# Charleston On The Air

*A History of Radio Broadcasting in Charleston, SC*

by

J. Douglas Donehue

Public acceptance of radio was overwhelming during the Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s and when WCSC, Charleston's first radio station, went on the air in 1930 it was already clear that soon everyone would want a radio of their own. In less than 10 years, radio's influence on life in Charleston and across the nation was profound.

When the late U.S. Senator Ellison "Cotton Ed" Smith told a crowd of hecklers during a political stump meeting at College Park that he didn't need their votes because thousands of people listening to him on radio would vote for him, it was more an endorsement of radio than it was of the veteran senator.

Many of the most memorable characters who have graced the airways in Charleston since 1930 spring to life in Donehue's portrayal of an era which he and thousands of other Charleston and Lowcountry residents fondly remember. Jack Gale, Booby Nash, Big Bill Ward, Russ Long, Wayne Poucher, George Norwig, Flo Myers, Bob Nichols, Harry Weaver, Red Evans and many others. They are once again "on the air" as they come to life in this remarkable book.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

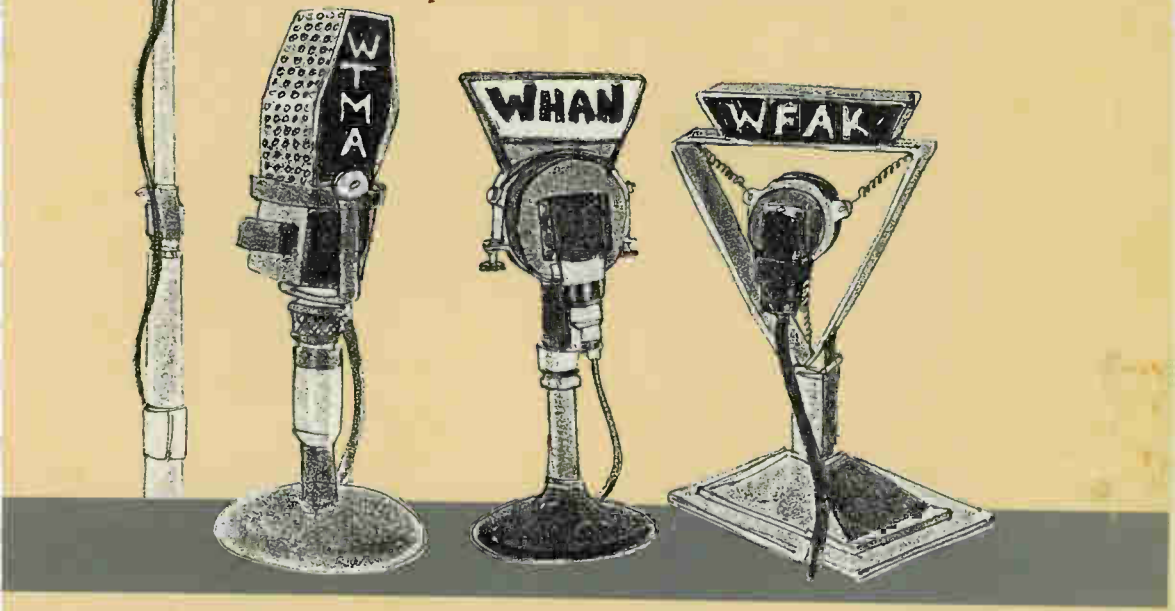
J. Douglas Donehue has been a journalist for over four decades. He began his newspaper career as Sports Editor, first for the Orangeburg (SC) *Times and Democrat* and later for the Montgomery (AL) *Advertiser*; he wrote for the *Ryukyuan Review* while stationed on Okinawa during the Korean War. For forty years he was associated with the Charleston (SC) *Post and Courier* (formerly *The News and Courier*) where he rose through the various desks (Sports Editor, Copy Editor, City Editor, State Editor, Managing Editor) before assuming the position of Director of Corporate Communications and Public Relations.

Since 1967 he has taught Journalism and Mass Communications both at Charleston Southern University and the College of Charleston. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by Charleston Southern University in 1985.

