WBBM RADIO
Yesterday & Today

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Acknowledgments
WBBM Newsradio celebrates two milestones in 1988. It is the station’s 65th anniversary and 20th year in the Newsradio format.

The thread that connects WBBM’s past to the present is broadcasting innovation. The past includes only four major programming shifts. From 1932 to 1950 the station was known as the WBBM Air Theatre. From 1951 to 1964 WBBM became Chicago’s Showmanship Station, evolving into The Talk of Chicago from 1965 to 1968. On May 6, 1968 WBBM Newsradio 78 was born.

Only 14 of the country’s approximately 10,000 radio stations have more than one million listeners each week. And WBBM is one of those—with 1.3 million listeners in the Chicagoland area alone. Because of its powerful signal the station is also heard at night in 41 states and in several Canadian provinces.

The following words and pictures will take you from WBBM’s first broadcast from the basement of a family home to its current status as one of America’s most respected and influential radio stations.

Gregg Peterson
Vice President, General Manager
WBBM Radio
1911-1926:
HALFWAY BETWEEN PEORIA AND Springfield in the center of Illinois is the small town of Lincoln.

In 1911, two young men, boys really, began operating an amateur radio station in their Lincoln home. The "spark" (voiceless) station, 9DFC, was built and run by 17-year-old Les (H. Leslie) Atlass and his eight-year-old brother, Ralph.

The amateur station proved to be a popular and time-consuming pasttime for the Atlass boys and over the years their interest in radio grew, although they were asked by the government to cease operations during World War I for security reasons. In 1921 the station resumed operation with an amateur license and a 200 watt vacuum tube transmitter.

In the fall of 1923, Les, age 29 and well-established in the family business, and Ralph, 20, decided they would switch their amateur station to one that would broadcast to the public at large and so they applied to the government to cancel their hobby-like station 9DFC.

On November 14, 1923, the Frank Atlass Produce Company, (the family business) was licensed as a broadcasting station on the 226 meter wavelength (equal to 1330 kilocycles) with power of 200 watts.

The Radio Division of the Department of Commerce assigned the station the call letters WBBM.

WBBM'S FIRST FEW MONTHS OF operation were experimental, but it was not long before the station's first program went on the air, with little fanfare or
publicity, from the basement of the Atlass family home at 110 Park Place in Lincoln, Illinois, on April 14, 1924.

At about this same time, the boys’ father sold the family’s successful produce business to Armour and Company and moved the family to Chicago. Les and Ralph applied to the government requesting that the radio station be “abandoned” in Lincoln and asked that the WBBM call letters be retained for future use. These requests were granted on September 26, 1924.

After residing for a while at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago, the Atlass family moved to a fine home at 7421 Sheridan Road, and once again the basement became the headquarters for a radio station operated by Les and Ralph.

The government approved the station’s move to Chicago and WBBM went on the air with an increase in power to 500 watts, although the government had authorized an increase in power to as much as 1500 watts. During the fall and winter of 1924-25 the station was on the air Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evenings beginning at 8 pm. Programming consisted primarily of recorded music. The first record ever broadcast over WBBM was Barney Google (with the goo, goo googlie eyes), but it was mostly jazz music of the time that was heard by the relatively few listeners out there in Radioland.

ON FEBRUARY 25, 1925 THE NAME on Les and Ralph’s broadcast license was changed from Atlass Produce Company to Atlass Investment Company. By April, as more and more radio stations were being authorized by the government, WBBM was ordered to begin sharing its 1330 frequency with a new Chicago station, WIBO.

The Atlass brothers were by now anxious to move their radio station out of the basement of the family home and into more appropriate quarters. On June 4, 1925, WBBM began broadcasting from a new site, the Broadmoor Hotel, located at the corner of Howard and Bosworth in the Rogers Park area of Chicago’s north side.

The transmitter was located atop the hotel and the WBBM signal was sent out from a new inverted “L-type” antenna system, suspended between two steel masts, each 75 feet high. E. C. Paige was in charge of technical operations for WBBM while Ralph managed the station and Les became Vice President of Atlass Invest-
LES ATLASS WANTED LIVE ENTERTAINMENT rather than recorded music on WBBM every night, so he combed the Chicago area for talent. Among the personalities he brought to WBBM was a singer by the name of Charley Huey who was known as the Washerwoman of the Air.

Atlass also wanted a WBBM staff orchestra and he found one when he visited the fashionable Birchwood Country Club and heard Sturdevant's Birchwood Country Club Orchestra, a six piece aggregation featuring Clarence Schwarz at the piano, John Froelich on alto sax, Donald Winans on tenor sax, Roy Pietsch on trumpet, Wayne Osborne on the banjo and guitar, and Charles Abbott on the drums.

All WBBM broadcasts originated in a small, glass enclosed studio in the lobby of the Broadmoor Hotel. When the WBBM orchestra performed, as it did every Tuesday and Thursday evening from 8 to 11 pm, Les Atlass and his brother beamed as they peered through the glass to see the announcer seated at a small table in one corner, the pianist at a Gulbransen Baby Grand piano (with a microphone sitting on top to pick up all the music), the trumpeter squeezed between two sax players and the drummer with his rig, and the banjo player with his back to the far corner. The ensemble was crowded, but effectively arranged to get the best musical effects over the air.

DURING THE BROADMOOR DAYS, WBBM was the only Chicago station to air popular music on Sundays. It was said to be sacrilegious, but the show was very well liked.

The three-hour musical program regularly consisted of impromptu numbers by the orchestra and songs by visiting song pluggers, some stage and opera stars, and others who wandered into the hotel to display their talents for free on the exciting new medium known as radio. On "bad days," when no "free" talent showed up at the Broadmoor, announcer Charlie Garland and singer Kay Davidson had to do the same songs over and over since Charlie, who doubled as a pianist of sorts, could play only in the key of C.

Teenager Jean MacDonald of Evanston played a piano duet with her brother at the Broadmoor studio. She recalls, "They just put a mike on the piano and we played, with many boo-boos, I'm afraid. I think they were desperate."

In the early days at the Broadmoor, WBBM broadcasts were unrehearsed and spontaneous. But this practice would soon change, for it wasn't long before the Atlass brothers decided they needed to make the public more aware of their broadcasting efforts. In late 1925, they started publishing their schedule in the newspapers. To do this, programming had to be planned in advance. As the newspaper ads began bringing more listeners to the station, programming hours were expanded and a few sponsors were attracted to the station. Years later, Ralph Atlass remembered, "We were the first station in Chicago to take radio ads. Our first three accounts were Yellow Cab, World Storage Battery Company, and the Chicago Mercantile Company, a hatmaker. For $250, an advertiser got three hours of time, which included an orchestra, an announcer, about a dozen spot ads, and other expenses." These sponsors quickly felt the rewards of advertising on WBBM, which began using the motto, We Broadcast Broadmoor Music.
In those infant days of commercial radio, however, the Atlass brothers found it difficult to line up sponsors for their programming, a necessity for commercial success, especially since costs had climbed significantly with the move to the Broadmoor.

So, in 1926, Les and Ralph leased their broadcast time to the Stewart-Warner Speedometer Corporation in what would be termed a "time brokerage" arrangement today.

Stewart-Warner provided all the WBBM programming in an effort to increase sales of automobile and bicycle speedometers. The ownership of the station was retained by the Atlass Investment Company, but it was Stewart-Warner that became their sole sponsor, and it was Stewart-Warner that produced the programs.

WBBM maintained the studio at the Broadmoor Hotel, but the Stewart-Warner Corporation was not satisfied with the tiny, glass-enclosed facility the Atlass brothers provided and so they constructed a much larger one of their own at their plant on West Diversey Avenue. The walls of the Stewart-Warner studio were covered with acousti-celotex, a substance made from sugar cane fibers which absorbed fifty-five percent of outside sound while eliminating vibrations. Studio equipment consisted of two grand pianos, a harp, and an announcer's desk which was an exact replica of the desk used by George Washington during his presidency.

By July 1926, WBBM's motto was Stewart-Warner Air Theatre.
Leslie Atlass was a giant in the field of broadcasting, a radio pioneer who knew what he wanted and whose style of leadership brought the results he strived for.

He was born on November 29, 1894 in Lincoln, Illinois. He attended Lake Forest Academy and during World War I he served overseas as a signal corps officer in artillery operations. After his military service he rejoined his father's meat packing business in Lincoln and soon became president of the Frank Atlass Produce Company. In June, 1917, he married Harriet Marks, also of Lincoln, and they lived about a mile from the Atlass family home. Les and Harriet had three children: H. Leslie, Jr., Frank, and Harriet.
After several years of operating an amateur radio station in the basement of their family home, and believing in the future of radio as an entertainment medium, Les and his brother founded WBBM in 1923.

H. Leslie Atlass took the leadership role in the station from the beginning. And he continued to manage the station even after Columbia Broadcasting System purchased it in 1931. He possessed a sharp feel for innovation and he had vision. He originated remote broadcasts from ballrooms and hotels and brought entertainment to the living rooms of Chicagoans. As programs originated from different points across the city, he called on his technical staff to develop remote control lines which eventually ran from one end of Chicago to the other.

His philosophy was “nothing but the best for WBBM listeners” and he believed in taking them via their radios to wherever things were happening in Chicago. He originated remote broadcasts of Sunday morning church services. And the first airing of a West Coast football game was heard on WBBM with sportscaster Pat Flanagan at the microphone.

Atlass was able to make decisions clearly and rapidly and he knew how to allocate authority to responsible people. Those who worked for him put their hearts into their jobs and he commanded the respect of everyone.

He always demanded freshness in programming, a prime ingredient which paid dividends to WBBM and the Columbia Broadcasting System. He endorsed honesty in programming and believed that extra fuss and trimmings were unnecessary when real talent was available. He thought big and always employed the best talent he could find, accepting no substitutes.

Atlass listened constantly to his station. Whenever an error occurred, the responsible party was summoned to the telephone immediately, even if it was three o’clock in the morning.

He rewarded loyal employees and was often described as “a man who walked the store.” He usually was the first to arrive in the morning and he developed a ritual of carefully placing a fresh flower in the bud vases on the desks of every receptionist and secretary.

His sense of humor was vibrant and contagious. Frank Johnson, former building operations manager for WBBM, spent 40 years at the station, most of them working closely with Les Atlass. He recalls Atlass’ sense of humor:

“He had health problems, heart problems in later years. The doctors would caution him about drinking and smoking. One doctor even suggested that he not drink before five o’clock
in the evening. So those of us who worked around him were all presented with watches that read five o'clock all the way around!

"He also had a few little tricks he liked to pull," remembers Johnson. "Les Atlass would go through the station in the Wrigley Building and he would throw a paper clip into a light fixture and then he would keep track of how long it was 'til they got washed. He wanted the place immaculate and he got it that way. It was a good place to work.

"He insisted on proper dress at all times by everyone. He said the reason they paid for air conditioning was so people could wear shirts and ties and coats. He was a man of great propriety.

"Les Atlass was very fond of yachting," said Johnson. "He had a boat—a very large boat with a six man crew. On a nice day he would come into my office and say, 'Let's take one of the departments out to lunch today. Who do you want to take out today, the accounting department, the sales department, or what?' We would decide, then take them out for an afternoon on his boat.

"He had a great deal of autonomy. He was an extremely clever man and workaholic. He just had a tremendous drive to succeed in anything that he did. He had a mind that worked very rapidly. He was one of a kind. I've never worked with anybody or met anybody like him since.

"He would travel through the building at least once a day and sometimes up to several times a day and check with technicians or the pageboys or the mailroom people or sales. He was involved with the station thoroughly. He was there and he knew what was going on. And the employees liked him. He'd see a technician trying to fix a television monitor and he'd say, 'Well, you missed the most important thing. The first thing you should do is kick the set!' The technician would laugh and they'd have a good rapport."

Les Atlass was a very close friend of cowboy star Gene Autry, whose program for Wrigley's Gum occasionally originated in Chicago from the WBBM studios in the Wrigley Building.

Frank Johnson recalls that Atlass was an advisor to Autry, who also became very suc-
operated station, it was H. Leslie Atlass who constantly came through with the key sales that kept the network solvent.

According to writer Les Brown of Variety, the show business publication, it was through Atlass’ “ability to make money for the network, while at the same time spending lavishly for programming, that he acquired his power. That power reached its peak in the thirties, when he controlled the entire midwest for CBS.”

Brown called Atlass “One of the original ‘Think Big’ boys and his freedom with the buck was legend. But not the least of his talents was his knack of finding and developing future elder statesmen for the network. The pattern of their apprenticeships was nearly always the same. Atlass would baptize them in sales, move them up eventually as his assistants, and then farm them out to either Minneapolis or St. Louis stations as General Managers. New York grabbed them from there.”

As for Atlass himself, according to Brown, “He was content to remain in Chicago, where he was untouchable as far as the network was concerned. He maintained a yacht, the largest in the Chicago yacht complex, at company expense, and he ruled his shop as a king. Few loved him in the trade,” said Brown, “but he was universally admired as a businessman and broadcaster.”

H. Leslie Atlass sold his ownership in the station to CBS in 1931, but stayed on in various senior management positions until he retired from WBBM and CBS in November, 1959 when he reached the company’s mandatory retirement age of 65. He died a year later after suffering a fatal heart attack on his yacht which he had skippered down the Mississippi River to Florida. Before his death, Atlass had suffered five heart attacks in the previous five years.

On the evening of his death, November 18, 1960, WBBM Radio produced a documentary tribute to the station’s founder and longtime leader. During that broadcast, newsman-sportscaster John Harrington, who had worked with Atlass for 25 years, recalled the day he met the legendary Mr. A:

“I well remember the day he hired me in St. Louis. He had come down on one of the first American Airlines scheduled flights into St. Louis, and the airplane heat had gone out and it was about minus 20 degrees up where they were flying. Then, to make matters worse, after arriving at the St. Louis airport, he immediately got into a taxicab with no heat. So by the time he got to the Mart Building where Mr. Jack VanVolkenburg, who was one of his proteges, and I were waiting, he was so frozen stiff, that he was running into the office and jumped up onto the radiator. While he was standing on the radiator, Mr. VanVolkenburg said to me, ‘John, I would like you to meet the Boss. Here he stands.’ I had to reach up and shake hands with him. He looked at me and he said, ‘Hmmm, you’re a sportscaster, huh?’ ‘Well,’ I said, ‘I’m trying to be one.’ He said, ‘Well, report in Chicago on Monday morning.’ I asked what time and he said, ‘Anytime before noon.’ That’s the way I was hired, by a man standing on a radiator in the office of Mr. Van Volkenburg, who at that time was general manager of KMOX which was part of Mr. Atlass’ Central Division of the Columbia Broadcasting System.”

Harrington recalled how it seemed that everyone “the Boss” took an interest in went on to bigger and better things. He said that Gene Autry owes much of his success to Atlass. “Mr. A. once told me that the way he got to know Gene Autry was when Will Rogers made a stop here in Chicago and was talking to him about a cowboy he had heard out west. Rogers said, ‘I heard a telegrapher out there, who was
in a small railroad station, who thought he could sing. I think he has some possibilities and I think you ought to write him a letter and ask him to come in and sing.’ Mr. Atlass did write to him and from that came the famous Gene Autry.

‘Of course,’ said Harrington, ‘there was another story too, about the Boss. When he found out that Gene Autry was taking music lessons, he said, ‘You'll have to quit that or be fired, because you're going to spoil it, if you try to take singing lessons and learn to be a singer.’ I think Gene stopped taking singing lessons right then and there.”

DURING THAT SAME WBBM broadcast tribute to H. Leslie Atlass, WBBM salesman Don Mann spoke of Atlass, the man he had known during his last decade as General Manager and Vice President of WBBM. “He was one of the last rugged individualists in America. He never asked for any quarter nor gave any. He made many contributions to radio and television and was truly a perfectionist. Perhaps his greatest innate ability,” said Mann, “was the fact that when he retired, the organization did not flounder or fall apart. But rather, as the record shows, the organization went on to greater heights and accomplishments.”

Caesar Petrillo, WBBM’s long-time music director, hailed Atlass as a pioneer in broadcasting. “He loved being a part of it. He loved show business and the people in it. He always surrounded himself with the best in entertainment. He loved and insisted upon live entertainment. He believed that his listeners deserved much more than canned entertainment and he gave it to them. It was an honor and a privilege to have been associated with him.”

Newsman John Harrington recalled another Les Atlass story, one that happened many years before when Atlass was driving through a small town in his Stutz Bearcat automobile:

“Exceeding the speed limit somewhat, and that's an understatement, he was stopped by the constable when he had to wait for a freight train at a crossing. When taken to the police station, the Justice of the Peace told him it would cost him $50 for going so fast through town. Mr. Atlass handed the amazed man a hundred dollar bill and replied, 'You better take the hundred 'cause I'll be coming back through here in about four hours!’”

H. Leslie Atlass was to his employees and competitors alike, a controversial leader. In the business of radio he was a man who knew a good trend even before it started. He was not a conformist. He was, in fact, considered by many a maverick in the friendliest sense. Regarding his business acumen, it has been said by many that Mr. Atlass was wrong only about one tenth of one percent of the time. That may have been grossly exaggerated.
1927-1931: THE EARLY YEARS
WBBM increased its transmitting power to 1000 watts in the early months of 1927. In mid-year, by the time the arrangement with the Stewart-Warner Speedometer Corporation came to an end, WBBM had been moved from its 1330 position on the dial and had been reassigned to 770 kilocycles. The government also transferred radio station WIBO to another spot on the dial and ordered WBBM to share its new frequency with station WJBT, which had been granted a license to broadcast in June, 1926.

WJBT was licensed to John S. Boyd, secretary of the Union Stock Yards of Chicago, who had been operating an illegal (unlicensed) station for several months before being granted his official broadcast license. WJBT was assigned 500 watts of power at 640 kilocycles and when he went on the air legally, Boyd moved his transmitter "temporarily to the roof of the Broadmoor Hotel, adjacent to WBBM's antenna." By April, 1927, a Federal Radio Inspector's report indicated that "WJBT has not operated for more than 48 hours in its existence" and that its owner "desires the license for speculating purposes only, in hopes that it might be valuable later." The newly empowered Radio Commission told WJBT, in effect, to start broadcasting regularly or lose the license. The Commission reassigned the station to 770 kilocycles in June, 1927, and it began sharing time with WBBM. By the end of the year, WJBT was airing programs of the Chicago Gospel Temple.

WBBM's transmitter was moved from atop the Broadmoor Hotel building to a new site near Glenview, Illinois, 20 miles northwest of Chicago and power was raised to 5000 watts when the transmitter was first put into service in September, 1927. The station had applied for a power increase to 10,000 watts, but would have to wait for that wattage jump.

At the same time, an addition to WBBM's downtown studio facility, Studio Two, was being constructed for WBBM in downtown Chicago at Kimball Hall, 159 N. Michigan Avenue, while regular programming continued to originate from Studio One in the Broadmoor Hotel.

While WBBM retained its original time-share of the 770 frequency, WJBT was ordered to share its portion of that frequency with still another Chicago station, WAAF.

