

CKOV - Fitty Years

WRITTEN BY

J. PETER SHANNICK

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MAKING RADIO WAVES IN THE OKANAGAN

Fifty Years of Country Radio with its Roots in the Country

The history of CKOV, the Okanagan's first radio station is a story of men and women who created a radio station at a time when broadcast technology was downright primitive by today's standards. It was no easy feat putting a radio station on the air in 1931, a time when the world economic situation was at its all-time low and anyone starting any business venture faced a murky, uncertain future. For CKOV to exist at all in 1931 and then continue for fifty years is remarkable in itself, but no radio station exists in a vacuum so this history is also an important chapter out of Okanagan history. Here is the story of a radio station and a community, Kelowna, that grew from a small, unsophisticated frontier town into a small, somewhat cosmopolitan city.

Central to CKOV's history is a family -- the Brownes of Kelowna. No different than other immigrant families from Europe, Asia, South America or Australia, the Brownes worked hard to wrest a new life from the raw opportunities of the Okanagan landscape. The Brownes, however, are merely one part of the story. During CKOV's fifty years, nearly 500 disc jockeys, news gatherers, announcers, writers, advertising salesmen, secretaries, accountants and management personnel have contributed to the evolution of the station and the town around it.

As a freelance writer and broadcaster, I heard stories for over a decade about J.W.B. Browne, the man who started CKOV, and about his wife, Gerdine Tryphena Browne, one of Kelowna's pioneer women, and matriarch of Okanagan Broadcasters. Last fall, as I began to gather fifty years of CKOV's history, I had my long-awaited opportunity to meet Mrs. Browne ("Granny" as she is known to friends and family) and listen as she shared five decades of observations and memories.

PRIOR TO 1931

James William Bromley-Browne was born in Stoke-on-Trent, England, in 1884. Like many of the young Englishmen of his generation, he developed a yearning for travel and adventure. He fought as an underage soldier in South Africa's Boer War, developing health problems that would plague him throughout his adult life. After his hitch in the army, he signed on as a purser with the CPR ships travelling to the Orient. He arrived in British Columbia during the first decade of this century. It was a decade when airplanes, automobiles, computers, televisions and most of what we call modern technology was either unimagined or still in its infancy. J.W.B. Browne drove horse-drawn freight stages through the Fraser Canyon into the Cariboo and eventually drove B.C.'s first automotive stage, a Pierce Arrow, along that same route.

Around 1911, J.W.B. Browne joined a group of automotive enthusiasts in Victoria who decided to tour B.C. and Washington by car. They drew the first B.C. road maps for motorists, and started western Canada's first motoring magazine.

About this time, Tryphena - who had moved to Vancouver from Toronto as a teenager - was selling magazine advertising. She met J.W.B. at the Commercial Printing Company in the Sun building where he was working as an editor of the motoring magazine. They married in March of 1914, moving to Kelowna in early May of that year.

"We took the train from Vancouver to Okanagan Landing just south of Vernon," she remembers. "You had to walk from the train to the CPR boat. That boat, the Sicamous, ran into every little landing all the way down the Lake. The trip took nearly three hours. I remember standing on deck with my dad and my husband. As I looked down at the long wharf that was supposedly Kelowna, I thought to myself: 'Now what do we do here?' It was funny. There

was only this long wharf, a lot of rowboats, and a wholesale place for horse feed. At first I thought we'd be behind a horse again. But no, a chap named Clarence Duncan, an American from Missouri, I believe, picked us up in his car. There could not have been more than three or four cars in all of Kelowna at that time, so I guess it was one of the first ones."

Tryph and J.W.B. settled in Rutland, a sparsely inhabited community separated then from Kelowna by miles of orchards. In spite of steady immigration, war decimated the Rutland population the way it did other Okanagan communities. In 1914, World War One was on the horizon.

"Rutland wasn't very big to begin with," Mrs. Browne says. "It was mostly young English bachelors. A lot of them were military men, so when the first war broke out, they enlisted. My husband, being an Englishman, wanted to go badly, but his health had been poor following the Boer War, so the army wouldn't take him. He decided to help out in other ways. He rounded up fellows to carry the news of the war up into the woods and hills above Rutland. They came down the next day to sign up. Very few of them had wives," she says, laughing. "They all had dogs and cats and livestock, but no wives. They just couldn't let the animals run wild while they went away to war, and they didn't want to shoot the animals themselves. So they helped each other out by destroying one another's dogs and cats. They brought their horses down out of the hills and turned them loose. There were a lot of wild horses around the Valley in those days. They left all their harnesses and their chaps and what-not hanging in the barns. Very few of those men ever returned."

Life in Kelowna during the First World War was busy for those who were left behind. It was, in many ways, James William Bromley-Browne's preparation for the later broadcast years. When he notified the other young Englishmen that a war had broken out, it foreshadowed the future when CKOV would broadcast similar information instantly throughout the Valley. During the war he raised funds for the Red Cross and the Salvation Army.

"He was a showman," Mrs. Browne remembers. "He played in most of the productions here in town, raising money for the people in Europe who needed help at that time. He understood the workings of the stage and he enjoyed that sort of thing."

Around Kelowna, people called her husband "Big Jim." He stood six feet tall, weighed 225 pounds. Because of his interest in automobiles, J.W.B. Browne started Kelowna's first service station, The Oil Shop, which was the town's first Goodyear franchise and the first Imperial Oil outlet. Gasoline arrived in barrels in those days and was pumped by hand into the cars. Tires were applied directly onto the steel rims by a special vulcanizing machine, and batteries were always custom built or rebuilt for whatever model car you drove.

The heart problems, however, that JWB developed in the Boer War periodically confined him to his bed. It was during one of his illnesses, in the twenties, that he developed the idea of going into commercial broadcasting.

"When radio came along, he was in bed a lot of the time, unable to move. So I thought the best thing I could do was get him one of those music boxes, they called them radios," she laughs. "I thought it would amuse him, help to get him going again. I took this thing into his room and turned it on. The one thing he heard that really got him thinking again was a report from the far north. The Government was trying to find a young Provincial policeman patrolling the Interior on horseback.

"The policeman apparently married before he went to the north. He had brought his young bride to British Columbia, but when it came time for her to have her baby he sent her back to Toronto. Well, this report came over the radio. The Government was trying to locate this young policeman. Because he travelled all the time, he had not picked up his mail in a while. They were asking that messages be posted in places where he might hole up. They said to tell him he had a son. My husband was struck by radio's wonderful ability to reach across the mountains like that to touch people's lives. That started his interest in radio."

