

MOLINE'S HOMETOWN STATION

Dave Coopman

WQUA



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My deepest gratitude goes to John Flambo for providing so much information on his father and pictures from Verne Flambo's early days of promoting both WQUA and various stage presentations; and to Phil Roberts for doing a superb job of proofing the manuscript and offering advice from his many years in broadcasting and journalism.

DEDICATION

This publication is dedicated to the memory of G. LaVerne Flambo: the promoter, the impresario, the most-remembered owner and manager of WQUA radio, the mentor, the civic leader, the philanthropist.



INTRODUCTION

While serving as president of the Rock Island County Historical Society from 1981-83, I made a comment to the Society's archivist that we should have some information on every significant business in the area. The archivist invited me to pick a business and write about it.

After the Society's library addition had been built in 1992, I again made that comment and was again invited to pick a business or subject, research it, and write about it.

During the winter of 1996, I began researching the history of Davenport radio station KSTT. Over the next two and one-half years, I had compiled enough information about that station that I published a book about its history and some of the people who worked there. A few of those same people had also worked at Moline's WQUA and thought it would be a great idea if I could do the same type of project on that station.

Combing the files of the Society's library, I found very little information on WQUA, nor any material on its owners – especially its most significant owner, G. LaVerne Flambo. This is an effort to supply the Society with a chronological history of Moline's original radio station and the people who gave the station its identity, as well as provide the local history or broadcasting buff with an overview of what radio broadcasting was like in its earlier days.

And because Verne Flambo was considered by many as *the* impresario of entertainment in the Quad City area, his booking activities must be included with the history of WQUA. Many of those visiting entertainers were heard in interviews aired on WQUA. More importantly, and because of his long association with the station (with apologies to the Small family), Verne Flambo was considered by many in the area to be synonymous with WQUA. Mention either and the other came to mind.

This is by no means a complete history of the station. Having no complete listing of employee records available, there are many people who are not included in the research. Some did not stay at the station long enough to have an impact on its history. Some did not have much public information available. Many of those known have died, did not reply to inquiries, or could just not be found.

Please keep in mind that while every effort was made to note exact dates, some may not be quite correct, as memories do fade after many years, or the precise dates could not be determined from the information available. There were several periods where no viable information could be found.

Broadcasting magazine and yearbooks, city directories, newspaper articles, ads and program listings, the Internet, letters, E-mail, interviews and phone conversations made up the bulk of the research for this project.

A word about pictures used in this research. Images were obtained through many sources: the internet, newspapers, former employees and an occasional magazine. Several were of rather questionable quality, but were used as I could not find better pictures of the subject. Also, ownership of any material that might be copyrighted stays with the owner.

Regardless of some of the research limitations, I think the reader will find this an interesting history on a unique piece of Quad City media, its owners and its personnel.

Dave Coopman

1946-1949

RADIO ARRIVES IN MOLINE

Prior to World War II, the Quad-Cities had but two radio stations. Davenport's WOC signed on the air in 1922 and was the first duly licensed radio station west of the Mississippi River. Rock Island's WHBF (now WKBF) first broadcast in 1925.

As the United States entered the war, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) froze applications and grants for new stations. The Commission lifted its wartime ban on licensing new broadcast facilities in October of 1945 and was deluged with applications for new stations all across the country. As the Commission sifted through the glut of applications and began awarding construction permits, two were granted locally – one each for Davenport and Moline.

On April 10, 1946, the Commission granted a permit to the Moline Broadcasting Co. for constructing an AM broadcasting station on 1230 kilocycles with a power of 250 watts. The frequency assignment was for local service, which meant the station was designed to serve primarily the city of Moline and the areas contiguous to it. Maximum power was to be no more than 250 watts and the station was to have unlimited operating hours.

Estimated construction cost of the new station was \$9,800, but that figure did not include the land or buildings. Offices and studios were located at 1319 5th Avenue, in a building that was dubbed Radio Center. The transmitter and tower were located in the 3,000 block of 7th Street.

In its original application, the company had requested the call letters WDRM, standing for Davenport, Rock Island and Moline, but the Commission assigned the call letters WMOI.

Owners of Moline Broadcasting Co. were Bruff Olin Jr., 90 percent; G. Decker French, 5 percent; and Howard Eckerman, 5 percent.

Bruff Olin came to Moline from Bridgeport, Conn., where he had served as general manager of WNAB Radio. He was a Grand Rapids, Mich., native and a graduate of Fordham University. He had worked in broadcasting since 1933, in both announcing and business management. Olin began his career at KVOO in Tulsa, moved to WFBL in Syracuse, WKIP in Poughkeepsie, and then was hired as the station manager of WGNV in Newburgh, N.Y. In the early 1940s he became general manager of the Bridgeport station.



Bruff Olin and the construction permit for his new, unnamed radio station.

Before the 91880

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D. C.

In re application of)
MOLINE BROADCASTING COMPANY) FILE NO. 34-P-3876
MOLINE, ILLINOIS) DOCKET NO. 6699
For Construction Permit)

S E E E

At a session of the Federal Communications Commission, held at its office in Washington, D. C., on the 10th day of April, 1946:

The Commission having under consideration the petition of Moline Broadcasting Company for reconsideration and grant of its above-described application for construction permit for new standard broadcast station at Moline, Illinois, using 1230 kc, 250 w, unlimited;

IT IS ORDERED, That said petition and application be, AND THEY ARE HEREBY, GRANTED.

BY THE COMMISSION

T. J. Slawie
Secretary



BRUFF W. OLIN, Jr.
PRESIDENT-TREASURER, GENERAL MANAGER

RADIO CENTER
MOLINE, ILLINOIS
Phone: MOLINE 7000

G. Decker French was a director of the French & Hecht Manufacturing Co. of Davenport, and was president of Central Engineering Co., a Davenport paving and construction firm. Howard Eckerman was a Davenport attorney and partner in the Eckerman and Hart law firm.

During June of 1946, the owners decided that WMOI weren't the best call letters and began looking for a better "name" for their station. Since the station was located in the Quad Cities, it only seemed appropriate that Quad Cities might somehow figure into the station's call.

Olin discovered the call letters WQUA, but they were assigned to a sheriff's office radio in Hagerstown, MD. He wrote the sheriff and received his agreement to give up those call letters so that Moline Broadcasting could use them. A letter was sent to the FCC on July 9, formally requesting that WMOI be changed to WQUA. The FCC agreed to the change on August 3.

LAW OFFICES
GEORGE B. PORTER
EARLE BUILDING
WASHINGTON 4, D. C.
DISTRICT 4743

CHARLES E. THOMPSON

July 9, 1946

Mr. T. J. Slowie, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Washington 25, D. C.

Attention: Miss Fairfax

In re: Moline Broadcasting Company,
Moline, Illinois (File No.
B4-P-3678)

Dear Sir:

Moline Broadcasting Company, which was recently granted construction permit for new standard broadcast station in Moline, Illinois, to be operated on the frequency of 1230 kc., 250 watts power, unlimited time, and to which there was assigned by the Commission the call letters WMOI, hereby requests that these call letters be changed to WQUA. This call (WQUA) is presently assigned to the Municipal Police Station, Washington County, Maryland. There is attached hereto photostatic copy of a letter from the Sheriff of Washington County, indicating that they are willing to release use of WQUA and have the Commission assign other call letters.

Very truly yours,
George B. Porter
George B. Porter,
Attorney for Moline
Broadcasting Company.

Enclosure.

cc Mr. John B. Huyett,
Sheriff of Washington County,
Hagerstown, Maryland.

Comd

REC-117
JUL 10 11 57 AM 1946

WQUA signed on the air on September 23, 1946. The station's first personnel roster included: Bruff Olin, president and manager; Dorothy Morris, bookkeeper; Kay Liljequist, continuity writer; Jean Showalter, secretary; Wendell Porter, programming; Wayne Perkins, announcer; George Travis, chief engineer; Chet Andrews, announcer; Ralph Willey, announcer; Roy "Bud" Dawson, sports announcer; Walter Bufe, engineer; Bob Haydon, engineer; Ed Masters, news editor; Donald Stevens, program director; Gareth Linder, engineer; Marvin Rosene, sales manager; and Evelyn Cohen, secretary.

The station operated as an independent through the end of 1946. Because it had no network programming at this point, the station aired locally produced news, sports, public affairs shows, recorded music and programs provided by the World Transcription Service. These programs were syndicated transcribed programs consisting of vocalists, bands, drama, comedy, and quiz shows that were not aired on any network affiliate. The programs were in fifteen or thirty-minute blocks of time and generally offered at least one commercial break, as well as an opening and closing "billboard" which would be sold to local sponsors.

SCHEDULE FOR FIRST DAY OF BROADCASTING

6:44 a.m.	First Sign-On	4:00 – 5:00	Afternoon Tunes
6:45 – 8:00	Introduction	5:00 – 5:15	Dawson on Sports
8:00 – 8:05	News	5:15 – 6:00	Organ Reveries
8:05 – 9:30	Introduction	6:00 – 7:15	Music for Dining
9:30 – 11:30	Musical Review	7:15 – 7:30	World of Song
11:30 – 12:15	Ask Me Another	7:30 – 10:00	Columbia Masterwork
12:15 – 12:30	News	10:00 – 10:15	News
12:30 – 3:00	Club 1230	10:15 – 11:00	Serenade
3:00 – 4:00	Community Hour	11:00 p.m.	Sign-Off

One of the first announcers at WQUA was Wayne Perkins. He was from the Clinton area and at 18 years of age, he helped put Clinton's KROS Radio on the air in 1940 as its first announcer. When the United States joined World War II, Perkins enlisted in the Army Air Corps in hopes of becoming a pilot. His piloting skills were evidently too good, as the Army named him a flight instructor. After leaving the service in 1945, he returned to Clinton and approached KROS for a job. He found there were no openings at that station, but heard about a new station in Moline that would soon begin broadcasting. He came to town and was hired by WQUA.

"I had a long shift doing two shows, 'Moments to Remember' and 'Melodies at Midnight,'" Perkins recalled. "And Olin was a stickler for doing things his way. The announcers and newscaster would stand to allow for proper breathing techniques. This worked until news copy started falling on the floor, then the newsman got to sit. Announcers were not allowed to insert any sort of personality on-air. The music director would pick all the music, the engineer would sit at the control board, play the records and ride gain on the program, and the announcer was just a voice to tell the audience what selection was being played.

"It was after one of WQUA's Christmas parties that Olin began to let some personality on the part of the announcers enter into the broadcasts. I was a musician and began playing the piano and singing. Evidently Olin liked what he heard and realized we could be more than just voices, and it was due to that party that some of our personality entered our shows," Perkins stated.

A program which first aired on WQUA in late 1946 led to a 20-year run for that show. Orville "Porky" Meyers was the newly elected president of the Moline Conservation Club, and felt the club needed members and publicity. Meyers approached Bruff Olin and asked if he could start a program that would feature hunting and fishing tips. Olin agreed, and "Outdoor Future" was born.

Meyers would not only discuss various hunting and fishing topics, but would invite other noted local sportsmen to talk about equipment, procedures and great hunting and fishing spots. Meyers made local outdoorsmen aware of the concept of conservation long before the subject of the environment ever became an important public issue. "Outdoor Future" began as a 15-minute

sustaining program but later gained a sponsor, the Moline Maid-Rite sandwich shops. By 1947, Meyers had teamed with his outdoor partner, Harry DeLeon, and the show became known as "Along the Outdoor Trails with Porky and Ponce."



On January 1, 1947, WQUA began an affiliation with the Mutual Broadcasting System after negotiations with the Columbia Broadcasting System had fallen through. This affiliation seemed slightly strange, as Mutual already had an affiliate in Davenport's KSTT. With WQUA joining the network, Mutual had two outlets just several miles apart. Normally, a radio network would not affiliate with two stations in so close a proximity to one another. It must be assumed that because KSTT was a daytime-only operation that signed off the air at sundown, and as WQUA was licensed as a full-time operation, Mutual allowed this dual station affiliation in order that the network's evening program offerings could be heard throughout the area as well.



Over the coming months, WQUA was gaining acceptance by both listeners and advertisers. Programming was constantly revised to reflect the changing audience tastes and the further refinement of radio broadcasting as a whole. In its effort to satisfy its listeners, WQUA even went to the trouble of placing ads in the local newspapers with surveys to be filled out and returned, asking people what types of programs and music they preferred to hear.

Some of the more popular programming on the station was sports. WQUA carried a variety of major league baseball games, both live and by re-creation using the Western Union ticker and sound effects. It also carried many of the local high school and college football and basketball games. Station sports director Bud Dawson performed the baseball re-creations, called the play-by-play action of the local games and presented many interview segments with the local team's coaches.

WQUA also aired the games of the Tri-City Blackhawks, one of the original NBA professional basketball teams. Again, Dawson provided live play-by-play and interviews with the team's coaches and players.

Staff members began moving on to other stations around this time, as was the norm in the broadcasting business. New stations were signing on all around the country and needed personnel with broadcast experience. With offers of more money, a chance to return to certain parts of the country or the opportunity to work at a station in a larger market, the WQUA staff began to reassemble itself.

In the case of engineer Gareth Linder, graduation from Augustana supplied the reason for his departure. Linder was a college senior when he was hired as a transmitter engineer. Working nights allowed him time to do his college study and get paid for it.

When asked if he played commercials or aired transcriptions from the transmitter site, Linder replied, "No, all we did at the transmitter was routine maintenance and take the FCC-required transmitter readings every half hour. The transmitter engineer did switch to the network feeds and back to the local studio at appropriate times, though. Everything else was done downtown."

After graduation, Linder worked at radio stations in Woonsocket, R.I. and Quincy, Mass., before settling in at WBZ in Boston. When WBZ-TV went on the air, Linder became a video engineer. He retired in 1986 from that station, where he was crew chief of the videotape department.

In February 1948, a gentleman who would come to figure greatly in the future history and progress of WQUA joined the station as commercial manager. G. LaVerne Flambo was raised in Davenport, graduated from Davenport High School and attended Augustana College where he studied music. He had high hopes of becoming an opera singer. In his teens, Flambo won the Midwest Regional Talent Finals and the Atwater-Kent talent audition on radio.

Realizing that a career in opera was not in the offing, Flambo accepted a sales position with the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Co. in Fairfield, Iowa. He was also elected exalted ruler of the Fairfield Elks Lodge. It was in Fairfield that his interest in becoming an entertainment promoter began.

When he joined the Elks, Flambo discovered there were more than 100 delinquent members. To encourage members to pay up, he brought in a popular orchestra for a free dance. Pay up they did, and Lodge membership grew to more than 700 members, thanks partly to the entertainment he booked for Lodge dances and parties.

He also began booking shows at the Ottumwa, Iowa, Coliseum. Why Ottumwa? There were 2,500 Naval cadets taking flight training, stationed at what is today the Ottumwa airport. Those cadets were a ready-made audience for any kind of entertainment. Flambo also started booking musical and dramatic shows into the Burlington Arena and Davenport's RKO Orpheum and Masonic Temple at this same time.

In January of 1947, Flambo accepted the position of public relations director for the Davenport Chamber of Commerce. He held this position until joining WQUA. He replaced the previous commercial manager, Marvin Rosene, who became Olin's administrative assistant.

At the time Flambo joined WQUA, he was still in charge of producing the Davenport Chamber of Commerce's big Mississippi Valley Food and Home Show. The featured entertainment for the event was Ralph Edwards and his "Truth or Consequences" radio show, which had been booked by Flambo for a seven-day run at the Davenport Masonic Temple auditorium.

"Truth or Consequences" was a very popular NBC radio program that had been on the air since 1940. The premise was for contestants to answer questions posed by Edwards. If they did not answer correctly in the allotted time, the contestants were given outlandish "consequences" to perform, from hitting others with pies in the face to swapping clothes with other contestants to washing elephants. Usually the questions were rigged so that there was no way the contestant could answer before "Beulah the buzzer" signaled that time had run out.

Edwards and his staff performed up to seven shows per day while at the Food and Home Show, and two of the shows were broadcast live from Davenport over the NBC network. More than 45,000 people had seen the program in person during "Truth or Consequences" visit to the Quad-Cities.



On the left, Ralph Edwards broadcasting his NBC show from the Masonic Temple.

On the right, WQUA sales manager Verne Flambo.



In early 1948, Gene Osborn joined WQUA to assist Bud Dawson with his sports announcing duties. Osborn would help with Davenport Pirates games, provide color commentary on basketball

games, and when the station scheduled double-header basketball coverage, Osborn would call the action on one game while Dawson called the other.

It was also in early 1948 that announcer Wayne Perkins decided he needed more money than was currently offered and resigned from WQUA. He returned to KROS as its program director and later worked at KCLN in Clinton, KXEL in Waterloo and at KWNT in Davenport.

As noted, Perkins was an accomplished musician on many instruments, as well as a singer. He performed with various bands and even wound up with one that became rather famous.

"I played for a whole two weeks with Lawrence Welk up in Fargo, N.D., and that was two weeks too long. I played an upright bass and was in competition with the big tuba. I mainly wanted to sing and not knowing he had a polka band, there were not that many songs I liked to sing or kinds of music I liked to play, so I went to greener pastures," Perkins stated.

Perkins and wife Rosemary, also a musician, put many different musical groups together and toured the club and lounge circuit across the country. During the '60s, The Rosemary Wayne Trio played all the top nightspots in the Quad-Cities area. Tiring of living on the road, Perkins and his wife opened a decorating shop with Perkins doing all the woodworking. Today he is retired and lives in Moline.

Departing the station about this same time as well were chief engineer George Travis, who was replaced by Larry Lynch, and program director Don Stevens, who was replaced by Jack Davis. Lynch had been an engineer with the Voice of America and, most recently, at KSTT in Davenport. Davis had been at Denver, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Columbus and Detroit stations.



On the left is chief engineer Larry Lynch at studio B master control. The control board appears to be homemade. In the center is morning announcer Jack Davis. On the right, sports director Bud Dawson.

In June of 1948, Moline held its centennial celebration, and WQUA figured in the festivities in a big way. Bruff Olin and Marvin Rosene were on the centennial committee and planned most of the entertainment. Besides covering the many events of centennial week, the station aired interviews with the visiting Hollywood personalities by morning show host Jack Davis. It fed broadcasts of the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra and the "Chicago Theatre of the Air" to the Mutual network, aired live from Wharton Fieldhouse. These were heard coast to coast and put Moline in a national spotlight for the week.

With his centennial duties over, Marvin Rosene left Moline to become the general manager of newly built WKTY in LaCrosse, Wis. Two years later he joined WLOL radio in Minneapolis as sales manager. In 1953, Rosene joined KSTP-AM in St. Paul as its sales manager, eventually becoming the general sales manager over both KSTP radio and television. When he tried to retire in 1963, the owner of those St. Paul stations, Stanley Hubbard, asked Rosene to watch over Hubbard's Florida properties. He also assisted Hubbard in the development of the first home satellite-delivered television programming, USSB, which is known today as DirecTV. Rosene died in Florida in 1998.

Another of the early programs airing on WQUA was a Sunday morning Swedish show that had been started by exchange students at Augustana College. The program featured Swedish music, news and community discussions. It was aired entirely in the Swedish language with the exception of the commercials. A young Augie student from Orion, Joe Anderson, took over as host of the program in the fall of 1948. He was chosen because of his ability to speak the language. Taking charge of the program, Anderson not only changed many of the commercials to the Swedish language, but he also sold those commercials.

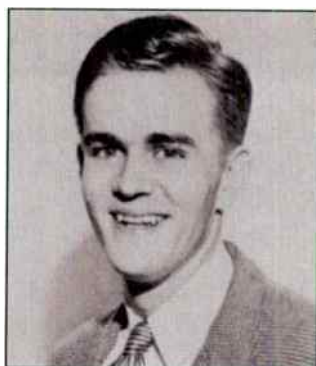
Anderson recalled, "I enjoyed every aspect of that show, not only the hosting, but the selling as well. I remember trying to sell some commercials to the Lundholm Drug Store, which was in the middle of Moline's Belgian neighborhood. Wally Lundholm, the owner, asked me how he could possibly sponsor a Swedish show with so many Belgians as his customers. I told him they'd enjoy the music. He did buy some commercials and later told me his Belgian customers all commented on how good the music was, even if it was Swedish!"

SCHEDULE FOR THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1948

5:58 a.m.	Sign-On	5:00 – 5:15	Sports Camera
6:00 – 7:00	Jack Davis Show	5:15 – 5:30	Superman
7:00 – 7:05	News	5:30 – 6:00	Adventure Parade
7:05 – 8:00	Jack Davis Show	6:00 – 6:15	News
8:00 – 8:05	News	6:15 – 6:30	Day in Review
8:05 – 9:30	Jack Davis Show	6:30 – 7:55	Music for Dancing
9:30 – 10:00	Community Hour	7:55 – 8:15	Billy Rose Orchestra
10:00 – 11:00	Passing Parade	8:15 – 8:30	Mutual Newsreel
11:00 – Noon	Kate Smith	8:30 – 10:00	Mutual Dance Band
12:00 – 12:30	Queen for a Day	10:00 – 10:15	Bing Sings
12:30 – 3:30	Baseball	10:15 – 10:30	News
3:30 – 3:35	Baseball Scoreboard	10:30 – 11:30	Musical Serenade
3:35 – 5:00	Bob Elson	11:30 p.m.	Sign-Off

During 1949, Decker French and Howard Eckerman sold their minority interests in WQUA to Oakley Tyler of Davenport. She was the widow of Herbert Tyler, who had been the vice president and general manager of the Dewey Portland Cement Co. in Davenport.

Original announcers Chet Andrews, Ralph Willey and Wendell Porter departed the station and were replaced by announcers Don Benoit and Hal Showers, who would also report the news; and Vern Glewwe, who did double duty as WQUA's programming and production director. Dan Rafferty replaced news editor Ed Masters. Jack Davis was named assistant general manager and Verne Flambo was named executive vice president of WQUA. Flambo continued as sales manager and was joined by Lou Nielsen from KXIC in Iowa City.



Don Benoit



Hal Showers



Joe Anderson

Don Benoit served at stations in Florida and Chicago before arriving at WQUA. Vern Glewwe entered broadcasting via the Armed Forces Radio Service and formerly worked at WCAZ in Carthage, Ill. Dan Rafferty worked in Chicago before spending three years as staff announcer and popular program host at WOC in Davenport.

During May, Don Benoit took over for Gene Osborn, who left for the sports directorship at KGGM-TV in Albuquerque. Osborn later worked in Detroit, Pittsburgh, Chicago and Kansas City where he was heard as part of the broadcast teams calling games of the Tigers, Pirates, White Sox and Royals. Osborn passed away in 1975 at the age of 53.

Since beginning his booking enterprise, Verne Flambo had brought the likes of Jeannette McDonald, Gene Krupa, the Warsaw Symphony Orchestra, the Horace Heidt Show, conductor Artur Rubenstein, Fred Waring, Tommy Dorsey, operatic singers Marian Andersen and Lauritz Melchior, Carmen Cavallero, Xavier Cugat, Woody Herman, Eddie Cantor and Paul Whitman to the Quad-Cities. In November 1949, he booked Spike Jones and his City Slickers Orchestra for a week of shows beginning on Thanksgiving Day. The production was billed as a WQUA Radio Theatre Production. In much-later interviews, Flambo would relate that the Spike Jones shows were always some of his bigger moneymakers.

On December 27, 1949, WQUA started a program that would have an almost 10-year, on-again off-again history on the station. Hal Showers began broadcasting from the Plantation restaurant, one of the most popular dining and entertainment venues. The show, called "Plantation Party," aired Tuesday through Saturday from 11:30 p.m. to midnight. Visitors to the restaurant could have Showers join their party and visit with them at their tables, providing entertainment for both the patrons and the home audience in the form of interesting and noteworthy news of socially prominent people. Showers would interview visiting dignitaries as well as the entertainers who were booked in the Tahitian Room. Occasionally the format of this program would cause a bit of a problem.

Joe Anderson, who took over the show after Showers left the station in 1952, recalled, "There were many people I recognized from the community, but I didn't necessarily know their spouses. On more than one occasion I would walk by a table, recognize a locally prominent gentleman and begin to introduce him and his wife, only to find out it wasn't his wife he was with. I quickly learned to cover that mistake, as well as ask their permission before I stuck the microphone in their faces!"

1950-1952

BRUFF OLIN SAYS GOOD-BYE

As the station entered 1950, it was enjoying success with its personalities and programming. Station personnel at this time were: Bruff Olin, owner, president and general manager; LaVerne Flambo, executive vice president and sales manager; Lou Nielson, salesman; Vern Glewwe, program manager, production director and announcer; Dan Rafferty, news director; Bud Dawson, sports director; Jack Davis, assistant general manager and announcer; Hal Showers, announcer; Don Benoit, announcer; Joe Anderson, announcer; Ann Wyman, director of women's programming and continuity writer; Larry Lynch, chief engineer; Dale Rathje, engineer; John Ford, engineer; Louise Murphy, head of continuity; Peggy Mousley, continuity writer; Dorothy Morris, traffic manager; Doris Matson, bookkeeper; and Mary Ann Clark, receptionist.

As was somewhat the norm for the radio business, staff members doubled up on duties. The announcers would do news and sportscasts, news director Dan Rafferty would do an occasional record show and continuity writers would conduct some of the public affairs shows.

In addition, the announcers generally worked split shifts. Don Benoit had both late morning and late afternoon shows. Vern Glewwe announced shows in the morning, afternoon and evening and was known as the "Nite Mayor." Hal Showers did a show in the afternoon, then came back in the late evening with "Showers Till Midnight" and/or "Plantation Party." Joe Anderson worked all shifts on Sunday and hosted the "Swap Club" with Louise Murphy during the week.

The year would prove to be interesting, with many additions to the staff and the programs offered. One of the biggest changes that took place in 1950 began on January 19. Bruff Olin

announced that he had sold Moline Broadcasting Co. to Mrs. Herbert Tyler of Davenport. She had been the minority owner for nearly a year. The sale was subject to FCC approval. Newspaper articles regarding the sale stated that Mrs. Tyler had no plans to change personnel or programming. She did name Verne Flambo general manager, and he would continue his duties as executive vice president and commercial sales manager.

Station attorney Roy VanDerKamp related that originally Olin didn't wish to sell, but the money may have been too good not to. Tyler offered Olin \$112,000 for Moline Broadcasting. But Mrs. Tyler would not own the station for long.

Up until the early '90s, the FCC watched and governed stations very closely, especially in areas of finance, engineering, number of commercials per hour and amount of public service programming offered. VanDerKamp stated that Tyler did not wish to be involved with so much close scrutiny and the many forms that stations were required to file with the Commission. WQUA would again be put up for sale.

As if the sale weren't enough, a second major change was announced on January 21. The Mutual network revealed that effective July 1, WQUA would lose its affiliation. Davenport station KSTT, which would increase its power from 250 to 1000 watts and begin broadcasting full time on that date, would become the exclusive Quad-Cities affiliate. Because KSTT had signed on the air with the Mutual network before WQUA took to the air, and with KSTT's additional power and range, Mutual chose to honor KSTT's slightly longer senior status as the area's affiliate. WQUA would now have to look for another network or once again operate as an independent.

While these two changes were major happenings for the station, the listeners really heard nothing different coming from their radio speakers to this point. Nor did the changes affect Verne Flambo, as he continued to bring big-name entertainers into the area.

In early February, and again billed as a WQUA Radio Theatre Production, Flambo booked popular comedian Jack Benny for one performance at Wharton Fieldhouse. This appearance, to be held in May, would also assist the local Elks Lodge in its Crippled Children's Appeal. He further announced that singer Vaughn Monroe and the Lawrence Welk Orchestra would both appear in April, with Welk's shows broadcast nationwide on the Mutual network.

Announcer and part-time sportscaster Don Benoit resigned and headed back to Florida. Hired as a replacement on the sports beat was Fairfield, Iowa, native Milo Hamilton, who would assist Bud Dawson. Hamilton had just graduated from the University of Iowa and his first assignment was calling the Golden Gloves fights at Wharton Fieldhouse. He also announced high school basketball games, did basketball recreations and called the play-by-play action of the Davenport Tigers, the local Three-I League baseball team. Hamilton would also present a 15-minute sports program each weekday evening.



Vern Glewwe



Dan Rafferty



Ann Wyman

On February 25, Mrs. Tyler reached an agreement to transfer her ownership to a new group headed by Dalton LeMasurier of Duluth, Minn. LeMasurier was president and general manager of Red River Broadcasting Co., which owned KDAL radio, and was also a director of WIRL in Peoria.

LeMasurier was a native of Grand Forks, N.D. and had owned KDAL since 1936. The new name for Moline Broadcasting would be Quad City Broadcasting Corp.

Officers of the new company were: Dalton LeMasurier, president; Verne Flambo, executive vice president and general manager; Roy VanDerKamp, secretary; Odin Ramsland, associated with LeMasurier in the Duluth and Peoria stations, treasurer; and Oakley Tyler, Ralph Henninger and Robert Dettman, all as additional corporate directors.

Under the new ownership, Flambo relinquished the commercial sales manager's position to John Grandy. Grandy was part of the management structure of the Red River Broadcasting Co. and sales manager of KDAL.



Dalton LeMasurier



Odin Ramsland



Robert Dettman



John Grandy

While Olin had no immediate plans after the station's sale, newspaper articles stated that he would retire to Sarasota, Fla. However, on October 19, 1950, he purchased Worcester, Mass., radio station WAAB for \$100,000 and became its president and general manager. In October 1952, Olin sold WAAB and did retire to Sarasota, where he died in December 1966.

During March, Bob Castle, WQUA's longtime traffic manager, joined the station. (For readers not familiar with broadcasting, "traffic" is the scheduling of program elements – commercials, public service announcements and the various programs that radio or television stations air.) After leaving the service, Castle enrolled in Chicago's Radio School of Broadcasting. His first position after graduating was staff announcer and newscaster at WKAI in Macomb, Ill. On a return visit home to Moline, he saw a newspaper ad for a continuity writer's position at WQUA and applied. After interviewing with Flambo and Louise Murphy, the head continuity writer, Castle was hired and began a 33-year association with the station.

In May, comedian Jack Benny and troupe landed at the Moline airport and were welcomed by a crowd of more than 2,000 well-wishers. The show that evening was performed to one of the largest crowds Wharton Fieldhouse had ever seen – almost 5,900 people. Verne Flambo said later in a newspaper interview with Shirley Davis of the Davenport *Times-Democrat*, the show produced the greatest total box office receipts he would have for many years to come.

On May 22, the transfer of control of the station from Olin/Tyler to LeMasurier was completed. The officers and directors, as noted previously, stayed the same. However, the new name for the corporation, Quad City Broadcasting Corp., would not be used just yet.

With the first of July approaching, WQUA was informed that KSTT would not meet that original target date of increasing power, switching its frequency and becoming a full-time operation. Therefore, WQUA would remain affiliated with the Mutual Broadcasting System and would be able to continue broadcasting that network's offerings. September 1 would now be the termination date of Mutual's contract with the station.


Chicago native Ed Grennan joined the station in late August. He had started in broadcasting with Armed Forces Radio. Upon leaving the service, Ed found work in Springfield at WKLI, in Battle Creek at WBCK, and at Chicago's WGN, where he worked as a summer fill-in announcer. He started at WQUA with a music show in the afternoon.

With the arrival of September, KSTT had finally switched to its new frequency and began to operate on its full-time schedule. It would now be the Mutual network's exclusive outlet for the area. WQUA was once again an independent operation, but that would not last for long.

WQUA BECOMES THE STARS' ADDRESS



Owner Dalton LeMasurier's Duluth station, KDAL, was a CBS affiliate. He also served as head of the CBS Midwest Radio Affiliates Board. Because of his connections, WQUA would become the CBS Radio outlet for the Quad Cities. At 6 p.m. on Sunday, October 15, 1950, WQUA joined the network for the first time to carry the "Jack Benny Show." That program was followed by a full evening of CBS network offerings.





Effective October 15th
WQUA
becomes affiliated with the
Columbia Broadcasting System
as the CBS outlet for the
Quad Cities . . .
Davenport • Rock Island
Moline • East Moline.

WQUA

CBS—The Stars' Address for the Quad Cities
RADIO CENTER—MOLINE, ILLINOIS

COMPLETE COVERAGE OF ALL
"QUAD CITY QUAD" GAMES

PLUS THE CHICAGO CUBS
GAMES EVERY AFTERNOON



BUD DAWSON
MILO HAMILTON

The Voice of
SPORTS

WQUA

SERVING THE QUAD CITIES from MOLINE
1230 ON YOUR DIAL

"After joining CBS, business really boomed," remembered Bob Castle. "We had five continuity writers to handle all the commercials. I was continuity director at the time and also did the traffic, but the traffic job became so demanding that I had to give up the continuity job to be the full time traffic manager.

"During the Christmas season, the station was sold out... sign-on to sign-off. It was my job to tell the salesmen that there was no time available. We were running 16 minutes of commercials per hour, which was the limit allowed by the FCC at that time."

Business certainly did take off for WQUA after joining the network. Local advertisers wanted their messages heard with the prestigious CBS News, Arthur Godfrey, Jack Benny, Edgar Bergen and all the popular soap opera and drama programs that aired on the network.

Advertising revenue for the station might have been even higher if it hadn't been for one slight problem – WQUA was in the smallest CBS-affiliated market in the country. On a local frequency and with only 250 watts of power, the reach of the station was not as broad as the national ad agencies would have liked. Therefore, they didn't want to pay network rates to WQUA for their clients' messages heard within the popular network shows.

"The station decided to let those spot commercials run anyway, without receiving any of the national money. However, the national advertisers did buy the adjacencies (the time available before and after) to the programs and the station made good income, as those commercials were sold at the local advertising rates," stated Bob Castle.

Although WQUA was now running many of the CBS program offerings, there was still ample time to broadcast locally produced programming. In late October, a new local show debuted called "Luncheon at The Fort." Broadcasting from the dining room of the Fort Armstrong Hotel in Rock Island, the show featured audience-participation games and quizzes and guest interviews. Gifts from local merchants were awarded as prizes to the game winners and various audience members. The show was emceed by Joe Anderson and written by Hal Showers. An organist provided live music and the production became a very popular part of WQUA's early afternoon broadcast schedule.

Other popular live programs at the time included, of course, news and sports; "Dollar Derby," a call-in quiz show sponsored by Wonder Bread Bakery; the "Community Hour"; "Man on the Street," an interview show from busy street locations and supermarkets; "Tater Quiz," another call-in quiz show sponsored by the Hiland Potato Chip Co.; "Story Hour," a program hosted by former teacher Charlotte Nutt who, as Aunt Peggy, would tell famous children's stories; and "Kid Bid," a program where children collected bottle caps from the sponsor's soft drink, then used them to bid on games and toys during the airing of the show on Saturday mornings.

"Plantation Party" had ended temporarily. However, the owners of Marando's Restaurant liked the concept of that program and brought "Music from Marando's" to its Milan, Ill., facility. The Marando brothers featured a variety of big-name dance bands and musical entertainers at their restaurant. Hal Showers, Ed Grennan or Joe Anderson would interview diners and guests and broadcast some of the visiting bands' shows live, much like the "Plantation Party" show.

SCHEDULE FOR SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1950

6:00 – 7:00 a.m.	Jack Davis Show	4:05 – 5:00	Bob Elson
7:00 – 7:15	News	5:00 – 5:15	News
7:15 – 8:00	Jack Davis Show	5:15 – 5:30	Dick Haymes
8:00 – 8:15	News	5:30 – 5:45	Safety Show
8:15 – 9:00	Jack Davis Show	5:45 – 6:00	Along the Outdoor Trails
9:00 – 9:05	News	6:00 – 6:15	Day in Review
9:05 – 10:00	Swedish Disc Jockey	6:15 – 6:30	Milo Hamilton Sports
10:00 – 10:05	News	6:30 – 7:00	Music for Dining
10:05 – 10:30	Kid Bid	7:00 – 7:05	News
10:30 – 11:00	Musical Adventure	7:05 – 7:30	Juke Box
11:00 – 11:15	News & Tunes	7:30 – 8:00	Russ Morgan Orchestra
11:15 – 11:45	Tune-O	8:00 – 10:00	St. Ambrose Football
11:45 – Noon	Music by Fomeen	10:00 – 10:15	News
12:00 – 12:15	News	10:15 – 10:30	Bowling Show
12:15 – 4:00	Baseball	10:30 – 11:30	Music from Marando's
4:00- 4:05	News	11:30 p.m.	Sign-Off

During October, Milo Hamilton moved across the river to KSTT, as LeMasurier decided that the station would put less emphasis on sports. Hamilton spent two years as sports director in Davenport

and left there in May of 1953 to become the broadcast voice of the St. Louis Browns baseball team. He called games for the St. Louis Cardinals in 1954 and the Chicago Cubs from 1955 to 1957. From 1958 to 1961, Hamilton was the sportscaster for WIND in Chicago; from 1961 to 1965 he broadcast the games of the Chicago White Sox, followed by the Atlanta Braves from 1966 to 1975, the Pittsburgh Pirates from 1976 to 1979, then back to the Cubs from 1980 to 1984. Since 1985, he has been the voice of the Houston Astros baseball club.