WAAF went on the air in May, 1922 and was licensed to Corn Belt Publishers, publishers of the Dover's Journal. Original studios were located in the Chicago Stock Yards and were later moved to the Palmer House, then to the LaSalle-Wacker Building in Chicago.

WBBM, having moved its transmitter to Glenview, in November, 1927, moved its studio from the Broadmoor to 306 S. Wabash Avenue, a downtown Chicago location not far from Kimball Hall. (WJBT also moved its studios to this site at about the same time.)

By this time the Birchwood Country Club Orchestra had moved on to other challenges. The station carried many band remotes from various cafes around the city. The popularity of these remotes once led the Atlass brothers to a conflict with the local musicians' union which stopped just short of violence. Ralph Atlass reflected on the situation some years later:

"We had to have a house band on the payroll whether they played or not. If we didn't do this, we couldn't pick up performances of the big bands, which were unionized. So we had a band on the payroll which we didn't even use, and then one day in about 1927, we decided to use them and found out they couldn't even read music. My brother appeared before the musicians' union board and there was a fracas caused by one band member. Later the president of the union came down to the station with some of his sluggers. This was a common thing in the industry at the time, and we were ready with some Pinkerton men. The presence of the Pinkerton boys was enough to keep a fight from breaking out, and eventually the non-music reading musicians were replaced by another 'house orchestra.'"
WITH A LIMITED BROADCAST DAY (due to the time-sharing with WJBT and WAAF), and a limited budget, WBBM provided both jazz and classical music, tenors and baritones, sopranos and altos, soloists and instrumentalists, pianists, and a constant parade of entertainers—mostly talented, mostly unpaid—who performed for listeners.

As far back as 1925, WBBM had an announced program policy which called for 95 percent musical entertainment, either vocal or instrumental. This policy was the result of thousands of letters sent to the station expressing a preference for music. And the policy was so well carried out that WBBM was called by listeners, the "station of the dance bands."

URING THE STATION'S INFANCY, two of WBBM's "hit" programs were The Nutty Club and a children's program, Joy Diggers Club.

The Nutty Club originated at the Granada Cafe on Chicago's south side and was heard each Saturday night from midnight until three in the morning. Celebrities took an informal part in this entertaining session which included both music and comedy. Among those who appeared on the program were Paul Whiteman, Helen Morgan, Guy Lombardo, Olsen and Johnson, and almost every other popular performer of the day who happened to stop in at the Cafe.

The Nutty Club boasted a listener membership of hundreds of thousands who wired in musical requests.

WBBM's Joy Digger Club was one of the first children's programs on the air. The motto of the Club was, "Dig a little joy out of everything each day; it's there if any of you dig deep enough." The Club was conducted by Nate Caldwell, who was known at the time for his peculiar style of "whisper singing" and his eccentric ditties.

THE PROGRAM CONSISTED OF songs, stories, and instrumental numbers, some of which were performed by children who were members of the Club. Boy Scouts took over the program once a week, and from time to time, prominent people gave short talks on subjects of interest to youngsters.

Membership cards were sent to listeners who wanted to join the Club. Dues consisted of one letter a month from each member.

Musical Comedy Memories was another early WBBM show. It was written by announcer Bob Brown, who prepared librettos for the show, which featured Belle Forbes Cutter. Don Amaizo, the Unknown Violinist was a daily show which featured a narrator telling a continuing story of the adventures of a handsome young violinist. After each episode, Don Amaizo played a musical piece on his violin, a selection that tied in with the story.

WBBM became an additional Chicago affiliate of the Columbia Broadcasting System on September 27, 1928. WMAQ, the Chicago Daily News station, was an affiliated station of the Columbia Broadcasting System from September 18, 1927, the date of Columbia's
charter network broadcast, until November 1931 when it joined the Red Network of the National Broadcasting Company. For a period of about three years, both WMAQ and WBBM carried Columbia network programming.

NOW, IN ADDITION TO LOCAL PROGRAMMING, WBBM was able to provide listeners with network broadcasts. The majority of these originated from New York, and consisted of popular music, but occasionally the station carried other Columbia affiliates whose various regional programs added to the variety.

Also in 1928, as more and more radio stations were being licensed, WBBM in Chicago and KFAB in Lincoln, Nebraska joined forces to solve a reception problem.

At night, when AM radio waves travel farthest, the signals of the two midwest stations, each sending out 5000 watts of power at 770 kilocycles, interfered with each other, distorting reception for listeners residing between the two cities.

In Iowa, for example, where people could hear both stations particularly well, especially after sundown, a problem developed with an echo effect during the evening hours. According to station engineers, it took network programs 34 milliseconds to go over network lines between Chicago and Lincoln, Nebraska. Listeners in between those two points would hear the WBBM broadcast first, then an instant later, the signal from Lincoln.

LES ATLASS AT WBBM AND THE automobile dealer who owned KFAB decided to share nighttime programming in order to provide a clear signal. Under this arrangement the two stations synchronized their late night programming each evening from sundown to 10 pm (when KFAB signed off).

The synchronization system was devised to eliminate the echo effect. WBBM engineers built a series of 19 amplifiers, coils, and condenser units through which the network feed was piped and which effectively delayed the program some 35 milliseconds. With network programming going to the WBBM transmitter through this delay system, taking about the same amount of time it took the network shows to get to Lincoln, the problem was solved.

Plush WBBM studio in the Wrigley Building.
THERE WAS, OF COURSE, THE ADDITIONAL problem of the period of time between network shows used for local station identification. The network allowed 30 seconds of time between each CBS show. WBBM took half of that and KFAB the other half. Following the conclusion of each network broadcast, usually with the announcer saying, “This is the Columbia Broadcasting System,” theme music would play for an additional 15 seconds. During that 15-second period, KFAB would do its station break while WBBM simply carried the extended theme. Then, during the final half of the 30-second break, WBBM would give its call letters and station identification while KFAB simply carried dead air.

WBBM, incidentally, paid KFAB to sign off at 10 pm (after network programming had concluded for the evening) so WBBM’s local programs could be heard without “competition” from KFAB, and listeners throughout the Midwest could tune in without interference to the many band remotes the station carried.

The Federal Radio Commission became interested in this project in 1933 and made an exhaustive study of the synchronization of the two high-powered broadcast stations, by this time each carrying duplicate Columbia Network programming. The entire engineering cost of the experiment was borne by WBBM and all of the facts pertaining to the operation were supplied to the Commission on a monthly basis.

In November, 1928, WAAF was reassigned from the 770 spot on the dial, leaving only WJBT to share that kilocycle position with WBBM.

FEW MONTHS LATER, IN MARCH, 1929, WBBM received permission from the government to increase its power to 10,000 watts at the station’s Glenview transmitter. At this time, the station physically moved all of its studio facilities to the prestigious Wrigley Building located at 410 N. Michigan, on the west side of Michigan Boulevard at the Chicago River, just north of the Boulevard Bridge.

The Atlasm Investment Company, Inc. purchased station WJBT from John S. Boyd, also moving that station’s studio to the Wrigley Building, and by mid-summer relocated WJBT’s transmitter from atop the Broadmoor Hotel to the site of WBBM’s transmitting plant in Glenview. WJBT’s power was increased to 10,000 watts, but the station was on the air only a few hours each week, using WBBM’s technical facilities, yet still retaining a separate license.

ON MARCH 13, 1930, STATION WJBT was consolidated with WBBM to form one full-time station, called WBBM-WJBT. (Most station mergers or consolidations in the 20’s and 30’s used hyphenated call letters.) WBBM-WJBT settled into a varied program format that included many locally originated programs of music and variety plus much of the Columbia Broadcasting System’s network offerings. These CBS shows featured Guy
Lombardo and his Royal Canadians (on the air for Robert Burns Cigars every Monday night at 9); Paul Whiteman and his Orchestra (for Old Gold Cigarettes each Tuesday at 8 pm); tenor Morton Downey (four times a week at 6 pm); Tony Wons’ Scrapbook (poetry readings weekday mornings at 7 am); H. V. Kaltenborn with the news (three times a week at 7:15 pm); True Detective Mysteries (broadcast Thursdays at 8 pm); and the Lutheran Hour (Thursdays at 9 pm).

Sunday morning services from a number of Midwest churches were broadcast on WBBM-WJBT, and on Sunday nights listeners tuned in to hear Columbia network offerings which featured controversial Catholic priest Father Francis Coughlin and evangelist Billy Sunday and his Back Home Hour.

Sandwiched in between the Sunday serving of religious programs, was the New York Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Arturo Toscanini (who later joined NBC) with a weekly two-hour concert.
On weekdays, listeners tuned in to WBBM-WJBT for the Adventures of Helen and Mary, the DuBarry Beauty School, the Women's Radio Institute, and Evangeline Adams with a thrice-weekly astrology program, all Columbia network offerings.

The network had acquired its first station, WABC in New York, in 1928 and was now seeking to expand by purchasing significant stations across the country. WBBM-WJBT was a major station in the Midwest and Columbia president William S. Paley entered into negotiations with H. Leslie Atlass to bring the station into the ownership of the network. In early 1931 the Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc. purchased WBBM, and Les Atlass was retained to manage the station as Vice President for CBS in Chicago. He was guaranteed a lifetime job as part of the original transaction. At about the same time, Ralph Atlass left WBBM and acquired part ownership of a station in Gary, Indiana, WJKS, which later became WIND.

In the fall of 1931 Columbia dropped WMAQ from its roster of affiliates. (WMAQ had been sharing CBS programs with WBBM, but now switched its allegiance to NBC.) By April, 1932, the hyphenated call letters WBBM-WJBT were discarded. The new Columbia Broadcasting System station in Chicago was now known as WBBM, with the slogan, World's Best Broadcast Medium.
Technician Paul Heyn retired from WBBM on April 18, 1987, “44 years, 5 months and 10 days” after he came to the station on November 8, 1942. He was Chief Engineer for WBBM from 1963 to 1969.

Prior to joining WBBM, Heyn had worked since 1940 for WMBI, the Moody Bible Institute station in Chicago. He was about to be married, the war had begun and he was classified 4-F for medical reasons. With his forthcoming marriage, Heyn knew that he needed to improve his salary from the $125 a month he was then earning. A friend told him of a possible opening at WBBM, so he applied and was hired at $49.50 per week.

Heyn’s first WBBM assignment was to engineer remote broadcasts. In the following account, Paul Heyn recalls his years with WBBM and the changes he saw while employed there.

PAUL HEYN REMEMBERS

I WAS TAKEN AROUND TO VARIOUS remotes and we had to carry along a portable amplifier and, in some cases, the power supply. The amp and the power supply each weighed about 25 or 30 pounds and you carried them one under each arm to balance the load.

My first assignment was with a fellow by the name of Christy Flynn. We went over to an interview with someone in one of the buildings in the Old Post Office area. We had to go up several flights of stairs carrying this gear, but I was a young buck then and able to handle that sort of thing without too much trouble.

We used to be sent down to the Home Arts Guild with Harold Isbell. This was a company that promoted various home products, and they would hold a luncheon and Isbell would
interview the various women who attended. The program was piped back by line to the Wrigley Building and was recorded directly on a disc there. We had to coordinate with the fellow who was doing the recording which would eventually play on the air later. It didn’t go on the air directly. This was one of WBBM’s many local programs.

I remember airing a program with Fran Allison before she ever got involved with Kukla, Fran and Ollie on TV. She played the piano and sang. I remember engineering a soap opera up there in Studio Nine, in the control room behind the glass. I usually filled in for one of the regulars who was on vacation. We had plenty of time to learn the show. We had rehearsal periods all the time.

The WBBM Air Theatre had quite a number of broadcast studios. Master Control was in the basement of the Wrigley Building and there was Studio Three, another basement studio adjacent to Master Control. It had a pipe organ and eventually became the music library. But at the time I joined WBBM it was an organ studio—a large studio, M-7, where the announcers stationed themselves for network breaks when we carried network programs.

On the first floor we had Studio Ten, a large audience studio seating perhaps 150 people. It had a balcony with a control room. There was also a series of clients’ booths at the back end of the balcony. Each had a loud speaker and they were isolated from the general noises of the studio, except for whatever was picked up by the microphones. I used to do a number of shows out of there.

Two of the shows that originated from Studio Ten were That Brewster Boy and Jobs For GI Joe with Paul Harvey when he was just starting in the business. This second show was a job-seeking program for GIs who had been discharged from the Army and were looking to reestablish their lives. They would come on the program and describe their qualifications, and employers seeking this type of individual would call in. It proved to be very effective. We would also air the Gene Autry Show whenever he was in town and for a while, I believe, we did First Nighter out of there.

I had a lot to do with setting up the audience studio for a broadcast. In those days the microphones were always returned to the shop and stored in canvas bags. They simply didn’t let them stay around the

Paul Heyn.
studio. That became one of the jobs for the technicians when setting up the studio. The microphones were brought up from the shop and set up on stands. We hardly ever had any table microphones, but we had microphone booms. We could rig microphones up on those booms and then set up perhaps one or two mikes for the orchestra, depending on what we had, and one for sound effects, one for the announcer, and another for the dramatic pieces. Usually eight to ten mikes would take care of a good-sized dramatic show. We would also have a microphone for the audience, hanging overhead and patched into the control booth.

It would take about half-an-hour to set up Studio Ten for a full audience broadcast; I was always given plenty of time—several hours. After you set it up, the director would get the cast assembled and then do a little orchestra rehearsal. We would get a microphone balance on the orchestra, seeing where the mikes would be best placed. Caesar Petrillo, the staff band director, would look that over and have the orchestra play for him to hear what the pick-up sounded like.

Caesar Petrillo.
STUDIO TWO, ABOUT 35 BY 40 FEET square, was also on the main floor of the Wrigley Building. Across the hall was another large studio, Studio One. The orchestra broadcasts usually came out of Studio One and Studio Ten. At the time I came to WBBM, Ben Bernie was on the air for the Wrigley Chewing Gum people. He conducted the orchestra out of Studio One at about 4:45 in the afternoon.

On the second floor we had Studio Eight and Studio Nine on one end of the hall and Studios Five and Six at the other end.

From one of those studios I was privileged to operate, as far as radio is concerned, one of the most famous shows of all time, Amos 'n' Andy. Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, broadcasting for 15 minutes every night, did not like to have people watching them when they were reading their script. They just lost themselves in the script portraying these characters and simply didn't want more people watching than was necessary. Consequently, they would permit no guests whatsoever, not even Mr. Atlas! The announcer, Del Sharbutt, for Campbell Soups, was located in the studio down in the basement, the organ studio, Studio Three. They played the organ music and the theme song from there. It was just Amos 'n' Andy 'n' me, the technician. I don't even recall a producer with me. He was downstairs, too, I think. It was up to me to give them their cue. They seemed to operate independently and knew exactly when they were to come in. They continued on until they finished up their little bit, then the cue was natural for the announcer to take over.

COLUMBIA RECORDS USED STILL another studio on the second floor of the Wrigley Building. Studio Twelve was in the middle of the floor and available to us, but Columbia used it for group recordings from time to time. It was a separate operation, just meant for recording purposes, although I did do a show out of there every Sunday afternoon. It was a little five-minute piece for Quaker Oats with a fellow by the name of John Nesbitt. It was a lively little skit—fast-moving. In five minutes it was all over with... snap! snap! snap! It was quite a thrill to do that show because it really moved like sixty.

The soup that made Campbell's a household word

Just think it! You'll marvel at once why it is so famous! The rich, heartwarming, the luxurious, the delectable, every pot of the famous

Ain't it grand when you can have the Campbell's Tomato Soup... rung up in your grocery store? Why, just think of it, every

It's the taste people love! 

Campbell's has a greater following than any other canned soup! It's a household word! It makes your table sparkle with recherché flavor! It's so heartwarming, so wholesome, so dependable that you can trust its taste every time.

Meal-planning is easier with daily choices from Campbell's. 21 A

Early Sponsor.
During World War II I did a show called *America In The Air*, a dramatic presentation of the various battles that had been going on in the Pacific and elsewhere. It was a lot of boom! boom! with the sound effects, and the orchestra adding the various accents to the dramatic scenes. On this show I recall working with Mike Wallace in 1944 and there was another chap who used to show up, Buddy Clark, who was a vocalist. He would take bit parts. A lot of acting parts were available at WBBM.

For *America In The Air*, we would rehearse all afternoon and then the show would go on the air around five or five-thirty for half-an-hour. It was directed by a chap by the name of Les Weinrott, a rather well-known producer in Chicago at the time. He was a good director, an ace, a real professional. I enjoyed working with him. This show was also fast moving. It was a technician’s nightmare, though. You’d have to use 10 microphones!

After the show we went out for dinner. Caesar Petrillo and a number of the fellows in the band were Italian and so we’d go to some Italian restaurant on Taylor Street. Scrumptious food! Then we’d come back in the evening and repeat the whole show for the West Coast, live. It was not a matter of recording it and then playing the recording for the West Coast.

**CAESAR PETRILLO AND THE WBBM staff orchestra would play all the big shows, but would also be on stand-by to play for sustaining shows on the network when the network didn’t have any sponsored programs. Caesar was the brother of the president of the Musicians’ Union, James C. Petrillo.**

Sometimes, particularly at night, we would maintain a few members of the staff orchestra in case the dance band remote line failed. If that happened, we would bring in the orchestra to fill in.

Playing recordings on the network was taboo. And we really didn’t start doing that until we had Daylight Savings Time.

Shortly after the war, CBS decided it had a problem with areas in the country which stayed on Standard Time while the network programs were being broadcast at Daylight Time. So there was a shift and CBS chose WBBM as a recording point. The network programs were all fed into ‘BBM and recorded first on 16-inch transcription discs. We had a separate little room and we’d record them in duplicate. We had four lathes on which to record the continuous programs throughout the day. And, as we recorded, we would take the discs to the outside hall where we had eight turntables situated for a Musicians’ Union man to play back to the network. Eventually we went from disc recording to Ampex tape and then we replaced all the machines with tape machines for recording and playback.

I worked many of the dance band remotes. I worked in the evening from five until one, or from six to two in the morning. They really needed me only for the dance band remotes starting around 10 pm. I’d usually go to one remote site an evening, places such as the Melody Mill Ballroom, the Latin Quarter, the Pump Room, the LaSalle Hotel, the Band Box, the London House, the Drake, the Aragon, and the Millford Ballroom.

**NE OR THE THINGS THAT WBBM management used to tell us was that when you go into a hotel with your amplifier, you should get a bellboy to carry the**

![Tommy Dorsey](image)
amp into the ballroom or wherever the program was being performed. They did not want us to tote that big, heavy amplifier through the lobby. The reason for that was simple. If you brushed up against somebody, carrying that amplifier, and perhaps they'd be injured or bruised or something like that, they would come after CBS. It was better to pay the bellboy, and if he had any accidents, running into people in the lobby or something, it was the hotel’s problem. So we were given an expense account and you would put down “Bellboy tip” or “carrying the luggage.” I can still see that amplifier box, a bruiser, about 18 inches long and six or eight inches square, in a lead-lined case which also contained several vacuum tubes and so forth.