Radio had been of interest to several other Kelowna residents since the early years of the century. Receivers picked up KGO in distant San Francisco. George Howard Dunn of Kelowna, one of the first amateur radio operators in Canada introduced J.W.B. Browne to the technical potential of radio. Mr. Dunn, too, was an English immigrant. He had worked for a while with the Japanese government before taking on the City Clerk's job in the city of Kelowna in 1908. In 1912, he developed an interest in amateur radio, then established his first transmitter,

a spark set. Radio at that time was a rarity in British Columbia. There were a few transmitters on ships and in the logging camps, but little else. Radio was still so young that as late as 1934 Webster's dictionary only defined broadcasting as "a casting or sowing of seeds in all directions."

In 1928, the Kelowna Amateur Radio Club was formed. Joining George Dunn in this endeavor were other Englishmen, such as Bobby Johnston, an engineer with A.J. Jones Boatworks, who became the club's radio engineer; Harry Blakeborough, the City of Kelowna electrical engineer, the club's technical adviser; and - of course - James William Bromley-Browne in charge of the entertainment programming. To convert to amateur radio broadcasting, Dunn's transmitter had to be converted from Morse key operation to voice. The government granted the club a licence under the call letters 10-AY, restricting the group to non-commercial broadcasting. With a diminutive 50-watt transmitter, the club broadcast a relatively ambitious schedule of programs.

10-AY broadcast church services from the United Church, with the church sometimes raising money for equipment. On weekdays, 10-AY broadcast the performances of the Ogoogo Concert Club, as well as plays. Performers in those early days included Bert Johnston, who later became CKOV's first sportscaster; Jack Taylor, Henry Tutt, Joey Price, Toddy Boyd, Bay Pridham, Rev. C.E. Davis, Tommy Griffiths, Phyllis Trenwith, and the Kirk family, all of Kelowna.

During the Twenties radio began to catch on across North America. Newspapers folded in cities that had once supported a dozen dailies. In 1929 the stock market crashed and the depression touched everyone. Radio offered an inexpensive diversion. You could laugh, you could sing along with the music. Through radio, listeners sensed that others were enduring the same hardships as themselves. Radio made people feel less isolated, less alone. 10-AY was important to the families living in the Valley during those very isolated years. At that time a trip to the coast might take two or three days, if you were lucky. Construction of the Hope-Princeton was still two decades away. Sometimes the trip to Kamloops took ten to fifteen hours from Kelowna, depending on the conditions of the road and the weather. Motorists heading for Vancouver often had to decide whether to chance the weather between the Okanagan and Kamloops or to take the longer, more circuitous route through Washington State.

Okanagan fruit growers, in particular, felt the hopelessness of their isolation. A U.S. or Eastern Canadian fruit grower was close to his markets while an Okanagan grower had to not only raise an excellent apple at the best possible price but ship it to market at competitive prices. The families living in the towns and on the orchards developed a strong attachment to the programming of 10-AY. Radio allowed them a front row seat to local theatrical and musical productions. But even in those early days, radio was starting to prove its worth as an instrument of civic change and improvement. When the polio epidemic struck the Okanagan during the late twenties, J.W.B. became known as Daddy Jim to the children who were forced to stay indoors until the dangers had passed. Then, with George Dunn and the other members of the Kelowna Amateur Radio Club, J.W.B. Browne produced dozens of small 10-AY concerts with local performers.

"Jim was having so much fun," Mrs. Browne remembers, "that he finally asked George to go in with him and start a business, get a commercial radio licence. George thought it was a crazy idea. He had his job with the City, he said, and he wasn't interested. So Jim went on his own and applied for the licence."

THE BIRTH OF A STATION

In the Twenties, the Canadian government had not yet defined its policies concerning commercial radio. England decided to avoid the licensing of commercial broadcasting altogether. Canada, however, felt the lure and influence of broadcasting policies established in the neighboring U.S. Because most Canadian radio transmitters were in the hands of a few amateurs, and used for fishing or shipping or logging, the licensing of commercial radio in this country was originally in the hands of the Department of Fisheries.

J.W.B. Browne received his commercial broadcasting licence in the spring of 1931 on condition that 10-AY disband. The Amateur Radio Club readily agreed to this condition for the token sum of \$1.00, paving the way for the Okanagan's first commercial radio station. While Tryphena Browne's husband's involvement with radio had been growing, she had been operating a hair styling salon in Kelowna. On the day that CKOV's licence came through, the wife of the director of Vernon Preparatory School came into Tryphena's shop and asked if she was interested in selling the business.

"She said she wanted it so badly. I told her I would let her know that night. I got in touch with Jim and told him that I'd received this offer on the business. He said for me to do what I liked. I told him I had pretty well made up my mind to sell and for him to get started building his radio station."

At this time, Jim Browne Jr. was beginning to become involved in radio's technical side. He was interested from the beginning by the apparatus that conveyed the signal. The yard of Jones Sawmill, located where the Kelowna Memorial Arena and the Museum are now situated, was chosen as the site for the transmitter towers.

"We started originally with two steel poles," says Jim, now retired. "The idea was that the galvanized poles would get progressively smaller from four inches to two inches at the top. We were about two-thirds of the way up with those steel poles when they came down on us, almost spearing a couple of the guys who had come along to help out. After that we got some fellows out of Lumby to cut two 90-foot cedar poles. They had trouble getting them down here. The road at that time twisted and turned like you wouldn't believe. They had two trucks, logging trucks, which were much smaller than logging trucks today. Each truck had a load of logs on it and then the 90-foot poles were put on top of the loads of logs. They couldn't come up the Kickwilli Loop - the corners were too sharp. They had to go north to Vernon from Lumby and when they couldn't find an intersection wide enough to make the turn back to Kelowna, they had to go into a lumber yard and make the turn before heading south. Even then they had to carefully navigate those turns, one truck cutting in on a curve while the other went out wide."

The towers went up, studios were established on Mill Avenue (now Queensway) next door to Jones' Sawmill, on a site that is now the location of the South Okanagan Health Unit. The original studio was a twenty by thirty foot building with heavy carpet hanging from the ceiling as sound-proofing.

