came over from radio to face the cameras, and Bill Gladden served as weatherman among other duties. Later on, newsreel film would be utilized by stations, although it was often a day before it could be processed and edited for airing until news departments could afford their own labs.

WAVE produced several local public affairs and cultural programs including live symphony orchestra performances and complete election coverage. Gilbert and his wife hosted the first talk show, *Mr. and Mrs.*, a program patterned after a New York series. *Healthy, Wealthy and Wise* was

considered a quality kids show, and Louisville area youngsters grew up watching Uncle Ed (Ed Kallay) from his Magic Forest host the *Funny Flickers* for cartoon lovers. Camille Green produced an early cooking show and Barry Bingham, WHAS owner, even had a panel show about the arts in the city on WAVE. There were several music variety shows remembered fondly by Louisville TV viewers that maintained loyal viewers for years including *Club Ebony*, *The Firesiders*, *Pee Wee King Show* and *Music Place*, which had their first fans on radio.



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*Milton Metz's dual radio-TV career with WHAS meant TV weather duties for 19 years and host of "Metz Here," a radio talk show for more than 30 years.*

The Norton family was involved in many areas of community service and Jane Norton, who served on the Jefferson County Board of Education, believed there could be a partnership with the new medium and the classroom. She proposed TV sets for the schools, and with WAVE

providing the technical assistance, courses of study, lecture series and instructional programs were put on the air before the days of educational TV in the state. In 1950, the station carried English courses from the University of Louisville, the first production in the nation that could be watched for college credit.

In 1956, the station solidified TV's use as a fund-raising tool by producing its first telethon, an effort to garner support for Children's Hospital. *Bids for Kids* was produced for the next three years.

WAVE continued to update its equipment, eventually enabling it to carry the state's first network color shows in 1954.

The TV "logo" replaced the old slogans and liners of radio and WAVE formally adopted the sine wave as its symbol in 1958 and used variations of that icon through the years.

Kentucky's first station received in-city competition for viewers in 1950, when WHAS went on the air. In early promotion of the new venture, station manager Victor Sholis spoke of bringing modern equipment and "good" television to Louisville. Despite these seemingly veiled verbal swipes at the efforts of WAVE, the two stations kept the luring of viewers on friendly terms and showed a willingness to cooperate in many areas.

WHAS-TV, like the radio, would have a strong commitment to news. The staff produced a daily newsreel called *Today's News Today*, striving to highlight the various events of the day in Kentuckiana.

WHAS carried the full inventory of CBS network programs and worked to develop local shows. Like WAVE, WHAS used its radio personnel who the public had heard for years but perhaps never seen — people like Jim Walton, Herbie Koch, Bill Pickett, Sam Gifford, Ken Meeker, Bud Abbott, Tom Brooks, Rosalind Marquis, Paul Clark, Eloise Terry and others. These personalities took to the TV screen with local shows like *Hi-Varieties*, which helped to spotlight young talent over the next two decades. *T-Bar-V Ranch* was the popular kids show, and *Hayloft Hoedown* kept its music going until the early 1970s on Channel 11.

In 1951, a Wednesday night show, *What's Your Question*, gave viewers an opportunity to question the newsmakers of the area and receive answers in a face-to-face setting. That same year, a news documentary, *Inside our Schools*, called a TV milestone by *Life* magazine, took the cameras into area schools to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the educational system. The *Good Living* program with Marion Gifford received national acclaim for a maternity series aired in 1952, and the following year, WHAS carried live an actual delicate chest surgery on a local man as part of a cancer awareness week, a telecast that won national awards.

WHAS began network color in 1954 and conducted several nights of special viewing for the general public to come by and see the *Ed Sullivan Show* in color since few such sets were available. That same year, Channel 11 began its now well-known *Crusade for Children* campaign, a telethon that raised large sums annually for local children's charities.

Public awareness programs became an important part of the station effort and a series by Bill Small in 1959 called *53 Miles from Death* shocked the community by revealing the unprepared state of the schools in the event of a tornado. As a result Conelrad warning radios were placed in all schools.

One of Kentucky's first female news reporters was Phyliss Knight, who won two national "Golden Mike" awards for outstanding female performer. She had taken over the *Small Talk* program in 1956. The program had been started with Mary Snow Etheridge Abbott, who left when her husband Bud took a job with Radio Free Europe.

Many Louisville area reporters went on to fame in other markets and some landed good network jobs. News director Bill Small, who won a Peabody award for the station, the first of many national honors for the news department, became chairman of Radio-TV News Directors Association, president of NBC News and head of United Press International. WHAS's David Dick

took a job as CBS correspondent, covering the Washington scene and world events like the Jonestown massacre and the shooting of Governor George Wallace in 1972, for which he won an Emmy. Dick returned to the University of Kentucky to teach in the Journalism Department in 1985, and started his own publishing firm. Another network correspondent, Peter Hackes was also at WHAS in that first decade, but according to station lore, was told at first he would never be good enough to actually get on the air! Dick recounts how his career didn't start too promisingly either, when he was fired from WVLK radio in Lexington before coming to Louisville.

In November 1955, WHAS decided to create a promotional logo for the station and a small cartoon-like character with the number 11 for his eyes was displayed. A contest was held to name the fellow with more than 40,000 entries received, a new Edsel going to the winner! More than 150 people wanted to call it "Fisbie," and a drawing was held to determine the final winner. "Fisbie" thus became the registered trademark for Channel 11-WHAS.



It was quite a challenge for Lexington's first TV station, WLEX, when it began operation since it was estimated that fewer than 25 percent of the homes owned a TV set and most of those were limited to receiving only VHF signals. Even before its sign-on, the station was encouraging the public to purchase UHF converters and tune in as the station broadcast test programs that included University of Kentucky game films with commentary by coaches Blanton Collier and Adolph Rupp. Appearing with the coaches was a young WLEX radio announcer, Cawood Ledford, who would play a dual role as radio and TV sportscaster in WLEX's infancy, before leaving for WHAS in 1956.

Sports — particularly UK sports — would become an attraction for Lexington TV. The first basketball telecast occurred on February 18, 1956, with the Cats losing to DePaul 81-79. The station continued to broadcast the coaches show for many years and carried the away basketball games, since the university prohibited the live telecast of home action.

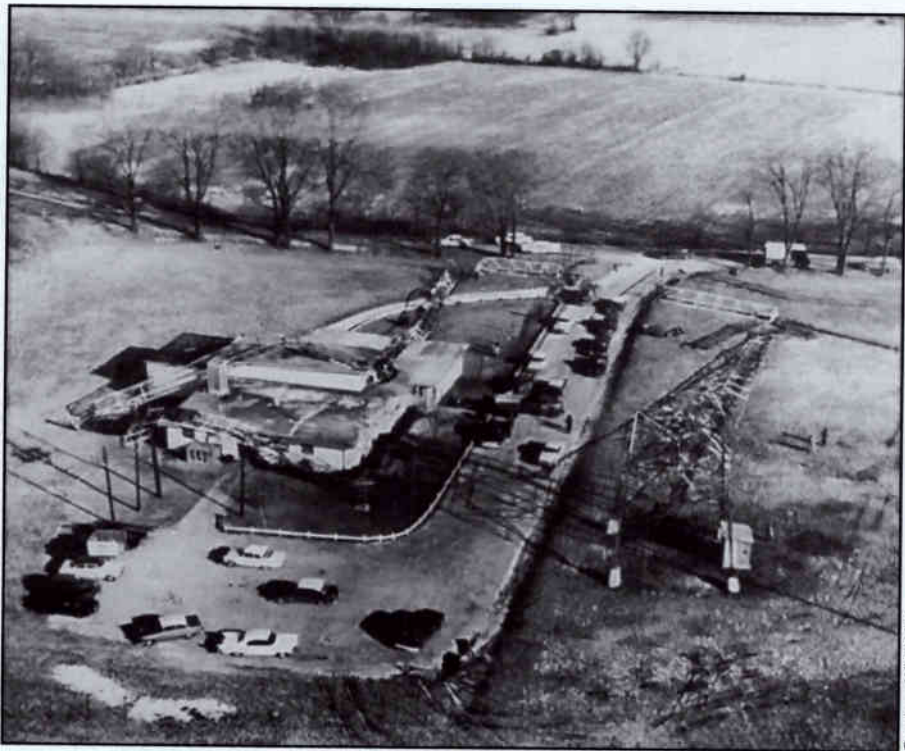
The first WLEX newsmen such as Bob Dunn and Todd Hunter did mostly on-camera copy reading. Sid Daughtery was the first weatherman, but most people held down several positions. Before the end of the decade, Wayne Bell and Peter Stoner became popular TV personalities, Stoner in news and Bell as sportscaster, engineer and later even "kiddies" show host. As sports director, Bell was responsible for keeping Adolph Rupp on time during the coaches shows. Bell recalls that kicking the Baron on the leg was the special signal to start winding it down!

Before it began a morning schedule, Channel 18 would sign on in the afternoon with a homemakers show hosted by Betty Maxwell, and then end the day with a late movie on *Pioneer Playhouse*. WLEX began airing the *Tonight Show* in 1956 and carried primarily the network programs of NBC, although being the only station in town, they were free to choose from other networks and often did. There was no direct feed of shows for them, however, so the station had to pick up the signal by telephone and microwave from a Cincinnati station, a link that often failed.

Harry Barfield recalled that as a UHF station in a small city, there was no automatic network spot schedule to bring in revenue, so the station had to contact network sponsors themselves to buy the Lexington market.

Channel 18 made it a practice to offer time to local colleges and universities and presented many educational programs including college classes from the University of Kentucky offered for college credit, beginning in 1959 and continuing for several years.

The most tragic incident in the state's broadcast history shocked the young station, when a storm struck on January 21, 1959, causing the tower



Courtesy WLEX-TV

*Tragedy struck Lexington's first TV station as a January 1959 windstorm brought down the tower, killing one and inflicting heavy damage to WLEX-TV.*

and antenna to come crashing down, inflicting severe damage on the studio and transmitter building and taking the life of receptionist Suzanne Kimberly Grasley, who was four months pregnant with her first child. Ironically, she had just told Wayne Bell and Harry Barfield, as they were heading for lunch, that she was concerned about her husband's job offer in Florida because she was fearful of hurricanes. When they returned from lunch, a wind had taken her life.

The tower was one of the taller ones in the country at the time at 661 feet and rated to withstand a 125-mph wind. The old 375-foot tower remained nearby and was being used for the state highway department radio dispatching. That tower was rated only to withstand winds of 80 miles per hour, the speed of the storm's strongest gusts that day, according to the weather service. The smaller tower toppled, cutting the guy wires of the larger tower, which buckled and dropped. Engineer Joe Polsgrove had just seen on the newswire a report of a tower falling in Elizabethtown, then turned to look out the window and witnessed the smaller tower tumble. A county patrol officer driving nearby saw the larger tower crash, as a portion of it landed near the cruiser, blocking the road. He radioed the report and emergency crews quickly arrived and not long afterward so did the looters.

The total damage was estimated at \$300,000 to \$400,000. Within a week, the reconstruction of the station was underway and WLEX went back on the air, February 24 with a temporary antenna atop a new tower. A new modern "pylon" antenna arrived in April and soon the FCC authorized 300,000 watts for the station.

When WKXP-TV debuted in 1957, the station had proposed to operate full-time by filling the hours, it hoped, with many movies. The station wrote an open letter to "Mr. and Mrs. Lexington" in the local papers stating that after many frustrating hours, the station was ready to provide full service with three studios and the best equipment available. The half-page ad spoke of trying times in getting ready for the full-scale telecasts. The frustration was obvious in the first days as Frank Faulconer recalls the premiere showing of a movie *Charge of the Light Brigade* saw the station go off the air at a critical point in the film. One week later, while trying to show the film again, technical problems cut it off at almost the same spot in the movie with Errol Flynn charging the camp of the Kublai Khan! The station did not have network service and was relying on an exclusive package of Warner Brothers films for most of its broadcast schedule. When the station sold to Taft early in 1958, it signed affiliation agreements with CBS.

One of Channel 27's popular local shows was a Saturday afternoon dance party, with host Nick Clooney, Maysville native and brother of singer Rose-

mary Clooney. Like many on the WKYT staff, Clooney had worked at WLAP radio as a disc jockey. Clooney recalls he eventually changed the focus of the "bandstand-type" show and called it the *Nick Clooney School Salute*, featuring a different area high school each week. He also began working the anchor desk on weekends, launching a successful career in TV news.

The local kiddies program, *Windy Wonderful* might be called a Bluegrass version of *Mister Ed* since it featured a talking horse, "Windy," created by Henry Allin. Donna Reed, then later Mary Ann Williams, served as the horse's human sidekick and hostess. Williams, a Transylvania student at the time, wound up finding romance on the show, as she married Jerry Kuykendall, who was prop man for the station.



In Paducah, WPSD general manager, Edwin Paxton, Jr. quickly assembled a staff of 20 people for the new TV station and by October 1957 was opening the day with NBC's *Today* show and closing with the *Tonight Show*. The WKYB radio people were trained for the new TV station, and Neil McIntyre, a veteran army broadcaster, was hired to help the staff and especially train them to get rid of their vocal "twang."

Sam Livingston became operations manager with Jim English, program director; Billy Turner, news director; Bob Swisher, sports; and Sam Skaggs, weatherman. Delores Siress, in the front office, Gerry Quigley, engineer; and Don Alvey, director; still on the staff, were among the first WPSD crew.

Besides the local newscasts, Channel 6 produced a popular weekly outdoor show, a dance party and broadcast live wrestling from the arena they built next door to their studios in the Forest Hills area of the city. Additionally, a bowling alley was even installed in the annex building and bowling shows were telecast each week. WPSD began a tradition of its Lions Club telethon that first year, raising nearly \$9,000.

The transmitter and tower for the station were located at Monkey's Eyebrow, some 22 miles from Paducah, and the rules required the transmitter site be manned with an engineer at all times, often quite a lonely job! The tower, at over 1,630 feet, was the second tallest man-made structure in the world, the tallest being WPSD's competitor's tower in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. The Paxtons would have gone slightly higher with theirs, but the FAA requirements were different in Kentucky. Ed Paxton, Jr. recalls that his father predicted the TV station would soon be making more money than their newspaper, a prophecy that came true in about six years.

Another Kentucky station built its own wrestling ring in the studio and carried Thursday night and Saturday night fights. WLTV-13, Bowling Green



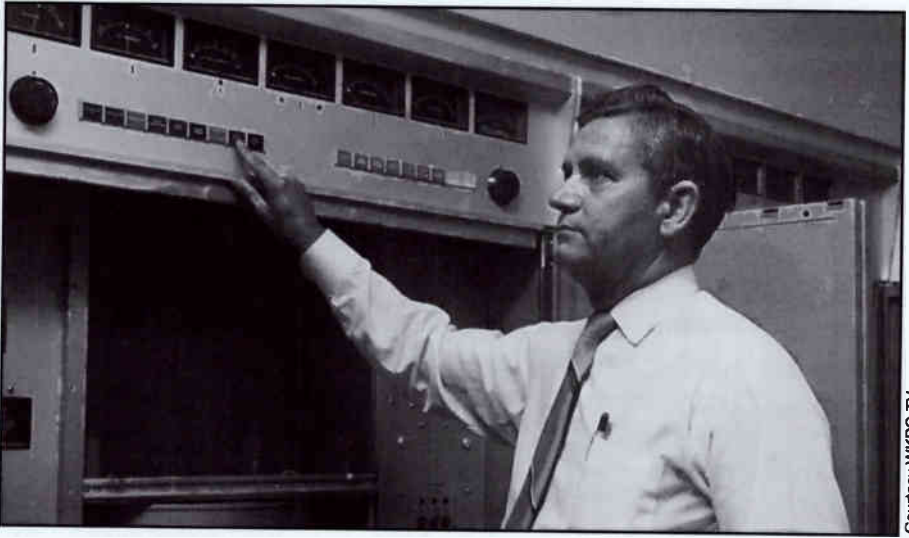


Courtesy WEHT-TV

*Junie Dee is the center of attention on "Hillside Hoedown" on Henderson's WEHT-TV, the first UHF TV station in the state.*

was airing not only wrestling but plenty of local talent from its studios with its own *Country Music Jubilee* that seemed to bring people from everywhere to not only perform but to watch the shows. It became a real meeting place for fans to hold parties, find new friends and enjoy the give-aways associated with the program. Channel 13 tried to keep operating costs low in order to survive in a small town, resulting in more than 125 hours of simple live local programming in a typical week, from home-spun newscasts to country, gospel and children's programs. *Fins, Furs and Feathers*, a combination of outdoors and cooking show was one of the first in-studio shows produced. The host, Temp Flowers, might tell the viewer how to remove "skunk stink" from clothes, how to fry fish and cook raccoon all in one program!

WEHT-50 in Henderson began producing an afternoon women's show and live newscasts at 6 and 10 p.m. at the outset. They soon added a local version of the *Tonight Show* format after the late news, called *The Nightcap-pers* with a live band and guest interviews, and an afternoon kids show, *Rusty's Roundup*. Sports director "Chick" Anderson, of network and Churchill Downs fame, got his start in Henderson calling the station's afternoon race of the day from Ellis Park and Lynn Stone of Churchill Downs was



Courtesy WKPC-TV

*Tom Landers, chief engineer of WFPK, Channel 15 Louisville, Kentucky's first non-commercial TV. The station is now known as WKPC.*

one of the first sports reporters. Bill Hight, who came to the station in 1957 and served for 16 years in various management capacities, said the top show was probably *Hillside Hoedown*, the local music show aired from the studios each Saturday night for many years. Another live show was the *Hoosier Jamboree* that helped jump start the career of gospel great, Doug Oldham.

In 1956, the station proudly announced in its newsletter that a "G-I-R-L" would be the station's new personality, the first female weathercaster, Jean Jones.

Louisville's WFPK-15 was demonstrating the feasibility and value of television in education with its efforts of transmitting programs directly into the schools. Tom Landers, one of the early engineers, recalls that 84 classrooms had UHF sets at one time receiving the special live instructional programs in English, Math, Science, History and Spanish. The production was nothing fancy in those early teaching programs, but by the end of the 1950s, the station was also broadcasting documentaries, special features and programs from the NET (National Educational Network), a forerunner of PBS.



The delivery was not an easy one as radio people in Kentucky gave birth to television. Financial success was slow for any UHF station, while VHF licenses with a network affiliation meant strong money-making potential. Radio operators were familiar with investments in transmitters, towers and audio equipment, but to that

was added cameras, switchers, lighting, projectors and studio sets. By the late 1950s, some videotape machines, marketed by Ampex, were in use.

Through the early years, the programming remained mostly live and became dominated by the networks. By the middle of the 1950s, some of the network production was moving to the West Coast coupling more with the film industry. As with the pioneer days of radio, early TV folk speak fondly of the days of live television despite its pitfalls.

While only the fortunate few could afford a set when the first stations went on the air, the big tube soon became a centerpiece of the home. When the 21-inch screens became available, they went for more than \$400. Few color sets were sold until after the early 1960s. Top radio manufacturers also captured the majority of the TV sales market.

By 1955, according to a CBS survey, some counties like Kenton and Jefferson in Kentucky, had 84 percent of households with sets, yet in some areas of the state only 10 percent of the homes had a TV, since few signals were available for reception. By 1960, nationwide, 87 percent of the households had at least one TV set and the advertising revenue generated by reaching the U.S. population began pouring into networks and stations. Audience trends and measurements became a major feedback for operators and advertisers.

The A.C. Nielsen Company was the leader in providing ratings which were dominated by CBS and NBC. NBC had three affiliates in Kentucky by 1960. Dumont disbanded in the mid-1950s, and ABC struggled but survived into the next decade when more stations would go on the air.

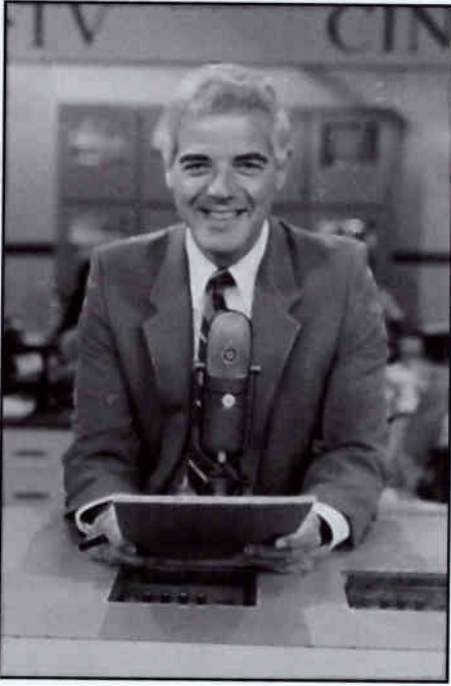
Local newspapers began the practice of printing the nightly offerings, and with the help of the networks, many stations were able to publish slick newsletters for distribution.



TV signals recognize no geographic borders and with Kentucky surrounded by seven states, construction of early stations in neighboring states had an impact on viewers in the Commonwealth, especially during those days when there were few choices. These early VHF stations were the source of the first TV programming for many of the state's residents.

With TV markets like Huntington, Cincinnati and Evansville just across the river, these stations have been a part of people's lives. Additionally, areas of southern and western Kentucky were covered by Nashville and Cape Girardeau, Missouri, and in some southeastern mountains communities by signals from the Bristol-Kingsport-Johnson City area of Tennessee. These cities had VHF stations on the air in the late 1940s and early '50s.

Folks in many parts of Kentucky, brought their first aerial to the highest possible point, on their house or property, stringing yards of wire to that first



*After starting at WKYT-TV in Lexington, Nick Clooney became a major market TV figure, including many years as WKRC-12 Cincinnati newscaster.*

network features at one time. Braun was from Ludlow, Kentucky, and had started at WCPO as a cameraman. WLWT had news with Peter Grant and Howard Chamberlain, and Waite Hoyt with sports and of course, Reds baseball. The first major league game televised in the area was the Red-Pirates doubleheader at Crosley Field in September 1947 on experimental station W8XCT, the predecessor of WLWT. Several dramatic network shows also originated from the Mt. Olympus studios over the years, the first being *Boston Blackie*, staged August 10, 1949.

WCPO-TV 9 became a hit with area viewers and top ratings with people like Jack Moran and Jack Fogarty and shows with Uncle Al and Wanda Lewis, Colin Male and Dottie Mack. Mack and Lewis had teamed up with Paul Dixon, when he was with WCPO, to create a network show, *Pantomime Hit Parade*, where the popular hits on radio were pantomimed for TV. Program director Ed Weston doubled as "Coco the Clown." Years later, Al Schottelkotte would become the popular newscaster on Channel 9 in that tri-state area.

set. They often pointed the antenna toward Ohio, West Virginia, Missouri or Tennessee in hopes of getting that first glimpse of a picture in the glow of that blue tube.

In Cincinnati, three popular radio stations would beget TV outlets all before 1950, as the Crosley Corporation's WLWT-5 went on the air February 9, 1948, after several years of broadcasting with an experimental station. Then WCPO-TV 9 and Channel 12-WKRC inaugurated service the following year. WLWT became the NBC affiliate, with WCPO as CBS and WKRC as ABC. The radio staff at each station formed the nucleus for the new television operations.

Northern Kentucky viewers could get such early local programs as the *Paul Dixon Show*, *Midwestern Hayride*, *Ruth Lyons 50-50 Club*, and later the *Bob Braun Show* on Channel 5, all of which were network

Kentuckians remember one of their own, Nick Clooney, who became the a familiar figure on Cincinnati TV and was a key anchor on Channel 12-WKRC, beginning in the mid-1970s. Clooney, who later wrote columns for the Cincinnati and Maysville papers, also worked in major market TV in New York, Los Angeles, Salt Lake City and Buffalo, and in 1994 began hosting on the American Movie Classic cable channel. He won an Emmy for TV commentary in 1990.

WLWT was purchased by group owner, Multimedia, Inc., in 1976. Channel 9-WCPO has been owned by the Scripps-Howard group since being built by the radio. WKRC-12 was purchased by the Great American Broadcasting group in 1987.

The first educational TV programs for northern Kentucky came on the air in 1954 with WCET, Channel 48 operated by the Cincinnati Educational TV Foundation and later affiliating with PBS.

Eastern Kentuckians' first exposure to television was with WSAZ Channel 3 in Huntington, which debuted in November 1949 and was the only station in the region for five years until WCHS-8 in Charleston and then WHTN-13 in Huntington went on the air in 1954 and '55, respectively. Many folks warmed up to the set on Saturday night with Channel 3's *Jamboree*, and in 1951, the station began broadcasting area news with Nick Basso and then later Bos Johnson and Bob Brunner continuing a tradition of top-rated newscasts that featured extensive eastern Kentucky coverage.

Kids grew up with *Mr. Cartoon*, played by George Lewis and later Jule Huffman, who was a mainstay on the staff in weather, and taught the "cartooners" for 25 years.

TV-3, an NBC station, was started by its WSAZ radio counterpart and the Huntington Publishing Company, Colonel Joe Long, president. It was originally on channel 5, until switching frequency and increasing power in 1952. The station was sold to the Goodwill group owners in 1961 and later was acquired by Capital Cities and then Lee Enterprises.

WHTN became WOWK in 1975 with a new transmitter and antenna system after being purchased from Reeves Telecom by Gateway Communications. The WHTN radio and TV stations had originally been owned by the Huntington Theatre Corporation. Channel 13 produced early children's programs, and WCHS-8 had Marilyn Fletcher's *Romper Room School*. WCHS also claims an historical event, in 1958 carrying a live Caesarean section birth of a baby, the first in the nation.

A network flip-flop occurred in 1986 when WOWK changed from ABC to the CBS network and WCHS in Charleston became the ABC outlet for the market.



Courtesy Mickey Curry, WSAZ

*Eastern Kentuckians' initial exposure to TV news coverage was from WSAZ-TV 3 in Huntington, West Virginia. Pictured above is Nick Basso, the first news director.*

Besides WEHT, western Kentuckians had WFIE-14, and then WTVW-Channel 7 in Evansville. Channel 14 brought the first network color to town in June 1956 and went live with local color in 1966. WFIE's Jack McClain was prominent on sports and news, then later Mike Blake and David James with Ann Komis. Marcia Yockey charmed folks with the area weather for decades and had an enormous following until her retirement in 1988.

Barry Smith was general manager at Channel 7 for nearly 20 years, and had such long-term newscasters as Joe Halburnt and Randy Moore.

At WEHT, Jon Esther became news director in the early 1960s, then Hal Wolford worked TV-25 news and later developed his *Backroads*, traveling newsfeature show, while Brad Byrd become the long-term key news anchor. Joe Celandia did sports for many years. Ernie Madden moved up from sales to manage the station, then later Doug Padgett took over.

More than a dozen southern Kentucky counties are in the service area of Nashville TV and three VHF stations went on the air in the early 1950s, evolving from radio.

WSM radio had been established by Edwin Craig, an officer in the

National Life and Insurance Company. The call letters being the acronym for "We Shield Millions." *The Grand Ole Opry* started as the WSM *Barn Dance* in 1925, one month after sign-on. In 1950, that and other shows were carried over to WSM-TV, Channel 4. There were favorites like Ralph Emery and his homespun hospitality and the network programs of NBC.

In 1964, WSM was the first station in the country to receive satellite photographs and with improvements in news, received many awards, including a Peabody. Later newscasts would feature stars like John Tesh, Dan Miller, and the first female anchor, Carol Marin. The station became known as WSMV when it was sold in 1981.

WSIX radio started in Springfield in 1927 with Jack and Louis Draughon setting it up on the second floor of their tire store. They moved to Nashville in 1936 and started the companion TV in 1953 using their converted FM radio transmitter site for the first studios. Viewers watched the ABC and local programs on Channel 8 in the early years before an historic VHF channel switch was negotiated in 1973 with public television WDCN. That station instantly became 8 and WSIX-8 was transformed to Channel 2-WNGE-TV. General Electric had purchased the station in 1966 for \$9.7 million.

Louis Draughon commented to long-time radio-TV announcer-newsman Charlie Scott that it wasn't a bad return on a penny investment. It seems his brother had actually won the first radio transmitter in a poker game and their only cost to get into the business was the penny post card informing Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover they were going on the air as WSIX. The number six was significant to the brother's business where they declared "service is excellent," thus the early choice of call letters.

The radio and TV were sold separately in 1983, and the Knight-Ridder company changed the call letters to WKRN-TV.

One of the earliest TV-8 newscasters was Hudley Crockett. Newsman Jim Kent played Captain Crook for the kids show, while Joe Holcomb was the popular "Bozo the Clown." Later Rick Moore moved into the news anchor chair for an extended stay.