The twentieth century moved into its thirtieth year before the first radio station in Charleston, South Carolina, went on the air. By the middle of the century, seven stations were broadcasting, including the first FM stations. During the latter half of the century the number of radio stations in Charleston and nearby communities continued to increase and by the end of the century there were thirty.

This book takes a look at the growth of radio from its infancy in the 1930s into a dynamic communications force that helped change Charleston from what it was to what it is today, providing people with a seemingly never ending variety of information and entertainment. It also looks at the ways that radio itself has changed in the seventy years since it first came on the air in Charleston, as it has responded to changing demographics, technology, and competition from other media.

Most importantly, this history is about many of the remarkable people who have played key roles in the development of radio in Charleston.



# Charleston On The Air

## *A History of Radio Broadcasting in Charleston, SC*

by
J. Douglas Donehue

ISBN 0-9703749-0-9

PRINTED BY
THE R.L. BRYAN COMPANY
COLUMBIA SOUTH CAROLINA 29210

# AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

Ever since radio came on the air in Charleston, there has been competition between radio stations and the city's newspapers, competition for both audience and advertising. The natural competitive tension has occasionally been adversarial, particularly in the early years of radio. For many years, the two media were hardly on speaking terms.

How is it then that this narrative history of radio broadcasting came to be written by a newspaperman with over 40 years in editorial and management positions with *The News and Courier?* John M. Rivers Jr., former owner of WCSC and son of one of the leading pioneers in radio in South Carolina, felt that a written history was needed. A friend of many years, Rivers asked me to consider researching and writing such a volume. As a journalist I was intrigued.

Realizing the need for objectivity in the presentation, especially where it dealt with the sometimes thorny relations between radio (WCSC in particular) and the newspapers, I spent a great deal of time going through the library clip files of *The Evening Post* and *The News and Courier,* and personally interviewing people who have long associations with the newspapers, as well as many who have contributed to the development of radio in Charleston. I am indebted to all of these individuals for their contributions to the project.

Needless to say the 70-year history of radio in Charleston has included a large number of on-air and off-air personalities, some well remembered and some long forgotten. Indeed, as the number of radio stations has burgeoned, particularly in the last 20 years, literally thousands of individuals have contributed to its colorful history. Not all could be included in this document. If your

favorite is not included, the oversight is not intentional.

I would especially like to thank Red Evans, Ed Webb, and John Rivers Jr. for their critique of the document in its near final form, and my wife Virginia for keeping me on track as well as for her authoritative but always gentle hand in editing the manuscript.

I was director of promotion and public service for *The News and Courier* in the early 1970s when there was a marked "thaw" in the relationship between the print and broadcasting media. In 1973, the newspapers first began to advertise themselves on local radio stations. Since that time, there has developed in the Charleston media market a system of exchange advertising that generally works to the advantage of all. There will always be some market competition, of course, but it is characterized generally by a spirit of cooperation.

J. Douglas Donehue
January 2000

# Table of Contents

# Pioneer Years
# 1930-1947

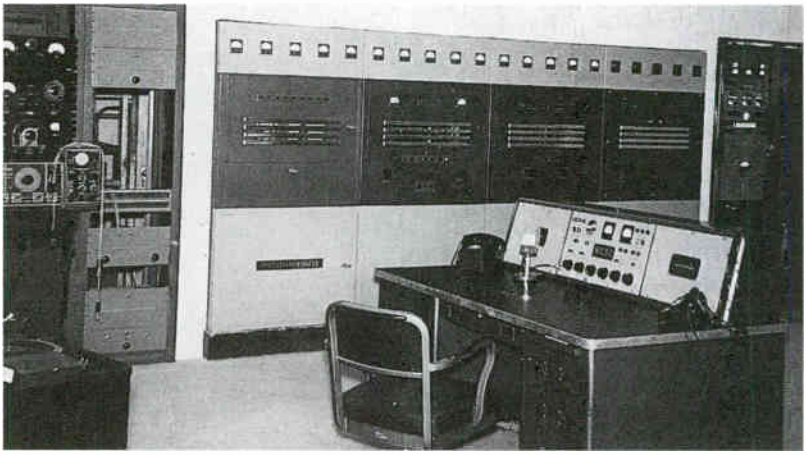
Radio in Charleston, South Carolina, has undergone many changes since the city's first commercial radio station went on the air on May 8, 1930. That station was WCSC, which broadcast first at the 1360 spot on the radio dial and then, in 1941, moved to the 1390 location. Captain Lewis S. Burk and Fred Jordan were the original constructors and owners of WCSC. The station's first studios were in the Francis Marion Hotel, and its transmitter tower was located just across the Ashley River in St. Andrew's Parish in a marsh beside Highway 17. Motorists approaching the old Ashley River Bridge from the west can still see the remains of the supports of a wooden walkway that ran out through the marsh to where the WCSC transmitting tower formerly stood.