I was usually the only technician at a band remote. The announcer stayed back at the studio. I carried three or four mikes, and the microphone stands were usually kept at the hotel. The amp was battery-operated and we had a storage battery system kept in a huge box, which was usually parked permanently at the remote location. You had to set up the cords and place the microphones in the various positions around the band, then hook up the amplifier to the telephone line and then call in to the station. We had a small, ringing amplifier that rang in the Master Control room.

Then we would check in with the booth announcer and go over the numbers. We had a clearance sheet that we presented to the orchestra leader, showing the numbers that were scheduled to be played on the air. We would have to get all that information straightened out. We were required to be set up half-an-hour before broadcast.

There were two broadcast lines from the remote site to WBBM, a program line and a cue line. They had a system of relays at the studio that permitted you to hear your own program coming back from the studio. After it went to the studio, it filtered through the board and then came down the cue line. I could hear the announcer at the studio introduce the number, then I would point to the orchestra leader to pick up the cue and he’d start playing. I worked with Tommy Dorsey, Ray Pearl, Wayne King and many others.

The band remotes were on practically every night. They would start about 11 pm with perhaps a network show, then we’d take over from 11:30 to midnight, perhaps feeding to the network. After midnight, there would be no more network, but we would carry on for another hour or so.

There were close to 40 people on the technical staff, including seven guys who were out at the transmitter. They had two fellows on duty all day long at the transmitter, seven days a week. But late night hours they would have only one guy out there, after the station’s commercial responsibility was over. If anything happened out there, no one was ever permitted to enter the transmitter cubicles or touch any of the gear inside, unless another man was there.

Those were fun, rewarding days. Never a dull moment.
1932-1950: THE WBBM AIR THEATER
WBBM was very much at home with studios and offices in the Wrigley Building, the illuminated Chicago landmark at the foot of the Magnificent Mile of North Michigan Avenue.

By mid-1932, in Glenview, WBBM’s transmitter utilized a “T-type” flattop antenna system supported by two, 305-foot towers.

The Columbia Broadcasting System and WBBM were good for each other and the station thrived under the capable direction of H. Leslie Atlass, who was a “hands on” manager. He knew the intimate operation of every department from sales to engineering to programming. He had grown up with the station and knew how it worked and what made it work.

Particularly interested in programming, Atlass had developed (with the financial resources of the Columbia network) a fine staff of local announcers and performers who gave a richness to WBBM that few other stations in Chicago and across the country could match. In the early 1930s, the WBBM announcing staff included Harlow Wilcox (who went on to become one of the nation’s premiere announcers, most notably as the Johnson’s Wax salesman on Fibber McGee and Molly broadcasts), Norman Barry (who later joined the NBC staff in Chicago), Jean Paul King, Harold Fair, Holland Engle (who in later years was a fixture at WGN) and news commentator Harry Steele.

Pat Flanagan was the resident sportscaster and he reported the play-by-play action to listeners of Chicago Cubs games on WBBM. During the baseball season Walgreen Drug Stores sponsored Flanagan’s Sports Hunches program for 15 minutes before each game and during the 15 minute intermission between double headers.

WBBM, of course, had its own studio orchestra and Howard Neumiller was musical director with Billy Mills and Joe Ainley, who were musical production men. (Billy Mills had worked for the Isham Jones band as arranger and had his own orchestra in Chicago in the early 1920s. He later went from WBBM to the Columbia Broadcasting System on the West Coast, Sophie Tucker, Eddie Cantor, Billy Mills)
Coast as general musical director of the Western Division of CBS. In 1938 he became the band leader for Fibber McGee and Molly on NBC.

Among vocal talent presented to WBBM listeners during the early and mid-1930s were Jack Brooks ("Song Souvenirs"); Lee Morse ("Decorative little red-haired singer of Musical Comedy fame"); Jack Burnett ("Dark and handsome tenor with the high-pitched voice"); Billy Scott ("The Southern Gentleman of Song"); Italian baritone Mario Fiorella; Harriet Cruise ("That shy little girl from Nebraska"); and the Masqueraders (a "Quartet of young College men" which included William Ross, University of Chicago, first tenor; Roger Robinson, Northwestern University, baritone; and Winford Stracke, University of Iowa, bass. Win Stracke later ventured forth on his own as a folk singer of some reknown and appeared in the early 1950s on Chicago and network television on Stud's Place and Hawkins Falls).

Jumping on the WBBM Bandwagon were a cavalcade of big-name orchestras, all broadcasting from remote locations in and around the Chicago area. Ace Brigode was on the bandstand at the Merry Gardens and Husk O'Hare, the "Genial Gentleman of the Air" beamed his special brand of music to listeners from the Canton Tea Garden during luncheon and late evening broadcasts. Johnny Hemp and his Orchestra and Clyde Lucas and his California Dons were heard from the LaSalle Hotel. Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians and Ted Lewis and his Orchestra would broadcast frequently from the Wisconsin Dells. (Lombardo was featured on the Columbia network every New Year's Eve with a remote from the Hotel Roosevelt in New York City).

Sophie Tucker, Last of the Red-Hot Mamas, was the featured headliner on a special WBBM broadcast on July 13, 1933 while the popular entertainer was appearing in the Windy City. Also that year, in another special program, this time from the Century of Progress World's Fair, WBBM presented a quarter-hour portion of the Grand Army of the Republic Day at the Fair, with speeches and musical entertainment provided by the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs' Chorus.

But there was more than music on H. Leslie Atliss' station, now called the WBBM Air Theatre broadcasting from the Wrigley Building in Chicago.

Actor Hugh Studebaker was the star of a weekly program for children entitled Multi, the Man of Magic. It was about Multi's experiences in the Himalayan Mountains, where the "crazed inventor" of "Wings of Doom" was the source of mystery and trouble. (Studebaker went on to become the leading character, Dr. Bob Graham, in the long-running daytime serial Bachelor's Children, and as a host of other characters on other radio programs including Captain Midnight, Fibber McGee, Guiding Light, Right to Happiness, Road of Life, and Woman In White.)

Growin' Up, a Monday through Friday radio serial of "modern youth" was based on the exploits of young teenagers in a "modern day American city." Johnson & Johnson Products sponsored this "ever-fascinating story of youth finding its way in life."

Crazy Water Crystals was the sponsor of J. B. and Mae, a nightly dramatic serial which was considered unusual in that the sponsor's...
message came in the middle of two short acts, rather than at the beginning and end of the program.

*Grandpa Burton's Stories* was a late afternoon feature every Monday and Wednesday with personality Bill Barr, who narrated adventures of interest to both youngsters and adults.

*The Count of Monte Cristo* was an ambitious dramatization of the popular Alexander Dumas story featuring WBBM staff and local freelance radio actors.

*Child Actress Mitzi Green* appeared in *Happy Landings*, a serial for children; Jerry Sullivan presented a daily program of old songs; and Chicago favorites Eddie and Fanny Cavanaugh were on every weekday at 1 pm, sponsored by Broadcast Brand Corned Beef Hash, with a program of comedy, songs and humorous rhymes submitted by listeners.

These and other local WBBM shows were woven in and around such CBS network offerings as *The Voice of Experience*, an advice program conducted by Dr. Marion Sayle Taylor; *Tito Guizar and his Guitar, The Songs of Morton Downey; Don Ross, the Pontiac Minstrel*; and commentaries by Boake Carter and Edwin C. Hill. Comedy was provided by George Burns and Gracie Allen; Colonel Stoopnagle and Budd; and Fred Allen with the *Linit Bath Club Revue*, sponsored by *Linit Bath Oil*.

Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll starred as *Amos 'n' Andy*. Singer Jane Froman headed her own musical variety show featuring a group known as the *Snow Queens*, and Dick Powell appeared in a program with *Ted FioRita and his Orchestra*.

Arie, THE LITTLE FRENCH Princess was heard daily at noon and Smilin' Ed McConnell was also a regular weekday feature (before he developed the Buster Brown Gang with Froggy the Gremlin, Midnight the Cat and Squeeky the Mouse).

Comic strips jumped from the funny pages to the mind's eye when CBS presented Buck Rogers in the 25th Century, sponsored by Cocomalt.

WBBM created a number of programs for local broadcast that were deemed good enough to be presented on the entire Columbia network.

One of these programs was Skippy, with Franklin Adams, Jr. in the role created in the comics by Percy Crosby. Another was Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy in which Jim Ameche starred as the teenager who waved the flag for Hudson High in the adventure show sponsored by Wheaties, "Breakfast of Champions."

Myrt and Marge found its way to network exposure via WBBM. Myrtle Vail and Donna Damerel Fick appeared as sisters in show business, one a trouper, the other a newcomer to backstage life. In real life, Donna was actually the daughter of Myrtle.

Writer Goodman Ace and His wife Jane created Easy Aces for a local station in Kansas City in 1930, and a year later moved to Chicago where WBBM became the home for their popular show, heard on the full CBS network for many years.

In 1935, the Federal Communications Commission granted permission to WBBM to raise power from 25,000 watts to the maximum allowable 50,000 watts. The following year all CBS operations in Chicago, network sales, network administrative offices, and the offices and studios of WBBM, were consolidated into the first three floors of the Wrigley Building. Improvements at the WBBM Air Theatre, at a cost of about $160,000, included a 200-seat auditorium studio on the first floor (where the Wrigley Building Restaurant is located today) and main studios on the second floor. There were 12 studios in all.

With the expansion of studio facilities in the late 1930s, WBBM was better able to handle the growing list of locally produced programs. The station was producing 10 quarter-hour programs each weekday and seven nighttime programs each week for the Columbia network.

Sound effects were essential to comedy or dramatic programs and WBBM boasted a fine department devoted to these image creating devices. Urban Johnson was head of the WBBM Sound Effects Division. One of the first men to organize a sound effects department in Chicago, Johnson was a former drummer and had five other musicians working for him as sound men. It was not necessary to be a musician to become a sound effects man, but
Johnson felt that musicians possessed an accuracy for cues and the sense of rhythm necessary for that line of work.

For example, to provide an accurate effect of the routine of a chorus tap dance over the air, four sound men, each grasping a pair of ladies' cleated slippers, tapped out the dance from drum notes placed before them. Various horses' hooves effects were produced by rhythmically slapping down a pair of coconut shells on different bases. For a horse traveling over pavement, hard, thick linoleum was used for the "ground." Authentic gravel, placed in boxes, formed the "footing" for that specific type of road. A horse galloping over turf was successfully simulated by using soft rubber pads as the base. The operator's sense of rhythm played an important role in effectively producing those sound effects.

WBBM's basement sound effects laboratory in the Wrigley Building resembled an antique shop, with shelves holding everything from pistols to chinaware. Before an effect was built, it had to be carefully planned and clearly out-
lined. After the contraption to be used was constructed and tested, it was brought to a studio and retested in various positions around the microphone. The sensitive mechanism of the microphone reacted peculiarly to sound effects and sometimes it was necessary to experiment for a long time before a proper registration could be assured.

Among the interesting devices found in the WBBM Sound Effects Department were three “elevator motors” enclosed in box-like compartments and operated by push buttons. Each motor represented a type of building in which the scenes of the drama would take place. A soft purr and whiz signified a modern building. A slow, sluggish sound indicated an antiquated structure, while a coarse, jolting movement represented a freight elevator used in factories or warehouse scenes.

Another device produced the effect of a horse pulling a wagon over a rough road. The object was 16 inches high and was composed of a toy-like jolting cart which traveled over a wooden roller when the apparatus was propelled by a hand crank. Two coconut shells at the front of the device produced the clattering of the horse's hooves. The effect of a wagon being pulled over a smooth-surfaced road merely involved replacing the clumsy cart with a rubber-wheeled doll buggy.

Hundreds of other devices were part of the WBBM sound effects lab. Some were invented in the department while others were authentic articles. There were 60 types of bells, ranging from fire truck gongs to jingle bells; dozens of clocks whose tickings were used to create atmosphere; and 25 auto horns, dating from a 1904 Maxwell to modern dual-blast horns.

The department also had a turkey claw which, when scraped against a wooden surface, reproduced the effect of a dog scratching on a door. An authentic telephone ring was produced by actually ringing a telephone.

Less than half the sounds needed for broadcasts were represented by objects in the laboratory. Two thousand records in another section of the department produced “larger” sounds for broadcast. Some were purchased from firms that manufactured them and others were made by WBBM’s portable recording studio which traveled about the city to pick up sounds required by the department. At one time the traveling studio made a trip to the country, setting up its equipment in a farmer’s barn to record the cooing of hundreds of pigeons required for a church belfry scene. Another trip was made to Gary, Indiana to record the authentic roar of a blast furnace in a steel mill.

Dozens of Chicago radio actors and actresses found themselves in the studios of the WBBM Air Theatre, Wrigley Building, Chicago, where writers were grinding out scripts for such daytime dramas as Oxydol’s “mother of the air” Ma Perkins, starring Virginia Payne, Rita Ascut and Charles Egleston; Bachelor’s Children with Hugh Studebaker, Olan Soule and Charles Flynn (who succeeded Jim Ameche as Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy); Betty and Bob with Elizabeth Reller and Les Tremayne; Arnold Grimm’s Daughters featuring Betty Lou Gerson and Ed Prentiss (who was also Captain Midnight on WGN-Mutual); Kitty Keene, Inc. with Beverly Younger and Bob Bailey (who later became Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar); and Kay Fairchild, Stepmother star-
Above:

Middle, left: Myrt and Marge
Myrtle Vail and Donna Damerali Fick.

Middle, right: Virginia Payne as "Ma Perkins," with Murray Forbes and Charles Egelston.

Bottom: Sound effects technician in action on WBEM dramatic program.
ring Sunda Love, Marvin Miller, Francis X. Bushman (a star of the silent screen) and Willard Waterman (who eventually became the Great Gildersleeve); the Romance of Helen Trent featuring Virginia Clark as the woman who, "...when real life mocks her, breaks her hopes, dashes her against the rocks of despair ...fights back bravely, successfully, to prove what so many women long to prove in their own lives: that because a woman is 35, and more, romance in life need not be over; that romance of youth can extend into middle life, and even beyond..."

Daytime listeners to WBBM were able to hear those Chicago-originated soap operas as well as other network fare from CBS, including Big Sister; Aunt Jenny's Real Life Stories; The Goldbergs; Our Gal Sunday, Road of Life; and Valiant Lady. Plus Betty Crocker for General Mills (from Chicago) and Mary Lee Taylor for Pet Milk (from New York) offering "kitchen-tested" recipes for homemakers while Mary Margaret McBride conducted interviews with fascinating guests of interest for a large, daytime, audience of women at home.

For local listeners only, WBBM presented The Musical Clock, an early morning program; The Rhymsters with Eddie and Fanny Cavanaugh; and Meet The Missus, an audience participation show. WBBM Music Director Howard Neumiller was at the piano with a late afternoon interlude of musical favorites.

Pat, Pat Padgett and Pick Malone, who went on the air as minstrel comics for the Model Tobacco Company, selling Dill's Best.

Tuesday evenings found WBBM's ever-growing audience tuning in and enjoying Edward G. Robinson starring as Steve Wilson, crusading editor of the Illustrated Press on Big Town, sponsored by Rinso; Al Jolson and the Lifebuoy Show; Al Pearce and his Gang (with Pearce starring as Elmer Blurt, the reluctant salesman: "Nobody home, I hope, I hope"); plus Jack Oakie's College and Benny Goodman's Swing School, both on the air for Camel Cigarettes.

Eddie Cantor was the network headliner on Wednesday nights with his Texaco Program, followed by Gangbusters, the G-Man show which dramatized closed FBI files (with the permission of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover). Palmolive Soap picked up the tab for Gangbusters.

The Kate Smith Hour featured the popular singer in a program of music, comedy guests and dramatic sketches every Thursday evening, followed by an hour of amateur talent.
Top: Jack Oakie.
Bottom: Powell with Frances Langford.

Top: Paul Whiteman,
the King of Jazz.
Bottom: Major Edward Bowes.

OUTSTANDING DECCA RECORDS
by DICK POWELL

3266 DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP
SONG OF THE MARINES
2013 ON WISCONSIN
THE EYES OF TEXAS ARE UPON YOU
2024 STEIN SONG
THE ILLINOIS LOYALTY SONG
2025 VICTORY MARCH
RAMBLING WRECK FROM GEORGIA TECH
2075 THE MARINES' HYMN
THE ARMY AIR CORPS
3267 ON BRAVE OLD AMERICA
SEMPER PARATUS
gathered before the microphones by Major Edward Bowes who, if he felt an amateur wasn't quite ready for the "big time," would hit a large gong, signaling an abrupt end to the aspiring newcomer's career. Calumet Baking Powder was Kate Smith's sponsor and the Amateur Hour was the radio showcase for products manufactured by the Chrysler Corporation.

On Friday nights, Paul Whiteman and his Orchestra performed on the air for Chesterfield Cigarettes, and the Campbell Soup Company presented Hollywood Hotel starring Dick Powell with gossip columnist Louella Parsons and a raft of celebrity guests.

Your Hit Parade, sponsored by Lucky Strike Cigarettes, was the big hour on Saturday night, presenting the top tunes in the nation, reflecting "an accurate, authentic tabulation of America's taste in popular music... as determined by Your Hit Parade survey which checks the best sellers in sheet music and phonograph records, the songs most heard on the air and most played in the automatic coin machines."

Another Saturday night feature on WBBM/CBS was Professor Quiz as quizmaster Craig Earl and announcer Robert Trout offered one of the first quiz shows on radio.

Major Bowes offered a second program each week, every Sunday morning, featuring the more talented amateurs from his various troupes. The Salt Lake Tabernacle Choir was also a regular Sunday morning feature. In the early afternoon listeners heard Jean Hersholt as the kindly Dr. Christian, a character based on Dr. Allan Roy DaFoe, who had delivered the famous Dionne Quintuplets. Appropriately, Dr. Christian was sponsored by Vaseline Petroleum Jelly.

Other Sunday programs featured Guy Lombardo, comedian Joe Penner ("Wanna buy a duck?"), and the Phil Baker Show starring ex-vaudevillian Baker in a comedy-variety series for the Gulf Oil Company.

In January, 1939, a new 490-foot Blaw-Knox guyed vertical radiating antenna tower was installed at a cost of $25,000 at WBBM's Glenview transmitting site near Lake and Shermer Avenues. After several months of testing, the antenna was put into operation at the end of March. But in April a spring ice storm engulfed the Midwest and...
THROUGHOUT THE LATE 1920s AND all of the '30s, WBBM had been broadcasting on a frequency of 770 kilocycles. But at 3 am, Saturday, March 29, 1941, as a result of the North American Regional Broadcasting Agreement, WBBM (and most other radio stations in North America) was obliged to change its frequency. WBBM was assigned to operate henceforth on 780 kilocycles in lieu of the previously authorized 770 kilocycles. The station continued its late-night synchronization of programming with KFAB in Lincoln, Nebraska, which had also been moved to the 780 spot on the dial.

At about this same time WBBM began operating an FM station, and after a period of experimentation, began carrying the regular WBBM-AM programs on WBBM-FM. (This simulcasting of programs would continue until July 20, 1958 when WBBM-FM began completely independent commercial operations.)