WLAC-TV in Nashville was started on channel 5 in 1954 by the radio as the city's third station. While still broadcasting on channel 5, its call letters have become WTVF with several ownership switches through the years. Southern Kentuckians started picking up newscaster Bill Jay in 1960. He had become popular earlier as "Captain Bill" on the kids show *Popeye and Friends*. Chris Clark was hired as news anchor in 1966 and has been behind the desk for 28 years. Bob Lobertini was weatherman and a popular on-air personality in the early years, and the station actually had black and white weather radar in 1958.

The city's first female anchor hit the air in 1974 on Channel 5 — a 19-year-old by the name of Oprah Winfrey who would become one of America's most widely-known and highest-paid TV stars. Channel 5 was home of the production of Nashville's *Hee Haw Show*, until it was purchased by the CBS network of which WTVF is an affiliate.

Before Paducah's WPSD went on, western Kentuckians could tune to CBS affiliate, KFVS-TV 12 in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, which was operating by 1954 with its sister radio station. The TV had been started by Oscar Hirsch, a broadcast pioneer who had built the radio station in 1925. A UHF channel had earlier been assigned to the region, but strong lobbying by Hirsch got him the channel 12 frequency.

The TV began with a small staff and no studio camera at first, just carrying network shows and announcements over slides. Don McNeely was the chief announcer and soon became the area's first newsreader, staying on the job until 1992 with news and weather in a career spanning five decades. Later, Mike Shain became a familiar face with news and Blaine Baker on sports.

McNeely also served as host of the *Junior Auction*, a unique kids show that brought youngsters in every Saturday with Kas potato chip bags to bid on prizes and watch cartoons. Merle Emery hosted the western program as the "Old-Timer" and there was also "Ruffles the Clown" played by Duane Kirby.

KFVS started a live morning show from 6 to 7 in the late 1960s, and the *Breakfast Show* is still be seen on Channel 12. The station sold to the AFLAC group in 1979.

WSIL-TV 3, licensed to Harrisburg, Illinois, was the first station on the air in that Kentucky-Illinois-Missouri region, signing on in 1953, and becoming an ABC affiliate.

In southeastern Kentucky, some mountain communities picked up the first signals and CBS programs from Channel 11, WJHL in Kingsport-Johnson City on the air in 1953 and owned by the Hanes Lancaster family which had started the radio station. The first news was delivered by Michael Blankard. Carl Dickenson came in 1954 as engineer and worked for 40 years supervising three transmitter site changes during that period.

Eddie McKinney did one of the first kids shows, again getting kids to bring potato chips bags (Terry's brand) in for prizes and cartoons. Bob Lewis has been a major part of the Channel 11 news team with the longest term of service.

The first two-inch portable video tape machine (serial no. 1) was purchased by WJHL and in the early 1960s the truck it took to contain it followed the local football team around with telecasts.

The station sold in 1964 to Park Communications, becoming one of the earliest of many stations that would be owned by Roy Park.



WCYB radio became a dual operation with the beginning of TV-5 in Bristol, Virginia, which went on the air in 1956 as a NBC affiliate. There were cartoon shows for kids with Ed Spiegel hosting, among his many duties. Early local programming included *Club Quiz* and *Classroom Quiz* shows to challenge adults and kids.

Walter Crockett was one earlier news director who did editorials and also put the first female anchor in the southeast on the air over objections from others. Evelyn Booher worked her first newscast in the 1960s, several years before women news anchors became common. Male reporters such as Merrill Moore, Johnny Wood and Stan Hawkins have kept viewers informed through the years.

Farther south, in Knoxville, two VHF stations were on the air in the 1950s, and could be picked up by a few Kentucky folks, WATE, on Channel 6, and WBIR, Channel 10, both started by sister radio stations.



The desire in those early years to bring in these stations and those inside the state to at least capture all three networks prompted the early attempts at community antenna systems.

Cable television actually began in the late 1940s as residents banded together to form a community antenna at a high location to get better reception. Kentucky was one of the first states to become involved in such projects. In 1949, in the hills of the eastern part of the state, people began to erect tall antennas on the mountain tops with wire running to the community in the valley. The Kentucky Cable Association recognizes Bill Riden of Cumberland as the first operator of such a system. Others also started at about that time including Tom Gullett who wired up the tiny community of Manton in Floyd County, then later Drift, Paintsville and Prestonsburg, and owned several of Kentucky's earliest systems.

D.C. Duncan of Consolidated Coal in Jenkins formed what he called the Television Club to bring in programs from Huntington, Cincinnati and Louisville at first, adding others later. The idea spread from the mountains to rural southern and central Kentucky and soon simple CATV systems were serving many towns.

One of the first attempts at local programming on cable was in 1954, in Winchester in a garage owned by politician and Paintsville broadcaster, Howes Meade, who had built a system for the town of 10,000 and offered subscribers channels from Cincinnati and Louisville as well as movies which he projected on a home screen and picked up with his cameras. He envisioned box office television and local origination programs and commercials. The opening night was quite an event according to newspaper

accounts, with everyone from the president of the Kentucky Broadcasters Association to Wildcat basketball star Wallace "Wah Wah" Jones on hand, to see the electronic innovation and enjoy the talent lined up for the night.

Some cable systems were community cooperative efforts with people investing in the company, while others were built for profit by individuals and fees charged to hook-up. Through the early 1950s in other states, there had also been widespread experiments with actual "pay-TV" channel arrangements separate from community-antenna operations. UHF stations had felt subscription television might be the only way for them to survive in those rough years. Interestingly, the two ideas would combine a few decades later with the cable TV-satellite channel boom.

In 1952 there were approximately 70 cable systems of some type in service, nationwide. By the early 1960s, the community antenna concept had grown to more than 600 in the country, mainly in small rural towns.

In 1965, there were 30 cable systems listed for Kentucky, with some of the other early operators — Charlie Hale, Harlan; Bill Gorman, Hazard; Jim Hays, McKee; Clyde House, Somerset; R.B. Salyer, Whitesburg; Calvin Hiesler, Glasgow; Bill Breedy, Monticello; Bill Betts, Maysville; Fred Dupree, London. These men along with Gullett and others began to talk of forming a Cable TV Association and organized the group electing Dupree as the first president. Bill Betts also later served as president, the only person to head both the Kentucky Broadcasters and Cable TV Operators.

Thus, Kentucky was wired early for what would later become a primary method of delivering TV signals, not just to the rural areas but to cities as well.

## Chapter 5

### *TV Grows and Matures (Market Summaries)*

By the early 1960s, television had solidified its place in American culture and the pioneer stations entered a period of growth and maturation. The popularity of television increased in the succeeding decades and by the early 1990s, the home video revolution was under way. Nearly every home had one or more color sets at affordable prices. Viewers would have access to dozens of cable channels and three-fourths owned their own video cassette recorders to record and manipulate programs to their own schedule and play movies and programs as they pleased.

The remote control became the most coveted piece of gear in the house, but it made TV programmers shudder to think their shows and commercials were just a flick of the finger away from the consumer censors. A new creature, the satellite dish, found a welcome habitat on Kentucky hillsides and backyards, as homes received many new networks directly, bypassing local stations.

The growth in the number of stations in the state was steady but with Kentucky's four VHF channels already built by 1962, all the new stations would be UHF.

In 1968, 20 years after the state's first television station went on the air, there were 785 commercial and non-commercial stations in the nation, but only nine commercial and one non-commercial in Kentucky. That year, the state saw the long-awaited educational television network, KET, begin with

its twelve transmitter locations. Three more commercial stations were added by 1975, with more growth in the early 1980s including the state's first religious stations, and LPTV (Low Power Television). But two more UHF stations in the state would fail, after operating a short time.

**Thirty years after the first Kentucky station, the 1978 state TV log looked liked this:**

Bowling Green — WBKO-TV 13

Louisville — WAVE-TV 3; WHAS-TV 11; WKPC-TV 15; WLKY-TV 32;  
WDRB-TV 41

Lexington — KET network; WTVQ-TV 62; WKYT-TV 27; WLEX-TV 18

Paducah — WPSD-TV 6; WDXR-TV (dark)

Hazard — WKYH-TV 57

Henderson — WEHT-25

Newport — WXIX-19

The FCC's attempt to correct the mixture of VHF and UHF markets failed, so legislation to help the struggling UHF channels was passed in 1962 requiring that each set manufactured must have all-channel receiving capability. But it would be the dramatic change in the delivery system of television signals brought on by the growth of CATV or "cable TV" that would eventually level the "viewing field" for VHF and UHF. That cable growth brought stations thousands of additional viewers outside the normal coverage area and improved the picture reception by eliminating ghosting and static problems. The same cable companies, however, became a competitor with television stations through insertion of local commercials, the advent of satellite-delivered signals for cable customers, local origination channels, pay movie channels and other services.

Government regulation of the cable industry started in the mid-1960s when more than one million homes nationwide had been wired for reception. Then in 1972, the FCC formally established the Cable Bureau, but the government's attitude toward CATV has vacillated with periods of de-regulation and re-regulation in an effort to respond to new technology, political and economic conditions, copyright matters and fairness.

The decade of the seventies was a time of government actions and reactions, and television sought to deal with a heavy regulatory atmosphere.

Under the FCC's watchful eye, there was enforcement of fairness doctrine provisions, a close count on employment numbers of women and minorities

through the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and in an effort to diversify control of stations, limitations were placed on ownership.

In Kentucky, as in many other states, the radio stations and newspaper media people were the early entrepreneurs in the new TV field, a move that had government encouragement at first, but later disapproval. In 1970, restrictions were placed on radio stations also owning the television in the same market, and five years later, newspapers were denied the right to cross-ownership within the same city. "Grandfather clauses" in both provisions would keep some of the long-standing partnerships around for a time, but buying and selling radio and TV stations and national group ownership became increasingly popular, as the value of station licenses inflated dramatically. Of the first ten stations started in the state between 1948 and 1970, only two would still be under the same basic local ownership by 1994, WLEX and WPSD.

Television programming recovered from the quiz show scandals and blacklisting controversies of the 1950s to give Americans longer and better newscasts, bring a war in southeast Asia into the living rooms and take viewers to the moon with the Apollo astronauts. The "liberated" decade of the 1960s also gradually saw the appearance of previously forbidden words and censored scenes. Soon a more permissive atmosphere would prevail on the screen. The FCC sought some restraint on this pattern with the idea of a "family viewing time" in the early evening hours. Criticism of the lack of quality children's programming brought the FCC to bear in studying that issue, as most stations had dropped such shows that had attracted young audiences in the formative years of TV.

Stations relied heavily on the three networks for the majority of the programming, and until the 1970s, when some independent stations would flourish, an affiliation was necessary for success. To ABC, NBC and CBS, was added the FOX network in the late 1980s when fourth and fifth stations began operating in many markets. At first, FOX developed by offering some programming many thought too "racy" for the three established networks and was soon gaining in popularity and offering a full schedule including winning the rights to NFL football games for the 1994 season. Still, it lagged behind the big three in overall ratings.

The prime-time access rule adopted by the FCC in 1971, meant no network programming from 7 to 8 p.m., putting the burden on local stations to fill that time. Most stations contracted with independently-produced syndicators for programs.

Greater volumes of game shows and independently produced programming became available along with reruns of successful older shows. The sit-

uation comedy and drama continued to be the most popular prime-time evening fare.

As the nation's thirst for information grew, so did the numbers of documentary and newsmagazine shows, led by *60 Minutes* on CBS. To the soap operas and game shows of the daytime hours was added a new format — the “talk” show with audience participation.

Hollywood studios and several major independent producers put together the evening programs while networks generally produced the morning and evening news, late-night shows, the sports coverage programs and some daytime soap operas.

The trends of increased sex, violence and talk show discussions of previously taboo topics on networks has led many industry veterans to question the direction the network moguls were taking TV. They recall the famous speech by FCC Chairman Newton Minow in 1961, in which he referred to television programming as a “vast wasteland.” More than three decades later some might wonder if the same description might be apropos. The negative impact on youth, especially of the sex and violence in programs, has often been documented and used as evidence in arguments by politicians for more government control.

The increasing popularity of all sports in the country made TV coverage a lucrative venture, and the networks carried regular season games and special events of all the major sports.

The TV stations in the state would eventually concentrate resources on producing only local news, public affairs programs and fund-raising charity telethons, instead of the many music, variety, children's and informational programs of the earlier days, although many of those local productions would remain a viable part of the program schedule into the 1970s.

Television became the prime source of news and information each evening for Americans. Local evening newscasts were expanded to half-hour and then to an hour in the major markets. In addition, late-night news became popular, and most stations developed morning and midday news programs, as well.

The local ratings battle focused on these newscasts and the ability of anchors to attract and keep the audience. At the network level, John Chancellor (NBC), Walter Cronkite (CBS) and Harry Reasoner (ABC) became popular anchormen matching stories and features for viewer loyalty.

Network shows like *Ozzie and Harriet*, *Leave it to Beaver*, *M\*A\*S\*H*, *All in the Family*, *Bonanza*, *Mary Tyler Moore*, *Dallas*, *Laverne and Shirley*, *Perry Mason*, *Andy Griffith* and *The Waltons* would have long lives on the networks, and be resurrected years later in syndication. These popular

shows and others that came later have often been seen as a reflection of American life and culture.

Americans began spending more and more time in front of the “tube” and by the 1990s the average household had the TV on more than seven hours daily. For cable customers, TV became a round-the-clock medium and even many local stations began telecasting 24 hours a day. The increased amount of time in front of the TV by youth has been criticized as contributing to a generation of lethargic and overweight individuals. A new phrase, “couch potato” was coined to describe the television addict.

Competition for audience shares was strong among networks and local stations because each rating point meant more revenue for the stations through increased advertising schedules and elevated rates. With the growing penetration of cable systems into major markets, the big three networks saw their overall audiences erode considerably, from a time when there was no other choice, to a share of only 60 percent of the total viewers by 1994. The distinction between a true over-the-air “broadcast” station and a satellite-delivered cable station became muddled in the eyes of the typical household that practiced “channel surfing.”

A.C. Nielsen Co. eventually took over the ratings system with Arbitron dropping out. DMA’s (designated market areas) would be surveyed to determine the top stations, while nationally, the weekly ratings told the fate of the network shows.

Television sales people soon realized, however, that unlike radio, the audience loyalty was not to a particular station, but to the specific programs. Advertisers wanted to keep the viewers attention, entertain and impress so commercials advanced beyond the “live pitchman with props” stage to sophisticated video segments filled with jingles, action shots and graphics. Spot rates began to soar from a few dollars in the pioneer days of TV to thousands of dollars for prime-time commercials. Advertising focused not just on products but on businesses that were building national chains and network TV became the principal way to reach the people all across the country.



A revolution in technology during the electronic communications era changed the way television presented its product, increasing the immediacy of news, the reliability of performance, and the overall quality of the programs. The days of live staging, kinescopes and film gave way to the new and improved video tape recorders. The large two-inch tape machines of the early 1960s eventually got smaller, reducing to one and then 3/4 inch, coming into common use.

A new era came with the transition from black and white to color, first with network shows and then with local stations' film processing, cameras and equipment. By 1965 all network shows had gone to color.

Video cassette format machines like the Sony Beta eventually replaced the large tape and, along with compact camera equipment, created more effective "ENG" (electronic news gathering) initiated at most Kentucky stations by the mid-1970s. The portable video recorders allowed for quick electronic editing of news instead of the tedious film processing.

The first communications satellite was launched in 1962, paving the way for the gradual elimination of "land lines." Big dish receivers replaced the phone company as the source for programming feeds. Microwave links improved and then satellite uplinking in the 1980s not only became the method of network broadcasts and worldwide communication, but allowed for broader local news and sports coverage. A station could bring the audience live coverage from anywhere, dramatically changing the way stations planned their news and local events.

By the 1980s, stations were adding stereo sound to their signals and tele-text and captioning services were being made available utilizing their sub-carrier frequencies.

Just as communications technology in all industries moved from the tube to solid state, video and audio equipment became smaller and more reliable. The computer revolutionized not only business and traffic operations, but brought exciting and beneficial changes in special effects, character generating, editing and automation systems at TV stations.

Fifty years after the government approved the first permits, television stations would bear little resemblance to those original one-camera operations.

Most all the first television stations in Kentucky and surrounding states were founded by co-owned radio. The local radio station continued to be a training ground for many to move into television as more stations went on the air, and staffs expanded.

With a vast audience and reliance of households on TV for their news, information and entertainment, the increased influence of television on all aspects of society has been apparent. Cable channels brought live coverage of Congress, and the strategy of forming public opinion on issues centered around presentation on the TV news shows. Political campaigns were often won or lost by how much coverage was given and how much money was spent on television.

Local TV stations were required to meet community needs with programming, and Kentucky stations developed newscasts that included investigative reports. Many tackled tough problems with regularly-scheduled



panel shows. Helping to solve crimes and becoming a consumer ombudsman were jobs taken on by many news departments. The fund-raising "telethon" continued to involve TV stations in national charities and community projects.

With the era of deregulation in the 1980s, television benefited from less intrusion by government although not to the extent of radio. Most of local TV broadcasters' concerns were with the government's attitude toward the cable industry. After some contentious debate with the cable lobbyists and Washington, television was able to get "must-carry" provisions instituted, that required CATV systems to negotiate with local channels in their service area for carriage.

## **KET**

In the 1960s, non-commercial educational broadcasting began its development as an alternative program choice to commercial stations.

A dream originally envisioned in 1952, when O. Leonard "Len" Press was in the Radio Department at the University of Kentucky became a reality on September 23, 1968, as the Kentucky Educational TV Network went on the air. The idea was formalized into law in 1962 by the legislature, after Governor Bert Combs directed a study of the need in 1960.

By 1966, Press, now on the state payroll, convinced Governor Ned Breathitt that the time was right and the public support was there for a statewide effort in the field of educational television. Press has said a good part of his job then was to "barnstorm the state telling people what it was we were trying to do." Ronald B. Stewart became the first chief engineer for the new Kentucky Authority for Educational Broadcasting.

With state bond issue money and federal grants in hand, the microwave system to carry the first signals across the Commonwealth was built. Governor Louie Nunn granted Press his maiden operating budget and KET was on the air, becoming the nation's largest public television network and a model for the rest of the country.

The original network began with the master control center in Lexington and production facilities to produce programming planned for all the state universities. Twelve UHF stations were programmed from the Lexington site — Channel 25 WKAS Ashland; Channel 38 WKMR Morehead; Channel 22 WKPI Pikeville; Channel 35 WKHA Hazard; Channel 29 WKSO Somerset; Channel 23 WKZT Elizabethtown; Channel 52 WKON Owenton; Channel 54 WCVN Covington; Channel 53 WKGB Bowling Green; Channel 21 WKMU Murray; Channel 35 WKMA Madisonville; and Chan-

nel 46 WKLE for Lexington and Richmond. Call signs were selected to signify the city in which the transmitter was located. No offices or studios were located in the various cities, but transmitter buildings and tower sites had to be obtained. The programming would be produced in Lexington and sent to the sites for rebroadcast.

The system has grown to 15 transmitters and eight translator stations carrying the signal throughout more than 40,000 square miles of Kentucky and the surrounding states. Channel 68, WKMJ Louisville, was added in 1970, Channel 29, WKPD Paducah, was acquired in 1978 and Channel 31, WKOH Owensboro, was put on the network in 1979.

The original programs were instructional and designed to enrich and supplement classroom teaching throughout the state. School systems began purchasing sets from the state at a cost of \$135 and erected the antennas to receive the signal.

In 1969, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) was established following Congressional approval of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to provide federal tax dollars for educational radio and television stations. KET joined the PBS network and began its first evening programs and first non-instructional type broadcasts. The Children's Television Workshop production of *Sesame Street* goes on the air and is an immediate hit, bringing new viewers to the educational network.



Courtesy KET

*Kentucky Educational Television, Opening Night, September 23, 1968. From left to right: O. Leonard Press, KET executive director; Governor Louie Nunn; Wendell Butler, superintendent of public instruction; Robert Martin, KET board member; Pete Manchikes, KET board member.*

In 1974 a weekly state public affairs program, *Comment on Kentucky*, with host Al Smith debuted. The show, normally done live, has featured frank discussions about politicians and Kentucky government and issues. In 1984, KET began offering open-captioned rebroadcast of newscasts each evening, from various commercial stations in the state.

KET has produced many award-winning programs including the KET/GED series, 43 half-hour programs to help adults prepare for the GED high school equivalency exam. The series is used throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico, in the federal correction system, and by the U.S. Armed forces. Since 1975, its estimated that more than 1.5 million adults, nationwide, have passed the GED exam after viewing the series.

In 1985, the GED study-at-home series was launched statewide, and now boasts more than 5,000 graduates.

College-credit telecourses at the undergraduate and graduate level have become an integral part of the program schedule with 20 participating colleges and universities in Kentucky.

Through its partnership with the Kentucky Center for the Arts, KET has been able to feature Kentuckians as well as world-renowned performers, and with help from the Fund for Independent Productions, showcase local filmmakers and video artists.

KET produced many highly-acclaimed educational programs, aired on the network and nationally on PBS. The documentary on the life of Senator



Courtesy KET

*Modern KET headquarters, located on Cooper Drive in Lexington. The O. Leonard Press Telecommunications Resource Center was dedicated in 1992.*

John Sherman Cooper, received a premiere at the Washington Kennedy Center in 1990.

In 1989, the interactive-distance learning programs began with the first broadcast of the Star Channels, classes that provide students in Kentucky high schools and 18 other states with courses unavailable in their local system.

In many ways, Kentucky's educational TV network was fulfilling the original dream of the first radio stations and their partnerships with colleges to bring education and culture to every area of the state and enhance the lives of individuals, and enlarge their base of knowledge.

In 1971, a group "Friends of KET" was formed among individuals interested in helping the network fulfill its mission and in 1981 the "Fund for Excellence" was launched as a primary source for money to facilitate the underwriting of program costs for evenings and weekends. Telethons are now held each year to supplement government funding for the KET budget.

The network is governed by the Kentucky Authority for Educational Television, made up of members appointed by the governor, and guided by a KET Advisory Committee, consisting of individuals from a wide range of groups including broadcasters. (see Chapter 6 on KBA involvement)

In 1992, KET opened its new telecommunications resource facility at the Cooper Drive center, Lexington, adding state-of-the-art satellite technology and production equipment. The 67,000 square-foot addition was named for O. Leonard Press, the founding director of KET who had retired a year earlier.

Press has received many awards over his 40-year career in the state, including being named by *Louisville* magazine as one of the "50 Who Made Kentucky" and in 1991 was PBS national manager of the year.

Virginia Gaines Fox, who had worked as a staff person at the beginning of the network, was named executive director to succeed Press. By 1994, the KET staff had grown from 40 at the start to 244, with a budget of \$22.9 million, a ten-fold increase from its first fiscal year.

After serving for seven years as chairman of the Kentucky Authority for Educational Television, attorney W. Terry McBrayer lauded the efforts of KET in providing thousands of hours of instructional programming to the state's students and teachers, and creating a "safe haven for children with programming free of violence or commercial message."

McBrayer and others have urged the state's two other educational TV stations, WKPC in Louisville and WKYU at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green to align themselves with the KET, avoiding duplication of programming and saving public funding dollars. Both stations, while also affiliated with PBS, remain separate entities, though, and have resisted any incorporation into the KET umbrella in favor of continuing as local stations.

## Louisville Market

The first three stations of the state's largest city were started by local media people but by 1990, they had sold them to outside group ownership.

The Norton family and WAVE radio, which gave birth to the state's first TV, expanded their TV interests beyond Louisville with the purchase of WFIE-TV, in Evansville, Indiana. Through the years, they acquired other stations in Michigan, Wisconsin and Iowa, and in 1969 became known as Orion Broadcasting.

Tragedy struck the family in 1964, as George W. Norton, Jr., president, was fatally injured in an automobile accident in Jamaica in February. His son assumed the leadership, only to be killed in an auto accident in Louisville in May that same year. After the death of her son, Jane Morton Norton returned to WAVE as president and her nephew, T. Ballard Morton, Jr., joined the management team with executive vice-president Ralph Jackson. Long-time WAVE radio-TV executive Nathan Lord, in failing health, was named secretary-treasurer. Lord, Kentucky's first TV manager, died in 1967. Lee Browning became station manager for WAVE, serving for more than a decade before Jim Keelor moved up from the news director position to assume leadership and Ed Godfrey took charge of the news department.

In 1980, Mrs. Norton sought to divest herself of the company stock. The proposed sale of Orion Broadcasting to a South Carolina firm, Cosmos Corporation, was officially announced with the transfer completed the following year. It was a \$110 million package deal that included five television and three radio stations. Cosmos, with chief executive officer Charles A. Batson, had been in the broadcasting business more than 50 years.

The city's other media family, the Bingham, also got out of the broadcasting business during the decade. In 1986, after some family disagreements that had become the subject of public discussion, Barry Bingham, Jr. announced the *Courier-Journal* and broadcast properties WHAS radio and TV would be sold. WHAS-TV was purchased by the Providence Journal Company of Rhode Island for \$85.7 million in December of that year.

Victor Sholis, who had managed the station for the Bingham family since its beginning, had retired in 1975, and Ed Shadburne became vice-president and general manager for WHAS from 1970 to 1976. Later, Robert Morse, former news director, took over as general manager. He was asked to resign by the new parent company following its takeover in a dispute over the "golden parachute" contracts he had held under the Bingham ownership. The employees found the management style of their new owner to be different than the close paternalistic relationship enjoyed under the years of Bingham

control. Other layoffs occurred and four top executives left the station, as WHAS went through a difficult period of reorganization and adjustment.

WLKY-32 changed ownership and management several times since its founding by the local stockholders of Kentuckiana Broadcasting. In 1967 Edmont Sonderling, of Oak Park, Illinois, purchased the station for \$7 million. The former owners were asked to serve on an advisory board for Sonderling Broadcasting, which previously had owned only radio stations. The stockholders at the time of the sale were George Egger, Richard Shively, Holman Wilson, William S. Cutchins, Dillman Rash and Archibald Cochran. The station later sold for \$8.3 million to Combined Communications of Denver in 1972 which was acquired by the Gannett company in 1979, and finally was purchased by the Pulitzer Broadcasting group in June 1983.

WDRB-TV 41 in Louisville signed on the air February 28, 1971, becoming the fourth commercial station in the market. While other UHF stations without network affiliation were faltering, Channel 41 proved to be successful, using its schedule of reruns, movies and sports to lure enough of an audience to quickly show a profit. The permit for the channel had been held by Robert Rounsaville since the 1950s, but was acquired by Consolidated Broadcasting, made up of eleven stockholders, with station manager Elmer Jaskan, the only local one. Call letters were selected to represent the 'Derby City.'

In 1977, the station was purchased by the Minneapolis Star and Tribune Co. for \$6.5 million. The *Tribune* had owned WCCO radio and TV in Minneapolis but was eliminating cross-ownership in that city under court order and seeking television properties elsewhere. Another newspaper, the *Toledo Blade* purchased the station for \$10 million in 1984. In March 1994, WDRB began operating channel 58 as a LMA (local marketing agreement) for Kentuckiana Broadcasting's WFTE. The station was licensed to Salem, Indiana, with Tom Ledford, president. The call letters were chosen to represent the channel position of "Fifty-Eight."

Channel 21 had returned to the Louisville airwaves in April 1986, 32 years after suspending operations and having the license transferred several times. In 1978, both WDRB and Word Broadcasting had filed for the permit, with the FCC granting the license to Word, but WDRB later winning it in an appeal to the FCC review board. With a change of ownership at Channel 41, however, their application was withdrawn and Word Broadcasting laid plans to construct the station on Prayer Mountain in Bullitt County, with studios on Fern Valley Road.

The individuals involved in the start-up, including Bob Rodgers, president, were associated with the Evangel Tabernacle, a 6,000-member congregation. They announced intentions to have a station with family-type and

religious programming. The station wanted to go on the air Christmas Day in 1985, but antenna problems prevented it. Rodgers has given credit to Clarence Henson for helping guide the church through the whole process of finally getting switched on. However, the station was quickly hit with the depressed market for Christian television, with stations failing because of the negative publicity associated with televangelists' scandals. Rodgers says the station was determined to survive and turned from strictly religious program offerings to develop a schedule of family-type shows, shopping networks, movies and programming associated with independent stations. WBNA still carries Christian programming including, some local church broadcasts and is on the air 24 hours a day. Phil Keith has served as program director since the beginning.

In 1988, Rodgers expanded Word's television interests and started WQQB-TV in Bowling Green after purchasing the construction permit from John Cunningham. Word operated channel 40 there as a religious station for a year and a half before selling it in 1991. Rodgers' workload had increased greatly when he assumed additional duties of church pastor upon the death of his father, W.L. Rodgers, and decided to concentrate the media efforts solely in the Louisville area.



TV stations in the major markets were constantly competing with one another in upgrading their facilities, their signal and ability to serve through technologies and equipment that were improving rapidly.