*The building west of the Ashley River that housed Radio Station WCSC's transmitter. Note transmission towers in background.*

When radio came on the scene in Charleston in 1930, wireless communication had been around for just over 30 years; Marconi received a patent for his wireless telegraph in 1897. In the early twentieth century there was much amateur experimentation with code and voice transmission. The potential importance of radio telegraphy was dramatically demonstrated when wireless operator David Sarnoff picked up signals from the sinking Titanic. In 1916 Sarnoff, who was to become president of Radio Corporation of America (RCA), envisioned a new use for radio as a medium for entertainment: "The idea is to bring music into the house by wireless ... a simple 'radio music box' arranged for several different wave lengths."

Following World War I, the idea of broad-casting (as opposed to point-to-point communication) began to be developed. Great strides were made in the radio business during the 1920s after KDKA in Pittsburgh became the nation's first commercial radio station. Initially, the costs of broadcasts were covered by sales of radio receivers rather than advertising. In order to expand programming, radio set manufacturers formed the first network in 1923 and solicited support for the system from merchant sponsors—no direct selling was involved, but the sponsor's name would be mentioned in connection with the program. With the formation of the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) in 1926 and the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) in 1927, network broadcasting was firmly established and radio grew almost unrestricted.

The future for radio in Charleston seemed auspicious when WCSC was established in 1930, but then followed the Great Depression. In point of fact, as noted by B. Eric Rhoads in *Radio's First 75 Years*, radio was booming in spite of the Depression:



*Inside view of WCSC's transmitter building with control center in foreground.*

"Perhaps it was because people could get their entertainment for free without purchasing tickets to the theater for a motion picture or a play. Perhaps the curiosity about radio and the momentum was so strong nothing could kill it. If there was one purchase to be made, it was a radio set, something every home felt it had to have."


*WCSC Engineer Raleigh Walters mans the control board in the station's studios atop the Francis Marion Hotel in 1941.*

At the same time that the public embraced radio during the years of economic hardship, advertisers found that sponsorship led to increased sales, so advertising revenue increased in spite of the Depression.

*Larry Miller, copywriter for WCSC when the station's studios were atop the Francis Marion Hotel.*

Depression or not, by the late 1920s radio was a phenomenon, robust and growing stronger with each passing day. Public acceptance of radio was overwhelming, and in Charleston it was only a matter of time before the city got its first radio station. The fact that Charleston for nearly ten years had only one station, WCSC, is somewhat surprising when one considers that having a radio station was a tremendous source of community pride. Indeed, it was a public occasion worthy of great celebration when WCSC went on the air. Charleston Mayor Thomas P. Stoney heralded WCSC as the hallmark of progress when he was guest speaker at the opening of the radio station on May 8, 1930. The theme of his speech was "Charleston, the City Progressive." He declared proudly, "WCSC has been received as far as the western coast of the United States and by various northern cities. And if atmospheric conditions are favorable to radio broadcast-

ing tonight, programs on WCSC will be heard all over the United States." Little wonder that having a radio station was such a remarkable source of municipal pride.