On December 7, 1941, listeners who tuned in to the WBBM Air Theatre to hear the usual Sunday afternoon broadcast of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra over the Columbia network were shocked when, in the midst of the program, CBS staff news reporter John Daly broke in to say, "The Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor by air, President Roosevelt has just announced..."

Radio in general had not spent much time or money on the dissemination of news until September of 1939 when the French and British governments declared war against Germany. That, of course, was the beginning of World War II and in the following 21 months preceding the "unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan" the nation's radio stations were

WBBM was one of its casualties.

At 9:50 pm on April 13 a guy wire on the new antenna tower snapped and the 490-foot tower collapsed. WBBM went off the air for nearly four hours. CBS network programs were transferred to station WIND (owned and operated by this time by Ralph Atlass). Broadcasting resumed on WBBM at 1:30 am from a temporary tower at the Glenview transmitter.

Next morning, WBBM completed arrangements with the National Broadcasting Company to temporarily use the transmitter of WENR, its Blue Network station in Chicago. WBBM programs shifted to the WENR transmitter in Downers Grove, Illinois while impatient WBBM engineers awaited the erection of a replacement tower. In September, a second 490-foot Blaw-Knox tower was in place in Glenview and WBBM was back at its 50,000 watt strength. (During the ice storm that crippled WBBM's transmitter, station WGN also suffered a problem at its transmitter site in Roselle, Illinois. The sleet storm weighed down and snapped an electric wire, throwing WGN off the air for 45 minutes shortly before 10 pm on April 13.)
Edward R. Murrow in London with (L to R) Paul Manning, John Daly, Bob Trout.
beginning to build news organizations to gather and report unfolding developments around the world to a concerned listening audience.

At WBBM, CBS Vice President H. Leslie Atlass had appointed J. Oren Weaver the News Editor. Weaver quickly acquainted his announcing staff with the techniques of writing and reporting news. Sports announcer John Harrington assumed the position of on-the-air leadership in the news reporting field at WBBM. Fahey Flynn added expanded news reports to his announcing and sports reporting chores. As an owned and operated station of the Columbia Broadcasting System, WBBM had at its disposal the top-flight news staff of CBS News which included Robert Trout, Eric Severeid, Howard K. Smith, Larry Lesueur, Elmer Davis, Edwin C. Hill, Knox Manning, Charles Collingwood, and Edward R. Murrow (whose nightly This Is London reports fascinated and touched the nation). These newsmen reported on all fronts, including the home front, throughout World War II.

WBBM programs were regularly interrupted by network and local newsmen who brought late-breaking news to anxious listeners. Special and regularly scheduled programs were added to both the local and network line-up—not only to report the news and analyze it, but to provide morale-building entertainment and encourage support of the war effort.

Glenview, Illinois, the site of WBBM's transmitter, was also the home of the United States Naval Air Station, and as more and more air traffic was being routed to this location, the Navy Department asked WBBM to move its towers to avoid any hazards to incoming and outgoing aircraft.

With financial assistance from the Navy, WBBM moved its tower and transmitter 11 1/2 miles southwest to its present site near Itasca, Illinois. A new 50,000 watt transmitter was installed and service began from Itasca on May 1, 1942. This transmitter is still in daily use by WBBM.

A typical broadcast day during the war years at WBBM featured a minimum of 14 regularly scheduled five and 15-minute newscasts, in addition to unscheduled news bulletins which might interrupt any of the regularly scheduled programs. Early morning listeners to WBBM heard 15 minutes of CBS network News of the World each day at 7 am, followed by another quarter-hour of news reported by John Harrington. During the noon hour actress Bernadine Flynn (she was Sade on the popular
Vic and Sade series) presented a program of news for women (not women's news) sponsored by Crisco.

Local programming throughout the early 1940s reflected the country's concern. Typical features on the WBBM Air Theatre included Victory Matinee, a weekday show with prominent entertainers who were visiting Chicago, plus a member of one of the armed forces talking about his role in maintaining the country's defenses; The Chicago Hour, a program of songs focusing on allies of the United States; Salute to Victory; and Navy Community Sing. There were also short dramatic programs, filled with patriotism, such as War Jobs for Women; That Men May Live; and The Midwest Mobilizes.

CBS, too, offered special programs designed to inspire a greater home front effort and to increase the sale of War Bonds and stamps.

The Wrigley Gum Company sponsored three network shows, all produced in WBBM's Chicago studios. They were First Line of Defense, promoting the effort of the U.S. Navy; America In the Air, a salute to the Army Air Corps; and Service to the Front, spotlighting defense plant workers and their efforts to provide the nation's fighting men with the best equipment, supplies and ammunition.

Columbia offered The Man Behind the Gun, a profile of the average American who had put aside his peacetime occupation to defend his country. Fashions In Rations was a Saturday morning network program aimed at women, demonstrating how to make the most out of various goods and foods that were rationed by the government during wartime.

ANY OF THE MAJOR CBS NETWORK programs (the daytime dramas and the nighttime, prime time shows) featured wartime themes and carried urgent messages to “back the attack, buy more War Bonds” and “bring your used kitchen fats to your grocer today.” Listeners were urged to “plant your victory garden now” and “conserve rubber, plan a stay-at-home vacation this year.”

The daytime dramas reflected what was happening in real life. Husbands and boyfriends were going off to war while women stayed at home, raised their children, ran the family business and got jobs in defense plants and in other lines of work, thereby releasing men to take up arms and fight for their country. Ma Perkins' son John was killed in the war and listeners grieved with Ma as she learned that her only son had been buried in an unmarked grave, "somewhere in Germany."
WBBM listeners heard Fred Allen on CBS asking the inhabitants of Allen's Alley a question about gas rationing. Kate Smith regularly sang "God Bless America" on her program and Judy Canova dedicated her closing musical number each week to "our boys in the service."

On the quiz show, *Take It Or Leave It*, quiz-master Phil Baker always helped a soldier or sailor contestant answer the big $64 question with an extra hint or an easy clue. None of the civilian contestants seemed to mind. And when the GI was about to leave with his winnings, Baker asked him one additional question, "What's your rank, sailor?" When the sailor gave the obviously correct reply, Baker doubled his...
winnings and the young serviceman went off with $128 and the warm approval of a cheering studio audience and the folks at home.

The FBI In Peace and War presented dramatizations of espionage and sabotage. Dinah Shore’s programs originated from military bases in the United States. Your Hit Parade reflected the wartime years as Mark Warno and the Orchestra played while Frank Sinatra and Bea Wayne sang such tunes as Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition, Comin’ In on a Wing and a Prayer, I’ll Be Seeing You, and I’ll Walk Alone.

LISTENERS WHO TUNED IN TO WBBM heard of the exploits of General Dwight Eisenhower in Europe and General Douglas MacArthur in the Pacific. There was D-Day in 1944 and the death of President Roosevelt in 1945, emotionally described for CBS listeners by Arthur Godfrey. President Truman’s announcement of the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Japan signaled the last days of the war, followed by the broadcast of the Japanese surrender. Finally, the war was over.

A few changes had taken place at WBBM during the war years. On May 31, 1944, the synchronization of nighttime broadcast signals between WBBM and KFAB in Lincoln, Nebraska ended after an 11-year post-sundown association. Also in 1944, J. L. VanVolkenburg, who had been assistant to H. Leslie Atlass, was elevated to the post of WBBM General Manager with Atlass continuing as Vice President of CBS' Chicago operations.
After the war, in 1946, Frank B. Falknor, who joined the station in 1933 and had been Operations Engineer for CBS Central Division and Chief Engineer of WBBM, was named General Manager, while VanVolkenburg became Vice President and Director of Television Operations for the network (reflecting the CBS move towards TV). In September, 1947, a new vertical radiating antenna tower was installed at the Itasca transmitter site.

WBBM's Wrigley Building studios were busier than ever in the years following the war. Tommy Bartlett, Cliff Johnson and Jim Conway had joined the announcing staff and were hosting a number of their own programs. (Johnson and his family shared breakfast with morning listeners when a WBBM microphone was placed on the table in the kitchen of the Johnson family home in suburban Oak Park.) Jim Conway went Shopping with the Missus and traveled to hundreds of grocery stores in Chicago and suburbs on behalf of Milnot ("It Whips!").

Caesar Petrillo was still conductor of the WBBM/CBS Chicago Staff orchestra. Petrillo had been a trombonist in nightclubs and cafes with Paul Whiteman, Vincent Lopez, Paul Ash and other name bands. For 10 years he was the assistant conductor and member of the house orchestras at Balaban and Katz' Uptown, Paradise and Chicago theatres in the city. He joined the WBBM orchestra in 1937, became its conductor in 1940 and was elevated to music director in 1943, supervising all live and recorded music on the station.

Following the war, the WBBM/CBS Chicago Staff orchestra, under the baton of Petrillo, was heard regularly in programs that featured singer Billy Leach, the King's Jesters, the Meadowlarks, and Curt Massey. Julian Bentley had joined the news staff and John Harrington and Fahey Flynn were doubling as sportscasters and newscasters. Flynn visited his share of supermarkets for audience participation programs and even took a few turns on some of the station's dramatic programs, most notably as a wife-killer on a drama entitled "Brief Pause for Murder" in a 1946 broadcast of The Whistler.

Bob Elson had a late night sports show on WBBM, Tony Weitzel offered celebrity interviews and George Watson packed an amazing number of commercials into a 15-minute package of zany comedy and music called Gold Coast Rhythm, heard two or three times a day.
Paul Gibson was on the air every morning at 7 with an hour of one-sided conversation. One of radio's great ad-libbers, Gibson sat down in the studio with a note or two in his coat pocket, a newspaper clipping in his hand and a hat on his head. He proceeded to talk for a solid hour on virtually any subject.

Gibson was a stocky man of medium height with curly graying hair, blue eyes, a moustache, and a barrel chest. He was called radio's conversational crusader against women. He was married five times (once to a radio singer known as Bonnie Blue Eyes) and divorced five times. He was born in 1913 near Beaumont, California and was a high school dropout who went to work as a crime reporter and Latin American correspondent for a newspaper syndicate. Later, he founded a construction company that became the largest builder of private homes in California.

Gibson's radio career began in Los Angeles, continued in San Francisco and flourished in Chicago in the mid-1940s when he joined WBBM for $75 a week. Soon his salary was in the six-figure bracket and at one time he had more than 90 sponsors. He was a world-wide traveler and a voracious reader. When he died in 1966 at the age of 53, WBBM General Manager E. H. Shomo called Gibson "one of the greats in American broadcasting. His intelligence, his incredible memory, coupled with his great wit and personal warmth, made him the unforgettable Chicago radio personality and salesman of our times."

Opinionated and charming, Gibson's popular ad-lib dissertations covered everything from philosophy to fine arts, current books and authors, music and musicians, travel, and his favorite subject, women. He frequently infuriated his female audience as he offered his candid views. Not satisfied with just a single hour in the morning, Gibson popped up in mid-afternoon following a string of soap operas, and later at night after the network shows.

Big Band Remote Broadcasts were popular on WBBM as an after 10 pm feature before, during, and after the years of World War II. Most of the station's staff announcers took their turn introducing the sounds of the bands as they broadcast from the Aragon, Trianon, Milford Ballroom, Edgewater Beach Hotel and other venues in and around Chicago.

With the increase of popular local entertainment being broadcast, the WBBM Air Theatre was gradually becoming known as Chicago's Showmanship Station.
The Itasca transmitter site in 1942 shortly after we began transmitting from there.

March 29, 1941: WBBM 770 becomes WBBM 780.
Art Thorsen, who was Program Director at WBBM from 1958 until 1962, came to the station as a writer in January, 1950. After a tour in the Air Force, he studied television for a year-and-a-half at the American Academy. But at that time TV jobs were paying only $25 a week and Thorsen felt he couldn't live on that, so he decided to get a job in radio, using his American Academy background.

Thorsen recalls his many years at WBBM including the interesting radio personalities, and the challenges of producing entertainment programs at Chicago's Showmanship Station.

**ART THORSSEN REMEMBERS**

Timing is everything. I walked into WBBM applying for a job in the writing department an hour after they had fired one of their writers, an Art Hellyer type, you know, one who tells off management! So they treated me like a king. They said, "Can you write a 10-minute comedy sketch right here?" I said I could. I'd have told them I could write anything, whether I could or not. And so I spent about an hour working on a sketch, and they said, "Great! Can you start tomorrow?" So I was in. Then I started writing.

It's hard to believe, but soon I was writing 36 shows a week. You can't really call a lot of them shows because they were just little five minute music things, like Breakfast With Billy.

The first script after I was hired was for The Chicagoans, a big orchestra show. Later, I went into the main studio to watch the show and here they were, saying my words—they were saying my words on the radio! It was a big thrill.

The Gold Coast Show with George Watson was another show I wrote for. We had three
Backstage, opening night at the Lyric Opera.
Art Thorsen, right, with Monte Fassnacht, Stage Manager.
of them going a day. One in the morning, one in the afternoon, and one in the evening. They were big money makers for the station, with all the commercials they could integrate in the story line. Mort Hall was the originator of the idea. He wrote one, I wrote one, and Bill Bell wrote one. They had a flock of commercials they couldn't put anywhere else. So, the idea was if you could build a story around these commercials, you could get away with using more than you were supposed to. So Mort came up with the idea to write these comedy sketches. They were 10 or 15-minute shows. Normally a 15-minute show would have three 60-second commercials, but there would be maybe eight commercials in the Gold Coast time. But you were into the commercial before you realized it because it was part of the dialogue. The first line of the commercial would carry on from the previous speech. It was great fun trying to integrate the commercials into the plot.

I’VE WRITTEN GOLD COAST SHOWS with 12 minutes of commercials and three minutes of story! The show lasted for about a dozen years and I think people loved it. We’d get great fan mail. Of course, the secret was in the talent. George Watson was such a talented man and you could write a script with any dialect, any accent, and he’d make you believe it. He could do so much with his delivery and his presence. He was excellent. The King’s Jesters were the supporting players to Watson and vocalists Jean Williams and Elaine Rogers would take parts every now and then and everybody loved it, ’cause it was different from what they usually did.

The Gold Coast Show came out of one of the studios on the main floor of the Wrigley Building. George Watson insisted on working out of those studios down there ’cause they were close to the Wrigley Bar!

BETWEEN SHOWS, AT THE WRIGLEY Restaurant and Bar, there’d be extemporaneous shows going on down there, especially with George Watson! George never took off his hat. That was one of his idiosyncrasies—because he was bald. So you’d see him down at the Wrigley Bar with his hat on, or he’d be at the microphone with his hat on. I’ve seen him at the microphone coming fresh out of the Wrigley Bar, with an announcer under each arm holding him up so that he could do his show. A third announcer held his script and he wouldn’t slur a word or anything. He was perfect! George never failed to be on deck no matter what condition he was in. His performance was always good.

AT WBBM IN THE WRIGLEY BUILDING, the writers worked up on the third floor, where no one could find us, and the newsroom was up there, too. There were four comedy writers, three documentary writers and, of course, all the news writers. We had a lot of writers at the station, each in his own cubbyhole.

The comedy writers would come in during the morning, do about a paragraph of plot and show it to Mort Hall, who was the chief writer. And he’d say, “Yeah, go ahead with it,” or “No, that’s stupid, don’t do that,” and you’d have to write a sketch in a couple of hours, because you had a couple of other things you had to do during the day, too. It was the greatest training ground for writers that I could ever imagine. Creativity, plus a deadline and the pressure of getting that stuff out.

Enos Shomo, Garry Moore, Bill Connelly, Art Thorsen.

The Wrigley Bar in the Wrigley Building, circa 1950.
IN ABOUT 1957, AFTER WBBM HAD moved to McClurg Court, I went from writer to Creative Director. It was my job to develop new programs for the sales department to sell. There'd be musical programs like Luncheon With Billy and the Supper Club with Art Hellyer. Art was incorrigible. He was always getting on bad paper with the manager of the station. You know, if he didn't like a guy, no matter what his rank was, he'd tell him. He was a great guy and I liked him. When I became Program Director I was always going to bat for him in the front office, but management finally ran out of patience. I thought he had talent, but he was only with us for a year or so.

There was another announcer who had a most gorgeous voice, golden pipes if ever there were any. He would have had a good career with "BBM, but once when he was in a supposedly dead studio he said a naughty word and the pot was open in the control room and it went out coast to coast. He had been talking with someone about another announcer who wasn't doing his bit or something and how he had to cover for him, and then he uttered an obscenity. Unfortunately, it was on a network cut-in.

In those days you couldn't say "hell" or "damn" and he went beyond that. Needless to say, he was immediately fired. The engineer on duty was also fired. I think that one of the other announcers, across the street having coffee, was fired just because he was that close to the building! It was a slaughterhouse that day! Eventually, I think, the union forced the station to take the engineer back, but everybody else was looking for work. The guy who utters the unacceptable language is the guy who hangs for it, if the engineer accidentally turns on the mike or not. He couldn't get a job again, anywhere in radio. Oh, little teapot stations up in the wilds of Wisconsin or something, but not on a major station. His whole career was shot.

As Creative Director for WBBM, I also developed the Music Wagon show and, when I made Program Director, I wanted it to be more structured than it had been. I wanted to put more meat in the shows. Instead of, "Now, so and so will sing such and such," I wanted more conversation, more bits that the host could insert.

THERE WERE SO MANY SHOWS AND so many people. Just going to work was fun. Not many people can say that. I couldn't wait to get to the office every day because of all the different characters there, each more interesting than the other. And working together, like in the writing department, you'd bounce ideas off each other and come up with a better script than if you were doing it alone. Everybody respected everybody else's talent. There were lots of great personalities who were fun to be around. It wasn't like work. It was just a wonderful time every day, with wonderful people.

WBBM had an awful lot of respect from its peers in the radio business. I think anybody who has ever had an opportunity to put WBBM on his resume has got some extra special credentials, because it was and is a very outstanding station.

At the Opera: (L to R) Bill Bell, Lee Phillip, Harnet (Sis) Atlass, Art Thorsen, Jim Consay, Ken Carbonel.
1951-1964: THE SHOWMANSHIP STATION
H

LESLIE ATLASS HAD ASSUMED additional duties as CBS Vice President by 1950. Television was growing by leaps and bounds and Atlass had also become responsible for the network's owned and operated TV station in Chicago, WBBM-TV. In addition, he was reappointed to the post of General Manager of WBBM Radio. To help Atlass with his expanded responsibilities, Erwin H. Shomo was appointed Assistant General Manager of WBBM Radio on October 16, 1950.

Shomo joined the advertising staff of the Chicago Tribune and the Chicago Herald-Examiner in 1925. In 1937 he began working at WBBM in the sales department, eventually becoming Sales Manager. In 1949 he was appointed General Manager of KMOX in St. Louis for a year, after which he returned to WBBM.

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AT THIS TIME, RADIO, IN GENERAL, was beginning to feel the impact of television. Many of the locally produced soap operas were leaving their long-time homes at the WBBM studios in the Wrigley Building. Some series ended, others headed for New York City where TV opportunities were beginning to open up for the performers of the radio daytime dramas. Changes were being made in the nighttime broadcast schedule as well. Sponsors of network radio shows were anxious to reach the ever-growing television audience and were beginning to divert their advertising dollars to this new and growing medium.

