

## KWGN(TV) starts with a bang

Denver woke up last Monday morning (March 7) to find KWGN-TV, a bright new independent color-TV station in town, and an all-out promotional campaign to tell viewers about it just in case they hadn't noticed.

But for KWGN's new owners it had been a nerve-wracking weekend of gambles and miracles to transform what until a week earlier had been KCTO. It was possibly one of the fastest and most complete station operational and format shifts ever recorded following the FCC's approval of a sale.

KCTO's former staff has been retained and is being enlarged.

WGN Continental Broadcasting Co., through subsidiary WGN of Colorado Inc., won approval from the FCC on Friday afternoon, March 4, to purchase KCTO for \$3.5 million from J. Elroy McCaw. By suppertime that same night the sale was consummated in Denver and the WGN group had assumed control.

With the FCC's announcement coming like a starter's gun in a race, supervisors in all aspects of TV-station operation were flying to Denver from WGN-TV Chicago to work with the KWGN staff over the weekend. Pre-packaged new program formats and schedules, rate cards, color videotape and film equipment, much other technical gear and new studio scenery and sets (plus the extensive promotional campaign) popped out of storage from various sites in Denver and Chicago to help effect the 48-hour transition.

**Plan Ahead** ■ Originally the changeover had been planned to take place in a 10-day period but Ward L. Quaal, WGN Continental president and general manager, subsequently decided on the condensed transformation as the FCC's action on the purchase took longer than first anti-

ipated. Advance preparations for any station changeover are difficult since FCC rules forbid new owners to use the station's premises until after the approval is announced.

In this case the prospective new owners set up their operations at the Denver Hilton hotel following the



announcement of their bid to buy the station last Sept. 7. Dick Jungers, formerly WGN-TV vice president and general sales manager, who now is KWGN's vice president and general manager, moved to Denver last fall and began an exhaustive round of research and contacts to learn of Denver's programming needs and interests.

This past weekend he was joined by about 20 WGN-TV people who moved into KCTO with him to help change the station into KWGN effective 6:25 a.m. Monday morning. Most returned to WGN-TV last week.

**Higher Rates** ■ KWGN's new rate card shows the basic one-time class AA prime time rate is \$850, up from KCTO's \$425. One-minute prime rate is \$275, up from \$100. The new KWGN rate card also popped up on agency desks all over the country first thing last Monday morning along with the new KWGN program schedule.

The equipment dispatched to KWGN

from Chicago included a fully equipped mobile unit with three live monochrome cameras. They went immediately into action last week covering the state high school basketball tournament after Mr. Jungers obtained what was claimed to be the first local-TV coverage rights.

On Monday morning the new KWGN "counter programming" format unfolded with added accent on news, new children's programs and family-type shows plus public-service features. Denver's three other TV stations are all network affiliates. At the same time Monday morning the Denver market was hit by the big promotional barrage too, including heavy use of local radio.

All of the promotion had been planned and made ready in advance with the help of Sam Lusky Associates, Denver agency. About \$25,000 is being spent on advertising for the first four weeks alone. The theme: "Switch to the New View on Channel 2."

King-size bus cards, illuminated taxi displays and a large diorama at the airport augment the heavy radio and newspaper schedules. On radio from 20 to 70 spots weekly are being used for four weeks on KHOW, KIMN, KDEN, KOSI, KLAQ and KFML. Some stations refused the KWGN business, it was indicated.

Last Thursday (March 10) Mr. Quaal announced officially the change of corporate name of WGN Inc. to WGN Continental Broadcasting Co. It continues as a subsidiary of The Tribune Co., holding company with some two dozen subsidiary firms in the U. S. and Canada, including the *Chicago Tribune*.

WGN Continental embraces WGN-AM-TV; Mid-America Videotape Productions; KDAL-AM-TV Duluth, Minn.-Superior, Wis.; WGN Televents Inc. (a community antenna TV firm), KWGN, and WGN Continental Sales Co., a station representative firm with offices in New York and Chicago.

wise is simply to evade our responsibilities."

He also saw sharp distinctions between the NBC, WBC and GE cases, on the one hand, and WGMA, on the other. While NBC was negligent in not discovering that the quiz shows were rigged, he said, it had no part "in the lies and deceptions" practiced by Messrs. Barry and Enright. Furthermore, he said, the commission, in renewing NBC's licenses, gave weight to the network's "long and meritorious past conduct." No such mitigation exists in regard to WGMA, he said.

Messrs. Barry and Enright acquired the station in 1957.

The commission's actions in renewing WBC and GE licenses were based on the companies' "long-term excellent broadcast records, coupled with the consideration that the misconduct was not in the broadcast field."

Commissioner Bartley also would have affirmed the commission's earlier decision. He said he doesn't agree with "the newly announced policy of disregarding misconduct which occurs outside the operation of a broadcast station."

## FCC sticks to its urban-suburban policy

The FCC last week denied petitions for reconsideration of its policy statement issued to help it determine when an applicant for a suburban community really intends to serve the community, and when he is a big-city applicant in disguise.

Under the new policy, the commission will question the genuineness of a suburban application if the proposed