The year was 1931. The population of Kelowna was 4,597. The Dirty Thirties were underway. A hobo jungle existed just north of Kelowna near the railroad tracks. The Kelowna to Carmi Road, via McCulloch Lake had just been completed. The Kelowna Dog Pound reported the impoundment of one dog and four horses for a total of \$15.00 in pound fees. The apple marketing season provided barely one month of work for the packinghouses.

1931 was also the year that an enterprising oil entrepreneur drilled in Okanagan Mission to a depth of 2,050 feet. He found gas, but no oil. 1931 had an average high of 60 degrees (Fahrenheit) and a low of 28 degrees. The Mayor of Kelowna was D.H. Rattenbury and the Kelowna School Board included such notables as David Chapman, Sr. and Mrs. S.D. Treadgold. In November of that year there were ten births: Kuniko Kitaura, Billy Shumacher, Carol Jean Curts, Mildred May Olsen, Tony Tozer, Paula Wray, Albina Zvonarich, Freida Hannabar, Isabel Love, and CKOV.

On November 4th, 1931, at 2:30 p.m., amateur radio station 10-AY ceased to exist. James William Bromley-Browne flicked the switch, turned on his microphone and said:

"This is CKOV, the Voice of the Okanagan."

At that time, CKOV was broadcasting at 1230 kilocycles on the dial with a 60-watt ship's transmitter that the Marconi Company in Montreal had converted to 100 watts. Looking after that transmitter was Jim Browne, Jr., the Okanagan's first radio engineer.

From the beginning, CKOV was a community effort. As with its predecessor, 10-AY, CKOV's listeners sent donations to keep the station on the air. The company, Okanagan Broadcasters Limited (which held the licence) had been incorporated on July 27, 1931, so the contributions were converted to shares of stock for the donors. Among the Okanagan residents who saw the value of the new station were W.A.C. Bennett, the hardware merchant who eventually served as Premier of British Columbia for two decades, and Cap Capozzi, founder of Calona Wines and the Capri Hotel Shopping Centre complex in Kelowna. Most of CKOV's listeners in the early days found some way of helping out whenever they could. They loaned records, operated equipment and performed on the air.

"My main concern," Tryphena Browne remembers today, "was Big Jim's health. I tried to keep an eye on him so he wouldn't overdo it. I knew if I didn't watch him, I'd have him down again. But you couldn't stop him. He's go all the time. Eventually when he was confined to a wheelchair, he still managed to broadcast all the hockey games. And he used to go to the station in a wheelchair. They had to carry him to his office. He felt he just couldn't leave it. He had a powerful voice and I remember listening to him sing along with the orchestras he used to broadcast in those days."

J.W.B. Browne became known from Revelstoke to the U.S. border as The White Haired Philosopher. His fifteen minute program aired each morning and afternoon.

In 1931, CKOV's signal spread unfettered by competition throughout the interior of British Columbia. Jim Browne, Jr. remembers the technical difficulties of broadcasting in those early days. He entered broadcasting without training, learning from the men who installed the original equipment.

"I picked up what I could from the people who constructed the station," he says. "They showed me what to fix and how to fix it. We had a transmitter with a tunable crystal, the signal sometimes moved as many as twenty kilocycles from where it was supposed to be on the broadcast band. The original frequency was 1230. Listeners used to sometimes call up from Vernon to tell us that a station from China or Japan or somewhere was interfering with our broadcast. On a clear night, other stations sometimes interfered on either side of us, forcing us to tune the transmitter to 1235 or 1240. We told the listeners what we were doing so they could adjust their receivers accordingly."

In 1934, as Canadian broadcasting began to fall under increasing regulation, CKOV was ordered to install a crystal-controlled transmitter.

"That was when we bought our first true 100 watt transmitter," Jim, Jr. remembers. "That was the year, too, that we enlarged the studio, adding an additional 20 by 30 foot section to the building."

In Kelowna, the first generation of listeners were growing up with the new station. E.J. "Ted" Turner, a packinghouse worker at that time, remembers those early days.

"I sort of grew up with the station," says Turner, today a resident of the Gulf Islands. "I knew the whole works. I remember the first building. It was so small that when Big Jim Browne was on the air in that little talk booth, I sometimes had to stand out on the street to talk to him. It was that small. Eventually that building became the first yacht club building. In those days we used to congregate at the Golden Pheasant Cafe downtown listening to the station. Sometimes after CKOV signed off, we'd all go over there and play music with Big Jim."

Penny Bond Miller is another Kelowna resident who remembers Big Jim Browne and the early days of CKOV.

"We used to sing on CKOV on Saturday mornings, I believe it was called the Early Bird Show," Mrs. Miller remembers. "Mr. Browne was very interested in human beings. He wanted to know absolutely everybody in the Valley, and to know their story, where they came from, what they did. He was very people-oriented. He had time for every group, everybody who had anything to say or contribute."

A lot happened in the confines of CKOV's original radio building on Mill Avenue. Although the first studio had two chairs and a microphone, a constant stream of Kelowna citizens flowed through the station taking advantage of Big Jim Browne's good nature, utilizing the power of radio to entertain, inform and shape the community. Harry Mitchell, who broadcast the B.C. Tree Fruits' Bulletin on CKOV for 20 years, remembered the significant part that CKOV played in solving several of Kelowna's early problems.

"Those were depression years," Mitchell recalls. "There was literally nothing out here. When I came down on the Sicamous, I had just emigrated from a city of one million in Scotland, so I was a little taken aback by what I saw here. There were only a few houses, a wharf and little else. I had left a reasonably good job in Scotland, and it took me a few years to get established here. I arrived about the time that the two tall cedar poles were being raised for CKOV's transmitter where Kelowna's museum is now located.

"On the air, Jim Browne was pointing out things that needed improvement. CKOV was a regular forum for civic improvement, and in 1935 when the Junior Board of Trade was formed, all these young men got together to try to improve the civic situation. There was no mail delivery, no street numbering. You just knew, for example, that you lived on Ethel Street, but whether you lived on the north or south end of the street, you had no idea. Jim Browne said he'd help out any way he could, so he gave us the air time to talk about the problem. Another problem was mosquito control.