In the late 1940s, CBS Chairman William Paley decided he wanted his network to become the number one radio network, and he set out to raid the roster of big comedy stars at his arch rival NBC. First to switch to CBS were Amos 'n' Andy, who had started their...
careers on network radio with Columbia but were currently starring in a weekly half-hour comedy show on NBC. Then, in what was Paley's biggest coup, Jack Benny moved, lock, stock, sponsor and timeslot, to CBS. Following this lead, Burns and Allen, Edgar Bergen, Red Skelton, and Bing Crosby all switched to the "Network of the Stars" and CBS boasted the biggest stable of stars in its history.

Paley achieved this incredible talent raid by offering to purchase their programs from the stars, then hiring them to appear on the programs as employees of CBS. This resulted in a very favorable income tax capital gains deal the entertainers couldn't refuse. This also set the scene for CBS to have an outstanding lineup of talent ready to switch over to television when the time came. And that time would come quickly.

Network radio had made some drastic, and interesting, changes by the mid-1950s. Sponsors, listeners, and even the networks were deserting radio for the TV tube. Gone were the big variety shows. Gone were most of the big time comedians (Jack Benny and Edgar Bergen were the last of the CBS stars to have radio shows of their own, and the only other comic on the air was Bob Hope on NBC). Gone were many of the long-established situation comedy and dramatic programs.

The Lux Radio Theatre had become the Lux Video Theatre and the Hallmark Playhouse had become TV's Hallmark Hall of Fame. Amos 'n' Andy were playing records over the CBS Radio Network five nights a week. Bing Crosby had a 15-minute show Monday thru
Friday evenings and Yours Truly, Johnny Dollar, “America’s fabulous free-lance insurance investigator” took five quarter-hours each week to complete cases which previously had been solved in 30 minutes, once a week.

Some popular TV shows were translated to radio as CBS and WBBM carried My Little Margie, December Bride and I Love Lucy.

BUT, AS THE NETWORK TRIED TO economize on its radio offerings (to keep cash available for the new, growing baby, television) many of the mystery and drama shows continued on a sustaining basis without commercial sponsorship. Suspense; Gangbusters; Mr. and Mrs. North; and Mr. Keen, Tracer of Lost Persons, all played to small, but loyal, audiences. Not entirely abandoning radio, CBS did develop the “adult western,” and Gunsmoke became a popular favorite, as did Have Gun, Will Travel (which actually started as a TV western, then moved to radio for a brief, but welcome two-year run).

TIMES WERE CHANGING IN CHICAGO, too. With the network offering more and more sustaining (non-sponsored) shows, WBBM was not always obliged to carry the CBS products and frequently opted to present locally originated programs.
News was an ever-growing part of WBBM's daily broadcast schedule and John Harrington, Julian Bentley and Fahey Flynn kept listeners up-to-date on local, national and international events. Caesar Petillo and the WBBM staff orchestra entertained with a quarter-hour of live music, sometimes twice an evening, at 6:30 and again at 9:30 pm. Gold Coast Rhythm (with all those commercials) continued two or three times daily. Singers Billy Leach and Curt Massey plus the King's Jesters, the Wilsonaires and the Meadowlarks each had musical shows of their own. Jim Conway was still Shopping with the Missus and popular Chicago disc-jockey Howard Miller had a daily 15-minute interview show, sponsored by Wrigley's Gum. Miller's program originated from WBBM and was fed to the whole CBS Radio Network. Jay Andres had become host of an all-night recorded music program, Music 'til Dawn, sponsored by American Airlines.

By 1955, Paul Gibson, still one of the outstanding personalities at WBBM, was on the air no less than four times a day, waking up listeners with an hour of chatter at 6 am, returning at 4 pm for 45 minutes, again at 5:30 for a 15-minute chat, and finally, with a late night visit at 10:15 pm.

CBS IN CHICAGO WAS PHYSICALLY located in a variety of places. Radio was in the Wrigley Building, TV was at the Garrick Theatre, at the State-Lake Theatre Building and in a few other sites around Chicago's Loop. In 1954, CBS purchased the Chicago Arena on the city's near north side, just a block west of Lake Michigan. The Arena was built in 1922 and had originally been known as the Chicago Riding Club. More than 500 horses were quartered in the building, which was designed by architect Andrew Rebori who subsequently redesigned the building for CBS. In later years, the Riding Club became the Arena and was home for ice shows and bowling alleys. This 178,000 square feet of space, located at 630 N. McClurg Court between Ontario and Erie, was to become, by the fall of 1956, the new, centralized home for all Columbia Broadcasting Company activities in Chicago.

The original purchase price was $1,270,000 and another $5,037,000 was spent over the next two years converting the former sports center into a base for WBBM Radio and WBBM-TV operations. (CBS Chicago also included CBS Television Network Sales, CBS Radio Network Sales, CBS Radio and TV Spot Sales, Columbia Records, Columbia Transcriptions, and CBS Television Film Sales.)

Under the direction of Frank Johnson, who had joined WBBM Radio right after World War II and had become Operations Manager of the entire CBS Chicago organization, the Chicago Arena took shape as the most modern radio-TV facility in the country.

WBBM RADIO OCCUPIED MOST OF the second floor of the building. (The ground floor was devoted almost entirely to television.) Seven radio studios were
constructed ranging in size from a small announcer's booth (accommodating just one or two staff announcers) to the large, main studio, with more than 700 square feet of space—large enough for the CBS Chicago staff orchestra, musical talent, announcers, and a small studio audience. (With the changing face of radio and the decline in big-budget audience shows, there was no need to build a large audience studio like the one left behind at the Wrigley Building.) Another five rooms on the second floor were so constructed that they could be converted to additional studio space if needed.

A MODERN MASTER CONTROL room, designed and installed by CBS Radio technicians, was the technical heart of WBBM Radio at McClurg Court. State-of-the-art in every detail, the Master Control represented a great stride towards push-button control of both network and local programming.

From a large semi-circle console, the Master Control technician would have full view of four of WBBM's studios and he was able to put any one, or all of them, on the air at any given moment. Each of the larger WBBM studios, including the main, 700 square foot studio, had its own separate control room which served as the technical center during broadcasts originating in those studios.

More than 100 people were responsible for WBBM's around the clock schedule of broadcasting. In addition to the on-the-air talent,
there were writers, producers, directors, technicians, people in program operations, scheduling, transcription, and others who worked together to keep Chicago's Showmanship Station humming. Some 225 local shows were broadcast each week on WBBM, including about 20 which originated for broadcast over the CBS Radio Network.

MUCH OF WBBM'S PROGRAMMING was still live during this period. The station, under the continuing guidance of H. Leslie Atlas, had not switched totally to records and disc jockeys as had many other stations across the country. WBBM continued to prosper while presenting a variety of live entertainment shows. Mal Bellairs hosted an hour each morning called Music Wagon with the singing Boyd Twins, Joan and Jane (who were also known as The Doublemint Twins of Wrigley-sponsored programs and commercials), singer Billy Leach, the King's Jesters, and Hal Kartun's Merry Men of Rhythm.

Later in the afternoon, Mal was back with the Bellairs Show, another live musical offering. The Little Show, a daily 15-minute program during the noon hour, featured Len Cleary at the organ, Sid Nierman at the piano, the King's Jesters, and Billy Leach. Just Entertainment was a mid-afternoon quarter-hour with members of the Caesar Petrillo Orchestra and whatever staff vocalist or group was on duty. Larry Taylor and the WBBM staff orchestra,
Les Atlass Retires and So Ends an Era

AMIDST ALL the noise-making and celebrating which marked the end of 1959, three nights back, a strange silence has covered the almost simultaneous end of a broadcasting and telecasting era.

With the retirement of H. Leslie Atlass as vice president in charge of the local CBS bailiwick, an era is ending, in every sense of the word. Broadcasting—from its inception through its maturation and mutation into telecasting—has operated under a system of opposing checks and balances not unlike that which the two political parties maintain over one another. For as long as most of us living in or around broadcasting can recall, it was the networks on one hand and the stations on the other—the latter represented by thorny, cantankerous, outspoken mavericks who fought the best and worst of the old-time politics.

Those three—the most widely listened-to, widely hated and widely respected spokesmen within broadcasting—were Harry Bannister, of Detroit's WJB; Walter Dannen of Milwaukee's WTMJ, and H. Leslie Atlass of Chicago's WBBM.

But, however good this new man may prove to be, he could never replace the already announced and (understandably) unpopular step. It seems odd and improper for this network in this city to let loose of a human tradition as the network without a face or notice.

ATLASS is no saint, no hero. As is typical of most ceo's who are head of big corporations, he has been in the industry for many years and has been on the job for many years. He is one of the most knowledgeable and prolific broadcasting pioneers.

Les Atlass has reached compulsory retirement age—and he is being retired honorably and with much less regret for his family and friends than his network's would like to admit. However, he is not the only one who will be missed.

For when their 65th birthdays come, moreover, as so often happens, CBS is sweeping WBBM and WBBM-TV clean of Atlass from top to middle.

FRANK ATLASS, who has been program manager, and Harriet "Sis" Atlass, who has been head of Public Affairs, are being "retired" too—the latter will see 65 for many and many a year. This is a clean-sweeping which I firmly believe CBS will come to regret.

Frank Atlass is the most vital, aggressive and creative young program man on the local TV scene—and among the best of the upcoming program executives in the national scene. Frank will be a hard man to replace—and "Sis" Atlass will prove downright impossible to replace.

TO PERMIT all the truly notable and worthy achievements of these young executives to be shot out by the fact that their last name is Atlass is no less a cruelty and stupidity because it is a frequently employed gambit of corporate public relations.

Certainly it would be well and suitable for CBS and the City of Chicago to take due note of the fact that H. Leslie Atlass is no longer with them. He took his network for 37 years.
host Mal Bellairs and singer Patty Clark entertained during the dinner hour on *The Supper Club* from 6:30 to 6:45 pm.

There were some record shows on WBBM, reluctantly permitted by General Manager Atlass, who told people like Bellairs and Josh Brady to add their own personality to the programs, not just sit there and introduce records. Bellairs began a highly popular program on Saturday and Sunday afternoons and Brady selected the records for his weekend morning shows. Franklin MacCormack hosted a program of selected music and poetry readings on Sunday from midnight to 3 am, and Rudy Orisek presented *Rhythms 'Round the World* Monday thru Friday at 11:30 pm, followed by Jay Andres and his *Music 'til Dawn*.

**AFTER 36 YEARS WITH WBBM, H. Leslie Atlass, founder of the station and its longest-term employee, retired in December, 1959 and E. H. Shomo was appointed CBS Vice President and General Manager.**

The WBBM *Showmanship Station* format continued into the early 1960s with live programming wrapped around CBS network offerings. However, CBS network programming...
Gunsmoke radio cast: (from left) Howard McNear as Doc Adams; William Conrad as Marshall Matt Dillon; Georgia Ellis as Miss Kitty Russell; Parley Baer as Chester Proudfoot.
Chicago Arena, before conversion to WBGM CBS, Chicago.
Chicago radio and television personality Mal Bellairs was first introduced to WBBM in 1941 when he auditioned for an announcer's position at the station's Wrigley Building studios. His audition was unsuccessful and it wasn't until 1955, after his military service during World War II and jobs at WCFL Radio and in local television, that Bellairs was offered a full-time position at WBBM. Program Director Thomas A. Bland had asked him to do an acting part in an off-the-air sales presentation for the CBS sales force. His performance was good and he was invited to join WBBM as a staff announcer.

During his years at WBBM, Bellairs saw many changes, including format (live and recorded music changed to talk) and location (Wrigley Building to McClurg Court). Below he describes what it was like to be a part of that exciting, changing time.

MAL BELLAIRES REMEMBERS

On the first day of May, good old May 1, 1955, I became staff announcer—no guarantees, no nothing—doing network cutaways and station breaks while sitting in a dismal little studio in the Wrigley Building listening to Ma Perkins.

The Wrigley Building is my favorite building in the whole world. I loved it! I loved 'BBM! The National Boulevard Bank was on the first floor, and there were studios and control rooms and recording rooms on the lower level, which was actually the basement. That's where all the network programming came in. That's where Lenny Kaye had all the phonograph records. That's where they did the duplication of shows. And by golly, when I was first there they were
doing them on big discs. That was before we had tape recorders, so they were recording on big 16-inch transcriptions.

In 1955, most of the soaps had moved to either New York or Los Angeles so soap opera programming was just carried on the network. But live programs were still being done out of the various studios at WBBM. Jim Conway was a very strong, powerful personality at the time. Josh Brady was also at the station and we worked together for years.

We also had George Watson. We had the Gold Coast Hour, which was nothing but a dramatic dialogue that linked together dozens of commercials in a 15-minute program. I used to be amazed at how Mort Hall, the man who wrote that show, would take 8, 10, or 12 com-
mercials and create some sort of corny, crazy, comic scene. Then Watson and the King's Jesters would put all this together with different voices. It was unbelievable! It was the top-grossing show on the station. And it was solid commercials!

There was almost always something going on in one studio or another. Nowadays, most radio stations have carved their necessary space down tremendously, but in those days we had this great luxury. And I maintain there is nothing as exciting as working in the Wrigley Building and walking out on that street at Christmas time, or in the middle of summer and being part of Chicago on Michigan Avenue.

Shortly after I started at WBBM, I got my first big break—an interview show called Lucky Ladies, from grocery stores for Thomas J. Webb Coffee. That was a difficult show to do because shows in grocery stores are always hard to do, whether you have 5,000 women all climbing down your neck or you have nobody, and you still had to do a show. But it gave me good exposure. I would give away coffee and silver dollars, and to this day people walk up to me and say "I still have that same silver dollar you gave me...."

I was the first one who was allowed to play records on ‘BBM. Les Atlass had been violently opposed to recorded music, but in some high level meeting someone said, "Well, why don't we try it on weekends?" So they gave me two big blocks of time to play records—Saturday and Sunday afternoons from noon to 5 pm.

And then, in the record library, I sat down with Lenny Kaye, the world's greatest technician in music, and I started to listen and build programs. I'd already had some experience with this when I worked at WCFL. I hate the term "disc jockey," but I suppose that's what I was. Anyway, I put together these two weekend shows and they became very successful. That opened the door, then, to the future use of records, although Mr. Atlass looked down on records as being kind of a third class citizen in broadcasting.
CBS still had a full orchestra. They had musicians coming out of their ears. The King’s Jesters, and other groups of performers, were doing all kinds of live things. Mr. Atlass never bowed down to the current style of radio that used nothing but recorded music. I respected his opinion and was appreciative of the fact that I got a chance to open the door. So I tried to do more than just play records. I tried to be timely, to relate to people and talk about things that were going on.

From the beginning, my feeling was that I needed to feel free to pick the music. And I insisted on being in charge of my own music and WBBM allowed me that freedom. I played a very wide spectrum of music, and I think I played an important role in launching some careers because Chicago is a wonderful market and ’BBM is a huge voice. I noticed the likes of Harry Belafonte very early. Performers like Harry would come to visit and we would sit and talk and get to know each other. I also followed the trends in music. I played folk music when it was still developing, and showcased ethnic music like the Irish music of the Clancy Brothers. I didn’t like straight rock music and almost never included it in my programs. Certain things you can’t exclude, like the Beatles, but I never really liked Rock and Roll very much. I expressed my opinions on air and people would call in and we would talk and it became a very nice program. I even started my own Christmas show on WBBM in 1955, Christmas Around the World, the music of Christmas in many different countries.

WBBM was very kind to me. They let me run with my ideas and this was the thing that I most appreciated about WBBM. If they felt you had a creative urge, an idea, there was nobody saying, “Well, you’ll get the greatest numbers of audience points...we have to do this...” It was freedom and I think that’s why WBBM has done so very well.

Len Cleary at the Mighty Wurlitzer.

Rosemary Clooney and Bellairs.
Before WBBM moved from the Wrigley Building to the old Chicago Arena on McClurg Court, I did the last live show in the Wrigley Building one Sunday afternoon. I took my microphone and walked out into the halls, which were filled with nothing but echoes and cardboard boxes piled with files. And I walked up and down the halls, recalling all the wonderful things that had happened in that great building. Whew! That was really incredible. I dearly loved the Wrigley Building and I was sorry when we left, because the feeling was different after that. It was economics, of course, that put radio and television together in what had been the old ice skating arena, right across the street from where I had worked as a young announcer at WCFL.

ANYWAY, IT WAS AT McCLURG Court that we got an idea for a live music show. By 1959 I was doing a lot of live stuff with Len Cleary, who played the organ. We'd put together music shows with small groups, doing shows around dinner time.

During this time we got an idea for a live morning show and we called it The Music Wagon. We started out early in the morning and we would just go. The orchestra never had the opportunity to do enough rehearsal, so a lot of it was very, very spontaneous. But we had some of the finest musicians I've ever heard. It was all pretty much ad lib. People like Al Hirt and Rosemary Clooney would come to town and perform. Whenever Arthur Godfrey was in Chicago, he'd come to visit and would sing with the band.

We had audiences, too. We didn't advertise for an audience, but we'd have groups that just wanted to see a radio show. We'd have maybe 20 or 30 people.

George Walsh was the producer and we used to have a great time with him, because as a producer-director he was pretty loose and there were no holds barred. The band was a wild bunch. Sometimes Hollywood actresses would come in and they would be difficult but the band would loosen them up. One time Jayne Mansfield came in to be interviewed.

The King's Jesters.

GOLD COAST SHOW
Comedy, more comedy and just plain fun
Monday thru Friday,
8:45-9 a.m. and 3:45-4 p.m.
about some movie she was coming out with. I said to her, "There's one question I want to ask you..." She said, "I'll bet there is!" and the band just went up in smoke!

This was all in the morning, seven to nine. We never heard or used the term "morning drive." We hadn't really been that concerned about ratings or who our audience was. We were only thinking about doing good shows. In fact, I almost never paid attention to the ratings. I knew they were being taken, but they didn't affect us in any way. Nobody ever said to me, "Bellairs, your rating is going down. What are you going to do to hype this thing?" We never had a contest to give away 10 acres on the moon—we never did anything like that. We just never really considered it. Very unsophisticated radio, maybe, but we weren't that much concerned with economics.

We knew that Music Wagon was sponsored and that it was going to be sponsored by major companies in 15-minute blocks, and they paid a lot of money. There were countless clients. The main philosophy was, do we get results? Do we deliver more customers? We can prove it, we said. Give us the opportunity. Then we did it.

And it was all done very live. It was live radio! We were probably the only live radio station left in the country at that point.

And it broke our collective hearts when, I think it was in 1965, we finally got caught by the bottom line. The station was having a difficult time with the Musicians' Union. Negotiations were very tough and so I have to assume,
although I do not know, that the word came down from CBS in New York, to cancel the musicians. So all live musicians were out. This was very hard, and shortly after that time, we went to talk radio.

I HAD NEVER DONE TALK RADIO, BUT I think all the network owned and operated stations were switching to talk radio at about the same time. So we started the talk phase. We had left the music phase, the entertainment phase, now we went into talk. And it has really developed into quite a thing across the country. It began in Chicago at WBBM. They brought in people who were good at talk and some of them were extremely inflammatory in style.