Hamilton received the Ford Frick Award in 1992 from the National Baseball Hall of Fame for "excellence in baseball broadcasting."

As 1951 opened, nearly all of the CBS programs had now been integrated into WQUA's daily broadcast schedule. Soap opera and dramatic shows like "Helen Trent," "Our Gal Sunday," "Perry Mason," "Ma Perkins," "Young Dr. Malone," quiz shows like "Strike It Rich" and "Winner Take All," and news shows like Edward R. Murrow's "Hear It Now" were part of the daily offerings.

The slogan "CBS, The Stars' Address" was modified by Verne Flambo. Billboards, newspaper ads and stationery all reflected the new motto, "WQUA, the Station that Sparkles with Stars," referring not only to the CBS stars, but the WQUA stars as well.

Morning man Jack Davis was still the top-rated announcer in the area. Bud Dawson produced some of the best sports shows and play-by-play action heard on local radio. Joe Anderson continued to host the very popular "Swedish Disc Jockey" show and Hal Showers, with his "Showers Till Midnight," was top late-night listening. WQUA was beginning to plant its roots as a personality-driven station.



Ed Grennan



Hal Showers leads in to the network news

A new program offered this year was "Problems and Solutions." Host Ed Grennan explained in a phone interview how the show came about: "As far as I know, it was the first two-way talk program in the country. In the beginning, we didn't know what to call it. When people called the station, I'd answer by asking, 'Hi, do you have a problem or a solution?' and that's how it got its terrible name. It was popular for the almost four years I was at the station.

"One time a man from the sewer department called and said he had a large quantity of human waste that had been processed into fertilizer. Evidently it was good for gardens. The city was giving it away for free, but people had to bring their own buckets and shovels. I'm not kidding you... I had 500 hundred people out there shoveling shit. The power of that show just really knocked me over!

"The show was done without the seven-second delay so common with phone shows today, yet we never had a problem with someone saying something off color or swearing. How it got to be so popular, I'll never know, but I'm certainly glad that it did. When I left WQUA for Chicago, I took the show with me, but it got a better name - "Party Line." I'll forever be thankful that Flambo had me do that show!"

TELEVISION COMES TO WQUA... OR DOES IT

While Bruff Olin owned WQUA, he had visions that someday there would also be a WQUA-TV. Whether or not he actually applied for a television station construction permit cannot be determined. However, during March of 1951 Dalton LeMasurier began the process to create a Moline television operation, but it would not be without complication. Some background on early television should first be explained.

As television was initially developed, the television signals were placed in the VHF (Very High Frequency) range and each frequency was assigned a channel number, two through 13. These VHF signals had the furthest range and thus could reach large numbers of viewers. Due to the distance that each frequency would carry through the air, the FCC assigned certain channels to larger populated metropolitan areas. Smaller populated areas did not receive any channel assignments.

A problem started to arise as more broadcasters wanted to put more television stations on the air and more cities wanted television. Because there could be no signal overlap, some cities could not have a channel assigned to it. To cure the problem, the FCC set aside another group of frequencies, in the UHF (Ultra High Frequency) range, assigned as channels 14 through 89.

Besides assigning UHF channels to less populated areas, the FCC assigned some to larger areas in order that the larger cities could have more television stations and more programming choices. Originally, the channels assigned to the Quad Cities were 2, 4, 5, and 9. After several years, channels 2 and 9 were re-allocated to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and channel 5 would eventually move to channel 6. At the time LeMasurier wanted to establish WQUA-TV, the channel lineup for the area was 4, 5, 30, 36 and 42. Channel 30 was reserved for educational use.

The VHF channels were the most desired. They had been around longer, had more range, and more television receivers had been built to accept those signals. At that time, unlike today, television tuners did not receive both VHF and UHF frequencies. The Quad Cities viewers had purchased TV sets that would receive the signals of the stations already on the air – 4 and 5. If a station were to be successful at the time, it would have to broadcast on a VHF channel.

It was LeMasurier's plan to petition the FCC to see if another VHF channel could be added to those already assigned here. He wanted to stay away from the UHF channels if at all possible. In his quest, he hired an engineering firm to determine if his plan was feasible. It would be months before he found out if he would be successful or not.

In June, LeMasurier learned that obtaining the FCC's permission for an additional VHF channel to be added to this area's allotment was going to be an extremely difficult process. With the channel assignments that were currently in place for the surrounding area, his plan would require as many as 35 moves of frequency assignments for other parts of the country.

For instance, St. Louis station KSD-TV, which was already on the air, would have to move from channel 5, to either 4 or 2, and that, most likely, would never happen. The FCC allowed a public comment period for LeMasurier's plan and by July, the Commission had received nearly 700 comments to the proposal.

Hearings regarding the channel reassignments were held in Washington in November. With 100 formal complaints filed regarding the moving of channels that were already in place, the issue of whether there would be another television station for the Quad-Cities was put to rest. There would be no WQUA-TV.

Back on the radio side of the business, popular morning announcer Jack Davis left the station in March. Ed Grennan took over as morning show host and continued to do the "Problems and Solutions" phone show. He and Hal Showers also began a Saturday afternoon show, "Showers and Grennan," to take phone calls, play requests and comment on items in the previous week's news. It could be considered a predecessor to the team approach to shows, common in the industry today.

Grennan noted, "I probably did some of my best work in radio at WQUA. I could play music and say things that listeners really wanted to hear. Hal Showers and I had fun with a Saturday show we did and had pretty good listenership, even against some of the sports programming the other local stations were airing."

General manager Verne Flambo gave up his sales manager's position and John Grandy was brought in from LeMasurier's Duluth operation to fill that position. Ed Davis was appointed as the station's promotions director. Salesman Lou Nielson crossed the river to WOC, where he retired as that station's sales manager in the early 1980s.

By June, the FCC had approved the transfer of stock in WQUA from Moline Broadcasting to the new corporate entity, Quad City Broadcasting Corp.

Verne Flambo continued to bring popular entertainment to the area. The Ames Brothers, Guy Lombardo's Orchestra, the Sammy Kaye Orchestra, the Horace Heidt Show, Spike Jones and the traveling stage show of "Kiss Me Kate" all appeared under his auspices this year. While many of these musical acts had appeared for Flambo in previous years, he knew what the audiences liked. As long as the orchestras remained popular, he would continue to bring them to the area.

A bonus to Flambo's booking business was the opportunity for the station to record interviews with some of the entertainers that came to town. While it wasn't obligatory that the stars, or members of their shows, visit the studio for an interview, it was certainly an added plus for both the attraction and for WQUA. The added publicity certainly didn't hurt either party.

Flambo once again produced the Mississippi Valley Food and Home Show, which featured a variety of Quad-Cities businesses, products and services. As part of this production, he booked the Lawrence Welk Orchestra for the entire six-day run of the show.

January of 1952 opened with Benne Alter joining the announcing staff. Alter was a native of Rock Island and began his radio career at WOC. At WMT in Cedar Rapids, he developed and became the popular host of its "Man on the Street" program.

By February, "Luncheon at the Fort" was no longer on the air. While still popular, coming up with fresh ideas for the daily show took its toll on both writer Hal Showers and host Joe Anderson. The addition of several popular soap operas on the CBS schedule made it easy to end "Luncheon's" airing.

"Plantation Party" returned to the air, but according to newspaper listings, was heard only on Friday and Saturday evenings, not Tuesday through Saturday nights as before.

News director Dan Rafferty left the broadcast business and became an auditor for the Illinois State Office of Education. He sold real estate for several years and in 1966, he joined Deere & Co. in its Visitor Services department. Rafferty died in 1984.

In April, Ohio native Ed Fisher was hired out of Indianapolis for the morning show. Fisher had a novel approach to the show; as an accomplished pianist, he would intersperse piano playing with announcing. He might start playing a song on the piano, then have his engineer segue into a record of the same song, or play some of the song on the piano as the record ended. At times he would play the piano while reading the weather forecast, a live commercial or a public service announcement.

An article appearing in the Davenport *Daily Times* said Fisher was a bit like Arthur Godfrey and Hoagy Carmichael rolled into one and "could play, sing, sprout home-sliced humor and wild wit, and keep his early morning audience through sheer entertainment."

Fisher kept people laughing elsewhere, too, as he transcribed and mailed a show called "Ed's Place" to radio stations in 20 other markets.

With Fisher joining the staff, Ed Grennan's show moved back into an early evening timeslot, but he continued his popular phone show, "Problems and Solutions," in the afternoon.

Program and production director Vern Glewwe left the station in April and took a job outside of the radio business. He became a salesman for the John Normoyle Co. in Moline, a machine tooling and equipment supplier. He later became vice president of the Twin State Machine Tool Co. in Davenport. Glewwe passed away in October of 1972. Glewwe's replacement as program director was Benne Alter.

Chief engineer Larry Lynch left WQUA to start his own radio engineering business. Hired to replace him was Harold Higby. Higby was a Newton, Iowa, native with many years of experience in not only engineering, but managing radio stations as well.

He began his career in 1933 as chief engineer of KFJB in Marshalltown, Iowa. In 1934, he joined WOC as an engineer and was chief engineer there from 1936 to 1940. From 1940 to 1947, he was the control room engineer for WHO in Des Moines. Higby was a partner in KASI radio in Ames, Iowa,

and put that station on the air in 1947. In 1950, he became manager of Boone, Iowa, station KWBG, a position he held until joining WQUA.

By summer, an announcer whose name was connected with the station for many years, was hired, but almost as an afterthought. Jack Barlow (real name Jack Butcher) was a Muscatine, Iowa, native. After serving in the Navy, Barlow returned home to work on the family farm. Along with the farm work, Barlow also earned money as a singer and guitar player. With his deep voice, he came to the attention of George Volger, owner of Muscatine's KWPC, and was offered a job. After two years at KWPC without receiving a raise, Barlow quit the station.

Explaining how he got hired at WQUA, Barlow stated, "A friend of mine had an interview with Flambo for a sales position and he talked me into going to his interview with him. My friend talked Flambo into giving me an audition for an announcer's job. Flambo tore off some newswire copy, handed it to me and had me read it cold. Flambo had said he didn't need another announcer, but he hired me anyway and made a slot for me from 10 p.m. to midnight."

Newspaper radio logs showed another new name, Bill Mason, joining WQUA in June. Mason was a Morrison, Ill., native who got his radio start as a teenager at KROS in Clinton. In 1945, he joined WOC in its news department. During 1947, Mason left for KXL in Portland, Ore., and spent five years with that station.

Leaving Portland to get back closer to the Quad-Cities, Mason made a brief stop at KCIM in Carroll, Iowa, before being hired by Flambo as WQUA's news director. Mason was probably most responsible for WQUA's ability to offer the best news with the smallest news department.

"At the beginning, it was myself and maybe one other newsman," Mason stated. "Because we didn't have time to personally meet with every news source, we had to check with them by phone. Yet as we would visit over the phone, they got to know us and we got to know them. That process created a mutual trust that gave us many stories the other stations didn't get."

News was not the only duty Bill Mason would perform at the station. This was still the age of the "man on the street" program. Benne Alter, who had fine-tuned the art of the street interview while at WMT in Cedar Rapids, and Mason aired a program called "Meet the Missus." They would post themselves at a supermarket and interview the lady shoppers on a variety of topics.

Mason was also teamed with sports director Bud Dawson. Dawson called the play-by-play action, and Mason provided the color commentary and read the commercials on the high school games broadcast over WQUA.



Ed Fisher



Harold Higby



Bill Mason

Another person hired that summer was Bill Longman, a soon-to-be senior at Davenport High School. Although he didn't start out as an announcer, Longman had an envious job once school got underway for the year.

Longman explained, "I had always wanted to be a deejay. I used to visit WOC and KSTT and watch their announcers at work. In June I called WQUA and talked to Benne Alter, asking how I might be able to get into radio. Benne was very nice to me and we talked for quite some time. Just before hanging up, he asked if I could type and if I would be interested in working on the music library, cross-referencing the records. I jumped at that.

"I worked all summer typing names of songs on cards, but also got to run the control board and do station breaks when Ed Grennan went to dinner. When fall came, Alter asked if I would be interested in doing a teenage deejay show. From 8:45 to 9:15 p.m. each night, I was the host of "Billy's Bandstand" and played only songs the high school kids were interested in. That show lasted until the end of December 1952."

After finishing school, Longman went on to Armed Forces Radio and area stations KFMA, KSTT, WHTT-FM and KWNT, Davenport; KCLN, Clinton; KPIG, Cedar Rapids, KMAQ, Maquoketa; and WHBF in Rock Island. He retired from the maintenance department of the Davenport School System and still lives in Davenport.

SCHEDULE FOR TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1952

6:00 – 6:05 a.m.	Bill Mason News	2:00 – 2:15	Hilltop House
6:05 – 6:30	Ed Fisher Show	2:15 – 3:00	House Party
6:30 – 6:35	Bill Mason News	3:00 – 3:15	It Happens Everyday
6:35 – 7:00	Ed Fisher Show	3:15 – 4:00	Problems and Solutions
7:00 – 7:05	Bill Mason News	4:00 – 5:00	Benne's Matinee
7:05 – 7:30	Ed Fisher Show	5:00 – 5:15	Tom Bordon News
7:30 – 7:45	Bill Mason News	5:15 – 5:30	Bud Dawson Sports
7:45 – 8:00	Ed Fisher Show	5:30 – 5:45	Snooky Lanson
8:00 – 8:15	CBS News	5:45 – 6:00	Lowell Thomas News
8:15 – 8:30	Got Your Number	6:00 – 6:15	Tom Bordon News
8:30 – 9:00	Sincerely, Ed Fisher	6:15 – 6:30	Jack Smith
9:00 – 10:30	Arthur Godfrey	6:30 – 6:45	Curt Massey
10:30 – 10:35	Bill Mason News	6:45 – 7:00	Edward R. Murrow
10:35 – 11:00	Swap Club	7:00 – 7:30	People Are Funny
11:00 – 11:15	Wendy Warren	7:30 – 8:00	Mr. And Mrs. North
11:15 – 11:30	Aunt Jenny	8:00 – 8:30	Life With Luigi
11:30 – 11:45	Helen Trent	8:30 – 8:45	Louella Parsons
11:45 – Noon	Our Gal Sunday	8:45 – 9:15	Billy's Bandstand
12:00 – 12:15	Big Sister	9:15 – 9:45	Straw Hat Concert
12:15 – 12:30	Ma Perkins	9:45 – 10:00	Proudly We Hail
12:30 – 12:35	Bill Mason News	10:00 – 10:15	CBS News
12:35 – 1:00	Grennan's Choice	10:15 – 10:30	Tom Bordon News
1:00 – 1:15	Second Mrs. Burton	10:30 – 10:45	Refreshingly Yours
1:15 – 1:30	Perry Mason	10:45 – 11:00	Peggy Lee
1:30 – 1:45	Nora Drake	11:00 – 11:15	CBS News
1:45 – 2:00	Guiding Light	11:15 – Midnight	Ed Grennan

In the fall of the year, Hal Showers left WQUA to take a job as an analyst at the Rock Island Arsenal. During November, a major change took place with the morning show.

Jack Barlow explained, "I was awakened by a phone call from Flambo at 4 a.m. telling me to get dressed, go to the station and open the show for regular morning man Ed Fisher. He had had an ulcer attack and was too sick to do his regular show. Fisher never came back, and I took over from 5 to 9 a.m. as the morning host."

Whether Fisher had really had an ulcer attack or not was up for conjecture, but he was next heard in the much larger radio market of Cleveland, Ohio, at WJW, where he was the morning personality for many years. He continued with the same style of show that had made him popular in Moline and showcased his comedy under the banner of "The Grouch Club." At the same time, he hosted two daily programs on WJW-TV.

Fisher later moved to the morning drive shift at WQAL-FM in Cleveland, where he remained through the very late 1980s. At both Cleveland stations, his sign-off was "E. Floyd Fisher, a fond farewell, take care of the babies." Ed Fisher died in 1992.

Jack Barlow's "down home" style quickly caught on with listeners and advertisers alike. At a reunion of WQUA staff members in October of 2003, Barlow recalled how he wound up with one particular sponsor, McLaughlin's Manor House Coffee.

"Flambo called me into his office and introduced me to Lee Moore, the area sales rep for the coffee company. He asked me if I thought I could advertise the coffee, and I told Flambo that I didn't know, since I hadn't ever tried it.

"Moore took me back to his hotel room and brewed up a pot of the stuff and it was the best coffee I'd ever tasted! So I started doing Manor House Coffee commercials on the show, but I never read from any script, I just talked about it. I sure sold a lot of coffee for those guys."

Lee Moore, who was at the reunion to visit with Barlow, stated that Barlow indeed sold a lot of coffee for the McLaughlin Co. and helped it become a leading brand in the area.



Jack Barlow



Bill Mason News tearsheet

One of the more interesting local human-interest stories that Bill Mason followed late in the year was due to both the city and the Moline Board of Education refusing to cooperate with one another. The story got its start when the school board built Hamilton Elementary School at 7th Street and 32nd Avenue. At that point in time, the population was spreading south along 7th Street, but the city had yet to annex that area. The school's location was over a quarter-mile beyond the border.

As opening day was nearing, more than 100 angry parents signed a petition stating that they would keep their children home unless a sidewalk was installed for the children's safe passage. The school board stated that keeping the children out of school would be breaking the law and there was no money left in the budget for sidewalk construction. The board felt it was the city's responsibility to install the sidewalk as a safety issue.

The city took the opposite side of the argument. Since the school was outside the city limits, the school board would have to pay for constructing the sidewalk. The city did agree to have the city engineer lay out the portion of the sidewalk that was within the city boundary.

The citizen's group raised the money from parents and property owners with frontage along the new sidewalk's 1,500 feet length. Those who couldn't afford to pay were willing to donate their time during Saturday work sessions to grade, form and pave the sidewalk.

Mason updated the group's efforts during WQUA newscasts and, in December, was heard nationwide on the CBS News, recounting the story of the parent's school safety program.

The "on-year" elections of 1952 were provided great coverage by WQUA. As Bill Mason noted in a reunion booklet for station employees, "WQUA election night coverage was unsurpassed with its speed and accuracy. In most cases, our informants called us before their report was made to the courthouse. Our studios were usually filled with politicians anxious to know how they fared in the election. Many times the news they received confirmed the fact they had lost the election. To have them on hand for instant interviews was another plus for 'Q'."

Verne Flambo's entertainment bookings for 1952 included Ted Mack's "Original Amateur Hour" show, Spike Jones (again), pianist Victor Borge and the Guy Lombardo and Fred Waring orchestras. While not producing as many shows this year as in the past, Flambo still gave audiences the popular acts they seemed to demand.

1953-1956

ABC REPLACES CBS



In January of 1953, CBS announced that it would change affiliates and the reason was probably due to WHBF-TV. Effective January 1, the FCC had given WHBF-TV permission to increase its power to the maximum allowable at that time. That meant that channel 4's signal would be seen about 30 miles further, reaching many more viewers.

On the 15th of January, WHBF-TV announced that it had signed a contract to become a primary CBS television affiliate. The station already carried programs of the CBS, ABC and DuMont networks, but of the three, CBS was by far the most prestigious and had the better program offerings.

By becoming the primary CBS affiliate, it meant that WHBF-TV would carry all CBS television programming as it was fed from the network. The station would still carry ABC, DuMont, and local programs, but would do so only at times that CBS was not providing the station with any network shows. (The DuMont network would wind up ceasing business in early 1955. WHBF-TV carried some ABC programming, as did WOC-TV, until August 1963 when Moline's WQAD-TV signed on the air.)

At this same time, it was announced that WHBF radio would also become a CBS affiliate. Networks favored affiliates that had both radio and television facilities. CBS, no doubt, also liked the fact that WHBF radio was on a regional frequency with 5,000 watts of power and could be heard over a much wider area than that served by WQUA's 250 watts.

WQUA traffic manager Bob Castle understood that CBS had been trying to get WHBF-TV to become their primary affiliate for the area, but WHBF would not do it unless their radio property was allowed the CBS radio affiliation as well.

WHBF radio had been affiliated with ABC since 1946. With WQUA losing its CBS connection, the most probable scenario would have WQUA picking up the ABC network that WHBF would be leaving. And in fact, that is what happened.

Verne Flambo anticipated that WHBF-TV would affiliate with the strongest network it aired, and that CBS would also make the deal the TV station's radio partner. According to an article in the *Daily Dispatch*, while the WHBF stations were making their announcement, Flambo was in New York talking with representatives of ABC and signing an agreement to become that network's radio outlet for the Quad Cities.

While WQUA would lose programs like Arthur Godfrey, many popular soap operas and dramas and the CBS newscasts, it could pick up other popular programs like "Don McNeill's Breakfast Club," "The Lone Ranger," "Ozzie and Harriet," the Gillette fight broadcasts and honored news

programs by Paul Harvey, John Daly and Edward P. Morgan. The affiliation change would become effective on July 1. Until that time, however, it was radio as usual. The announcing staff continued with its duties whenever WQUA was not running a program from CBS.

Barlow was the station's wake-up voice along with Bill Mason's newscasts. Ed Grennan was heard on his morning phone show and mid-afternoon and late evening record shows. Joe Anderson was heard in the late morning with Louise Murphy on the "Swap Club" program and in the early afternoon. Benne Alter played the day's popular tunes on "Benne's Matinee" in the late afternoon. Newsman Tom Bordon delivered newscasts during the late afternoon and early evening. Bud Dawson and Davenport *Daily Times* columnist John O'Donnell provided the sports reports. Dawson and Mason still aired the action from the various local athletic events broadcast on the station.

Sales manager John Grandy returned to Minnesota and his corporate sales responsibilities with Red River Broadcasting. Taking over the position at WQUA was William Archer.

The Davenport Chamber of Commerce no longer sponsored the Mississippi Valley Food and Home Show. But Verne Flambo picked up yet another duty in its place – auto show general manager. The Quad City Automobile Dealers' Association wanted to produce an autorama in the spring to showcase the new offerings from Detroit. The group asked Flambo to head the production and bring some popular entertainment to pique interest for the show. Flambo booked Eddy Howard and his Orchestra and scheduled the show for a seven-day run at the Rock Island Armory.

An interesting story about a near disaster for that auto show demonstrated Flambo's flair for the show business style. In her feature story on Flambo, Dorothy Buresh of the Moline *Daily Dispatch* wrote: "Leaning back in his chair, the impresario turned a cigar over and over in his fingers as he recalled old times. 'One time I brought Eddy Howard to the Rock Island Armory for an auto show. After a night of entertaining, he fell off the stage – a heart attack,' Flambo recalled. Dejected at being left without a name attraction, Flambo was driving through downtown Rock Island when he noticed that Harry Cool was playing at one of the nightclubs. He made Cool a proposition to take the band over, but to make it look good, he flew Cool to Chicago and then back again to the Quad City Airport where he was met by all the press!"

The auto show was deemed a success, as more than 15,000 visitors viewed Detroit's new models and enjoyed both Eddy Howard and Harry Cool.

During April, a new station voice was heard in Dave Fleming. A Davenport native, Fleming was a student at Augustana College. He had been a sports reporter for the Davenport *Daily Times* for nearly a year before he was hired at KSTT in early 1953 to join Milo Hamilton as color commentator for sports play-by-play broadcasts.

Explaining how he wound up at WQUA, Fleming recalled, "Jerry Dunphy, the KSTT general manager, and Hamilton didn't get along very well. Those were two strong egos working against one another. Dunphy knew he couldn't fire Hamilton, so he fired me. I called WQUA the next day and was hired as an announcer."

Fleming began his duties at WQUA airing several newscasts on Sundays. In late April, he began a record show, "Sunday Nite with Fleming," from 10:30 p.m. to midnight.

In May, Verne Flambo again demonstrated his concern and support for a worthy local not-for-profit group. The Moline Boys' Choir was in dire financial straits, facing a possible dissolution. The privately sponsored choir was made up of 53 boys ranging in age from 8-14. It was widely known throughout Iowa, Illinois and Indiana, and presented concerts of modern, classical, madrigal and folk music. Its popularity was such that it had to turn down many more concert requests than it could accommodate.

As Flambo had done with the "Jack Benny Show" for the Moline Elks several years before, he booked the "Horace Heidt Show" for a performance at the Davenport Masonic Auditorium and would donate the profit from the show to the choir. Flambo also made sure that ad sales for the choir's souvenir program booklet were successful. The show netted the Moline Boys' Choir more than \$2,500 and brought the group back to solvency.

Flambo's assistance at this time was most likely responsible for the fact that the Moline Boys' Choir remains in existence today and has entertained audiences across the U.S. and in many European capitals.

As the date for the network switch grew closer, both WHBF and WQUA began playing up the impending change in newspaper ads. WQUA reminded listeners that it would be “as easy as ABC to dial WQUA,” and pledged to continue the finest in music, news and public service.

On July 1, the network switch from CBS to ABC took place. Since the ABC Radio Network did not have as many network shows as did CBS, it left more time available to hear WQUA’s local stars “sparkle.” Because the “Breakfast Club” aired from 8 to 9 a.m., early morning host Jack Barlow lost an hour in the morning but picked up an early afternoon show. Dave Fleming could now be heard in the early afternoon, as well as in the evening from 9 to 10:30 p.m. Ed Grennan was heard at noon, mid-afternoon with “Problems and Solutions,” late afternoon and late evening. Joe Anderson was heard in the late morning, early afternoon and early evening. Benne Alter was still heard in the late afternoon.

While these announcer schedules seem rather odd, remember that the network did not feed a constant stream of programming hour after hour. In some cases, the announcer might fill a fifteen or 30-minute segment between network shows with music and then remain on duty to read local commercials between programs. Regardless of the scheduling, WQUA maintained good ratings before and after the network switchover.

Flambo continued to bring great entertainment to the area. During the remainder of the year, he booked the Guy Lombardo Orchestra for a return visit and brought the “Dorothy Lamour Variety Revue” to the Masonic Auditorium. In early November, Flambo announced that he had contracted Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis to appear in Moline on January 14.

On a sadder note, Mrs. Oakley Tyler, a minority owner and board member of WQUA, passed away from cancer on November 10, 1953. She was 52 years old.

As new year 1954 rolled in, the station was operating with a well-established schedule of ABC network programming, local music, news and sports shows.

The “Martin and Lewis Show” scheduled for January 14 in Moline was postponed, as was the entire five-city swing of their show. Perhaps it was for the best as newspapers of the period reported an unusually cold and snowy January. The appearance was rescheduled for May.

Verne Flambo was once again in charge of the Quad City auto show and booked the Wayne King Orchestra for the show’s run in April. The auto show was once more a popular event, with almost 20,000 visitors viewing the cars and the King Orchestra shows during its seven-day run.

While Flambo could bask in the glow of another great auto show, it would be extremely short lived. The day after the show closed, April 12, he and the WQUA staff mourned the sudden loss of popular program director Benne Alter. Alter died at age 42 from a heart attack. His survivors included his wife, a son and a daughter. That son would enter WQUA history later.

After Alter’s death, Dave Fleming began a program in Alter’s old timeslot called “Spinorama.” Playing songs that teens liked, the show became extremely popular. It aired for most of its history from 4 to 5:30 p.m., but newspaper logs showed the show would occasionally move to different times, usually due to sports scheduling.

Fleming’s evening show featured the music of a variety of stringed orchestras, or as Fleming described it, elevator music. He noted, “Flambo didn’t like anything really brassy, so I played a lot of Hugo Winterhalter, Mantovani, Kostelanetz – the really smooth music.”

During May, “Plantation Party” returned to the air five nights a week with either Joe Anderson or Ed Grennan alternating as host. The show again offered interviews with entertainers, patrons and visiting dignitaries, along with records and live music.

On May 17, the Flambo-sponsored “Martin and Lewis Show” played Wharton Fieldhouse. The duo was near its height of popularity and they brought an ensemble of nine Hollywood acts with them. More than 6,000 fans packed the Fieldhouse to its rafters. It was reported that this show was not only the largest attended one-time event ever held there, but it also netted Flambo the biggest profit of any show he booked to this point.

Flambo once again booked Spike Jones for a concert at the RKO Orpheum Theatre in June. Evidently the band continued to sell tickets and in newspaper interviews during later years, Flambo noted that the “Spike Jones Show” always made money. During the late ‘40s, Flambo had even

booked the Spike Jones group for a month's worth of shows all around the Midwest. Flambo stated that the money made from those shows allowed him to build a new home.

With Spike Jones' homemade instruments, the pistol shots and the gulnk-gulnks, perhaps it said something about the taste of the Midwestern audiences. At any rate, Flambo knew what his audiences liked and would continue to bring the show to town until its popularity waned.

Two more Augustana College students were added to the station staff at this time. Bill Lindholm had graduated from Augustana and was now an Augustana Seminary student. He was hired as an assistant engineer, night newsmen and announcer. Perhaps if his calling hadn't been to the ministry, he might have made an excellent broadcast engineer, as he had built Augustana's student radio station from scratch and also served as its general manager.

Mel Loding was an underclassman who was, in Loding's words, hired as the "go-fer," but who also wound up as a fill-in announcer due to his pleasing voice.

At the end of August, WQUA began broadcasting 24 hours a day, Monday through Friday. The host was Bob Leroy and the program was called "Robyn's Roost." Rather interestingly, for a new show that aired in the overnight hours, there was absolutely no newspaper promotion of this show except for the initial announcement. At the time, only KSTT was heard in the overnight hours and this writer thought there would have been more promotion of the program, especially if trying to sell advertising during those hours.

SCHEDULE FOR FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1954

6:00 – 6:15 a.m.	Bill Mason News	3:00 – 3:05	Bill Mason News
6:15 – 6:30	Worship	3:05 – 4:00	Ed Grennan Show
6:30 – 7:00	Jack Barlow Show	4:00 – 4:05	Bill Lindholm News
7:00 – 7:05	Bill Mason News	4:05 – 4:30	Dave Fleming Spinerama
7:05 – 7:30	Jack Barlow Show	4:30 – 4:35	Bill Lindholm News
7:30 – 7:45	Bill Mason News	4:35 – 5:00	Dave Fleming Spinerama
7:45 – 8:00	Jack Barlow Show	5:00 – 5:15	Bill Lindholm News
8:00 – 9:00	Breakfast Club	5:15 – 5:30	Dave Fleming Spinerama
9:00 – 9:45	True Story	5:30 – 5:45	Martin Rosell
9:45 – 10:00	When a Girl Marries	5:45 – 6:00	Bill Stern Sports
10:00 – 10:15	Modern Romances	6:00 – 6:05	Bill Lindholm News
10:15 – 10:30	Ma Perkins	6:05 – 6:30	Ed Grennan Show
10:30 – 10:45	Easy Money	6:30 – 7:00	The Lone Ranger
10:45 – 11:00	Hospitality House	7:00 – 8:00	Carmine Anthony Show
11:00 – 11:30	Problems and Solutions	8:00 – 10:00	Moline High Football
11:30 – Noon	Jack Berch	10:00 – 10:15	ABC News
12:00 – 12:30	Jack's Place	10:15 – 10:30	Art Mooney
12:30 – 12:45	Bill Mason News	10:30 – 11:00	Plantation Party
12:45 – 1:00	Jack's Bandstand	11:00 – 11:05	Bill Lindholm News
1:00 – 2:00	Dave Fleming Show	11:05 – Midnight	Ed Grennan Show

In October, popular announcer Ed Grennan left WQUA and headed to Chicago. He spent four years at WAIT and two years at WBBM-FM. In 1959, Grennan went to work as an announcer at WLS. When WLS was purchased by ABC and turned into a rock and roll station, Grennan was the only holdover from the old staff. Grennan stated that he felt he really didn't fit into or like that format and left the station. He moved over to WMAQ-TV, where he spent the next 30 years as an announcer and program host. He retired in 1991 and passed away in August of 2000, just two weeks after our last conversation.

Commenting on his time at WQUA, Grennan noted, "I had fun at WQUA with the phone show, the 'Plantation Party,' and my late evening programs. If the money could have been better, I would have stayed until retirement. At times Flambo and I would be at odds with one another, and he may not have been the best boss I ever had, but he surely loved his community and that station. And

what a showman he was! When I sum it all up, it was one of the better experiences of my career... in some ways, maybe the best.”

Hired to take Grennan’s place on the staff was Carmine Anthony (Capobianco). Anthony, an Illinois native from the Chicago area, had been heard previously as the host of a jazz and popular music program on KGKO in Dallas, Texas. With his deep voice and smooth style, he quickly became popular with his new audience.

Kay Adams (real name Dawn Sonnevile) began a women’s show in October, airing each afternoon at 1. Adams had written for radio and had been a radio actress on several network soap operas airing from Chicago.

Also in October, Flambo brought stars Paul Douglas and Wendall Corey to the stage of the RKO Orpheum in the touring version of the “Caine Mutiny Court Martial.” The show was rather unusual in that it was an extremely popular Broadway production at the same time the hit movie “The Caine Mutiny” was playing to sellout crowds in theatres all across the country. The play was a hit in the Quad-Cities with a sellout audience, too.

Flambo produced another two-show sellout in November when he booked the popular singing group the Crew-Cuts. The group’s recording of “Sh-Boom” was topping the music charts and the quartet was taking the teenaged crowd by storm. Newspaper articles noted that the group remained available for an hour after each show to sign autographs, making all their fans extremely happy.

The final booking for the year for G. LaVerne Flambo Productions was in December, when operatic contralto Marian Andersen sold out the RKO Orpheum. In addition to some Broadway and classical favorites, Anderson’s show always featured patriotic closing tunes that had her audiences demanding several encores.

The Marian Andersen appearance once again demonstrated Flambo’s generosity to the community, as he shared the show’s profits with two Quad-Cities women’s service organizations, the Zonta Club and the Daughters of Isabella.

The year had been good to both WQUA and Verne Flambo, but perhaps what was to come next would be even better for the two.

BIG SOUND, BIG SHOWS, BIG STARS, BIG SALE

January 1955 began with an interesting concept in the sound of WQUA. Dave Fleming’s evening show marked the beginning of WQUA’s use of “hi-fi,” or high fidelity sound.

Before the advent of the processed signal used today by virtually every radio station in the country, the sounds emanating from radio speakers were somewhat flat in tone. In the mid to late 1950’s, many stations began to use electronic equipment to process the sound radiated by their transmitters to make that sound more dynamic and brilliant. WQUA did it before any other station in the area and without elaborate electronic gadgetry. Dave Fleming explained how that difference in sound was accomplished.

“I got together with our chief engineer, Harold Higby, who came up with a novel way of running the signal through one of the big tape decks in the control room in such a way that the playback head, about an inch beyond the record head, would be live to broadcast back the sound recorded by that first head, thereby creating an echo – which gave the music tremendous depth.

“Almost all the records back then were done in sound-deadened studios to cut out any extraneous noises. Today’s recordings are just the opposite – with plenty of reverberation to give the sound brilliance and depth and sparkle, with a three-dimensional effect. So, nearly 50 years ago, we were the first to create that sound which made our hi-fi music concept unique and groundbreaking – years ahead of our time.”

Ralph Stephenson, who would later work at WQUA, noted that the station used to run promos about Hi-Fi by asking listeners to tune their dials to another radio station, then tune back and hear the big difference in the sound of WQUA.

No matter how it was done, WQUA had created a distinctive sound over its competition. Fleming hosted the “Hi-Fi Showcase” each evening from 8:30 to 10. Moline resident Howard Bowman noted that by the end of the year, Fleming’s show had created a lot of interest in the concept of high fidelity

sound systems. Those home component systems were just beginning to become popular and were beginning to hit the marketplace in 1956.

News director Bill Mason resigned and took a television anchor position at WOC-TV. In his place, Hal Roach was named head of the news department. Roach had previously worked at WWCA in Gary, WAOV in Vincennes and WRAY-TV in Princeton, all in Indiana.