To say that radio in Charleston has come a long way since 1930 would be a gross understatement. But to zero in on exactly how far it has come, an advertisement in *The News and Courier* of May 14, 1930, helps to put it in perspective. An ad for Haverty's Furniture Company at the corner of King and Society streets featured a Model 40 Atwater Kent radio "with speaker and tubes complete" for $69.50 and a Crosley Showbox radio "with Dynacone speaker and tubes" also for $69.50. The ad noted that $5 down would deliver either set, and payments would be $1.50 per week on the balance. Even before WCSC went on the air in 1930, Charlestonians could buy one of the aforementioned radios and listen to such stations as WEAF, WABC and WJZ in New York, WPG in Atlantic City, WCAU in Philadelphia, KDKA in Pittsburgh, WOR in Newark, WLW in Cincinnati, WSB in Atlanta, WJR in Detroit, WBT in Charlotte, WHAS in Louisville, WSM in Nashville, and a number of other stations which were listed daily in the newspapers across the country.

It should be noted that Charleston did not get its first radio station without a struggle. There was formidable opposition to the establishment of radio stations WIS in Columbia and WCSC in Charleston. As more and more stations had come on the air during the 1920s, interfering signals from competing stations, even at considerable distance from each other, became a problem. At a hearing in Washington before the Federal Radio Commission (forerunner to the Federal Communications Commission, FCC) in 1930, an attorney for radio station WFBI in Syracuse, New York, which was then broadcasting on the 1360 kilocycles wave length, argued that "South Carolina, which now has no licensed broadcasting station, can get all the service it needs from the outside." The South

*John M. Rivers*

*John M. Rivers Jr. succeeded his father as head of WCSC Radio and Television. Now head of Rivers Enterprises, Inc., he is also chairman of the SCETV Commission.*

Carolina applicants for a federal broadcasting license vehemently repudiated the New Yorker's assertion, and they won the day with help from Congressman John McMillan of Florence, who championed the cause of both WIS and WCSC. With regard to the Charleston station, the congressman argued that it was in the interest of his district to have a broadcasting station in Charleston because "that city is in the center of the trucking [truck crop] section."

Growing problems of signal interference on the airwaves eventually led to the Federal Communications Act of 1934, which created the Federal Communications Commission to regulate radio communication systems, including the allocation of broadcast channel frequencies.

In 1933, the South Carolina Broadcasting Company acquired the license to operate WCSC and in 1938 brought in John M. Rivers as President and General Manager of the young radio station. Radio pioneers like John M. Rivers enjoyed pushing the edge of the envelope. A shrewd businessman who had been in the banking business before he became involved with radio, Rivers knew how to make money. He made WCSC an integral part of the lives of thousands of Charlestonians by providing them with wholesome, interesting, compelling radio programs. He surrounded himself with highly skilled people who were dedicated to providing the city with the best radio could offer. It was about this time, March 1933, that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt made good use of the new-fangled radio contraption when he began his "fireside chats," bringing the presidency into living rooms across America on radio waves. More than ten million Americans listened on three million radios—many of them in Charleston.

Eventually, WCSC moved from its long-time studios atop the Francis Marion into a modern communications center at 485 East Bay Street. That address was significant

because WCSC's network affiliate, CBS, had its headquarters at 485 Madison Avenue in New York City.

WCSC had the commercial radio market in Charleston all to itself until June 15, 1939, when competition came in the form of the second station, WTMA, which began broadcasting at 1210 on the AM dial. The station was established by Y. Wilcox Scarborough and Jesse W. Orvin with studios in Wagener Terrace. The studios were later-moved to the Dock Street Theater in the heart of Charleston's historic district when Scarborough and Orvin sold the station to the Evening Post Publishing Company in October 1939. The late William D. Workman Jr. was WTMA's first general manager.

Prior to the Christmas shopping season in 1939, WTMA employed the services of a young Charleston woman who had come back home after playing the role of India Wilkes in the movie version of Margaret Mitchell's epic story, *Gone With the Wind*. Alicia Rhett played the role of a woman named Mrs. James Adams, known as Jo to her friends, in a program about Christmas shopping. In the program, she teamed up with Meredith Smith, an employee of WTMA, who wrote the dramatized shopping tour. Miss Smith played the role of Jo's friend Peggy. It was soap opera genre as the two women attempted, sometimes successfully and at other times not so successfully, to influence their men and women friends to buy certain Christmas gifts for their loved ones, friends and neighbors. The Christmas gifts, of course, must be bought at Charleston stores which advertised on WTMA. It all gets a little tricky when Jo advises a friend named Tom to buy a present for his girlfriend that Peggy has cautioned him against buying. The program, generally speaking, was well done and proved quite popular with advertisers, especially since Alicia Rhett was its big attraction.