"In those days you couldn't sit on your lawn without being bothered by swarms of mosquitoes. People out in Glenmore had friends over from England for a visit, I remember. These people were hospitalized by the bites they sustained during a single evening out in the orchard. When they got out of hospital, they headed directly back to England. They couldn't put up with the mosquitoes any longer. So we got together a committee to investigate the mosquito. We studied how they bred and all, then publicized the problem over CKOV. I remember after that broadcast, the Junior Board of Trade from Penticton came up and said 'what are you fellows trying to do? Kill the tourist traffic in Kelowna? We said, no, we were just trying to be factual and solve the problem.' At that time, Mr. H.V. Craig, a Kelowna lawyer, used to go on CKOV every spring

asking for funds to control the mosquitoes through a voluntary program. It was not adequate to solve the problem. Eventually, by talking about the problem on the air and among the residents of the town, the city fathers became convinced that mosquito control was a community responsibility."

Radio has always been a blend of news, information, entertainment and sports, a part of the day to day life of the community, a reflection of the changing world. Music has always been the mainstay of radio entertainment, and CKOV's music broadcasts in the thirties reflected Kelowna's tastes at that time. In addition to the local performers, there were also visiting performers from everywhere who contributed to the music programming. Win Shilvock, a retired investment dealer who moved to Kelowna in the late forties, remembers performing on CKOV with the Home Oil Optimists.

Living on \$5.00 per week while attending the University of British Columbia in 1933, Mr. Shilvock was playing with a small ensemble on the CNR boats to Prince Rupert and Alaska when the Home Oil Optimists were formed. As an advertising medium, the group went on five-month tours of British Columbia. A typical concert included everything from tap dance to comedy skits. The 18-member orchestra appeared at matinee and evening performances in the Kelowna Scout Hall, and performed in the CKOV studios as the first out-of-towners to perform on the station. It was very hot in the CKOV studio while we performed," Mr. Shilvock remembers.

Throughout the Thirties and Forties, Jim Browne Jr.'s involvement with CKOV was limited to the technical end of the business. His first love was ranching and horses and as his father worked to refine CKOV's programming, he sometimes found himself drawn into distant mountains on horseback. Once, while working on a ranch at Princeton, he left word at the station that if anything broke down for someone to get in touch with him. The full-time engineer at that time, Art Miller, ran into a problem that he could not solve. The station developed an intermittency in the transmitter, it kept going off the air and no matter what Miller did it just wouldn't stay on for long. Miller, like Jim Browne, Jr. and most radio engineers at Canadian stations in those days, had learned his engineering by the seat of his pants. The problem stymied him.

J.W.B. sent word to Jim via a bus driver who knew the owner of the ranch in Princeton. Jim jumped on his horse and rode all night across the mountains, arriving at the westside ferry landing at dawn in time for the first ferry. He rode out to

the CKOV transmitter, walked in the door, took one look at the problem, replaced a transformer, then went home to sleep. The station was back on the air. Another time Jim remembers being called in because of some difficulty while he was out on the range. He walked in the door and, with one of his heavy workboots kicked the box that contained the crystal, putting the station instantly back on the air.

"In those days," Jim Jr. recalls, "the crystal sat in a small, heated box and could be very temperamental. Kicking it was not what the books might have said to do, but it worked every time!"

In 1936, Jim Browne was not satisfied with the performance of the Marconi transmitter, so he decided to convert it from 100 to 250 watts. The engineers at Marconi in Montreal told him it was not possible.

"They said something about the harmonics," Jim remembers. "I didn't know anything about harmonics, but I had been reading American manuals on tubes and figured it would work."

He made the conversion and the transmitter performed beautifully at 250 watts, with the Department of Transport, who were now the agency regulating broadcasters, none the wiser. At the start of the Second World War, Marconi heard via the grapevine what Jim had accomplished in Kelowna. They invited him to Montreal to show their engineers how he had accomplished what they had earlier said was impossible. For a month he worked with the Marconi Company's designers and his influence went into the design of a new 250 watt ship's transmitter used aboard Canadian and British corvettes during the war.

In 1938 the CKOV transmitter moved to Lakeshore Road on a piece of property that had been part of Mission Creek's flood plain and within shouting distance of the Father Pandosy Mission. The 16-acre parcel was bought from Dr. Benjamin deFurlong Boyce for \$75.00 per acre, the agreement written on the back of a paper bag found alongside Lakeshore Road. "When we finally paid off that property," Jim Browne remembers today, "it was that original piece of paper bag that we bought back."

At the Lakeshore Road site, a proper tower was constructed and the station's power increased to 1000 watts. As the technical capacities of CKOV expanded during the late Thirties, the station began to reach farther and farther afield in search of

its programming. Sports events were, naturally, the first place they turned. Radio took the action to the listener. Sports facilities in Kelowna during those days were limited. There was no rink for ice hockey, only a playing field in Kelowna City Park for box lacrosse games and a court in the Kelowna Scout Hall for basketball games. Such things as indoor swimming pools and man-made ice were mere dreams.

As a fledgling radio station, CKOV went where the action was. Bert Johnston was Kelowna's first sports announcer before opening a men's clothing store in downtown Kelowna. Harry Mitchell remembers that Johnston used to share the announcing duties with J.W.B. Browne at the basketball games. "Bert Johnston was the Foster Hewitt of sports in Kelowna in those days," Mitchell says.

Kelowna followed its sports stars on CKOV radio. Charlie Pettman, who eventually served as Kelowna's fire chief for several decades, and his brother, Harold, who became a familiar figure in the tree fruit industry as well as theatrical productions around Kelowna, were two of the basketball players in the Thirties. Down in Kelowna City Park, CKOV's first remote broadcast was a box lacrosse game that included Herb Capozzi playing goalie.

Once CKOV developed a taste for remote broadcasting, the station appeared everywhere with its small transmitter. The station broadcast from the Rotary Club's Home Fairs in Penticton before finally establishing a satellite repeater that became the predecessor of CKOK. When the Pendozi was launched, CKOV was aboard for the maiden voyage with Jack Bews describing the historic event.

News during the early days of CKOV's broadcast was "catch as, catch can." There was no newsroom as such, no news staff. The on-air personnel read the news or incorporated it into their other programming.

"The news came in on quarter-inch tape," Jack Bews remembers, "and we had to take it - moisten the back - and stick it onto forms that were designed for use with the ticker tape. That news came through at 7:30 in the morning in time for our 8:00 a.m. news broadcast, and we usually rewrote from the B.B.C. newscasts for our evening news at 5:00. We also picked up news from the Morse code news service that we received from the U.S. I wasn't very good at code, so I had to record the Morse code signal on a dictaphone and then play it back at the slowest speed to transcribe it."