Verne Flambo was again the show manager for the Quad City Autorama, which would run from January 29 through February 6. For the show's entertainment this year, Flambo booked the Crew-Cuts, the "Red Foley Ozark Jubilee" and singer Kitty Kallen.

In the middle of the month, Flambo was notified that Kallen would not be able to perform. Quickly adjusting to the problem, he was able to book a singing trio that was much more appealing than Kitty Kallen would have been – the McGuire Sisters. The McGuires were extremely popular due to their long association with the Arthur Godfrey radio show and a good number of hit records.

The Crew-Cuts, still very popular on the record charts and from having been in the Quad-Cities just two months previous, would appear for two nights; the "Red Foley Show," which featured a popular group of country artists, would perform six shows over two days; and the McGuire Sisters would do three shows a day for four days, along with the Harmonicats.

The Autorama drew more than 10,000 people during its first two days of operation, which featured the Crew-Cuts. The Red Foley shows also drew nearly 10,000 visitors. For the McGuire Sisters' first show, attendance was pegged at 6,500 and the lines of people waiting entrance into the Rock Island Armory were five abreast and stretched for four blocks. The paid attendance for the entire run of the show was a record 44,907. The local Autorama was the largest in attendance of any show between Chicago and Kansas City, mainly because of the entertainment Flambo brought to the show.

Recalling the McGuire's visit to WQUA, Bob Castle noted, "After their interview at the station, they came into the lobby and found their fans had been locked out. Mr. Flambo did not want a crowd of squealing fans in the building. The sisters said they did not treat their fans that way, so the front door was unlocked and as many as possible poured into the lobby. The girls then sang two or three songs a cappella."

An interesting side note to the McGuire Sisters' booking involved their pay. The girls' fee for their appearance was \$8,000. Flambo offered them a guarantee of \$6,000 and 60% of the gate, which they turned down. Had they accepted Flambo's offer, the trio would have pocketed \$20,000 instead of that \$8,000 fee. Flambo probably chuckled all the way to the bank.



On the left is Dave Fleming, popular host of "Spinerama." In the middle, the McGuire Sisters with Verne Flambo (L), general manager of the Autorama, and Vern Trevillyan (R), the general manager of the Quad-City Automobile Dealers Association. On the right is part of the crowd that filled the Rock Island Armory to hear the McGuire Sisters. It's interesting to note how the audiences dressed to attend public functions in those days.

During mid February, WQUA was once again signing off at midnight. "Robyn's Roost" was removed from the broadcast schedule. The show's host, Bob Leroy, was relegated to weekend announcing duties and didn't stay at the station much longer.

Flambo brought the "American Jazz Festival" to the RKO Orpheum at the end of February. The show featured piano player George Shearing, Count Basie and his orchestra, singers Erroll Garner and Sarah Vaughn and saxophonist Stan Getz.

Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops Orchestra played the Masonic Temple in early March. Both the jazz festival and the Boston Pops produced sold out audiences for Flambo.

Since early in 1950, Verne Flambo had been executive v-p, general manager and a minority owner of WQUA. That changed somewhat on May 13, 1955, as Dalton LeMasurier sold Quad City Broadcasting Corp. to Flambo for \$100,000. The new corporation, known as WQUA, Inc., was made up of Flambo, president-treasurer; Gertrude Flambo, vice president-secretary; and Grace Lund, Dalton LeMasurier and Odin Ramsland, directors. The sale was dependant upon FCC approval, which was granted on August 1.

Amazingly, with all that transpired in booking the auto show talent, the jazz festival, the Boston Pops and the purchase of the radio station, Flambo had still other big productions in the works for local audiences.

In mid August, he again brought the Crew-Cuts to the RKO Orpheum stage for two shows, much to the delight of the teen crowd. Once again, both shows were completely sold out.

On August 25, he brought Don McNeill and the complete cast of the very popular "Breakfast Club" shows to Davenport. The appearance was billed as WQUA Showboat Days and was co-sponsored by Eagle-United Supermarkets.

Show day began in Dubuque with McNeill and his cast boarding a 78-foot replica of an old river showboat. The boat made stops to greet crowds on the riverbanks in Clinton, LeClaire and Princeton, Iowa; on Campbell's Island near East Moline; and at the ferry landing in Davenport. WQUA personalities were along for the trip and everyone was dressed in period riverboat clothing. At each stop, a segment was recorded that would be played back on the network airing of the "Breakfast Club" program the following week.

Upon arriving in Davenport, a parade wound its way through the downtown streets with cast members, dignitaries and the WQUA personalities riding in 20 antique cars. The parade ended at Municipal Stadium, with the McNeill group performing the "Breakfast Club" show for almost 20,000 fans, all of whom had been admitted at no charge.



(L) The Breakfast Club crew greeting fans at a river stop downstream from Clinton. WQUA's Jack Barlow is seen on the lower deck, second from right. (R) McNeill and Davenport mayor Walt Buese in the parade of antique vehicles through downtown Davenport



The crowd at Davenport Municipal Stadium for the performance of the "Breakfast Club." With more than 10,000 people in attendance, Flambo was lucky the weather cooperated.

By September, Bill Mason had returned to the station as both news and program director. He also returned to his color commentary work with Bud Dawson on the high school football and basketball games.

A young announcer, who would become extremely popular during his time on the air, joined the WQUA staff in mid September. Don Nelson, a native of Jonesboro, Ark., began his radio career at the age of 13 in the record library of hometown station KNEA. By age 15, he was announcing on KBTM in Jonesboro. After two years there, Nelson moved to a Moberly, Mo., station and worked for one year there before being hired by Flambo and Mason for WQUA.

Nelson took the place of Carmine Anthony, who crossed the river to Davenport and went to work at WOC. Anthony spent a little over one year at WOC as host of its sign-on show and an hour of show tunes in the early afternoon. He was next heard on WJJD in Chicago, where he was the afternoon host through the early 1960s. For 10 years, Anthony hosted a stock market and business show on Chicago TV, before retiring to Florida. He died in 1997 in Tallahassee, Fla.

Beginning in October, WQUA's announcers were now heard on the following schedule: Jack Barlow, 5 to 8:15 a.m.; Kay Adams and Joe Anderson with "Hospitality House," 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.; Jack Barlow with "Jack's Place," 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; Kay Adams, 1 to 2 p.m.; Don Nelson, 2 to 4 p.m.; Dave Fleming and "Spinerama," 4 to 5:30 p.m.; Joe Anderson, 6:15 to 8 p.m.; Dave Fleming and "Hi-Fi Showcase," 8 to 10:30 p.m.; and Don Nelson with "Plantation Nightbeat," 10:30 p.m. to 1 a.m. Local newscasts were aired throughout the mornings and at 12:30 p.m. with Bill Mason, and in the late afternoons and evenings with Bill Lindholm.

The Plantation show was again on the air as a regular Monday through Saturday feature. WQUA created a remote studio set-up that was wheeled into the restaurant's foyer. From there, Nelson interviewed patrons and visiting guests and played records. "Nightbeat" received heavy promotion in the newspapers and with table cards at the restaurant. It was advertised as being "newsy, but not nose-y."

In October, Verne Flambo brought Mantovani and his 45-piece orchestra to the RKO Orpheum and a sell-out show. Flambo's last presentation of 1955 was Lily Pons, the coloratura soprano from the New York Metropolitan Opera Co., appearing at the RKO Orpheum at the end of October.

One must wonder why Flambo brought such diverse entertainment to the area. Big bands, opera singers, philharmonic orchestras, pop singers, jazz musicians, Broadway plays and the ballet were quite an eclectic mix. In the Shirley Davis article "Show Biz Reflections" appearing in the *Times-Democrat* in 1964, she noted that Flambo knew that some acts would lose money, but he brought them here "because I thought they would be good for the area." Perhaps, too, it was because of his love of fine music. No matter what the reason might have been, the Quad-Cities was certainly richer for his efforts.



Don Nelson



Carmine Anthony



Dale Holt

MORE CHANGES, MORE SHOWS, MORE RADIO

Year 1956 opened with some fine-tuning of WQUA's broadcast schedule. An early version of "Plantation Nightbeat," hosted by Don Nelson, was added from 6:15 to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday. The show was called "Early Nightbeat," and its format was the same as the later program.

Nelson commented that Flambo got his money's worth from him – he was on the air at the station from 2 to 4 p.m., then off to the Plantation to set up the remote equipment, did the "Early Nightbeat" show from 6:15 to 8, bribed the busboys for something to eat then did the late version of "Nightbeat" until 1 a.m. – all for about \$2.25 an hour.

Flambo probably got his money's worth from all of the announcers. A newspaper radio log of the period for a Saturday showed Jack Barlow signing on at 5 a.m. Nelson, after announcing "Plantation Nightbeat" until 1 a.m., was on the air again at 8 a.m. Barlow was back at 10, and Nelson returned at 12:45 p.m. Barlow was back again from 5-8 p.m., and Nelson was back at the Plantation from 10:30 p.m. to 1 a.m. And you thought show biz was easy!

As the year got underway, the WQUA staff once again mourned the death of one of its own. Bud Dawson, long time sports director, suffered a heart attack on January 7 while walking down Fifth Avenue. Dawson had been with WQUA from the beginning. Since 1953, he had also worked as the publicity and promotions director of the Quad City Speedway, as well as track announcer. In addition to his broadcasting and speedway work, Dawson had been active in various youth sports programs.

"Bud Dawson was one of the better sports announcers I ever worked around," recalled Ed Grennan. "He put on great interview shows and was tremendous with play-by-play. He was a big Moline fan, but never demonstrated it since a good sports man should remain neutral. I can remember when his son was a quarterback for the Moline High School team, Bud never let on that there was any relation, but he was proud as punch to see his kid do well in the games."

Filling the void created by Dawson's death, University of Iowa radio and television student Harry Kalas was hired to call the play-by-play action for the remainder of the season's high school basketball games. Bill Mason would meet Kalas at the game sites, they would air the games then

Kalas would drive back to Iowa City for class. This routine was followed for each game broadcast by the duo.

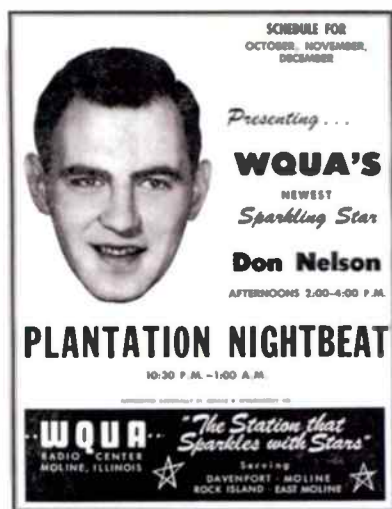
Verne Flambo's first production for the year brought the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo to the stage of the RKO Orpheum on January 3. This was followed up with the entertainment for this year's Quad City Autorama.

Flambo, again the auto show manager, booked country star Eddy Arnold, vocalist Dorothy Collins of the "Your Hit Parade" television show and pop singers Somethin' Smith and the Redheads, the Four Lads and Pat Boone to the stage of the Rock Island Armory.

Approximately two weeks before the show's start, Collins backed out of the show, citing "physical fatigue" as the reason. In her place, Flambo booked the then-number one female vocalist, Georgia Gibbs. He also initiated a \$10,000 lawsuit against Collins and her manager.

The show had a nine-day run, from January 28 through February 5, with numerous stage shows per day. While the attendance didn't match the previous year's record with the McGuire Sisters, nearly 34,000 attendees enjoyed the cars and celebrities.

All of the singers were receiving plenty of airplay on radio stations across the country, but Boone had had several records place number one on the music charts. With his good looks, clean-cut image and white buck shoes, he was definitely a hit with the teenaged gals. Again, WQUA had great access to the singers for interviews to be played back on the station's shows most applicable to the particular singer.



"Nigtbeat" Publicity Sheet



Don Nelson with Pat Boone



Harry Kalas as he looks today

Just four days after the close of the auto show, Flambo presented the touring Broadway stage show "Tea and Sympathy." In March, he brought the National Ballet of Canada and Louis Armstrong with Woody Herman to the RKO Orpheum and comedy/classical pianist Victor Borge to Wharton Fieldhouse. The Orpheum saw two more Flambo presentations in April: the musical "Pajama Game" and the comedy "Teahouse of the August Moon."

During June, the issue of whether there might be a WQUA-TV rose again. The FCC invited comments on proposed channel assignment changes. Across the country, there were 24 markets that had a mixture of both VHF and UHF channels and the FCC wanted to eliminate that situation by making each market either exclusively VHF or UHF.

The FCC proposed moving VHF channel 8 from Peoria, which was primarily a UHF market, to the all-VHF Quad Cities market. It would then establish more UHF channels for Peoria. If this were to happen, Verne Flambo was ready to make application for that channel.

There were legal problems with this plan, though. Several years earlier, the FCC had given channel 8 to Peoria radio station WIRL and it would fight any effort to move that assignment.

If and when that assignment was made, Flambo was prepared to immediately apply for and

begin construction of a television station. He played it wisely, though, in stating “when the assignment was made.” In effect, that meant that he would not enter into any legal fight to have the channel moved to the Quad Cities, but would wait for the FCC to make the assignment change. That way, he didn’t spend additional money in fighting to gain the channel; he’d wait for it to come here.

Elaine (Fitch) Vinzant joined the WQUA staff as a continuity writer in August. An Arkansas native, Vinzant was a music major who found radio production to her liking after working at her college radio station. Since she had sisters living in Santa Barbara, Calif., and Moline, she wrote to the radio stations in each city and was hired by WQUA continuity director Frank Freeman.

By September, some major changes in the personnel roster took place. Evening newscaster and announcer Bill Lindholm left to perform his seminary internship was then ordained a Lutheran minister. From 1958 to 1970 he served as pastor at both Grace Lutheran Church in East Tawas, Mich., and Hope Lutheran Church in Oscoda, Mich. From 1970 until his retirement in 2002, he served Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Livonia, Mich.

Jack Barlow, who some staffers said got fired and hired by Flambo so many times that it was hard to keep count, went over to KSTT (but he’d be back.)

Dave Fleming, who had graduated from Augustana in the spring, headed west and enrolled at the UCLA Law School. He was admitted to the California State Bar in 1959 and is currently of counsel to Latham & Watkins, the sixth-largest law firm in the world.

Fleming was the instigator of the successful city charter reform movement in Los Angeles in 1997; is past vice chairman of the California Transportation Commission; was an eight-year member of the Los Angeles Board of Fire Commissioners and served as its president for five years; chairman of the board of Valley Presbyterian Hospital; is a director of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce; and currently serves on the boards of the Technology Council of the Motion Picture and Television Industry, the Reason Foundation, and is a trustee of the Children’s Planning Council of L.A. County, an organization he was instrumental in creating.

He has been honored by the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith, the California Jaycees, various bar associations and many philanthropic organizations. Fleming was appointed by President George W. Bush to the James Madison Foundation in Washington, D.C.

Mel Loding also graduated from Augustana in the spring and enlisted in the service. He later joined Deere & Co., where he served as a buyer. He retired in 1985.

Joe Anderson took over Barlow’s former morning show. Dale Holt, another student from the Augustana Theological Seminary, became night newsman and had an announcing shift as well. Art Stanley, who had previously worked at WOC and stations in Illinois, Nebraska, New Jersey and Texas, came to WQUA from KCIM in Carroll, Iowa. He took over most of the weekday shifts of Don Nelson, while Nelson went to school.

Nelson hadn’t yet finished high school when he became a fulltime broadcaster; a move he later stated was a big mistake. He finished his high school work and was enrolled at St. Ambrose as a freshman. In addition to his fulltime work in radio, he carried 15 hours of classroom study.

Beginning with the October broadcast schedule, all local music shows were billed as WQUA Hi-Fi, using the technique Harold Higby had created for Dave Fleming’s “Hi-Fi Showcase.”

MONDAY – FRIDAY BROADCAST SCHEDULE October – December 1956

5:00 – 6:00 a.m.	Hi-Fi Joe Anderson	3:00 – 3:30	Hi-Fi Art Stanley
6:00 – 6:10	Bill Mason News	3:30 – 3:35	Bill Mason News
6:10 – 7:00	Hi-Fi Joe Anderson	3:35 – 4:00	Hi-Fi Art Stanley
7:00 – 7:05	Bill Mason News	4:00 – 4:05	Dale Holt News
7:05 – 7:30	Hi-Fi Joe Anderson	4:05 – 4:30	Hi-Fi Art Stanley
7:30 – 7:45	Bill Mason News	4:30 – 4:35	Dale Holt News
7:45 – 8:15	Hi-Fi Joe Anderson	4:35 – 5:00	Hi-Fi Art Stanley
8:15 – 9:00	Breakfast Club	5:00 – 5:05	Dale Holt News
9:00 – 9:30	My True Story	5:05 – 5:30	Hi-Fi Art Stanley

9:30 – 9:45	When a Girl Marries	5:30 – 5:45	Dale Holt News
9:45 – 10:00	Whispering Streets	5:45 – 6:00	Hi-Fi Art Stanley
10:00 – 10:30	Hi-Fi Kay Adams	6:00 – 6:15	ABC News
10:30 – 10:35	Bill Mason News	6:15 – 6:30	Freddy Martin Band
10:35 – 11:30	Hi-Fi Kay Adams	6:30 – 6:40	Mel Allen Sports
11:30 – 11:35	Bill Mason News	6:40 – 7:55	Hi-Fi Don Nelson
11:35 – Noon	Hi-Fi Western Style	7:55 – 8:00	Don Nelson News
12:00 – 12:05	Bill Mason News	8:00 – 8:55	Hi-Fi Art Stanley
12:05 – 12:30	Hi-Fi Western Style	(8:00 – 10:00 Fri.	High School Sports)
12:30 – 12:45	Bill Mason News	8:55 – 9:00	Don Nelson News
12:45 – 1:00	Paul Harvey News	9:00 – 9:50	Hi-Fi Dale Holt
1:00 – 1:30	Hi-Fi Joe Anderson	9:50 – 10:00	Art Stanley News
1:30 – 1:35	Bill Mason News	10:00 – 10:25	Hi-Fi Dale Holt
1:35 – 2:30	Hi-Fi Joe Anderson	10:25 – 10:30	ABC News
2:30 – 2:35	Bill Mason News	10:30–1:00	Hi-Fi Plantation Nightbeat
2:35 – 3:00	Hi-Fi Joe Anderson		w/Art Stanley

Flambo introduced a classy new show in October that would air Sunday evenings for many years. WOC had been airing a nightly show called "Variations in Music." It had been originated by Harry Brown, the conductor of the Tri-City Symphony, but was taken over by Betty Stevens when Brown left the area to become conductor of another symphony. Stevens not only played the classics on the program but also developed a thorough commentary on the composers and their other works of music. WOC had cancelled "Variations" to feature more pop music.

WQUA WQUA WQUA WQUA

**VARIATIONS
IN HI-FI**

with
Betty Stevens

Three solid hours of the world's finest music, recorded by the world's most accomplished artists.

TONIGHT 8 to 11

WQUA

1230 on Your Dial

WQUA WQUA WQUA WQUA



Betty Stevens

WQUA WQUA WQUA WQUA

BASKETBALL

To-night on WQUA
Moline vs. Alleman

Game Time 8:30 P.M.

Harry KALAS and Bill MASON

Sponsored by
Ydeen's Varsity Shop
Deep Rock Independent Service Stations
and These Uptown Merchants

Wheeler's
Drug Store, Inc.
Bruce Darbeck's
"66" Service
Trevillian's
Misty Tasty
Food Shop

Angie Clay's
Standard Service
Eriason Pharmacy
George Melin
Agency
Uptown National
Bank

High School Basketball Every Friday and Saturday

WQUA

1230 on Your Dial

WQUA WQUA WQUA WQUA

Stevens, a Rock Island native, had studied music in Switzerland, France and Italy. She had been director of the Rock Island Children's Little Theatre and had also directed plays for the Quad City Music Guild. She was a perfect fit for the classical show.

Flambo was promoting more stage plays and "good music" shows this year and, when WOC cancelled the show, he saw the perfect opportunity to bring it to WQUA. No doubt his love of opera played a role in wanting it on his station, and rather than air the show for only a half hour as WOC had done, Flambo allowed it to expand to three and a half hours. An opera or concert could be heard in it's entirety and bring more listeners for that style of music to WQUA.

Besides the radio station and his entertainment promoting business, Flambo began to further his radio station holdings. With close associate and insurance agency owner Harry Cleaveland, the two created Knox County Broadcasting Corp. for the expressed purpose of building a radio station in Galesburg, Ill. On October 9, the partners applied to the FCC for a permit to build that city's second radio station.

On October 11, Bill Mason hosted a famous guest. ABC's Paul Harvey was in town for an afternoon address to the Rock Island County Teacher's Institute. Harvey prepared and aired his 12:45 pm network newscast from WQUA's newsroom studio.

Flambo's entertainment bookings continued with Mantovani making a repeat appearance at the RKO Orpheum in October. November brought a repeat appearance by Victor Borge at Wharton Fieldhouse; a presentation of "Madam Butterfly" by the NBC Opera Co. and a concert by the National Swedish Chorus, both at the RKO Orpheum; and a performance by the 100-member Carabinieri Band of Rome at Wharton Fieldhouse.

As noted earlier, this was the year that Flambo concentrated on "good music" entertainment. The majority of the shows this year brought to the local audience performances that would normally only appear in New York or Chicago. Flambo demonstrated showmanship at its best.

1957 – 1959

CROCODILES AND CHEESE DOGS

January 1957 began with the departure of Joe Anderson and Kay Adams. Both personalities moved over to WHBF. Anderson spent the next eighteen years as mid-day host at that station. Upon his retirement, he spent seven years working as a salesman for Geneseo station WGEN. He later did voice work for the Moline Gospel Temple's television programs. Anderson died in January of 2002.

Kay Adams joined Anderson in an afternoon program at WHBF for several years, and then was involved with radio sales, promotion and continuity. After leaving the air, she reverted to using her real name, Dawn Sonnevile. She left WHBF in the mid '70s and worked in radio sales at KSTT and WOC. Sonnevile died in October of 1997.

Sonneville's staff position at WQUA was not replaced after she left. Paul "PJ" Denault replaced Anderson. Former station staffers describe Denault as one of Flambo's "soul-saving" projects that worked out for the better.

To explain what the staffers meant by "soul-saving," broadcasting was full of former big-city personalities who were in downward spirals for one reason or another. While their announcing skills were still excellent, their careers, and sometimes their personal lives, were headed down due to a variety of possible problems, usually drinking or money. Flambo, had a knack for finding young talent on the way up or veteran talent on their way down. He figured if he could keep them sober and out of trouble, the station would have some great voices. Station owners across the country may have done this same thing, but Flambo seemed to have good success with it.

Denault was purportedly one such individual. He had worked for the Voice of America, radio stations in Duluth and St. Paul and had even hosted a children's TV show in St. Paul. He had a great voice, but due to a personal problem, had trouble keeping a job. Flambo took a chance on Denault and hired him to replace Joe Anderson.

Flambo was again the managing director of the Quad City Autorama. Scheduled for a run from January 21-27, he booked singers Guy Mitchell, the Ames Brothers, Somethin' Smith and the Redheads and the Dick Hayman Orchestra. As an added attraction and due to popular demand for some country artists, Flambo also brought in singer Johnny Cash and the Tennessee Two to close the show. All of the vocalists had current hits on the national charts.

As an interesting side note to the auto show concerts, one of the emcees of the show was Ed Zack, an announcer at WOC. When asked how someone from a WQUA competitor wound up working one of Flambo's productions, Zack stated, "Flambo would call on me on occasion, probably because his people had other commitments." Zack remembered introducing Somethin' Smith and the Redheads at the Armory and the Crew Cuts at the RKO Orpheum.

News director Bill Mason was busy in the first four months of the year covering a plane crash near Colona, Ill., that killed three people, the heavily contested March primary state and county elections, and, for the first time in history, the total closing of the Arsenal swing-bridge to allow for the installation of a new deck surface.

For those who thought the Quad-Cities had problems with the bridge closings in 2003, there were only a total of six lanes over the Mississippi in 1957. With the closing of the Arsenal Bridge, traffic was backed up into Rock Island and Moline for months with Arsenal and Iowa-bound traffic. Police were present every weekday in an effort to keep the steady stream of cars flowing over the bridges. Bridge headaches are nothing new in the Quad-Cities.

On April 9, the Flambo-Cleaveland partnership received its construction permit for a 5,000 watt, daytime-only station in Galesburg. Construction started immediately, supervised by WQUA chief engineer Harold Higby. The station was to be on the air by the fall of the year.

April also brought the premier of Don Nelson's "Crocodile Club." The "Croc Club" was a Flambo invention. Nelson remembered: "It was entirely Flambo's idea. He had read about an increase in the rate of juvenile delinquency incidents and wanted to do something about it, so he created some dances with a tie-in to my nighttime show to give kids somewhere to go and something to do. My nighttime show was renamed the 'Crocodile Club' and Flambo gave me total free reign to pick whatever music I wanted for the show. Each show was a 'meeting' for the 'Club'"

Membership was open to junior high, senior high and college students. They were to send their names and address on a postcard and in return they received a membership card, bumper sticker and a badge. This entitled the member to attend the monthly chaperoned dances.

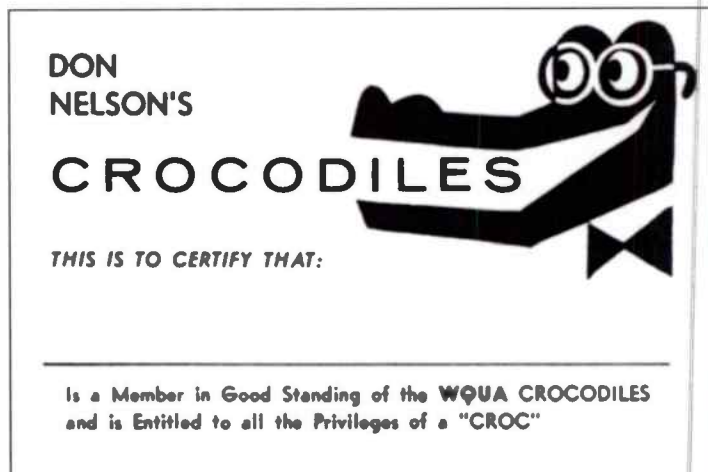
The hops had a dress code – dresses for the girls and jackets for the boys. Flambo urged parents to attend and discover that the teens could have a place to meet their friends and have a few hours of fun and dancing.

The first Croc Hop was held on April 12 at Moline's American Legion Hall with more than 2,300 teens admitted and another 1,500 turned away due to space constraints. It was decided that further hops would be held in venues that could hold about 6,000 people since, in the first month alone, more than 7,000 membership cards were sent out.

The second hop was held at Wharton Fieldhouse in May. Don Nelson spun records, the Hal Wiese Orchestra was on hand for dancing, and the Diamonds, a popular national recording group, sang their hit songs to more than 3,200 Crocodiles.



P.J. Denault



Thousands of these cards were mailed out

Another WQUA program, which was actually a sales promotion for the Foremost Packing Co. in East Moline, began in May. The show, called "So You Want to be a Disc Jockey," was hosted by Don Nelson and aired each weeknight from 7:30 to 8 p.m.

Interested teens were asked to send their names to the station and each week one name would be drawn. That person would tape a half-hour program with Nelson and the guest disc jockey would pick the music he or she wanted to play. Nelson would interview the teen and help him or her through the commercials for Foremost. At the end of the program's run, the teen disc jockey who received the most votes, would win a \$500 prize.

How were votes cast? That's where a Foremost product entered the picture. The company had just introduced hot dogs stuffed with cheese. Voting was accomplished by friends and relatives sending in part of the package label with the teen's name written on it. Obviously, the only way to acquire the label was to purchase packages of the cheese dogs. While the show was certainly popular, one wonders how many clogged arteries the program voting produced.

Verne Flambo brought another big show to Wharton Fieldhouse on May 18. "The Pat Boone Show," along with The Four Lads and the Fontaine Sisters, played to a good crowd, but Flambo would not be around to welcome the singers.

On May 11, tragedy struck the WQUA family again, as former owner Dalton LeMasurier and his wife went missing when their plane was lost in a Wyoming storm. LeMasurier was a seasoned pilot, but, according to Wyoming officials, had been caught in one of the worst storms of the winter season.

Flambo's son, John, recalled, "We were on our way to a brief vacation or something when Dad got word that the LeMasuriers were missing. We turned around, came home and Dad left for Wyoming to see if he couldn't help in some way with the search."

Nineteen days after it was reported missing, the wreckage of the plane was spotted on a mountain near Rawlins, Wyo. The rescue party found Dalton LeMasurier dead, but wife Dorothy was alive and had survived for 19 days on vitamin pills and three pieces of candy.

The LeMasuriers had been returning from Pasadena, Calif., and flying at 8,000 feet when they crashed into 9,500-foot Ferris Mountain, obscured by fog and snow. Both had survived the initial crash, but Dalton LeMasurier died after three or four days.

During June, an article in the Rock Island *Argus* noted that pop music, most notably rock and roll, was starting to take over the local airwaves. According to columnist Charles Sanders, only two stations were providing a variety of network dramas and good music.

There was no doubt that rock-and-roll had entered local radio programming, but the music heard on WQUA was not raucous by any means. News and program director Bill Mason defended the music played at WQUA. He noted that most of the pop music was played primarily in the evenings, pointed at the teenaged listener, while the rest of the day was devoted primarily to show tunes and standards. WQUA was still airing network offerings like the "Breakfast Club" and morning radio drama programs. In addition, the station aired the weekly "Voice of Firestone" and "Variations in Music," both of which offered classical music.

Mason further noted that the only thing ABC offered in the afternoons was the "Martin Block Show," which played records. Mason felt that WQUA announcers would better serve the local audience by playing songs the local audience liked.

As the first area station to program pop music and the first to modify its over-the-air sound, this was probably the point where WQUA began to promote itself as "the" music and news station for the Quad Cities.

MORE ABOUT TV THAN YOU PROBABLY CARE TO KNOW

Back during 1956, Flambo noted that he was ready to apply for a television license if and when the Quad-Cities area was assigned another channel. Channel 8 was finally pulled from Peoria and assigned to the Quad-Cities area after the FCC denied a petition for a rehearing on the transfer of the VHF frequency out of Peoria.

Three permit applications had been filed for the channel at that time, but Flambo was not one of the applicants. Although he hadn't stated so, there were most likely two reasons why Flambo had yet to apply: He was in the middle of building the Galesburg radio station, and, as it turned out, the legal wrangling over the channel assignment would be far from over.

(By the fall of 1957, there were eight applicants for channel 8. With so many entities interested in winning the license, it took nearly four years for the FCC to decide which applicant would be awarded the construction permit. In 1960, Community Television was given the nod to operate channel 8, but in June of 1961, the FCC reversed itself and granted the permit to Moline Television Corp. In 1962, Community Television and several other applicants that had originally lost out challenged the FCC's decision. Moline Television started construction on its studios and transmitter

site in early 1963 and was given final approval for the license in April of that year. WQAD-TV finally signed on the air for the first time on August 1, 1963. (Maybe Verne Flambo knew something the rest of the applicants didn't – that it would be a long, costly fight to bring television to Moline.)

In July, Flambo brought the Four Lads back to Moline to perform at a Croc Hop that was held on the tennis courts of Moline's Stephens Park. It was dancing and a concert under the stars with plenty of room for the crowd.

By the end of the summer, WQUA did away with "Don McNeill's Breakfast Club" and the other few ABC network shows that were still on the air. In their places, the station aired lengthened music shows. The only ABC programming kept was some network news and sports reports. The popular "Paul Harvey Report" and "Edward P. Morgan and the News" were still integral parts of the station's schedule, though.

The thrust of WQUA was now music, news, and local sports. There was even a switch in how the newspapers listed the station's programs. Only the "Croc Club" and "Variations in Music" were called by their program names. All others were listed simply as "Hi-Fi Music" and didn't even mention the announcers' names. The emphasis was on the music.

Verne Flambo's fondness for opera was once again demonstrated when he brought the New York Opera Festival production of "Carmen" to the RKO Orpheum in October.

On November 17, 1957, the Flambo-Cleveland partnership's new station signed on the air in Galesburg. The station's call letters were WQUB. It had 5,000 watts of power, but a directional signal. It was a daytime-only station, meaning it was on the air from local sunrise to sundown.

WQUB shared some of WQUA's announcing and engineering staff. Jack Teiken was WQUB's morning announcer and Ernie Mimms was its mid-day announcer. Others like Don Nelson remember driving back and forth between Moline and Galesburg to do an air shift.

In mid-December, Flambo, Odin Ramsland, John Grandy, Harry Hyett and Mrs. Dorothy LeMasurier made an offer to purchase Eau Claire, Wis., radio station WRFW. Assuming the offer to purchase was accepted, it was Flambo's intent to have the station's call letters changed to WQUC, and all of his properties would then be referred to as the ABC Radio Station Chain.

The sale took place in December, but the change of call letters to WQUC did not take place. Instead, the call letters were changed to WECL and Harry Hyett was named its president.

As 1957 came to a close, announcer and night newsman Dale Holt resigned from WQUA to perform a ministerial internship. Before graduating from the seminary, he returned to radio work at KSTT and was host of a classical music program on that station. Upon graduation, Holt served as a Lutheran minister in several states, later focusing his ministry on children. He served as director of the Midland Television Ministry Network and was host of the "For Children Only" program for many years. Rev. Holt died in December of 2002.

Hired as Holt's replacement as the evening newscaster was George Johnson. He would also host a Saturday evening record show. Johnson had been a wire service correspondent during the Korean War and a newsman at WCCO radio in Minneapolis.

SCHEDULE FOR THURSDAY, JANUARY 2, 1958

5:00 – 6:00 a.m.	Hi-Fi Paul Denault	2:30 – 2:35	George Johnson News
6:00 – 6:10	Bill Mason News	2:35 – 3:00	Hi-Fi Art Stanley
6:10 – 6:30	Hi-Fi Paul Denault	3:00 – 3:30	Hi-Fi Don Nelson
6:30 – 6:35	Bill Mason News	3:30 – 3:35	George Johnson News
6:35 – 7:00	Hi-Fi Paul Denault	3:35 – 4:00	Hi-Fi Don Nelson
7:00 – 7:05	Bill Mason News	4:00 – 4:05	George Johnson News
7:05 – 7:30	Hi-Fi Paul Denault	4:05 – 4:30	Hi-Fi Don Nelson
7:30 – 7:45	Bill Mason News	4:30 – 4:35	George Johnson News
7:45 – 8:30	Hi-Fi Paul Denault	4:35 – 5:00	Hi-Fi Don Nelson
8:30 – 8:35	Bill Mason News	5:00 – 5:05	George Johnson News
8:35 – 9:30	Hi-Fi Paul Denault	5:05 – 5:30	Hi-Fi Don Nelson
9:30 – 9:35	Bill Mason News	5:30 – 5:45	George Johnson News

9:35 – 10:00	Hi-Fi Paul Denault	5:45 – 5:55	ABC News w/John Daly
10:00 – 10:30	Hi-Fi Art Stanley	5:55 – 6:00	Paul Harvey News
10:30 – 10:35	Bill Mason News	6:00 – 6:15	Hi-Fi John Birdsell
10:35 – 11:30	Hi-Fi Art Stanley	6:15 – 6:30	Edward P. Morgan News
11:30 – 11:35	Bill Mason News	6:30 – 7:00	Hi-Fi John Birdsell
11:35 – Noon	Hi-Fi Art Stanley	7:00 – 8:00	Hi-Fi Croc Club w/Nelson
12:00 – 12:05	Bill Mason News	8:00 – 8:30	Hi-Fi John Birdsell
12:05 – 12:30	Hi-Fi Art Stanley	8:30 – 8:35	George Johnson News
12:30 – 12:45	Bill Mason News	8:35 – 9:15	Hi-Fi John Birdsell
12:45 – 1:00	Paul Harvey News	9:15 – 9:30	George Johnson News
1:00 – 1:30	Hi-Fi Art Stanley	9:30 – 10:25	Hi-Fi John Birdsell
1:30 – 1:35	Bill Mason News	10:25 – 10:30	George Johnson News
1:35 – 2:30	Hi-Fi Art Stanley	10:30 – Midnight	Hi-Fi John Birdsell

Note in the schedule above, the announcers' names have been added to show which shift was covered by what announcer. Newspaper logs did not include the announcers' names.

The schedule for January 1958 also shows another addition to the announcing ranks. Not much information could be found for John Birdsell, nor could former staffers add any information other than he was one of Flambo's "soul-saving" projects and he didn't last long at the station.