WAVE had dedicated a new TV center at 725 South Floyd Street in late 1959, a cultural event in itself with the presentation of a live opera, commissioned by WAVE, Inc. Then in the late 1960s, WAVE completed work on a landscaped "Garden Studio," which was dedicated to the memory of the Nortons.

In 1968, WHAS took up residence at their new home on West Chestnut, an architectural style it referred to as "20th Century Greek-American" with the latest studio accommodations and equipment.

In the fall of the previous year, WLKY had moved into beautiful new facilities on Mellwood Avenue.

Reaching for the sky, with higher towers and increased coverage, was clearly on the mind of Louisville stations. As early as 1954 WHAS proposed to build the world's tallest structure: a 2,000-foot tower for its antenna, at the transmitter site in suburban Louisville. Later a tower was planned for Brownsboro, but all proposals met with objections from aviation authorities, and even Lexington TV stations, who feared the competitive signal. WHAS

finally built a new 975-foot tower at the antenna farm at Floyd Knobs, Indiana, and began operating with it in 1965, eleven years after the planning had begun. Indiana was located in a different FAA zone with stricter limitations on tower size.

That same year, WLKY tripled the size of its antenna at Floyd Knobs and increased its power four-fold. Ten years later, Channel 32 switched on another new transmitter upping power again.

It would be WAVE, though, that would make the major tower news, when it raised the state's tallest structure, a \$5 million, 1,739-foot broadcasting tower at LaGrange in Oldham County. The structure is 300 feet higher than the nation's tallest building, the Sears Tower in Chicago, and increased the signal of Channel 3 to 20 additional counties when it was activated in August 1990. That project, too, was time consuming as the station worked for six years to overcome objections from various public sectors and government agencies. Guy Hempel, WAVE general manager, said it was a big step for the station and enabled them especially to reach areas of northern Kentucky where viewers were relying on Cincinnati area stations for news.

The network lineup of the Louisville stations remained stable for decades, when suddenly it was disrupted in 1990 by a series of moves that shocked the viewing public. WAVE (NBC), WHAS (CBS), WLKY (ABC) and WDRB, which had recently joined the new FOX network, found themselves shaken when WHAS decided to end its 40-year affiliation with CBS and signed an agreement with ABC, whom manager Neil Kuvin, called the "network of the '90s." After some hard discussions and study, WAVE decided to stay with NBC, and CBS linked up with WLKY. Shortly after the changes, the all-important station ratings began to gyrate with the once dominant WHAS slipping some, while WLKY showed significant improvement in overall ratings and turning the TV game into a three-horse race in the city.

With help from the new network, general manager Lyn Stoyer announced WLKY would spend \$2 million to upgrade its news and other operations and add noon and 5 p.m. reports. WDRB-41's new 10 p.m. newscast soon became a serious player, as well.

Observers were noting that it seemed the five years of changes since the Bingham's sold WHAS was allowing the other stations a sporting chance at the top spot.

Channel 11 recovered quickly though, to tighten its hold on the top news ratings in the city and soon launched a popular and unique Saturday morning news block from 7 to 11 a.m.

WHAS had not always dominated the news market, however, having taken over first place in 1978. Since he went on as Louisville's first news-





Courtesy WAVE-TV

*Livingston Gilbert, Kentucky's first TV newscaster, gets ready for a show. Gilbert was Louisville's most popular news anchor for 32 years on WAVE-TV.*

reader in 1948 for WAVE-TV, Livingston Gilbert had been the most watched and respected newsman of the city. He ended his career in both radio and TV in 1980 by saying "40 years is enough." The announcement brought sadness and accolades from co-workers and competitors alike. WLKY's Ken Rowland called him truly an "institution" for he had reported on all the major events that had affected people's lives. County judge and later Senator, Mitch McConnell, characterized Gilbert as a man of professionalism and dedication, and one of the community's "finest citizens."

Dale Greer had been the first person to sit at the anchor desk with Gilbert and has said that there was no resentment at being asked to share the spotlight back then. In fact, Greer believes to this day that Gilbert, who folks said never made a mistake, deliberately fumbled through his story that first night, after Greer had nervously botched his opening lines. Then at the first commercial break, according to Greer, Gilbert put his arm around me and said, "Hang in there, we'll do better."

Through the years, the "Kentuckiana" stations battled each other with efforts to be the first in news innovations. There were promotional campaigns and juggling of reporters and anchors to find the right mix to appeal to the audience. Each hyped their newest advance as being the catalyst to make them the "best, first or finest." WAVE put together its own color film



Courtesy WAVE Radio

*For much of its history, WAVE Radio and TV in Louisville depended on five key announcers: (left to right) Bill Gladden, Ed Kallay, Ryan Halloren, Livingston Gilbert and Bob Kay.*

processing system in 1962, and in the mid-1960s, news director Rodney Ford headed the largest news staff in Kentucky and Southern Indiana. WHAS's new mobile unit was touted as the reason behind the station's day-long live coverage of the August 1965 DuPont explosion. With the advent of all color, WHAS made history with what was then the longest continuous colorcast on record, its marathon two-day Crusade for Children broadcast in 1967 and that same year expanded the evening news to a full hour. WAVE laid claim to the city's first helicopter reports, radar weathercasts and editorials.

Still, workers of that era say the competition was friendly and the dedication of the Bingham family at WHAS and the Nortons at WAVE, put Louisville TV news at a higher level than any market that size in the country.

All the early TV personalities, most who started in radio, spoke of the family-like atmosphere that pervaded those operations. But the decade of the eighties brought change, the break-up of the family empires and the end of the combination radio-TV partnerships of WAVE and WHAS that had served the community for years and meant dual careers for

many of the city's most-remembered broadcasters.

Before that, the WAVE and WHAS radio air personalities had continued to work the TV shows. Bob Kay at WAVE remained active in news until 1982, retiring after 41 years. He has observed that the new generation of broadcasters probably doesn't understand such loyalty, as many don't intend to stay at one station that long these days. Kay says the technology changes from those first attempts at TV in 1948 have been good, but the laxity of standards in programming has been disturbing to him.

A number of the old variety shows that started in TV's infancy remained popular with Louisville audiences for decades, but the main emphasis would become the local newscasts and public affairs shows.

Louisville viewers had been loyal in putting WAVE and Livingston Gilbert in first place in ratings of local news. In 1977, for instance, WAVE had a 43 percent share of the audience for its newscasts. By the end of the following year, however, WHAS had taken over first place, when Kirstie Wilde joined Jim Mitchell as a female co-anchor. Channel 11 then remained at the top for the next 15 years, often with double the ratings of the competitors. WHAS, assured that the FCC prohibition on newspaper ownership would be "grandfathered," had moved ahead with renewed vigor in updating equipment and staff.

One anchor, after leaving the city, landed on his feet as a network correspondent. Neil Boggs came to Louisville news but was let go after two years on the job, sparking a wave of protests and letters to the editor in the newspapers. He had replaced the popular Mort Crim, who had given WHAS a ratings gain for the late night newscasts. Crim went on to work at several major market stations and became a popular nationally-syndicated radio and TV commentator.

Diane Sawyer, a Louisville native and former national Junior Miss, started her professional career as the Channel 32 weathergirl in 1967. In 1970,



Reprinted with permission Courier-Journal

*Network news correspondent and anchor Diane Sawyer began her career in Louisville as a weathergirl for WLKY-Channel 32.*

# The News at 10



Reprinted with permission Courier-Journal

***Jim Mitchell and Laretta Harris deliver the first 10 p.m. newscast for Louisville on WDRB in 1990. Mitchell helped take WHAS-TV to the top of the ratings in the late 1970s.***

Sawyer left WLKY to take her talent and ambitions east and start a successful career in network television. Sawyer had often stated her desire to work in documentary production and news reporting. Her first job after leaving Kentucky was in the Nixon White House press office where, after his resignation, she accompanied him to San Clemente to help research his memoirs. She returned to Washington in 1978 as a correspondent for CBS news. In August 1984, she became the first female reporter for the highly-rated *60 Minutes* program and five years later moved to ABC's *Prime Time Live* news show.

Another Channel 32 weathergirl, Ange Humphrey, used her country charm and looks to gain a loyal audience in the 1970s but decided to jilt the TV viewers for a chance at a music career in Nashville.

For 19 years Channel 11-WHAS viewers depended on Milton Metz for the weather forecasts as he switched from the radio to the TV studio daily.

Many reporters and announcers moved on from Louisville news to pursue careers in major markets, but some found greener pastures just down the street. Ken Rowland was news director for WLKY-32 from 1963 to 1970 when he became the WHAS anchorman. In 1977, he left Channel 11 to return to TV-32 as a co-anchor when the station hired him in an effort to boost news ratings. Jim Mitchell left WHAS after nine successful years to pursue law

school, but wound up taking over the 10 p.m. news at WDRB-41, then switching to WAVE for a few months before retiring.

Ken Rowland retired from broadcasting in November 1986, with Mayor Jerry Abramson showing up to proclaim a special day in his honor. The mayor said Rowland had gained the trust and confidence of his audience through the years. Liz Everman, his co-anchor, saw it as a sad day, but said she was able to make it through the farewell newscast without needing a hanky. Everman continued to be the top anchor for the TV 32-evening news, while Rowland pursued a career as a stock market analyst.

The game of musical anchor chairs had some assistance from the courts in 1979 when a judge ruled the no-competition clause in Melissa Forsythe's contract was not valid under the circumstances presented in court and allowed her to work for WHAS after seven years with WAVE-TV. She had left Channel 3 after some conflict over work schedules and began a new job at Channel 11, where she remained until unceremoniously dismissed in 1991. Popular female newscaster Jackie Hays had succeeded Kirstie Wilde at Channel 11, but then left town, only to come back and wind up as the steady anchor at Channel 3-WAVE beginning in 1988.

Not all the changes were to other TV stations, as Tommy Dorsey, *Courier-Journal* radio-TV columnist for nearly 20 years came over from WHAS-TV, where he had been news director. Channel 11's roving reporter Byron Crawford also jumped to the newspaper to do his traveling and feature writing for the print media. Crawford had also known the radio side, starting at Stanford's WRSL as a youngster and working several other stations before coming to WHAS.

Many other Louisville personalities have become familiar to the viewing public like sportscaster Bob Domine and meteorologist Tom Wills at WAVE, with Dave Nakdimon as political analyst. News anchor Gary Roedemeier at WHAS kept ratings strong beginning in the mid-1980s.

Channel 32 reached a helping hand across the ocean in one of its news personnel moves. In July 1975 following the fall of Saigon, WLKY hired Le Phuc Dinh, a Vietnamese refugee as a photographer. Dinh had worked for ABC as a cameraman. The station helped relocate him and his family in Louisville, and 20 years after that big move he was chief photographer for the station.

In February 1979, lightning struck the channel 32 transmitter building, knocking the station off the air for three days. The outage occurred right in the middle of the long-awaited TV miniseries, *Roots: The Next Generation*. When WLKY officials realized they would not be back on the air for awhile, they purchased time on WDRB-41 to broadcast the final two episodes of the

show as well as their local newscasts.

WHAS and WAVE continued to achieve many honors for productions including Louisville Advertising Club (Louie Awards) and CLIO citations for commercials and news awards from AP and Radio-TV News Directors Association, plus IRIS awards, Peabody awards for documentaries and several Emmys. In the late 1980s, WLKY, likewise, began picking up honors for news productions.

With investigative reporting in vogue, all three stations have helped bring about many public policy reforms and changes but also have been open targets for lawsuits and challenges.

In November 1985, WLKY was pinned with one of the largest libel verdicts ever returned against a news organization in the United States when a Jefferson Court jury awarded \$2.8 million to H.W. "Tommy" Thompson, saying he had been defamed by false stories about his attempts to store recycled sludge in Clark County, Indiana. The news reports had been aired in 1980 and 1981, and the suit had been filed against the previous station owners, Gannett Co. Judge Edwin Schoering reduced the judgment to only \$170,000 the following April, however.

In March 1990, WDRB began a regular local newscast of its own, and by 1994, the report had come close to being the top-rated 10 p.m. newscast in the country according to general manager John Dorkin. Dorkin had previously been in program management at Channel 32 and realized the opportunity and benefits in developing an early news show. He assembled a strong anchor team of Laretta Harris along with Jim Mitchell, Tammy Garrison on weather and David Sullivan, son of Kentucky broadcast legend Claude Sullivan, doing sports. Don Schroeder, who came over from Channel 3, later replaced Mitchell.

With full FOX affiliation and local news in 1994, WDRB was able to move much of the independent-type programming such as old movies, syndicated shows and sports to Channel 58.

Louisville television stations have taken their public service seriously as evidenced by the early commitment of the Norton and Bingham families. The *Crusade for Children* on WHAS has raised more than \$50 million for area youngsters and continues as the longest running locally-originated radio-TV fund raisers of its kind in the country. Many national telethons are also carried on the stations and community-service events and efforts became a major part of each station's promotional budget. In 1958, the Nortons began the WAVE Foundation to make contributions to a variety of local charities and cultural organizations.

Keeping the stations in business and enabling them to serve the community was the steady increase in advertising revenues. Revenues and profits



Reprinted with permission Courier-Journal

*WHAS Radio/TV Crusade for Children is the longest running local telethon in America. Shown here is the 1967 edition, the first to be broadcast in full color.*

for the Louisville market showed an upward trend, and by 1970, according to FCC records, revenue for all three stations was \$10 million with a before-taxes profit of \$1.5 million. Both revenue and profits had tripled by 1980 with four stations reporting. (Figures reported by the FCC do not show individual station numbers, but totals for market only) Louisville is the 49th ranked Designated TV Market Area (DMA) in the country, with cable penetration at 60 percent of homes.

Radio-TV critic Tom Dorsey of the *Courier-Journal* has commented that the large public appetite for news has caused the nature of the TV business to change through the years, with more money poured into local news and newscasts that give more and briefer stories than in earlier days. "Stations now," he said, "compete not so much with the newspapers as against each other." Dorsey believes the quality of Louisville TV has improved through the years, but the influence of the single, powerful anchor has waned, with more importance placed on the entire news staff.

WFPK, Louisville's UHF educational station, fought financial problems from its outset and in 1967 the license was officially changed from the Louisville library to the Jefferson County Board of Education, which had control over instructional programs since the station's inception. Channel 15

would become known as "Kentuckiana People's Choice," WKPC-TV.

The school board generally went along with the recommendations of powerful superintendent Richard VanHoose, who served as president of the television station. Vice-president and station manager was Jerry Weaver, and Kenneth Lam, vice-president and instructional director.

In 1964, the station developed additional nighttime entertainment and cultural programming and in 1969 finalized the PBS network affiliation and began its conversion to color, all adding to the expenses of the publicly supported station. Auctions, membership drives, underwriting of programs by businesses and on-the-air fund raisers were used in an effort to raise the necessary operating revenue. When KET began operating Channel 68 WKMJ in 1970 as part of the state-wide network, there were calls by many in the Louisville area to merge the two stations and save expenses.

In 1973, the school board finished construction of new studios on Bishops Lane, but two years later plans were being made to transfer the license to a non-profit community-based corporation. The board of education had installed an ITFS, an instructional television fixed service four-channel system in 1975 to deliver the instructional programming to its school system and wanted to relinquish control of the over-the-air broadcast services of Channel 15.

The station continued to suffer from financial woes, programming difficulties and community apathy. However, in 1981, the license was transferred to Fifteen Telecommunications, Inc., with a governing board of directors from the community. The following year, Barbara Hoffman was named as chairman of the board and immediately asked for a study of the television station by a PBS task force. The study pointed out the problems but recognized the potential and the corporation set out to revitalize the programming and subscriber membership base.

John-Robert Curtin was hired as general manager in 1983 to spearhead the effort and by the time the station celebrated its 30th birthday in 1988, Channel 15 was on sound financial footing with more than 46,000 members making contributions.

Memberships still make up one-half of the operating budget with other monies coming from auctions, special events, local corporate underwriting and 17 percent of the budget from federal funds.

The station continued to work with the schools, air PBS programs and produce local shows dealing with the arts, government and culture while becoming more involved in local community issues.

In 1982, the station had agreed to participate in an experiment to sell commercials on public TV in an effort to help offset cuts in federal funding



from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The board changed its mind, however, after consideration of the small amounts that might be raised and a loss of support from businesses and the commercial broadcasters who would object to the idea.

In 1985, WKPC and KET sought to arrive at some sort of agreement for working together in the Louisville market, ending 15 years of competition for public TV viewers. The negotiations broke down, however, with only an arrangement for channel 15 to air PBS shows at different times when possible.

### **Louisville Market**

WAVE-TV 3  
WHAS-TV 11  
WLKY-TV 32  
WDRB-TV 41  
WBNA-TV 21  
WKPC-TV 15  
WFTE-TV 58 (Salem, Indiana)

### **Lexington Market**

The small city in the heart of the Bluegrass region was beginning a pattern of growth in the 1960s when the two stations, WLEX and WKYT, would be joined by a third, completing the network trilogy. All are UHF channels, making Lexington one of the three largest markets in the country without a VHF-TV station.

The local founders of WLEX remained in control of the station with John Douglas Gay, Jr. and H. Guthrie Bell being the principal shareholders. They expanded their broadcast interests into the Gay-Bell group and were involved with the company until each died, when the ownership passed to their heirs. Bell died in 1969 and Gay passed away in 1988. Both men were active in community life and business interests. Bell was president of Grapette Bottling and Gay had manufacturing interests in many areas and held dozens of patents on farm equipment and was active in supporting local charities and Transylvania University, which received a bequest of \$2 million upon Mrs. Gay's death in 1995.

Dave Powell, in his notes on the station history, says Gay would often

come to the studio in his overalls straight from the farm to engage in small talk about cars and machinery and pass out garden vegetables. Through the years, several local individuals have held smaller amounts of WLEX, Inc., stock and in 1963 interest was expressed by Crosley Corporation, WLWT, Cincinnati, in purchasing Channel 18, but the deal was never consummated.

In 1965, Roy White, who had purchased Gay-Bell's WLEX radio on a seven-year agreement back 1958, was operating the station as WBLG and planned to expand into television once out of debt and convinced the market could sustain a third station. White knew he needed additional financial resources and thus forged an alliance with Reeves Broadcasting to apply for the channel 62 license that was available.

However, Garvice Kincaid, of WVLK radio, had filed for the construction permit. Kincaid had sought a television station in the past, originally applying for channel 18, then making overtures to buy WKXP, and finally filing applications for the third channel. The battle between White and Kincaid was on and Kevin Fitzmaurice in an article in *Bluegrass* magazine, wrote of Kincaid encountering White's wife at the airport one night to declare emphatically, "I'm going to get that station."

Reeves and White formed a local corporation, WBLG, Inc., and planned for the new station to operate in conjunction with the radio, with Reeves Telecom providing technical and legal assistance, and White giving the application the local character and image it needed.

The FCC began conferences on the two applications in the summer of 1966. Although some questions were raised about the financial qualifications of White, it appeared WBLG's prospects were excellent, given the fact White would actually manage the station and the track record of his radio station was good. WBLG submitted requests for information regarding Kincaid's media properties and questions were raised about his numerous business holdings and the operation of his radio stations.

In January of the next year, the strategy changed and Kincaid called on Taft Broadcasting of Cincinnati in an attempt to purchase WKYT-TV. A deal was completed with a price tag of almost ten times what he had reportedly offered to pay nine years earlier. Kincaid then petitioned the Commission for dismissal of his application for Channel 62 and instead applied for transfer of ownership of WKYT-27.

WBLG received a construction permit for TV 62 in September 1967, and the switch was thrown to begin transmissions May 28, 1968, from its studio and transmitting facilities on Bryant Road, on the eastern edge of the city, with a 998-foot tower, just below the FAA maximum allowed height. Barbara White, the owner's daughter, and Mayor Charles Wylie participated in

the ceremony. The station began regular programming on June 2.

Meanwhile, under Kincaid's guidance, WKYT improved its equipment, enlarged the staff, switched affiliation back to CBS and constructed a new \$5 million colonial-style building to house the station on Winchester Road, across from WBLG. The new structure and its state-of-the art studios were occupied in October 1969. The two competitors had considered erecting a common tower for their antennas and operate them from separate buildings on the property below, but WKYT decided it would hinder its individual identity and elected instead to settle nearby.

On November 15, 1962, the city's oldest station, WLEX, became the first station in the state and first UHF station in the nation to go full local color. They had broadcast network color beginning in 1955. The station has expanded its physical plant several times over the years and in 1968 increased power with a new RCA transmitter. WLEX talked of moving its transmitter and antenna to an area that would allow a much higher tower and better effective radiated power, but approval was never gained.

WLEX, while carrying programs from all the networks at one time or another, has remained an NBC affiliate since the beginning, while WKYT had changed to ABC in 1961 and the following year WLEX signed an additional agreement with CBS to carry its programs. When Channel 27 signed with CBS, the new WBLG was left with no choice but the terms of an ABC agreement that was written with a network commercial rate of \$250, meager compared to the contracts the other two stations owned, and much less than ABC had been paying Channel 27.

The lack of revenue, low power, antenna problems and high channel designation hindered the success of the new station. WBLG was sold for \$1.5 million in 1973 to Starr Broadcasting, whose chairman was William F. Buckley, Jr. The call letters were changed to WTVQ. The license has changed owners three more times, all to outside groups. Roy Disney, owner of Shamrock Broadcasting, purchased it in July 1979 and obtained a more favorable channel 36 assignment, installed a new antenna and upped the power to 2 million watts, making it the most powerful station in the market.

Shamrock sold the station to media giant Park Communications in 1991, and in 1994 the Park group was purchased by Lexington's Gary Knapp, a former college professor and securities broker along with a partner, South Carolina businessman Donald Tomlin. With the deal, Knapp became chairman of a company that owned eight other TV stations, as well as radio stations around the country and 106 newspapers, including 18 in Kentucky.

Harry Barfield continued to lead the fortunes of WLEX until his death in 1991, when he was succeeded by John Duvall as president and general man-



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*Ralph Gabbard, WKYT's veteran general manager, informs his top-rated news team in 1993 that the station has been sold. From left are Sam Dick, Barbara Bailey, Cindy Preszler and Gabbard.*

ager. In 1994, WLEX hired the first black station manager, when Marilyn Clark was named to replace Al Greenfield who moved to the Nashville Network. Clark joined a staff of female managers in news, marketing and sales.

The distinction of the first female general manager's position in Lexington had gone to Diane Sutter when she was chosen to head WTVQ-36 by Shamrock in February 1989 after Bill Service had resigned over "disagreements in management philosophies." When the station sold to Park Communications in 1991, the group brought in their own manager, Chris Aldridge, replacing Jerry Fox, who had held the position for only five months although he had been with the station for 18 years.

WKYT had several management changes during the Taft ownership years and struggled financially and in the ratings. In 1970, Ralph Gabbard moved from Richmond radio to become sales manager of WKYT-TV. Two years later he was promoted to general manager and continued to successfully lead the station for the next two decades, turning the station around in profits and audience.

Bluegrass Broadcasting, a division of Kentucky Central Insurance, the owner of WKYT-TV and WVLK radio in Lexington, expanded Kentucky TV holdings in 1985 when it purchased the license of WKYH Channel 57 in Hazard and built a new station, going on the air with WYMT (Your Mountain Television).

But trouble in the empire of the late Garvice Kincaid in 1993, mainly the insurance company, would startle the Lexington community and cause the break-up of the broadcast properties. The state insurance commission take-over of Kentucky Central eventually led to the sale of the assets of the Lexington insurer. The liquidation meant WKYT and WYMT would go to the highest bidder. A Georgia firm, Gray Communications, with president John T. Williams, outbid Ralph Gabbard for the television stations by a small margin. A request by Gabbard to the state that would allow him to increase his bid was rejected and the sale was declared completed. The \$38 million transaction was approved by the FCC and Gray took over operations in September 1994.

Gray, which owned stations in Georgia, Florida and Louisiana and two newspapers as well, made Gabbard the president of their television holdings. Wayne Martin became general manager of WKYT and the basic staff of both Lexington and Hazard remained intact. Gabbard said the new owner wanted the "best television possible" — the same philosophy he had followed in the past. Gray moved its headquarters to Lexington and Gabbard took on the task of building and expanding the company's television interests, a job he called "exciting."

The number of commercial stations in Lexington expanded in the mid-1980s to five with two independent stations signing-on, but only one surviving.

WDKY-TV 56, licensed to Danville, with the tower in Garrard County but studios located on Interstate Avenue in Lexington went on the air February 10, 1986, after several delays in announced opening. The independent station carried syndicated shows, movies, children's programming and FOX programs, eventually fully affiliating with the new network. Robert Bertram of Jamestown had received the construction permit for the station but sold it to Backe Communications, Inc., an outside group owner in 1985 and the station was put on the air.

When WTVQ gave up channel 62 to move to 36 in 1980, four groups expressed interest in starting a new independent station utilizing the old frequency. Two applicants eventually became embroiled in a controversial struggle for the license, Way of the Cross, Inc., a local non-profit religious group, and a for-profit corporation, Family Broadcasting Company with nine local stockholders. The application had been approved for Way of the Cross Outreach in 1983, but upon appeal a FCC review board awarded the construction permit to FBC, Inc., citing its plan for maximum signal coverage. More legal problems over tower location ensued, with FBC finally selling half interest in the station to a Florida consortium which put the station

on the air, October 15, 1988, as WLKT-TV 62 with studios at 124 New Circle Road NE, and the transmitter site and tower off Clintonville Road in Clark County.

The station went bankrupt and pulled the plug in July 1989 as creditors foreclosed on the equipment. Steve Kesten of Lexington, vice-president of the FBC group said the fact that WDKY was able to get on the air as an independent station before them helped to seal their fate and the long legal struggles left a "sour taste" for the stockholders. The station produced little local programming but relied on movies, some sports and syndicated shows.

WDKY has changed management and ownership several times, but succeeded as the fourth station in the market. MMC Television purchased the station from Backe for \$9.5 million in 1989. It was sold to Superior Communications in 1992 for \$10.3 million.



From the pioneer days of mostly reading wire copy for newscasts, the TV stations began to give local news a high priority to challenge newspapers and radio as a reliable source. Reporters were one-man bands, writing and announcing, using movie cameras and still photos to illustrate stories. Phone feeds were common for the out-of-town stories.

Georgetown native and newspaper reporter Billy Thompson took over Channel 18 news in 1966, and became a mainstay at the desk for the next decade. Thompson also replaced Wayne Bell as host of the *Adolph Rupp Show*. While not a polished reader with the "broadcast" voice, Thompson's nose for news and his local contacts kept WLEX on top of the ratings until the mid-1970s. He was joined by co-anchor and weatherman Jim Stephens, who was with the station until 1979.

Tom Hammond joined the sports team and headed up the department beginning in 1969, doing ballgames and reporting on the races and sales at Keeneland. That work prepared him for joining NBC in 1980 for network basketball broadcasts and thoroughbred racing.

The WLEX news team began doing remote broadcasts and the first "live truck" was a 1946 full-size bus that was acquired from Gay-Bell station WCOV. However, its mechanical operation was so unreliable chief engineer Dave Powell said the staff started reserving a big wrecker on remote days, just in case!

In 1968, Sue Wylie became the city's first female newscaster as she and Peter Stoner established the long-running *Noon Today* program on Channel 18 and later in 1974 she created *Your Government*, the station's popular public affairs program. Wylie has had opportunities over the past 20 years to interview the leading newsmakers and government figures on the show. Her



Courtesy WLEX-TV

*At WLEX, Lexington's first and longest-running female newscaster, Sue (Hackett) Wylie, consults with reporters Jim Stephens and Bob Hensley.*

candor and penetrating style of questioning have earned her respect and popularity statewide. In a *Herald-Leader* interview in 1993, Wylie recalled the tremendous effort involved over the years, "arriving early to edit and write the noon program and do story packages, and *Your Government* and work, work, work!"

At Channel 27, another female interviewer, June Rollings, started a program, *Town Talk*, later renamed the *June Rollings Show*. The program featured Dave Parry on the piano and organ, with a wide range of guests. Rollings had no previous broadcast experience except for an appearance on a nationally-televised cigarette commercial. She took quickly to the format though, and maintained the show for more than a decade.

WBLG offered its first newscasts in 1968 with Clark Davis as anchor, Carol "Hoot" Combs doing sports and Marie Kittrell with women's news. Assistance was gathered from the sister radio station, with Ed Van Hook, news director, eventually taking over the anchor desk. Early WKXP announcer Frank Faulconer began a 16-year run with weather on WBLG/WTVQ before retiring and winding up back on radio.