During the Thirties, the Trans-Canada Network slowly threaded the country together with news and entertainment programming. The Network had an emergency capacity that went untested until almost the outbreak of the Second World War. Suddenly, an abandoned gold mine in Moose River, Ontario, caved in, trapping several men deep beneath the earth's surface.

When news of the disaster spread across the country, Canadians everywhere sat on the edges of their seats as the true-life drama built to a fever pitch. The Trans-Canada Network used its twenty-four hour emergency procedure for the first time, and Jim Browne Jr. suddenly found himself broadcasting for seventy straight hours as CKOV carried the developments in Moose River. When the men were eventually rescued, Canadian listeners had only a brief moment to catch their breath before the world again turned itself upside down.

THE WAR YEARS

The world of the late 1930's was a stage of turbulent international politics. Beyond the pastoral peace of the Okanagan, tanks were rolling through European valleys much like the Okanagan. When England entered the war on September 3rd, 1939, the Trans-Canada Network of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation withheld the news while Prime Minister Mackenzie King and his cabinet decided whether or not to enter Canada into the war. With Jim Browne Jr. broadcasting from the transmitter, J.W.B. Browne and Jack Bews monitored their U.S. news sources at the studio downtown, conveying the story to Okanagan listeners as it unfolded. The Valley, as a result, was one of the few regions in Canada to hear the story that night.

"I don't know how Ottawa found out that we had carried the news of England entering the war," Jack Bews remembers. "But they found out, nonetheless. The next day we got a wire telling us to cease and desist or lose our licence. They rapped our knuckles on that one." It was not the first time and it was not the last time that CKOV found itself in conflict with the Ottawa bureaucracy and its red tape.

When Canada finally entered the war, CKOV's staff experienced an exodus unlike any other in the station's history. Bill Carruthers, Rolf Mathie, Dennis Reid and Dick Misener went to the Army. Bern Heeney, Ernie Gordon and Jack Bews joined the Air Force. Ernie Gordon died in action, some of the others found new occupations after the war, and only two, Dennis Reid and Jack Bews, later returned to CKOV. As the war progressed, returning soldiers (some of them invalided out of action) joined the CKOV staff to replace those who had joined the military. Among these were Bill Stewart, Harry Watts and Ted Soskin.

In the early months of the war, Big Jim and Tryphena Browne showed their loyalty not only to Canada, but to their friends

as well. The Nishi family, Canadians of Japanese origin, were in danger of being moved from the Kelowna area during the infamous forced migration to eastern B.C. The Nishis had a son, Carl, and three daughters, Aya, Fusa and Mari, all born in Kelowna. The Brownes supported the Nishis in their successful effort to remain in Kelowna. Aya eventually married and moved to Toronto. Mari later worked for seven years as CKOV's receptionist, and Fusa became housekeeper-companion to the Brownes. She helped Tryphena nurse Big Jim when he was confined to the house, serving as his "home secretary." Today Fusa continues to be Mrs. Browne's closest companion.

As a young girl, Marion Lee often listened to CKOV on her brother's crystal set in the attic of their Kamloops home. She moved to Kelowna in 1943.

"It took us ten hours to get here from Kamloops in a blizzard," she remembers today. "That was January, and there were five soldiers on the bus, the driver and me. Every so often we rounded a bend in the road and ran into a snowdrift. The driver - a small man - had to get out and shovel us out of the snowbank so we could get going again. Not one of those soldiers offered to help."

In Kelowna, Marion Lee went to work for CKOV as a secretary, but radio being radio nobody ever does the same job day in and day out. She soon found herself writing quarter-hour, half and one-hour programs under the guidance of Ralph Spencer, CKOV's first copy chief.

"It was interesting," she recalls. "Each program was written with an introduction mentioning the sponsor, as well as an introduction for each musical selection. We had to convey the era of a song and something about the composer. There was little room for ad-libbing, not like today. Most announcers in those days wrote their own programs."

During the war, the station broadcast an incredible variety of programming from its small Mill Avenue studio. There was even an exercise class, for example, with Kay Dunaway playing the piano while a half-dozen children went through their morning calisthenics under the guidance of Bill Wilcox and Janet Strang.

The Radio Rascals, famous across Canada for their appearances on CJOR in Vancouver and the Trans-Canada Network, performed live on CKOV to promote their dances throughout the Okanagan. The Radio Rascals featured, among others, Red Hughes who later became a well-known figure in Kelowna Little Theatre; and Art

Vipond, who served as CKOV's engineer for many years before opening a health food store in Kelowna.

The world was at war for the second time this century. Big Jim Browne again found himself working to raise funds for the people of Europe who needed help. This time CKOV joined forces with the Kinsmen Club's Milk for Britain Drive. For his effort, J.W.B. Browne was made a lifetime member of the Kelowna Kinsmen Club.

CKOV kept the Valley informed of the fighting and passed along news of the Okanagan's sons when it came available. With the men away, women proved to themselves and the world that they could do anything. CKOV hired its first woman announcer-operator, Eileen Bowman. She had held a similar position with CJAT in Trail. At CKOV, Eileen became a companion for CKOV's listeners. Called "Hi Neighbor," her program included a pot pourri of recipes, household hints, poetry and items of interest to the homemaker. In those days, radio contests often drew 5,000 letters per week, a significant indication of CKOV's support when the sparseness of the Valley population is taken into consideration. Eileen Bowman's program was a forerunner of the 1950's feature, "Cy and I," with Cy Cairns, a staff announcer and professional pianist, and Marion Bews. Some people called the program "Cyanide!"

The Forties also saw the continuation of a CKOV tradition begun in 1931, the New Year's Eve broadcasts, a family affair with the Brownes. Every New Year's Eve, Big Jim Browne, Tryphena Browne, their son, Jim, his wife, Barbara and eventually Tryphena's grandson, Jamie, all went on the air to play music, pass along Valley news and extend the family's best wishes to all the listeners for the new year. The tradition continued into the Seventies.