NIKITA, EMPTY STAGES, AND THOUSANDS OF STAMPS

During late 1957 and early 1958, the United States and Russia began what was known as the space race. Russia was the first to launch a satellite call Sputnik in late 1957, much to the chagrin of President Dwight Eisenhower.

In early February of 1958, the U.S. launched its own satellite, called Explorer. On a Saturday morning shortly after, Bill Mason wondered what the Russian people thought of the US launch and decided to find out how much it would cost to call Russia. Since it would only cost \$13.20, including the tax, Mason placed a call to Russian Premier Nikita Khrushchev.

While today one thinks of only dialing a series of numbers to connect with a party overseas, in 1958 it was much different. All long distance calls had to be placed through the services of a telephone operator. The direct circuits to Russia through Chicago closed down at 10:15 a.m., but the phone company said they would try through the New York long distance operators. At noon, Mason was informed that the call hadn't gone through, but the operators would continue to try to complete the call. At 2:30 p.m., the London long distance operator informed Mason, "In regard to your call to Moscow, the party you wish to contact does not wish to speak on the phone." The Russian premier missed his chance to be famous with Mason in Moline.

While that phone call did not work, many others did. Bill Mason remembered, "In order to make us sound 'different,' we relied on many telephone tapes from places where the news was being made. This included overseas. Radio stations around the nation were very cooperative in giving us on-the-spot reports, which added to our image of being different. We in turn were quick to help (stations we called) with reports from our area."

In essence, Mason created a mini audio news service. Today it's very common in the news business to use reports from other stations, but this was in the 1950s when obtaining a story was done by any means available. It was just one more way WQUA stood out to the listeners.

The Quad City Automobile Dealers Association did not hold an auto show for 1958. The U.S. was going through a recession and the association felt that the expense of putting on a show would cut into dealership profits during a tough sales year.

At the same time, the country was coping with a recession, rising costs of entertainment and, especially, stage productions, meant Verne Flambo did not bring any shows to the area this year. It appeared that the entertainment business was cutting its own throat.

For example, singer Eddie Fisher demanded a \$7,500 guarantee and four round-trip airline tickets from New York to play here. Flambo wouldn't bite, but Des Moines promoters took the show

and it failed miserably. Sales didn't meet the demand much less the promoters' costs.

Touring stage productions were even worse. The top touring show cost almost \$13,000 to bring in, and it was just too great a risk during a recessional period.

Flambo did book the popular singing group The Four Preps for a Croc Hop in March and movie and recording star Tommy Sands for a Croc Hop in August. Those were the only artists to appear, and only as "Crocodile Club" promotions.

In late August, the audience ratings were released for the July ratings period. Out of 22 measured segments, WQUA was first in 15 time periods, tied for first in one period, was second in

SHARE OF RADIO AUDIENCE

<u>TIME</u>	<u>WQUA</u>	<u>KFMA</u>	<u>WOC</u>	<u>WHBF</u>	<u>KSTT</u>
M-F 7:00 a – Noon	28.8	2.9	16.3	35.1	11.2
M-F Noon – 6:00 p	32.3	4.0	13.7	22.7	17.0
Sat. 7:00 a – 6:00 p	31.3	1.9	12.5	25.7	14.7
Sun. 10:00 a – 6:00 p	21.9	2.9	22.6	10.2	6.6

five time periods and tied for second place in one period. The emphasis on music and news was certainly paying off for the station.

For readers unfamiliar with the terms rating and share: a rating is the number of homes that are tuned to a given station divided by the number of all homes with radios (or televisions). The share is the number of homes tuned to a particular station divided by the number of homes with their radios (or televisions) turned on at that particular time.

Ratings and share can be deceiving, however. Two stations might both claim to be number one in the same time period. This can happen when the demographics are broken out by age group. One station might have the most number of listeners between the ages of 18-24 and another station could have the most number of listeners in the 25-49 age group. And yet both could claim to be number one and both would be correct.

During the summer, Verne Flambo created the Wapello County Broadcasting Co. and offered to purchase Ottumwa, Iowa, radio station KBIZ for \$62,500. KBIZ was a full-time operation with 250 watts of power. On August 1, the purchase became official.

By early fall, Paul Denault resigned from his morning show and moved on to announcing jobs at WBBM and WNUS in Chicago, where he used the on-air name of Paul Rogers. He joined WGN and hosted its overnight shows, like "Great Music from Chicago." He also did voiceover work for Old Style beer and Allstate Insurance. He retired in the late 1990s and died March 3, 2007.

A new addition to the WQUA staff was Jim Johnston, a former announcer at WGN. Johnston had received a construction permit for a radio station in Watertown, N.Y., and Flambo offered to mentor him in the aspects of owning a radio station.

With the changes in announcers came a change in their on-air schedules. Don Nelson was now heard from 5 to 10 a.m. and 8 to 9:30 p.m. Art Stanley's shift was 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Jim Johnston's show aired 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. and newcomer Harry Maus covered 6:30 p.m. to midnight, except for the hour and a half of the "Croc Club."

Maus was a student at Palmer College of Chiropractic in Davenport and had previously worked at Davenport's KFMA.

Since the death of sports director Bud Dawson, WQUA had used the talents of University of Iowa broadcasting students for local high school football and basketball games. During the 1958-59 season, Dale Buhl performed play-by-play for football and Harry Kalas called the basketball games. Bill Mason again provided color commentary and read the commercials.

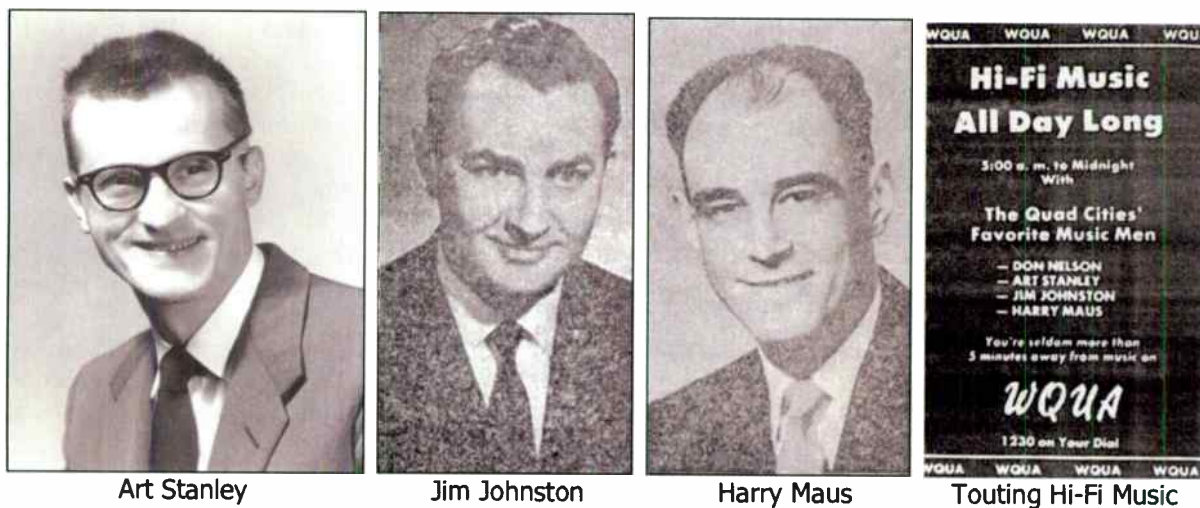
As college seniors, this would be the only year that Buhl and Kalas performed play-by-play for WQUA, as both graduated in 1959. Buhl went on to work as a newsman at WHO in Des Moines.

Harry Kalas was drafted into the military upon graduation and was stationed in Hawaii. After his tour of duty, he spent five years broadcasting the Pacific Coast League Hawaii Islanders baseball

games. In 1965, he became a member of the Houston Astros broadcast team. In 1971, he joined the Philadelphia Phillies broadcast team as play-by-play announcer and as of this writing, began his 33rd year with the team.

Kalas was named Pennsylvania Sportscaster of the Year 17 times. In 2002, he joined fellow WQUA alum Milo Hamilton in the Baseball Hall of Fame as a Ford Frick Award winner. Kalas is the voice of NFL Films, calls football games on the Westwood One Radio Network and is heard on many commercials, most notably, Campbell's Chunky Soups.

Several other additions to the staff were made before the year was out. John Simes was added as a salesman and copywriter, Rex Stein was hired as continuity director, and Dorothy Wiatt was hired as an assistant bookkeeper and secretary.



Art Stanley

Jim Johnston

Harry Maus

Touting Hi-Fi Music

Flambo added yet another station to his ownership portfolio on January 1, 1959, when he purchased KWEB radio in Rochester, Minn. Partner in this venture was John Grandy, former WQUA and KDAL sales manager. The two created Olmstead County Broadcasting Co. to operate the station with Grandy as its general manager.

Flambo also began to bring entertainment back to local audiences in 1959. Although the country was still in a minor recession, the entertainment world evidently began to make more realistic payment demands. On January 15, he booked "The Mary Martin Musical Review" into the RKO Orpheum. Martin had starred in the Broadway productions of "Peter Pan," "South Pacific" and "Annie Get Your Gun." Theatre patrons had missed the local, live performances and the Martin Review produced a sellout.

January 1959 also brought a flourish of advertising and promotions at WQUA. One of the bigger contests was the King Korn Karnival, where listeners could win thousands of trading stamps. Just what were trading stamps?

Trading stamps were small coupons, the size of postage stamps, given to customers by merchants. They had no cash value, but could be exchanged for merchandise either at in-town redemption centers or by mail.

The practice began back at the turn of the century to reward customers who paid for their purchases with cash instead of credit. It grew with the spread of chain supermarkets and gas stations and by the 1940s, merchants found it profitable to award the stamps to all of their customers, not just the cash customers.

Merchants paid a stamp company for the stamps, then advertise that they gave away the stamps with every purchase – one stamp for every 10 cents in sales. Some merchants had double stamp promotions. The intent was to create customer loyalty so the customer would continue to shop at a particular merchant to obtain enough stamps to redeem.

The most popular brand by far was the S&H Green Stamp, followed by King Korn Stamps, Plaid Stamps and Gold Bond Stamps. Each of the companies had local redemption centers where shoppers

could take their books of saved stamps, make their exchange and take the merchandise home with them that day.

WQUA's contest had the listener write down 10 key words heard throughout the day on the station. For every response mailed in, whether it contained the correct key words or not, the station sent 10 stamps. If the response had three or more key words, the listener received ten stamps for each correct word. If all ten words were correct, the listener received 150 stamps. In addition to those awards, the listener was eligible to win 1,000 or 100,000 stamps from a random drawing held each week from all correct entries. The promotion lasted for six weeks and more than one million stamps were given away.

While the King Korn Karnival was underway, the station ran a contest where each monthly winner could have his or her house or car payment paid by the station. Listeners would send their names and payment amounts, then hope their name was picked at random. The duration of this contest was four months.

It's interesting to note that the stamp and payment contests were held during the time periods that ratings services polled listeners to establish station ratings. This certainly was not uncommon in broadcasting, but comparing the amount of newspaper advertising in past years with this year, it seemed to be the first time WQUA really sought out listeners, thus ratings.

A new face was also added to station management in January. J. Maxim Ryder was hired as WQUA station manager. Ryder had been manager of WBRY in Waterbury, Conn., and was on the board of directors of the CBS Radio Affiliates. Prior to his radio work, Ryder had been editor of several New England newspapers.

During February, the station began a programming feature that ran until early 1962 and was extremely popular – weather forecasts by the Krick Weather Service. The forecasts were presented at quarter past every hour Monday through Friday and gave comprehensive weather reports and long-range predictions from Krick's headquarters in Denver, Colo.

Irving Krick was a professional meteorologist who had developed long-range weather forecasting techniques with remarkable results. During World War II, he provided planners with sound dates for the invasion of Normandy. Since the Eisenhower years, his firm has provided the White House with weather information it could not obtain from Federal forecasters. (Readers wishing more information on Krick should read Boesen, Victor, *Storm: Irving Krick Vs the US Weather Bureau Bureaucracy*, Putnam Publishing Group, 1978)

"We would get a call in the newsroom several times a day and would record the reports for later play on the air. It was a popular feature since the forecasts were quite often better than the National Weather Service. Their (Krick's) specialty was long-term forecasting, especially for big, outdoor community events. For example, Krick would give a Christmas forecast even before Thanksgiving," recalled Ken Buel (more about Ken in a moment).

On March 13, Jack Barlow returned to WQUA in a new timeslot. The station again returned to programming music and news around the clock, and Barlow was the host of "Night Watch," heard from 11:00 p.m. to 5 a.m. The show was popular because of Barlow's personality and the mix of standards, pop and country tunes he played. Perhaps the show was popular by default as well, since WQUA was the only station in the Quad-Cities to have programming in the wee hours of the morning for listeners who worked the graveyard shift.

At this same time, Frank Freeman left the station for a position at WHBF and Art Stanley was appointed program director.

For March 23, Flambo booked another appearance by Mantovani at the RKO Orpheum. The orchestra leader's last appearance in the Quad-Cities had been in October 1956 and produced a capacity audience. This visit brought the same result.

Bill Mason resigned as news director on March 25, as he was named new public relations director of I-H Farmall in Rock Island. Mason remained in that capacity for 13 years. In 1972, he was appointed western region public relations director for International Harvester and moved to the San Francisco area.

Taking advantage of an early retirement offering when I-H closed his office, Mason and wife Mary began writing articles for a variety of special interest magazines, finally narrowing in on the

old car hobby. The two wrote for 14 different magazines and also became representatives for Krause Publications, an automotive hobbyist publishing firm. The Masons were referred to as "the first husband and wife team ever" to write a series of joint columns for trade magazines. In 1990, Bill and Mary Mason retired completely and returned to Bettendorf, where they currently reside.

George Johnson took over as WQUA news director. Ken Buel, a Collinsville, Ill., native and a 1957 graduate of the University of Illinois was hired for the vacant news position.

Buel recalled his hiring: "I worked at KBUR in Burlington, Iowa from graduation until March of 1959. Flambo called and asked me to come to Moline to talk about taking a news job at WQUA. He offered me the job, but in my 23-year-old arrogance, I told Verne that I wanted to think about it and didn't want to come to town without contacting the other big stations in town to see what they had to offer. I went to WOC, and they wouldn't see me, so I went back and told Flambo I'd take the job."

That "youthful arrogance" didn't seem to hurt Buel in the eyes of Flambo as Ken Buel would spend the next 16 1/2 years at WQUA in a variety of staff positions.

Ralph Stephenson and Phil Rosene joined the sales staff of Les Johnson and John Simes during March. Stephenson had worked at Monmouth and Mount Carmel radio stations and Rosene was a former downtown merchant. Stephenson's job was an experiment to try to sell ad time to merchants on the fringes of the WQUA listening area. Rosene had a local territory. It's been said that Rosene didn't know what he was selling and the advertisers weren't sure what they were buying, but everyone couldn't help but like him.

Longtime WQUA bookkeeper Dorothy Wiatt tells a story of Rosene coming into the station one time and telling the office staff that he had sold the "Messiah" Christmas program. Rosene then asked, "What's the 'Messiah'?" This is in no way an indictment of Phil Rosene but is mentioned because he was one of the station's more prolific and well-liked salesmen.

During April, Flambo again produced a show that would benefit a local not-for-profit group. The WQUA-sponsored "Shower of Stars" brought recording stars Frankie Avalon, Frankie Ford, the Skyliners, the Impalas and Chuck Berry to the RKO Orpheum stage for two shows. All proceeds from the show went to the local United Cerebral Palsy Association.

What made this an interesting booking by Flambo was the fact that admission was only \$1. In 1959, these were top stars and all of the performers had records that were riding high on the sales charts. The low admission price certainly guaranteed that the two shows would be sellouts, but it also meant that Flambo underwrote the entire cost of the booking so the Cerebral Palsy group would garner some much-needed funding. It's highly doubtful that promoters would be that generous in today's marketplace.

During May, WQUA petitioned the FCC for permission to raise its transmitter power to 1,000 watts from the current 250 watts. Nighttime power would remain at 250 watts. By increasing its power, WQUA would be heard in a 75-mile radius of Moline.

Earlier in the preceding year, several disc jockeys around the country decided to try to set a record staying awake. Peter Tripp, a New York announcer, was probably the most famous for this marathon broadcasting effort and stayed awake for 264 hours.

At noon on June 19, WQUA's Jack Barlow made an effort to break Tripp's record as he began broadcasting nonstop from Harrelson Motors. A remote studio was set up in the showroom of the former Buick dealership in Moline and speakers were installed outside the building so the public could hear Barlow. Listeners were invited to watch and chat with him.

Barlow was under the supervision of a doctor, and a nurse was always with him during the long evening hours. During the day, other station announcers were always present to help with the physical part of the job to help conserve his strength. Station manager Max Ryder stressed that Barlow would not receive any stimulants, other than coffee, to help him stay awake.

During his fifth day of broadcasting, Barlow told interviewer Carla Reynolds Telleen of the Moline *Dispatch*, "At one point, I lost control of my eyesight; apparently the eye muscles went to sleep but I didn't from about 1 to 3 a.m. The nurse bathed me with 10 containers of ice cubes."

The crowds that came to watch Barlow at the Harrelson showroom were large, and he would actually rally and become more alert when a crowd gathered. Unfortunately, he didn't rally enough to break the record. On June 25 at 7:30 a.m., Barlow called it quits after 139-1/2 hours. He was

taken to Moline Public Hospital, where doctors checked him over, then put him to bed for some much-deserved sleep.

The same day that Barlow gave in to sleep, Flambo gave in to an opportunity to make some return on his money and sold WQUB to a group of Galesburg businessmen. According to former traffic manager Bob Castle, because the station had to direct its signal away from the northwest and the Quad-Cities, it was never really a moneymaker.

The reason WQUB's signal was not to be heard in the Quad-Cities was twofold: WQUB, on 1590 kilocycles, had to protect Davenport's KFMA, on 1580 kilocycles, from interference, and the FCC did not allow the same ownership to operate two stations where the signals overlapped into the same geographical area. It had the same effect as owning two stations in the same city, which the FCC did not allow at that time either.

Another reason WQUB might not have been a moneymaker was the shared staffing that Flambo had WQUA provide. With the exception of Jack Teiken several of the WQUA announcers would do shifts at both stations. And Ernie Mimms would travel from Galesburg to Moline to cover a shift on WQUA. Towards the end of Flambo's ownership of the Galesburg station, portions of WQUA programming would be broadcast on WQUB by using telephone lines, similar to network feeds. Sometimes the quality of those lines was lacking.

"In those days, Class A (broadcast quality) phone lines were very expensive and Flambo didn't want to pay the high price, so he used Class C lines. The problem with that was that many times listeners would hear bits of phone conversations, cross-talk or the sounds of ringing telephones over their radios," recalled Bob Castle.

Flambo's mentoring period for Jim Johnston was over about this time, and Johnston moved on to put his own radio station, WOTT, on the air in Watertown, N.Y.

With Johnston's departure, WQUA's announcer schedule was shuffled a bit. Ernie Mimms (real name Ernie Memos) was hired from WQUB to do the "Night Watch" show. Jack Barlow moved to 6 to 10 a.m. Art Stanley's shift aired 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Don Nelson moved to the 2:30 to 7 p.m. slot (the "Croc Club" had run its course by then). Jack Teiken, also from WQUB, moved into the 7 p.m. to midnight slot, Teiken also performed engineering duties at the station. Former nighttime announcer Harry Maus moved into the news department

Prior to his arrival at WQUB for his first commercial radio job, Mimms had been an announcer with Armed Forces Radio and a trumpet player in the Air Force band. To make extra money, Mimms played with a band at Galesburg's Harbor Lights nightclub.

"When I was hired to do overnights at WQUA, I asked what kind of music I was supposed to play," recalled Mimms. "Management told me to play whatever I wanted to, so I played jazz. Barlow had been playing a lot of country and his fans would call and tell me to get that jazz crap off the air. But it was my show, and that's what I was going to play.

"I felt a little overwhelmed there at first, as I was the new young kid working with all those great voices – Don Nelson's especially. And for news voices, you couldn't find any better than George Johnson and Ken Buel."



Jack Teiken on the left



Ernie Mimms



George Johnson

As Mimms was the new guy at the station, a few practical jokes were played at his expense. "I was on-mike one time and I suddenly felt a blast of something hit me in the head," Mimms stated. "Don Nelson had stopped by the studio after some late night drinking and decided to discharge a fire extinguisher on my head. Talk about a surprise... I think I'm the only one there and suddenly get blasted by a fire extinguisher," Mimms remembered.

During September, WQUA began to introduce a new overall station image. It moved away from calling itself Hi-Fi WQUA and now referred to itself as WQUA Tempo. The music was referred to as Tempo Top Tunes and the Betty Steven's classical music program was now called "Variations in Tempo" instead of "Variations in Hi-Fi." Overall, the sound was the same – processed to add timbre and the high fidelity quality. Only the branding name was changed.

The King Korn Karnival returned in September, but this time it had a co-sponsor in Eagle Supermarkets. WQUA still gave away thousands of trading stamps and the process for winning was the same as earlier in the year. This time, however, the entries had to be on a special entry blank available only at the Eagle stores. There was no purchase necessary, but every time the promotion was mentioned, Eagle Supermarkets also got a mention.

High school football season was getting underway, and station manager Max Ryder asked Ken Buel to team up with University of Iowa broadcasting student Bob Miller. Miller would do the play-by-play, and Buel would do color commentary and commercials.

Bob Miller remembers, "I was actually hired the year before to do football broadcasts. After two games I was fired and rightly so, as I was not ready or experienced enough to do a good job. However, Verne Flambo called again and asked me to come back in 1959.

As Bill Mason did in prior years, Buel and Miller would meet at the game site each week. Buel remembers his first out-of-town game: "The first broadcast out of the Quad-Cities was in Kingston Stadium, Cedar Rapids. After less than six months in the Quad Cities, I had barely been to Davenport, let alone Cedar Rapids. This was also prior to Interstate 80 being built. I checked an old road atlas and started out.

"I didn't even know enough to use Kimberly Road, but rather, took River Drive to downtown Davenport and then started out on Harrison Street. Of course, it took much longer that I thought to get to Cedar Rapids. Not shown on my old atlas was the fact that the highway I thought took me to Cedar Rapids had become a by-pass. When I finally stopped and asked directions, I was in Marion, about as far from Kingston Stadium as possible to be and still be in the Cedar Rapids metro area. As a result, I found the stadium and pulled into the parking lot in the middle of the first quarter of the game.

"We got the broadcast handled from that point on, but you can only imagine the fear I had the next morning knowing I was going to have to explain to Verne what had happened. I told him the absolute truth – why he didn't fire me, I don't know, but he said something to the effect of 'never let his happen again.'"

Buel learned a lesson and for the next 16 years of covering high school sports for WQUA, he would make it a practice to leave an hour prior to the figured driving time and get the out-of-town drive to the game site safely out of the way. Dinner on the station, prior to the game, would be an added inducement for his advance travel arrangements.

Bob Miller had a similar experience with game tardiness. "Due to poor driving conditions and leaving Iowa City much too late, I didn't get to Wharton Fieldhouse on time for the start of the basketball game," Miller stated. "I remember how nervous and upset I was, as I had the game on the car radio listening to Ken do the pre-game show and knowing I wouldn't arrive in time for the tip-off. I arrived halfway through the first quarter and Ken was doing an excellent job of filling in for me. I've never been late for a broadcast since."

In September, Jack Barlow left the morning show and was replaced by Jim McKinney. Art Stanley recalled, "Jim McKinney had a beautiful old-time radio voice and related with the women of our audience extremely well. I can still hear him with his 'Hello, Ladies' introductions."

Also in September, Flambo announced six bookings for the upcoming months. Four of them would be for the Broadway Theatre subscription series: for October, "Dark at the Top of the Stars" with Joan Blondell; for January, "Two for the Seesaw" starring Hal March and "Look Homeward

Angel” starring John D. Barrymore; and for March, “Odd Man In” starring Ann Sheridan. Two shows Flambo reserved for himself: “An Evening with Carl Sandburg” starring Bette Davis and Gary Merrill in December, and the return of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo for January.

During December, the Pulse rating survey for the month of October was released. WQUA was rated in first place in 53 time periods and tied for first in five other periods. The next closest station in the ratings was KSTT with nine first-place time periods. WQUA’s efforts at being “the” music and news station had again paid handsome rewards in the ratings, thus in the advertising rates the station could charge for its airtime.

Christmas Eve 1959 brought Verne Flambo a gift he couldn’t refuse: the announcement that a deal had been reached for the sale of WQUA to Radio Moline, Inc. Seventy percent of the stock in Radio Moline was owned by the Kankakee *Daily Journal*. Len H. Small, Burrell Small and Arthur Beckman owned the remaining 30 percent. The sale of WQUA did not include the other Flambo radio interests in Ottumwa, Iowa; Eau Claire, Wis.; or Rochester, Minn

Flambo would remain with WQUA in an executive management capacity, Max Ryder would remain as station manager and other station personnel remained as well.

The Small organization owned WKAN in Kankakee, WRRR in Rockford, KKIS in Pittsburgh, Calif., the Kankakee *Daily Journal* and the Ottawa (Ill.) *Republican-Times*. (More on the Small family and their media holdings can be found, beginning on page 87.)

THE SIXTIES

UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP

Year 1960 started with Flambo’s presentation of the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo. It was this group’s second visit to the area and the third presentation of a ballet troupe by Flambo. Ballet may have run its course in the Quad-Cities as the production sold only 1,600 seats.

However, Flambo’s presentation on behalf of the Broadway Theatre League’s subscription series, “Look Homeward Angel” starring John Barrymore and Miriam Hopkins, had an extremely successful two-day showing on January 11 and 12.

January 20 was a big day for Verne Flambo, as the FCC gave its formal approval for the sale of WQUA to Radio Moline, Inc. The reported sale amount was \$410,400 and included the agreement to hire Flambo as a consultant for 70 months at \$52,000 and an agreement not to compete for \$1,000. Radio Moline also paid the broker’s fee of \$21,600. The whole deal offered Flambo a tidy profit on his 1955 purchase of “a tea kettle held together with bailing wire,” as he was once quoted by the newspapers.

In early February, Flambo presented the “Fred Waring Stereo Festival” at the RKO Orpheum. This was the third time he had brought Waring to Quad-Cities audiences to much success.

Overnight announcer Ernie Mimms left WQUA in March to join the WOC stations. On radio he was the early evening announcer. On TV, he was a weatherman and later, the very popular host of “Cap’n Ernie’s Cartoon Showboat”. After the cartoon show had run its course during the mid 1970s, Mimms became co-host of “PM Magazine.” One of his co-hosts was Paula Sands, who got her start in broadcasting at WQUA in the early 1970s. After “PM Magazine” had run its course on television, Mimms went into sales for WOC radio and retired from the station in 1998 after 38 years of service.

The overnight shift went dark for a period, but Barlow returned by April.

High school basketball’s March Madness brought plenty of advertising revenue to the station as the Erie, Ill., high school basketball team advanced to the state sectional tournament.

Salesman Ralph Stephenson noted, “I had my greatest success in sales when Erie got into the state basketball regional tournament. The station created some Erie Boosters programming with nearly every business in the town as a sponsor. I practically sold out the place. And Flambo was as surprised as anyone.”

The station news department had plenty of big stories to cover during the first four months of the year. Russia shot down a U.S. U-2 spy plane. The Senate held hearings regarding payola (the practice by record companies and distributors of paying disc jockeys to play and promote certain

records). An Alleman High School honor student was murdered at his family's grocery store. The royal wedding of England's Princess Margaret took place. Local flooding took place along the Mississippi. And three women, one of whom was originally from Moline, were murdered at Starved Rock State Park. George Johnson, Ken Buel and Harry Maus covered them all in great detail.

By the end of April, salesman Ralph Stephenson left WQUA and joined WHBF-TV in production and staff announcing. From 1963-1967, he taught junior high school English and geography. While teaching, he also worked at WQAD-TV in production and local program direction. He left the teaching field to enter the real estate brokering and appraising business. Stephenson was chief appraiser for First Federal Savings and Loan for 11 years and then opened a private appraisal practice from which he retired in 1998.

On May 20, Flambo presented the "Johnny Cash Show" at Wharton Field House. The show also featured recording stars Johnny Horton and Red Sovine. WQUA announcer Jack Tieken recalled an interesting story relating to Cash's visit.

"I was emceeding the show that night and when it was time for Cash to come on, I introduced him, then just stood there by myself. Looking around, I found that Cash was nowhere in sight. The Fendermen, Cash's sidemen, realized there was a problem and stepped forward to the microphone. For the next ten minutes, we did a bit of an interview until we suddenly saw Cash walk on stage. He was definitely drunk, but the minute he began performing you'd have never known it!"

Over the years, hard-drinking Johnny Cash appeared regularly in the Quad-Cities, always booked by Verne Flambo. *Quad-City Times* columnist Bill Wundram wrote about Cash's appearances: "Cash performed at a variety of venues, places like the RKO Orpheum, The Mark, Col and Davenport Masonic Temple. Arthur Pierce, the genial manager of the Masonic Temple, had to look the other way when Cash was booked to perform. The Temple forbade any alcohol, but Cash would not appear unless well fortified with Jack Daniels.

"Flambo and Fred Epstein, the owner of KSTT radio, often sparred over sponsorship of attractions. 'But Johnny Cash and his promoters were faithful to Flambo. Cash would appear for no one but him,' remembered Harold Denton, assistant manager of the old RKO Orpheum."

Evidently Cash let down Flambo only once. During another booking at Wharton Fieldhouse, Cash failed to show up. Flambo found him passed out in his room at the LeClaire Hotel. Flambo refunded the audience's admission, but didn't sour on booking Cash again and again.

Morning announcer Jim McKinney left the station in June and headed for Peoria. Don Hanley was hired as the morning announcer and Johnnie Green joined the news department. Hanley had been a top-rated morning announcer and sports play-by-play man in Springfield. Green had been a reporter and news director for KPHO radio-TV in Phoenix, where he had gained renown and awards with his reporting on the mid-air collision between a United Airlines DC-7 and a TWA Constellation over the Grand Canyon.

Jack Teiken also left the station at this time and went back to WQUB where he stayed until 1962. His next stop was at WJLR in Rockford. From 1965 to 1968, he was the overnight announcer at WSAI in Cincinnati. Using the name Bob White, he received some of the highest ratings of any Cincinnati announcer during his time with that station. After WSAI, Teiken held executive or ownership positions with stations in Illinois, Indiana, Georgia, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, and New Mexico. He retired to Indiana in 2002.

During this same period, Flambo created Gambo, Inc. and bought out WECL partners Odin Ramsland, John Grandy and Dorothy LeMasurier. Flambo became the majority owner, and Harry Hyett was named president of the Eau Claire, Wis., station.

Over the summer of 1960, WQUA promotions and contests included a free water show on the Mississippi, which featured skiers and jumping boats; another round of the Telebookalooker contest; and the \$500 Treasure Hunt.

The WQUA Sweepstakes was initiated in August. Listeners could win ranges, freezers, cash, dinners and thousands of King Korn stamps. All listeners had to do was pay attention to the station, answer the phone and correctly answer a question about the programming on WQUA.

During the run of the Sweepstakes, the station also introduced the WQUA Money Maids. Ladies would knock at the doors of homeowners and if their radios were tuned to WQUA, the Maids would

offer a choice of envelopes that contained from \$1 to \$20.

In September, the station gave away up to \$100 in the Fabulous 40 Frolic on Don Nelson's show. WQUA began printing lucky numbers on its Tempo of Top Tunes music survey sheets. If a listener had a sheet with the number called out by Nelson during his show, and the listener called in, he or she won money.

These promotions were created to generate audience and reward listener loyalty, as one never knew when the station might call, knock at the door or mention a lucky number. It was also a ratings ploy, as the only way one could win was by listening to the station.

With the college graduation of Bob Miller, September's high school football season paired Ken Buel and Don Hanley in broadcasting the Moline High School games. Buel provided color commentary and interviews, and Hanley performed the play-by-play calls. Hanley had called the action for University of Illinois games while at his former Springfield station.

Miller went on to work in news at KOEL in Oelwein, Iowa; WITI-TV in Madison, Wis., as a news reporter; WMTV in Madison as sports director; and WKOW-TV in Madison as sports director and play-by-play voice for Wisconsin football, basketball and hockey. In 1973, Miller joined the National Hockey League's Los Angeles Kings as its play-by-play announcer. In 2005 he completed 32 years with the team. He has announced more than 2,500 hockey games.

Miller is a member of the Hockey Hall of Fame, the Southern California Sports Broadcasters Hall of Fame, the L.A. Kings Hall of Fame and the Wisconsin Hockey Hall of Fame. He has also done voice-over work on the TV program "Cheers" and in several movies, including "Miracle on Ice," "The Mighty Ducks" and "The Mighty Ducks 2." He recently received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.



Bob Miller



Bob Miller receives Hollywood Star



Ken Buel and Don Hanley

For his concert business, Verne Flambo booked two very popular artists into the RKO Orpheum during October. The Ray Conniff Orchestra and its "Concert in Stereo" program presented a unique concept to the audience on October 20. Conniff had five large speakers and 12 microphones installed on the RKO stage to provide recording studio stereo sound in a concert hall environment. Newspaper reviews noted that although the music was loud, the capacity audience was completely delighted.

One week later, on October 27, Mantovani and his orchestra appeared and also played to a sold out audience. In fact, the Mantovani performance set an attendance record of 2,765 for the RKO Orpheum, when the theatre added 57 extra seats in the orchestra pit to satisfy demand.

The 1960 national election on November 8 offered a highly competitive contest between presidential opponents John Kennedy and Richard Nixon. A series of nationally-televised debates and months of mud slinging by both candidates promised large voter turnout and great interest in all political races, local through national.

WQUA station manager Max Ryder set up a system for election night coverage that would be used by the station for many years. Ryder used station personnel and members of a church congregation to cover every polling place in Rock Island County. As total vote counts were taken off the mechanical voting machines to be forwarded to the county courthouse, WQUA's "reporters" would note the vote tally for each candidate and phone those numbers into staff members manning

the phones at the Moline studio.

Staffers would keep running totals of precincts reporting and the news department would report how the vote was going, even before that information became official at the courthouse. As in years past, many of the local, county, state and national candidates hung out at the studios to find out how they were doing at the polls. It also gave WQUA the opportunity of some exclusive interviews with the winners.

According to several former employees, two national candidates who seemed to always show up at the station during election coverage were Paul Douglas and Everett Dirksen, the United States senators from Illinois.

Two nights following the elections, Flambo brought Count Basie and his Orchestra to local fans at Augustana's Centennial Hall. While the show was a sellout, many had to be turned away due to Centennial Hall's much smaller seating capacity than other venues used by Flambo.

Near the end of 1960, Flambo announced his upcoming bookings for the coming year. Popular singer Brenda Lee would appear at Wharton Fieldhouse on New Years Day; the Warsaw Philharmonic would visit the RKO Orpheum on January 23; and Marian Andersen, opera's great contralto, would appear at the Orpheum on February 21.

While the Brenda Lee program at the fieldhouse was a huge success on New Years Day 1961, the Warsaw Philharmonic only managed to fill half the available seats at the RKO. Marian Andersen, however, performed to a nearly sold out audience that gave her several standing ovations. Anderson never failed to entertain her audiences with her mix of arias and patriotic songs.

On February 1, Flambo and John Grandy sold KWEB in Rochester, Minn. Grandy would later go on to manage broadcast properties and become a station sales broker in the San Francisco area.

At WQUA, the station produced a three-hour program on February 23 that featured the six candidates running for Moline mayor in the city primary election. After grilling each candidate, the station opened its phone lines to give listeners the opportunity to ask questions of each candidate.

One week later, the station pre-empted Illinois sub-state basketball coverage for one evening to bring the results of the Moline municipal primary.

On February 28, a surprised group of newsmen heard Verne Flambo announce his retirement as a theatrical manager. Citing other business interests as his main reason, Flambo said he no longer had sufficient time to administer the theatrical events.

The retirement was received somewhat cynically by the newsmen who were present, as they figured that Flambo could never quit "showbiz." But Flambo was serious and expressed thanks to the press for their "sincere support in my venture to bring good theatre to the area."

Good theatre it was – for 15 years. Beginning in October of 1945 with Jeanette McDonald, Flambo played host to stars like Jack Benny, Victor Borge, Martin and Lewis, Spike Jones, Eddie Cantor, Pat Boone, the McGuire Sisters, Johnny Cash, Doris Day, Louis Armstrong, Jimmy Dorsey, Duke Ellington, Count Basie and Ray Conniff; fine concerts with Mantovani, Artur Rubenstein and the NBC Opera; theatrical road shows and many rock and roll performers on behalf of WQUA.