The early Newsroom-62 newscasts were low-budget and described by



Courtesy WTVQ-TV

*The Channel 36 WTVQ news team that in the early 1990s brought the station its first substantial ratings gain. From left to right are Brad James, John Lindgren, Sky Yancey and Kenny Rice.*

many as quite folksy and informal. Davis had started the practice of walking onto the set through a door as the news opening montage played. He would hang up his hat, sit down and begin. Van Hook has said he just continued the practice and stationed the radio people at desks to report on their aspect of the news. At Roy White's request, the station was one of the first to give a business news segment each evening.

WLEX had the strong advantage in news ratings since the beginning until overtaken by WKYT in the survey of November 1975. That number one position has been held by Channel 27 news since then, with the exception of one brief period in 1983. Ken Kurtz had joined the station in April 1975 as news director and began to make changes. Kurtz said, "We began to stress packages, editing and news content, and make more professional news decisions." Both 18 and 27 had been doing half-hour local evening news since the late 1960s, as well as late night and noon reports. Kurtz cancelled the noon, to concentrate on the evening and brought in new people. WKYT hired



the city's first black female reporter, Laretta Harris, who became weekend anchor then moved on to Louisville.

By 1995, according to published reports, there were three men and seven minority women on Lexington TV news staffs, with Valeria Cummings of Channel 27 having the most seniority with eleven years.

Stations began converting their news departments from film to videotape in the mid-1970s and WTVQ first went with the new 1/2 inch tape Akai format, while WLEX and WKYT opted to wait and invest in the better quality 3/4 inch equipment.

WKYT's race to the top was also fueled by money poured into equipment, innovations and larger staff, from nine people to handle all news in 1975 to more than 40 by the early 1990s. Kentucky Central TV's Garvice Kincaid, who had long dreamed of having the best, died, however before seeing his station make it to number one.

A trio anchored by John Lindgren with Denny Trease on sports, then later Rob Bromley, and Brad James doing weather kept Channel 27 first in the news ratings for years, often with double the audience of the other two. Lindgren had come to Lexington from Louisville TV, a reversal of the usual trend. When Lindgren departed to Nashville, Sam Dick took over in 1987 and joined Barbara Bailey as main anchors.

Susan White, for 14 years the *Herald-Leader* TV critic, in an article in 1993, cited more local news, strong reporting, large staff including veteran reporters like Jerry Sander and Barry Peel and good anchor teams as part of the reason WKYT kept the stranglehold on first place.

Competition among the three stations has been keen, with staffs creating expensive promotion campaigns, buying new equipment, polling viewers, modernizing and changing set designs, all in an effort to win over the audience. And there was the usual shifting of reporters and anchors between stations, a practice that seemed common through the years.

One of those shifts helped create the first significant movement in the ratings in a decade when Channel 36 tied WLEX for second place in a 1989 survey and took over the runner-up spot in an Arbitron ranking in 1992, making the struggle for number two a real horse race in thoroughbred country.

John Lindgren had returned to Lexington to join Sky Yancey and Kenny Rice as part of the WTVQ news team in 1989. Brad James jumped to 36, to do the weather and the station purchased the city's first Doppler weather radar system. General manager Chris Aldridge and news director Michael Castengera expressed excitement and optimism in newspaper stories that detailed the rise of the station. The newsroom had been nearly empty in 1980 when Channel 18 news director Bob Hensley changed mantles and

became the TV-36 anchor. After years of struggles, announcer and ownership changes, the new kid in town had apparently finally grown into a bonafide competitor.

Another popular figure, WLEX's colorful sportscaster, Alan Cutler left town only to return to the same station when he resumed work in 1987 with his usual flair. One of 18's former anchors in the 1980s, Bob Hale, has a place in radio trivia. As a radio deejay in Iowa in 1959, he had emceed the Clear Lake concert of February 1959 and later at his home recommended a charter plane company for Buddy Holly, Richie Valens and the Big Bopper to take to their next tour destination. The plane crashed that night, of course, and the event is chronicled in song as "the day the music died."

In May 1993, Lexington's senior anchorwoman, Mindy Shannon of WLEX, announced she was leaving the station after twelve years and would later take a job on the other side of the camera, as Governor Brereton Jones' press secretary.

WLEX continued to have the popular morning show, *Kentucky Sunrise*, while WKYT gained acclaim with Ralph Gabbard's concise and conservative editorials, the only TV in the city to offer regular station opinion.

In 1994, WKYT took an unusual step by joining forces with WDKY-TV to produce a 10 p.m. newscast for Channel 56 utilizing Channel 27 newspeople. WKYT officials called it a good business decision, while it gave WDKY its first newscasts since going on the air.

Coverage of University of Kentucky basketball had been the domain of WLEX, but that 25-year partnership ended in 1970 when WKYT's bid won the broadcast rights to the UK package of live and taped-delay games, rights WKYT has continued to hold, linking up later with Host Communications of Lexington to produce the Wildcat network games.

After a 29-year relationship, WLEX divorced itself from baseball in 1985, when it dropped the Cincinnati Reds broadcast and the games were later picked up by WDKY.

Each station in the market endured some lean times at start-up but posted steady gains in revenue spurred by market, audience and rate increases. Rates for commercials in the late 1960s of \$50-\$100 for prime positions would be approximately 20 times or more higher by the early 1990s.

WDKY seemed to enjoy quick success with national advertisers and became a good biller buoyed by companies looking for outlets for youth-oriented advertising. Figures supplied by the FCC showed that in 1970, the three Lexington stations that year, lost more than \$667,000 on advertising revenue of \$2.8 million. Revenue increased to \$12.3 million by 1980 and the net loss was cut in half. (FCC does not release figures for

individual stations, but for markets only) In 1990, the figures supplied by the National Association of Broadcasters showed that revenue from the four stations was \$30.4 million (no figures released on profits because the FCC no longer requires financial reporting).

All four stations cooperate in dealing with matters of common concern, promoting local television and other public service campaigns through the Television Association of the Bluegrass (TAB) which was formed in June 1989 with Harry Barfield as the first president.

Lexington is the number 69 ranked television market in the nation as rated by Nielsen, based on total households, and has 65 percent of homes with cable, about the national average.

### Lexington Market

WLEX-TV 18

WKYT-TV 27

WTVQ-TV 36

WDKY-TV 56 (Danville)

KET Headquarters

## Central and Eastern Kentucky

Also included in the Nielsen DMA Lexington market are the stations at Hazard and Beattyville. The fact that the two cities even have television stations rates as historically significant, as WKYH in Hazard became the smallest town in the state and one of the smallest in the nation (pop. 5,000) to have its own commercial television when it went on the air in 1969. WLJC in Beattyville in Lee County went on the air in October 1982 in a town of only 1,000 population as the first Christian station in the state and the state's first new TV license since 1971.

The Hazard station today, WYMT is a CBS affiliate, but it was a one-sided CBS network story on Appalachia that sparked the beginning of the station in the rural mountain community. Bill Gorman built the cable system for Hazard to bring TV signals to the area and had developed a closed-circuit station for cable subscribers in 1965 to establish some local, positive programming for the town. Gorman had been upset for years after a CBS documentary *The Hungry American* had painted what he considered a negative picture of the mountains. Finding no recourse to answer, he decided the best way was to start a TV station and tell both sides. Signals were com-

ing in from Lexington, Huntington and Bristol, but the local programming only reflected their area and not the mountains.

While operating his local access station, Gorman applied for a commercial license and on October 20, 1969, WKYH-Channel 57 Hazard went on the air with the transmitter and 442-foot tower located on a ridge above the city at the same location as the cable system head-in. The production studio downtown was spartan but practical as the station began a flexible schedule of local programs.

Some of the first staff members were Bill Helton, Gorman's son, Bill, Jr., and Bob Wood, a local minister. But most of the staff was made up of young people from the local vocational school interested in learning and gaining experience in television. The chief engineer, Lamar Ritchie, was 20 and photographer Jimmy Combs was just 16, but all were dedicated to making the station work and grow. Ritchie's son, Jody Paul, later succeeded his dad as engineer when the station became WYMT.

Gorman's vision was to "speak for the region" and local issues were tackled on panel and call-in shows. The station took on the flavor of television from two decades earlier with music bands and performers waiting to get on the air live and take a step toward stardom. The station was committed to local service and held many telethons through the years to raise money for a variety of charities including one that collected enough to buy new band uniforms for every high school in Perry County.

WKYH secured an affiliation with NBC in 1970 and five years after going on the air, was not only surviving, something many folks had doubted, but was able to buy some new equipment, improve its weak signal, get on cable systems and win respect from the mountain communities it served.

Still, the station remained a second-class citizen and was even considered too small to be listed in *TV Guide*. In the all-important game of national advertising, WKYH was always a loser because the survey people at Arbitron and Nielsen would not consider it a market for ratings purposes.

The station learned just how many viewers depended upon them, though, when it went dark for more than two weeks in June 1980, and reportedly received thousands of phone calls inquiring of the trouble. The transmitter lost its klystron tubes and the staff and public had to wait while GE labored to produce a functioning tube and the engineers drove to Schenectady, New York, to haul back the precious cargo.

Gorman sold his license to Lexington's WKYT-TV in May 1985 for \$1 million, when the FCC came out with restrictions on stations also owning cable systems. He decided to keep the cable and sell the TV station, even though NBC had urged him to do the opposite.

WKYT poured millions of dollars into building a new facility on the Kentucky 15 Bypass in Jacklot Hollow with a 1,029-foot tower on Buffalo Mountain to extend the coverage over a 70-mile radius, and approximately 26 counties. WYMT signed on the air in October 1985 with heavy emphasis on local news including a new computerized news room and a staff equipped with four-wheel drive vehicles to get around the rugged terrain.

Local and Kentucky sports received strong emphasis and Channel 57 began expanding its scope with links to bureaus in Middlesboro, Pikeville, Frankfort and WKYT studios in Lexington. Advertising sales and viewers showed marked increases after the first few months.

Yet, two years later, the town would be in turmoil over cut-backs and firings at their TV station.

The home-grown talent WYMT selected for its news had achieved celebrity status, particularly Steve Crabtree and Janice Sword. But the station announced it needed money-saving measures, as jobs and some newscasts were to be eliminated. Crabtree, who objected too strenuously to the layoffs, was dismissed and others resigned in protest. There were negative newspaper editorials, petitions and viewer complaints as locals felt their mountain people had been mistreated by the city folk. Crabtree took the job as news director for WBKO, Bowling Green.

WKYT provided substitute anchors until the station hired Tim Sharp from Huntington and his wife Kimberlee Thorne, but their stay was short-lived and radio newsman Tony Turner eventually brought stability to the news desk.

Ernestine Cornett took over as station manager in 1990 when Wayne Martin was moved by the parent company to Lexington. The station simul-



Courtesy WYMT-TV

*A new tower was erected for WYMT-TV 57 (formerly WKYH) after the station was purchased by Bluegrass Broadcasting (WKYT) in 1985. The tower and new transmitter were built high on Buffalo Mountain, no small task.*

casts three charity telethons with WKYT each year as well as the daily Channel 27 noon and 5 p.m. news with local inserts. WYMT produces its own newscasts 6:30 a.m., as well as 6 and 11 in the evenings. Cornett says the station continues to grow in every way and has a staff of 53 employees. Bill Gorman, who is also mayor of Hazard, now looks from a different angle at his idea of small-town television and declares WYMT "first class ... they do an excellent job."

The old building that housed WKYH burned in a suspicious fire December 1, 1994, destroying the town's cable equipment and some of the old original TV electronic gear.

From 1971 to 1982, no new TV stations had gone on the air in Kentucky, when the early 1980s would bring a flurry of activity for not only the high powered UHF but also the newly authorized LPTV, low power stations.

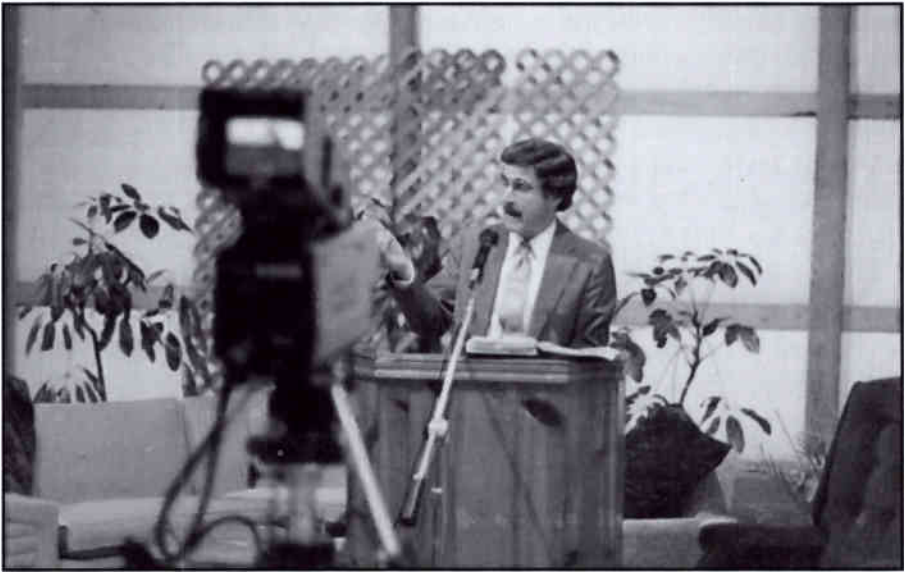
With call letters proclaiming "Wondrous Lord Jesus Christ," Forest Drake and the Hour of Harvest Ministries, a non-profit interdenominational group, debuted WLJC-TV 65, October 19, 1982, from Beattyville. The small town, which had been the site of the state's first educational radio experiment, was now home to its first religious TV station. The station was powered by 92.75 kilowatts, covering parts of 15 counties.

Drake, a native of Lee County and minister since 1951, had built the town's FM radio station in 1965 with the same call letters. On the fourth anniversary of the TV, a chapel and office complex were dedicated on what the staff called "Holy Hill."

The station operated 6:00 a.m. to midnight in the beginning before going to round the clock broadcasts with the help of several satellite religious networks. A nightly live old-fashioned church service at 7 p.m. simulcast on the radio and TV became the cornerstone of the local programming that also included public service campaigns and newscasts.

The effort has truly been one of faith, as Drake concedes many did not see the television as being economically feasible. He believed it would succeed, however, just as the radio station had, on the strength of prayer and support of Christian people. Drake's family has pitched in to help in the broadcast and ministry efforts over the years and in 1995 his son, Jonathan Drake, serves as station manager.

Drake considered the programming of WLJC as a needed change from the usual TV fare. "It's wholesome television and we felt this is what the Lord would want us to do," he declared as the station launched its Christian programming schedule.



Courtesy WLJC-TV

***Forest Drake delivers a sermon on the state's first all-religious TV station, WLJC in Beattyville. Drake also started the first FM religious radio station.***

The station has remained true to its original mission and now uses programming from the Trinity Broadcasting Network in addition to its local religious shows and a weekly interview community-affairs program hosted by Jonathan Drake. The younger Drake says the station suffered real financial setbacks from donors during the national televangelist scandals, but has recovered somewhat from that negative publicity.

Just six months after WLJC went on the air, a religion-oriented station signed on in Ashland, April 30, 1983, giving the largest city in eastern Kentucky its first television after years of discussions and plans by different groups.

The Tri-State Family Broadcasting Company, a for-profit corporation, brought WTSF-61 into existence as about 70 percent commercial with family programming, syndicated shows and reruns, and 30 percent Christian broadcasts. The station struggled financially in the Huntington, West Virginia, market that had four stations and decided to go all Christian programming in January 1985.

Claude Messinger has served as general manager since the outset and joins his wife Maybelle to host a one-hour information and interview program called *Celebration*, broadcast live each weekday at 10 a.m. and repeated four times through the day via tape. The studios on Bath Avenue are in a renovated former school building. Channel 61 has used a variety of fund-raising methods to stay on the air, including selling donated mer-

chandise out of their WTSP storehouse, soliciting partners in their "6100 Club" and two telethons each year. The station runs virtually no commercials, relying instead on the purchase of local religious programs by a variety of denominational groups.

WTSP carries some feeds from religious networks, but Messinger said it was the network TV evangelist scandals that just about dealt a knock-out blow to the station financially when support dried up. The station has recovered, however, and has been able to upgrade its equipment and is well-accepted in the community, according to Messinger.

At least two other TV stations have been planned for Eastern Kentucky, but never got off the ground. In the late 1960s, Walter May received a construction permit for channel 22 in Pikeville, but did not build the station, the frequency later going to KET. May was involved with Hobart Clay Johnson some 15 years later in obtaining a permit for channel 51. Hopes were high when they believed their presentation to ABC in New York was well-received and acquisition of equipment began. However, threats of legal action on the network from other ABC stations whose signals reached that area caused the executives to deny the affiliation. May and Johnson chose not to get involved with TV when the only option left was independent programming.

A station for Paintsville, WFKT with James C. Blevins as president, was also licensed in the early 1980s, but did not go on the air.

In southeastern Kentucky, another Christian TV signal arrived in 1991 from WPMC-TV 54, located across the mountain in Jellico, Tennessee.

### Central and Eastern Kentucky Markets

WYMT-TV 57 — Hazard  
WLJC-TV 65 — Beattyville  
WTSP-TV 61 — Ashland

### Western Kentucky

The Paxton family of Paducah remains in control of the city's newspaper and television station, the only cross-ownership print/TV arrangement remaining in the state. The management history of the newspaper, radio and TV spans four generations dating back to 1896, and while the



broadcast interests are now limited to the local television, the Paxton Media Group operates newspapers in Arkansas and North Carolina in addition to the *Paducah Sun*.

Edwin J. Paxton, Jr. returned to the newspaper full-time in 1961 and his brother Fred took over WPSD-TV 6. Fred assumed dual roles in 1972 as president of the television and publisher of the newspaper and later corporate head. He relinquished his position as TV president to his son Richard in 1994.

The operation of the television station has remained in steady and loyal hands since its founding, as most of the original staff stayed with the station until retirement and even today an incredible number — 22 — of the employees have an average tenure of 30 years with the company, including John Williams, now general manager, more than 30 years, and Dan Steele, operations manager, 28 years.

While many reporters have gotten their start in Paducah and moved on to Louisville and other major markets, one factor has remained constant — Tom Butler has been the name synonymous with local news. Butler started on the air in 1962 with a morning newsminute after news director Gene Compton told him, unexpectedly, to get ready to face the camera, something he had never done. He continues to do it, though, and says each day in TV news is “a challenge, a learning experience.” Butler believes the big change is in technology for news is “much different today with satellites, computers and improved video electronics.”

There have been funny moments during those three decades, but the one people remind him about most is the day his co-anchor was on vacation and attempting to introduce the show by informing the audience of such, came out with, “Hello, I’m Vickie Dortch.” He broke up as did others looking on. Dortch later moved on to Louisville metro news.

Many WPSD newspeople have put in a good deal of TV mileage with Butler, including reporters Sam Burrage and Ernie Mitchell. Larry McIntosh was sportscaster for many years.

Paducah native Gene Pell worked in radio and TV, and later joined the NBC network in 1978. He became director of the Voice of America and in 1985, president of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

The station produces more than three hours of local news weekdays and



Courtesy WPSD-TV

*Tom Butler, Kentucky's elder statesman of TV news anchors. He began work at WPSD TV-6 in Paducah in 1962.*

three hours each weekend, including several national award-winning series. Butler's *Accent* public affairs show has welcomed many famous guests since the 1960s. The most memorable interview, he says, was with poet laureate Jesse Stuart, because he felt he had done a good job, after staying up for days reading the famous author's material.

The facilities and equipment have expanded steadily through the years, going all color in 1968 and claiming firsts in the market in live truck remotes, videotape news and radar weather, according to Dan Steele.

WPSD continues to produce one of the longest-running local TV telethons in the nation as the Lions Club production has continued uninterrupted since 1957. The 15-hour yearly program has featured an array of national network stars, musicians and local celebrities in raising more than \$12 million through the years for disabled children and adults in the four-state area served by the station.

Corporate president Fred Paxton expresses pride in his family's steady operation of the station and civic involvement. He admits there has been some resentment by many in the industry at the company controlling the daily newspaper and the lone television station in the same city. He has said, however, that the two entities are very much in competition with one another for advertising dollars, and actually do not cooperate with one another or have overlapping staffs. Paxton says the two have even done opposing editorials without the other's knowledge.

WPSD has remained an NBC affiliate and gained national respect as one of its top stations. Despite the small size of the city itself, the Nielsen DMA viewing market is unusual in that it covers three states — including Cape Girardeau, Missouri, and the Illinois cities of Harrisburg and Mt. Vernon. It is ranked 76th in the nation by population standards.

Three network stations on the air in 1970 reported revenues of \$3.35 million according to the FCC figures, with profits of \$783,000. Twenty years later, the overall market had grown to seven stations with revenues more than \$23 million according to the reports supplied by the NAB.

An independent station, KPOB went on the air in Poplar Bluff, Missouri, in 1977, and in 1981, religious station WTCT started up in Marion, Illinois. The year 1983 brought two additional signals with WCEE in Mt. Vernon, and Engles Communications' Channel 23-KBSI in Cape Girardeau, which became a FOX affiliate.

In the news and local ratings WPSD is tops in the Kentucky counties. The cable penetration of the Paducah area, at 54 percent, is below national average.

**In the decade of the seventies, WPSD received some in-city competition**

when radio station WDXR, owner E. Weaks McKinney Smith, and George Bailey received a permit to begin WDXR-TV 29. Certainly, owning a UHF independent station in what was a VHF market was, at that time, a risky venture, but McKinney-Smith wanted to emphasize local programming.

The station was located at the radio studios in downtown Paducah right next door to the *Paducah Sun*, parent company of the TV competitor. WDXR-TV signed on May 31, 1971, but struggled technically and financially. Lady Sarah McKinney-Smith joined her husband in operating the station and recalls the difficulty in keeping the transmitters humming, with \$10,000 klystron tubes failing regularly, sometimes before the repairmen would get back to the airport on their way home.

In addition to carrying syndicated movies and shows, WDXR featured a children's show and coverage of any local event it could get involved with. But with few UHF viewers, advertising was slim and the station lost more than \$1 million before calling it quits.

McKinney-Smith, believing the salvation of the station would be network affiliation, was in New York trying to obtain an agreement with ABC when he died suddenly in his hotel in February 1974. The station soon went bankrupt, left the airwaves and the license was given to KET, becoming a part of the educational network in 1978.

WLTV-13, Bowling Green, remained under the ownership of Argus Broadcasting, with vice-president George Brown, Jr. and general manager Joe Walters, until sold in 1970 to Professional Telecasting Systems and



Courtesy WBKO

*Early in its history, Bowling Green's WLTV-13 (now WBKO), which did not have network broadcasts, filled each evening with local live programs, such as the one shown here.*



***For more than 25 years, Clyde Payne has directed the affairs of one of Kentucky's four VHF-TV stations, WBKO-TV 13 in Bowling Green.***

Clyde Payne began his work as general manager. The call letters were changed to WBKO in 1971 and the station made modernization changes, converted to all color and relocated the transmitter site from Hadley to north of the city for improved reception.

The station had moved the studios to the Old Armory Building in downtown Bowling Green in 1968, and after obtaining ABC affiliation March 6, 1967, was beginning to shed its "countrified" image and take on the look of a "city" station. Payne and a group of local investors formed Bluegrass Media, Inc., and purchased WBKO in 1976 for \$1.75 million, and continued to develop the assets of the station until selling it to Benedek Broadcasting in April 1983, with Payne remaining as vice-president and general manager. Two years later the station relocated to new facilities, custom built on

a tract of land purchased on Russellville Road, southwest of the downtown area, and began receiving its network programming by satellite.

On September 26, 1969, tragedy struck the young station, when threats were made for reporting stories regarding a local car-theft ring. The threats were carried out when station personnel arrived that morning to find the tower leaning, held up by only one guywire after having been dynamited during the night. As a tower crew worked to topple the tower, it buckled and fell to the ground away from the building. Total damage was estimated at around \$200,000 and the station returned to the air with a temporary 150-foot tower. The perpetrators were never caught despite rewards being offered for information.

The station continued to rely heavily on its local live programming philosophy until obtaining the network affiliation. The evening hours often meant back-to-back live local shows from 7:30 a.m. until midnight. Gene Prather, who held just about every job at the station in the past 30 years, recalls those days as "challenging and fun," as the staff tried to find a way to do it all.

The old western-style children's program *Sundown and Friends* had live burros that were actually raised and kept on the station grounds at Hadley.

There was *Uncle Albert's General Store*, *Romper Room*, *Charlie Fleenor's Dance Party*, *Odis Blanton and the Blue Star Rangers Show*, and the *Happy Goodman's Gospel Hour*. Country and gospel music were popular and auditions were being held almost constantly to fill the live show slots. For a time, Clem Cockrell was a one-man show for the local news segments. Many southern Kentucky radio people came on staff to get a taste of television.

Channel 13 would later concentrate more on community events, public affairs, and delivering Bowling Green a professional newscast, including electronic news gathering beginning in 1982 and opening a bureau in Glasgow. The station continued to be involved in many fund-raising telethons for such groups as the March of Dimes, Capitol Arts Center and Cerebral Palsy. As the only station in town, the local news personalities became prominent figures and received plenty of fan mail. Larry Bailey and later Roy Brasfield served stints as news director before Steve Crabtree took the spotlight.

WBKO experienced a labor problem when production employees threatened a walk-out in November 1980 and voted to strike after negotiations with the company broke down. The owners said they would continue operations with or without the union members. Employees had voted to join the National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians in March, but the union was eventually de-certified as a bargaining agent in July 1981, having never reached any contract agreements.

The station received some heated reaction in the local editorial pages when it decided not to carry the network shows *NYPD Blue* and *She TV*. Clyde Payne made the decision, believing the shows violated community standards and *NYPD* was picked up by local FOX affiliate WKNT-40. Payne was the subject of letters accusing him of "censorship," but he said the overall response was more positive than negative, and WBKO remains as one ABC station that did not return the controversial drama to the air.

Since its beginning, Bowling Green had been too small to be considered a measured market by the ratings services, so its viewers were counted in with the Nashville survey until Arbitron made the city a separate market in 1977, allowing WBKO to get more attention from national and regional advertisers. The Nielsen ratings service joined in calling Bowling Green a separate DMA in 1985, and with its VHF signal dominating that region, the station since that time has had one of the highest shares of viewers for a single market in the country with ratings of 40 percent or better.

Since Kentucky's other VHF stations are located in border cities, WBKO, which now operates at the maximum 316,000 watts, often boasted of covering more square miles of the Commonwealth than any other TV station in the state.

Included now in the market with WBKO, are UHF stations in Bowling Green, Campbellsville and the public broadcast facility at Western Kentucky University.

A town with a population of 9,000 is not the usual place to find a TV station, but industrialist William Speer, known by most simply as "Billy," felt that was exactly what Campbellsville needed when he formed Green River Broadcasting and applied for a license in 1980. WGRB-TV Channel 34 went on the air in April 1983. It was the second station to debut in the state since 1971, going on six months after Beattyville and the same month as Ashland.

Speer wanted his TV to be a community station with local programming and news. His stated intention was to give people a "voice" in the media in that part of the state not served by local television. Speer has said he believed the station, now broadcasting with 1 million watts, has been an asset to the community and south central Kentucky. Myra Alvey, the station's first news director, announced plans for local newscasts and farm shows with four mini-cam reporters ready to cover a 22-county area.

With no network affiliation, syndicated programming would also play a heavy role in filling the hours. The opening day was set back several times while workmen finished up the television complex seven miles south of Campbellsville on the Adair-Taylor county line. Since the station was not associated with a radio station, many on the first staff were learning on the job. Marty Bagby has been in charge of programming since the outset, but the station has seen a lot of people come and go, as it became an entrance position for those looking for opportunities to get started and advance to larger markets. Speer says the employees learned to do a little bit of everything, and several have gone on to jobs in Louisville and other cities.

In 1994, WGRB linked up with WKNT in Bowling Green to form a local cooperative network of sorts, when the two stations announced plans for a joint local newscast. The newscasts allow for flexibility by the journalists including longer segments on stories as needed. The station is able to utilize local Western Kentucky University students in various aspects of the operation.

Southeastern Communications, Jeff Bland, president, had purchased the Bowling Green station WQQB in 1991 from Word Broadcasting of Louisville and changed the call letters to WKNT (Kentucky News Television), increased the power and got the station back in operation. The WKNT-40 transmitter is located in Smiths Grove, north of Bowling Green. WKNT and WGRB cooperate in other areas and both carry FOX network shows.

**The state's only full-power television station operated by a university is**



Courtesy Western Kentucky University

*Kentucky's only TV station owned by a university is WKYU TV-24 in Bowling Green. Above is one of the first programs broadcast from the Western Kentucky University studios in 1989.*

located at Western Kentucky in Bowling Green. WKYU-TV is an outgrowth of the extensive broadcast program at the school that also includes a network of four public radio stations.