THE POST-WAR YEARS

In 1946, the station moved to its Pandosy Street location, where it would remain for more than 35 years. The facilities were designed by Fred Weber, the station engineer; and the elaborate, finely detailed cabinetry was built by Weber's assistant, Geoff Walton. In the new location, Jack Bews established CKOV's (and the Valley's) first full-fledged newsroom. Correspondents sent news items from Revelstoke, Salmon Arm, Enderby, Armstrong, Vernon, Coldstream, Kelowna, Peachland, Penticton, Princeton, Merritt, Oliver and Osoyoos. CKOV's newsroom paid a penny a word.

"We kept in touch with everything that was going on throughout the Valley," Jack Bews remembers. "As CKOK and CJIB came on the air in the late Forties, our news gradually became more local."

In 1948 Marion Lee married Jack Bews at the home of James William Bromley-Browne, one of several CKOV romances that blossomed over the years.

During the mid-Forties, the B.C. Arthritis Society was formed. His own first-hand problems with the disease made Mr. J.W.B. Browne particularly sensitive to the needs of the new society. While on holiday in the Gulf Islands, Marion Lee met Mary Pack, a Vancouver school teacher whose mother suffered from arthritis.

"Drawing on her own funds," Marion Bews remembers today, "Mary wrote to every newspaper in Canada soliciting support for the creation of an Arthritis Society. She felt a society could wield more clout in approaching government for assistance. At that time, arthritis research was still in its infancy so money was needed for equipment and staff."

Marion passed the story along to J.W.B. Browne. He immediately threw CKOV's full promotional support behind the effort.

The result was the establishment of the Kelowna Branch of the Canadian Arthritis and Rheumatism Society, with Captain C.R. Bull as president, and Marion Bews the first secretary. Other branches soon sprang up in other British Columbia towns. The B.C. service model became the cornerstone of the Canadian Arthritis and Rheumatism Society, serving as an organizational model for parts of the U.S. and other countries. The role CKOV played in the development of this Society was documented in Mary Pack's book, "Never Surrender."

X In 1946, Jack Thompson took over the CKOV Early Bird Show, moving to the Okanagan after several years reporting the Wheat Board News on a Winnipeg radio station. Thompson's arrival at CKOV heralded a major shift in radio programming in the Okanagan, and reflected a growing trend throughout Canada. Prior to Thompson, CKOV offered little in the way of personality radio programming. To his Kelowna audience, Thompson's personality blossomed in the character of Grandpappy Jackson.

He told tales, he played music and he hammed it up every morning from 7:00 to 10:00. In the process, Grandpappy Jackson became an Okanagan legend. Generations of Valley residents woke up with him every morning. He became, perhaps, the hottest item in CKOV's entire 50 year history. Today some Kelowna residents still remember Grandpappy Jackson. It took television nearly a decade after it arrived on the broadcast scene to develop Steve Allen, Jack Paar and Johnny Carson as personalities. Grandpappy Jackson, by all accounts, was a one-of-a-kind broadcaster. His program was spiced with ad libs and off-the-wall humour that today many announcers do their best to duplicate. He maintained a running battle of wits with Art Vipond, Bob Hall, Walter Gray, as well as others on CKOV's staff. In Grandpappy Jackson, radio began to shape the programming it would need later to compete with the somewhat aloof, always distant audio/visual combination of television. Radio was immediate. It responded to life in the here and the now. It played with the imagination in ways that no other medium has been able to duplicate.

Freda Woodhouse, another early CKOV personality, came to the station after working for two well-known Canadian broadcasters, Claire Wallace and Kate Aitken. At CKOV, Freda conducted interviews, wrote news, features and advertising copy, and specialized in a children's program called "Friend Freda." She also spearheaded a program called "Coffee Break."

"In those days," Marion Lee Bews remembers, "there were no phone-in programs. Several staff members and their special

X THIS COULD BE THE SAME JACK THOMPSON FROM CJ6X YORZON (WINNIPEG STUDIOS) PERHAPS THE J.T. THAT STARTED AT CKOC HAMILTON
— LYMAN POTTS

guests used to meet in the studio at coffee time. For half an hour, Freda led the discussion on anything and everything, whatever was topical. The modern version of "Coffee Break" is the CKOV "Open Line" whose telephone bills today are almost as much as some of the early pay-rolls."

As the Forties drew to a close, failing health made James William Bromley-Browne's involvement with CKOV increasingly difficult. The duties of station management gradually shifted to his son, Jim Browne Jr. By now, Kelowna had grown to a booming population of about eight thousand inhabitants; the town was on the brink of a population boom that would occur after the Okanagan Lake bridge was built.

As manager of CKOV, Jim Browne and CKOV began to look farther afield for new broadcast interests. When television was introduced to Canada in 1952, he saw its potential and became involved with the inception of CHBC-TV in 1957. Television introduced new competition to radio that was totally unlike the competition that CKOV had encountered with the Valley newspapers over the years. As television began to catch the eye of previously loyal radio listeners, the shape of CKOV's broadcasting began to change.

During the Fifties, as well, the technical end of the radio business began to give radio new potential. Seventy-eight rpm (revolutions per minute) records were gradually replaced by long-playing albums at 33-1/3 rpm and the shorter 45's. Reel-to-reel tape recorders replaced the wire recorder, and each new technological innovation influenced the sound of the station, changing very subtly the way radio conveyed music and information.

As if to signal the end of one era and the beginning of a new one, James William Bromley-Browne died in 1954, with the decade not even half way along.

"Jim was ill for about a year," Mrs. Tryphena Browne recalls. "When the New Year came around he was in hospital. He had been very ill. I went up to see him, it was just before I was supposed to go to the station for the New Year's Eve broadcast. I didn't even know if I would get back to him in time, but I went on and told the old people of the Okanagan how Jim was and what he wished to say to them. The show had to go on, he always said."

And it did.

Under Jim Browne Jr.'s management, CKOV continued to grow, continued to reach out into the community. But Jim was different from his father, he was his own man, and his involvement with CKOV reflected his individual nature. Because flying was one of his interests and because the Kelowna City Airport was always in the process of closing down, he became involved in the push to get the city a permanent, commercially operated airport. His contacts with the Department of Transport on radio matters were invaluable to Mayor Dick Parkinson and the other residents who wanted Kelowna to have an airport. He personally flew a delegation back East, opened the right doors and introduced Kelowna to Ottawa on a first-name basis.