In an article in the *Daily Dispatch*, Flambo stated that he was never in the entertainment business to make money – "I've probably lost more money than I've earned over the past 15 years."

Whether or not he made money was between Flambo and his accountant. But the fact remains that he seemed to have an uncanny knowledge of what the Quad-Cities' audiences would like to see and brought those shows, many times more than once, to local venues with great success. And the Quad-Cities became a better place because of his efforts.

It was at about this time that station manager Max Ryder became better known to listeners through his writing and airing of editorials. Former production manager and general manager John Dombek remembered: "Max was the best broadcast editorial writer I ever knew. His on-air delivery of his editorials was typical East Coast, mixing subtle wit with a studied knowledge of whatever subject or person he reported on, using an extraordinarily large and impressive vocabulary. One of his favorite words was 'aficionado.' At that time, the word was little used in general, and not at all in sports. He used it in both areas. In each editorial he wrote, he used to introduce a new word. It would be a word he had recently discovered that he believed brought clarity to conversation, and that he just liked the sound of. With his New England accent, his editorials truly stood out."

February also produced some staff changes at WQUA. Program director Art Stanley resigned to become the manager of the Oelwein, Iowa, radio station. He later worked at stations across Kansas, buying one in 1964. In 1971, Stanley purchased a radio station in Sullivan, Ind., and operated it until his retirement in 1995. He still resides in Sullivan.

When Stanley left the station, Don Hanley was named program director.

Salesman and copywriter John Simes moved to California to become the head of publicity for the Statewide Theatre chain. In 1965, Simes became a publicist and represented a large contingent of stars like Frank Sinatra, Peggy Lee, Sammy Davis Jr., Liza Minnelli, Dionne Warwick, Lee Marvin, Henry Fonda and many others. He also handled the publicity campaigns for the "Bob Hope Show," "the Sammy Davis Show," the Academy Awards, Ringling Brothers Circus, Caesar's Palace and many other shows and entities. In 1998, John Simes retired from the publicity business and opened a floral business that catered to television and movie sets, show business celebrities and TV programs.

Harry King (real name Harry Kirchman) was hired as an announcer, but wound up spending time in the news department as well. King got his first taste of broadcasting by winning a contest while in high school in St. Paul, Minn. A graduate of the Brown Institute of Broadcasting in Minneapolis, he got hired at KDLM in Detroit Lakes, Minn., owned by the Brown Institute. After trying to find work in Nashville, King spent five years at WMAY in Springfield, Ill., prior to WQUA.

In March, local newspaper columnists took both WQUA and WHBF to task over basketball, as neither station aired the championship games from Champaign. No local area teams had made it into the Sweet 16 section of the tournament. Because of this, there was a lack of interest on the part of advertisers and no sponsors could be found. To make matters worse, WHBF-TV did not televise the championship, either.

The writers were incensed that no station was carrying any part of the state championship. They felt that many of the regular fans were still interested in the outcome of the teams that had beaten the local favorites.

However, those writers had to realize that without sponsors, the stations could ill-afford to send their sports crews to Champaign for two days, or pay for the broadcast lines back to the studio and receive no money in return. For WHBF-TV the cost would be even greater, as video/audio lines were much more expensive than just audio. Perhaps it was the columnists' first lesson in the economics of broadcasting.

April brought yet another station under Flambo's ownership when he purchased KASI in Ames, Iowa. Coincidentally, this was the station that WQUA's chief engineer, Harold Higby, had owned and put on the air prior to coming to WQUA.

In June, WQUA brought back the King Korn Stamp giveaway via a new contest. Throughout the day, listeners were to keep track of random words given by the announcers. Once all words had been given out, listeners were then told to put those words into a popular saying and mail it to the station. The entry with the earliest postmark would receive 100,000 stamps. This contest continued until one million stamps had been given away to loyal listeners.

On July 15, 1961, WQUA decided to drop its network affiliation with ABC Radio and become an independent operation. Citing its use of only the ABC newscasts, Ryder decided the money paid to ABC wasn't worth the cost for what little network programming the station used. KSTT took over as the local ABC affiliate.

SING ALONG WITH MITCH – AND WQUA

WQUA's musical format at this point was still mainly pop standards, up-tempo easy listening, lighter rock and roll and some country music, especially during Jack Barlow's overnight show. But television was about to create a monster on which WQUA would capitalize.

Record producer Mitch Miller had introduced a series of sing-along records of pop standard tunes and printed the lyrics on the album jackets so the listener could sing along with the music. NBC put Miller's choir on its television network during the summer of 1961 as a replacement to reruns.

The program was nothing more than a musical variety show with guest vocalists and his sing-

along choir performing easy listening pop standard favorites. The hook was that the songs were the kind that people liked to sing. To encourage the audience's involvement, the words to the songs were superimposed at the bottom of the television screen and a bouncing ball jumped over the words in time with the choir. The TV program's success lasted through the 1964 season.

While WQUA couldn't superimpose words on the radio, it could still promote and play those same songs that were easy to sing. Featuring many of the Mitch Miller records, as well as others that lent themselves to the sing along beat, the station billed itself as "the Sing Along Station." The music was played throughout the general listening time periods, but especially on Jack Barlow's 10:30-11:30 am program, with a good deal of success.

Station promotions during the summer months included the WQUA Treasure Hunt that offered cash prizes of \$250, merchandise like a boat or a washer/dryer combination and thousands of King Korn stamps. While promotions like these were really nothing more than "bribes" to get an audience to tune in, they paid off in listener loyalty and ratings.

Back in February, Verne Flambo retired from the booking business. That retirement didn't last long, though, as he and RKO Orpheum manager Milt Troehler began GMT Productions. Flambo had the role of president and backer and Troehler was the vice president and operations man.

Their first production, Mantovani and his Orchestra, was booked for November at Augustana College's Centennial Hall. The hall held 1,620 seats and more than 2,000 people showed up for the concert. Extra seats were placed on the stage with the orchestra, yet many more people had to be turned away.

BIG SHOWS AND BIG NEWS IN '62

In January, Verne Flambo's newly created GMT Productions announced its lineup of attractions for the first three months of the year. Appearing at the RKO Orpheum were comedienne Phyllis Diller and the Fred Waring Orchestra. Booked for Centennial Hall were trumpeter Al Hirt, pianist Roger Williams, the Dave Brubeck Jazz Quartet and Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops.

Once again Flambo had the uncanny ability to know what shows would interest Quad-Cities' audiences, as newspapers noted that each performances was a sellout.

The WQUA news department had plenty of stories to cover at the beginning of the year as well. Tensions pertaining to the Berlin Wall, the U.S. military buildup, U.S.-Soviet negotiations over Berlin and the Cuban trade embargo were all part of the national coverage. Hometown news included the 125th anniversary of Deere & Co., the opening of Moline's new Wilson Junior High School, the first discussions of a proposed civic center in Moline and local primary election contests.

On February 20, 1962, radio was king for the day as hundreds of local residents took portable radios to work in order that they could listen to the reporting of astronaut John Glenn's orbit of the earth and return in the Mercury space capsule.

Helping the WQUA news department cover some of these stories was the addition of a spot audio news service, UPI Audio. Actually, Mid America and WQUA helped in the further development of the network itself.

In 1958, the United Press International wire service started UPI Audio to provide radio stations with top-of-the-hour five-minute newscasts and spot news, called actualities, which each station could use within its other newscasts. Up until very early 1962, UPI Audio only had 32 client stations and the network lines went only as far as Cleveland, Ohio. A UPI salesman attacked the Midwest and with the signing of Mid America's radio stations, the network extended to Moline. In addition, the service was able to nearly double the number of subscribers it had. Within a year, the network had advanced to Denver and 18 months later was at the West Coast. At its height, UPI Audio had more 1,000 subscribers to its spot audio service.

Since WQUA had earlier dropped the ABC network and was now an independent operation, the addition of UPI Audio allowed WQUA the ability to air reports from national and international correspondents, thereby enhancing the news product it put on the air. Interestingly, this is exactly the same thing then-news director Bill Mason did at WQUA back in 1957 when he traded recorded reports of important news with stations from around the country. While this practice is common

today, in the 1950-'60s it was a not-so-common occurrence for non-network-affiliated radio stations.

This was also the time that WQUA's on-air editorials became a little more pointed and political. Station manager Max Ryder had begun writing and airing editorials, called "air-atorials," in early 1961. But this year, with primary election contests at hand, Ryder's editorials began to indicate the station's preference over particular candidates and issues.

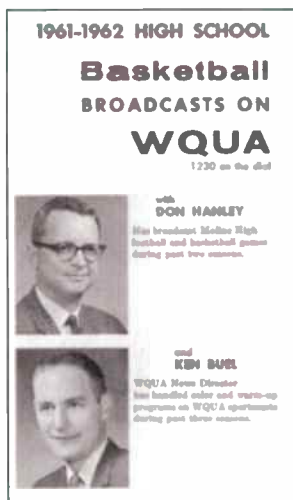
Broadcasting management in general had been reluctant to take a stand on issues, political or otherwise, because stations owed their licenses to do business to the FCC. As general policy, the FCC encouraged radio and television stations to provide equal time for opposing views on all public issues. But it was never clear to broadcasters what exactly "equal time" might be or how hard the FCC might come down on a station for not providing that time to opposing views.

Locally, WQUA threw caution to the wind and took the step to political editorializing to better inform voters about the issues and the candidates' views. WQUA was credited with being the first area station to do so.

In a turnaround from the previous year when no local radio or television station covered the Illinois state basketball championship, WQUA announced that it would cover every game of the tournament at Champaign.

Ken Buel recalled, "WQUA began covering the Illinois State Tournament in Champaign in 1962. Prior to that, we would only do the regional and sectional tournaments, which always rotated between Wharton Fieldhouse and Rock Island and United Township high schools. Rock Island High's basketball team qualified to go to Champaign in '62 and we did all eight of the tourney games from Huff Gym. Rock Island lost to eventual state champ Decatur in the first round, but after our experience there it was decided we would continue to broadcast all of the games from Champaign regardless of how the local teams had done."

March newspaper logs showed the WQUA announcing staff as Don Hanley from 5:30 to 10 a.m.; Jack Barlow, 10 to 11:30 a.m.; Jim McKinney, 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Don Nelson, 3 to 7:30 p.m.; Harry King, 7:30 to midnight; and Barlow, midnight to 5:30 a.m.



Basketball Promo



Harry King



Jack Barlow

The lineup would change slightly in April. Barlow was beginning to do more nightclub work with his band and left the overnight program. He would be heard during the day and on Saturdays from 6 to 10 p.m. Taking his place on the "Night Watch" show was Stan Cooper.

WQUA promotions for 1962 included the WQUA Walking Man. Listeners could win \$100 by listening to the footsteps and clues and making a correct identification. Lucky listeners could also win between \$1 and \$100 for identifying the WQUA Leprechaun; an Easter wardrobe for correctly identifying the WQUA Easter Bunny; and various amounts of money or King Korn stamps in the WQUA Add for Cash contest.

Continuing with his GMT Productions bookings in April, Flambo brought country music stars

Jimmy Dean, Stonewall Jackson and Conway Twitty and his Twitty Twisters to Wharton Fieldhouse. Flambo further announced the June appearance of Arthur Godfrey at the Davenport Municipal Stadium. Godfrey would also bring his horses for a presentation of dressage, the guiding of a horse by slight movement of the riders hands, legs and weight.

Later that summer, Flambo announced shows for every week in October, beginning with the appearance of Liberace at the RKO Orpheum, followed by the Dave Brubeck Quartet, Dame Judith Anderson and the Smothers Brothers.

By October, some personnel changes had taken place at the station. Longtime personality Jack Barlow left to devote more time to his band and nightclub work. Taking over Barlow's morning timeslot in the WQUA schedule was Kirk Johansson (real name Ed Hadley). Johansson had joined the station's continuity department and would occasionally be heard with the news well. He had previously worked at stations in Springfield, Ill., and Janesville, Wis.

Johansson replaced Rex Stein, who had crossed the river to become head of continuity for WOC. Stein held that position until retirement in 1976. He died in December 1999.

Don Nelson vacated his announcer's chair to take a position in the sales department. Nelson stated, "Announcers were driving Fords and Chevys and I noticed that all the salesmen were driving Buicks and Cadillacs. I wanted a Buick, so I moved to sales to make more money."

Taking Nelson's place in the daily schedule was Ottumwa, Iowa, native Mike Hervey. Hervey's first job in radio was at KLEE in Ottumwa. Before coming to Moline, he worked at WCVS in Springfield, KPIG in Cedar Rapids and WPEO in Peoria.

Some of today's radio programming has an "anything goes" attitude where one can hear most any expletive uttered. Back in the '60s, a foul word was rarely heard on the air. And if by chance something was said that shouldn't have, the offending station usually issued an on-air apology for the infraction.

In the case of Don Hanley, station management felt the offending word bad enough that it placed an ad in the local newspapers apologizing for the gaff. Usually those mistakes were caused by a production error that was verbalized while the microphone was open. Hanley wouldn't be the first, or the last, person in broadcasting to have something like that happen. Yet the station felt responsible enough to actually apologize for the error in a newspaper ad.

Could it, however, have been a publicity stunt? After all, what reader of the newspaper wouldn't wonder what exactly might have been said and then want to listen to see if anything else might be mentioned about the incident.

Some programming changes were in the offing as well during October. Prior to this point, the last full newscast of the day was at 10 p.m., with headlines and weather every hour. At the start of October, WQUA would begin "Dateline." George Johnson would provide bulletins at any time and five minutes of news every half hour from 9:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m., Monday through Saturday.

On Sunday evenings just before Betty Stevens' "Variations in Tempo," the station began airing "Open Forum." Each week a different topic would be chosen and listeners could call in with questions. This program had been aired in the past, but usually only around election season or when an important news happening was occurring. Now it was heard weekly.

Flambo brought the Chad Mitchell Trio and pianists Ferrante & Teicher to Centennial Hall during November.

November was also the month the station gave away a trip to Paris for New Years Eve. Listeners were to write an essay "Why I'm Proud to be an American." It seems strange that this subject would be chosen at this time of the year, but regardless, the Robert Degens of Moline won the contest as a result of Mrs. Degen's entry.

January 1963 was shaping up to be one of the Quad-Cities' coldest months on record. Along with plenty of snow, temperatures were bottoming out in the 15 to 26 below zero range. The station's news department was covering weather-related stories, the efforts of the Moline School District to have a bond referendum voted upon to construct an addition to the high school and a boiler explosion at the newly opened Wilson Junior High School.

With the opening of the Assembly Hall at Champaign, WQUA had a new home from which to broadcast the state tournament games. Ken Buel remembered: "The '63 tournament was the first

year in the new Assembly Hall and our assigned seats were right on the extended center stripe on radio row. I don't know if it had any connection, but at that time, Jim Flynn, a former *Dispatch* sports writer who had joined the U of I sports information department, was the one making the space assignments. He told me that 'as long as you keep coming back, you'll keep those seats.' On several occasions over the years, I controlled the tip-off as the ball came to me from the center court jump circle."

As a tie-in promotion to the state tournament, WQUA ran the Sweet Four contest. Picking the teams that finished in top four order awarded \$1,230 to the winner.

Other promotions during the first quarter of the year included the Q Dandy Dozen, Add for Cash and the WQUA Easter Bunny Contest. Easter Bunny was probably the toughest contest, but it also had the biggest prize. To win, the listener had to not only identify the mystery bunny, but also come closest to guessing his/her correct weight. The winner of the contest would receive a five-day, all-expenses-paid trip to New York City.

By March, more announcer changes were made as Joe Murray (real name Murray Schwartz) and Don Wiese joined the station. Murray got his start in radio in Richmond, Va., in 1952 and came to WQUA from Tampa. He was appointed WQUA's program director. Wiese was an announcer and also sold advertising time.

The weekday announcing line-up at this point was: Don Hanley heard from 6 to 10 a.m.; Joe Murray from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Mike Hervey heard from 2 to 6 p.m.; and Don Wiese who aired from 6 p.m. to midnight. Hanley, Murray, Hervey, Kirk Johansson and Wiese were heard on Saturday and Johansson and Betty Stevens were heard on Sunday.

WQUA newsmen Ken Buel, Harry King and George Johnson continued to follow local stories such as the building of King Plaza in Moline, efforts by the Moline Community College District to get a referendum put on a ballot to raise money to build a new campus, the building of the nuclear power generating station in Cordova and the Moline School District's efforts to ease overcrowding at the high school.

Nationally, the news department continued to cover events regarding the Berlin build-up and the Cuban trade embargo. In May, coverage included astronaut Gordon Cooper's 22 orbits around the earth that spanned two days. That flight concluded Project Mercury's space program and Cooper was the last of the original Mercury Seven astronauts to make his flight.

Over the summer months, the station's promotions included Telebookalooker and Add for Cash. Don Nelson didn't totally stay away from the audio board and turntables, as he became host of the Saturday morning wake-up program. Don Hanley moved to Sunday afternoons from noon to 5:30. And an old friend to many insomniacs, Jack Barlow, rejoined the station in his old overnight timeslot.

On August 1, the issue of a Moline television station was finally put to rest with the sign-on of WQAD-TV channel 8. While the station had no connection to WQUA radio, those call letters started a minor confusion that lasted until 1983.

Both sets of call letters were a play on the word "Quad" in Quad-Cities. Because they were so close in their spellings, and probably because WQUA had been around much longer, program guests, viewers and even advertisers constantly confused WQAD-TV with WQUA. The usual mistake was to refer to either station as WQUAD. Over the years, the confusion seemed more to the detriment of channel 8 than to radio 1230.

Announcer Dick Stuart (real name Dick Hauf) was added in August. Stuart was from Princeton, Ill., and had worked on Armed Forces Radio.

Longtime chief engineer Harold Higby resigned to become manager of the electronics department of Klaus Radio in Davenport. He retired from there in 1974 and died in August 1984. His replacement as chief engineer at WQUA was Jim Larson.

Copywriter Elaine Vinzant left the station to raise children. "I'll always remember the salesman asking for copy to be written at the last minute because they promised a client they'd get them on the air right away," Vinzant recalled. "And for Christmas, there were so many spots sold that Don Nelson would drop off sales orders and information and I'd write copy from home. How many ways can you say 'So-and-so wishes you a Merry Christmas' and make each one sound unique?"



Mike Hervey



Kirk Johansson



Joe Murray



Dick Stuart

As fall began, GMT Productions announced its first offerings for the season at the RKO-Orpheum. Pianist Roger Williams would appear October 8, Mantovani on October 22, Liberace on October 29 and Ferrante & Teicher on November 5. Flambo noted in newspaper articles that he wanted to bring back the entertainment that audiences seemed to really want.

Two weeks after his initial booking announcement, Flambo announced that Jack Linkletter and performers from ABC-TV's "Hootenany" show would appear at Centennial Hall on November 3. For November 19, he booked the "Dick Clark Caravan of Stars" for two shows at the RKO. Appearing with Clark would be rock and roll stars Bobby Vee, Paul and Paula, Linda Scott, the Dovells, the Essex, Dale and Gracie, the Ronettes, Jimmy Clanton, the Dixie Belles, Brian Hyland and the Tymes.

GMT Productions achieved what it set out to do, as each of the fall shows were sellouts.

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR, IT MIGHT COME TRUE

"Harry King was wandering around the studio complaining about a slow news day – then Kennedy was shot!" recalled Joe Murray.

President John Kennedy, who three years previous had drawn crowds in the thousands to his Quad-Cities campaign appearances, was visiting Dallas on a fundraising tour. At 12:30 p.m. local time on November 22, his motorcade came under fire and the president was mortally wounded. Shortly after 1 p.m., the Associated Press announced that the president was dead.

For the remainder of that day, news coverage would be almost non-stop. WQUA carried the national stories, as well as local reaction by politicians, businessmen and private citizens.

During that afternoon, all radio stations in the nation abandoned their normal broadcasts and commercials. When not running news programming, the stations switched to more somber classical music. It was decided by the broadcasters that normal programming would not resume until after the president's funeral four days later.

"I remember the day President Kennedy was shot, WQUA was among the first, if not the first local station to discontinue commercial broadcasting. Betty Stevens was called in to program the music," stated former traffic manager Bob Castle. While most local stations rode their networks, WQUA was able to air music with some degree of order and continuity thanks to long-time classical music host Betty Stevens.

News coverage of the Kennedy assassination, the killing of alleged assassin Lee Harvey Oswald by nightclub owner Jack Ruby and whether or not the assassination was part of a conspiracy filled WQUA's newscasts throughout the remainder of the year.

January 1964 brought the final departure of Jack Barlow from WQUA. Barlow and his band were committing to many more performances, and it wasn't long before he left the area entirely. He played a number of local venues and also worked at WIRE in Indianapolis before heading to Nashville in 1966. He's been a recording artist with several top-20 country hits and many charted records and has played Las Vegas and The Grand Ol' Opry many times. His voice has been heard on

hundreds of local, regional and national commercials; most notable were Big Red Chewing Gum, Kraft Foods, Bob Evan's Farms and Dollar General Stores. As of this writing, Barlow still does voice-over work and divides his time between homes in Florida and the Nashville area.

When Barlow departed, the station did not replace him and instead signed off the air at 1 a.m.

January also brought with it a new branding image for WQUA. Over the previous seven years, the station was known as Wonderful WQUA. Now, as a variation to the sometimes-used term Quint-Cities and in a bit of an effort to emphasize that WQUA was the station the whole area listened to, it began calling itself the Sound of the Five Cities and displayed a new logo that emphasized "Q" radio.

Ratings released in February showed the station in the overall top spot for adults 25-49 years of age, WQUA's target audience. The ratings were even better for listeners beyond the age of 49. Even the teenaged audience numbers were good with an overall second place showing. The station's mix of music, personalities, news and sports was reaching the desired audience, although it was still using an almost block style of programming. Middle-of-the-road pop tunes, Broadway show tunes and the lighter rock and roll hits were interspersed throughout the day and rock was played in the evening.

A new public affairs show, called "Public School Profile," began airing in February. Hosted by Ken Buel, the program highlighted various curriculums and programs of the Moline Public Schools. Buel added, "The program was coordinated by the audio/visual director at Moline's administrative office. She would select the topics and people with consultation from me. I was always free to request topics and guests. We used to record the show at Allendale during the week and play it back on Sundays."

Since contests and promotions were still a mainstay of all the area stations, WQUA used several new ideas, along with a few old, popular contests to attract listeners. In January, Three to Get Rich would award \$1.23, \$12.30 or \$123 to a lucky caller each hour. In March, the Sweet 4 would award \$250 for successfully picking the top four winners in the Illinois High School Basketball Tournament. March brought the return of the King Korn stamp giveaways. Over the summer months, the WQUA Cash Call returned. Magic Digits, rolled out in September, had listeners add up numbers announced throughout the day. When urged to call with the correct total, the listener would win cash, King Korn stamps or merchandise prizes. November brought the annual Turkey Trot contest.

Solid Gold Weekends were heard throughout 1964. Usually played were all million-selling songs, but several of the weekends were devoted to special themes. One such theme was the Solid Gold Bandstand Weekend, where nothing but big band greats were played.

This year began Flambo's 20th anniversary of bringing musical entertainment to the masses and he "celebrated" in a big way. His GMT Productions brought a mix of shows for both young and old.. Shows booked for January included the Henry Mancini Orchestra and The New Christy Minstrels. The Smothers Brothers and the Jose Greco Spanish Dancers appeared in March. Victor Borge, the Dave Brubeck Quartet, Al Hirt and the Chad Mitchell Trio all made appearances in April.

July's concert booking was a blockbuster for the teenagers. Thousands showed up for two performances by the Beach Boys. Appearing with the popular surf music band were Freddy Cannon and the Kingsmen. Teens filled the streets around the RKO Orpheum before, between and after each performance, in hopes of getting a glimpse of the popular singers.

September brought another appearance of the "Dick Clark Caravan of Stars." This time the show was emceed by former teen idol Fabian and included Gene Pitney, Brian Hyland, Major Lance, the Crystals, the Rip Chords and the Dixie Cups. RKO personnel added seats to the orchestra pit to try to accommodate as many of the screaming fans as possible. Teen gals lined the street outside the theatre in hopes of getting a glimpse and response from Fabian.

September also brought the third Quad-Cities appearance of Phyllis Diller. Appearing with her was the Glenn Miller Band. In a newspaper interview, Diller's agent stated, "This is the only theatre date she accepts. Normally she only performs on television, in show lounges and nightclubs. But Mr. Flambo and the Quad City audiences treat her well. She respects that."

Another visit by Mantovani and his 48-piece orchestra was scheduled for October, but the date was cancelled at the last minute due to illness. Later in the month, Johnny Rivers, English duo Chad and Jeremy and the Ventures appeared at the Orpheum for the teen crowd.

Rounding out the year of concerts were Ferrante & Teicher and the Clebanoff Strings Orchestra in November. A repeat appearance by the Smothers Brothers, originally scheduled for December, had to be postponed and moved to March of 1965.

At WQUA, some staff changes took place in early fall. Ken Buel was named news director. Mike Hervey left for WIRE in Indianapolis and was replaced by Jeff Blake (real name Jim Orr). Blake was from the Washington, Iowa, area and had worked for three years as a top-40 deejay at KCRG in Cedar Rapids. Don Hanley continued as morning drive announcer, but gave up his play-by-play work. Corey Kent (real name Kent Braverman) was hired as production director and took over calling the action on the high school sports broadcasts. Continuity writer Kirk Johannson left to become public service director at WQAD-TV. He later worked in the advertising department of Eagle Foods and in sales for Qwest Telephone. He died in August 1994.

Blake was hired to bolster the teenaged audience. His fast-paced show featured the rock and roll hits of the period and plenty of record and movie pass giveaways. He also had Beatle tunes before they were released in the U.S. Blake explained: "There was some sort of operation in Princeton, Ill., that was a telephone center that would route calls all over the world for the government. In the evenings it was staffed by a group of gals who got bored very easily and would call disc jockeys around the country just to talk. They called me on several occasions and would link me with other announcers in a sort of conference call arrangement. We'd talk at length, all for free.

"One time I had them link me with a friend in Dallas who had a friend in England. We were all linked together, and the guy in England said he had gotten a tape of some of the Beatles songs that had yet to be released in this country. We asked for a copy of the tape, and I wound up with about a dozen of the Beatles' songs that had never been heard here. Since no one else had them, I put them on the air as exclusives."



Promoting new logo



Corey Kent, Jeff Blake, Dick Stuart



"Q" wants teen audience

Ads promoting Blake's shows regularly appeared in Moline High's *Line O'Type* newspaper and his show became popular with the students there. Unfortunately the show only lasted about a year.

Election coverage played a major role in WQUA's news coverage during October and November. Many local and state races were hotly contested, as well as the residential race between incumbent Lyndon Johnson and opponent Barry Goldwater. Vice presidential candidate Hubert Humphrey and Republican presidential candidate Goldwater both made Quad-Cities appearances in early October. Goldwater's rally at Wharton Fieldhouse drew more than 6,000 people.

The November election was again covered as WQUA had in the past; church members and station staff were dispatched to all the voting precincts to copy down and call in the vote totals when the polls closed. Program director Joe Murray described his assignment: "I was sent to a little town called Buffalo Prairie somewhere out in the county. I wasn't even sure where it was. When it came time to call the station with the vote totals, I picked up the phone and heard a conversation. They still had two-party phone lines there, and I couldn't get the two women to shut up. Even pleading with them that I was trying to phone the station with a news story didn't stop them. All I could do

was wait until they decided to finish. The Buffalo Prairie votes were probably the last ones tallied at the station that night because recipes and gossip took more importance than who won the election!"

As 1964 closed out, GMT Productions announced its shows for the first of the new year. The Vienna Boys' Choir would perform at Centennial Hall on January 27, Fred Waring would play the RKO on February 18, and the previously postponed Smothers Brothers show and Phyllis Diller would appear at the RKO in March. It would be Diller's fourth show in three years.

Flambo also sold his Ottumwa, Iowa, radio station at the end of December. He had purchased KBIZ for \$62,500 in 1958 and sold it for \$210,000 on December 15.

NEWS, WEATHER, SPORTS AND THE ALL-NIGHT FISTFIGHT

Weather, Viet Nam, civil rights and sports made up a large part of WQUA's news coverage for early 1965. It seemed that cold temperatures, sleet and snow were almost daily local occurrences for the first few months of the year. In those same months, the U.S. military committed more and more resources to aiding the South Vietnamese government in its struggle against communism, and the southern states were heating up with demonstrations and violence over the rights of black citizens to secure the vote. These stories began playing themselves out in March and April.

Precipitation records for snowfall were broken in March with 21 inches of snowfall. This would set the stage for further news stories to come.

Moline High School's basketball team fought its way through the state tournament playoffs to earn a trip to Champaign. Unfortunately Chicago Marshall would beat the Maroons in a semi-final game, but WQUA's Corey Kent and Ken Buel aired all the tournament action. There was so much interest in the broadcasts this year that 48 firms signed on as advertisers. As an aside, the 1965 state champion was the team from Collinsville, Ken Buel's alma mater. Buel was a standout player for Collinsville while in high school there.

In the south, 600 people began a peaceful march from Selma to Montgomery, Ala., to take their plea for voting rights directly to the governor. They were met by state troopers who used horses, tear gas and clubs to break up the march. Two days later another march was held, with the marchers turned back peacefully. Federal courts ruled the marches legal. On March 21, nearly 4,000 marchers started out over the same route again. By the time the march reached Montgomery, well over 25,000 people had joined the march for the vote. But violence in the fight for civil rights would continue.

In Southeast Asia, the U.S. military stepped up its aid to the South Vietnamese government with the addition of more soldiers and bombing runs over Laos. This was the start of the troop buildup in that region that would later result in the Viet Nam War.

While these stories and the local political races gave WQUA news plenty to cover, the station was also busy with personnel changes. Newsman George Johnson quit and moved over to the news department at WOC. Johnson worked there until he retired in 1970. He passed away in 1972.

Taking Johnson's place was Dan Hibbs. Hibbs had worked in Armed Forces Radio and stations in Nebraska and Minnesota. He was a reporter at KSTT before coming to WQUA.

The station also began to broadcast on a 24-hour basis again. The overnight shift had not had an announcer for more than a year with the departure of Jack Barlow. On March 9, Adam Jones and the "All Night Fistfight" took to the air Monday through Saturday from midnight to 5:30 a.m. Jones (real name Robert Ocepek) began his career in Cleveland and had worked in Baltimore, Louisville, Des Moines and Peoria. He had also been the road emcee for the "Shower of Stars" before joining WQUA.

"I remember when I came to Moline, I checked into the LeClaire Hotel and decided to tune in the station," stated Jones. "I thought it a weird assortment of block programming. Dick Stuart played show tunes for an hour and Don Hanley was playing a lot of "tinklie" stuff that you'd associate with a Mummer's parade. I was beginning to wonder what I had gotten myself into."

Jones didn't have to wonder very long. The overnight audience quickly embraced his program; a mix of music, conversation with callers and wry humor. Jones was such a success that his overnight program lasted 10 years.

Jones remembered a programming hint provided by Flambo: "After about a week, Flambo called

me into his office and told me he really liked the show, but I should cut down on my conversation by half. That next night I did the show just as I always had – didn't change a thing. Flambo told me later that day that he liked the way I changed and to keep up the good work. We became great friends over the years I worked there in spite of my audacity."

Being good friends with Verne Flambo didn't stop Jones from pulling an occasional joke on the boss. Engineer Jim King remembers: "Flambo used to have a tape recorder set to tape Adam's show at 3 a.m. Somehow Adam knew this and at three o'clock began to talk very, very slowly. Flambo called me one morning to tell me something was wrong with the tape machine and to fix it. I couldn't tell him there was nothing wrong with the recorder so I just said that it had been fixed. I don't think he ever found out that Adam was playing with him!"

One of Jones' annual gags occurred at the changeover from daylight savings time to standard time. He would record his 1 to 2 a.m. segment. At 2 a.m., when time officially reverted back to 1 a.m., he would play the recorded 1 to 2 a.m. portion of the show. After all, it *was* 1 a.m. all over again, wasn't it?

Weather was back in the news on April 9. The Moline office of the U.S. Weather Bureau issued a warning that because of all the snowmelt and spring precipitation in the Upper Mississippi Valley Basin, river communities should prepare for some heavy flooding. This was before the area had major levees, dikes and floodwalls.

Every few days the Weather Bureau and the Corps of Engineers raised the estimated flood levels. Cities up and down the river began constructing flood protection in earnest. As the river rose ever higher, a call went out for help in holding back what was to become, at that time, the highest recorded river depth. Hundreds of high school and college students reported to various locations around the area to fill sandbags or create walls of sandbags to protect vital facilities and the towns and cities themselves.

WQUA's newsroom, normally not manned around the clock, went into 24-hour operation. Station personnel who normally had nothing to do with news were pressed into service to report on the flood. For more than two weeks, official reports, river level updates, calls for help and daily briefings from the Mayor's office were aired by the station.

Each morning, the station rented a helicopter to provide flood and traffic reports. During the afternoons, an airplane provided coverage up and down the river. "We used or hitched rides in anything that would take us to a critical area," stated Don Nelson. "I can remember both flying over the flooded areas in a small plane and riding around in one of those 'ducks' (an amphibious vehicle) used by the Civil Defense."

Preparing for any possibility, the station borrowed a spare generator from the Civil Air Patrol and placed it at its transmitter site on 7th Street in case power was lost.

Youthful sandbaggers took a break from their work on April 18 for the "Dick Clark Caravan of Stars" show. Presented at Davenport's Masonic Temple Auditorium by GMT Productions, the show featured teen favorites Del Shannon, the Shangri-La's, Jewel Akens, Jimmy Soul, Dee Dee Sharp, Mel Carter and six other acts.

As bad as the flooding was, there was still other news to cover. While not directly affected by the river flooding, several smaller communities in southern Rock Island and northern Mercer counties were hit by tornados on April 24. Aledo, Reynolds, New Windsor, and Taylor Ridge were in the path of some of the worst weather that part of the county had seen in years.

On March 28, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. came to Davenport to receive the Catholic Interracial Council's Pacem in Terris award for his civil rights work and for leading the successful march from Selma to Montgomery, Ala., for voting rights on March 21.

The "Flood of the Century" crested March 29 at 22.4 feet. While dikes and levees did hold, a large group of students waited at several locations through the night, in case their help was needed.

As a tribute to the youthful flood fighters' work, WQUA announced plans for a party and dance. Local businessmen raised more than \$5,400 in support of the Sandbag Shindig. However, the party was called off when it became apparent that area teens would not accept this type of "thank you" for their efforts. After a meeting between Max Ryder and 60 high school and college students, it was decided that \$1,600 would be spent for plaques to be placed on the Bettendorf and Centennial

bridges. The remainder of the money was used for a scholarship fund.

With flood waters receding and the WQUA news department back on its normal schedule, stories centered around the dollar amount of damage caused by the flood and what communities must do to provide future flood protection.

On March 14, former President Dwight Eisenhower stopped by the Quad City Airport. Deere and Company was providing air transportation back to Gettysburg from Grinnell, Iowa, for Eisenhower, and he stopped to visit Deere's headquarters. At the airport, WQUA's Harry King covered Eisenhower's impromptu news conference.



Newsman Dan Hibbs



Adam Jones



Plaque honoring floodfighters



(L_R) Former Pres. Eisenhower at the Quad-City Airport with his aide, Brig. Gen. Robert Schulz, WQUA's Harry King, and Iowa Senator Jack Miller. The Deere & Co. corporate plane is behind them.

In April, as the baseball season got underway for the year, WQUA announced that it would carry all weekend games of the Chicago White Sox. Those games would originate from the White Sox radio network, with Sox broadcaster and former WQUA announcer Milo Hamilton calling the action.

GMT Productions brought another show geared to the teen audience on May 18. The "Gene Pitney Shower of Stars" was booked for two shows at the RKO and featured Pitney, Vic Dana, Gary Lewis and the Playboys, Bobby Goldsboro, the Crystals and the Bill Black Combo.

Verne Flambo sold off the last of his radio properties, KASI, on June 6. Dale Cowles, who had been Flambo's manager at KBIZ in Ottumwa, purchased the Ames, Iowa, station.