They brought in a young man from Boston named Jerry Williams. I had never heard this kind of radio before and he was the type. They asked me to interview him the first day he came to town. He came to one of my shows and started to take off on the Kennedy family. I mean, he really took off on them. But that was his style and he became very successful at it.

I tried to do a talk show, looking for information—trying to find out what listeners thought. And I was asked to do a show with Dr. Freda Kehm, who was the first psychologist on the air. During the program we took live telephone calls, giving the audience a chance to talk back. That became an important part of the station, and her ratings just went out of sight. Women loved it and a lot of men, too. Listeners were looking for something live, where people were really talking and communicating. It was more than just talk radio.

THE DR. KEHM PROGRAM WAS ON for a product called Miracle White. We took Miracle White bleach from a tiny little operation (the man mixed it up in his bathtub on the north side of Chicago) to one that was later sold for seven million dollars! Dr. Kehm was largely responsible for that because she had the power of believability—she was like everybody’s grandma. Her advice was mostly on how to raise children. Mainly, the “terrible twos” and the threes, how to treat them when they became four and five, and how to help them in school. And she got into all kinds of sensitive areas of child rearing.

When WBBM went all-news in 1968, I was an anchorman daily from 11 am until 2 pm. That included my show with Dr. Kehm and doing news. It was also at that time that my first wife, Jo, and I developed a program called Mal and Jo On The Go, which to this day you can see reflected in the programming on WBBM. We did restaurant and show reviews, demonstrating that radio is a good way to let people know what was happening. We would go to theatres, night club openings, and restaurants, and we would build 10 or 15 segments (each 5 or 10 minutes), and they would be played on the station throughout the week.

Mal Bellairs, Walter Cronkite, and an unidentified woman.
In the beginning, I didn’t quite see the potential for an all-news station, but they made a believer out of me. There was a niche for it all across the country. Now as I travel around and hear other stations of the CBS variety, doing all-news, I realize that there were some pretty smart old boys who decided that was the way to go.

And then I got an urge.

I had done about everything on WBBM that I could do, so I started looking around for a radio station that I could buy, where I could have the fun of running the place. It was also about that same time that WBBM and all of the CBS network stations switched from talk to news. There were many people who thought that I left WBBM because I didn’t like the news format. That wasn’t true. I was already in negotiations to buy a station, so I could try the one area of radio that I had never experienced. And I think it was a good move, because I don’t think that doing news would have satisfied the urge that brought me to WBBM in the first place. I left the station in mid-October, 1969 and opened my station in Crystal Lake, Illinois on November 1st.

By this time, of course, Ernie Shomo, the WBBM General Manager, had died. Ernie had been my good friend, my patron. I never signed a contract with WBBM, never. Ernie and I shook hands. From time to time I would go to him and say, “Ernie, I’m bringing in a lot of dollars, how about a few more for the Bellairs’ tribe?” and he’d say, “Okay, what do you need?” I would tell him and he would say okay. That’s how we lived.

And I have always looked at H. Leslie Atlass as being probably the smartest man in radio that I have ever met. Absolutely brilliant, but he kept a low profile. He was really tough, but he was also fair. He knew broadcasting and that’s how he built WBBM to what it is. He would never come around and give you instructions. He knew what he wanted and he got it and if he didn’t get it, out you went. He didn’t say, “I give you two weeks notice.” Instead, he would say, “Clean out your desk. Goodbye.”

It was an exciting time and I look on my days at WBBM as the greatest because they were challenging and exciting. I worked with some wonderful people and I’ve maintained some very good relationships with WBBM all through the years. I still do lots of commercials on the station. I left on very good terms. They gave me a nice farewell party that I will never forget.

I have never, ever had anything but the greatest pride in being able to say I was part of WBBM.
AS CBS RADIO NETWORK PRO-
gramming was changing, so was
WBBM, and radio, in general. Most sta-
tions were feeling the tremendous impact
of television. Revenues were dropping and
original programming was taking a beating.
WBBM had been a long-time holdout against
eliminating its live music and variety programs,
but by 1964 the handwriting was on the wall.
WBBM could no longer afford the luxury of the
staff orchestra, vocalists, writers and others it
needed to maintain its Showmanship format.
The WBBM sheet music library, used over
the years by musicians and singers, had an

WBBM Public Affairs Director John Callaway and guest panel
estimated value of over $150,000 and was considered to be one of the most complete reference musical compilations in the broadcast industry. It had been built up since the early 1930s and included many irreplaceable scores dating back as far as the 1880s that were out of print. The library was donated to the Stateville and Joliet penitentiaries for use by inmates who participated in the band and music staffs of the two institutions.

**Chicago Radio Announcer Insults Women For Pay**

**By VIRGINIA KACHAN**

CHICAGO, Nov. --- (INS) --- In a matter-of-fact voice, Paul Gibson has been telling women off for years and getting paid for it.

Gibson is one of Chicago's most durable radio personalities.

HUSBANDS "abused," slipping in commercials and topics ranging from current news to the origin of the calendar and what made George Washington tick.

This radio stunt over station WBBM nets him an annual income of about $100,000 and 1,500 to 5,000 letters weekly, Gibson estimated in an interview.

A former newspaperman, Gibson peppers his audience with such jokes:

"Women are educated far beyond housewife's needs. You don't need a diploma to be a vacuum cleaner jockey."

"In the United States, husbands obey wives -- this is the only place in the world where husbands are spouse broken."

"No nice person is even vaguely related to your wife." Gibson, a suave-mannered man in his 40's, calls his technique "reverse psychology." He said:

"Instead of being bored, women get mad and start to count up what they do accomplish -- like running the house, bolstering their husbands' egos, bringing up the kids, cleaning up the neighborhood and the community."

"When a woman begins to boil, she stops feeling sorry for herself and starts thinking," he said.

Gibson can't estimate how many letters he has received over the years from irate housewives. But he said "usually the gals simmer down by the last paragraph and mention they will keep on listening."

He added that many sponsors have cycled on his five-times weekly casts have complained.

Gibson's "abuse".

- Husbands. "Tell me they've up, and tell me they're going for years at my sponsors," he Gibson calls the victim" of his has been married now is resigned.

"None of my wife's personality. Even the of my little made with any part in mind."

He wound up in a typical Gibson form: ever marry again of my ex-wives. "I've got to be a man.

**Chicago Tribune, Monday, December 28, 1961**

**TOWER TICKE**

**By Herb Lyons**

Radio Station WJJD turned over a check for $10,000 to the family of Mrs. Joe Carrow and his children for the heroism by Mr. Carrow, who died in that street accident.

Both Eddie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds have been invited to perform at the B. J. B. J.'s inaugural which means Eddie must run his Vegas Riviera hot gament early and Debbie, set to follow him there, will delay her opening. So Perriee Mac Bailey signed to sit the few days in between.

Big Bet for Tonight: Arthur Miller's talker "After the Fall" opening at the Blackhawk theatre. In Miller's disclaimer, there's little doubt it's a slightly autobiographical version of his days with Marilyn Monroe.

Mike Wallace comes back into his own via a new weekly CBS radio news show, Mike Wallace at Last...
Audience response, mail volume, and station research indicated that Shomo and Schlosser were on the right track with this format. It was then decided to add listener response directly to the programs, so arrangements were made between the telephone company and the WBBM technical staff to put listener calls directly on the air.

Conversation radio on WBBM became talk-back radio and the listeners became involved by asking questions directly to guests in the studio, with both sides of the conversation being broadcast.

Speaking to the press in anticipation of the new, and unique to Chicago format, Shomo said, "Every area of service to our community will be explored, with emphasis on health, finance and..."
education. WBBM has always appealed to an adult audience and we feel this approach will be appreciated by our listeners. These total information and news programs will enable WBBM listeners to call in to each program and talk directly to the personalities conducting the programs or to their guests, who will include experts in many fields. We hope to be able to be of special service to parents through talks by psychologists, dentists, doctors, marriage counselors, teachers, and others who can help listeners solve their problems.

Schlosser added, “Daytime and early afternoon programming will be directed toward housewives, and to male and female adults during the later hours. With our ability to talk directly to our audience, we can give our listeners what they deserve.”

Jack Stockton was named producer of an eight-and-one-half-hour “talk block” of programming, and on Monday, December 28, 1964, WBBM became “the new WBBM Radio, the Talk of Chicago.”

LEADING THE TALK PARADE WAS Dr. Freda Kehm at 11:30 am, with advice on child-care problems, followed at noon by Joe Foss with Current, a discussion of current and topical news. Paul Gibson held court in the one o’clock hour and listeners were given a chance to “get even” during a “Ladies and the Tiger” portion of his show devoted to telephone call-ins. In the two o’clock hour, Mal Bellairs hosted Tieline, featuring family service interviews, and in the next hour, Bellairs presented Sounding Board, a verbal clearing house with guests offering opinions on a variety of subjects. Beginning at four, Newsday, a news block, featured WBBM’s longtime leader.
newscaster John Harrington with a two-and-one-quarter-hour wrap-up of local, national and international news, sports, weather, business, and traffic reports. Tom Clark's Conference Call took to the air at 6:15 pm, giving listeners 45 minutes to call in queries to Clark and his newsmaking guests. A final hour of news, sports, and other features from the CBS Radio Network rounded out the eight-and-one-half-hour talk block of the new Talk of Chicago.

Woven throughout this talk format were hourly news reports from CBS Radio, eight comprehensive weather reports daily from Weather Command, and 21 helicopter traffic reports during morning and afternoon rush hours.

IN ADDITION TO THE TALK BLOCK, WBBM offered listeners recorded music programming with its personable hosts. Bud Kelly was the station's "wake-up man" with music, news, traffic, sports, and weather in the mornings, and Dale McCarren entertained with recorded music in the evenings from 8 to 10:30. Rhythms 'Round the World followed and Music 'til Dawn continued as the all-night show on WBBM.

Weekends at the Talk of Chicago had mostly a musical format, with Mal Bellairs continuing his popular Saturday and Sunday programs. On Sunday nights, however, WBBM Public Affairs Director John Calloway anchored a four-hour package of special programming.

As the Talk of Chicago unfolded over the next few months, a few changes were made in the program lineup. In September, 1965, Jerry Williams, the controversial talk show host from Boston, made a quick and dynamic impact on Chicago listeners when three more hours of talk and call-in radio were added to
the WBBM nightly schedule from 8 to 11 pm. Williams' "open-air gripe session," often called "the world's largest round-table," became a hot addition to the Talk of Chicago.

WILLIAMS, BORN AND RAISED IN New York, went into radio after his military service. He did some television acting in New York, then found a spot as a talk show host in Philadelphia for seven years, and for eight more years at WMEX in Boston before coming to WBBM.

His style was to select controversial guests, research their specialty, and let them go on the air live. He would not talk to a guest before airtime.

Williams called himself a professional provocateur, meaning that he argued a lot. Sometimes he would be the antagonist, sometimes the protagonist. Occasionally, but not very often, he remained neutral.

He did shows on extrasensory perception, civil rights, homosexuality, the Hugh Hefner philosophy of life, and social problems—long before those topics were considered meat and potatoes for talk show hosts. Williams booked atheist Madelyn Murray and civil rights organizer Saul Alinsky. Illinois Secretary of State Paul Powell took to Williams' show for three hours trying to explain the scandals in his office. During another show, an irate politician crashed into the studio while Williams was on the air and punched him in the nose!

Williams avoided show business guests who wanted to promote themselves and, instead, booked guests who were themselves controversial, guests who would stir up the radio audience and set off a lively, often explosive, exchange.

Within a year Williams was firmly in place as a major part of the WBBM format. Mal Bellairs had added a couple of hours of Swap Shop to his three-hour mid-day program, WBBM Sports Director Rick Weaver had a Sportsline call-in show between 6 and 7 every evening, and WBBM's Outdoor Sports Editor Art Mercier had a daily half hour in the early evening, just prior to the Williams' show.
Bellaire expanded his weekly Sunday show to encompass a full six hours, from noon to 6 pm every week. Lee Phillip, who was a strong local personality on WBBM's sister station WBBM-TV, came upstairs to the radio studio each day for a "Lady and the Tiger" session with Paul Gibson and he often infuriated her as much as he did his female listeners.

The format was doing well. Variety reported that WBBM had gained listeners in every time period from 6 am to midnight. A big factor in the success of the station, according to the trade publication, was its wide use of the telephone for listener participation in the majority of its shows. General Manager Ernie Shomo and Program Director Len Schlosser noted that the telephone talk-back feature had created a king-sized headache for the phone company, which had to install an elaborate phone system exclusively for the Talk of Chicago.

WBBM had to double the capacity of its switchboard and had installed a device to count the number of calls that didn't get through when the lines were jammed.

Shomo said, "We have found that listeners have a proprietary interest in a station that talks to them. They either think it is only polite to ring up someone who seems interested in them or they are riled up about one of the issues we are discussing and want to get their opinion on record."

The Talk of Chicago was well-received by listeners, but how did it do from a financial standpoint?

Within five months after the format was established, General Sales Manager Jack Bivens sent a memo to Shomo reporting that the hours between 6 am and 9 pm were "sold out" and Saturday, from 9 am to 6 pm, was "practically full count."
"I'll buy that!"

HERB-OX BOUILLON

Loaded with flavor — a time and work saver! A delicious hot beverage at mealtime; or a perky in-between pick-up! WBBM Radio's Paul Gibson is telling his vast Chicagoland listening audience that HERB-OX BOUILLON has four fine flavors—beef, chicken, vegetarian, and onion. Keep a supply of HERB-OX out front—in 5, 12 and 25 cube containers. Customers will buy it FIRST ... because they hear it FIRST on WBBM Radio, "THE TALK OF CHICAGO!"

WBBM RADIO-780

Makes shoppers name brand droppers.

1965 Ad in Supermarket News.
John Hultman came to WBBM in February, 1968, a few months before the station became Newsradio 78. He eventually served as News and Program Director for the all-news format and is currently co-anchor for the critical morning drive period. Originally from Wilmette, Illinois, Hultman went to New Trier High School and Purdue University. His broadcast experience started in Evanston, Illinois, at station WNMP. He later worked at a television station in Fort Wayne, Indiana, doing a daily children's show and a Saturday night dance show. He was a disc jockey at WWJ in Detroit and when that station changed to all-talk, he switched to the news department and did anchoring, street reporting, and news for both radio and television.

This prepared him for the important role he would play when he joined Chicago's all-news station.

JOHN HULTMAN REMEMBERS

I had been looking to make a move back to Chicago and a friend, Dale McCarren, who had previously worked in Detroit at WJR was working at WBBM so I called him. He knew of an opening for a staff announcer, which is what the position was called before we were all-news. That's the job I got when I came here on February 26, 1968, about two-and-a-half months before we went all-news. I did a little bit of everything for the first month or two, until we made the big change. We weren't the first CBS station to go all-news. WCBS in New York was the first.

At the beginning of April of '68, John Callaway, who was the News Director at the time, was told that WBBM would be going all-news in about a month. It was that quick. He had one month to expand the staff to cover news 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
All-News On Verge of Boom

By STEVE KNOLL

Chicago, April 3.

An increasing number of major-market broadcasters are concluding that all-news is good news, and the result may be a significant alteration of the broadcast landscape. Accompanying this latest swing in the format pendulum is a widespread conviction that all-news, to succeed, must be done well or not at all. The name of the game is not monotonous but variety within the limits of an informational format.

Ironically, the main thrust of the all-news ferment today comes not from the pioneers of the format but rather from the johnnies-come-lately who are taking over where their predecessors left off. Most tradesters have forgotten that all-news radio originated with some misbegotten experiments in the '50s in Portland, Ore., and at the Coast's KPAX. In those early days, an all-news radio station was like a CATV channel today, only with announcers reading wire copy rather than having the teletype unspool before the camera. Then along came broadcast innovator Gordon Melconden felt that, on an all-news monolith was than a jumbo two.

The new news orientation of the CBS O&Os marks a distinct departure from the former tradition, in force until recently, that downbeat news and stressed telephone conversation. In fact, Chi's WBMM, now going all-news, not long ago, enforced a serious cutback in local news programming and personnel. The Clark George-Sam Cook Digger administration at CBS Radio began the informational up-beat, whose ultimate effects on both the o&O's and network are still not fully apparent.

The broader national picture reveals this anomaly while most formats benefit from lack of competition, all-news is possibly the exception to the rule. Thus Group W entered Los Angeles happy that other stations had "prepared" the market to accept the all-news concept. When WBRS went to "Newsradio" in New York, the station held its own in the ratings and even showed some "dest though insignificant increase."

Of course, some from the WABC and the WPBS, out the WINS "fleet" the only major station which the "newswheel" or "newswheel," or clock, so that listeners will know at about what time they can expect the weather or the traffic report.

We have some 45 people in our WBMM newsroom. This includes reporters, anchor people, editors, writers, desk assistants, sports people, and traffic reporters. We have the CBS News facilities available to us, but we also subscribe to all the wire services, and to the Associated Press audio reports. We have a lot of different sources.

WHEN WBMM WENT ALL-NEWS IN May of 1968, we certainly didn't have as many people in the newsroom as we have today. At that time there was an editor by the name of Mike Hirsch, a very bright guy with a good news sense. In fact, he has since become a television documentary producer. Anyway, when I came to work on that first day—to start the night shift with John Madigan—Mike was editor that afternoon. He was sitting at the editor's desk surrounded by mountains of wire copy, tapes all over the place, yelling, "We need a phone-out for the next half hour! Quick, who can we call?"

It was just madness, but anything new is going to be like that—the first few days or the first few weeks. No matter how much you plan, there's going to be chaos for a while. And it really was chaos. But it all finally evolved. We decided we couldn't continue to do those unending phone-outs. We had reporters on the street, but we didn't have AP Radio then. We also didn't have all the CBS audio available to us that we do now.

WBMM'S STAFF WAS BEING INCREASED during this time. Bob Crawford, an excellent reporter, first came here as an editor—he wasn't on the air. Donna Pearlman came here not as an on-the-air person, but as an editor. Herb Howard, who later did traffic reporting, was here before we went all-news. He was a producer for some of the talk shows. When reporters came back from their assignments, we debriefed them on the air about what had gone on at the news conference, the robbery, the fire, etcetera. Right on the air. It was interesting, and much more in depth than it is now.
Carole Simpson
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
AND SATURDAY ANCHORMAN

Dick Westerkamp
CHIEF CORRESPONDENT

Frank Beaman
CO-ANCHORMAN

Dick Helton
(All photos, late '60s)
1968–PRESENT: NEWSRADIO 78
WILLIAM C. O’DONNELL succeeded E. H. Shomo as Vice President and General Manager of WBBM in October, 1967. O’Donnell came to WBBM from St. Louis where, after a sales career with station KMOX, he became Manager of CBS Radio Spot Sales there.