In March 1941, the Federal Communications Commission assigned new frequencies to radio stations

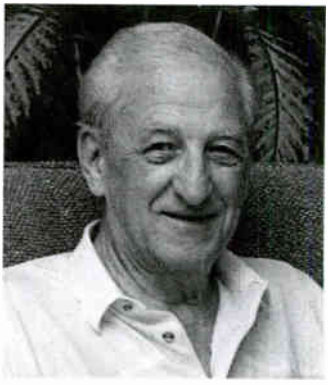

*Ken Klyce of WCSC and Miss New Golden Esso Extra at a downtown service station in August, 1956.*

throughout North America; the two Charleston stations, WCSC and WTMA took up locations on the dial that were different from the ones with which they started. WCSC moved from 1360 to 1390 AM, and WTMA moved from 1210 to 1250 AM. James Lawson Fly, chairman of the FCC, explained the reason for the changes: "Under the North American Regional Broadcasting agreement, most stations are moving up 30 kilocycles. Before the agreement was reached, chaos threatened the radio industry because of the expansion of the number of radio stations. There were simply too many stations broadcasting on the same wave length. To make matters worse, broadcasters who were barred in the United States were setting up stations south of the border and infringing on frequencies of regularly licensed stations. The recent development of directional antennae, letting these stations send their sig-

nals directly into the heart of this country, made it possible for them to drown out regularly licensed stations." WCSC continued to hold the 1390 position on the AM dial until the mid 1980s when the station was sold and the call letters changed to WXTC. WTMA remains the only pre-1960 Charleston radio station still broadcasting at the same frequency (1250 AM) and with the same call letters, in spite of numerous changes of ownership and format over the years. The station's studios are now situated at the eastern end of Orange Grove Road west of the Ashley River.

A pictorial brochure published by WCSC in 1941 shows the on-air and behind the scenes employees who pioneered in radio broadcasting in Charleston. There was Charles McMahon, the program director and Esso Reporter; Jim Carroll, a staff announcer who was educated at Notre Dame before coming to Charleston; staff announcer Thomas H. Moore, who was active in local amateur theater plays; Gladys Sage, assistant program director and women's news commentator who was a New Englander and also interested in acting; and Tommy Means, director of music, merchandising and publicity and a graduate of the College of Charleston who held a private pilot's license.

Roland Weeks was one of the management principals featured in the brochure. He was commercial manager of WCSC. A South Carolina native, Weeks was a 1928 graduate of the College of Charleston where he was captain of the tennis team and



*Roland Weeks, longtime commercial manager of WCSC, was a 1928 graduate of the College of Charleston and a key player in the station's early successes.*

*Gloria Seel, featured vocalist. Gloria was well-known in Charleston for her beauty as well as her singing. Specializing in light classics, Gloria was heard on the program, "Songs of Gloria Seel."*

*"Miss South Carolina of 1941" was the title modestly borne by Gloria Missel, featured vocalist over WCSC.*

played on the varsity basketball team. He also was adept at track and fencing. In the caption beneath his college yearbook picture, Weeks was described as being enthusiastic about writing and symphonic music. He also was one of Charleston's best handball players.

Most of the CBS network radio personalities, including soap opera stars, newsmen, variety and dramatic show stars, along with popular comedians of the day and musicians and singers were featured in the brochure. The brochure was similar to many others which were published all over the country to tout local affiliates of the Columbia Broadcasting System. Each local station contributed its own photos and captions to be intermingled with the network stars.

Not long after Charleston got its second radio station, the United States was drawn into World War II when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Charlestonians first learned of the attack on Sunday afternoon, December 7,

1941, when the news was flashed over WCSC and WTMA. The power of radio was thus asserted in dramatic fashion, and people throughout the city gathered around their radios to listen in utter dismay to the awful details of an event that would profoundly affect their lives for the next four years and beyond. Charleston became a bastion of national defense with its great naval shipyard and its soon to be vitally important Army Air Corps training base at what is now the Charleston Air Force Base.