Plaques commemorating the efforts of the teen flood fighters were dedicated June 29. Two plaques were placed at the Rock Island and Davenport approaches to the Centennial Bridge, and two were placed on each side of the tollbooth on the Bettendorf Bridge.

The plaque was designed by noted local artist Paul Norton from a photo by *Times-Democrat* staff photographer Phil Hutchison. It featured a likeness of Bettendorf High School student Ken Becker, who was chosen to represent the thousands of teens who turned out to help.

The inscription, authored by WQUA manager Max Ryder, read: "Erected by the grateful citizens of this community in tribute to our young people whose willing and tireless assistance during the flood of April 1965, given with no thought of reward or thanks, saved our homes, our industries and perhaps even our very cities."

Today, the plaques that were mounted on the Bettendorf Bridge tollbooths have been relocated due to the bridge becoming part of the Interstate System. One plaque is located at the entrance of the Bettendorf City Hall, and the other is located on the floodwall opposite the entrance to the Kone Elevator Co. offices in Moline.

During the remainder of the summer, the station reported on two more stories that contained heavy local interest. In July, the station covered the death of former Illinois governor, presidential candidate and United Nations Ambassador Adlai Stevenson. In August, the Hoover Presidential Library was opened in West Branch, Iowa. Former President Dwight Eisenhower again visited the area and was the keynote speaker at the event.

While the news stories of 1965 played a major role in what listeners heard on WQUA, programming was not forgotten. In addition to the White Sox baseball games, the station announced it would carry the full schedule of Notre Dame football. Later that fall, University of Iowa basketball games were added to the schedule. The college games were picked up from their respective networks, while Corey Kent and Ken Buel continued to provide coverage of Moline football and basketball.

Personnel changes took place at the station across the summer and early fall months as well. Steve Steffa had been hired as news director and Ken Buel was now the director of public affairs. Other new hires were John Dombek, Steve Hyett and Buddy Holiday.

John Dombek was hired as the station's production manager and also had copywriting responsibilities. A native of Houlton, Maine, Dombek had been a morning announcer and copywriter at WHOU in Houlton and a copywriter at WFDF in Flint, Mich.

WQUA had had great copywriters over the years in Elaine Vinzant, Rex Stein, Fran Purcell, Judith Lien, Terry Mullery and others. Dombek brought yet another dimension to the station's commercial writing.

Dombek stated: "Two of my favorite WQUA writing experiences had to do with 'locating' a place of business. Usually the location line on a commercial is at its end. It is supposed to be a mind grabber. Street address is acceptable, but a slogan is better. On one occasion I was instructed to visit Learner Sales and Service, an auto dealer in Rock Island. They needed that mind grabber. During the visit, I noticed the showroom had a strange zigzag window arrangement and figured that if I could somehow use that feature, it could be a great identifier. I described the shape to Max Ryder, the station manager at the time. After a pause, he asked, 'Is it in the shape of a sawtooth?' That's it! The commercial ended with 'Learner's Sales and Service in the sawtooth-shaped showroom, downtown Rock Island.' They were still using it 20 years later.

"On another occasion I was told to come up with a location line for Josephson's Jewelry. On a walk-by one day, I noticed the owner had erected a large clock on an ornate post on the sidewalk outside the store. I wrote, 'Josephson's Jewelry, by the clock on the lamppost in downtown Moline.' It is my belief years later, when they moved to a new location, they took the clock with them and continued to use it as their identifier in commercials."

Over the years, Dombek became a creative force in Quad-Cities radio, helping the station win more than 21 ADDY awards for local, regional and national advertising campaigns.

Steve Hyett was a St. Ambrose College student hired for part-time news and announcing. Hyett's radio experience included the student-run station at St. Ambrose and WMRO-AM-FM in Aurora, Ill.

Although not directly employed by WQUA, Guy Harris was hired by the Small brothers to act as a national program director for all of the Small stations. He had been with the Plough-Westinghouse stations before joining the Small organization.

It was Harris' opinion that WQUA's sound needed more continuity to it. In that effort, he fired Don Hanley, Dick Stuart and Jeff Blake. Harris hired a new morning man, Buddy Holiday, and moved Adam Jones to an 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. shift, vacating the overnight show.

Harris also changed the musical programming the station played. From now on, WQUA would play a pop-standard mix with the exception of Betty Stevens' program. The new formula provided for

seven current hit records, two new releases, three standards and two featured album cuts per hour.

Buddy Holiday started his career in Texas and came to Moline from WIOD in Miami. He brought with him several character voices to liven up his show: Grandpappy and Ersel Twerp. According to Adam Jones, "Holiday used a bunch of voices and every one sounded exactly the same... like him."

Don Hanley left broadcasting briefly to work in the wholesale floral business. He then joined WOC as its morning announcer and early evening sports anchor on channel 6. He later became program director and then station manager of WOC-AM and KIIK-FM. Hanley left the WOC stations in the mid-1980s and died in June 1992.

Dick Stuart moved to the midday shift at WHBF. In 1972 he became the operations manager of both WHBF radio stations. After leaving radio in 1990, Stuart was manager of Tri-State Foods. He died in March of 2006.

Jeff Blake joined KSTT as its late night announcer and a member of its news department. In 1969 he gave up announcing to go to news full time. He later joined KSTT's sales department. Blake became a vice president at Happy Joe's Pizza in 1977 and later joined Showbiz restaurants. Today he does commercial voice-over work, develops interactive computer training programs and owns movie rental stores and tanning salons.

Guy Harris didn't stay long in the national program director position. He left the Small stations in 1966 and joined a station in San Antonio, Texas.

Newsman Harry King left WQUA and joined WNUS in Chicago, the first all-news radio station in the country. King served that station for 10 years in various positions including reporter, operations manager, and news and program director. He spent a year at WGCI as program director and also taught broadcasting at the YMCA junior college in Chicago. From 1976-77 he was news anchor for all-news WMAQ. He served as the public relations officer for the Illinois VFW from 1977-80 and at the same time was the director of development for Dialogue with the Blind. From 1981-84, he served as disaster public relations officer for FEMA Region V. For six years, King worked with several companies dealing with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) signage issues, especially for the blind. In 1989, he formed AS/PS Corp. to provide national projects coordination and installations of ADA signage. King has been retired since 2002, but remains active with radio news services for the blind.

After all these changes, the announcing staff at WQUA consisted of Buddy Holiday, Joe Murray, Corey Kent, Adam Jones, Don Wiese and Betty Stevens, while news reporting was handled by Steve Steffa, Ken Buel, Dan Hibbs and Steve Hyett.

Flambo's GMT Productions again brought major entertainment to the area in the fall. Mantovani returned to a sellout audience at the RKO on October 19, Robert Goulet sang at the Masonic Temple on October 31 and singer Jack Jones appeared at the Masonic Temple on November 15.

The teen audience was also treated to one more show this year. Singing duo Sonny & Cher, along with Len Barry and Danny Hutton, played two shows at the RKO Orpheum on November 16.

On November 30, WQUA's ownership, Radio Moline Inc., closed on the purchase of Des Moines radio station KIOA. Shortly after that purchase, a corporation name change took place for both KIOA and WQUA. Radio Moline would now be known as Mid America Broadcasting Inc.

REPLACE AND RETIRE

Early 1966 saw the arrival of Don Braid as the afternoon 3 to 7 p.m. announcer. Braid had spent eight years in the Peoria market at WMBD and WPEO.

With the arrival of Braid, Adam Jones was again heard in the overnight hours and another new announcer joined the station: Bob Allen (real name Gordon VanWaes). Allen was from Kewanee, Ill., and was first heard on WKEI while in high school. Astute listeners who tuned around the Quad-Cities radio dial probably recognized Allen's voice from his stints as Gordon Vann at KSTT. He had also spent time on the air at WTKT in Tucson and WIRE in Indianapolis.

Originally he was planning to use the Gordon Vann air name but explained how his name changed: "Flambo asked that I use a different name on the air, perhaps as a courtesy to KSTT. I had just had a conversation with Ken Buel, who mentioned his sons' names were Bob and Allan. Needing

a name quickly, I chose the first names that came to mind, Bob and Allen (Bob didn't know Allan Buel spelled the name differently), based on Ken's sons' names. Naturally, after using Gordon Vann for so long, I had to write that new name on an index card to remind me what my name was."

With the addition of Allen, the announcing staff schedule was: Buddy Holiday, 5 to 10 a.m.; Bob Allen, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Don Braid, 3 to 7 p.m.; Joe Murray, 7 p.m. to midnight; and Adam Jones, midnight to 5 a.m. Steve Hyett was the Sunday morning announcer, and Betty Stevens continued with her "Variations in Tempo" on Sunday evenings.

Flambo's GMT Productions announced three shows for the first quarter of the year: Pearl Bailey and her husband, Louie Bellson, would perform at the Masonic Temple Auditorium in February; Liberace would bring his piano and candelabra to the RKO Orpheum for two shows, March 21 and 22; and the "Gene Pitney Shower of Stars" would play two shows on March 24 at the RKO. Featured performers were Pitney, Chad & Jeremy, Bobby Goldsboro, Len Barry, the Outsiders and B.J. Thomas.

Shortly after the close of the Illinois high school basketball season, announcer and sportscaster Corey Kent left WQUA. He ventured to Hollywood and appeared in several motion pictures, including "Exit to Eden" and "Dear God." Returning to his Iowa roots, he built and operated KCJJ Radio in Iowa City, sold it in the early 1990s and started several property management operations in Iowa City.

In April, WQUA again began airing Chicago White Sox baseball games. Unlike the previous year when the station only broadcast weekend games, this year's schedule would provide all of the Sox night and weekend games.

In previous years, one of WQUA's promotions was the Cash Call. It had been used at various times throughout the broadcast year but was not always a daily offering all year long. Beginning this year, the Cash Call would become a daily feature that ran well into the 1970s.

To further promote itself, WQUA had a city bus completely painted in a circus motif that proclaimed WQUA as the greatest show on radio. Interestingly enough, this was one of the first uses of what today is called a bus wrap. Today, many of Metrolink's buses are completely wrapped in graphical ads for local businesses. WQUA beat them all to the punch with a rolling billboard nearly 35 years before the idea would again gain popularity.

During the summer, announcer Don Braid was moved to nights, which he didn't like. After two months, he left the station and broadcasting all together. For many years he owned a shopper's newspaper and was active in the Playcrafters theater group. However, Braid could still be heard for years as a voice on commercials that aired on WQUA. Braid's wife, Paula, was used on many station commercials as well.

As the high school football season was approaching, Earl Spencer was hired to take Braid's place and perform play-by-play duties with Ken Buel on the Moline football and basketball broadcasts. Spencer began his career at stations in California and came to Moline from WITY in Danville, Ill., where he was a full-time announcer and sports director.

In late September, Joe Murray left WQUA. Murray stated, "I went to work at a station in Baltimore for exactly one week – the lousiest place I ever worked! I then went to Fairfax, Va., to sell radio time and wound up working there for 22 years. Since 1988, I've been selling advertising for the Comcast Cable System. I worked at 15 stations in five states and WQUA was one of my greater experiences in radio."

Replacing Murray was Don Elliott. Elliott had spent the previous six years at WMAY Radio in Springfield, Ill. Prior to that station, he had worked at KLIF in Dallas and KPAL in Palm Springs. In addition to his afternoon shift, Elliott also had play-by-play duties on non-Moline High games.

WQUA's listeners now heard Buddy Holiday from 5 to 10 a.m., Bob Allen from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Don Elliott from 3 to 7:30 p.m., Earl Spencer from 7:30 to midnight and Adam Jones from midnight to 5 a.m.

The Saturday schedule included Holiday from 5 to 10:30 a.m., Don Wiese from 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Bob Allen from 5 p.m. to midnight and Adam Jones from midnight until 5 a.m. On Sunday, Steve Hyett manned the control board until noon with music and public service programs, Don Elliott hosted from noon to 6 p.m., Steve Hyett returned with music from 6 to 8 p.m., and Betty

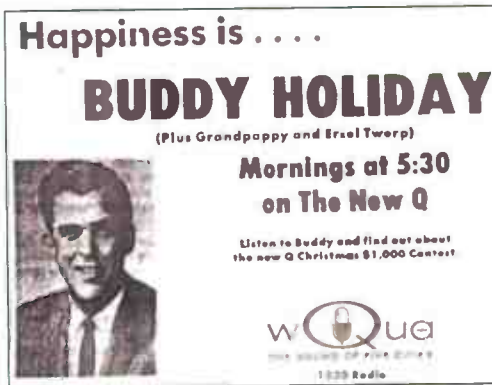
Steven's "Variations in Tempo" aired until 10:30 p.m.

Another September change came with the retirement of station manager Max Ryder. Ryder's distinctive writing style and New England accent would no longer be heard on WQUA editorials. Those would now be written and aired by Ken Buel. Don Nelson would take over as station manager, as well as continue with his sales management responsibilities.

Verne Flambo hosted a luau at the Plantation restaurant in Ryder's honor and flew Ryder's sons from the East Coast to be part of the festivities. Illinois senators Paul Douglas and Everett Dirksen sent recorded greetings. The Small brothers presented Ryder with a color TV and cash bonus. And to show his appreciation for Ryder's eight years of service, Flambo presented Ryder and his wife a three-week trip to Europe.



Steve Hyett



Buddy Holiday promo ad



Don Elliott and Bill Adams



(L-R) Don Weis, Mr. and Mrs. J. Maxim Ryder, Ken Buel



Steve Hyett on the newsbeat

October was to be a big month for Flambo's presentations, but several had to be cancelled at the last moment. The "Chad and Jeremy Show" was cancelled due to illness, and Phyllis Diller, a Quad-Cities favorite, was cancelled due to TV appearance schedules. But for the remainder of the month, the Eddy Arnold and Roger Williams shows at the RKO Orpheum, and the "Harry Belafonte Show" at Wharton Fieldhouse all played to large audiences. In place of Chad and Jeremy, GMT Productions booked another "Dick Clark Caravan of Stars" show that featured Bryan Hyland, Sam the Sham, the Yardbirds and Gary Lewis and the Playboys.

The race for the seat in the U.S. House of Representatives from the 19th Congressional District gave WQUA some great stories during this off-year political election season. Moline Republican Tom Railsback was vying for the seat of incumbent Democrat Gale Schisler. When the voting was over, Railsback had beaten Schisler by more than 9,000 votes. The usual team of WQUA personnel and

members of the Moline Gospel Temple congregation once again covered all polling places in Rock Island County to obtain voting tallies even before the counts were delivered to the courthouse.

Joining WQUA just in time for the elections was Bill Adams. Adams was an Augustana College student who happened to see a bulletin board notice that the station was looking for a part-time reporter. Adams noted, "The only radio experience I had was working on WVIK at Augie, but I auditioned with Steve Steffa and got hired to make the rounds of the police stations and city halls. I enjoyed it. Every time the minimum wage went up, I got a raise!"

As 1966 came to a close, GMT Productions announced its talent bookings for the first half of the coming new year. Pearl Bailey and Jimmy Dean would appear in February at the RKO. In March, the Ramsey Lewis Trio and Ferrante & Teicher would present shows at Augustana's Centennial Hall, and in May, Ella Fitzgerald would appear at the RKO.

The start of 1967 had the WQUA news department covering a wide variety of local interest stories. Reports included the consolidation of Lutheran and Moline Public hospitals into a single medical center, Illinois legislators padding their mileage bills, Chicago's McCormick Place destroyed by fire, and, of course, the weather. Extreme cold to start the year, a tornado in late January, and 8 inches of snow two days later gave the department plenty of story material.

Part-time newsman and announcer Steve Hyett left WQUA in February. "I moved on for more money, more experience and full-time radio work," Hyett stated. "I moved to WHBF where I was the 6 p.m. to midnight announcer. In early 1968 I moved to KSTT to get back into news and became their night news editor and adopted the air name Peter Buckley."

Hyett found broadcasting more interesting than college and dropped one of his classes in the spring semester of 1968. That cancelled his student deferment and, he was immediately drafted into the Army and sent to Southeast Asia. He spent time there running MARS (Military Affiliate Radio System) and AFVN (Armed Forces Vietnam Network) stations. After leaving the service, Hyett finished college and went to work in local government, bank marketing and the securities business, all in Naperville, Ill. Today he is a senior investment broker with A.G. Edwards & Sons. For the past 25 years, he has been the emcee for Naperville's Labor Day parade.

One of the more interesting stories covered in March was the sighting of a UFO by Moline police officer Bill Fisher. Fisher wasn't the only person to spot the craft, as many motorists witnessed it as well. The local spotlight was quickly turned off when the "craft" was discovered to be nothing more than someone's prank. The unidentified object turned out to be a cleaning bag that was held open by drinking straws and carried aloft by the hot air of a small candle.

In April, Bob Gann joined the station news department and Bill Coopman was hired as part-time engineering help. Gann was a Palmer College student and had formerly been the morning announcer at WOC radio. Coopman, brother of this writer, was an Augustana student who had a long history of ham radio and work at Augustana's WVIK. His main duty was to do transmitter maintenance, but later performed studio maintenance and also filled in, as Bill Maurice, for Betty Stevens and Adam Jones during their vacations or sickness.

With her children a little older, Elaine Vinzant returned to the station's continuity department to again write solid ad copy. No doubt things hadn't changed much since she left for child-rearing duty, as the salesmen still brought in requests for last-minute ad writing.

SOMETHING REALLY NEW FOR Q

There is an old adage in radio that states it's not what you look like, but rather, what you sound like. And WQUA had one of the best sounds in area radio. The signal was processed to provide an almost hi-fi sound all the time. However, those sounds originated from what many called "a dump." The equipment was said to be a Cadillac for its time – the late 1940s. The only areas in the building that received the benefit of air conditioning were the air studios and Flambo's office. Most of the office employees sat at desks in what had been the large studio when WQUA went on the air. Long-time employees Bob Castle and Elaine Vinzant both noted that in the winters they were cold and in the summers the heat was unbearable. But that was soon to change.

Verne Flambo had plans drawn up for an entirely new building. Everything would be brand new;

furniture, the latest in broadcast equipment and spacious private offices for everyone. Better yet for station veterans, every office would have its own thermostat. No more too hot or too cold!

When built, the station would be located on the northeast corner of 18th Street and 6th Avenue on the fringes of downtown Moline. Ken Buel related an interesting story about the building placement and ownership: "A curiosity is the name of the corporation that owned the WQUA building. The Small family had decided it would own the property and building and then rent the facilities back to the radio station. At a staff dinner party, when the artist's drawing and floor plan were unveiled, I noticed that it showed the address as 1804-6th Avenue. I pointed out to Verne that this was in error, as 1804 would be on the opposite side of 6th Avenue, somewhere near where the former IBM offices were located. However, by the time we saw the plans, the corporation had already been established with the legal name '1804 Corporation.' And that's the way it stayed." The actual address of WQUA was 1801-6th Avenue.



Flambo with painting of new studio



Bob Gann



Earl Spencer



Steve Steffa

The Flambo concerts from earlier in the year were all sellouts, and he announced another popular group of bookings in August. The "Gene Pitney Shower of Stars" appeared at the end of that month at the RKO Orpheum. Joining Pitney were the Buckingham, the Easy Beats and the Happenings. In October, Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops was scheduled for the Masonic Temple, and pianist Roger Williams was booked for a show at Centennial Hall.

During September, program director and morning announcer Buddy Holiday left the station to take a job in Denver. Bob Allen took over programming duties. Afternoon drive-time announcer Don Elliott moved to the morning show and newsman Bob Gann took over Elliott's afternoon slot. Maury Banks, another Palmer student, was hired for the vacant night news position.

Newsman Dan Hibbs left and rejoined the news department of KSTT. In the early '70s, he went to work for the Scott County Sheriff's Department as head jailer. In the mid-'70s, Hibbs returned to broadcasting as morning announcer at WHBF. In 1982 he moved to KXRK (the former KFMA, then KWNT) to do the morning show there. He moved over to WMRZ (the renamed WQUA – more later) in 1986. He moved to Des Moines before retiring to Bradenton, Fla. Hibbs died in January 2002.

In other moves, Earl Spencer was made sports director and promotion director Bob Schroeder took on the position of continuity director. Mark Minnick joined the station as a reporter in the news department. He had previously been a part of the news operations at WOC radio-TV.

Spencer announced that WQUA would again carry all of the Notre Dame football games for the season. In addition to all Moline High football games, the station would also carry two UTHS and two Alleman football games. Spencer would do the play-by-play for the Moline contests, with Ken Buel providing the color commentary. Don Elliott would call the action for the non-Moline games, with Bob Allen handling the color.

Maury Banks left the station at Christmas, but he'd be back.

One other departure occurred during 1967 with the promotion of WQUA general manager Don Nelson. Nelson was appointed general manager of WIRE, the Mid America station in Indianapolis.

Perhaps Nelson's steps to WIRE were inevitable. A Flambo protégé who began as an 18-year-old announcer and quickly became an audience favorite, Nelson held five different positions during his

12 years at WQUA. When Nelson arrived at WIRE, it was a rock-and-roll station that he soon changed to a country music format. Within two ratings periods, WIRE went from 9th place to 1st place in the market and held that position for years.

In 1981, Nelson became general manager of KSON in San Diego. He became general manager of Los Angeles station KMGG in 1985 and in 1991 was named vice president/general manager of New York stations WYNY and WNEW.

He has served as chairman and director of the Country Music Association, a director of the Radio Advertising Bureau, director and past president of the Indiana Broadcasters Association and was the founding chairman of the Arbitron Advisory Council.

After leaving WYNY, Nelson served as a station consultant and currently operates a real estate agency serving San Diego and the Palm Springs area.

Upon Nelson's departure from WQUA, Verne Flambo and Ken Buel assumed daily management.

ASSASSINATIONS, DEMONSTRATIONS, A NEW HOME, AND THE BAREFOOT BOY FROM BEMIDJI

January 1968 brought the groundbreaking and start of construction on WQUA's new studios. While brick and mortar was rising, chief engineer Jerry Bower was specifying all the new electronic gear that was to be installed. He evidently impressed the people at Collins Radio Co. and wound up taking a job as a Collins salesman. Peter Burk was hired to take Bower's place as chief engineer.

February 1968 saw the departure of Don Elliott. He was replaced by a new name, but not a new voice. Mike Hervey returned to WQUA as Mike Murphy, the name he'd used at WIRE. The new schedule was now Mike Murphy, 5 to 10 a.m.; Bob Allen from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Earl Spencer, 3 to 6:30 p.m.; Bob Gann, from 6:30 p.m. to midnight; and Adam Jones, midnight to 5 a.m.

The station also began a new promotional identification, Taste the New Life. Along with this, production director John Dombek incorporated new imaging sounds to be used with commercials and station jingles. New York artist Eric Siday produced all the sounds electronically. Dombek met with Siday to explain what he felt was needed for WQUA and the result was 54 master tapes of sounds that Dombek could use for emphasis in commercials, station IDs and jingles. WQUA was the first medium-market station to use Siday's electronic sounds.

In conjunction with this new imaging campaign, the station sponsored a Taste the New Life contest. First prize was a two-week vacation in Bermuda. The second-place finisher would receive a weekend in St. Louis, and third place would receive a Yamaha motorcycle. Entry was easy, as listeners only needed to send in their names for a random drawing.

In April, WQUA's news department followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King. King was shot in Memphis, Tenn., while in that town to lend support to a strike of city workers. It was just three years previous that Dr. King was in the Quad-Cities to receive the Pacem in Terras award, and the news department focused on the local side of this national tragedy.

Don Gregory was added to the news department roster for weekend duty. Gregory was a grad student at Iowa and had worked with Mark Minnick at KBOE in Oskaloosa, Iowa.

News director Steve Steffa made a trip to Vietnam in early May. The trip's purpose was to explore the work there of local civilians, such as personnel from the Rock Island Arsenal. Steffa spent three weeks in Vietnam and sent back reports and tapes to the station daily. The UPI news agency assisted Steffa with his reporting.

May also saw the return of Maury Banks to the newsroom. He stated, "In a moment of weakness, I felt that chiropractic was not for me after the first quarter (in 1967) and decided to return to Canada. I had time to think, called the station and they agreed to rehire me. I returned in May of 1968 and went back to Palmer in September of that year. Mr. Flambo always treated me well. He was quite concerned when I returned to Canada and very happy when I got back."

Paul Jacobson joined the staff as station manager in June.

By the end of June, Don Gregory decided to stay in graduate school, and he quit his weekend news job. Since his time at WQUA, Gregory went on to earn a Ph.D. in philosophy and teaches at George Mason University and Northern Virginia Community College. He still maintains his interest

in the business of broadcasting and does several shows on the college's cable TV system.

Norm Francis came from Detroit to join the news department in July. Francis was the morning news voice and also sold advertising time in the afternoon.

Verne Flambo created excitement for the teenagers when he booked the Beach Boys for a repeat appearance at the RKO on July 2. As they had in their previous shows for GMT Productions, the group produced sellout audiences for both scheduled performances.

Three days later, WQUA news was again busy with reports on the assassination of Democratic presidential hopeful Robert Kennedy. Kennedy had been gunned down after completing his press conference in an L.A. hotel upon winning the California presidential primary election.

In mid-August, Mike Murphy again left WQUA and joined KMBZ in Kansas City as that station's morning personality. He became the highest-rated morning announcer in the market during his stay at that station, but was soon hired away by rival KCMO radio. For over 30 years, Murphy kept the title of top morning announcer in the Kansas City market. He received the National Association of Broadcasters' Marconi Award, the highest award given to a radio personality, in 1998. In 2005, he received a nomination to the national Radio Hall of Fame. Murphy noted: "I didn't win entry that year, but I've still got four more chances and it's something I'd really like to have happen. It is truly a feather in a broadcaster's cap." He is now retired and still lives in the Kansas City area.

WQUA always had talented, great-sounding, popular announcers. Names that former listeners always associated with the station were Jack Barlow, Don Nelson, Ken Buel and Adam Jones. Another name now joined the list of memorable announcers with the hiring of Jim McShane as Mike Murphy's replacement in morning drive time.

McShane (real name Harold Searls) was a native of Bemidji, Minn., and had worked at WBBM in Chicago, WDGY in Minneapolis, WHB in Kansas City and KPHO in Phoenix. Prior to his arrival in Moline, McShane had spent four years as Johnny Dark on WMCA in New York City.

He billed himself as the "barefoot boy from Bemidji," reportedly because he was born on an Indian reservation. His daily sign-off, "Look out street, here I come," was actually taken from fellow WMCA announcer Joe McCoy's show closing.

When asked about McShane's arrival, Bob Allen stated: "I'd love to take credit for hiring him, but McShane had some history with Paul Jacobson somewhere and it was Jacobson who brought him to the station's attention."

McShane became hugely popular with his audience and advertisers. A daily feature of his show was the Housewife Strip, a parody that used narration over the popular song "The Stripper" by the David Rose Orchestra. Advertisers loved his voice quality and the fact that many times he'd just ad lib about the establishment rather than read commercial copy.



Bob Allen



Early Jim McShane



Later McShane



Mark Minnick

August ushered the station's move to its new, ultra-modern headquarters on 6th Avenue. The exterior was faced with beige brick and exposed aggregate fascia. The interior was color coordinated with autumn tones and walnut woods. All of the offices were unique in their décor, yet blended into the station's overall decoration. Verne Flambo personally chose much of the artwork for the walls.

Perhaps the most stunning portion of the building, however, was the broadcast area. Announcers worked from what was called a "floating studio." The floor of the on-air studio was a floating slab of concrete that was not connected to any other part of the building and thus eliminated vibrations from inside and outside the building.

Every bit of technical equipment was brand new as well. The audio control boards no longer used rotary pots (potentiometers) to control sound levels. Rotary pots tended to get dirty and dirty pots created noise when used to adjust audio levels. WQUA was the first in the area to install the new Collins Radio control boards that used photocells to activate changes in the audio. All tape recorders and cartridge tape machines were new. Production, on-air and news studios were all interconnected and any one could be used for broadcasting. Everything was state of the art for the time period.

The building contained two complete heating and cooling systems that allowed separate temperature control for offices and studios. For all the employees who suffered through summer heat and winter cold in the old building, each office now had its own temperature control.

Just as station personnel were getting used to the new surroundings, the Democratic National Convention gave the news department several weeks' worth of reporting on both the political stories and the anti-war demonstrations that boiled over into rioting in the streets and parks of Chicago.

As the turbulence of Chicago died down, WQUA became the dial to turn to for fans of Moline, Alleman and Chicago Bears football. Earl Spencer and Ken Buel again called all the action of Moline and Alleman games on Fridays, while the complete schedule of Bears football was heard on Sunday afternoons through the facilities of the Bears Radio Network.

Visits to Davenport and Moline by presidential candidates Hubert Humphrey and Richard Nixon augmented WQUA's election coverage. As in previous years, station personnel and members of the Moline Gospel Temple manned all the county precincts to record vote totals and air them quickly.

Verne Flambo brought the Lettermen to the RKO-Orpheum to close out the year's bookings by GMT Productions. Besides the Beach Boys in July, Ferrante & Teicher, Fred Waring, John Gary, Roger Williams and Mantovani all made appearances during the year.

And as 1968 came to a close, basketball fans could hear the complete schedule of Moline games, as well as some games of United Township and Alleman when Moline games did not interfere. All games of the University of Illinois were also carried by WQUA during the 1968-69 season.

SCHOOL NEWS, FLOODING, AN OPEN MIKE AND FLAMBO "RETIRES" AGAIN

The first four months of 1969 belonged to the WQUA news department. Nationally there were continuing stories regarding the Democratic Convention, the Vietnam War and student rebellion against the war that WQUA covered well. Most listeners, though, were much more interested in the Moline School District's search for a new superintendent, the Moline High wrestling team's winning the State Tournament, Alleman High School's winning the regional basketball title and an arson fire at Moline High School that had burned for hours in a tunnel under the fine arts wing.

As in 1965, the area again braced for near-record flooding. The station covered various levee construction projects, low-area evacuations, and once again, sandbagging by local high school and college students. As there was much more preparation this time, the 19-foot crest did not create as much damage as the flood of 1965 had, and many of those levees remain today.

In April, an incident involving the Moline Police Department was not only reported on by WQUA news, but WQUA news became a minor part of the story as well. A Moline police captain and a civilian woman spent 45 minutes in a parked squad car discussing the upcoming mayoral election, several other policemen and local gambling arrests. What brought this to light was the fact that the microphone on the car's police radio was broadcasting their conversation. And since the microphone key had stuck in the "talk" position, no other police radio traffic could be transmitted.

Various charges were brought against the captain, and the Police and Fire Commission convened a hearing to investigate the charges. The captain's lawyer, Stewart Winstein, subpoenaed WQUA to the hearing. Winstein heard a rumor that a tape of the conversation had been made, as most of the local newsrooms had police and fire radios to enable them to hear calls for service.

Ken Buel continued: "It was my first and only appearance in a courtroom as a participant in a legal proceeding. Of course there was no tape of the incident, but Winstein was convinced that I had it. He was so unhappy with my responses that he complained to the judge that I was a 'reluctant, cagey witness.' The city attorneys immediately leaped to my defense before the judge.

"In my testimony, I had to explain what equipment we had, and when I told him it would have been technically possible for someone to record the conversation, he was all the more convinced I was withholding evidence. Bill Adams became an issue when I was asked to name the newsroom personnel. Bill had left WQUA for KSTT between the incident and the court hearing, and Winstein became convinced his leaving had something to do with the tape. I told him I didn't know why Bill had left, and Winstein said he'd have a subpoena issued to track Bill down and get the answer. All the time, Bill was seated right behind Winstein in the press section of the hearing room. When Bill finally got called to testify, he said he left for higher pay, and that took care of that."

Adams had indeed gone over to KSTT in April. He was a member of its news department for five years, joined its sales department in 1974 and was named KSTT sales manager in 1978. In 1981, Adams was named vice president and general manager. In 1987, he left KSTT (then called KKZZ) and the co-owned WXLN-FM to become general manager of the former WHBF radio stations. When those stations were sold, he opened Budget Consultants. Adams served as a Moline alderman and is now involved in commercial real estate in Arizona.

As instrumental as station manager Paul Jacobson might have been in hiring Jim McShane, he should also be remembered as the person who ended the run of Betty Stevens' "Variations in Tempo" in April. The program had been a Sunday evening staple for nearly 13 years and was the only classical music program on commercial radio during its entire run.

After her program ended, Stevens continued working with Playcrafters, the Quad City Music Guild and the Quad City Symphony. She also continued to voice commercials heard on WQUA.

Adam Jones remembered Stevens as serious and professional when it came to broadcasting: "When the station did away with engineers manning the transmitter, the announcers had to get an FCC license to take transmitter meter readings. Of all the announcers, Betty was the only one to pass the exam on the first try."

Betty Stevens died on August 1, 1985, at 66 years of age.

Station manager Paul Jacobson's stay at WQUA was not long. In June he was named general manager of co-owned KIOA in Des Moines. Ken Buel and Don Wiese took over the station manager's duties under the guidance of Verne Flambo. Wiese was in charge of sales and Buel handled all else.

During September, Len Carson replaced evening announcer Bob Gann. But Carson didn't get to stay long and was replaced by Lee Askervold in November. Ken Buel remembered that Askervold, a former announcer in the Seattle area, wandered in off the street and asked for a job. "We didn't have an opening, but after hearing the guy, we couldn't let him get away. Unfortunately we had to fire another announcer, whom we had recently hired and was very good as well," stated Buel. So went the business of radio.

As the high school basketball schedule went into full swing, WQUA again broadcast all the games of the Moline Maroons, and several games each of UTHS and Alleman. In December, WQUA traveled with UTHS to the Collinsville Invitational Tournament. Collinsville, Ken Buel's hometown team, had not been beaten in 52 consecutive home games nor had they lost their own tournament in 15 straight years. East Moline changed all that by beating the state's number-one team and winning this year's edition of the Invitational. Earl Spencer and Buel captured all the action for the fans back in UTHS territory, and Adam Jones provided updates throughout his show on the team's progress in returning to a 3:40 a.m. pep rally in the UT parking lot.

At the end of the year, Spencer and Buel again ventured south to cover the Centralia Holiday Tournament appearance of UTHS. The East Moline team beat everyone and returned home with a record of 12-0 and the number one rating in the state. But getting home wasn't easy.

Shortly after arriving in Centralia, a major blizzard hit southern Illinois and after winning the basketball tournament, the team was, more or less, snowed in. Since the roads were bad, an impromptu victory party was held, with Ken Buel raiding a convenient store to buy whatever goodies were left to feed the team, coaches, cheerleaders and members of the press.

In a year-end wrap-up column appearing in the *Dispatch*, columnist Carla Teleen lamented the fact that there hadn't been any entertainment for adult audiences that year. With the exception of an Eddy Arnold show back in February, GMT Productions had not booked any shows for the remainder of the year and quietly went out of business. Without fanfare, Verne Flambo and Milt Troehler ended the booking business that brought Mantovani, Victor Borge, Johnny Cash, Ferrante & Teicher, Phyllis Diller and so many other acts to area audiences.

One can only speculate as to why the two decided to end the business. Perhaps it was due to many more shows being booked into the area by local colleges, nightclubs and KSTT's Fred Epstein. Or it might have been due to the job responsibilities of both Troehler and Flambo. Whatever the reason might have been, the long run of Flambo as an impresario was finally over.

January 1970 started without Mark Minnick. He left to join KRNT radio-TV in Des Moines. He wouldn't be gone for long, however, returning to WQUA by the end of the year.

With record cold sweeping into the area in early 1970, WQUA kept the airwaves hot with local basketball contests – especially those of UTHS. UT won the regional and sectional tournaments and played in the title game for the state championship. Unfortunately the team lost to LaGrange, but Spencer and Buel brought all the action and color to listeners back home. They also gave updates on the team's return trip for the 3:30 a.m. pep rally in the UT parking lot.

CHANGES, BICKFORD, AND BROTHER TIMOTHY

In June, Verne Flambo hired Ed Wodka as station manager. Wodka had started at WIRL as a salesman and color announcer on that station's local sports broadcasts. He was sales manager there from 1965-68, but left "when my biggest and best client offered me a buy-in of his Ford dealership," recalled Wodka. Ken Buel remained as assistant manager and public affairs director.

In late summer, news director Steve Steffa had to resign his position for health reasons. He had developed Multiple Sclerosis and its affects had made it impossible for his continued running of the newsroom and airing news reports. Steffa died in August 1973. With the resignation of Steffa, Ken Buel was again named news director and continued with his managerial and public affairs duties.