"I'll never forget when Jimmy took Mayor Parkinson back to Ottawa," says Mrs. Browne. "Jimmy was keen on the project. He did a fair amount of flying in those days. He did everything he could to get Kelowna an airport. When Cttawa finally agreed to it (airport construction) and time came for the airport to open, all these big business people, the City Fathers and everybody else turned out for the congratulations, Jimmy just disappeared. They eventually found him hiding out in the plane so he wouldn't have to go through all the ceremonies."

During the Fifties, Rock and Roll began to fill the airwaves of North America. As the post World War Two baby boom babies began to exert their buying influence on the marketplace, radio became more popular than ever. But this meant more radio stations. As the airwaves filled, CKOV's signal received increasing interference from stations as far away as the southern U.S. Distant signals sometimes pushed CKOV off the dial in fringe areas of its broadcast pattern. The applications necessary for a station to increase its power are a slow bureaucratic process, but approval eventually came through from the Board of Broadcast Governors (the predecessor of the Canadian Radio and Television Commission.)

TOP 40 RADIO ARRIVES

With a full 5,000 watts of power beaming from its Lakeshore Road transmitter, CKOV entered the Sixties with all the confidence and bravado of a young man at a Saturday night dance. The world was changing, much to the chagrin of people who like the old ways, the old music, the old style radio. As North America began to look increasingly to the stars and beyond, technological innovations began to filter into radio everywhere. Suddenly the equipment freed the staff from many of the tedious and often repetitive chores that once filled their broadcast day, but it pushed the personality of the announcer into the background, made the stations sound "canned". In Los Angeles and New York radio stations became heavily formatted. It was called the Drake format, named after the broadcaster who invented top-40 radio.

Suddenly stations everywhere became "tight". Dead air became a curse avoided at all costs. Every second was filled with music or commercial and as little chatter, as little news as possible. Radio started to "drive" with a fast pace that made the personality of the announcer very difficult to perceive, it was the "sound" of the station that became important. Announcements and commercials that were once read by the person on the air were pre-recorded onto cartridges and plugged into the flow of the programming as easily as a record. It took nearly a decade for Drake to arrive in the Okanagan with all its driving force. CKOV's format adopted the cartridge technology but maintained a lot of the backfence informality and the live feeling that was removed from stations in major urban centres.

In the early Sixties, CKOV entered yet another field of broadcasting when it put CJOV-FM on the air. The new FM outlet allowed for the broadcasting of classical and

semi-classical music, longer album cuts and types of music that had lost their place when the Drake format pushed AM radio into the fast lane. Charles F. Patrick and Gloria Mildenberger, both well-known figures in Kelowna Little Theatre, both longtime CKOV employees, worked with the new FM outlet as it gradually shifted to an automated, pre-recorded, semi-classical format in the later years of the Sixties. Eventually CJOV-FM evolved into a station of its own, with its own staff, its own studios. In recent years the operation's call letters were changed to CHIM-FM, reflecting its unique broadcasting personality.

Among the baby boom teenagers and young adults was a third generation Browne, grandson of J.W.B. Browne and son of Jim Browne, Jr. Jamie's full-time involvement with CKOV began in 1968. Following in his grandfather's footsteps, he entered first radio programming and later moved to management. It is an unbroken family tradition unique to the history of Canadian radio.

Like his father and his grandfather before him, Jamie came into the business of broadcasting with his own individuality intact. Radio had changed a lot in the forty years since his grandfather had started the station, and it would change nearly as much in the next decade as it had in the first four.

When the influence of the Drake format finally took the Okanagan by storm, CKOV went as tightly-formatted as any station could possibly get. In 1968, every moment of the day, every commercial, every newscast, every weather report, every comment by an announcer was pre-recorded and fed into a fully-automated broadcasting system. The heart of the system was a bank of blue machines, primitive computers with carousels for the tape cartridges and a clock to schedule everything. Every spoken word was pre-recorded on a cartridge, including such mundane radio business as the time checks.

"It could do everything," Jamie Browne (Big Jim's grandson) remembers. "The idea was to free up people to find out more of what was happening in the community. But it was never as fast or efficient as it should have been. The automation was relatively accurate, but you could never leave it without being afraid something would go wrong. We also lost that personal contact with the radio audience. There was no announcer in the control room speaking to the listener individually. With the automated system, the

announcer was talking to a tape machine, talking to everyone in general and nobody in particular. It just didn't work. The same thing eventually happened to the Drake format in the early Seventies. It wore out and stations re-discovered the importance of the highly personalized style of radio."

The U.S. Space Program also had a powerful influence on radio toward the end of the Sixties. With its emphasis on miniaturization, the Apollo program gave the world the benign virus of innovation. Every car rolling down the assembly line had a radio in the dash as standard equipment.

Many teenagers on the beach held transistor radios or cassette recorders to their ears. Radio programming began to reflect the new listener as the Seventies arrived.

CKOV's influences during the Seventies, as always, came from around the world as new staff moved to the Okanagan to work in the Valley's relative peace and quiet. They brought CKOV their knowledge of the new solid state equipment, their ability to read surveys and fathom the needs of the audience. Some demonstrated an almost mystical sense for programming modern music. Studies across Canada showed that listeners wanted music, news, commercial information and strong personalities. Modern programming began to mix this concoction, supplying a little of everything every half hour. It fit the lifestyle on the go.

When CKIQ received its call letters in 1971, radio in the Okanagan moved into a new era. Prior to that time, the three AM stations in the Valley (CKOK, CKOV, CJIB) had never been more than loosely competitive, nobody had a signal strong enough to take listeners from anyone else. For the first time, an Okanagan station had competition in its own backyard, another station down the street chasing the same news stories, producing commercials for the same businesses, and struggling for the loyalty of the same listeners. In the past, CKOV's music programming had always had a bit of something for everyone, it was general, it waltzed down the middle of the road. Suddenly the station found it necessary to find its own audience and to understand how that audience was different from CKIQ's. It was, for the first time, necessary to specialize.

THE DAWNING OF RADIO'S AGE OF SPECIALIZATION

Space technology had two influential spinoffs that enabled CKOV to key into the changing times in a big way. The cassette recorder, compact and improved from its early models, became the cornerstone of a new type of broadcasting. News personnel were suddenly everywhere, thrusting microphones at the people making the news. CKOV extended its coverage, expanded its open line and became an aggressive gatherer of news. The second spinoff was the computer. Suddenly the grey humming boxes were working away in the corners of offices everywhere. As the Seventies unfolded, CKOV began to adapt computer technology to such mundane routine tasks as the compilation of its program logs, which are the heart of the broadcast day.