Throughout the war, WCSC and WTMA, with mostly female staffs, kept up a steady flow of news and information about what was going on in the world. Charlestonians listened to Edward R. Murrow, broadcasting from London during the air raids that wreaked such terrible destruction on that city. They heard H.V. Kaltenborn, Edwin C. Hill, John B. Kennedy, Joseph C. Harsch, Richard Harkness, Morgan Beatty, Bob Trout and other well known newsmen report on what was happening in areas where American armed forces were battling the Germans, Japanese and Italians on land and sea. Before going to bed at night, they could get sketchy details of world-shaking events that would be explained in greater detail the next day in their newspapers. Radio had become a vital part of American life, but it was only a prelude of what was to come.

In addition to helping keep the people of Charleston and the Lowcountry informed about what was going on in the war, WCSC and WTMA provided much needed entertainment for the men and women of the armed forces who were stationed in Charleston. Tens of thousands of Navy, Army, Marine Corps and Coast Guard personnel kept radios tuned to WTMA and WCSC, both of which signed off the air with the playing of the Star Spangled Banner at midnight, for news and entertainment.

Training flights of Army Air Corps B-24 heavy bombers from the Charleston Air Corps Base, which fre-

quently filled the skies over the Lowcountry, always knew they were close to Charleston when they picked up programs from the two stations. Ships coming into Charleston from the submarine-infested waters of the Atlantic Ocean listened eagerly for the friendly sounds that came over the airwaves from WTMA and WCSC to let them know they were nearing the east coast of their homeland.

Edward Niederkorn of Seattle, Washington, has fond memories of hearing a Charleston radio station for the first time. He had been severely injured when the B-24 bomber he was piloting cracked up during takeoff from a base in North Africa. After many weeks in an Army hospital at Naples, Italy, he came home aboard the hospital ship Chateau Thierry. "We started picking up a Charleston radio station as we neared the coast," said Niederkorn. "It was WTMA. There was guy telling knock-knock and little moron jokes. He had everybody in my ward laughing by the time we started to enter the harbor." Two of the jokes Niederkorn remembered were: "Knock, knock. Who's there? Gorilla. Gorilla who? Gorilla my dreams, I love you." The little moron joke was about the little moron who climbed up on the roof because someone told him the drinks were on the house. Niederkorn said, "The jokes were corny, but we were so happy to get back to the good old USA that we'd laugh at anything." He remained in Charleston at Stark Army Hospital for a few days before being sent to another hospital closer to his home. "I listened to that radio station every day while I was in Charleston," he said.

While Roosevelt was talking to Americans via his "fireside chats," radio provided a dimension to political campaigns in Charleston that were always robust and lively—even sometimes vicious. Politicians would buy radio time to try and gain voter support in a variety of ways. They would sometimes bring musicians to the

radio studio to sing songs extolling the virtues of the candidate. The late Ellison "Cotton Ed" Smith, a United States senator, was in a red hot race against former Governor Olin D. Johnston in 1943 when the two men squared off in a debate before a crowd of several thousand people at College Park on Rutledge Avenue. From the outset, it was obvious that the crowd was with Johnston and frequent boos were heard when "Cotton Ed" was speaking. At one point, the senator, who was calling for an end to Roosevelt's New Deal and the alphabet social work programs that had brought the country out of the Depression, shook his fist at the audience and cried out, "I don't need your support!" Then he pointed to the radio microphones in front of him and added, "There are thousands of good people listening to me this evening, and every one of them is going to vote for me." Alas, it was an idle boast because Johnston defeated Smith and went on to have a lengthy tenure as a United States senator.

It is fair to say that in the early days of radio in Charleston, when WCSC was the only station on the air, the press paid little or no attention to this new medium. Indeed, one can search through the files of *The News and Courier* and *The Evening Post* from the time WCSC went on the air in 1930 until WTMA came along in 1939 and find little, if any mention of WCSC after the few scant stories about Charleston's first radio station going on the air. This is in marked contrast to the amount of material relating to radio and television that is contained more recently in *The Post and Courier*, the newspaper that resulted from the merger of *The Evening Post* and *The News and Courier* in 1991.