As the year rolled on, AM radio was beginning to change. Actually that change had started when television became more prevalent and many of the drama and comedy shows disappeared from radio schedules. But another major change was beginning due to an FCC mandate that AM-FM combo stations could no longer duplicate their AM programming on their FM signal – the two had to be split, with separate programming for each. Besides separate programs, additional pluses for the FM signal were its clarity – no static – and the fact that FM could carry a stereo signal.

WHBF-FM had for years broadcast separate programming from its AM counterpart. WOC would soon split its two operations and rename its FM signal KIIK. Both WHBF-FM and KIIK would also begin broadcasting in full stereo. A change in Davenport's KWNT-FM ownership would soon have an impact in the market, too, but more on that later.

Along with the non-duplication rule, the FCC also created more FM-only frequencies in the Quad-Cities. WMDR-FM, licensed to Moline, would soon sign on the air followed later by WEMO-FM in East Moline.

How did WQUA combat these changes? Actually it didn't have to – yet. It continued with a great-sounding group of announcers, a strong news presence, local sports, a playlist of up-tempo, middle-of-the-road music, strong production values and a processed signal that made the station the best-sounding AM radio station in the Quad-Cities area.

Commercials were something else that made WQUA stand out from the others. One that many readers of this history might remember introduced Bickford Stevenson. John Dombek explained: "Ralph Bickford was the voice of Bickford Stevenson, a gourmet traveler I created for a series of commercials for Ben's Gourmet House in Rock Island. In order to establish the authenticity of Bickford Stevenson, each commercial began with the sentence, 'This is Bickford Stevenson and as you know, I have eaten at some of the finest restaurants in the world.' Of course, he hadn't, but listeners didn't know that. The copy and delivery were always slightly humorous, so listeners could never be sure if Bickford was what he said he was, and they weren't about to admit it."

The Stevenson series also ran for a restaurant in Florida and another in Kansas City, “the result of the recurring demand for funds to support my family,” as Dombek put it. He further explained: “I regularly asked management for pay increases with no substantial results. I could have gone back to *Broadcasting* magazine for another job, but I liked “Q.” So I presented an idea to Verne Flambo. I would be my own ad agency in addition to being production manager. That way, he could retain a production manager and I could make a few extra bucks. After viewing my income and expense situation, he agreed, and also gave me permission to use the WQUA production equipment for my quest. A good deal for both, I thought. Ben’s Gourmet House signed a major yearly contract with WQUA based on that Bickford Stevenson series.”

As noted earlier, the station earned many awards for its advertising writing and production. Dombek credits station personnel Elaine Vinzant, “an absolute genius in solid copywriting,” Judith Lien, “spontaneous and creative,” and Bob Schroeder and Terry Mullery... “all creative, enthusiastic and solid copywriters.” Because of that writing and production, many WQUA-produced commercials were heard on other Quad-Cities stations by request of the advertisers.

Personnel began shuffling in, out and around WQUA during the 1970-71 time period. Newsman and announcer Maury Banks graduated from Palmer College and moved to British Columbia to begin his chiropractic practice. Newsman Norm Francis moved on to Lincoln, Neb. Jim Brodson joined the news staff and Dan Skott (real name Ray Danielson) was hired as a part-time announcer and newsman. Earl Spencer moved on to KHTY in Bakersfield, Calif., and Ron Stauner, former morning announcer at KGLO in Mason City and KWWL in Waterloo, took over Spencer’s 3 to 7:30 p.m. air shift. Program director Bob Allen replaced Spencer in calling play-by-play action on the high school football and basketball broadcasts. Lee Askervold, who had worked part-time at Gendler’s Wine Shop in addition to his air work, left the station and became a regional sales manager with the Seagram Distillery. He retired from that firm and died in March 1999. Askervold’s evening replacement was Dave Moore. Ed Wodka added the title of vice president to that of station manager, and Verne Flambo’s son John joined the sales staff.



Lee Askervold



Ron Stauner



John Dombek



Dan Skott



Earl Spencer on remote



Ken Buel

Earl Spencer's move had a Moline connection to it. Don Wiese, who left his post as sales manager at WQUA in 1970, had gone to work in southern California at Eastman Radio, a station representation firm. Eastman represented the Bakersfield station and Wiese recommended Spencer for an opening on the KHTY staff. While there, Spencer became the first broadcaster allowed to air a show from Disneyland. Up until then, Disney would not allow broadcasts from the park.

Spencer didn't stay at KHTY long. An opportunity opened up to work at Los Angeles station KFI as a producer/engineer on its L.A. Lakers basketball broadcasts, working with sportscasting legend Chick Hearn. In 1972, Spencer moved to Ventura, Calif. as program manager of KBBY. In 1980, he left broadcasting and joined Pacific Bell Telephone in operations and training and retired in 2000.

Elaine Vinzant left WQUA to become director of volunteer services at the East Moline State Hospital. When that facility was closed in the early 1980s, she became a procurement analyst with the U.S. Army Armament, Munitions, and Chemical Command. She retired from that position in 1993. She remains heavily involved in music and watching her grandchildren grow.

In addition to winning awards for its radio editorials and newscasts, WQUA's "Public School Profile," with host Ken Buel, won the Illinois Education Association's School Bell Media Award for distinguished service in the coverage and interpretation of education in 1971.

During 1972, WQUA introduced a series of five-minute broadcasts called "Good Vibrations." John Dombek had created the program that invited local area ministers, priests and other church officials to come to the station and record brief messages that would be played throughout the week. When a scheduled minister didn't show up, Brother Timothy took his place. Who was Brother Timothy?

Dombek explained: "After participating for a time, the ministers grew less interested in the program. One afternoon, the scheduled pastor didn't show up. His programs were to air the next morning and all of the next week. It was too late to get a sub, and I had a problem. In a minor panic, and keeping in mind the changing attitudes of the day (towards religion), I sat down and created Brother Timothy Allmen of Everyman's Church in Coal Valley. I wrote five programs, enough for the next week, and recorded them myself after most of the staff had left for the day.

"On the second day of airing, the station phone began to ring. Each caller had the same question, 'Who is Brother Timothy and where is his church located?' They searched the Yellow Pages and asked friends, but no one knew him. Ed Wodka was caught unaware by the calls and had no idea what they were calling about. He came close to putting a halt to the show. However, when the calls continued and even increased in number, he re-evaluated his response and asked how long I could be Brother Timothy. We continued the program for a year or longer. Brother Timothy spoke of joy, love, the uselessness of comparing one's own self to another, the rigid rules of churches and common everyday frustrations – things every unassuming good person wanted to hear."

The WQUA audience evidently loved Brother Timothy as he was invited to ride in a Coal Valley parade as the special guest, asked to marry a couple in Davenport and asked to give talks to community and charitable organizations. And according to Dombek, no churches ever called about Timothy.

During 1972, Mark Minnick was named WQUA's news director. Ken Buel again returned fulltime to his duties as assistant station manager and public affairs director.

On the national news scene, stories included the withdrawal of troops from Viet Nam, a burglary at the Democratic National Headquarters that produced a linkage to President Richard Nixon and a basic mistrust of government by many in the country. WQUA began to add to its news staff.

One of Minnick's first hires was Phil Snyder, a graduate of Drake University. Snyder had spent time as a disc jockey at stations in Des Moines and Newton, Iowa. He was brought in to cover the night news shift and prepare for Ken Buel's early morning newscasts.

Snyder remembered his first day on the job: "Dan Skott was showing me the ropes when the police scanner screamed about a robbery with injuries at a tavern in Davenport. Since one of us needed to go to the scene and the police department to gather information, and since I didn't yet know enough about the equipment to solo, I went on my first reporting assignment. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a double homicide. Also unfortunately, I didn't know what I was supposed to do. I was a disc jockey in my former roles, not a reporter, and that night turned out to be my trial by fire."

Snyder had another trial by fire early in his WQUA career. He explained: "Jim McShane, the morning guy, told me to come meet him for lunch at a local tavern one day during my first week at the station. For some reason, it made perfect sense for me to be drinking myself into oblivion with the station star shortly before my shift started. I called Minnick, he laughed it off as some sort of initiation and I don't remember if I ever made it into work that day."

That "initiation" didn't seem to hurt Snyder's tenure at WQUA, as he was there for three years, but more about him later.

Also joining WQUA were engineer Mike Moore, who would assist chief engineer Peter Burk, talented continuity writer Terry Mullery and newsman Jay Jones, formerly of KBUR in Burlington.

FLAMBO GETS AN FM STATION

As noted earlier, FM stereo stations were beginning to make their mark against the AM stations in the Quad-Cities. Those already on the air were programming rock and roll, middle-of-the-road, and country music. One format that was missing was beautiful music, but that didn't last for long.

What was beautiful music? Some called it "elevator" music, and some called it easy listening. Basically it was instrumental versions of hit songs most favorable for background listening.

Davenport's KWNT-FM came up for sale due to the illness of its owner. Verne Flambo entered into negotiations on behalf of WQUA's parent ownership to purchase the station and the FCC approved the sale in August of 1973.

Flambo liked beautiful music and it was his intent to begin programming that format over the new station. John Flambo explained: "Dad was at an NAB (National Association of Broadcasters) convention and one of the big buzzes was beautiful music. It seemed somewhat natural, since he had wanted to be an opera singer when he was younger. It was his intention to bring the format to the Quad-Cities, but he wanted to do it right."

While WQUA chief engineer Peter Burk was building new facilities for the FM, the station was kept on the air on a sustaining basis – no commercials. It was not making money, but Flambo wanted only a first-class operation when it finally debuted with its new format at Christmas 1973.

The station would be on the air 24 hours per day, seven days a week. It was automated and used programming from Schulke Radio Productions. Schulke's programming was arranged so that each musical selection flowed into the next. It also presented 52 minutes of music with only six interruptions for newscasts or commercials.

The station was christened KRVR, but it took a little time to come up those call letters. John Flambo explained: "At that same NAB convention, there were discussions about using call letters to identify your locale or something prominent in your region. San Francisco had two stations that created a picture identity of the city – KFOG (fog) and KABL (as in cable car). It finally hit Dad that the station would be serving both sides of the river and the river was the prominent landmark in the Quad-Cities. K-River was born."

In spite of Adam Jones' warning that "FM causes warts," Verne Flambo finally had his beautiful music, FM radio station. With no real competition in format, KRVR became extremely popular as listeners stayed tuned for hours on end. John Flambo was named as the station's general manager.

While KRVR helped splinter the Quad-Cities radio audience just a little more, WQUA continued with its mixed format of adult standards and pop hits and a concentration on news and local sports.

John Carver was added to the WQUA news staff. Carver remembered: "I had met Flambo in 1971 and asked him for a job. He told me to get more experience, and he got me a job at WHBF-TV as a cameraman and floor sweeper. I later managed to get a job at KTVO-TV in Ottumwa and eventually got back to the Quad-Cities and was hired by Mark Minnick as a reporter."

During 1974, more names appeared in the newsroom. Jan Coleman, a recent grad of Southern Illinois University, joined the department. She was the first female reporter on the news staff and contributed some great local reporting. Norm Cooling, an Augustana student, was hired for beat reporting and covering local meetings. Roger Staft, formerly of KSTT, became a member of the team, and Phil Snyder was named as assistant news director.

John Carver recalled: "This seemed to be an era when news was really important. We competed

for the stories and really felt proud when we 'scooped' the competition. These were the Watergate years, and I think WQUA really raised the bar on local reporting. Minnick was incredible and readily gave out praise for all our work. And Ken Buel – what a total professional!"

Watergate was the subject of many newscasts during this period, and on August 19, 1974, President Richard Nixon resigned. Phil Snyder recalled: "I was in charge of the newsroom when Nixon decided to resign. I sent three reporters to unlikely places to get reactions from the ordinary people. The resulting montage of voices that localized this national story was among some of the best work at WQUA."

For the high school football season, Ken Brown of WIRL joined Ken Buel to do play-by-play of the games. A coup for WQUA this year was its ability to carry the Iowa state football championship game, which featured Davenport West. Ken Buel explained: "We took competitive advantage of the fact that both KSTT and WOC were contractually committed to carry Hawkeye football and we jumped in and originated the game from Ames, which West won. There was even a letter to the editor in the *Times-Democrat* complimenting us on compensating for what the Davenport stations were unable to do."

Early 1975 saw some departures from WQUA. On the programming side, evening announcer Dave Moore left for station WNAM in Neenah, Wis., where he eventually became the general manager. Newsman John Carver left for a reporting position in Arizona. After working at several other stations in the West, Carver became a retirement planner and is currently living in Montana.

Dave Moore's replacement was Dale Reeves. While the name wasn't familiar to local listeners, the voice might have been. Reeves had been in the Quad-Cities in 1969 as Brian Alexander Christie at KSTT. Reeves recalled: "I remember I heard about the opening from Adam Jones. We had been friends for years, and he called and told me to send a tape to Bob Allen. I'm sure Adam's kind recommendation had something to do with Bob deciding to hire me. Having worked in the market in 1969 might have helped, too." Reeves had a fast wit and could do many "voices," all of which made him a popular addition to the WQUA programming.

Jan Coleman left and went to WHBF radio. She later moved to the Chicago area and worked in the news department of WGN and, later, WBBM radio. A musician, she has played in Chicago area clubs and has sung the national anthem at Wrigley Field several times.

Newsman Phil Snyder left during April. His original plan was to hike the Appalachian Trail, but he was back in Moline within a week. He wound up going to work for WMBD in Peoria and shortly thereafter was hired by Dave Moore to run WNAM's newsroom. Snyder left the radio business in 1980 to work in corporate communications for Thrivent Financial and retired in 1983.

Snyder recalled: "I was proud of the features I did for the station and a couple won awards, as I recall. One story was from a Rock Island tavern that remained open to waders and boats even though it was inundated by the flooding Rock River. Another was a story of an old, poor man who lived across the Mississippi River from Muscatine who lost his walking access to town when an old bridge with a sidewalk was replaced with a new bridge without any place to walk. He didn't drive and had no way to get groceries, get to the doctor, etc. My story didn't resolve anything, but it did highlight a new DOT policy toward pedestrians. I also like the work I did from the Iowa Legislature. I remember covering Jim Leach on his first unsuccessful effort for Congress. I was at his headquarters in Iowa City, and it was getting late as he poured over election results. I remember finally saying, 'C'mon, Jim, why not concede so we can all go home?' He gave me a look like I was crazy, and the night wore on.

"I loved working at WQUA, my first real job, and it feels like it consumed a far greater space in my career than the relatively short time I was there."

With Snyder's departure, Jay Jones was appointed assistant news director. Hired to take Snyder's place was Augustana student Nora Sanders (real name Nora Gottschalk). Sanders would handle beat reporting and newscasts.

In May of 1975, Ed Wodka was promoted to vice president-general manager of Mid America's KIOA in Des Moines. When KIOA was sold in 1983, he joined KJR in Seattle and then became president of KRLD in Dallas. In 1987, he was vice president-general manager of Houston's KEGL, then became president and CEO of KDGE in Dallas, a merger and acquisitions consultant for Smith-

Barney, chairman of I-Tech Consultant Engineering and is currently general manager of the First Media stations in Dallas.

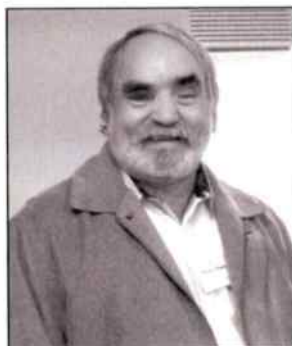
With Wodka's departure, John Dombek was appointed vice president-general manager.

For the summer, Gordon McCollum was hired for vacation help in the traffic, production, and continuity departments. In the fall, he moved to the traffic department of KRVR and after short stints in Dubuque, East Moline and Wisconsin, spent 22 years as an announcer at WKAN in Kankakee and is currently doing a PM drive time shift at WULI in Kankakee.



WQUA News Team

WQUA News Team (L-R): Mark Minnick, Nora Sanders, Norm Cooling, Jay Jones, Roger Staft and Garry McCormick.



Peter Burk



Dale Reeves

With the Bi-Centennial of the United States coming up in one year, WQUA decided to send Ken Buel, Jim McShane and chief engineer Peter Burk to Philadelphia to report on preparations for the big celebration. What made this interesting was the technical side of this cross-country broadcast. If it worked, and it did, this system would be used a year later when the team returned to Philadelphia to cover the actual Bi-Centennial celebration. Through the use of telephone lines, wireless microphones, transmitters and receivers, the broadcast crew in Philadelphia was fed the real-time broadcast from Moline in their earpieces, and the wireless microphones allowed Buel and McShane to wander around Independence Square for their reports.

Engineer Mike Moore related how these broadcasts were accomplished: a wireless Marti (a transmitter/receiver) was installed on the top floor of the Ben Franklin Hotel. This unit would receive the wireless microphones Buel and McShane used. A phone line was used to send their audio back to the studios in Moline. A second phone line from Moline to Philadelphia was used to send the station's programming to the hotel for cueing Buel and McShane.

Moore recalled, "For some reason, Pete Burk couldn't go, and I went to Philadelphia during the actual Bi-Centennial in 1976. I took 13 bags of equipment with us on the trip. One piece was a portable reel-to-reel tape recorder that was used to tape interviews, which we could mix into the reports. A two-way radio was used to communicate with Buel and McShane when they were in the Square. It also allowed them to hear cues from the station when I fed the Moline audio into the two-way. McShane did his show from the hotel just like he was in the studio, although the records and commercials were played from the studio in Moline. Ken's reports and interviews would air both live and on tape. For the time, it was a heck of a system and actually sounded very good."

Sounded very good indeed, as the broadcasts were well received by the WQUA audience.

One of manager Dombek's first major changes to programming came as a result of Adam Jones getting tired of working the overnight shift. Jones had been doing overnights since he arrived at the station in February 1965 and had a very large following. The question was what to do with such a large talent. Dombek decided that perhaps Bob Allen and Jones could do a two-man show.

Bob Allen recalled, "Neither Adam nor I thought the idea would work. In fact, we were both rather unhappy about the idea, but Dombek asked us to give it a try. After a few days of working

together, we settled in and developed a rhythm." "The Giant Adam and Bob Show" became the first dual host, music/personality program on local radio and was well received by its listeners.

With a growing family and job responsibilities with John Deere, part-time engineer Bill Coopman left the station. He went on to become head of the telecommunications department and retired from Deere in 2005.

Denise (Huddleston) Varra joined WQUA's staff in November. She was a music/drama teacher who was looking for a career change. She approached friend John Dombek about possibilities, and he hired her for the Sunday morning shift running the church and public service programs along with two live newscasts. Varra recalled, "I took the job without a second thought. I decided it was something I'd be able to do and would work at learning everything I needed to know to get better and get promoted. I had no prior broadcast experience, but Dan Skott and Ron Stauner gave me excellent help." Denise learned well as she was offered the all-night show in March 1976.

FAMILIAR NAMES GONE AND NEW VOICES ADDED

Nineteen seventy-six saw the departure of some very familiar names. In March, Dale Reeves headed to WGBS in Miami. He continued to do character bits for the "Giant Adam and Bob Show." They mailed him scripts and would then record him over the phone. After Miami, Reeves went on to stations in Cleveland, Chicago, New York, New Haven and Nashville among others. He was one of the founders of the American Comedy Network, providing character voices for radio, movies and commercials. He was one of the original program hosts when Sirius Satellite Radio began broadcasting. He currently owns Revomedia, providing voice-over and imaging services for commercials, radio and television.

Ken Buel, whose career with the station spanned more than 17 years as newsman, news director, assistant manager, football and basketball color man, public affairs director and editorial voice, left in July. After that long a period at one station, it was hard to imagine WQUA without the presence of Ken Buel. But in one sense he didn't go too far from the station, as he moved to the corporate headquarters of WQUA's parent, Mid America Media in Kankakee. For the next 10 years, he held various positions including assistant corporate secretary, vice president of government relations, and manager of WKAN radio.

In 1986, as Mid America Media was in the process of being sold, Buel returned to Moline. He spent two years as marketing director for the former Moline Public Hospital. He moved back to his hometown of Collinsville in 1990. He does seasonal tax preparation work and remains very active in the work of Rotary International.

Part-timer Denise (Huddleston) Varra was offered the all-night show in March and became known as WQUA's Lady of the Night.

Mark Leonard (real name Mark Moskowitz) was hired as the weekend announcer. Recently back from the Army, he had used the name Brad Scott while on the air for two years at KSTT. He had also worked at WHBF as a weekend announcer. Leonard had an earlier connection to WQUA as his father, Benne Alter, had been the station's program director in the early 1950s.

Chief engineer Peter Burk left the station to take a job with Capital Cities Broadcasting. He spent seven years with that company in Buffalo, N.Y., and Atlanta. Leaving that firm in 1983, he started Burk Technology to manufacture broadcast equipment and continues to do so.

Mike Moore was named chief engineer with Burk's departure, and engineer Dennis Beadel was hired to assist Moore.

In the news department, Garry McCormick was a new voice in the newsroom, joining Mark Minnick, Jay Jones, Nora Sanders, Roger Staff and Norm Cooling.

Morning drive announcer Jim McShane left the station in September, but not of his own volition. John Dombek stated, "I fired the best morning man and talent that I ever worked with, Jim McShane. He dominated the market. One morning he went on the air under the influence and was recorded in that state by an employee of KRVR. The fellow sent a copy of the tape to me. I felt I had no choice in the matter and fired him. I was wrong, of course."

McShane basically retired at that moment. He did not continue with a broadcasting career, but

was heard occasionally on commercials. McShane passed away in September of 1993.

Hired to fill Jim McShane's slot was Jack Carey (real name Ed Brintnall). Carey had worked at WKBW in Buffalo, N.Y.; WCAO in Baltimore; WMAX in Grand Rapids; WBRB Mount Clements, Mich.; and Armed Forces Radio prior to arriving in Moline. His "Coffee with Carey" featured music, news, and conversation – personality radio that his audience enjoyed, as his show became a hit.

In October, a Mid America memo announced that Verne Flambo had been appointed assistant to the president-corporate development. His duties were to include seeking out, negotiating for and ultimately acquiring additional holdings for the corporation.

Howard Frederick took over Flambo's old position of executive director of broadcasting for Mid America Group stations.

The duo of Adam Jones and Bob Allen left in early December to join WPTF in Raleigh, N.C. They spent two years there and continued to use the character voices of Dale Reeves and poke fun at as many people as they could get away with. In 1978 they were hired by WAKR in Akron, Ohio, and spent 13 years on the air there. Adam retired from radio in 1991 to work with his wife in their successful business, Ocepek Pottery. Bob Allen was named WAKR program director and continued on the air without Adam. When that station changed to a news/talk format, Allen was heard delivering drive time newscasts. As of this writing, Bob Allen still works at WAKR.

This year might have been a turning point in the WQUA fortunes. Perhaps it was because some of its long-time familiar talent was no longer on the air. Or it might have been because FM and popular music were driving AM stations closer to their graves. Mixed musical formats were just not pleasing the audiences any longer. However, WQUA would not throw in the towel just yet.

Jack Carey noted, "I am of the opinion that ownership/general management conceded that there was a need to put a new staff in place to play the 'new' adult contemporary blend of music. I believe their thought was a facelift formatically and personnel-wise was essential to take 1230 where they wanted it to go."

A new program director, Jim Mahanay from KIMN in Denver, had been hired in late fall to transition the station from its middle-of-the-road music format toward a more contemporary sound. While still trying to appeal to adults, it would also begin to use more of the contemporary music that FM stations were playing.

One of Mahanay's first hires was Bill Miller. Miller had become friends with Mahanay several years earlier when they both worked at WKY in Oklahoma City. With Miller's hiring, the announcer schedule was: Jack Carey, 6-10 a.m.; Jim Mahanay, 10 a.m. to noon; Bill Miller, noon to 3 p.m.; Ron Stauner, 3 to 7:30 p.m.; Dan Skott, 7:30 to midnight; and Denise, midnight to 6 a.m.

In January of 1977, Ron Stauner departed the station. He took a job as the morning announcer at WAWA in St. Petersburg, Fla. When that station was sold, Stauner was out of a job, and he went to work for HoldOnAmerica in St. Petersburg. Stauner died in July 1996.

Weekender Mark Leonard left the station to enter a pre-med program in Chicago. He graduated from medical school in 1982 and completed his residency in internal medicine at the Medical School of Wisconsin in 1985. Today he is a practicing oncologist in Naples, Fla.

January also brought out the best in the members of the WQUA news department. Besides the inaugurals of President Jimmy Carter and Illinois Governor Jim Thompson, the Moline School District faced a desegregation issue that put its bilingual program at Erickson School in jeopardy. Numerous area drug raids and arrests and minus 80-degree wind chills that paralyzed the Quad-Cities were well covered with in-depth reporting that would later win awards for the department.

Those awards included Best Spot News Coverage by the Iowa Broadcast News Association and Best Spot News Coverage by United Press International.

By February, several more announcers had been added to the programming. Rich Erickson, a former announcer at KSTT, was hired for the 3 to 7 p.m. shift, and Bryan McGannon (real name Bill Baker) was hired to host the 7 to midnight slot. Denise Huddleston was still heard from midnight to 6 a.m. Dan Skott shifted back to the news staff and was the weekend announcer.

McGannon had attended Indiana University and worked on its campus radio station. He also had worked as weekend announcer at WTTS in Bloomington, Ind.

Bill Miller took over as production director when Terry Mullery left Moline for sister station

WIRE in Indianapolis. At WIRE, Mullery was creative services director, producer of its afternoon show, and director of WIRE's Indianapolis News Network. In 1979 Mullery worked at several San Diego ad agencies as a copywriter and tried his hand at acting. He relocated to Los Angeles in 1988 and is a freelance copywriter.

April brought Kris Ketz to the WQUA newsroom. Ketz was a high school senior when hired and was the son of WQAD-TV's news director, Jim King. "Dombek and Minnick hired me – I was cheap," Ketz stated. "Looking back, I can't believe they put me on the air with no formal training or experience. It's a miracle I didn't get the station sued. The news department had just won a National Headlines award, and I remember thinking, 'If I keep my mouth shut and listen, I might learn something. I'd like to think I did.'"

In May, Norm Cooling graduated from Augustana and left for Colorado. He worked as the news director of a small Montrose County radio station and then went to law school in 1981. He has been the deputy district attorney in Canon City, Colo., since 1986. Cooling noted, "I got my interest in the law primarily from covering trials for the Q!"

During June, Dan Skott left the station and hired on in WOC's news department. He worked there for a year and, after breaking his leg twice during the winter of 1977, left for the better weather of Florida. He worked at several stations in that state and died in 1993.



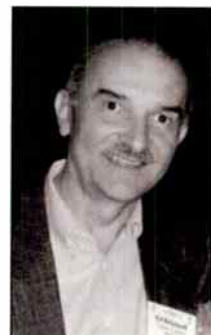
Bryan McGannon



Mark Leonard



Jay Jones and Denise Varra



Jack Carey



Spike O'Dell



Obviously



Nora Sanders



Greg Schulte

A name that would later become very familiar to local listeners was hired in July for weekend air shifts. East Moline native William "Spike" O'Dell was working in plant protection at Farmall when the radio bug bit him. He took courses at a local broadcasting school and went to work part time at WEMO in East Moline. Eventually that station couldn't pay him, but told him he could continue to work for free. On his way to work at the tractor plant, O'Dell stopped by WQUA to drop off an audition tape. Jim Mahanay asked if he could work that night, and I was hired on the spot. O'Dell continued to work at the Farmall plant during the week and at WQUA on the weekends.

One month later, O'Dell suggested to David Sands, a friend and co-worker in Farmall plant protection, that he apply for another part-time opening. Sands (real name Sandoval) noted, "Spike encouraged me to try 'professional radio' after years at my college radio station in the early '70s. Work at the tractor plant was solid work, but deep inside I still maintained a passion for radio."

Sands took an old college audition tape to program director Mahanay and, like O'Dell, was hired on the spot to host the overnight shift on the weekends.

A young copywriter and commercial voice, who would later become a popular television hostess, was hired in October on a recommendation from Rich Erickson. Paula Gillette was a recent Moline High School graduate and another product of the same broadcasting school that had trained O'Dell and Sands.

Assistant news director Jay Jones left for a news job at WHBF. After one year there, he went to WDBQ in Dubuque. From 1979-1988, Jones worked at WMTV in Madison, Wis. He next spent five years with the BBC in Belfast, Northern Ireland, followed by positions as a news reporter at WMUS-TV in Milwaukee, WTOL-TV in Toledo and KLAS-TV in Las Vegas. During the campaign season for the 2004 elections, Jones served as press secretary to Jack Carter, son of former President Jimmy Carter, who was seeking a Nevada senatorial seat.

Pete DiIulio, another talented copywriter, joined the station in November.

WQUA AND THE QUAD CITIES SAY GOOD-BYE TO G. LAVERNE FLAMBO



1911-1977

Impresario, broadcast executive, mentor and soul of WQUA, G. LaVerne Flambo, died November 29, 1977. The man who put the Quad-Cities on the entertainment map with his big-name shows and promotions, and who took great pleasure in developing the talent of many young people in the broadcasting field, died quietly in his sleep.

While he didn't originate Moline's first radio station, he was the person who most embodied it and was most responsible for its success. Even after he sold the station to the Small family in 1960, it was still "his baby." He knew what audiences wanted to hear, and they responded. To this day, to those who grew up with the station, Flambo and WQUA are synonymous.

As 1977 came to a close, several announcers left the station. Rich Erickson was hired as program director at KSTT. Shortly after taking that job, he hired Spike O'Dell as that station's morning drive announcer. Midday announcer Bill Miller returned to Knoxville, Tenn., to finish college.

Erickson spent two years at KSTT, worked out of the area for several years and then returned in the mid-1980s to program KWNT in Davenport. Erickson died in the mid-'90s.

O'Dell spent four years as the area's top-rated morning announcer at KSTT. In 1981 he was hired at WBT in Charlotte, N.C., but only stayed there one year. He returned to KIIK-FM in Davenport to again fill the morning drive slot. He joined Chicago's WGN in 1987 as its afternoon drive announcer and took over morning drive time in 2000. As of this writing, O'Dell holds the top ratings in the Chicago market.

Bill Miller finished college and went on to graduate school. He was a station programmer in Knoxville and a station owner in Tennessee. He returned to Knoxville to run another radio station and then joined the Transtar Radio Network (now Westwood One) as a regional manager. Miller

later spent time in Tampa in radio sales and news. He left radio entirely in the mid-1990s to focus on writing and publishing *The Blue Chip Radio Report* newsletter for the country music industry. As of this writing, he has turned his attention to bluegrass and Appalachian folk music and is syndicating a bluegrass program to radio stations.

Bob Bateman was hired to replace Bill Miller as midday announcer and production director. Bateman had gotten his start in radio at the University of Dubuque's radio station and worked at KDTH and WDBQ, both in Dubuque, before coming to WQUA.

January 1978 brought a huge change in WQUA programming: the end of regular season Moline High School sports broadcasts. John Dombek explained: "High school sports were garnering fewer and fewer listeners. Any sports broadcasts of impact came from the University of Iowa or Illinois. Ultimately they moved primarily to TV. I cancelled our Moline High sports broadcasts and almost got lynched. The voices of irate Moline fans flooded our phones and even hit the newspapers."

In a letter published in the *Dispatch* to address the irate fans, Dombek noted that WQUA could not find any sponsors for the games, with the exception of a Moline bank and one or two others, but they couldn't cover the full costs of airing the games. He suggested that over the years, the fans did little to thank and support the advertisers who had supported them by spending thousands of dollars to provide those games on WQUA.

Dombek was right. It did cost a lot of money for remote equipment, telephone lines, announcers, and travel expenses for away games. WQUA wasn't alone in dropping its weekly Moline sports schedule. Over the next few years, all but one station had dropped the weekly games, opting only for special coverage when a local team went into advanced tournament play.

In place of the games, Dombek and Mahanay initiated a new program that featured all album-rock music aimed at improving the ratings with the younger listeners.

The announcers were shuffled to accommodate the new program. Jack Carey was still heard in the morning from 6 to 10 a.m., Jim Mahanay aired from 10 a.m. to noon, Bob Bateman was heard from noon- to 3 p.m. and Bryan McGannon was on from 3 to 7 p.m. Former overnight host Denise Huddleston was moved to 7 to 11 p.m. and hosted the new show called "The Album Place." Taking Denise's place with the overnight shift was Randy Raley. Raley also helped produce "The Album Place." His radio background included weekends at WHBF and morning announcer at Muscatine's KFMH-FM.

"The Album Place" appeared successful for WQUA. According to Raley, WQUA actually caught KSTT, the perennial rock ratings leader, within two audience rating periods. Unfortunately that success did not last. WXLN-FM, sister station to KSTT, noticed the success WQUA was having with album rock and changed their Top-40 rock format to an album rock format similar to WQUA's.

With WXLN-FM now airing the same product with FM's superb clarity and in stereo, "The Album Place" was taken off the air by July 1978. Dombek noted, "The full range sound of album rock had no chance on AM radio. Because of that, and because of our 250 watt signal at night, it was doomed to fail. AM radio, at this time, simply could not compete with FM in a rock format. As it turned out, it couldn't compete in any format."

Denise Huddleston left WQUA and began work at WBPI in Denver. She later worked at KLDL in the same city. She soon left broadcasting and went to work in media relations, exhibit services and the meetings and events department of Coors Brewing Co. Denise got married in 1986, and both she and her husband retired and are today living the retired life in Las Vegas.

WQUA faced another hurdle when Christian ideals clashed with the lyrics to a popular song. Popular morning announcer Jack Carey rattled the local broadcasting scene when he quit because he was forced to play music he found sexually suggestive and offensive. The song was titled "Kiss You All Over." Carey felt he couldn't go to church with his wife and friends, then go into the studio later and play that song. He also felt that Mahanay's tight formatting at WQUA conflicted with his idea of personality-based radio.

Carey went to work at KTOF-FM, a Christian music station in Cedar Rapids and later worked as the morning drive announcer at WHO in Des Moines. He returned to the Quad-Cities as KSTT's morning drive announcer in 1982. Before retiring from radio in 1998, he spent 10 years playing country music on WLLR-FM and KBOB-FM, both in Davenport.

Carey began a Christian outreach, providing vocal concerts and motivational speaking to church and civic groups. Because of his great singing skills, he has sung the national anthem for many events including the Bix 7 Race for more than 15 years, professional sporting events and various veterans' organizations. He currently owns Jack Carey Communications, which provides commercial and narrative voice-over work.

Carey's replacement on the morning show was Dave Deppisch.

The WQUA newsroom was undergoing some familiar voice changes as well. Nora Sanders joined the WHBF stations as a reporter and morning news anchor. In 1982, she joined WOC as a morning news anchor/reporter and later on became one of that station's talk show hosts. She left broadcasting in 1987 and began a career in fundraising. She currently is the director of development for the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin. She also married Moline attorney Marc Sale and is the mother of two children. Nora and her family live in the Milwaukee area.

Newsman Roger Staft left broadcasting to begin a career in the insurance business.

Mary Frances Fagan and Betty Vesey joined the news department as reporters. Fagan was a graduate of the University of Illinois and had been a statehouse reporter for WSSR-FM in Springfield.

Greg Schulte was hired as WQUA sports director and would broadcast the play-by-play for the full season of University of Iowa basketball games. Newsman Kris Ketz would assist Schulte with color commentary on the games.

Another familiar name in local radio, Charley O'Dey, joined WQUA during the year. O'Dey had worked at KSTT from 1971-73 and then went to WIRL. He joined the sales staff of WQUA and used his real name, Tom Thies.

January 1979 brought additional changes to the announce staff. Randy Raley moved over to WXLN-FM in Davenport, and program director Jim Mahanay headed south. Raley spent 11 years at several stations in the Kansas City market, managed KFMQ in Lincoln, Neb., for one year and returned to Kansas City's KSHE. In 2002 he moved to St. Louis and went to work for Learfield Communications as their affiliate relations manager. As of this writing, he is still in that position and does an occasional weekend shift on KLOU in St. Louis.

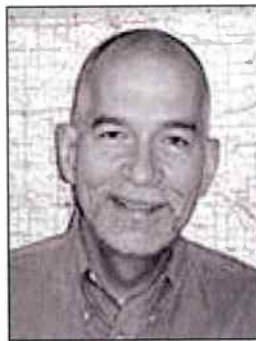
Mahanay joined WZEW in Mobile, Ala., as vice president of programming. He moved to WIFN-FM in Macon, Ga., in 2005, and as of this writing, is program director at all-sports WCNN in Atlanta.