WBBM had been doing well with its information and talk format. News had become a very important part of the Talk of Chicago and the station had the largest radio news staff in the city. Other CBS owned and operated stations had become all-news outlets, and in Chicago, independent station WNUS had unsuccessfully tried an all-news format, but it consisted mostly of “rip and read” wire service.
THE SUBJECT OF REVAMPING THE Talk of Chicago into an all-news station was put on the table. Management level discussions began, casually at first, then more seriously as the pros and cons of what "going all-news" would mean for WBBM. Other stations were picking up on the telephone call-in device that WBBM had pioneered and the Talk of Chicago no longer had an exclusive "talk-back" format.

"Would we still do phone-ins?"

"WNUS had tried all-news and wasn't successful. Who wants to listen to news all day long?"

"Is there enough news to fill 24 hours a day?"

"Will people tune out after five minutes?"

"What about Godfrey (who was the biggest star on the CBS Radio Network) be a morning show?"

"How about Music 'til Dawn (the all-night show had a firm sponsorship commitment)?"

"How can we go all-news with the staff we have? More people, reporters, writers, and editors will have to be hired."

"What about our current on-air people like Mal Bellairs and Jerry Williams? Can they adapt to an all-news operation?"

Research was done, surveys were conducted. O'Donnell had conversations with other CBS all-news station managers, and the New York brass as well. Finally, the decision was made.

ON MARCH 29, 1968, WBBM RADIO announced that it would "expand its award-winning news coverage to 17 1/2 hours per day" beginning May 6, 1968. Thirty-eight days later, WBBM Newsradio 78 went on the air with the most comprehensive and thorough radio news operation in mid-America. The news staff was tripled. Ten reporters would be working the streets daily. John Callaway was named News and Program Director for Newsradio 78.

Dan Price and Dale McCarren anchored the morning news block from 5:30 to 10 am; Mal Bellairs and Tom Clark were on mid-days, 11 am to 3 pm, Dick Westerkamp (recruited from other companies or speaking makes news) from 3 to 5 pm, the streets (The all-news operation from WBBM Newsradio 78). And they make the beats and reports that reporters can use.

"What about sponsorship commitment?"

"What about the pros and cons of the new format?"

"How about we do a thorough survey and do it the right way?"
BEAT US TO A NEWS STORY AND WE'LL PUT YOU ON THE AIR.

Those Newspeople give you the news as it happens. Sometimes, though, a story breaks right in your neighborhood and you know about it before we do. So we're making you an offer. If you give us a news story that's news to us, and we put it on the air—we'll put you on the air.

What you do is call 944-7878. Give us your news tip; we'll check it out. What's more, if yours is judged the best News Tip of the Week we'll pay $78. For the best tip over 78 days, $780.

So keep your eyes open. You could hear yourself on WBBM Newsradio 78.

WBBM Newsradio 78
Where news is first!
WWJ, Detroit) and Mike Stanley (from WCAU, Philadelphia) reported from 3 to 7 pm; and John Hultman (also from WWJ) and John Madigan were the evening anchors from 8 to 11:30 pm.

MADIGAN BEGAN HIS CAREER AS a newsman in 1937 as a copyboy at the Chicago Evening American. He subsequently became a reporter and later was named Political Editor at the American and for the Hearst newspaper chain. His career moved forward as he joined the Washington Bureau of Newsweek magazine and subsequently made regular appearances on television's Meet the Press and Face the Nation. In 1964 he became News Director for WBBM-TV, Channel 2 in Chicago.

In 1968, when WBBM Radio was making the switch to an all-news format, Madigan was recruited by John Callaway and William O'Donnell to do regular commentaries and news analysis for Newsradio 78.

His political knowledge and contacts were invaluable to the station and he became Political Editor for WBBM. His cogent News and Commentary and Views the Press programs were often controversial, and always elicited discussion among listeners and the press. Madigan's weekly At Issue series of probing interviews with prominent newsmakers was added later, and still receives widespread coverage and recognition.

OVER THE YEARS, MADIGAN'S famous on-air sign-off "Newsradio SSssssseventy-eight" became a well-known signature for the respected and honored newsman.

In the new WBBM newsradio format, CBS Network news and features were scheduled throughout the day. John Callaway's Sunday night public affairs program continued, and he was also assigned to produce a local interview show similar to CBS' Face the Nation.

General Manager O'Donnell was convinced the all-news format would work. "There's a greater awareness by people of what's going on," he said at the time, "and we intend to tell them. Radio has the mobility and intimacy that newspapers and TV lack. As the story happens, we can deliver it. This is what radio does best."
Early ad promoting Madigan’s “News & Commentary.”

John Madigan. A man of experience...35 years of it as a news journalist...11 with CBS in Chicago.

John Madigan. A man of insight. When it comes to penetrating analyses of news and political events, there's no one in Chicago like him.

John Madigan. A man who's not afraid to say what he thinks about the issues and personalities that confront us today.

7:00 AM - 12:00
MONDAY THRU FRIDAY

WBBM NEWSRADIO 78
That says it all!

WBBM Staff: (l to r) Maria Munoz, Community Relations Director; Catherine Cahan, Director of Editorials; Janice Nichols, Administrative Asst.; Darlyne Martin, Technical Dept. Asst.; Cherry House, Community Relations/Editorial Asst.

The debate in November 1984, between incumbent Senator Charles Percy and Paul Simon.

If you're undecided on the Senator race, listen to the last debate between Senator Charles Percy and Representative Paul Simon tonight on Newsradio 78. John Madigan will moderate the live debate and afterward he and Sue Castillo will ask listeners for their comments. On election night WBBM-AM's news staff will bring you up to the minute results of all the races.

Turn to us first: WBBM-AM Newsradio 78.
WBBM NEWSRADIO 78 WAS PUT to the test in its first few months of operation. John Callaway remembers: "Martin Luther King was murdered in the midst of the planning of the new format. Robert F. Kennedy was shot down a month after all-news WBBM was inaugurated. And the violence of the Democratic National Convention of 1968 capped the initiation period of all-news. We were given two months in which to plan the format, create a budget, hire a host of anchor people, reporters, editors, writers. In the beginning, we were heavy on street reporting and phone-out interviews. The format wasn’t as tight as it is now and we weren’t very slick. But we really cut loose on the big stories."

Among the Newsradio 78 staff members at the time were Bob Crawford and John Cody.

Bob Crawford joined WBBM a couple of weeks before the station went all-news in 1968. He had been working as News Director for the CBS radio and television affiliates in Peoria, Illinois and had covered the Richard Speck murder trial as a "stringer" or free-lancer for WBBM. He joined WBBM as a news editor and, in 1970, was assigned to Chicago’s City Hall as a reporter for Newsradio 78.

"Mayor Daley was in office when I started," says Crawford. "The years have passed quickly. I’ve lived through Mayor Daley, Mike Bilandic, Jane Byrne, Harold Washington, and now Eugene Sawyer. The easiest to work with was Mayor Washington. He was a more open type of person who liked the media more than any other mayor did. The toughest was Daley. You knew he had the power to do so many things, but you could never really find out what was going on. The real truth always lay somewhere beneath the news releases that would be handed out on a controlled basis. Trying to find it out was very, very difficult.

"Daley was always on guard with the news media. He basically didn’t like the press and he didn’t like broadcast reporters. Harold Washington genuinely liked reporters and liked doing battle with them because he was confident of his ability to handle himself on his feet."

Mayor Harold Washington, who appeared monthly on WBBM’s "Ask the Mayor" program.
What's the latest episode of McMullen & Wife?

Find out first on WBBM Newsradio 78.

Above: Bob Crawford and his City Hall Press Room colleagues corner Alderman William Beavers.

Left: Part of WBBM's advertising campaign during the tenure of Mayor Jane Byrne (which coincided with the run of "McMillan & Wife" on TV).
Crawford recalls a big City Hall scoop:
"Daley was so proud of the way he managed government. He liked to convey the impression that he was an expert on the budget and that he really knew how to run a sound government. I did an investigative series in which I found something like $96 million in waste in the budget, tucked away in the nooks and crannies and under obscure, misleading titles and things. He was furious! He got very upset at the whole situation. Finally they cut some of those elements out of the budget, so we ended up saving the taxpayers some money. I am pretty proud of that."

John Cody started his WBBM career as a news writer in 1967, and in the middle 1970s became a general assignment reporter, covering hard, breaking news and lighter features as well.

"I remember jumping out of an airplane with a tape recorder in the jumpsuit and the microphone wired to my left hand. I just talked as I fell!
"Once I went to cover a minor fire, where there wasn't really much to say, and so I interviewed a myna bird! A lady had evacuated the building with her myna bird and I found that the bird actually had more to say than the lady, so I interviewed the bird.
"I've seen guys burned to death over at Cook County Jail. I remember the late Richard J. Daley's funeral, on an extremely cold day, and we had to stand out there for hours, in what seemed to be sub-zero weather with high winds. And I remember a Chicago notable, Jimmy 'The Bomber' Catura being assassinated somewhere west of the Loop, and seeing his orange socks sticking out from underneath the blanket the police had used to cover him."

As a general assignment reporter, Cody has mastered the technique of gathering facts for a news story.
"You learn both the people to talk to and the type of person you need to talk to in a particular case. You learn the relative rank of people and who is likely to have information that you need and who is likely to have it but won't give it; and who is likely to give information but wouldn't know what they are talking about."
What made the Mayor Byrne today?

Find out first on WBBM Newsradio 78.

Newsradio 78: A whole lot more than a whole lot of news.

A 1978 ad.

WBBM/CBS Newsradio 78
You learn who you should look for. You learn what a public relations person is likely to say; what a policeman is likely to say and what he is likely not to say; what a corporate official is likely to say or not say; what a bystander is likely to say. You sort of figure out what kind of spin is on the ball so that you can field it.

OTHER NEWSRADIO 78 STAFF members working at the station at the time the all-news format began were Van Gordon Sauter, Bob Sanders, Alan Crane, Fred Partido, Jim Harry, and Brad Palmer.

Within the first 12 months as an all-news station, Brent Musburger, Frank Beaman, Alan Bickley, Sherman Kaplan, Dick Helton, and Len Walter had joined the Newsradio 78 staff. Listeners were becoming more and better informed than ever.

Dick Helton had been working for the Illinois Farm Bureau in Bloomington, Illinois, broadcasting each morning to 35 stations across the state. He had done stringer work for WBBM and he heard that, with the switch to all-news in 1968, the station was adding more people to its staff. Helton auditioned for a reporter's job, but was offered a position as a writer. He turned it down, electing to wait for an on-air spot which finally opened up in February, 1969.

"It was a very exciting moment for me," says Helton, "because here I was, a 24-year-old farm kid from downstate Illinois who, while growing up, had listened to people like John Harrington and Lowell Thomas on WBBM and CBS. I was very familiar with this radio station because of the impact it had in this community and in the Midwest for so many years. So, just merely to walk through that front door and see some of these people was extraordinarily exciting. It was a really big moment for me."

Helton recalls, "There was a lot of energy in this radio station at the time. Coming out of the '68 Convention, coming out of the election, the time was so good for all-news radio, because there were so many things happening. Van Gordon Sauter, who was the News and Programming Director at the time, looked at me on my first day here and said, very seriously, referring to..."
The afternoon co-anchor team: Dick Helton and Kris Kridel.
my young age, 'You realize we're taking a big chance on you.' They were hiring people from Detroit, Boston and Milwaukee—people from major markets who were older than I and who had a track record in a large broadcast facility. I'm still here, so I guess Sauter's 'big chance' worked out."

Helton remembers a night, early in the all-news format, when he was working the overnight shift on the air and a news service report moved him to make a lucky phone call.

``IT WAS ABOUT THREE O'CLOCK IN the morning and a piece of copy came across the wire that said there was an announcement at Apple Records in London that the Beatles were going their separate ways and would no longer perform as a group. I went into one of the studios and got on the phone and called Apple Records in London. Somebody answered and I said, 'This is Dick Helton and I'm with the CBS radio station in Chicago and we've just seen the information that the Beatles are breaking up. Is there anyone there who can give me some additional information about this? I'd like to do an interview.' The guy said, 'Hold on.' About 10 or 15 seconds went by and I heard the phone being picked up and this person says, 'Hello, this is George Harrison.' Just out of the blue I rolled the tape and we had George Harrison here on the air that morning in Chicago explaining why the Beatles decided to disband."

``I REMEMBER ANOTHER OCCASION and probably the most fascinating interview I ever did. Several years ago I had come across the name of Frank Goldsmith. Frank Goldsmith was nine-years-old and was on the Titanic when it went down. I found him in Ohio and I called him on one of the anniversaries of the Titanic sinking. We did a 15-minute interview in which he told me the story of his night on the Titanic. He told how he survived and how his father and one of his best friends stayed behind. His friend was 13-years-old, had just celebrated his birthday and was wearing long trousers for the first time. He refused to go with the women and children because he was a man, and so he stayed behind. Frank Goldsmith gave me this incredible account of the sinking of the Titanic in a firsthand story. To this day, as I recall this, it gives me goosebumps.'"
In early 1988, WBBM sponsored its first Current Events Competition for High School students.

Above: WBBM Morning Newsroom Staff: (l to r) Don Mellema, Reporter/Anchor; Valerie Ingram, Assoc. Producer; Perry Vickers, Desk Asst.; Steve Miller, Writer; Abby Polonsky, Production Mgr.; Carleen Mosbach, Senior Producer; Craig Dellimore, Managing Editor; Mary Novak, Writer; Duane Gray, Writer; Jim Benes, Writer.

Below: WBBM Evening Newsroom Staff: (l to r) David Bakker, Writer; Marilyn Idelman, Writer; Leon Colvin Jr., Writer; Carol Boudry, Desk Asst.; Robert Mangiles, Intern; Rick Strasser, Assoc. Producer; Jane Brouder, Assoc. Producer; Lee Ann Morris, Prod. Asst.; Helen Denhorn, Desk Asst. (seated, front); Deidra White, Writer (seated, rear).

Writer/Anchor Bernie Tafoya.

Anchorman Dale McCarren, Writer Don Schuble
LEN WALTER JOINED WBBM IN February, 1969, after a stint at WJR, Detroit as a news reporter and anchorperson, doing a lot of work covering the automobile industry and the unions. WBBM News Director Van Gordon Sauter had been a newspaperman in Detroit and knew of Walter's work on the air and invited him to join the staff of Newsradio 78.

"I CAME IN AS AN ANCHORPERSON, working afternoons with Alan Bickley who, I think, is one of the finest minds in broadcasting today. Shortly thereafter I was made a general assignment reporter and it seemed like the assignment desk would always give me stories that were business related. I had done a lot of recreational reading in the business field, so I had given myself a little bit of an education in that area. The station did not have a financial desk at that time."

Some years later, in 1982, Walter was asked to start a business news segment on a regular basis and he has since become Business Editor for Newsradio 78.

COVERAGE OF BUSINESS NEWS REQUIRES just as much news judgment as any other reporting. Walter recalls, "I was watching a pharmaceutical stock one day on the floor of the Midwest Stock Exchange and it began to operate very erratically. I started asking some questions among the traders on the floor. They didn't know what was happening. So, I called a friend of mine at the company and, off the record, he told me that a number of people had died as a result of using tainted Tylenol products. I was able to confirm that quickly and we broke the story on WBBM, and probably had it on the air an hour and-a-half or two hours before anybody knew what was going on. And our news desk knew how to handle that. The producer at the time dispatched a reporter to the police department. Another reporter went to the Food and Drug Administration offices, another went to some of the largest distributors of the product and, of course, the story just fed on itself after that. So what I was able to do was to give them the lead and carry the ball for an hour or two with regard to what had happened and what was happening to the stock, and what the federal regulatory authorities were doing.

Top, left. Reporter/Anchor Steve Crocker
Top, right. Reporter/Anchor Alan Bickley
"But basically my main function, as I see it, is to keep people up to date on where the markets are at any one specific time in our broadcast day. It's about the same as doing a play-by-play ballgame. You are constantly glued to the computers that are connected to all of the Exchanges around the world. The numbers dance and after a while, they tell you their own little story."

In 1971, WBBM General Manager William C. O'Donnell was transferred to KNXT in Los Angeles as General Manager of the CBS-owned TV station there. He was replaced by James W. Simon as WBBM Vice President and General Manager, but after a two year absence, O'Donnell returned to the post in January, 1973.

On its fifth anniversary in 1973, WBBM Newsradio 78 was also calling itself "The Electronic Newspaper" and the all-news format had indeed relaxed into a newspaper-style. (The "Electronic Newspaper" tag was later dropped; "Newsradio 78" best described WBBM.) News, of course, was the mainstay of the station, but listeners now could tune in to hear news commentaries and editorials, in-depth interviews with newsmakers, sports, financial news, weather, traffic, and features.

Husband and wife team Bob and Betty Sanders brought an extra dimension to mid-day listeners of Newsradio 78 with special features, guests, interviews and a rare warmth and friendliness. Bob and Betty were down-to-earth radio people who had a large listening audience which identified with them through their mid-day program of news and features, interviews with visiting celebrities, best-selling authors, and other interesting people. They met in St. Louis at a TV station where Bob was a staff announcer and Betty was doing commercials for the Liberace Show.

They began working as a husband-wife team on WBBM in 1972 where Bob had been working for some years as an announcer and disc jockey. Bob, incidentally, was the last disc jockey on WBBM before the station switched to the talk and all-news formats.

WBBM Newsradio 78 worked with the Chicago Police Dept. and the Illinois State Police “I-Search” program for five months in 1987 to fingerprint kids throughout the Chicago area during “Project Safe Kids.”
Today, people don't keep up with the Joneses, they keep up with Bob and Betty Sanders.

Bob and Betty Sanders were on WBBM together for 10 years. One of their many famous guests was actress Patricia Neal (shown with Bob and Betty and Don Mellema).
REGINE SCHLESINGER WAS AMONG the writers, editors, reporters and anchors who were added to the staff as the station's newsgathering expertise grew and was refined.

SCHLESINGER GRADUATED FROM Northwestern University in March, 1973, and started making the rounds looking for a job in broadcasting. Much to her amazement, she found her first—and only job thus far—at WBBM. She began as a news writer, did some producing, and after several years became a general assignment reporter and news anchor.

"College is very good academically and theoretically," she says, "but when you get out into the real world, the real experience of a newsroom is something different. It was unlike anything I had really seen. When a big story broke, suddenly the adrenalin started flowing, because I had never been involved in anything like that. Everybody pitched in and started helping. There was a real team spirit and everybody felt they were all working toward the same goal. The people at WBBM are very close to each other and have a very good working relationship.

"Being a general assignment reporter is wonderful, because there is so much variety. You never get pigeonholed into any particular kind of story. Some stories are tough to try to explain in a brief time because they are so complicated. Other stories are tough because they are constantly changing. And some are tough just because of the emotional heartbreak. Sometimes you see very sad stories. You have to try to distance yourself. It's the same sort of thing that policemen and firemen and doctors do in their situations. You have to separate yourself as a human being and look at it professionally and just try to deal with it as calmly as you can."

IN JANUARY, 1974, WBBM ADDED some pure entertainment with the addition of the CBS Radio Mystery Theatre, a network offering hosted by E. G. Marshall, and presented seven nights a week at 10:30 pm.

By the 1980s, after a dozen years of all-news, WBBM Newsradio 78 was considered...

Turn To Us In The Morning. Newsradio 78.