Relations have always been somewhat strained, to say the least, between Charleston radio stations and the city's daily newspapers. The competition for advertising revenue from local and national business enterprises began in 1930 when radio station WCSC went on the air. Like *The*

*News and Courier* and *The Evening Post*, WCSC was, after all, in business to make money. Both newspapers and WCSC had sales people out on the streets touting the merits of their respective abilities to attract customers through the medium of the printed word and the airwaves. Each new radio station that came on air increased the level of competition for the advertising dollar.

From WCSC's beginning, the newspapers had been niggardly in their coverage of news about the radio station, although both papers had given considerable coverage to the fact that Charleston was to have its first radio station—considerable, that is, if a one-column, two-line headline well down in the middle of an inside page on a story that covered the bare essentials can be called considerable. The newspapers, of course, were under some pressure from the city administration and Mayor Thomas P. Stoney to publicize the history-making event. Stoney himself was the principal speaker at the formal opening of the station. The program also featured music by the High School of Charleston Orchestra, under the direction of G. Theo Wichmann, and a brief concert by the Society for the Preservation of Spirituals. The last paragraph of the story, which ran ten inches in length, noted, "The program was officially in charge of the city through a committee headed by Mayor Stoney and Alderman Cotesworth P. Means."

In contrast to the coverage of WCSC's opening, the newspapers were unabashedly heavy-handed in their coverage of Charleston's second radio station, WTMA, on June 15, 1939. Stories and pictures adorned the pages of *The News and Courier* and *The Evening Post* the day after the station was officially put on the air from the stage of the Dock Street Theater. Detailed accounts of speeches by station owners Y. Wilcox Scarborough and Jesse W. Orvin were published, along with congratulatory messages from local and national dignitaries. In one story, Scarborough was quoted as saying the letters WTMA stood for "Where

Tourists Meet Always." It should be noted that WCSC's call letters stood for "Wonderful Charleston South Carolina."

Events leading up to the opening of WTMA were also given quite a bit more coverage than the newspapers gave WCSC's efforts to obtain a broadcast license from the Federal Communications Commission.

In retrospect, it was rather like making a bigger deal of the second man landing on the moon than of the first. Clearly, the newspapers were more inclined to favor WTMA than WCSC, because less than five months after WTMA went on the air, it was announced that the Evening Post Publishing Company had purchased WTMA from Messrs. Orvin and Scarborough. In fact, as early as October 1937 (almost two years prior to WTMA's debut) the newspapers' plan to take over WTMA was announced in the following story which was published in *The Evening Post:*

> "The Atlantic Coast Broadcasting Company of Charleston, chartered today, has been created to take over the contract of purchase made by the local newspapers and will assume operation of radio station WTMA as soon as the Federal Communications Commission grants an assignment of license from the present owners, Y.W. Scarborough and J.W. Orvin. The capital stock of the corporation is $50,000. The officers are all connected with the two local newspapers. They are Robert S. Manigault, president; Edward Manigault, vice president; R.F. Bradham, secretary; and Hall T. McGee, treasurer."

When the newspapers began publishing the daily program schedule of radio station WTMA under what was described as an exchange advertising agreement between the radio station and the newspapers, WCSC sought a similar agreement with the newspapers, but the request

was denied. WCSC would have to pay for space in the newspapers to publish its daily program schedule. The already strained relations between the newspapers and WCSC became even more so when the pot boiled over in early August 1941. State Senator Cotesworth P. Means introduced a resolution in the South Carolina Senate providing for an investigation of asserted "monopolistic" practices of the two Charleston newspapers. This was followed by a hearing before the Federal Communications Commission in Washington, at which Senator Means and WCSC President John M. Rivers testified. Pressing his attack on the newspapers, Senator Means told the FCC that his resolution in the SC Senate directed the State Attorney General to advise the legislature concerning whether or not the state anti-trust laws might be applicable to combinations which tend to lessen the full and free competition in dissemination of news. The senator repeated several times his complaint that *The News and Courier* and *The Evening Post* had a history of giving radio station WCSC "the silent treatment."