Rich Davis replaced Raley in the overnight slot and Bryan McGannon was appointed WQUA's program director. Former KSTT announcer Jack McKay was hired as afternoon drive personality. Gary Stanley, a local corporate pilot, was hired for weekend duties.

In the spring, WQUA picked up St. Louis Cardinal baseball and carried their full schedule of spring and regular season games. The station also started "Sportsphone," a once-a-week call-in program hosted by Greg Schulte. For one hour per week, fans could call and comment on the week's sports action, trades, schedules and anything else of sports interest.



Dick Luedke (r) interviews St. Louis Cardinals pitcher Pete Vukovich



Randy Raley



Tom Thies

While "Sportsphone" was gaining in popularity, Greg Schulte left the station in the fall to join KTAR in Phoenix. He served 15 seasons as broadcast producer and color commentator for the Phoenix Suns of the NBA and three seasons as pre- and post-game host for the NFL Phoenix Cardinals. Since 1998, Schulte has been the play-by-play voice of MLB's Arizona Diamondbacks. As of this writing, he was given a contract extension through the 2011 baseball season.

Schulte's replacement as sports director was Dick Luedke.

With the musical programming on WQUA still trying to keep what audience it had, the news department covered several big stories of great local interest: a visit to Davenport by President Jimmy Carter and a visit to Des Moines by Pope John Paul.

Carter took a river cruise on the steamer Delta Queen to promote his energy security program. It made a stop in Davenport where the president jogged, appeared on a radio call-in show (actually a call-out show to eliminate the crackpots), made a visit to Deere headquarters and attended a luncheon hosted by a Scott County delegate to the national Democratic convention.

Pope John Paul made a visit to Living History Farms in Des Moines, where he celebrated an outdoor Mass attended by an estimated 350,000 people.

Kris Ketz covered both events and recounted his experiences with each: "Helping with sports was a highlight of working at WQUA. Winning my first award was not. It was for President Carter's trip down the Mississippi – an AP award for something called 'radio actuality.' The entry was me – screaming at the top of my nervous lungs – 'the President is stepping off the riverboat and the crowd is going wild,' or something like that. It was awful. Just dreadful! I remember feeling pretty good about my performance until later that evening when I saw a CBS News piece by Leslie Stahl about how the Carter riverboat tour was scooping up a ton of free local media coverage at every stop – and they showed a shot of me talking into my radio mic. I was being used and didn't even know it.

"I also remember anchoring our coverage of the Papal visit to central Iowa two months later. I wondered aloud what 350,000 people in one place would look like. I now know. I also got close enough to touch the Pope and came away thinking, 'Geez, he's really a little guy.' Really profound."

Regardless of how Ketz might have felt used by the national media, his reporting on both Carter and the Pope was a bright spot for WQUA's coverage of the events. And, as Ketz had noted, coverage of Carter's visit won another in a long list of awards for the station.

As the year progressed, WQUA had tried almost anything to remain competitive. One such move included an emphasis on the popular trend in dance music called Disco. Not only did the station air "Disco Q," hosted on weeknight evenings by David Sands, but it also promoted Disco beach party dances to promote the music and itself.

Bob Bateman remembered those dances: "One of the coolest promotions at "Q" while I was there was the winter dance. We rented some big nightclub in the boonies – in the middle of a below-zero night – had tons of sand dumped on the floor, palm trees and beach umbrellas all around and we hosted a beach party complete with volleyball, dancing and beer!"

Program director Bryan McGannon stated: "I tried to accommodate management's desire to mix soft rock with Disco and St. Louis Cardinal baseball games, all with predictable results."

FM radio was literally killing AM radio's ratings. WQUA wasn't alone with this problem. All AM stations were experiencing exactly the same thing. Formats were constantly tweaked or changed completely in an effort to find a steady following. Yet WQUA still remained competitive with a good sound, great commercial writing and production and its award-winning news department.

However, the newsroom saw additional turnover during the next several months, beginning with reporter Mary Frances Fagan. She left in late 1979 and joined WQAD as a reporter. She spent two years there, and then joined the Illinois Public Radio Network in Springfield as its statehouse bureau chief. In 1988, she became the deputy press secretary for Gov. James Thompson. As of this writing, Fagan is the director for corporate communications for American Airlines, with responsibilities for their operations in Chicago, St. Louis and Washington, DC.

Jennifer Nahra, a former reporter for KSTT, took Fagan's place.

Afternoon host Bob Bateman left "Q" to join KSTT as its midday host. He left before a year was up to spend a year at WDAE in Tampa, Fla. In 1980, Bateman was hired at WFYR-FM in Chicago, first as night announcer and then in 1984 took over the afternoon drive shift. From 1984-86, he was

production director at WLS, working with that station's legendary announcers Larry Lujack and Fred Winston. In 1988, Bateman moved to Philadelphia as morning drive host at WEAZ-FM. A quick stop at WMGK as weekend announcer was followed by on-air and production work at WJZ in Philadelphia from 1995-2001. From 2002-2006, he was afternoon drive host at Milwaukee's WMIL-FM. Bateman still does weekend shows for a Grand Rapids station and commercial voiceovers. He also works at ISS, a company started by Bryan McGannon when McGannon left WQUA.

Nineteen eighty brought many additions and subtractions in both personnel and programming. The station signed up to carry Iowa State University football. The complete Cyclone schedule began airing in the fall of the year.

"Sportsphone" became so popular that it expanded to two hours per week. John Zahorik, a sports fanatic and local steel erection contractor, joined Dick Luedke in hosting the program. Zahorik also provided color commentary on football and basketball games covered by WQUA.

Morning drive announcer Dave Deppisch left and Sam Cornett was hired to fill the morning slot. Deppisch went on to spend 30 years as a talk show host at various stations around the country. He is now a marketing director with MidTenMedia in Tennessee.

After 13 years at WQUA and eight years as its news director, Mark Minnick left and joined WQAD-TV. He spent two years as a television reporter, and then went to KSTT/WXLP-FM as news director. In 1985, Minnick joined KIOA in Des Moines but quickly returned to Davenport as news director of WOC. From 1992-95, he worked in the public relations department of Iowa-Illinois Gas & Electric (now MidAmerican Energy). He was also the news director of KRVR and WLLR beginning in 1992. When those two stations' parent company purchased WOC in 1996, Minnick again became its news director. As of this writing, Minnick is news director of the Clear Channel group of stations in the Quad-Cities. (When contacted by this researcher, all respondents who had been hired at WQUA by Minnick gave him high praise for teaching them and allowing their talent to develop.)

Minnick's replacement was Dick Luedke, who now carried the title news and sports director.

In an effort to gain additional audience, WQUA and the local Hardee's restaurants came up with a promotion that involved the use of car stickers. The idea was for drivers to stop at Hardee's and pick up a WQUA Winning Window Sticker to place on their vehicle. The WQUA prize van would stop drivers displaying the sticker and register them for a chance at winning \$1,000 in clothes. One man and one woman were to be chosen from those registered.



Jim Albracht



Winning Window Sticker

During June, Ken Colwell was hired as chief engineer. He replaced Mike Moore who was named chief engineer at KBEZ in Tulsa, Okla., a station recently acquired by WQUA's ownership. Moore stayed with KBEZ until 1984, when he moved to his hometown of Adair, Iowa, to purchase ownership in a family business, Adair Machine Shop.

Program director Bryan McGannon gave up that position in September but continued with his on-air shift. Jack McKay took over that position and began a format of "smart music." It included songs that weren't normally played or hadn't been played on other adult contemporary stations.

Along with that change, morning announcer Sam Cornett left, and Charlie Bennet, a former morning drive host in Tampa, Fla., took over that spot. Production director and fill-in announcer David Sands quit his second shift job in plant protection at Farmall and became the midday

announcer. Bo Spates became Q's overnight announcer. "Sportsphone" was now taken over by Jim Albracht, formerly with WEMO-FM in East Moline and WDBQ in Dubuque. He would also do the play-by-play on high school tournament games.

Albracht remembered his first state basketball game for WQUA: "When I was hired, I knew that 'Q' had done high school sports for like forever, but really found out when I worked my first Illinois State Basketball Tournament game in Champaign. Just about every larger station broadcasts those games, and I figured our radio position would be up in the nosebleed section somewhere. When I reported to the IHSA representative, he walked me down to the first row on center court. I knew from that position what a long background WQUA must have had with that tournament."

The next night's seating was a different story. Albracht continued: "Moline was eliminated that first night at Champaign, so I went back home to air Saturday's game at Augustana. If Augie won the game, they'd go into the national championships. For this game, our broadcast position *was* in the nosebleed section, up around the balcony walkway above the bleachers. Kris Ketz was doing color commentary, seated on a folding chair. At the end of regulation play, a half-court shot tied the game. Pandemonium broke out and while he's on the air, Ketz fell off his chair. Augie went on to lose the game, but WQUA caught all the action – on the basketball floor *and* the balcony floor."

Despite Ketz's pratfall, constant staff turnover and continuous format alterations, WQUA was still winning awards. One award went to John Dombek for "I Am a Radio Commercial," and another award was given to Pete DiIulio for a series of commercials for a clothes-cleaning business. That series also won a regional award from the American Advertising Federation.

February 1981 brought the death of Burrell Small, the president and chairman of Mid America Media. Mr. Small he been part of the family newspaper business and was co-editor/publisher of the Kankakee *Daily Journal* with his brother, Len H. Small. As the Small's newspaper and broadcasting businesses grew in number, responsibilities between the two brothers were divided. Len Small had taken over the publishing properties and Burrell Small had become owner of all broadcasting properties.

More awards were presented to WQUA in May. One UPI award was presented for an editorial written by John Dombek and two UPI awards in the sports category, for Dick Luedke's play-by-play of University of Iowa basketball and Iowa State football.

A SHOE FALLS

While the station was winning awards, it was still faced with the fact that the changing business of radio was taking away listeners, thus profits, from AM stations. Sports programming helped WQUA, but trying to maintain listenership with then-current music and format trends was proving disastrous. The pressure was on to increase the profit picture. John Dombek explained what happened next.

"As pressure increased from ownership for me to increase profits (it being their right and duty to do so), I made a really big mistake. Without informing ownership, which had notified me prior to becoming manager that there were to be 'no surprises,' I surprised them with a big one. I committed to Iowa State University to air all of their football and basketball games exclusively in the Quad-Cities. There was a major profit to be made in that agreement.

"To help solidify the deal, I developed a sales brochure and offered sponsorship to Busch Light. I did so knowing that Ed Wodka, managing Mid America's radio station in Des Moines, had made a similar pitch for Iowa State sports that included a role for his station to be the coordinator for all of Iowa State broadcasts, including the Quad-Cities. As far as I was concerned, it was Ed or WQUA. Unfortunately for ownership, if WQUA got the contract, Ed couldn't fulfill his – and his contract was much larger than mine. Ed, being a loyal employee, appraised ownership of our situation. Later that week, Ken Buel, then a vice president for the corporation, appeared at WQUA and asked for my resignation. So, after 16 years at "Q," most of them fun, I was fired."

While definitely not one of the cheerier moments in Dombek's career, Buel wasn't very delighted, either. Buel recalled: "One of the toughest things I've ever had to do was go in there (to WQUA) and advise the staff that John had been let go, and I'd come back to run things for a while."

Dombek went on to open John Dombek Advertising and, in 1992, moved to Santa Clara, Utah. He still continues to run his ad business and has several clients in the Quad-Cities. Dombek adds: "The year before I moved to Utah, I entered my final radio spot in the Quad-Cities ADDY Award competition. Jack Carey and Gordon Johnson did the voice talent. The spot won 'best of show,' beating Deere, Alcoa (and) all the local TV-radio stations, newspaper and direct mail entries. In short, we beat every business and everybody in the media business in the Quad-Cities who entered that year. I felt really good about that!"



John Dombek



Sam Bakke



Ken Brown

Buel's stay as interim manager lasted but a few weeks. Sam Bakke was hired as WQUA's general manager. He was a native of Cedar Rapids and had been in managerial positions in San Antonio and Wichita for the Swanson Broadcasting group.

Back in 1960, WQUA dropped its affiliation with the ABC network. Shortly after Bakke's arrival, WQUA once again affiliated with ABC, this time with the ABC Entertainment Radio Network. They used the network, as well as UPI Audio, to augment its news and sportscasts.

August 1981 Jim Albracht was appointed sports director. He had been the host of "Sportsphone" since August of the previous year. Under Albracht, "Sportsphone" had expanded to airing four nights a week for two and one-half hours a night. He also interviewed many top sports figures on the show: baseball's Stan Musial and Brooks Robinson, basketball's Oscar Robertson and UCLA coach John Wooden, tennis player Billie Jean King and auto racing's Johnny Rutherford to name a few.

WQUA provided full coverage to the Quad-Cities Open golf tournament, Dick Luedke and Jim Albracht covered the grounds each day with studio-quality audio provided by engineers Ken Colwell and Jeff Cantrill. The record setting eight-hole playoff was part of the station's live broadcast of the final round of play.

Jim Albracht recalled covering the golf tournaments: "I'm sure the PGA and the golfers loved us as Kris Ketz traipsed around the course with a Marti unit strapped to his back reporting what was going on at various tees and greens. In those days we just did it and probably never asked the PGA for permission. Of course today there are all sorts of production people and announcers wandering with the front-running golfers."

Major staff shuffling continued to take place. In September, chief engineer Ken Colwell resigned to become part of the faculty of St. Ambrose. Jeff Cantrill was then promoted to chief engineer.

Colwell taught communication classes and oversaw the college's FM station. He has since earned his PhD and is professor of communications at St. Ambrose.

Dick Luedke resigned as news director and took over as sports director at WJBC in Bloomington, Ill. Charlie Butts, who had worked for Sam Bakke in Wichita, replaced him. Also added to the news staff was Randy Birch.

Luedke also served as tennis coach at Illinois State University for several years and is currently working in the public relations and media department of State Farm Insurance in Bloomington.

Continuity writer Paula Gillette left the station to work for Watt Advertising. In the summer of 1982, she was hired at WOC-TV to co-host "PM Magazine." Two years later, she was anchoring the 10 p.m. news and a new version of "PM Magazine" called "Five PM Live." She also married David Sands in 1984. In 1994, she began a daily live program called "Paula Sands Live," which she continues to host at present, as well as co-anchoring the 5 and 6 p.m. newscasts on KWQC-TV.

In early 1982, Sam Bakke resigned and went into business outside of broadcasting. Ken Brown, manager of WSWT-FM, a Mid America station in Peoria, was named to take Bakke's place. Brown was also named manager of co-owned KRVR, as John Flambo left that station to purchase KWPC and KFMH-FM in Muscatine.

Brown had worked at KFMA and WOC, both in Davenport, before becoming production director at WIRL. He had also been heard at WQUA performing play-by-play duties in the early '70s.

Sports director Jim Albracht left in April and joined WQAD-TV. He aired commentary with "Albracht's Attic" on that station's 5 p.m. newscast. He stayed until early 1984 when he was hired at KSTT as morning announcer. KSTT was going through the same problems that WQUA was having – dwindling audience due to competition from the FM stations. KSTT thought it could do a WGN-type of broadcast, consisting of interviews and conversation. It didn't work, and the entire staff was out of a job in September 1984 when their contracts were not renewed. Albracht was then re-hired by WQAD-TV as sports director. In 1993, he left television and went to WWFL radio in Green Bay, Wis., where he did Packers pre- and post-game shows for that station. In 1996, Albracht rejoined WOC and hosts "Albracht in the AM," a talk and interview program.

Albracht's replacement at WQUA was Randy Birch, who added sports reporting to his duties as news reporter and announcer.

News director Charlie Butts resigned and Bill Barnes was appointed in his place. Barnes had been a reporter at WKAN and for the previous six years had worked at the Louisiana News Network.

Salesman Tom Thies left WQUA to spend the next 20 years as general manager of radio stations in Louisiana, Missouri, South Dakota, Illinois and Pennsylvania. Today, he is retired and lives in Jefferson City, Mo.

Program director Jack McKay left WQUA to go back to KSTT. David Sands was named to fill that position. Sands stated: "I applied to manager Ken Brown for the position and got it without an interview! The place was a mess due to all the turnover in staff and this was my first programming job. I pretty much muddled through and used my production skills to tighten up the sound and flow of the station. It was quite a learning experience."

Part-time announcers John Roberts and J.J. Scott were given regular airshifts. Roberts was heard in midday and Scott replaced Bo Spates, who moved on to WHBF. Spates was later heard on KBOB-FM, WLLR-FM and today is the program director of KUUL-FM, all in Davenport.

July brought another year's airing of the Quad-Cities Open golf tournament. The station built a gazebo to use as a remote studio and appropriate setting for any celebrity interviews it would do.

Broadcasting live from LeClaire Park in Davenport, general manager Ken Brown covered the opening ceremonies of the Bix Beiderbecke Memorial Jazz Festival. Live reports would continue throughout the three-day event. Randy Birch also covered the running of the Bix 7 road race.

Newsman Kris Ketz left the station to join WQAD-TV as a weekend anchor/reporter. Since 1983, Ketz has been a weeknight anchor/reporter at KMBC-TV in Kansas City, Mo.

Program director David Sands left the station in October to join KSTT. He spent two years there, then moved on to KIIK-FM and KMXG-FM. He was program director at all three stations. He then became general manager of WOC and its two owned FM stations until those stations were sold in 1996. He now owns Sands Media and is the signature voice for KWQC-TV in Davenport.

Sands stated, "My time spent at WQUA was certainly an era when stations had individual and local control of their programming. The music we played spanned from Disco to album rock, with a lot of adult contemporary music thrown between. Logos, slogans and deejays changed almost weekly. For those of us on the air staff, it was an exciting time to have the freedom to express our talents and take chances. But there was also a downside – massive chaos and confusion for the audience and some lack of discipline on behalf of the staff.

"From a career standpoint, I was very lucky to work at WQUA when I did. I learned a lot from

watching how Dombek and Mahanay successfully engineered their plan to restructure the station and from being among an extremely talented bunch of on-air personalities to learn from.

“From a personal standpoint, I was taught when you need to check your ego and how far to commit between your personal belief system and what’s best for the company you work for. The ‘Kiss You All Over’ incident could be used as a case study. But obviously, the major event resulting in my time at WQUA was meeting Paula!”

Replacing Sands at the program director’s position was Chuck Finney, who had come to Moline from Cincinnati. He arrived just in time to take part in several Halloween parades with the Prize Van. Announcers J.J. Scott, John McCloud and Gary Stanley helped man the van.

With 1983 underway, afternoon drive host Bryan McGannon left the station. With mentoring by WQUA chief engineer Jeff Cantrill, he started ISS – Information Station Specialists. The firm markets low-powered informational radio stations to communities, airports, parks and highway departments. These products are now in high demand for homeland security applications by the military and industry. In 1986, he moved the company to Grand Rapids, Mich.

During May, vice president-general manager Ken Brown moved back to Peoria to take that same position at WIRL and WSWT-FM. John Haggard Jr. was brought on board to succeed Brown at WQUA and KRVR-FM.

Haggard had held sales and management positions at stations in Nashville and Philadelphia. Prior to coming to WQUA, he was general manager of WGNS in Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Brown would go on to manage WIRE and WXTZ in Indianapolis and WZZQ in Terre Haute. He retired in 1999 and moved to Viola, Ill. To take up his idle time, he works as a supervisor for the Transportation Security Administration at the Quad City International Airport.

Thirty-three-year veteran and traffic director Bob Castle also called it quits during May. He was the longest serving employee at WQUA. He went to work at the Social Security Administration and totally retired in 1987. He continued with his hobby of traveling and filming travelogues until 1996. Castle remains active with video production for friends and family.

Another longtime employee, assistant bookkeeper-secretary Dorothy Wiatt, retired from WQUA at this time as well. She continued to fill that same position at KRVR until 1988. She then worked for Manpower and Illinois Oil Co. until totally retiring in 1992. Wiatt passed away in May 2007.

Copywriter Pete DiIulio moved on to the advertising department of Eagle Foods. After a short stint as a copywriter at WOC in 1986, DiIulio left to join Midwest Fibre Products, his family’s business in Viola, Ill.

Program director Chuck Finney departed and J.J. Scott took over that spot. The station’s announcing staff now consisted of Scott, Pat Leuck, Steve Brethauer, Dave McKay, Bill Klutho and Gary Stanley. The news department consisted of Bill Barnes, Randy Burch and Cindi Salzmann. Female announcer Sandy McKay would soon replace Dave McKay.

ANOTHER SHOE FALLS

WQUA history came to an end on September 14, 1983. On that date, the FCC approved a call letter change for the station and with that, came yet another change in format to try to attract larger audiences. The station’s new call became WMRZ and the new format would be solid gold rock n roll. The programming would now consist of rock hits from the 1950-70 era. The station’s new call letter designation was a play on words – WMRZ, “mem-or-eez.”

The new format was fairly well received by advertisers and listeners. It was the first oldies format in the market and was well produced. The new call letters also ended the longtime confusion with WQAD and the mistake of referring to either station as “WQUAD.”

The oldies format was as popular as could be on the AM dial, as FM had become the frequency of choice for most listeners. Mid America, faced with many changes in FCC regulations regarding the number of stations one owner could have and the overall economics of the time, saw some writing on the wall.

In October of 1984, the Moline station was sold to Mississippi Valley Broadcasting. The new ownership continued to operate the WMRZ format until 1990. It then fired the entire staff, changed

the call once again to WLLR-AM and simulcast its real moneymaker, WLLR-FM. The FM partner aired a country music format. In 2003, WLLR-AM changed formats and call letters again to become sports and talk WFXN.

WQUA disappeared almost 37 years to the day it first went on the air. It was the fourth station on the air in the Quad-Cities and Moline's first. Advertisers and listeners embraced it as their own. Over its life it carried many sports broadcasts, but for 32 years it was the home of Moline High School sports. It aired live programs from various venues and encouraged local, everyday people to be a part of its broadcasts. It introduced not only rock and roll to the teenaged audience, but created the first dances specifically for them. It had some of the top announcers, news reporters and copywriters walk through its doors, later to walk on to more prominent stations in larger markets... or bigger careers away from broadcasting.

Over the years, station ownership created a proud broadcast heritage. In time, there will be few who will remember the letters WQUA. But until then, those letters will always stand for Moline's hometown station.



THOUGHTS AND AFTERTHOUGHTS

(with apologies to Ken Buel)

When researching history, there are always nuggets that make for interesting reading, but that are difficult to insert into a narrative. Here's where we add a few. And thanks to Ken Buel for the title of this section: "Thoughts and Afters" was the title of his post-game program at the end of WQUA's high school sports broadcasts.

What's in a name? Plenty, when the "name" of your station is at stake. The only legacy call letters that exist in the Quad-Cities belong to WOC and non-commercial WDLM, WVIK and KALA. The rest have changed, sometimes three or more times. To help better explain some of the changes, here is a list, as of 2007, of stations that had their city of license as one of the Quad-Cities:

- WEMO-FM (East Moline) to WZZC-FM to WLLR-FM to KUUL-FM
- WDLM (East Moline)
- WHBF (Rock Island) to WKBF
- WHBF-FM (Rock Island) to WPXR-FM to WHTS-FM to WLKU-FM
- WMDR-FM (Moline) to WHTT-FM to WXLN-FM
- WOC (Davenport)
- WOC-FM (Davenport) to KIIK-FM to KUUL-FM to WLLR-FM
- WQUA (Moline) to WMRZ to WLLR to WFXN
- WVIK-FM (Rock Island, Augustana College)
- KALA-FM (Davenport, St. Ambrose University)
- KBQC-FM (Bettendorf) to KGLR-FM to KQCS-FM to KORB-FM to KQCS
- KFMA (Davenport) to KWNT to KXRK to KTSS to KBQC to KFQC
- KSTT (Davenport) to KKZX to KSTT to KJOC
- KWNT-FM (Davenport) to KRVR-FM to KCQQ-FM
- Note: KUUL-FM and WLLR-FM swapped frequencies. KUUL-FM had much more power, but WLLR-FM was the perennial ratings leader. The same corporation owns both stations and wanted the ratings leader to have more coverage. In addition, some corporate-owned stations in nearby cities are now dual imaged; i.e., KBOB-FM, DeWitt (IA)-Quad-Cities and KMXG-FM, Clinton (IA)-Quad-Cities. Anytime a station's format changes, so do its call letters.

Even behind-the-scenes employees at WQUA moved on to bigger and better things. During the early '60's, WQUA's receptionist was Moneen Carpenter. Compared to the television actress Loni Anderson by many former employees, she welcomed station visitors with great charm. After leaving WQUA, she worked at KSTT and then moved to Nashville in the late '60s and became an assistant to country music legend Bill Anderson.

Classical music hostess Betty Stevens was usually at WQUA alone on Sunday nights. She brought her Great Dane with her for company and protection. The dog's name was J. Maxim, named for station manager J. Maxim Ryder. When someone the dog knew came into the studio, like an engineer doing studio maintenance work, it would sit up and wag its tail. The problem with that was the tail usually hit the turntable cabinet and caused the tone arm to skid across the record.

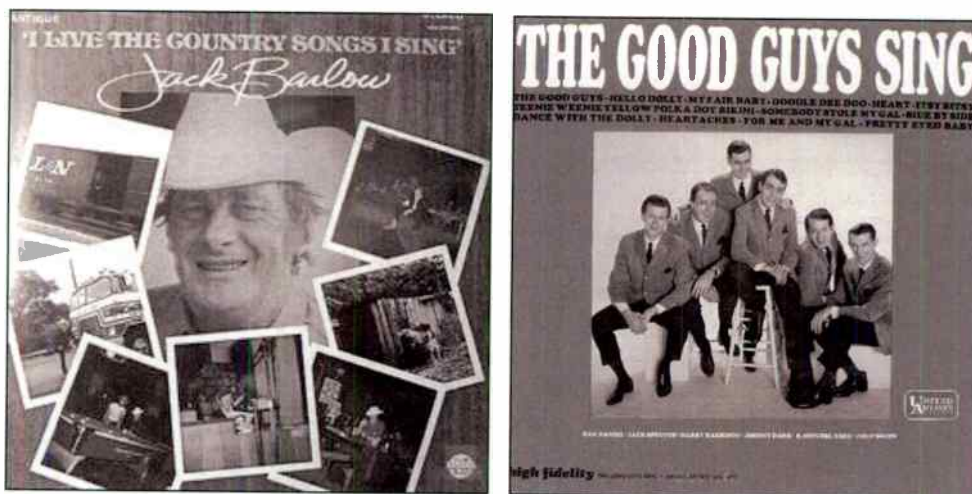
After selling WQUA to the Small brothers, one of Verne Flambo's responsibilities was to find new broadcast properties and personalities for Mid America stations. Bob Moore had been the news director at KSTT from 1960-64. Flambo hired him away from KSTT to be the news director at newly acquired WIRE in 1964. Bob Moore tells this story: "Flambo hired me to go to Indianapolis and do whatever I wanted to do with the news department and not to concern myself with the station manager or program director. We developed and broadcast some great hour-long documentaries on a number of topics without any commercial breaks. Whoever heard of such a thing in 'commercial radio?' Flambo gave me complete freedom to do what I wanted with that news department. And the group of people I 'inherited' were just great – which goes to show that 'new management' does not need to clean house, but just take the time to look at what you've already got." Bob Moore went on to be the news director at WCFL in Chicago, White House reporter for Metromedia (now Fox News), vice president of news and White House reporter for Mutual Radio News and spokesman for the Federal Reserve Board. Evidently Flambo did know talent.

With all the upheaval in formats and programming in the last few years of WQUA's existence, college sports still produced a revenue stream for the station. When the station signed Iowa State football and Univ. of Iowa basketball, the package netted sales manager Scott Boltz over \$80,000 in business for WQUA coffers.

Radio research isn't a relatively new idea. Back in the 1950s, Verne Flambo gave Mary Mason the use of a station vehicle, and she roamed the listening area talking to people about what they liked and didn't like about WQUA.

Jack Barlow wrote and recorded many country records over the years. One of his more famous songs wasn't even recorded under his own name. Zoot Fenster was the name used to record the song "Tha Man on Page 602," about a rumored misprint in the 1975 Fall-Winter Sears catalog showing a body part peeking out of the leg of a man's boxer shorts.

While Jack Barlow has several albums to his credit, Jim McShane had one, too. Well, he and his disc jockey buddies from WMCA in New York. Here's one of Jack's albums and Jim's. McShane is third from the right on the album cover.



With Mid America Media holding ownership in WQUA for the longest period of time, it would only be appropriate to provide some history (provided by Ken Buel).

- Leslie Small was the son of Lennington (Len) Small. Len Small had served as Ill. governor from 1921-29. Leslie was working as a bank teller when he was assigned to assist the Kankakee *Daily Republican* with its financial difficulties. He became interested in the newspaper business, went to work at the paper, and became its managing editor. In 1931, Leslie Small consolidated that paper and two others into the entity that became the Kankakee *Daily Journal*.
- Leslie Small had two sons, Len H. and Burrell. Both would join the operations of the newspaper and later became principals in the various broadcasting properties.
- The Kankakee *Daily Journal* Company amends its charter in August 1945 to cover broadcasting, as well as publishing and applied for AM and FM radio station licenses for Kankakee.
- WKAN begins operations on June 1, 1947. Later that year, WIKL-FM begins broadcasting but proved financially unsuccessful and went dark in June of 1950.
- In the fall of 1958, Radio Rockford, Inc., wholly owned by the *Daily Journal*, bought WRRR in Rockford, Ill.
- Ownership of WKAN was transferred from the *Daily Journal* to WKAN Radio, Inc. on June 1, 1959.
- The Kay Kis Corp. was formed in October 1959 to purchase KKIS in Pittsburg, Calif., with WKAN Radio, Inc. owning 80 percent and Burrell Small, Len H. Small and Arthur Beckman owning the remaining 20 percent.

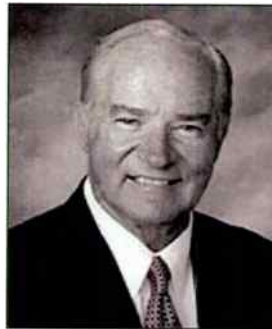
- On January 20, 1960, the FCC approved the purchase of WQUA by Radio Moline, Inc. The Daily Journal owned 70 percent of the stock, and Burrell Small, Len H. Small and Arthur Beckman owned the remaining 30 percent.
- KKIS in Pittsburg, Calif. was sold on February 16, 1962.
- The newly formed Twelve Ninety Radio Corp. purchased WIRL in Peoria, Ill. in December 1962. Twelve Ninety was wholly owned by the *Daily Journal*.
- Use of the phrase "Mid America" began in 1964 as Mid America Radio, Inc., wholly owned by the *Daily Journal*, was formed to purchase WIRE radio.
- July 25, 1965, Twelve Ninety Radio Corp. purchased WTVH, channel 19, in Peoria. Its call letters were immediately changed to WIRL-TV. (As a side note, Hugh Norman, who started KSTT in Davenport, also founded WTVH.)
- Purchase of Des Moines station KIOA by Radio Moline, Inc. was approved on November 30, 1965.
- Fall of 1965 brought changes in corporate names to form the framework of Mid America from that date forward. Mid America Audio-Video, Inc., became the licensee of WKAN. Mid America Media, Inc., assumed the license of WIRL. Mid America Broadcasting, Inc., replaced Radio Moline, Inc., in both Moline and Des Moines.
- Kankakee TV Cable Co. begins operations in the fall of 1965.
- Major factors in corporate reorganization, beginning in 1969, included family desires to concentrate on one aspect of communications plus growing concern over government scrutiny of cross ownership between broadcasting and newspaper operations. Through a series of stock transfers, Burrell Small divested himself of all ownership in the *Daily Journal* and its related publishing interests. Len H. Small and other *Journal* stockholders divested themselves of interests in Mid America Media properties. Ownership consolidation took several years and was finally completed in 1979.
- WIRL-TV was sold in March 1971. Its call letters were changed to WRAU-TV.
- WRRR in Rockford was also sold in March 1971.
- On April 1, 1972, Mid America purchased WUHN-FM in Peoria and WGEE-FM in Indianapolis. Their calls were changed to WSWT and WXTZ respectively.
- Mid America purchases KYNA-FM in Des Moines on September 21, 1972, and changes call letters to KIOA-FM, and later, KMGK-FM.
- December 28, 1972, Mid America Audio-Video, Inc. acquired all stock of Mid America Radio, Inc.
- Imagery, Inc., was created in March 1973 to provide support and data processing services for the broadcast and cable operations.
- WTRX-FM in Flint, Mich. was purchased in August 1973.
- KWNT-FM was purchased in August 1973 and became KRVR on October 9, 1973.
- In 1978, Indiana News Network was revamped by Mid America.
- Music scheduling and radio station management services were added to the data processing services of Imagery, Inc., in 1978.
- Plantation Cablevision, Inc. of Hilton Head, South Carolina, became a wholly owned subsidiary of Mid America Audio-Visual in February 1979.
- In the fall months of 1979, Kankakee TV Cable Co. expanded its service area into Iroquois County, Ill.
- KBEZ-FM in Tulsa, Okla., was purchased in June 1980.
- In August 1982, separate broadcast and cable divisions were established.
- KIOA and KMGK-FM, both Des Moines, were sold in March 1983.
- WQUA changed its call letters to WMRZ on September 14, 1983.
- Leslie H. Small elected as president of Mid America Media in April 1984.
- WTRX in Flint, Mich. was sold on June 1, 1984 and WMRZ in Moline was sold effective on October 12, 1984.
- Following this sale, Mid America Broadcasting, Inc. was dissolved on December 12, 1984.

- In later years, all broadcast properties were sold and all publishing operations were placed under the corporate umbrella of the Small Newspaper Group.

Pictured below are some more recent photos of former WQUA personnel.



Adam Jones and Bob Allen



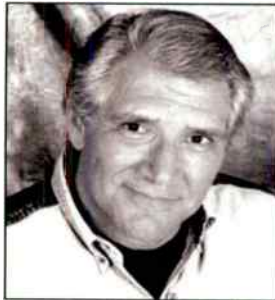
Dave Fleming



Elaine Vinzant



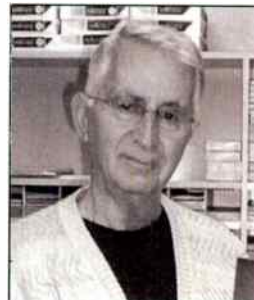
Mike Moore



Dale Reeves



P.J. Denault



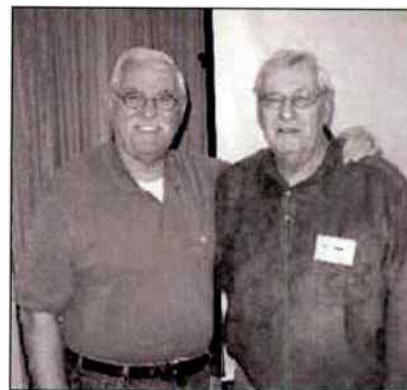
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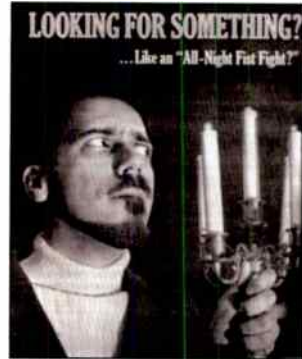
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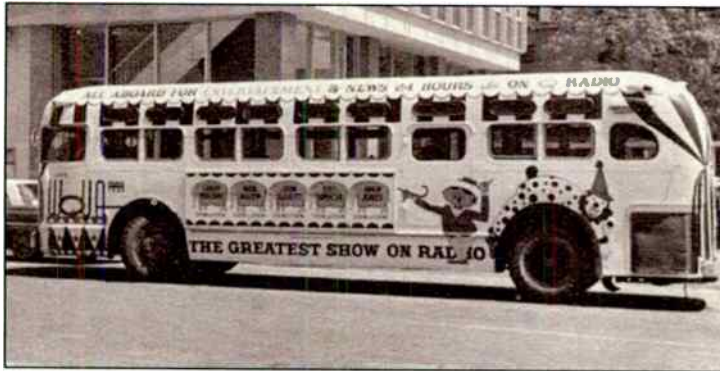
33-year employee Bob Castle



A young Bob Allen



"All Night Fist Fight"



WQUA's bus advertising program... the first bus wrap



Hard-to-miss promotion



John Ford with transmitter behind him. He is adjusting signal modulation.



Flood plaque dedication with J. Maxim Ryder on the right. Next to him is Ken Becker, the "model" for the teen flood fighter on the plaque.