The television station went on the air January 17, 1989, under the direction of Dr. Chuck Anderson, after about ten years in planning. Anderson has said the radio and TV operations have had the support of the WKU administrators who saw the need and importance. Although a KET station was already located in Bowling Green carrying the PBS network shows, Western felt the desire for a vehicle for higher education telecourses, which it now broadcasts in prime-time. The educational community also strongly sensed an obligation to give the viewers more locally-oriented, non-commercial programming.

While KET had reservations about the construction of the new station at first, Anderson says the relationship has remained friendly, feeling that the university station complements KET. WKYU is also affiliated with PBS and receives Corporation for Public Broadcasting federal funding, and while about a third of the programming is duplication of the state network, it is usually aired at different times. WKYU broadcasts on channel 24 with its antenna located on the tower of Channel 13-WBKO, whom Anderson lauds as an example of a commercial station working with the public station to better serve the area.

Bowling Green is Nielsen's 190th ranked DMA and has total cable penetration at 51 percent of households, which is below the national average.

With religious stations on the air in Beattyville and Ashland, the Life Anew Ministries, a non-profit group, opened WLCN-TV 19 in Madisonville, in Hopkins County in September 1983. The ministry had started in TV with a regular program on the local cable system, eventually leasing a channel from the company to program completely while applying for a regular television station.

The new station operated with 120,000 watts with the tower site in Hanson, Kentucky. The studios were at the the ministries' headquarters which also included the church, founded in 1973, and a Christian academy.

Financial success for religious TV stations has been rare and WLCN relied heavily on the resources of the church and its supporters to stay on the air. In 1986, the station sought to expand its reach with a new tower, which collapsed during construction for reasons never completely determined.

The associate minister, Rev. John R. Price, says the financial troubles began when insurance did not cover the entire loss. The tower finally went up in 1992 expanding the station's power to 1.3 million watts. Price also blamed the national TV evangelists scandals on the deteriorating support of the church's TV ministry. Price said people began to paint every religious broadcast with the same brush, even though his station had discontinued the Swaggert ministry and PTL before those well-known scandals hit the media.

WLCN struggled to pay off its more than \$1 million in debts and in 1992 held night after night of telethons to raise the money to keep the station operating. The amount raised was not enough to prevent the First Federal Bank from foreclosing on the building that housed the school, church and TV station, which was sold at auction in May, with the bank the only bidder at \$315,000. The bank had begun the foreclosure proceedings after the ministry defaulted on mortgage payments in 1991. Life Anew had sought bankruptcy protection to gain some time to get in better financial shape, but the petition was rejected by the court.

After operating from rented facilities, Life Anew received what Price called a "miracle from God" when an out-of-town businessman, who had heard of the station's fate, agreed to buy back the church building for them and offer very reasonable terms. That "Good Samaritan" act put the station and the 250-member congregation back on solid ground again.

WLCN broadcasts a live local church service nightly, Monday through



Friday, with some programming from the Inspirational Network, shopping networks and family movies. The remainder of the schedule is paid religious programming from a wide spectrum of denominations.

### Western Kentucky Markets

WPSD-TV 6 — Paducah  
WBKO-TV 13 — Bowling Green  
WKNT-TV 40 — Bowling Green  
WKYU-TV 24 — Bowling Green (n/c)  
WGRB-TV 34 — Campbellsville  
WLCN-TV 19 — Madisonville

\*n/c - non-commercial station.



The Madisonville station frequency, channel 19, had originally been held by Owensboro on the Air, the parent company of WVJS radio, which planned to build WVJS-TV in the early 1970s. Those plans were scrapped, however, when the Steele family, also owners of the cable franchised to the city, opted instead to utilize the local access channel on their wired system to serve the city. The cable channel-2 thus became local television serving the community for 20 years with the radio station personnel doing newscasts, simulcast radio programs, ballgames and public affairs presentations, along with billboard messages.

WVJS and WOMI radio both had applications for television channels at various times since the early 1950s, first for channel 14, then for VHF-9 which was eventually set aside for public broadcasting in Evansville. Owensboro, Kentucky's third largest city, is covered by the Indiana stations, but remains without a local commercial TV station to call its own, although construction permits have been issued and at least three UHF frequencies are available.

Henderson, Kentucky, classified in the Evansville market, is still the physical home of WEHT and WFIE's tower is also located in Henderson County. The market gained its fourth station when independent WEVV Channel 44 went on the air in 1983 and then later affiliated with the FOX network.

In northern Kentucky, the cities of Covington and Newport have no local broadcast TV facilities, being covered by the Cincinnati stations across the river, although another TV-19, WXIX, in Cincinnati is actually licensed to the city of Newport, even though the station is in Ohio.

James G. Lang, owner of WNOP radio had owned the construction permit for channel 74 and licensed it to Newport in 1955 where the radio station was located. Later, the construction permit was altered to give WNOP channel 19, but Lang never put the station on the air, selling the permit in 1965 to Cincinnati businessman D.H. Overmeyer, who changed the call letters to WSCO, which stood for his daughter's initials.

Overmeyer sold the station to U.S. Communications, the company that would complete construction of the station going on the air, August 1, 1968, from facilities on Eighth Street in Cincinnati.

James D. Parker, who came from Pennsylvania to install the station, returned a year later to become the chief engineer. He saw the facility sold to group owners, Metromedia in 1972 and to the Malrite Communications group in 1983.

The station signed-on with call letters WXIX (roman numerals for 19) and became somewhat of a superstation before the days of satellite delivery. It was often selected to be carried by many cable systems as an independent known for old movies, and lots of "kiddies shows." Parker remembers they were often referred to as the "baby-sitter" station, able to keep kids occupied for hours at a time. The station joined the FOX network in the late 1980s. Cincinnati-Northern Kentucky got an additional station in 1980 with independent WSTR, Channel 64, going on the air.

Eastern Kentuckians gained exposure to independent TV programming in 1982 when the Huntington, West Virginia, market added the fourth commercial station in WVAH-23. The call letters were making reference to the John Denver song lyrics "West Virginia, almost heaven." It built that state's tallest tower at 1,722 feet on top of Coal Mountain, near Hurricane. WVAH became a part of the FOX network five years later and in 1988 became one of four new VHF stations in the nation allowed by the FCC, moving to channel 11, marking the first time that any station in the country had signed off as a UHF-TV and signed back on as a "V."

Thus, counting Henderson (which is in Kentucky but identifies as Indiana) and Newport (which is in Ohio but is licensed to Kentucky), the state had 19 commercial stations operating in 1995, four of which were Christian stations. In addition, Kentucky has two independent non-commercial public stations, and the 15 stations on the Kentucky Educational Television Network.

Records indicate construction permits have been issued for UHF stations in Murray, Somerset, Hopkinsville, Paducah, Morehead, Harlan and Owensboro with plans in varying stages of development. Allocations remain available, according to FCC documents, for Ashland, Paintsville, Pikeville and Lexington (channel 62).

Nationwide, at the beginning of 1995, there were more than 1,500 TV stations in the United States.

### **Low Power TV (LPTV)**

In addition to more than 1,500 TV stations, there were as many LPTV stations on the air in the country in 1995. These low-power facilities were authorized as a separate service by the FCC in 1982, allowing for 10 watts of transmitter power for VHF channels and 1,000 watts for any UHF signal. The government had, prior to that, allowed full-power stations to operate TV translators, whose sole purpose was to rebroadcast the main station's signal into hard to reach portions of its coverage area. There are more than 4,700 such translators in operation in the nation. The new rules meant the possibility of more than 4,000 additional TV outlets.

LPTV stations would become much like a translator station but being allowed to originate programming on their own for local communities. The coverage was limited generally to an area of from ten to fifteen miles radius, and the rules governing their operation would be less restrictive than their full-power brothers.

The FCC, swamped with initial interest in the idea, placed a freeze on applications, gradually opening up time windows for stations to file applications. At one time, five applications had been submitted for stations in Lexington alone, but none built. While enthusiasm for the new service was



Courtesy TV-43

*The Kentucky New Era newspaper built the state's first low-power TV station in 1984 to serve Hopkinsville — TV-43 (WKAG).*

strong at first, few of the stations have been successful, in part because of the growth of cable television penetration and its ability to deliver hundreds of programming channels and local origination for the communities they serve.

Stations were given call signs that included the station channel assignment, and the state's first LPTV permit was issued to the Hopkinsville newspaper company, *Kentucky New Era*, for W43AG, to become known as TV-43.

The newspaper hired local radio station executive D.J. Everett III to get the station up and running. Everett explains that TV-43 was able to go on the air July 1984, some two years before any other Kentucky stations were approved, because of an agreement he had reached with KET and an out-of-state firm, both having applications for LPTV's for the city. The arrangement also allowed for the granting of KET's channel on TV-64 as a translator station.

A building was erected next door to the newspaper office to house the studios with the tower located some five miles away. TV-43 used independent satellite network programming for much of the day's schedule, but did a live local newscast each evening at 5 p.m. The station expanded its programming schedule to include many community events, local and state sports coverage, and affiliation with CNN.

Their reports from nearby Fort Campbell after the 1985 crash of a plane in Gander, Newfoundland, loaded with soldiers bound for Kentucky, propelled the small station into the spotlight and won it several state and national awards. With strong financial backing and without a commercial station within 60 miles, TV-43 was able to fill a void for local television, and build a reputation that caused the *New York Times* in an article to call it the "best known" low-power television station in the country.

Some LPTV facilities were operated by radio stations in the community and in Campbellsville TV-4 was launched by WCKQ/WTCO radio and went on the air, September 15, 1986, as the state's second low-power station, in a community that already had a full-power station, WGRB. Radio personnel did double duty in producing some local news shows, with the bulk of the programming from independent networks. The station earned several awards for its work and was a critical success but not a financial one, according to company president, George Owen, who decided to donate the station to Campbellsville College in 1990. The college operates TV-4 as a non-commercial station with the transmitter and antenna still located at the radio station. Hopkinsville and Campbellsville were both involved in starting the national organization, Community Broadcasters Association.

Just north of Campbellsville, WLBN/WLSK Lebanon received a license

for channel 6, which it operates with mostly satellite programming from the radio station studios.

Another college in the state was beneficiary of a LPTV license, as Owensboro Community College of the UK system received TV-12 for use as a non-commercial station in 1989 from WOMI, Owensboro Broadcasting, after the radio station determined it was not a profitable commercial endeavor. The station is operated 24 hours a day, as a tool for the students with educational networks and some local programming.

In the early 1990s, a chain of low-power stations was established in eastern Kentucky by Ultra-Com, Inc., with Vearl Pennington, George Archbold and Beryl Smith, owners. The group has VHF channels 2, 6, 7 and 10 feeding the Owingsville, Mount Sterling and Morehead area and have added TV-5 in Burlington, Ohio.

Programming from satellite networks is supplemented by live and taped local programs, including news, ballgames, and country and gospel shows from a Morehead studio. Pennington, from Mount Sterling, says the stations have been successful, and additional local programs as well as more stations appear likely in the future.

Selling enough advertising to meet operating costs, especially to produce local programs has been difficult for many LPTV stations, and operation at some stations has been sporadic. Often, success is predicated on being carried on cable systems within the area to add to the potential audience. Several independent networks of religious programming, sports, infomercials, instructional shows, and music videos are available to fill the broadcast hours of these stations. Nationally, LPTV stations have also become popular with religious and special-interest groups who have developed networks of facilities across the country.

Low-power TV station licenses have been issued for other cities in Kentucky. WNBS radio owns TV-46 in Murray, which broadcast for a time before going off. Corbin TV-20 is operated by Derek Eubanks and Victory Training School in Keavy has been permitted for channel 48. Records in 1994 indicate licenses have also been granted to Scottsville for TV-48, Proclaim Ministries, Jason Wilson, owner. TV-9 is owned by Andrea Kesler in East Bernstadt, and two Louisville stations have been granted to out-of-town owners. Dozens of LPTV permits have been awarded to individuals and groups since 1983 and then later cancelled.

In 1995, the FCC announced that all low-power stations could begin applying for regular call letters for identification, rather than the combination of numerals and letters. Applications were taken based on seniority of license issuance, and Hopkinsville received the first, becoming known as WKAG-TV.

## Cable TV

From the early days of stringing wire to houses in the mountains to pick up a couple of stations, community antenna systems blossomed into the mammoth and influential cable TV industry of the 1990s, providing the television service to almost two-thirds of America's homes and pondering an enhanced role in the coming age of the so-called "information highway."

As the Kentucky Cable Association grew and political and economic pressures mounted, the group hired an executive-director. Patsy Judd has served the organization since 1972 from main offices in Burkesville. The association holds a convention and a general membership meeting yearly, and in 1995 had 117 members systems representing about 90 percent of the 800,000 cable subscribers in the state.

The early systems in the state were started by local business people mostly in rural areas and small towns. But as was the case with broadcast television, group ownership soon developed and regional and national firms began buying out the lucrative systems in the state, including most of those in the larger markets.

In addition to bringing in the over-the-air TV signals, the satellite era enabled cable to offer customers new networks like ESPN, CNN and USA established to serve cable systems only. Movie channels like HBO and Showtime enhanced the appeal to potential subscribers, and the shopping channels became a video catalog for consumers.

The additional networks also afforded cable operators opportunity to sell local commercials for insertion, at rates below local TV stations and competitive with radio. With more to offer than just local television, the cable industry expanded to wire the larger cities, and in many locations in the state there were heated battles over obtaining the franchise or the right to serve the community granted by local governing bodies.

Cable systems set aside public access or local origination channels, required at first by regulation for larger systems and often by the local franchise agreement. These channels began to serve much like community stations, making time available to anyone who wanted to speak, entertain or produce a show. Larger cable systems had more than one channel available for use by government agencies and school systems for carrying local events and public meetings. The typical L/O station used computerized character-generators to create printed local commercial messages, bulletin board items, weather and local advisories. The larger companies developed professional studio facilities, and remote capabilities while smaller systems might utilize the home video one-half inch equipment to bring cable viewers the local ballgame or news highlights of the town.

In cities like Owensboro and Maysville and others where the radio station company had also built the cable system, the local channels were operated and marketed in conjunction with the radio. Some cable systems opted to lease or sell the local channel to a radio station to program. Radio stations often benefited by getting their signal on the TV set when these local channels used AM or FM audio as background to the alpha-numeric screen programming. When there were several radio stations to choose from, the cable operator often chose the one most popular with the subscribers or the station that negotiated the best deal to get on the cable. A few systems also offered separate cable radio service to provide homes with additional satellite-delivered radio stations.

In addition to all the major cities in the state, Kentucky Cable TV association lists 20 other of its member systems in smaller communities operating Local Origination channels. In one unique arrangement, the Hindman cable actually has a FOX network affiliation for its local channel, since no over-the-air FOX station can be received in the area.

The local channels in college towns have provided opportunities for many universities to supply local programs to their communities as they often produce news shows, sports programs and educational features for the cable utilizing students in the broadcasting programs of study and their on-campus studios.



Barry Bingham, Jr., whose grandfather started the first radio station in the state, has looked back on radio and TV in Kentucky with pride and observed that the industry has developed beyond anyone's expectation. "The big change," says Bingham, "is the proliferation of TV channels, such a wide diversity of choices for the viewer, some good and some frivolous and destructive, however."

Television has grown and matured since WAVE began sending out those first black and white pictures. As TV owners and executives reflect on the past half-century and look ahead to the new millennium, there is the realization of increased competition of hundreds of cable channels with the phone companies entering cable TV, direct satellite and interactive TV. Most experts see local service as the major asset for the traditional over-the-air television station. Many support increased de-regulation of ownership restrictions and other rules to allow fair competition with cable and satellite TV.

Stations now examine plans for the coming HDTV (high definition television) improved picture standards, chart their course of involvement in the new technologies and hope they can continue the legacy of service to the state that began in 1948 and has continued to radiate from the towers over Kentucky.

## Chapter 6

# *Fifty Years of KBA*

### **The Beginning**

Starting in the early 1920s, broadcasters in the nation had worked together in cooperative efforts and had formed a national group. With the growth of radio in the 1930s, the National Association of Broadcasters meeting in 1938 saw the need for a complete reorganization. A board of directors was selected with plans made for a full-time paid staff and president, with Kentuckians playing a major role in the move.

Mark Ethridge, general manager of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, licensee for WHAS, was named the first president of the revamped NAB to guide it through the transition period and search for a full-time executive.

In June of that same year, the NAB hired its first paid president, a former mayor of Louisville, Neville Miller, at a salary of \$25,000 per year.

While Kentucky broadcasters participated in the national association, it would soon become clear to some owners that a state group would be beneficial. Many dramatic changes, including the advent of FM and TV were taking place in the communications industry following the end of WW II. In October 1945, Hugh Potter, of WOMI radio Owensboro sent out a call to all Kentucky radio stations to gather in Louisville to form a state association. At the time there were only 12 commercial radio stations in Kentucky and no TV stations. WHAS was operating its experimental FM and WBKY was





C.-J. Photos.

KENTUCKY radio station owners and managers yesterday met at WAVE auditorium to form the Kentucky Broadcasters' Association. With all stations in the state represented, the new organization elected, from left, Harry Calloway, WHAS, Louisville, secretary-treasurer; Hugh Potter, WOMI, Owensboro, president; Ed Willis, WLAP, Lexington, first vice-president, and Harry McTigue, WINN, Louisville, second vice-president.

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***KBA formation in 1945 made the news as first officers discuss the new organization, founded that year in Louisville.***

the only non-commercial station. The commercial stations were — WCMI, Ashland; WLBj, Bowling Green; WHLN, Harlan; WSON, Henderson; WHOP, Hopkinsville; WPAD, Paducah; WOMI, Owensboro; WLAP, Lexington; and in Louisville — WHAS, WAVE, WGRC, WINN.

Answering the call to come to Louisville for that inaugural meeting were: Hugh Potter, WOMI; George W. Norton, Jr., George Patterson and Nathan Lord, WAVE; Miller Welch, Gilmore Nunn and J. E. Willis, WLAP; Henry Callaway, Joe Eaton, Richard E. Fischer and Orrin W. Towner, WHAS; Harry McTigue and G. F. Bauer, WINN; C.L. Harris, J. Porter Smith and C.E. Schindler, WGRC; Joseph B. Matthews, WCMI; F. Ernest Lackey, WHOP; J. Francke Fox, WHLN; Mr. and Mrs. Ken Given, WLBj; Bill Ladd attended representing the *Courier-Journal and Louisville Times*.

Thus, ten of the 12 stations joined to form the new group. WPAD and WSON did not send representatives, Pierce Lackey having expressed some early skepticism about the need for the organization.

The organizational meeting was held at the WAVE offices on October 24, 1945, with a constitution approved for the group and officers elected.

The purpose of the newly formed Kentucky Broadcasters Association was:

- To promote closer cooperation and understanding among the members.
- To make possible a unified effort when unity is beneficial.

- To protect its members in every lawful and proper manner from injustices and unjust actions.
- To act as a contact with the National Association of Broadcasters.
- To encourage and promote customs and practices which will be for the best interests of the public and the Radio-TV industry.
- To help educate the public and business generally concerning the uses and value of broadcast advertising.

Dues would be paid by members according to the power of their stations, from \$10 for less than 100 watts to as much as \$80 for stations using 5,000 watts or more, and there would be no paid officers. Elected to serve for one year terms in 1946 were — Hugh Potter, president; J.E. Willis, first vice-president; Harry McTigue, second vice-president; and J.H. Callaway, secretary-treasurer. Kentucky thus became the 14th state to form their own association of broadcasters.

At a dinner meeting at the Brown Hotel the next night, delegates welcomed home Paul Porter, of Winchester, who was chairman of the Federal Communications Commission. Porter told the broadcasters that there were three significant things to watch in operating their stations — freedom from domination either by government or by advertisers, editorial freedom and fairness to all, even to minorities which may dislike radio programs as they are presented. He assured his listeners of a fair deal in Washington, and urged them to regulate their business well to avoid unwelcome intervention by the federal government. His speech would also be a prophecy of an era of radio growth; he promised, as FCC chairman, to issue new licenses as fast as he received the applications.

Leonard Asch of WBCA (Schenectady, New York) was also thanked for his speech the previous night as he explained the technology of FM (Frequency Modulation) broadcasts to the audience. Asch, the first commercial FM owner in the nation, predicted that inexpensive all-channel radios would be available by the following Christmas. The expert told the AM broadcasters about the static-free quality of FM and spoke of the possibility of the line-of-sight waves bouncing back to earth years after being broadcast, puzzling those who were tuned in! While Asch talked optimistically of FM and new facsimile broadcasting, he predicted that television's tremendous production costs would not make it commercially viable for many more years.

As it would turn out, Porter's forecasts proved more accurate than Asch's. Paul Porter was made the first honorary member of the new Kentucky Broadcasters Association that evening.



*The fall meeting of the KBA in November 1946 drew a good crowd at the Lafayette Hotel in Lexington.*

## **Membership**

The next convention held by the KBA took place in Lexington in 1946 at the Lafayette Hotel, with 25 delegates present and about a dozen more guests. Three years after the Kentucky Broadcasters Association was born, it seemed that Paul Porter's vow in 1945 of more and more licenses was unfolding quicker than anyone imagined.

In mid-1945, there were 933 radio stations in the United States. That number had nearly doubled by 1948, and the number of AM stations in Kentucky had tripled. Plus, some 14 stations were either operating or were planning to build new FM facilities. Membership in the KBA was swelling, and by the June convention that year, 32 stations were cooperating in the organization. That growth caused Ken Given of Bowling Green to comment to a newspaper reporter that he had entered broadcasting because it was an unusual business and people looked on you with admiration for having such a strange occupation. "Now it seems everyone is in it!" He lamented. He could not know, of course, the massive growth that still lay ahead.

At the KBA's fall meeting in Owensboro in 1948, members heard another prediction of competition from an FCC Chairman when Wayne Coy told them 1,000 "video stations" would be in operation within the next seven to eight years. "Television" he said, "has the promise of having a greater impact on the radio business than anything that has come along." Nine days later, Kentucky's first television station, WAVE, went on the air.

Seven months after those predictions, the association heard Sol Taishoff, editor of *Broadcasting* magazine, deride the people who were crying that

radio will fall in the wake of television within a few years. He declared such predictions unreasonable. He also made the point that television was actually being nurtured by radio people, a point certainly to be true in Kentucky.

In the post-war era, new radio stations went on the air in the state's major cities, Louisville, Lexington, Owensboro, Paducah, Bowling Green and Covington. But now smaller communities were getting their own facilities and by 1950 radio had come to Campbellsville, Corbin, Danville, Elizabethtown, Frankfort, Glasgow, Hazard, Madisonville, Maysville, Mayfield, Middlesboro, Murray, Newport, Pikeville, Paintsville, Princeton, Somerset, Vancelevé and Versailles.

Then, ten years after its birth, the Kentucky Broadcasters Association listed 46 radio stations as members, with seven associate members. Associate members were made up of individuals and companies from allied industries who had been approved in action by the body in 1952.

### **The mailing list of the KBA at the start of 1955:**

S.C. Bybee - WAIN Columbia; Nathan Lord - WAVE Louisville; Mrs. O. C. Halyard - WBKY, University of Kentucky; Richard Martin - WCMI Ashland; John L. Crawford - WCTT Corbin; O.C. Halyard - WEKY Richmond; Ken Hart - WFKY Frankfort; Hubert W. Wells - WFMW Madisonville; J.W. "Bill" Betts - Maysville; J.O. Lewis - WFUL Fulton; J. Porter Smith - WGRC Louisville; Victor Sholis - WHAS Louisville; W.T. Issac - WHIR Danville; R.B. Helms - WHLN Harlan; F. Ernest Lackey - WHOP Hopkinsville; Walter "Dee" Huddleston - WIEL Elizabethtown; Harry McTigue - WINN Louisville; Clovis C. Sadler - WKAY Glasgow; Al Temple - WKCT Bowling Green; Charles Metcalf - WKIC Hazard. D.C. Summerford - WKLO Louisville; Ed Paxton, Jr. - WKYB Paducah; J.E. Willis - WLAP Lexington; Edward Weldon - WKYW Louisville; Ken D. Given - WLBJ Bowling Green; Earl L. Boyles - WLEX Lexington; Roy E. Alexander - WLSI Pikeville; H. Webster Taylor - WMIK Middlesboro; Joseph E. Griffin - WNBS Murray; T. E. Brewer - WNGO Mayfield; Mrs. Ann Lang - WNOP Newport; Hugh O. Potter - WOMI Owensboro; Prewitt Lackey - WPAD Paducah; William Frazier - WPKE Pikeville; Rex Osborne - WPRT Prestonsburg; Charles W. Stratton - WRUS Russellville; Mike Layman - WSFC Somerset; Arnold Silvert - WSIP Paintsville; Hecht Lackey - WSON Henderson; Clifford Spurlock - WTCO Campbellsville; Kenneth Crosthwait - WTCW Whitesburg; Malcolm Greep - WVJS Owensboro; Donald Horton - WVLK Lexington; Arthur Eilerman - WZIP Covington; Lee Smith - WLOU Louisville. Associate members were listed as - Carl Haverlin -

BMI; Norman Glenn - Sponsor Publications; W.F. Myers - SECAC; Pierre Weiss - World Broadcasting; W.L. Rector - United Television Labs; William F. Reilly - RCA Sales; Southern Bell Telephone Co.

This membership list represented about 75 percent of the stations on the air in the state at the time. Several of the new stations had not yet joined, and while neither of the state's TV stations is listed, their radio counterparts WAVE and WHAS were members.

Three years later, in 1958, the percentage of membership had fallen to 60 percent with 50 of the state's 83 radio and TV stations paying dues. That total of stations did not include co-owned FM stations still operating. The KBA had its first TV-only member in WPSD-TV, Paducah. Despite more smaller towns gaining licenses, the association saw little growth into the next decade as the membership was at 58 in 1962.

That year, the KBA published its first complete directory, listing all members, pertinent information about the stations and the association by-laws, procedures and past accomplishments. The directory was discontinued the next year due to lack of funds. The membership dues were now being based on spot rates, with each station paying five times its highest one-minute spot rate or a minimum of \$20 per year and maximum of \$100. No additional fee was charged for a co-owned FM station or when a television station was operated in conjunction with radio under the same ownership.

## **Members in 1962**

WCMI Ashland; WCBL Benton; WKCT Bowling Green; WLBJ Bowling Green; WTCO Campbellsville; WMTA Central City; WNES AM/FM Central City; WAIN Columbia; WCTT Corbin; WCPM Cumberland; WHIR Danville; WIEL Elizabethtown; WSTL Eminence; WSAC Fort Knox; WFKY Frankfort; WFKN Franklin; WFUL AM/FM Fulton; WKAY Glasgow; WHLN Harlan; WKIC AM/FM Hazard; WSON AM/FM Henderson; WHOP AM/FM Hopkinsville; WKOA Hopkinsville; WLBN Lebanon; WLBG Lexington; WVLK AM/FM Lexington; WFTG London; WAKY Louisville; WAVE AM & TV Louisville; WHAS AM & TV Louisville; WKLO Louisville; WLOU Louisville; WXXL Manchester; WNGO AM/FM Mayfield; WFTM Maysville; WMIK Middlesboro; WFLW Monticello; WMOR Morehead; WMST Mount Sterling; WNBS Murray; WNOP Newport; WNVL Nicholasville; WOMI AM/FM Owensboro; WVJS AM/FM Owensboro; WKYB AM/FM Paducah, WPAD AM/FM Paducah; WKLX Paris; WPKE Pikeville; WMLF Pineville; WDOC Prestonsburg;

WEKY Richmond; WRUS Russellville; WLCK Scottsville; WSFC AM/FM Somerset; WTLO Somerset; WTKY Tompkinsville; WKKS Vanceburg; WWKY Winchester.

The KBA listed 16 associate members, including the University of Kentucky and Indiana University.

Eight years later, when the association turned 25 years old, the total membership was listed as 110 radio and TV stations, double the figure of the '62 yearbook. Many stations now were operating FM facilities, with most stations simply simulcasting the AM programming. Listing these co-owned AM/FMs as just one station, the state had 120 radio plus 11 TV stations in 1970. The association began a campaign to try to reach 100 percent membership, calling on members of the board of directors to contact all non-member stations in their district. The call letters of the few non-paying stations were printed in the newsletter. The goal of complete participation has never been attained, although all the TV stations became members that year.

Five years later, it was reported 91 percent of the 195 radio and TV stations operating in Kentucky at that time were members. The number of stations on the membership roles remained in the 90-plus percentile for the next several years.