The task of scheduling commercials, newscasts, features and announcers at a radio station is called Traffic. Prior to the advent of the computer, traffic was a tedious, hand-written, boring job that sometimes occupied two CKOV staff members. The computer transformed a traffic manager into a computer operator and tied all of CKOV's departments into one cohesive whole. It simplified many of the procedures, it clarified data for all of the staff, and it even informed the sales department when there was additional time slots for sale.

In 1973 when the OPEC oil embargo drove the price of oil sky high, nobody in the broadcasting industry could predict how it would ultimately affect radio stations everywhere. As the price of oil went up, the price of polyvinylchloride (pvc), the plastic component of playing records also went into the clouds. To reduce their costs, record companies began to use recycled pvc and lower grade materials. By 1979, CKOV had begun to change from records to tape. The poor quality of the records made the move to tape necessary for the station to maintain a brightness to its sound.

"If you take a popular record," says Jamie Browne, and back-cue the record ten times during a week, you lose the first half bar of the music and the needle of the turntable gouges out the grooves of the record. Today 50 to 60 percent of our music is on cartridge and by 1982 we expect to have 90 percent on tape."

In 1979, along with the move to cartridge-recording for the music, CKOV's surveys and gut feelings indicated that there was a large, untapped audience for Country music in Kelowna.

"We surveyed about 500 people in the Kelowna area," says Jamie Browne. "They basically told us that - yes - they would listen to Country music, but it wasn't significant enough to turn around and change to Country overnight. The survey gave us an indication of what the public felt was missing from the marketplace. That reinforced our own gut feeling that now was the time to change. At that time, the three stations in Kelowna all sounded basically the same. Somebody had to break away and take the chance; either make it big or die. When you're in close touch with the listening audience, you get a feeling for what people want. We felt the time was right and we made the change."

Change, the constant in all things, brought new opportunities for women throughout Canadian society during the Seventies. In broadcasting, women proved they were men's equal on and off air. No longer relegated to the reception desk or the stenographers' pool, they gathered news, sold advertising and performed on air. Terese Elviss, for example, began at CKOV's reception desk and moved eventually into the key spot on the Open Line program. For the first time an Okanagan Open Line program was hosted by a woman.

CKOV: THE FUTURE

In 1981, work was begun on the new CKOV studios on one corner of the land where the transmitter is now located, signalling yet another step in the history that began in 1931. Within the walls of the station, CKOV will be endeavouring to adapt the state of the art technology to its programming.

"All of the equipment will be new," says Jamie Browne. "Basically it will do the same job as the equipment we are using today, but in some cases it will do the job faster, more consistently. Because everything has been miniaturized, you don't need as much space, but no matter how small the equipment gets you always need enough room for a man or woman to work comfortably. The building will be 11,000 square feet. The sound block will be on the outside walls. The announcing and news staff will have access to the outside through windows. We have designed the building around one word, Communication. We want the staff who communicate with the listening public to be able to see what's going on outside at any given moment. Inside the building we have designed the space so the people who work together most often are, of course, closest together. We operate 24 hours a day, seven days per week, twelve months per year, so we are designing the new facility to feel comfortable to the staff. There will be a garden and recreation area outside, with a courtyard in the centre of the building."

The biggest, most dramatic changes in radio during the Eighties will be in the handling of information. The Information Revolution, as some writers have called it, began in the Seventies and is starting to mushroom in the Eighties. Teledon, the Canadian cable system adapted by IT&T, is just one of the systems that will be feeding information into towns such as Kelowna during the Eighties. Every home will suddenly have access to libraries, films,

documentaries, research institutions and computer terminals all over the world. Broadcast News, the service that supplies CKOV with its national and international news stories, begins its satellite transmission in the fall of 1981. Each station on the service will have its own receiving dish and a high speed printer capable of printing 120 lines per minute. All of the stories will be coded and stations such as CKOV will be able to call up whatever stories they need for a particular newscast.

"There is still no computer program for local news," Jamie says regretfully. The industry will have to develop this during the Eighties. Broadcast News is having trouble finding a computer program to index the news it will be transmitting via satellite. The closest they have come is a program used for cross-indexing the legal libraries of Canadian universities."

The Information Revolution will also revolutionize the way radio stations in general and CKOV in particular program during the Eighties and beyond. With vast quantities of information feeding into cable-linked homes, newspapers, radio stations, television stations, and magazines are all expected to specialize, to focus their formats for increasingly smaller interest groups. This has already taken place in Canadian magazine publishing. Weekend Magazine and the Canadian Magazine both merged in the late Seventies as the demand for general-interest magazines declined. Runners are buying running magazines, sailors are buying sailing magazines, electronics nuts are buying electronics publications, women are buying women's magazines. No matter what the interest group, there is a publication specialized for the limited interests of that group. Radio in the Eighties is expected to follow suit.

Space technology, particularly the technology used for the Voyager and Marine probes to the planets, will again shape part of the way that radio sounds in the coming decades. Although digital encoding is still somewhat rare on popular recordings, it has the potential of offering the home listener a quality of music that has, until now, been limited to FM receivers. Through the digital process, all of the information of a particular song (the separation of the channels, the frequency range of the music, the rhythm, the vocals) can be programmed onto the record in the same way that similar information is programmed into a computer. A home receiver capable of decoding the digital signal can, in principal, receive a stereophonic, full-frequency

recording as good as anything that FM can offer. Digital has expanded AM radio's potential and people in the technical end of the business expect that digitally encoded microchips will ultimately replace the cassette tape.

That, however, is the future, and the future is always, at best, a big question mark. The history is somewhat easier to grasp than the future of any operation. In the beginning, the future of CKOV was never certain. It started in the Dirty Thirties, depression years when nobody with any sense should have been starting anything new. It survived and thrived, spawning other broadcasting ventures. Mrs. Tryphena Browne says that it was impossible to envision the changes, the growth that would take place in Kelowna and in CKOV between 1931 and 1981.

"I had no idea it would go fifty years," she says. "In fact, I never thought of it. My mind was taken up with other things all the time. It was quite a time, all the way through those years. It was something I wouldn't have missed for anything. It was a lot of fun."

- THE END -

Researched and written by J. Peter Shinnick, 1981