Plug into the largest radio news staff in town. Learn what happened as you slept. What the weather's doing. If the expressways are express or not. Who won. Who lost. How the markets are faring. WBMM's wide-awake reporters are right there with the news you'll need to start your day. Plus commentaries from John Madigan and Walter Jacobson. Get smart early. Turn to us first. WBMM Newsradio 78.

Early 80's ad promoting morning programming.

Top: WBMM Traffic/Continuity Staff: (l to r) Debbie Mills, Mgr of Traffic & Continuity, Deborah Parker, Asst. Traffic & Continuity Mgr, Mary Gorg, Continuity Mgr.
Bottom: Reporter/Anchor Dale McCarren.
“state of the art.” An experienced staff and management team had the knowledge and expertise to present ongoing news and breaking stories in a remarkably comprehensive and concise manner. Chicago tuned to WBBM for news as it was happening, for interpretation of the news, for sports reports and sports events, for features, interviews, and for the personalities and reporters who represented the station.

By the early 1980s, the Newsradio 78 format was so well defined and the audience had grown to be so large and loyal that the format planners back in 1968 need not have worried that listeners would tune out after a few minutes of headlines. Newsradio 78 had distinguished itself as Chicago’s most honored radio station, earning over 100 awards for excellence in broadcasting and journalism.

And the station was eminently listenable. John Hultman was News Director as well as an on-air anchor-reporter; John Madigan was Political Editor and Media Critic; Alan Bickley, Dale McCarren, Alan Crane, Bob Crawford, John Cody, Millard Hansen, Fred Partido, and Len Walter were anchor-reporters; Brad Palmer was doing sports.

Herb Howard reported Newsradio 78’s computer traffic from the 103rd floor Skydeck of Sears Tower. John Case was the only outdoor reporter in Chicago whose programs were aired seven days a week. Sherman Kaplan’s Restaurant Reviews, Don Mellema’s Entertainment Reports, John Cody’s Environment Report and Keith Bromery’s Urban Journal all added to the texture of all-news WBBM.

Fred Partido’s Speaking of Spanish program concerned itself with the needs and interests of Chicago’s large Latino population. Steve Crocker was the only radio reporter assigned on a full-time basis to cover the state legislature in Springfield. Dick Helton reported from the Federal Courts and Diane Abt’s beat was education. Joe Cummings was always at the scene of police and fire stories and Donn Pearlman received national recognition for investigative reporting.
Outdoor Reporter John T. Case was a familiar voice on WBBM Newsradio 78 for many years.

Each year WBBM is part of the St. Patrick's Day parade in downtown Chicago.

Above: WBBM's Computer Traffic Control at the Sears Tower Skydeck, and former Traffic Reporter Herb Howard who helped program the traffic reporting system used today.
PEARLMAN JOINED NEWSRADIO 78 in 1970 as a writer-producer. He had been working in Kansas City, Missouri as a stringer for WBBM when the writer's job opened for him. He remembers his first impression of the all-news station in Chicago.

"The newsroom looked like lower Wacker Drive. There's a false ceiling in there now, but then there were girders sticking out. There were, it seemed, 150 people running around the newsroom at the time. We had a lot more writers and management people then. Now, with computerization and a more efficient operation, there are more people out on the street, but fewer inside. The newsradio format was only about two-years-old at the time, but there was an awful lot of excitement, a different kind of excitement than we have today, a wide-eyed innocent excitement. 'Gee, we could probably do this and get someone live on the radio!' Then we'd pick up the phone and call somewhere in the world to get a story. Today, we're not just calling somewhere, we're getting them on the satellite.'"

PEARLMAN RECALLS HIS PART IN the coverage of the crash of the DC-10 near O'Hare Field in 1979. "I was one of the first reporters out there. I remember pulling up on Touhy Avenue because they were putting reporters off to the side in their cars. I saw a big, long line of ambulances and I suddenly realized that the attendants were just standing there. There was no one to be attended to. Everyone on the plane had died. It took a couple of seconds for that realization to hit me. I just couldn't move. It hit me that there were apparently no survivors."

AND PEARLMAN REMEMBERS AN embarrassing moment. "It was December of 1976 when Mayor Daley died, and fortunately I was not alone in my embarrassment. I was covering the funeral procession at Calgary Cemetery on the far south side. There was a whole group of reporters—radio, television and press people—all lined up outside the cemetery, waiting for the funeral procession with the hearse carrying the Mayor's body."
Former Counsel to the President John Dean talks about his book, "Blind Ambition," following the Watergate scandal.

Anchor/Reporter Carol Ramos.

Carol Ramos covering a public meeting at the Chicago Transit Authority.
Suddenly a state trooper yelled, 'Here they come!' We looked down the road and there was a hearse and a funeral procession coming. Everyone started to go on the air "live." All the radio stations geared up and went live and TV started to go live. I'm yelling into the two-way radio, 'Okay, let's go!' They put me on the air and I'm standing on the top of our mobile unit so I could look down the roadway. It's cold, it's windy and I'm holding a two-way radio in my frozen hand, describing the funeral procession. It comes closer and suddenly I realize there was no police escort and it was clear that all of us were broadcasting the funeral procession of someone other than Richard J. Daley.

"I tried to get out of it as gracefully as possible, indicating to the listening audience that everyone was doing the same thing. About five minutes later helicopters appeared in the sky, we saw flashing lights and police cars and we realized that, finally, this was the funeral procession we were waiting for."
CBS Radio Network's popular morning newscaster, poet laureate, author and philosopher.
Charles Osgood.

CBS Radio Network broadcasters heard on WBHM.
Below: WBBM “Sportsline” guest host Ted Albrecht coaches “the offense” during WBBM’s Football Clinic for Women Only.

Also below: Papa Bear George Halas and former WBBM Sales Manager John Goodwill at a “Bears Bash” for station clients.

As WBBM grew, the NewsTIP Hotline was created. Listeners who had learned of, or were witness to, an important news event were urged to call the station, and Newsradio 78 obtained many important scoops on big stories. The station’s Direct Line project was developed to help listeners with personal problems ranging from social service needs to consumer complaints. A Christmastime Wreath of Hope fund-raising campaign was initiated to assist thousands of needy Chicagoans during the holiday season.

Sports were not neglected by Newsradio 78. WBBM carried a variety of local and network sportscasts along with play-by-play coverage of major sporting events. From 1977 to 1984, WBBM was the home of the Chicago Bears broadcasts, and the station aired Chicago White Sox baseball in the ’80 and ’81 seasons.

“Sweetness” Walter Payton.

Bears vs. Packers, Noon Today
WBBM Newsradio 78.

Pre-game program starts at 11 AM with the Gale Sayers Show Play-by-play with Joe McConnell & Brad Palmer. Turn to us first WBBM Newsradio 78.

NFL Monday Night Football games are heard on WBBM Newsradio 78.
Will Harry Caray the Sox to a win?
Why does Joe McConnell have so much Sox appeal?
Will Jimmy Piersall come out of left field today?
How does a Rich King appraise baseball diamonds?

Find out first on WBBM Sportsradio 78.

Will James get away Scott-free?
Is Evans In-Vince-able?

Find out first on WBBM Sportsradio 78.

BBM Sportsradio 78 is the play-by-play voice of the 1980 Chicago White Sox.

For left: Former WBBM Sports Director Brad Prince, now a sportswriter on WGN TV, Chicago.
FELICIA MIDDLEBROOKS WAS THE first woman to co-anchor the morning drive time schedule on WBBM. She had worked at several radio stations in northwest Indiana and had been a desk assistant at Channel 2 News in Chicago. She started her WBBM career in 1983 as a reporter and weekend anchor, and was teamed with John Hultman in the morning drive period in October, 1984.

"IT'S WONDERFUL WORKING ON morning drive," she says. "Initially, I would go out on stories right after we got off the air, but it became physically debilitating. It was grueling for me to constantly talk on the air for five hours and then go out and cover a story. I miss street reporting, but I try to make up for it by doing special reports throughout the year. I don't want to lose touch with the people. You stay in touch with them by going out where they are—into the community. I'm committed to a number of organizations and I do side work for them. I'll go out and address civic and religious groups and spend a lot of time in the school system. When you meet the people, it makes what you're doing well worth the effort."
Announcing the total dollars collected during WBBM’s Wreath of Hope campaign for the benefit of 7 Chicago charities. (L to r) John Hultman, Felicia Middlebrooks, United Airlines’ Marie MacDonald and Richard Veatch. Gregg Peterson. United is one of WBBM’s Wreath of Hope Corporate Sponsors.

Morning Drive Anchor Team: John Hultman and Felicia Middlebrooks.

WBBM Direct Line volunteer staff. (L to r) Barbara Sterner, Nathan Feinstein, Marilyn Kaufman, Juan Bustamante, Terry Willis, Coordinator Naomi Hood (holding award), Erica Watts. WBBM General Manager Gregg Peterson, Harry Mazur and Cydelle Rosenberg (many other volunteers not shown).
Middlebrooks had been hired by Gregg L. Peterson who succeeded William C. O'Donnell as WBBM Vice President and General Manager in 1982. Peterson came to WBBM from KNX, the CBS station in Los Angeles, where he served on the news staff for 13 years, the last three as News Director.

When Peterson arrived at WBBM, he found "a great radio station that needed a little fine tuning." Peterson continues: "The station had a preeminent position in the marketplace and a tremendous number of talented people on staff. We began modernizing equipment—it had been some time since that had been done—and we greatly expanded the amount of community outreach programs. For example, we reemphasized the Wreath of Hope, our holiday charity where money is raised for various agencies around Chicago. We began doing a lot of things that are innovative for an all-news station. We started doing remote broadcasts, originating our Newsradio 78 programs from the Chicago Automobile Show or from the Taste of Chicago in Grant Park. We have also broadcast from various suburban shopping malls.

Chicago Bulls Superstar Michael Jordan signs autographs during the Wreath of Hope fundraiser at Yorktown Mall.
Above: Chicago Blackhawk fans join WBBM and the players at WBBM's Skate with the Blackhawks party to benefit Wreath of Hope.

Opposite: WBBM's Skyline Tours give the public a behind-the-scenes peek at corporate and political inner sanctums of power and prestige in Chicago.

Below: Broadcasting "live" from the Chicago Auto Show.
ONCE WE DID A REMOTE FROM THE Museum of Science and Industry on a Saturday in February. Normally, the Museum might expect about 15,000 visitors. We had 52,000 people show up—the most who had ever come to the Museum on any February day. We're involved in some community-wide event all the time.

"During a remote broadcast," says Peterson, "the writers, the reporters, the producers, the broadcasters, the technical department, the news sources that we rely on—all of that input still continues, so our programming really isn't changed. The difference is that listeners can see the radio station at work.

IN THESE TIMES PEOPLE REALLY need news more than ever before. The world is more complex and moves at a faster pace. More and more, the average person needs to know, for example, what is happening internationally and nationally in the business world. This was proven in October, 1987, when the stock market crash touched almost every person in the country, one way or another.

"Young people are more interested in news than ever before. Women have become more actively involved in the marketplace and have a need to know. People still rely on WBBM for basics—traffic, weather, even the time—but more than ever before, they want to know what's happening in other parts of the world.
Top, left: WBBM Sports Director Rich King takes questions from the audience during Sportsline at "Taste of Chicago."

Top, right: In an all-day broadcast, WBBM participates in the opening of the "We the People" exhibit at the Chicago Historical Society.

Middle: WBBM Free Day at Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History.

Bottom: The WBBM Mobile Newsroom setup at Taste of Chicago in Grant Park.
MERRILLVILLE, INDIANA.
WE SALUTE YOU AS OUR COMMUNITY OF THE WEEK.
July 6 - July 12
Each week WBBM Newsradio 78 honors one unique and inspiring community in our listening area. This week the spotlight is on you. Throughout the week we'll hear interviews, special features and facts about your community, highlighting your achievements, qualities, history and how you're making a difference. Stay in touch with Chicago and the details at our website every day at WBBM Newsradio 78.

FOLLOW THE BOUNCING BALL

WBBM
Newsradio 78

INDY 500 ON WBBM NEWSRADIO 78

Sun. 10AM-2:45PM
plus traffic updates & "Things of Speed" reports

WBBM
Newsradio 78

TRACK THE MARKETS ALL DAY ON NEWSRADIO 78

20/20 Business on

NFL PLAYOFFS & SUPERBOWL ON WBBM NEWSRADIO 78

VOTE STRAIGHT 78 ELECTION DAY

Starting today at 11:15AM

NOW THE NIGHT HAS A BITE

WBBM
Newsradio 78

WOODBURN. WE SALUTE YOU AS OUR COMMUNITY OF THE WEEK.

March 2 - March 8
Each week WBBM Newsradio 78 honors one unique and inspiring community in our listening area. This week the spotlight is on you. Throughout the week we'll hear interviews, special features and facts about your community, highlighting your achievements, qualities, history and how you're making a difference. Stay in touch with Chicago and the details at our website every day at WBBM Newsradio 78.

THE OFFICIAL STORM CENTER: WBBM NEWSRADIO 78

WE TOLD YOU SO

WBBM
Newsradio 78

NFL Monday Night Football on

Blackhawk Play-Offs on WBBM

Current ad campaign for WBBM Newsradio 78.
"We have worked very hard to take advantage of what radio does best, which is to provide companionship and become a friend. Radio is a unique medium, much different from television, newspapers or magazines. People really do relate to that person they hear coming over the radio. We look for broadcasters who, in addition to being tremendously professional journalists, are able to project personality and warmth. We have succeeded in doing that. We have a significant edge over many of the other news stations in the United States in that regard.

"The personalities of our news reporters also reflect the personalities of our news writers. We are blessed that many of the writers and broadcasters have been at WBBM for most of the years that we have been in the newsradio format. They really understand radio news and they understand Chicago. They are extremely professional."

More listeners than ever tune in to hear familiar voices relating the events of the day as they happen.

Top: 'Bear Talk' at the Ultimate Sports Bar & Grill with host Rich King and co-host Bears running back Neal Anderson.

Bottom: Anchor/Reporter Sherman Kaplan is also WBBM's Entertainment Editor.
Above: WBBM Technical Staff: (l to r) Technical Director Mark Williams, and Technicians Doug Callihan, Alan Rosen, Bob Seaberg, Mario Aceto, (missing: Jann Hendrickson)

JOHN HULTMAN AND FELICIA Middlebrooks report the news to Chicago during what is now known as "morning drive" time, 5 to 10 a.m. Donn Pearlman, Sherman Kaplan and Walt Hamilton anchor the news and conduct interviews mid-day. Kris Kridel and Dick Helton provide news updates, analysis, and interviews with newsmakers during the afternoon drive period and Millard Hansen keeps overnight listeners up to date.

Throughout the 24-hour broadcast day, WBBM Newsradio 78 schedules weather and traffic information, business reports, editorials, commentary, sports news and scores, and a wide range of special features with experts answering questions and offering advice.

A NUMBER OF LONGER-FORM PROGRAMS are part of WBBM's schedule in 1988. Ask The Mayor brings the Mayor of the City of Chicago to the WBBM microphones each month to take calls from concerned listeners. Ask The Governor does the same with the Chief Executive of the State of Illinois and has been the catalyst for new legislation.

Listeners have an opportunity each month to question the Chicago School Board President and the Chicago Superintendent of Schools during Talk to the Schools.

Chicago Superintendent of Schools Dr. Manford Byrd, Jr.

Have you called your Governor lately?

If you want to put a question to Governor Thompson, tune in to WBBM Newsradio 78 at 6:30 p.m. on the last Tuesday of every month. And find out how you can ask your question about the state of the State. The Governor's waiting for your call on March 31st.

WBBM Newsradio 78

Middle: The late WBBM Super Salesman Don Mann with Ed Lanctot (l) of Cotter & Company.

Bottom: Morning Traffic Reporter Barry Edwards.

Right: Accu-Weather meteorologist Elliot Abrams.
FINANCIAL EDITOR LEN WALTER reports daily from the Midwest Stock Exchange. Sportsline is a call-in sports show presented Saturday and Sunday evenings. Radio broadcasts of Chicago Blackhawk hockey games are carried exclusively on WBBM. At Issue is hosted by John Madigan, who interviews a prominent newsmaker each Sunday.

THE DAVE BAUM SHOW, MONDAY thru Friday evenings, explores the stories behind the headlines with guests in the studio and on the phone. Listeners can call in and question Baum and his guests. Chuck Schaden recalls the glory days of the WBBM Air Theatre and the golden days of radio with rebroadcasts of vintage radio comedy, drama, and adventure programs weeknights on Radio Classics.

On its 65th anniversary, November 14, 1988, WBBM can pause to reflect on its past laurels. But if the history of the station tells us anything, it will not rest on those laurels.
Splitting Up the Schools: The Decentralization Debate

November 12, 1987: A special Dave Baum program focusing on school decentralization. (l to r) Dave Baum, Michael Bakalis, Richard Newhouse, John Kotsalts and George Munoz.

Chicago Blackhawk Hockey play-by-play team: Pat Foley and Dale Tallon.
WBBM WILL CONTINUE TO ASSESS the needs of the community and through its programming, reflect the changing tastes and appetites of its audience. At age 65, WBBM is not yet ready for retirement. Mr. Atlass would be proud.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Selma Kessler & Bess Brock, Campbell Museum, Campbell Soup Company.
Joe Olcott, Booklet Publishing Company.
Elk Grove Village, Illinois.
And: Todd Nebel, Jeff Weigel, Kathy Garafalo, Mary Little, Louis Beese.
This is the story of WBBM Radio, Chicago.

It's a story that starts in 1911 in a small town in the center of Illinois where two brothers, Les and Ralph Atlass, began operating an amateur spark station.

It's the story of how, in 1923, they converted their amateur equipment to a commercial broadcasting station which was assigned the call letters, WBBM.

... the story of WBBM's early days in Chicago's Broadmoor Hotel and the move to the Wrigley Building and finally to the station's present home on McClurg Court.

... the story of radio broadcast lines that crisscrossed the city to bring listeners exciting band remotes from dozens of hotels and ballrooms in the area.

... the story of soap operas and dramatic shows emanating from the WBBM Air Theatre in the 30s and 40s, the story of live musical entertainment on the Showmanship Station in the 50s and the story of the Talk of Chicago in the 60s.

... the story of WBBM Newsradio 78 and the dedicated people who have kept a constant newswatch over the city, state, country, and the world, 24 hours a day, seven days a week since 1968.

It's the story of people, too. People who made WBBM what it was and what it is.

WBBM Radio, Yesterday and Today, is the fascinating story of the birth, growth and development of one of the country's truly great radio stations.

THE AUTHOR

Chuck Schaden, host of WBBM's Radio Classics, has been broadcasting classic programs from the "golden age" of radio—the 1930s, 40s and 50s—since 1970, and has been nationally recognized for his efforts.

A former newspaper editor and marketing executive, Schaden turned his hobby into a vocation and draws on his collection of more than 48,000 vintage broadcasts to prepare his programs.

A founding member of the Board of Directors of Chicago's Museum of Broadcast Communications, radio historian Schaden is a resource for the Chicago Public Library system and has taught college courses on the history of radio programming.

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