*WBKY, Kentucky's first public radio station and only university station at the time, provided coverage for the KBA's 1960 convention. Leaders are seen here with Lt. Gov. Wilson Wyatt. From left to right are Don Horton, Lexington; Wyatt; Francke Fox, Harlan; and Bill Whittaker, Morehead.*

With the growth of FM, the association would soon begin to view the AM and FM as two separate entities and a charge of 30 percent of the station's dues were assessed the co-owned FM. The fee schedule was set at the discretion of the board and approved by the membership. The assessment criteria was the market size and both stations were considered as members with one vote each. These changes were noted in the by-law revisions of 1976. By 1985, the commonly-owned FM station that was simulcasting 50 percent or less would be required to pay full dues. Those accounting changes and the growth of individual FM stations in the state would boost membership figures to more than 200 in the early 1980s. The total station membership would remain between 200 and 225 through the early 1990s, numbers that would represent about 75 percent of licensed stations in the state.

Associate membership increased steadily through the years to a peak of 79 members in 1993. Associate members included advertising agencies, colleges, corporations, networks, equipment manufacturers and other individuals and businesses engaged in communications and broadcast related activities.

By 1994, the membership dues were \$60 for radio stations in the smaller towns, to as much as \$300 yearly for television stations in the larger markets, with associate member dues at \$50.

## Governance

The original constitution of the Kentucky Broadcasters Association called for democratic processes with election of officers by a vote of the member stations. Each station could designate one official delegate. Two meetings per year were scheduled with officers elected in the fall meeting to serve during the following year.



*Ed Shadburne (left) and Roy Redmond at Kentucky Dam Village Meeting in 1960. Shadburne, of Louisville, served the KBA as secretary-treasurer for five years. Redmond, of Maysville, was active at every convention for over 30 years.*

The elective officers were president, first vice-president, second vice-president, secretary-treasurer and three additional executive committee members. Those officers and the committee members held their positions for one year and directed the affairs of the association for that 12-month period. The vice-president's duties were merely to serve in the absence of the president. The executive committee approved all expenditures and had general oversight of the KBA including the appointment of various working committees.

The association was not officially incorporated in the state until 1967, when articles were drawn up for the group as a non-profit corporation operating with offices in Bowling Green. By that time, the by-laws had been changed to provide for an elected board of directors. That move had come about in 1961 when the number of stations had grown sufficiently to designate a director over specific stations within a territory. That director would be seen as the representative of those stations on the board and would be elected by the stations of his/her geographic area. The by-law change called for a director in each Congressional district where there were four or more radio and/or television stations located. The officers of the organization remained the same, and were elected from among the members of the board. The entire membership would still vote for the officers, but they would do double duty as a district director and then, if elected, as an officer.

By 1963, the by-laws reflected the increase in television's numbers and influence, as a special at-large TV director was now to be elected to the board to represent all television in the state. All board members would be elected to two-year terms with odd districts elected in odd years and even-numbered districts in the even years.

In 1971, the by-laws were amended to make non-commercial broadcasters active members rather than associate members. They were to create a division within the association and name a member to a seat on the board of directors. Additionally, all board members were granted the right to succeed themselves once, serving a total of four years.

In 1974, the KBA abolished the office of vice-president unless created especially by the board, and instead the board was to approve the selection of nominees for the office of president-elect each year. That individual would then serve in an understudy capacity for one year and ascend automatically to the presidency the following year at the fall meeting. Nominations for this office were to be taken from the convention floor provided the individual had been a member of the KBA board for at least one term. The fall convention would then be the date and place for the yearly selection of a president-elect. These procedural changes were noted in the revised constitution and by-laws published and distributed in 1976.



By that time the governing body consisted of ten district radio directors, a TV director, educational radio director, along with the past-president, president-elect, current president and the secretary and treasurer.

In 1982, approval was given to grant full membership status to all non-commercial public broadcasting stations in the state, abolishing the non-commercial division and putting them on equal footing with commercial stations with their dues adjusted accordingly.

In 1985, further revisions in the by-laws were made to delete an associate membership for cable TV, and allow for full membership to the new low-power TV stations. Additional positions on the board for more at-large television directors were allowed at the discretion of the board and the associate members would elect a representative to the board of directors, who would not be eligible for the presidency, however. The new by-laws also called for special elections to fill vacancies, and established an executive committee of the president, immediate past-president, president-elect and the executive-director. In 1993, the by-laws were changed to increase the representation of television which now would have four directors, three commercial and one public TV executive.

Although the original KBA by-laws called for two general meetings per year, the wording now states a minimum of one general meeting per year with a board meeting to be scheduled then and at other times and places during the year as needed. The board's custom has been to hold additional winter and summer meetings besides the meetings concurrent with the spring and fall conventions. Often, a board meeting was held in conjunction with another winter seminar or spring Washington, D.C. trip. The summer meeting was usually held at the president's discretion at a sight he might choose. For many years, until their retirement, Hugh and Cliffordean Potter served as host of these meetings in Owensboro. Locations easily accessible to board members became more of the custom starting in 1972.

Proposals to change the name of the organization to Kentucky Association of Broadcasters to bring it in compliance with the national association's wording and eliminate confusion with other state groups whose initials are KBA have failed on a couple of occasions. Objectors cited tradition and the cost involved in a name change.

## **Officers**

Following the election of charter president, Hugh Potter, the next four leaders were charter members and present at that first organizational meeting in October 1945. J.E. Willis of WLAP succeeded Potter by being elect-



KBA photo

*WAVE's Jim Caldwell reports to a convention on NAB activities. Caldwell, one of the state's most-honored broadcasters, has been involved with the KBA for nearly all of its 50 years and also served in the Kentucky Legislature.*

ed in 1946 to serve the '47 term as president. He was followed by Harry McTigue of WINN Louisville, F. Earnest Lackey of WHOP in Hopkinsville and J. Porter Smith of WGRC in Louisville serving in 1950.

Charles C. Warren of Ashland's WCMI became the first eastern Kentucky president in 1951, with Bill Betts of WFTM in Maysville in 1952. WFTM had gone on the air in 1948. In 1953, Joe Eaton of WKLO became the third president from Louisville. The KBA's first and only president from northern Kentucky was Arthur Eilerman of WZIP, Covington, elected to serve in 1957. The next year, broadcasters would elect a man they would later have reason to lobby, Walter "Dee" Huddleston of WIEL Elizabethtown, who went on to become U.S. Senator.

With their numbers increasing, and matters becoming more complicated for broadcasters in the beginning of the decade of the sixties, KBA presidents found themselves working harder to develop programs of service for the association, and to mold the broadcasters into a genuine trade group. Many look back on the administration of Jim Caldwell in 1961-62 as the beginning point of this trend.

In 1970, Lee Browning of WAVE-TV became the first TV-only executive to head the association. Browning says his nomination was not really planned but happened by surprise when another board member submitted his name. He had no opposition and felt his tenure went very smoothly with no resentments from radio people. He said looking back over the years of

KBA that perhaps many radio people felt the TV folks were the “big money” guys, while TV members might often have felt outnumbered by the radio folks. Any conflicts or problems, however, were readily and easily resolved, according to Browning.

As it turned out, Browning has been the only Louisville TV president and some leaders over the years have felt the organization could have been strengthened by more participation from the bigger market.

In the fall of 1978, KBA made history in electing William Summers III of Louisville as president, thus becoming the first minority to head the state association and the first ever elected president of any state broadcast association. Summers, an ordained minister, managed the all-black format station WLOU. Bill Summers’ selection was no surprise as he and the station had been active in KBA for years. He reported no difficulties in his one-year tenure and many times has spoken highly of his acceptance on the state and national level during his year’s work. Summers believed the cordial and positive year of his service helped open doors for other minorities on a national level.

KBA had its first non-commercial broadcaster as president when Dr. Chuck Anderson took over in 1986. In addition to directing the stations of Western Kentucky University, Anderson taught classes and helped commercial broadcasters build stations in that part of the state. Anderson has said he believed his election and positive relationship with the KBA was a sign of the progressive spirit in the association regarding non-commercial or public stations. KBA has been “exemplary in the nation in its acceptance of public broadcasters,” according to Anderson.

The first woman selected as a KBA president-elect was Charlotte Tharp, community relations director of WHAS-WAMZ. While Tharp was elected in 1984, she left broadcasting to become an executive with Norton-Kosair Hospitals in Louisville, before assuming the presidency as scheduled the following year. The honor of being KBA’s first female leader went to Connie Joiner, who served as president in 1992. She was vice-president of sales for WVLK AM/FM Lexington. According to Joiner, she found no resistance in carrying out her duties, and there was acceptance at the national level as well since women were becoming an integral part of upper level management in all business. KBA had definitely moved beyond the “good ole boy” network days!

There have been few real campaigns for president as most nominees had no opposition, and were nominated from among current board members after the group often discussed privately who might be ready to assume the responsibility. In latter years, individuals presented themselves to the board



KBA photo

*Chuck Anderson (right), the first public broadcaster to serve as KBA president, greets Congressman Hal Rogers during a trip to Washington, D.C. in 1986. Rogers started his career as a radio announcer.*

as candidates for president-elect. Admittedly some choices were of the “smoke-filled” room variety, especially in the early days of the association.

Some members have pointed to the election of 1968-69 as the beginning of a movement toward more openness in elections and in all aspects of the organization’s activities. Art Grunewald defeated Roy Redmond, considered the choice of the “old guard,” in one of the few contested presidential elections. A new generation of broadcasters seemed to be asserting themselves and would affect some changes in KBA operations. Two of those individuals, Bob Doll and Walter May, would win the presidency in ’71 and ’72, respectively. Roy Redmond then was elected president in 1973.

Both May and Doll would say later that the so-called “young lions” of the late ’60s and early ’70s simply were looking to open up the process more, get more stations involved and different people active in the association.

In the challenged race for president-elect in 1979, a young Henry Lackey defeated veteran J.B. Crawley by two votes, served in 1981 and was then succeeded by Crawley. It was KBA’s only really spirited campaign, complete with election materials, campaign buttons and all. Lackey, as it turned out, was preparing for later political endeavors, running for State Senate

successfully followed by an unsuccessful bid for Congress. Ray Mullinix of Burkesville, who lost a race for KBA president in 1986 to Doug Hamby and never served as head, would win an election to the Kentucky House of Representatives two years later.

The Kentucky Broadcasters have seen presidents come from all parts of the state, large markets and small. Some stations have nurtured two or three leaders over the years. Most of the presidents tried to bring some new ideas and leave a mark of improvement for their year of endeavor. None were novices in the business, but had spent years building successful operations of their own and then served apprenticeship years either as vice-president, president-elect or member of the board.

While there were certainly many successful broadcasters who were not active in the KBA, historians can look at the list of KBA presidents and see most of the people who have impacted broadcasting in Kentucky in the past half-century. (See list, page 338.)

The election of district board members has at times been hard-fought and close, but then often it was necessary to search for those who would serve in the position. Some run-off elections have been necessary when more than two candidates sought election. At least one election, in 1974, had to be decided by a flip of a coin after a tie — Jim Ballard won the toss and defeated Jim Brown for District 8 director.

The seating of Cindy Sargent as District 10 director in 1994 brought criticism from eastern Kentucky stations and the resignation of some from the association. Sargent, of WPKE/WDHR Pikeville, was declared the winner, unopposed, but some stations in the district said they had not received any nomination forms for the election, although they had supposedly been mailed out.

In addition to oversight of the organization throughout the year, board members often assisted stations within their district with problems, and held district meetings to discuss matters. Directors were called upon yearly to pursue new members in their geographic area, as well as attend regular and called board meetings.

The first non-broadcaster to take a board seat was Bernie Vonderheide of the Public Relations Department at the University of Kentucky. Vonderheide was elected as the associates director in 1985 in a three-way race.

The role of secretary-treasurer of the organization has always been an important one. The first secretary, Callaway, was followed the next year by "Red" Bauer of Louisville. Then in 1948, Hugh Potter took the job and held it through 1957, nurturing the organization he had helped to birth. In 1958, the KBA had its first female officer as Katherine Peden of Hopkinsville was

## Presidential Hall of Fame

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1946 — Hugh Potter, WOMI Owensboro                    | 1976 — Garland West, WKCT<br>Bowling Green                      |
| 1947 — J.E. Willis, WLAP Lexington                    | 1977 — Jack Farmer, WHIR Danville                               |
| 1948 — Harry McTigue, WINN Louisville                 | 1978 — Fred Paxton, WPSD-TV Paducah                             |
| 1949 — F.E. "Dutch" Lackey, WHOP<br>Hopkinsville      | 1979 — William Summers III, WLOU<br>Louisville                  |
| 1950 — J. Porter Smith, WGRC Louisville               | 1980 — Bill Walters, WIEL Elizabethtown                         |
| 1951 — Charles C. Warren, WCMI Ashland                | 1981 — Henry Lackey, WSON/WKDQ<br>Henderson                     |
| 1952 — Bill Betts, WFTM Maysville                     | 1982 — J. B. Crawley, Campbellsville —<br>WCND and WLCK         |
| 1953 — Joe Eaton, WKLO Louisville                     | 1983 — Harry Barfield, WLEX-TV<br>Lexington                     |
| 1954 — Mike Layman, WSFC Somerset                     | 1984 — G. Nolan Kenner, WSFC/WSEK<br>Somerset                   |
| 1955 — Sam Livingston, WKYB Paducah                   | 1985 — Ralph Hacker, WVLK AM/FM<br>Lexington                    |
| 1956 — Gilmore Nunn, WLAP Lexington                   | 1986 — Chuck Anderson, WKYU-Western<br>Ky. Univ., Bowling Green |
| 1957 — Arthur Eilerman, WZIP Covington                | 1987 — Ralph Gabbard, WKYT-TV<br>Lexington                      |
| 1958 — Walter "Dee" Huddleston, WIEL<br>Elizabethtown | 1988 — Doug Hamby, WHRZ Providence                              |
| 1959 — Al Temple, WKCT Bowling Green                  | 1989 — Ed Henson, WLRS Louisville                               |
| 1960 — J. Francke Fox, WHLN Harlan                    | 1990 — Bill Evans, WQXE Elizabethtown                           |
| 1961 — Don Horton, WVLK Lexington                     | 1991 — Jim Allison, WLEX-TV Lexington                           |
| 1962 — Jim Caldwell, WAVE Louisville                  | 1992 — Connie Joiner-Sabad, WVLK<br>AM/FM Lexington             |
| 1963 — Bill Whitaker, WMOR Morehead                   | 1993 — Bob Scherer, WHAS/WAMZ<br>Louisville                     |
| 1964 — Bud McClain, WFKY Frankfort                    | 1994 — Steve Newberry, WHHT Glasgow                             |
| 1965 — Jim Topmiller, WHAS Louisville                 | 1995 — Leonard "Corky" Norcia,<br>Cromwell Group, Owensboro.    |
| 1966 — W.P. "Winkey" Sosh, WRUS<br>Russellville       | 1996 — President-Elect — Dan Dorsett,<br>Lexington              |
| 1967 — J. T. Whitlock, WLBN Lebanon                   |   |
| 1968 — Ray Holbrook, WHIR Danville                    |   |
| 1969 — Arthur Grunewald, WSON<br>Henderson            |   |
| 1970 — Lee Browning, WAVE-TV<br>Louisville            |   |
| 1971 — Bob Doll, WFKY Frankfort                       |   |
| 1972 — Walter E. May, WPKE Pikeville                  |   |
| 1973 — Roy Redmond, WFTM Maysville                    |   |
| 1974 — Charles Stratton, WNGO Mayfield                |   |
| 1975 — Ernie Sparkman, WKIC/WSGS<br>Hazard            |   |

chosen as secretary-treasurer. She was followed by Walter "Dee" Huddleston, and then Bill Betts. Ed Shadburne of Louisville assumed the job in 1962 and held it for five years, helping to assist the body through a difficult period in KBA history. Potter remained active, providing direction for the association until his retirement in 1973. Reflecting on Potter's work, Shadburne would later refer to him as the "conscience of the KBA."

The secretary-treasurer's position evolved from being elected each year to a job where the board had freedom to select and hire someone other than a current member of the board. The duties had grown with increased membership, and the need for continuity in the job was seen. In 1959, the officers had even studied an idea to have the University of Kentucky radio arts department personnel assist with the secretarial and correspondence duties of the KBA.

Al Temple, general manager of WKCT, Bowling Green took over as secretary-treasurer in 1966 and would hold at least part of those duties until his retirement. In March 1973, the Board allowed the job to be separated. While Temple remained as treasurer, J.T. Whitlock of WLBN Lebanon became secretary, and four years later the corporate office and



Courtesy WOMI

*Some of Kentucky's top broadcasters help Owensboro station WOMI celebrate its 20th birthday. Left to right are Hugh Potter, WOMI manager and first KBA president; Walter "Dee" Huddleston, WIEL manager, KBA president and secretary and later U.S. Senator; Katherine Peden, first KBA female secretary-treasurer and later Kentucky Commerce Commissioner; Bill Betts, of Maysville's WFTM, KBA president and secretary; and F.E. "Dutch" Lackey, of WHOP, KBA president and leader of National Community Broadcasters.*

operations were moved to his Lebanon station. Whitlock had been editing the newsletter for the organization and was working closely with Temple in office matters. The secretary received \$100 per month plus \$50 for office expenses, and the treasurer the same. That salary was raised by \$50 apiece the following year.

The job was combined again on action by the board upon the retirement of Temple in 1980, and J.T. Whitlock was hired as secretary-treasurer. His title officially changed a year later to executive-director and treasurer, to make it correspond to other states and the National Association of Broadcasters.

The compensation and expense account of the office was raised periodically through the 1970s and '80s, and then in 1992 the salary was increased to \$1,200 per month for the job plus offices expenses, and a pension fund was established upon Whitlock's retirement.

Whitlock had helped with association office matters in some capacity since his tenure as president in 1967. His jobs increased through the years, and as executive-director, in addition to editing the newsletter, he managed the daily affairs of the KBA office, while also running his radio stations, WLBN-WLSK. The services of the association had become more complex each year, and the executive-director was called upon to handle everything from questions on broadcast issues to being a part of planning all the association's activities. He had to supervise the paperwork and finances associated with the KBA office. Whitlock's straight-forward, energetic style has won him many plaudits from both inside and outside the KBA. J.T. has said, however, he thought his main job was just to "serve the broadcaster." One key element of his work, he felt, was to "keep the president in the spotlight and make his administration a good one."

Others say his willingness to labor for so long with little remuneration kept the association strong and vital. Whitlock was often assisted in some of the office duties by his wife Colleen and his business partner Cherry Gibson.

Committees have played an active role in the programs of the Kentucky Broadcasters. Twice each year special groups are formed for the difficult and time-consuming task of planning and directing the conventions. Other seminars, schools and meetings have become realities over the years through the work of committees. Members of these groups are appointed by the president and may come from the board of directors and the membership at large. Over the history, several standing committees have been active depending on the pleasure of the various administrations. The standing committees of KBA in 1994 were legislative, long-range finance, database program, director's job



description, public service programs, scholarship and marketing material.

Rewind to earlier years and you find committees for public relations, minority affairs, sports, state fair, insurance, state parks, safety, KET, by-laws, sales, Conelrad system, TARPAC political action committee, freedom of information and even a good music committee. Naturally there has always been work for committees in drafting various resolutions, selecting awards, recruiting members, investigating issues and problems, and raising funds for programs. Joint committees with other communications groups have been formed at times to work on common concerns. Groups within the KBA such as TV stations and public broadcasters have formed councils and held separate meetings to make recommendations.

In 1989 a past-presidents' long-range planning committee was created to offer advice each year to the board of directors and help chart the course for the future of KBA.

Other individuals, not mentioned above, who have been active on the board serving as multiple-term directors, or as vice-president: Chris Baker, Louisville; South Bevins, Pineville; Fred Bullard, Hazard; Gerald Cashman, Winchester; Neil Cline, Louisville; Gorman Collins, Jr., Prestonsburg; J.R. Curtin, Louisville; Wilfred Fischer, Vanceleve; Paul Fyffe, Paintsville; Bob Gardner, Louisville; Ron Gentry, Mayfield; Ken Given, Bowling Green; Oris Gowen, Somerset; Malcolm Greep, Owensboro; Ernie Gudridge, Louisville; R.B. Helms, Harlan; O.C. Halyard, Ashland; Dean Harden, Shelbyville; James Harris, Richmond; Welby Hoover, Jamestown; Tom Issac, Bardstown; W.T. Issac, Danville; Roger Jeffers, Hopkinsville; Gary Kidd, Cadiz; Nathan Lord, Louisville; Richard Martin, Jr., Ashland; Shelby McCallum, Benton; Francis Nash, Grayson; Larry Netherton, Morehead; Don Orwin, Somerset; Jere Pigue, Lexington; Clovis Sadler, Glasgow; Lloyd Spivey, Hartford; Seldon Short, Vanceleve; Victor Sholis, Louisville; Chuck Shuffett, Murray; Danny Tabor, Scottsville; Randy Thompson, Hindman; Bayard Walters, Hawesville; Joe Walters, Bowling Green; Louise Wesley, Liberty; David Wilkinson, Bowling Green; Walt Williams, Somerset; Mike Wilson, Greensburg; Willie Wilson, Cadiz; Don Wheeler, Lexington; Jim Wooley, Hardinsburg; and Donna Zapata, Louisville.

## **Finances**

In early 1973, treasurer Al Temple proudly announced that the association had paid its own way nicely the previous year, accomplishing its goals and ending up with more than \$2,400 in the checking account and another \$1,300 in the convention account. This was after several years of spending

a lot more than was taken in. The association had lost more than \$3,000 from 1967 through 1970, and again in 1976, records indicate a net loss for that year of \$101, but still a bank balance carried over. An increase in dues had helped to brighten the financial picture a little.

In the early years, not much money was brought in with dues, and little was expended. With no salaries to pay, and minimal office expenses, the budget was small. In 1962 receipts were only \$3,600 and that paid the bills.

Temple recalled that some years, it would be necessary to ask some of the wealthier stations to pay dues in advance to keep the bank balances in the black.

In the mid-1980s, the financial outlook of the Kentucky Broadcasters Association took a dramatic turn upward with the establishment of the State Parks System Advertising Program.

In 1984, while Ralph Hacker was president, a plan was put forth to have stations in Kentucky run tourism spots for the state park system with the money going to the KBA. Each station would agree to run at least 260 spots during the year and the trial program would net the association \$25,000. The plan was not to have an effect on other paid advertising placed on individual stations. The board decided the money should be set aside as a "war chest" for future lobbying efforts and not used for day-to-day expenses.

The KBA stations had run ads for state parks for many years but received compensation for them in the form of due bills good for lodging at the parks and then later with a single cash amount.

The parks contract was renewed each year and the fund quickly grew to in excess of \$100,000 by the end of the decade. A special committee was established to develop some reserve fund guidelines for saving, investing and spending the money.

Directors J.R. Curtin and Dan Dorsett helped formulate some long-range plans for funding future KBA operations and presented various ways the money could be invested and used to expand member services.

The state parks agreement continued to give the association money to develop new programs, fight some battles and put itself on a much sounder financial footing. In 1994-95, a total of 82 radio and TV stations in the state were running the announcements, and with the money going into the KBA coffers the liquid assets of the organization were more than \$300,000 as the board prepared to budget for a full-time office.

In 1994, agreement was reached for Regional Reps of Cincinnati to handle the administration of the parks program and possibly develop other similar non-commercial sustaining announcement contracts.

## Newsletter

The KBA maintains communications with members with a monthly newsletter. Known for years simply as the *KBA Newsletter* it was mimeographed by J.T. Whitlock and sent to members, associates and others who had asked to be placed on the mailing list. The publication has received some facelifts over the years with a special professionally-printed cover sheet to allow for pictures added in 1972. Copy machines were used to make further improvements in the early 1980s. Then in late 1986, president Ralph Gabbard asked for money to be used to have the entire newsletter printed each month. A logo was designed and the publication became known as the *KBA Newsline*. The change created a modern magazine look along with expansion of columns, features and news articles.

Through the years, the newsletter has carried messages from the president, minutes of board meetings, treasurer's report and news from Washington and Frankfort of interest to state broadcasters. The newsletter kept membership informed on general KBA business, officers and directors, coming events, programs and services. It served as a reminder regarding FCC matters and other legal advice. Classifieds were carried for job information and equipment exchange, and copies of communications as well as some personal items were often printed.

The new and improved *Newsline* was able to print more information from the NAB and other national sources, and news was separated into more attractive columns. The executive-director made a monthly report and, for a time, features on individual stations and news from district directors was published. Some small advertisements had been accepted since the beginning to help defray costs. The current *Newsline* also allows space for associate members, as well as other paid ads. In 1989, president Ed Henson and a committee implemented a plan to sell corporate sponsorships for the entire newsletter on a monthly basis.

Some controversy of editorial control has emerged within the organization when occasional personal comments by the editor have appeared to be understood as official policy. Whitlock relates he has been chastised a few times by officers regarding the content of some articles.

In the early years, the president and secretary-treasurer would often use form letters to get the messages out to members, and special notices were sent for meetings, conventions and programs that were being sponsored. While there was not always a monthly publication, "KBA Bulletins" were sent out periodically with news of accomplishments, membership notes, financial statements, FCC and NAB news and various reminders from the president and

secretary-treasurer. In 1962, a regular newsletter was distributed which continued sporadically until late 1966, when Whitlock became president and began the monthly printing, which has continued uninterrupted.

## **Conventions**

From the KBA's inception, convention meetings have been the heart and soul of KBA activities. Spring and fall gatherings have been the rule since 1945. A single convention meeting had been discussed several times by the Board as early as 1970, and was tried in 1985-86, but quickly laid to rest when many expressed regret at the abandoning of the long-standing tradition.

For many years the spring meeting was held in Louisville, with the fall meeting alternating at locations around the state, many times at state parks.

With the growth of membership, cities were chosen over the parks, which were unable to accommodate the numbers. Lexington became a popular meeting spot for the fall conference. While Louisville and Lexington have played host to the broadcasters an overwhelming majority of the time, the KBA has gathered in Ashland, Bowling Green, Pikeville, Elizabethtown, Somerset, Paducah, Hazard, Hopkinsville and Owensboro, as well as Cumberland Falls, Kentucky Dam Village, Kenlake and Jenny Wiley State Parks, and has held seminars in other locations as well. In 1972, a joint meeting with the Ohio association was held in Cincinnati, and some 20 years later joint meetings with the Indiana broadcasters were held first in French Lick, Indiana, in 1993 and then in Owensboro in 1994.

For about a 15-year period from the late 1960s to the early 1980s, however, a rotation of Louisville in the spring and Lexington in the fall became the habit.

Most KBA conventions were two-day affairs, sometimes spreading over three days, with perhaps only a board meeting set for the third day, or opening with just a board meeting and reception, with exact scheduling left in the hands of the convention committee. Frequently, day-long social events were planned, including trips to the race tracks, golf tournaments, station tours and boat cruises. Separate functions for the wives have also been included on several occasions.

Until being discontinued in the late 1980s, a sponsored convention hospitality room offered up drinks and conversation until the "wee hours." Concerns about liability led the board to discontinue an official KBA presidential hospitality suite, but other groups continued to sponsor their own room, and the association reinstated the hospitality suite in 1994. KBA had ceased to pay for any alcoholic beverages at conventions in 1979, leaving that to other sponsors.

Receptions usually precede evening banquets and since 1991 Kentucky legislators have been guests for these affairs at the fall meeting.

Attendance at conventions has seen its peaks and valleys through the years depending many times on the business and regulatory climate of the era. Many KBAers point out that when technology, regulation or commercial trends were changing, and these topics were being discussed, the broadcasters would be on hand. If the communication industry waters were providing relative smooth sailing at the time, many saw little need to attend.

In the formative years, with few radio stations, the convention was the only place to really be able to talk “shop,” swap stories and meet others in the business. Those open-forum discussions were often referred to as the “Convened Bull Session.”

With the early conventions, the attendees had few if any other stations in their market. Then came the radio station construction boom, with competitiveness among stations hitting a fever pitch and some felt it unnecessary to fraternize with the “other guys.” Most soon understood, though, the wisdom of cooperating, even with your competitor, when it came to issues of common concern.

In terms of the percentage of membership, convention attendance has seen little growth in the 1980s and 1990s even though the number of stations in the state has soared. Lexington meetings have generally been better attended than others, though, with the 1992 and '94 gatherings setting new records. Some banquet meetings have seen attendance approach 300, depending on the featured attraction or speaker for the night.

There were many reasons that “deregulation” meant fewer problems and fewer questions broadcasters needed answered. Many small market operators, faced with increased financial pressures and fewer personnel, claim there was simply no time or money for such meetings. Other observers note the growth of absentee ownership of stations means fewer members have real ties to the state association other than paying dues.

Various efforts have been made to increase convention attendance including some reduced costs, free sales seminars, big name speakers, entertainment events, etc. A study of convention programs finds a variety of attractive educational, inspirational and social elements for all broadcasters. Starting in 1963, planners tried to consider TV needs as well as radio in the individual seminars. In the mid-1980s, it was resolved again to make the conventions more attractive to the television stations with some separate programming and special events.

Public broadcasters meet as a group at the conventions and the doors have always been open to students from colleges and universities to attend

the educational portions of the conference. In fact student groups have often kept some sessions from being sparsely attended.

KBA conventions have played host to many FCC commissioners, NAB chairmen, governors, senators, politicians, college presidents, coaches, celebrities, network executives and broadcasters. Attorneys have offered much advice on legal matters and Vince Pepper, Brad Carey and Leonard Joyce, communication lawyers, have been frequent guests. Veteran FCC commissioner James Quello, a former broadcaster, has been a welcomed speaker on several occasions.

While convention speakers of the late 1940s concentrated on predictions of growth and change in the industry, Jack Younts of the North Carolina Broadcaster Association may have offended any TV guests with his warning in 1952 that a crisis in radio may be coming brought on by our "little brother" in television. He urged radio operators to run their stations in the public interest in order to keep them viable in the years ahead.

The trend in programming began to change in the mid-1950s, with network shows moving to television and radio devoting more time to music formats. One convention, in 1956, found public comments centered on defending charges against the industry that radio was becoming an "unlighted jukebox." KBA officers and station managers denied it, citing their many hours of news and local programming that still occupied the air time. That same year, FCC chairman, George McConnaughey told the delegates that radio revenues were experiencing quite a boom, having doubled from 1952 to 1955, despite the growth of television.

In a 1959 address, Glasgow native Julian Goodman of NBC told conventioners that they must "dignify their news services" if they truly wanted to be respected as an information source like the newspapers. Simply tearing off a yard of newswire copy a few minutes before a newscast would not work. Newspeople had to "know news and serve the community." Goodman returned to address a convention in 1975.

In October 1961, the convention heard Fred Ford, FCC commissioner, tell the audience that radio stations in operation had more than tripled since 1946, but that income had not kept pace. Too many stations, he said were dividing the local advertising pie, and one-third were losing money. Those 3,400 radio stations then would eventually become nearly 12,000 with the FM boom that later unfolded, and 25 years later, convention-goers would hear that a majority of all stations lost money in the previous year.

Fast forward to the 1990s, and speakers told of the new laws allowing take-over of weaker stations through local marketing and management arrangements and permitting ownership of more than one AM and FM in the

same market, under certain conditions, a dramatic change from the ownership restrictions of the past.

In addition, broadcasters would be attending seminars explaining the end of broadcasting as they had known it with the coming of the age of “digital radio” and “high definition television.”

A speech by popular University of Kentucky coach Rick Pitino to an overflow lunch crowd in 1994 raised a small furor when trying to defend Kentucky football coach Bill Curry, Pitino was pictured in the media as questioning the players’ ability. He spent a few days clarifying matters with the press corps and players.

In 1956, Governor A.B. “Happy” Chandler, a former station owner, made his first of several appearances at the KBA in a speech that was broadcast over a statewide network. Several events at conventions have been carried live over radio and TV in the state.

A special “50th Anniversary of Broadcasting” program was heard over a network of stations in 1970, and the following year, 70 stations carried the gubernatorial debate staged at the convention with candidates Wendell Ford and Tom Emberton appearing.

The debate between John Y. Brown and Louie Nunn was carried from the Hyatt Regency in Lexington in 1979 over several stations with the audio link set up by the Kentucky network and TV link arranged by WKYT to all



*The KBA leadership of 1970, celebrating the 50th birthday of radio with special events at the convention. From left to right are Bob Doll, Walter May and Roger Jeffers.*

commercial stations desiring it and on KET. That convention also featured Senator Barry Goldwater as a banquet speaker and an appearance by former President Gerald Ford.

A candidate's debate in 1987 from the Louisville convention was established with help from the Kentucky Network and WKPC, Louisville public TV, but unfortunately many of the candidates were "no-shows."

The idea of having a candidate or issue forum broadcast each year from a KBA convention was put forward by the board in 1989. One forum was broadcast that year in October on a statewide radio-TV network from the University of Kentucky. Director Bernie Vonderheide had helped organize the special question-and-answer session on the new Kentucky Education Reform Act, hosted by WHAS's Milton Metz, with a live audience of guests and convention attendees. The program seemed to be well-received, but that was the last such "issues-type" broadcast from a convention.

In 1991, the KBA joined the Kentucky League of Women Voters in co-sponsoring two debates in October between Brereton Jones and Larry Hopkins. A network was formed for TV with WKPC and WKYU assisting, and the Kentucky Network feeding radio stations.

Convention registration prices have always included the meal functions. One could take it all in with a luncheon, hospitality, brunch and banquet in 1958 for just \$20. Thirty years later, it would cost \$145! Conventions were expected to make a profit for the KBA with sponsors and donations helping to cover expenses. In later years, many conventions were operated at a loss, however.

For a time, KBA meetings had a reputation of sometimes getting a bit rowdy, with a few folks taking in a little too much "hospitality." On one occasion in 1977, the board issued an apology for some off-color remarks made by a speaker at the luncheon sponsored by Southern Baptists. Even as late as 1981 it was discussed that participants should be wary of not offending women in the audience.

Efforts made through the years to keep those incidents few and far between have been largely successful, and most conventions are calm and business-like. Kentucky broadcasters have ignored the political correctness of the religious neutrality movement and remain as probably one of the few state organizations that refuses to eat a meal without a proper invocation.

Door prizes donated by sponsors, stations and local businesses became a part of the convention routine in the early 1970s, when Roy Redmond of Maysville headed up what became known as "Colonel Roy's lottery."

For about the first 20 years of its existence the KBA conventions received extensive press coverage as especially the *Courier-Journal* took note of the



association's activities and elections. Since the retirement of Bill Ladd of the *C-J*, the newspapers have given little space to the broadcasters. Television and radio stations in the convention-site city have at times sent reporters to cover award luncheons or featured speakers.

## **Seminars and Training**

In the changing world of broadcasting, the KBA seemed to realize the need for continuing education very early. In 1951, the group sponsored a statewide Broadcasters Clinic utilizing its own members and University of Kentucky faculty. The Lexington meeting attracted 50 members to hear updates on radio law, audience measurement, sports announcing and civil defense. President Charles Warren of Ashland helped organize what would be the first of many efforts by the association to train better broadcasters.

In a precedent-setting venture in 1974, the KBA drew national attention with its 3rd class license seminar taught by FCC examiners at the Galt House in Louisville. That day, 190 would-be operators studied intensely for the test. At the end of the day, however, only 50 percent who took the exam, passed, pointing out the difficulty many broadcasters were having in getting properly-licensed operators at that time. After the school, which was the first of several sponsored by the KBA, the National Association of Broadcasters joined in discussing with the FCC some revamping of the whole 3rd class test which included a difficult Element (9) for broadcast endorsement.

Until 1979, when the testing procedure ceased and stations were held responsible for having knowledgeable operators, getting people with the third phone "ticket" as it was called, often remained a challenge. Likewise for the 1st class licensed operators, who served as station chief engineers.

The KBA sponsored schools with the assistance of Bill Elkins of the Elkins Radio Institute to help students pass the rugged FCC 2nd and 1st class radio exam. Professional Academy of Broadcasting in Louisville lent its assistance in the instruction as well. That license is no longer necessary, and the FCC is completely out of the testing business for radio operators.

Advertising being the lifeblood of the industry, many sales seminars were organized by the KBA through the years, both at conventions and as separate meetings. A well-attended meeting was arranged by Bill Walters in Elizabethtown in 1975, five years after the organization had held a similar program there.

Chuck Anderson of Western Kentucky University brought together instructors for informative news and sales seminars in Bowling Green for several years beginning in 1980. After that, the seminars concentrated sole-



*Two Louisville broadcasting legends: Bill Summers (right) joins in honoring engineer Clarence Henson with the Kentucky Mike Award.*

ly on sales, since many of the stations seemed to be phasing out their large news departments.

A combination of Sales and License Renewal Seminar drew more than 200 people to Elizabethtown in 1989, in an effort put together by Bill Evans. Under the direction of KBA officers, sales seminars have been held in other parts of the state as well including Morehead, Owensboro, Lexington, Jenny Wiley State Park and Lake Barkley.

Beginning in 1968, Morehead State University, at the request of the association, began a Communications Institute for an intensive summer training program for broadcast operators. The program set up by Don Holloway and Jim Uszler, fea-

tured many KBA members as guest teachers and continued operating for three more years.

The University of Kentucky joined KBA in 1974 for a special one-day complete broadcast school that utilized campus faculty and broadcasters.

In the early 1970s, the mandates of equal employment opportunity and affirmative action procedures found station managers seeking minorities and women for employment in a largely white, male-dominated industry. This shortage of qualified applicants for jobs led to another precedent being set by the KBA — a school for training strictly minority candidates. Under the guidance of some Louisville broadcasters, including Ed Shadburne, Bill Summers, Art Grunewald and Bob Gardner, students were brought to the Presbyterian Community Center to learn the rudiments of commercial radio.

The curriculum was nothing real fancy, the equipment was donated or found at local stations, and there were no grades, just an effort to acquaint the students with radio. Twelve enrolled in the first group. Gardner told a newspaper reporter looking into the program that the FCC was impatient with the low number of blacks in the business and that having no applicants was no longer an excuse. "You have to seek them out and train them," Gardner explained.

That 1972-73 experiment was later expanded and held in conjunction

with Jefferson Community College in what Bill Summers would later call "perhaps one of the most important things KBA has ever done." The school attracted as many as 67 students one year. The KBA continued to encourage minority hiring and a clearinghouse was established with members distributing application forms throughout their areas.

Several times during the fiercely competitive decade of the eighties, broadcasters had proposed a KBA-sponsored sales school, to truly equip radio salespeople for success. After several years of debate, planning and studying, Steve Newberry of Glasgow put forward a plan for a three-day school at Barren River State Park for sales managers and experienced salespeople to be certified after concentrated study and testing. Passing the school would be a certification of the individual's sales knowledge. At the same time, two one-day sales seminars, basically for beginners, would be held in Lexington.

This approach was approved by the board and undertaken with the assistance of Chris Lytle Associates in January 1991. The school continued for another two years, with Randy Thompson of Hindman joining in the planning and implementation.

When changes in technology and regulation occurred, the association often responded to requests from members for help by sponsoring special meetings.

Several times, seminars were held to instruct managers and engineers on the Conelrad and later the Emergency Broadcast Systems. The original wartime plan began with the practice of keying transmitters in different locations to pass on information to the public. The Conelrad (Control of Electromagnetic Radiation) System of tuning to the designated areas of the radio dial was replaced by the EBS where certain control stations would become the conduits of emergency information in event of enemy attack, while other stations would go off the air.

Later, all stations became a part of a wide relay system utilizing the information from the regional control stations. The higher-power FMs started replacing the AMs in the statewide emergency plan.

The KBA and its executive director became the key respondents to the government demands for statewide emergency networks to be developed and practiced. With government and civil defense agencies relying on radio and TV stations for the immediacy of getting emergency information to the public, the KBA has been called upon to coordinate these national alert systems, first through the Conelrad System and later by adopting and implementing the statewide Emergency Broadcast System. During the tense Cold War years, the association even dispensed packets of information on surviving enemy bomb attacks. The KBA continues to be the conduit through which federal and state agencies work to get cooperation from all stations

and assure a firm plan is instituted, tested and properly used both on the state and national level. The executive-director disseminates the assignments for monitoring stations within the state and has helped through the years in conducting the periodic tests.

One national practice of the EBS system became one of the most talked about false alarms in radio history. On February 20, 1971, with stations anticipating a trial alert EAN (Emergency Action Notification) on their wires, instead came the "real thing" complete with the correct authenticator code words for an actual National Emergency Activation, not a test! The order was for all stations, except those specifically designated, to go off the air, advising the audience where to tune for information from the president on the national emergency. The notification arrived at 9:33 a.m. and left operators in a quandary, whether to treat it as a genuine emergency or not. Many stations made the fateful announcement and ceased regular broadcasts just as instructed. Well, it was indeed a major goof, caused by the wrong message being sent from the center at Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado, and at 10:13, the wires jingled with the cancellation of the notification.

While it was quite a scare for staffs and audiences alike, those who had treated it as the real emergency were applauded for not taking anything for granted.

The KBA also sponsored license renewal conferences, held periodically to keep owners abreast of changes when renewal time came around. These meetings were well-attended and often included mock FCC inspections, preparing broadcasters for the dreaded surprise FCC visit to examine station files and equipment. With the de-regulatory spirit in full swing in the 1980s and government budget cutbacks forcing staff reductions, fewer and fewer random inspections were made at stations.

Convention sessions and special programs on equipment and technical matters have always been popular as they impacted the broadcasters pocketbook and the station's sound. Automation systems were catching the eyes and ears of owners in 1974 when Henry Lackey organized a pre-convention demonstration of the equipment at the Holiday Inn in Lexington. That meeting drew a crowd of representatives from 90 stations to see the new innovations in studio operations.

The state association leadership seemed to develop a sense of duty in fulfilling the need for education and training in radio-TV, utilizing many resources in providing opportunity for all broadcasters to have the latest information and ideas for continuing education and specialized instruction.

In addition, Kentucky broadcasters have recognized the great contribution the state's higher education institutions have made to the advancement of the industry in the state with their degree programs in radio-TV. There

have been many areas of cooperation with the faculties of the public-supported and private colleges and universities.

## Scholarships

Although hampered by small financial resources, the KBA, since its beginning, has been interested in assisting aspiring broadcasters in their college careers.

A scholarship program of \$150 to a student at the University of Kentucky was established in 1951, with a second scholarship for an additional student added five years later. The KBA continued the grant at the same amount for more than 15 years, until other colleges also developed communications programs and a shortage of funds did not permit any expansion. The KBA would turn its attention to helping minority students in the 1970s with a visionary program that met with limited success.

As an outgrowth of the minority school in Louisville, the association sought agreements with colleges and took applications from minorities to assist a student through a radio-TV program. Both Lindsey-Wilson and Lees Junior College participated for a time, with KBA supplying several thousands of dollars in scholarship money. Wilfred Fisher and Charlotte Tharp assisted Bill Summers in overseeing the program that saw a couple of students aided before funds ran out, and it was discontinued in the summer of 1980. The KBA would go a decade before launching another scholarship effort.

With the bank account in good shape, some KBA directors had been calling for the renewal of a scholarship fund for several years. In 1991, a firm plan was developed and a committee formed, chaired by Carl Nathe of the University of Kentucky.

The scholarships would be for \$1000, awarded in the junior year to a declared radio-TV major in the communications program of any of the state universities. The stipend was renewable for the senior year as long as grade requirements were met. A formal application had to be made to the scholarship committee and two individuals each year would be chosen to receive a



KBA photo

*Lexington's Harry Barfield addresses a news and sales seminar. The annual KBA Scholarship is named in his honor. He served for more than 30 years as head of WLEX-TV.*

plaque and be recognized at the KBA convention. The applicants, each year, are required to get a recommendation from a faculty member, then be screened and judged on grades, extra-curricular activities and a desire to continue in broadcasting after graduation from college.

The scholarship program was named, as a memorial, after WLEX-TV manager and past KBA president Harry Barfield. The first scholarships were awarded in 1992, and then a change was made in 1993 to make eligible all serious broadcasting students at any college or university in the state with a broadcasting/telecommunications program.

Since the mid-1960s, youngsters who demonstrated an ability to communicate well have been assisted by the KBA, as the association yearly backed the State 4-H Talk Meet. Jack Farmer of Danville was instrumental in arranging and encouraging KBA participation with that support of 4-Hers continuing uninterrupted through the years. Kentucky broadcasters often provided the judges and moderators for the event. Early budgets for sponsoring the Talk Meet were around \$100 but have required an outlay of \$500 from the KBA yearly since 1983.

## Awards

Article XI of the KBA by-laws lists the official awards of the organization as the Al Temple Award, Kentucky Mike Award, Life Member Award, Distinguished Kentuckian Award, Meritorious Service Award and Community Affairs Award, with a brief explanation of each. The history of implementing the awards program is not quite as concise.

Until 1955 when the "Kentucky Mike Award" was established, there was no official designation of awards to be presented by the association. An honorary membership was occasionally bestowed on guests of the convention and politicians. In 1950, a special award was presented to Bill Ladd of the *Courier-Journal* for his interest and coverage of radio issues and the association.

Ladd would be one of the first six recipients of the "Kentucky Mike Award" presented at the April 1955 convention. First intended for individuals anywhere within and without broadcasting who might have made a contribution to the industry, the award seemed to evolve into presentations to broadcasters who had contributed to the industry through their KBA work.

Others honored at that first ceremony were Willis Munro, Ashland; Ken Sparnon, New York; Carl Haverlin, New York; Hugh Potter, Owensboro; and F.E. "Dutch" Lackey, Hopkinsville. Potter, the charter president, and Lackey were broadcasters. Haverlin and Sparnon were from the music licensing companies, BMI and ASCAP, respectively, while Munro

was an executive for Ashland Oil, a company that heavily backed the statewide sports networks.

Although records are incomplete of all the awards ever given by KBA, apparently only three other non-Kentuckians, Sol Taishoff of *Broadcasting* magazine, Ray Livesay, long-time president of the Daytime Broadcasters Association and James Quello, FCC commissioner, were ever given a “Kentucky Mike Award.” Three governors have been recipients, Bert Combs, Ned Breathitt and “Happy” Chandler, with Breathitt and Chandler having broadcast holdings in the state, and Chandler actually getting the award twice, once in 1956 and then again 30 years later. Broadcasters have never been known for having a good memory, it seems!

The list of “Mike” recipients began to show a heavy emphasis on the ownership/management side of the industry, especially those who have been active in the association itself over the years. No other non-broadcasters have been honored after that first group. A husband and wife team is included, with Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Potter. Cliffordean, in addition to assisting Hugh with KBA matters, hosted a long-running daily women’s program. She was honored with her “Mike” award nine years after her husband. There are some family ties in the award gallery. The father and son team of Clarence and Ed Henson is on the list. Henry Lackey presented his father, Hecht, to the broadcasters for recognition. In fact, three Lackey brothers — Pierce, “Dutch” and Hecht — received the award, all of whom at one time were not only managers of their stations in Paducah, Hopkinsville and Henderson but also had been mayors of their respective cities.

The original rules for the award called for a secret committee of three representatives of member stations from different geographical locations in the state to determine each year if anyone had made an outstanding contribution to the broadcasting industry in Kentucky or in the nation. Rules stated nominations should be reported to the president and acted on by the board of directors in executive session. That ideal may have been followed for a time until more streamlined measures of just using a secret committee to approve nominations became the usual procedure.

In 1960, the by-laws listed Honorary Membership as the association’s only other official award. It was to be given automatically to all members of Congress from the state as well as the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Speaker of the House and President Pro-Tem of the State Senate.

Prior to 1960, however, there are records of several honorary “Life Member Awards” given to retiring broadcasters, those who may have sold their stations, or those leaving the state for other ventures. Six such certificates were presented at a 1959 meeting in Louisville. This award has been given



*The Kentucky Mike Award is presented by founding father Hugh Potter (left) to Broadcasting magazine editor Sol Taishoff, one of the few Mike awards given to non-Kentuckians.*

to scores of retiring broadcasters through the years, though non-broadcasters such as advertising executives and others who have been involved in KBA as associate members have also been honored.

One particularly emotional night occurred in 1973 when Bill and “Boo” Betts of Maysville received Life Member Awards, and then turned and awarded plaques to the Potters, who had retired to Florida.

That “Life Member Award” was not officially codified until later when another honor, “Distinguished Kentuckian,” was instituted to recognized persons in or out of broadcasting who had attained a position of national prominence. Then in 1976, the board, approved two more awards, as recommended by a committee — the “Meritorious Service Award” and “Community Affairs Award.” Originally the board envisioned the service award to be given to individuals who had done something worthy of recognition not covered by other awards. It is now listed as an award to a person or station presented for high achievement or performance, such as outstanding news, programming, or technical achievements or specific meritorious service to the industry. The community award was to be given to stations or individuals who had done an outstanding job in informing their audience of emergency conditions or in some way done noteworthy service to their community. That definition has been refined to any station or individual who has



made exemplary contributions to their community of license or service area.

Nominations for the Community Affairs and Meritorious Service awards may come from fellow broadcasters, groups or individuals, and several are usually given each year. The first Service award in 1976 went to Cawood Ledford, while Alan Baker of WLBN Lebanon won a Community award, for his long-time work on the air. The next year, 16 stations were presented with the Community Affairs Award for their vigilance during the floods in southeastern Kentucky.

Still another official award was created, when upon the retirement of their executive secretary-treasurer, the association decreed that the "Al Temple Award" be given to any individual who had made outstanding contributions to the Kentucky Broadcasters Association over an extended period of time. This honor would go to those specifically rendering service to the KBA.

Others singular awards have emerged through the history of KBA on special occasions. A special silver tray award was given to Hugh Potter in 1957 for twelve years of executive service, first as president, then as secretary-treasurer.

An "Outstanding or Distinguished Broadcasters Award" has been created and given sporadically through the years including one to Louisville broadcasting pioneer Steve Cisler in 1979 after fifty years in the business. Veteran announcers Ted Grizzard and Tom Kerr, along with Renfro Valley's John Lair, have been similarly honored.

In 1986, a committee went beyond the distinguished Kentuckian award to present a "Kentuckian of the Century" honor on a special night in Lexington, to former broadcaster, baseball commissioner and governor, A.B. "Happy" Chandler. It was a night of many bestowals as "Mike" awards were given to Chandler, Jim Allison and Ralph Hacker, and "Al Temple" honors went to Harry Barfield and Walter May.

In 1980, the officers created a special plaque of "highest appreciation" for Senator Wendell Ford, recognizing his support and help in Washington.

Certainly the association has been generous in its numbers and types of awards, albeit sometimes confusing as well.

The list of Kentucky Mike Award recipients — Jim Allison, Lexington; Chuck Anderson, Bowling Green; Harry Barfield, Lexington; Bill Betts, Maysville; Lee Browning, Louisville; Jim Caldwell, Louisville; A.B. "Happy" Chandler, Versailles; Governor Bert Combs; J.B. Crawley, Campbellsville; Bob Doll, Frankfort; Bill Evans, Elizabethtown; Jack Farmer, Danville; Ralph Gabbard, Lexington; Bob Gardner, Louisville; Art Grunewald, Louisville; Ralph Hacker, Lexington; Carl Haverlin, New York;



KBA photo

***J.T. Whitlock, KBA's long-time executive director and treasurer, is honored with a print. KET's Len Press presides.***

Clarence Henson, Louisville; Ed Henson, Jr., Louisville; Ray Holbrook, Danville; Walter "Dee" Huddleston, Elizabethtown; G. Nolan Kenner, Somerset; Garvice Kincaid, Lexington; Phyllis Knight, Louisville; Bill Ladd, Louisville; F.E. "Dutch" Lackey, Hopkinsville; Hecht Lackey, Henderson; Pierce Lackey, Paducah, awarded posthumously; Mike Layman, Somerset; Cawood Ledford, Lexington; Ray Livesay, Mattoon, Illinois; Nathan Lord, Louisville; Walter May, Pikeville; Harry McTigue, Louisville; Willis Munro, Ashland; Gilmore Nunn, Lexington; Fred Paxton, Paducah; Katherine Peden, Hopkinsville; Jere Pigue, Lexington; Hugh Potter and Cliffordean Potter, Owensboro; James Quello, Washington; Roy Redmond, Maysville; Ed Shadburne, Louisville; J. Porter Smith, Louisville; W.P. Sosh, Russellville; Ernest Sparkman, Hazard; Ken Sparnon, New York; Bill Stakelin, Lexington; Charlie Stratton, Mayfield; Bill Summers III, Louisville, Sol Taishoff, New York; Al Temple, Bowling Green; Charlotte Tharp, Louisville; Jim Topmiller, Louisville; Bayard Walters, Hawesville; Don Wheeler, Lexington; J.T. Whitlock, Lebanon; Bill Whittaker, Morehead.

Those who have received the Al Temple Award, include Al himself, who spent his career in Bowling Green, influenced many broadcasters and guided the association as secretary and treasurer. He is often dubbed "Mr. KBA;" J.T. Whitlock, of Lebanon, executive-director and treasurer of KBA since 1980, and before that serving the association as editor and secretary; Jim Caldwell, long-time WAVE radio and TV executive who has advised and



KBA photo

*J.T. Whitlock (left) presents Al Temple with a book of testimonial letters on his retirement night in 1980. The Al Temple Award was created to honor the veteran leader of the KBA.*

guided the organization in a career than spans six decades; Harry Barfield, general manager of WLEX-TV who chaired numerous conventions and committees for KBA and helped to bring television into the mainstream of the association in its infant years; Fred Paxton of Paducah, part of a long line of an influential family who served the newspaper, radio and TV industry in western Kentucky for decades. As manager of WPSD-TV, he also played an active role in assisting KBA and encouraging television participation; Walter May of WPKE/WDHR Pikeville, not only served KBA in many capacities but is a past radio board chairman of the National Association of Broadcasters and recommended and implemented many improvements in KBA; Ralph Gabbard, president of WKYT-TV Lexington and WYMT-TV Hazard, who began his career in radio in 1963, has been active in many leadership roles with the association and in the NAB as well. All the honorees had outstanding tenures as president of the association.

Among those who have received the "Distinguished Kentuckian" honor have been Julian Goodman, Loretta Lynn, Senator Marlow Cook, Governor Louie Nunn, Rosemary Clooney, Tom T. Hall, Ricky Skaggs, Foster Brooks, David Dick and Adolph Rupp.

The KBA conventions have been the forum for the presentation of other

awards over the years related to broadcast performance. Originally known as the UK-AP awards, the Associated Press continues to honor news, sports and public affairs efforts of its member stations with awards presented at the association's fall meeting. Since 1960, The Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation has presented its Communications Award to an outstanding farm broadcaster yearly at the KBA Spring meeting. This practice was started by communications director Paul Everman of the Bureau and continued by Mike Feldhaus, who has himself received national awards in public relations and communication. Everman had started in radio as WLAP farm director.

From 1966-1973, the Elkins Institute presented awards to stations selected by the KBA who had made extraordinary efforts in educating the public during the previous year. From time to time safety awards, education awards and other special presentations by government bodies and organizations have been made at the KBA conventions, and many stations and individuals winning awards in other forums have been lauded by the state association during meetings and in the KBA newsletter.

The association has also given a past presidents citation with the name inscribed on a permanent plaque and certificates have been awarded in some years to outgoing members of the board of directors who have served their allotted two terms.

The KBA cooperates with the Kentucky Press Association and the University of Kentucky in selecting individuals for the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame established in 1981. Many broadcasters have been enshrined including Barney Arnold, Barry Bingham, Sr. and Barry Bingham, Jr., James Caldwell, Irvin Cobb, J.B. Faulconer, Livingston Gilbert, Julian Goodman, Al Smith, Jr., Cawood Ledford, Lawrence Hager, Jr., Bill Small, Mark Ethridge, Len Press, David Dick, Milton Metz, Gene Pell, Harry Barfield, Elmer Sulzer, Tom Hammond, George Hackett, Phyllis Knight, and Jane Morton Norton. (See Chapters 2-5 for details of their careers.)

David Carter, of Ashland, who headed his own advertising agency that dealt with broadcast clientele and spot creation has been inducted into the Kentucky Advertising Hall of Fame.

In the summer of 1987, the KBA Board of Directors approved the inauguration of a self-nominated awards program for member stations. These awards, to be presented at the spring convention, would go to radio and TV stations submitting entries for work done the previous year.

The competitive awards are — Best coverage of a news story; Best coverage of sports story; Local Involvement Award; Best locally-produced commercial; and Innovation Award for best idea at making or saving money. Four categories, three for various sizes of markets for radio stations and one

for TV stations, were created by the rules with an entry fee of \$20 to be charged. A "first place" and a "significant accomplishment" prize in the form of a plaque would be presented in each category, with the evaluation done by out-of-state judges.

KBA members admit response to the competitive awards has been lackluster. One year, the whole thing was completely overlooked.

## **Issues and Lobbying**

Resisting the tax man has been a continuing task of the association over its life span, and the problems began early when in 1947 the state defined radio stations as public service corporations and filed suit in Franklin Circuit Court to recover more than \$1.1 million from five networks and 16 radio stations. The rationale was the stations should pay franchise and gross receipts taxes such as paid by utility companies and the networks should pay income taxes on their earnings within the state. This was the first attempt by Kentucky to levy such a tax on the radio industry. The suit was dismissed the following April, but the battle against all manner of taxation and regulation at the state and federal level had begun.

In 1952, the association, along with WHAS, successfully intervened in an attempt by the city of Louisville to impose a tax on the WAVE-TV tower. The city had claimed the tower did not meet the definition of manufacturing machinery specifically exempt from local taxation.

Keeping that exemption for stations was an on-going battle for the KBA. A legislative committee was formed in 1962 to get a law passed specifically exempting radio/TV equipment from the taxes. After passing the House and Senate, Governor Combs vetoed that bill because an amendment had been added at the last minute to exempt all types of electronic equipment, not just those used by radio and TV stations. The Governor explained he wanted stations to have the exemption but that the bill had become too broad. He explained he would have the Revenue Cabinet exempt stations by regulation and felt indeed the equipment was "manufacturing" in nature, because he was one of the appellate judges who ruled on the Louisville TV tower case.

Later in the decade, the KBA was called upon to help WLEX-TV in similar circumstances of local tax assessors desiring to classify the equipment as taxable property. Finally, the 1970 Legislature put into law what the broadcasters felt they had achieved through the courts in '52 and by regulation in '62.

Early lobbying efforts by the KBA were loosely organized and generally involved reactive rather than any proactive efforts. When trouble raised its

head, a letter-writing campaign by member stations was launched and contact was made by officers with the governor or state legislators.

Many of the KBA efforts were centered on giving radio reporters and stations similar consideration and protection as afforded newspapers in the state. The KBA asked the legislature in 1950 to approve laws endowing radio people the same immunity as newspapers in not being forced to reveal their news sources. Other lobbying efforts would be made later to permit access to police reports and court records, including a 1978 resolution asking the judiciary to permit recorders and cameras in the courtrooms, since newspaper reporters had complete freedom.

One major effort to create legislation on behalf of broadcasters was made in 1956 when the KBA lobbied Governor A.B. Chandler and members of the General Assembly to pass legislation that would define libel in the state and offer the same protection provisions as newspapers. An NAB model libel document had been submitted for consideration and was finally passed.

The following year, a KBA committee was formed to seek better relations with the University of Kentucky, specifically to get equal access to news releases and more equitable treatment on press passes to ballgames. Passes and tickets to games would still be an issue some 20 years later.

Broadcasters have always sought a share of the legal advertising from government bodies and agencies, and in 1970 the KBA secured passage of legislation in the General Assembly that would permit such legal advertising on stations under certain conditions.

While seeking comparable treatment with the print media, radio-TV has also joined with the newspapers several times to lobby for common concerns. The KBA has often labored with the KPA (Kentucky Press Association) in such matters as promoting action to repeal laws prohibiting reporters using scanners, working on open meetings laws and developing statements of principles on handling criminal cases. Both organizations have lobbied against imposition of taxes on advertising.

In 1965, the KBA issued a lengthy document constructed with the KPA and reviewed by the Bar Association on principles for criminal case reporting, pre-trial publicity and conduct for juvenile hearings and trials.

The association has also joined the Cable TV Association in opposing unfair taxation of that industry.

For many years, the association maintained a sports committee to work on freedom of access to ballgames for radio and TV broadcast. KBA has remained at odds with those who want to charge fees for the right to air the games. Stations have resigned themselves to the fact that professional and college networks are going to extract these charges but have continued to

fight "rights fees" from local high schools. The fee imposition by the Kentucky High School Athletic Association for its tournament and playoffs was met with loud opposition from the KBA, but to no avail. Stations within KBA districts who broadcast games have worked together for many years, however, in trying to get fair phone and line charges and setting up trade-outs of phone lines to reduce broadcasting costs.

The KBA leaders realized the importance of maintaining good relations with state and federal office-holders and many were invited to address meetings and participate in receptions.

Through the first 20 years of the association, the attempt to influence legislation and regulatory procedures was done largely through passing resolutions by the entire membership for distribution to the proper parties. There was not always consensus on some matters, though, owing to the varied individual interests of stations. Especially on issues that might help some stations but restrict other broadcasters or potential broadcasters, the association did not always know whether to cast its lot for freedom or protectionism.

The first problem arose in the summer of 1949 on the issue of a method for better radio service to rural areas, either giving clear channels more power or creating more local nighttime stations. The membership approved a resolution favoring a bill before Congress to limit radio station power and break up clear channels. The convention, a few hours later, though, voted to reconsider their resolution, referring it to the executive committee for possible action in the fall, after Victor Sholis of WHAS, the state's only full-power clear channel station, threatened to withdraw from association membership. Sholis said he had no objection to individual stations opposing the bill, but challenged the propriety of a state association, made up of all types of stations, entering into what he called an intra-industry dispute.

A lesson had apparently been learned as, in 1965, the board backed away from a resolution to the FCC opposing the inauguration of certain 750,000-watt superpower stations. The members were encouraged to respond independently.

The WHAS incident marked the beginning of the sometimes perilous road the association would have to walk among the various special classes of stations within the body. Small markets, large markets, non-commercial and television stations, while retaining membership in the KBA, would often find it necessary to join or form groups with a more narrow focus.

A good example of this approach was seen in 1954, when 15 of the state's "class 4" 250-watt stations united in an effort to get their power raised to 1,000 watts. F.E. "Dutch" Lackey of Hopkinsville was the mainspring of what was dubbed Community Broadcasters Association, a national group he began forming after a meeting in Chicago. Other stations around the coun-

try joined those from Kentucky, obtaining data and testimony from engineers and from community leaders demanding a better signal to serve their communities. They were finally able to accomplish their objective. Likewise, many stations supported the efforts of the Daytime Broadcasters Association, formed to help the daytime only AM stations. Illinois broadcaster Ray Livesay was at the vanguard in getting daytimers more privileges from the FCC through the years.

The non-commercial broadcasters and television executives also participated in national groups that have been active at various times to achieve specific goals. A National Radio Broadcasters Association, Television Broadcasters and a National Educational Association of Broadcasters have been active in years past. A number of stations are members of the National Religious Broadcasters.

With the increase in the number of non-commercial educational stations in the 1960s, another potential problem of the interests of commercial broadcasters versus those relying on public, governmental and institutional help would become apparent within the association, although the tensions were small as both groups gave high priority to maintaining good relations.

The association has joined in lobbying efforts for government funding of public broadcasters through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting at the federal level and in the state through helping to establish the Kentucky Educational Television (KET) Network. The KBA continued to yearly support the fund-raising efforts of public radio and TV, including sending commercial broadcasters to work the KET telethons.

Several broadcasters in the state, beginning with the ground-breaking work of Len Press and Al Temple, helped to assure Kentucky had one of the best public TV networks in the country. The KBA was an early backer of legislation to create a statewide educational network. Temple, Walter May, Chuck Anderson and Steve Newberry have served on the governing board.

The KBA contributed \$100 to a group hoping to get legislation passed in the 1962 General Assembly and later adopted a stern resolution in 1965 strongly urging Governor Edward T. Breathitt to immediately allocate the funds and implement the TV plan that had actually been passed by the 1962 legislature.

Some concerns about involvement of business and industry in public broadcasting have been raised at board meetings and occasional complaints from members have been addressed. The first objections that occurred had to do with college and university stations broadcasting ballgames that were carried and sold to advertisers on local commercial stations. Other eyebrows were raised when some public stations began carrying underwriting announcements that appeared to be near commercial in nature.



When more universities began applying for high-powered FM licenses, some commercial broadcasters feared the competition for both audience and business support.

In January 1981, the board passed a resolution addressing what it considered to be the problem of some public stations compromising the basic goals of non-commercial educational-type broadcasting. This resolution was sent to Kentucky and Congressional officials as well as to the FCC and the Authority for Public Broadcasters.

The resolution took issue with many stations relying too heavily on business and industry underwriting for support when they were receiving tax dollars as well. It also reflected a concern for programming on some stations. The board felt many stations were not providing the quality alternative-type programming intended for public stations and instead may have been after a wider audience with formats not recognizably different from commercial stations. It was suggested each Kentucky public station have a written statement of its goals and purpose of service. The resolution recommended some state review where public funding was involved.

Later a proposal for a national experiment in running commercials on public stations, including KET, was particularly onerous to board members, but several discussions with Len Press, executive director of KET seemed to satisfy the concerns. Generally, open communication and cordial cooperation among commercial and non-commercial broadcasters kept relationships within the association smooth.

Until the National Association of Broadcasters was forced by courts to drop its endorsement of the Radio and TV codes of ethics in 1982, the KBA had strongly backed stations adopting those principles of practice, kept track of state subscribers and had actually helped to formulate some of the provisions. In 1970, the KBA newsletter reported 50 percent of the stations were subscribers to the NAB Radio Code of Good Practices.

A 1947 KBA resolution asking the NAB to modify some of its proposals would appear very odd to the broadcasters of today. These ideas included the elimination of “double-spotting” — or reading two commercials between network broadcasts — and urged cessation of the practice of interrupting news broadcasts with commercial announcements!

Through the years, broadcasters within the KBA have changed their attitude toward commercials, when their only revenue began coming from local advertising rather than networks. They have generally opposed any restrictions on commercials, including beer advertisements, and even parted company with the NAB when it agreed to a phase-out of cigarette advertising.

Fearing what it called “censorship,” the KBA passed a resolution in 1960



*KBA members have gone to Washington each year since 1967 and are considered one of the most influential state delegations. Broadcasters are shown here at the Capitol in one of the early trips.*

urging Congress not to appropriate money for an FCC Compliance and Complaints Department, since members felt the FCC already had sufficient staff to handle legitimate complaints. The Commission went on to step up its inspection and regulatory efforts, however, and many more battles would be waged until a period of deregulation in the 1980s.

After 1961, with the formation of a board of directors representing member stations, the official KBA position on issues would become the responsibility of the board rather than the membership acting as a body formulating resolutions. When there were no significant matters to be dealt with, most of the resolutions would involve offering congratulations or appreciation to individuals or groups.

Early in its history, the KBA relied heavily on the national organizations, like the National Association of Broadcasters, to deal with matters in Washington and to advise stations about matters before the Congress and Commission.

Then, in May 1967, the Kentucky Broadcasters Association responded to the need for more intensive and direct lobbying efforts in the nation's capital and Frankfort when they voted to sponsor a trip to Washington that summer and a meeting with newly elected representatives to the state General Assembly following the November elections. This historic move would be a signal the KBA was determined to become a more powerful influence as a trade association.

President J.T. Whitlock helped organize the Washington trip with expens-

es of the delegates, except for transportation, paid by the KBA. The friendship of secretary-treasurer Al Temple with Representative William Natcher of Bowling Green is said to have helped pave the way for the trip, and Natcher would assist the group with the logistics of the meetings each year until his death in 1994. The folks making the journey would meet with the Kentucky Congressional delegation for breakfast to discuss their concerns and problems, and hear about pending legislation.

The tradition of a yearly Washington lobbying trip had begun and continues to be the cornerstone of the KBA political efforts on behalf of state broadcasters. The method of the trip was altered in 1971 at the suggestion of President Bob Doll to take the entire KBA delegation into each individual office of the representatives and senators where a spokesperson would make the sales "pitch" to them backed by the rest of the group. This would give more time for direct responses and personal contact than the general breakfast meeting with everyone present.

The KBA's annual excursion is hailed by many as a model of effectiveness in lobbying efforts. Walter May of Pikeville comments that the methodology is considered by the national association as tops in the industry. He says Kentucky is seen by other states as having one of the best relationships with its Washington delegation. The National Association of Broadcasters has always provided assistance and support for the KBA trip, noting the current issues that should be discussed and educating the broadcasters on ways to present its case and support data. Ray Holbrook, who has served with the Radio Advertising Bureau and as officer in other state associations, says that many broadcasters refer to the manner of the Washington trip as the "Kentucky method," and it has been emulated by other groups.

The leadership has always felt the more people who traveled to the offices on Capitol Hill, the more impact it would have; thus all Kentucky broadcasters are invited, with board members and officers expected to make the trip if at all possible. Fifteen made the first journey and as many as 35 to 40 have gone in some years.

The trip has usually been a two-day affair with an afternoon devoted to preparation and any personal visits to the FCC, the NAB or other agencies. The second day has meant non-stop appointments at the offices of House members, then the Senate before catching the flight home that night.

Some adjustments to the custom have been made through the years including the scheduling of the Senate visits on the first day in Washington to allow more time in each office.

The event is planned well in advance with topics of discussion selected

by a KBA committee, resolutions adopted by the board, and appointments made by the president of various spokespersons. The Congressional delegation is given an advance copy of the problems to be addressed and the significant points that will be made. This preliminary work has been a key to the overall outcome of the trip according to Fred Paxton, a regular with the group for years. The response of each representative is noted and a complete report of the trip is published in the KBA newsletter. In addition, the KBA delegation strives to present a summarized list of public service efforts made by broadcasters in the state during the past year and ascertain from the Congressman the important problems and issues where he thinks stations may become further involved.

The success rate of the Washington lobby efforts has been quite remarkable, according to the NAB and others close to Capitol Hill politics. The broadcasters have generally found sympathetic ears in the offices of their representatives on matters pertinent to the industry. Executive director Whitlock feels that over the years that those making the annual junket have returned home satisfied over 90 percent of the time.

The KBA's stances on issues have usually been in line with the NAB positions in opposing unnecessary regulatory moves and helping to lighten the paperwork load and tax burden of radio and TV stations.

Early in the decade of the seventies, several concerns were raised about the growth of cable TV and its impact on the local commercial broadcasters. Nearly every year, the association would address those matters in the Washington trip. Additionally, controls on TV programming have generally been opposed.

When it came to de-regulation, the KBA was firm in support of lifting Fairness Doctrine provisions and lightening political broadcast rules.

On expansion of the industry, the board has espoused protectionism, favoring current ownership being allowed to own and control more stations, but generally being against additional radio and TV channels. The KBA opposed additional VHF channel drop-ins, and with the expansion of the FM band, insisted AM operators in those cities be given first priority.

Ownership and application procedures have lent themselves to some split opinions. When more diversity of ownership was sought by the government through tax breaks and preference for women, minorities and first-time owners, some investigations found abuses. The practice of individuals or groups filing applications without any means or desire to build the station, and just waiting to be bought out by others was particularly upsetting to established broadcasters. Rapid buying and selling of properties with questionable paper-only ownership to take advantage of tax breaks was also revealed.

The extension of license renewal periods, and the streamlining of appli-

cations and renewals and opposition to government fees have always been a part of the broadcasters' platform, and the KBA naturally has supported such efforts, both with resolutions and with some footwork in Washington.

As early as 1966, the KBA had pushed for a seven-year license for radio stations. In 1971, the board proposed that a bill should be formulated giving radio and TV some degree of protection and continuity with renewals, extend terms from three to five years, and eliminate the "self-invitation" to the public for complaints at renewal time. In 1975, the KBA reported all seven members of the Kentucky delegation to the House had signed to co-sponsor a bill granting the longer license term.

In 1981, the industry would get the seven-year term for radio, five years for TV and the renewal application reduced to "postcard" size.

In 1969, the board opposed the idea of limitation being placed on future ownership to one full-time radio or TV station in the same market. Such an idea, the broadcasters reasoned, would work against proven broadcasters moving into FM or TV ownership. As it turned out, cross radio-TV and newspaper ownership was restricted, but co-owned AM/FM stations in the same city were permitted.

While the KBA has always cooperated with the music licensing agencies ASCAP, BMI and SESAC, and worked with them in the principle of collecting copyright royalties for writers of broadcast music, the organization has joined NAB in adamant opposition to "performers royalty" bills, that have asked broadcasters to additionally pay the performer of the music a fee for broadcast use. Through the Washington lobbying, the KBA has been successful in convincing Kentucky's representatives and senators that there is no rationale for paying artists when they reap benefits from the airplay itself.

Legislators have naturally been urged to oppose any effort by the government to extract spectrum fees for the right to operate and to hold FCC fees and fines to broadcasters at reasonable levels. While KBA might have been successful in convincing their representatives, this did not always translate into the desired final outcome from Congress.

For the most part, the association has not taken stands on issues unrelated to the communications industry and has not endorsed candidates for office. In 1960, a resolution was passed by the members backing the state park proposals and bonding issue. However, in 1965, when the board of directors was asked to support a state bond issue, they refused and stated a policy of not getting involved in non-industry related matters.

Help for various candidates has come, though, through the TARPAC (Television and Radio Political Action Committee) program with individual

broadcasters being asked to donate to that national fund. Until public solicitation was banned, the KBA conducted campaigns for contributions from members with goals established each year by the NAB. The board still names a TARPAC chairman, but the fund-raising guidelines have been altered with no publicity allowed in association publications and contributions, as a result, have declined.

While there have been discussions about starting a PAC fund for state-wide candidates, the association has left contributions to these campaigns up to the individual broadcasters to make directly.

Through the years, the KBA has enjoyed mostly congenial relations with its politicians in Washington and in Frankfort. The early leaders of the KBA were largely Democrats, but the association became more diverse as it grew, and broadcasters looked for favorable rapport with politicians of both parties. When Republican Mitch McConnell of Louisville took over the seat held by a former radio man and KBAer "Dee" Huddleston in 1985, many broadcasters were distraught, and it took several years for relationships with the new senator to warm up.

It would be Republicans' freedom from big government and open market philosophy that helped fuel the de-regulation fire for broadcasters. But when those moves would also mean more stations and competition, therefore less revenue, it was a fire many broadcasters wished then they could extinguish.

The KBA delegation to the nation's capital dealt with some familiar faces since the late 1960s, as the same folks welcomed them into offices and usually could be counted on for help and friendship — long-time legislators like Carl Perkins, Ron Mazzoli, Carroll Hubbard and Wendell Ford, who later would have a seat on the important Commerce Committee and take the position of Senate majority whip. Hal Rogers, a Republican, was a radio man himself, and broadcasters felt he understood their needs readily.

In addition to the Washington trip, the KBA board has authorized special meetings in Washington on urgent legislation or regulations, and standing committees of broadcasters have in the past held meetings with the legislator from their respective districts.

When de-regulation at the FCC in the decade of the eighties brought some relief to worries of interference from Washington, greater attention was given to state legislatures, and KBA realized more clout would be needed in Frankfort. Lobbying efforts there continued to focus on preventing taxation, protecting broadcasters rights, and assuring Kentucky laws did not present conflicts with Federal statutes.

KBA has worked to clarify the imposition of sales and use tax on broadcasters for many of the services inherent to a station operation. The Ken-

tucky Revenue Cabinet has, at times, in its audits sought to collect use taxes on syndicated programs, music and ratings services. The problem seemed to crop up every four or five years whenever there was a change in administrations in Frankfort, and therefore a new interpretation of the matter. Broadcasters have always felt the items in question were leased and therefore not subject to sales and use tax. The KBA spent some \$5,000 in one such legal fight before prevailing in 1985. Action was taken again a few years later when some auditors wanted to collect sales tax on the news wire services of TV and radio stations.

Placing a sales tax on advertising that is sold has been a popular proposal floated by governors and politicians in Kentucky dating back to the 1960s. That idea to raise more revenue for the state has sent shock waves through the broadcast industry.

Governor Martha Layne Collins proposed such a tax in 1984, but without success. The advertising tax proposal brought some quick response from then KBA president Nolan Kenner, who marshalled the forces in a campaign to influence the vote against such a tax. A committee made up of Kenner, Ralph Hacker, Fred Paxton, Jim Ballard, Harry Barfield and J.T. Whitlock was appointed to make the daily decisions in the endeavor to defeat the tax. Letters were sent to all legislators, and member stations were informed of the proceedings. The KBA enlisted the help of other state associations who had been involved in similar fights.

This whole scenario would be repeated again during the 1990 General Assembly when Governor Wallace Wilkinson asked for the sales tax on services, including advertising.

By this time the KBA had enlisted the assistance of retired Louisville broadcaster Rodney Ford to become KBA lobbyist and work with their standing legislative committee. His input would help the association put together a widespread campaign to stop the tax.

Early that year, President Bill Evans brought the board of directors together in Frankfort to plan the strategy and again solicited help from other state groups who had faced the same struggle, as well as the NAB and some of the state's larger stations. The KBA forged alliances with the Kentucky Press Association and other service groups such as cable TV that stood to be affected by the sales tax. Since most media people have some direct contact with politicians, individual broadcasters were called upon to discuss the matter personally with their local representatives.

Realizing the legislature was after monies from additional taxes to support a Kentucky Education Reform Act to improve schools, the KBA aligned itself with a group "Kentuckians for Sound Education," putting

forth alternative proposals for funding schools including a penny addition to the state sales tax already in place. The resolution enacted by the KBA board pointed out the failure of taxes on advertising in other states and called the proposed tax economically unsound, administratively unworkable and discriminatory against Kentucky businesses. A delegation was sent to Frankfort to testify before the legislative committees on the effects of the "ad tax."

The KBA in a coalition with other media and service organizations won the fight against the sales tax on services, but not without incurring some huge costs. In all, the association figured it paid out more than \$100,000 of its "war chest" fund to tackle and defeat the legislation and defend itself in legal proceedings afterward.

The Kentucky Broadcasters Association was named in a suit brought by Robert Gable, state Republican chairman, who accused the member stations of broadcasting political announcements free and demanded equal time. The KBA had sent the spots for "Kentuckians for Sound Education" to stations for airing as a public service campaign. The FCC had ruled the spots were public service in nature with proper sponsor ID. A circuit court ruling affirmed the spots were public service and the suit was dismissed with prejudice on December 17, 1990. Jere Pigue, who had served as legislative committee chairman, helped direct the campaign and served as liaison with the KBA attorneys.

The association learned some lessons from the experience, especially about the financial toll of hard lobbying efforts and the need to get better estimates of costs from attorneys, experts and public relations groups before entering into agreements.

Following the death of Rodney Ford, the KBA, in 1993, hired Sam Thomas to work as its Frankfort lobbyist, and assist with the legislative committee of the association. One of the first orders of business was to assure the lawmakers brought Kentucky's charitable bingo laws into compliance with new FCC guidelines to allow non-profit bingo games and lotteries to be advertised on radio and TV.

## Services

In addition to looking out for the interest of broadcasters in the state, and conducting conventions and seminars, the Kentucky Broadcasters Association seemed to find a variety of ways to be of service to radio and TV stations, and to other groups.

Since 1968, a plan of health insurance has been offered to member stations for their employees through the KBA. The group policy has been mod-



ified and realigned several times in efforts to keep costs at a minimum and maximize its value.

The Kentucky Broadcasters Association is authorized to intervene in problems and complaints from the FCC Detroit or Chicago offices against stations within the state and seek agreements and solutions.

One of the original stated purposes for the group from the founding fathers was to educate the public and the business community concerning the uses and value of radio-TV advertising. While some special radio month campaigns were sponsored in early years, more detailed plans on promoting electronic media use among potential advertisers have never really developed, despite good intentions.

The association has been active in offering the services of stations to organizations wishing to get their message out to the public. The KBA has endorsed and helped facilitate numerous public service and safety campaigns over the years with distribution of spot announcements and through encouraging member stations to underwrite many of these efforts with donated spots for such causes as G.E.D., drug abuse, traffic safety, tourism, get out and vote, and others.

The association has also helped stations obtain paid advertising on occasion, from KET, the Kentucky State Fair and other groups.

Besides supplying some programming from conventions, the KBA for many years worked with the State Fair in production of a talent show for live broadcast on a network of radio stations. The Rural Electric Co-ops of the state provided sponsorship, while individual stations sold the remaining commercial inventory and helped provide the talent from contestants selected to represent their stations. KBA backing began in 1961 and continued through that decade. The association also helped with lining up stations for other live State Fair broadcasts, including the popular reports of Louisville TV personalities Barney Arnold and Julie Shaw. These shows were sponsored for several years by Standard Oil.

The KBA has helped to conduct surveys among station operators and provided mailing lists and information about its member stations to groups seeking assistance and has served over the years as the representative of the broadcast industry in the state at various committee meetings and formal functions.

The organization made some small attempts toward preserving the heritage of the communications industry in the state. A call by Hugh Potter, a past president of the Kentucky Historical Society, in 1971, to establish a Library of Sound at Western Kentucky University with archival tapes, and broadcast files was largely ignored, however.



*Socializing at the National Association of Broadcasters Convention are Jim Allison, veteran Lexington radio and TV executive; Connie Joiner, of WVLK and KBA's first female president; and Eddie Fritts, NAB president.*

In 1977, the board sanctioned an idea from James Harris of Eastern Kentucky University to have a KBA Hall of Fame at the Richmond campus. The Communications Department collected pictures of past presidents and KBA activities and set up a display. A special Hall of Fame day was held at EKU in 1984 with association members on hand to see the pictures and tour the department. There was weak support from the KBA and after some personnel changes and a building move at Eastern, the display no longer exists.

The association sponsored a special "old-timers" reunion suite at the 1981 convention in Owensboro, and interest in the past was piqued. The board went on to appoint an historical committee that year but nothing materialized.

KBA has lent support to the collection of old programming tapes submitted by several radio and TV stations to the University of Kentucky Library. Stations have unlimited access to all the material. Terry Birdwhistell, the director of special collections at the King Library, has praised the Kentucky Broadcasters for their support. Tours of the archives have been given to board members and \$6,000 was appropriated by the KBA to the project.

Through the years, Kentucky Broadcasters have been called upon to endorse services that were being or might be offered to its members. The board has been ambivalent about this at times, but generally cooperative when it was an opportunity that would serve the public or save members time or money.

In 1994, the board endorsed support of an exchange plan with radio stations in the former Soviet republics, spearheaded by Ed Shadburne, and

designed to allow their broadcasters to come to the state to observe and obtain ideas and training.

Part of the KBA platform from the beginning was to act as a regional contact for the National Association of Broadcasters and in addition to providing stations information from NAB, the state has made significant contributions to the national organization from the beginning. Besides the early work of Mark Ethridge and Neville Miller, Kentucky has sent its home-grown broadcasters to serve in several positions at the national level.

Kentuckians who have moved up to the NAB radio and TV board of directors over the years have been — Jim Caldwell, Louisville; Bill Evans, Elizabethtown; Ralph Gabbard, Lexington; “Dutch” Lackey, Hopkinsville; Nathan Lord, Louisville; Gilmore Nunn, Lexington; Clyde Payne, Bowling Green; Hugh Potter, Owensboro; Al Temple, Bowling Green; Bud Walters, Hawesville; J.T. Whitlock, Lebanon; Donna Zapata, Louisville.

Bill Stakelin, formerly of Bluegrass Broadcasting, Inc., went on to become NAB board chairman and then head the RAB (Radio Advertising Bureau). Eddie Fritts became joint board chairman, then president of the National Association of Broadcasters beginning in 1982 through the present. Fritts owned a part of his father’s Paducah station for a time. Walter May of Pikeville served on the NAB board and in 1978 became radio board chairman. D.J. Everett of low-power TV-43 in Hopkinsville and active in KBA, was elected president of the National Community TV Broadcasters Association in 1989.

The Louisville chapter of the American Women in Radio and TV has produced some national leaders. Sondra Lee of S A Communications has been regional vice-president and national president in 1994. Charlotte Tharp of WHAS also served as president in 1982. Lynne Christensen of Immediate, Inc., Stephanie Dumeyer of WAVE and Jane Vance of WHAS have all served as national vice-presidents in various areas for AWRT.

Vance started at WHAS in sales in 1978, but her career in radio was aided by the KBA in the early 1950s. She was one of the first recipients of the \$150 scholarships for a radio arts student at UK and she gratefully remembers that it paid all the tuition back then.

## Epilogue

As a new generation of broadcasters takes its place in leadership roles in the radio-TV industry in Kentucky, it appears ready to move the state association toward new horizons. The KBA has hired a full-time executive-director, Gary White of Frankfort, ready to take over the office in 1995, moving the headquarters to that city. J.T. Whitlock was asked to remain as

government liaison for the association.

Armed with financial resources, KBA members seem likely to investigate other areas of service for the 50-year old organization.

Throughout its history, the KBA has undergone a metamorphosis from what veteran Jim Caldwell has called "a social fraternity" to "full-fledged trade association." Bob Doll, who became publisher of the national *Small Market Radio Newsletter*, sees KBA as one of the best state groups in the nation. Those sentiments have been echoed by Eddie Fritts, president of the National Association of Broadcasters, for he pictures the association's relationship with its Congressional delegation as an example to other states. Fritts has complimented the KBA leaders and Whitlock for developing "probably the best grassroots system of lobbying in the country."

Walter May, in his national contact with other broadcasters, has said he believes Kentuckians can be proud of what is a "model association." NAB television leader Ralph Gabbard says the KBA has become much more "professional" over the years and continues to make strides in that area, especially with its strong lobbying positions. Others agree the KBA has become more and more targeted toward industry needs through the decades, advancing from the early close-knit gathering of radio owners to a diverse group of communicators and associates to steer an industry so vital to the state and nation on a steady course of progress.

If it can be said that broadcasting just "gets in your blood" then perhaps it might also be said that, in the bluegrass state, the Kentucky Broadcasters Association was often the heart that pumped the blood through the veins.



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