Also attending that FCC hearing to defend the Charleston newspapers were Hall T. McGee, business manager of the newspapers, and Robert E. Bradham, advertising director. Regarding the newspapers' policy of refusing to publish daily program schedules except as paid advertising, McGee told the commission that the management of *The News and Courier* and *The Evening Post* was "on the verge of making a change in that policy" when Senator Means introduced his resolution in the Senate. McGee said the attempt to "force" free publication of WCSC's daily program schedules was responsible for the continuation the policy by the newspapers' management. He added that it was "unfortunate that such a matter, which might have been worked out locally, had to be brought to Washington and a national case made of it."

After that FCC hearing, the handwriting was clearly

on the wall, and relations between the newspapers and WCSC became noticeably less fulminating. In due time the WCSC daily broadcast schedule was published at no charge to the radio station (indeed the WCSC program schedule was positioned for a time above that of WTMA). Stories about WCSC began to show up more frequently in the newspapers—stories with bigger headlines and more detail.

Rivers' profile as one of the leading radio executives in South Carolina was significantly enhanced by a speech he made to the Rotary Club of Charleston on May 13, 1941. In that speech, he raised the specter of government censorship of radio broadcasting "that trends increasingly toward throttling freedom of speech." He did not pass up an opportunity in that speech to get in a subtle dig at the newspaper industry, something he frequently did to the delight of his colleagues in the radio business. He said the people who listen to radio, and not the government, must be the only censors. Then he added: "We must have the cooperation of newspapers in eliminating the abuses that exist in joint ownership of newspapers and radio stations. I happen to know that the Federal Communications Commission would like to eliminate newspaper ownership of radio stations." That eventually happened except in some cases where newspapers were allowed to retain ownership of radio stations under a grandfather clause. Rivers granted that some central control is necessary to regulate the technical operation of radio stations throughout the country and to designate the frequencies they use. He added that "unless there is some central authority to control the airwaves, there is chaos." Rivers also said, "There seems to be a serious thought in the government that anything making money should be destroyed. A profitable radio station is a strong community asset and there can be no doubt that radio is raising the cultural standards of the nation."

In 1944, John M. Rivers acquired the broadcasting license for WCSC and assumed full ownership of the station from the South Carolina Broadcasting Company. Wartime restrictions and a freeze order on all commercial radio expansion prevented Rivers from increasing the station's transmitting power to 5,000 watts as he wished to do. Rivers accomplished this soon after the war. Just before Christmas in 1947, *The News and Courier* published a story under a two-column headline about WCSC's increase in power from 1,000 to 5,000 watts. It is worthy of note that Rivers was looking to the future at the time when he said the increased power of WCSC and space for the necessary antenna systems "will be provided for the entrance of WCSC into the field of frequency modulation, facsimile, or television, multiplexing and other electronic developments." That's exactly what happened.

Earlier that same year, however, another story about WCSC was one that station owner John M. Rivers more than likely would not have liked to see in the newspaper. The headline read "Threats Cause Cancellation of WCSC Program on Gullah." The story detailed how a woman named Mrs. Maria Ravenel Gaillard of 54 Gadsden Street had received threats against her life for doing a series of broadcasts on WCSC on the subject of Gullah, the dialect spoken by many black and white sea island residents along the coast north and south of Charleston. When Rivers was notified of the threats, he immediately announced cancellation of the series of programs on Gullah. He said he was doing so with regret and that he was canceling it "only because Mrs. Gaillard, who is elderly, wished to avoid further threatening and abusive messages." The program was a 1947 version of a similar program aired by WCSC in 1930.

But Rivers, savvy broadcasting executive that he was, took full advantage of the opportunity that was his to focus a large segment of the public's attention on his radio

station. It was pure Rivers genius. It laid out a powerful case for public sentiment to swing far over in favor of WCSC, and it made a strong and highly respectable case for the preservation of the Gullah dialect. In much of his statement, he foresaw with remarkable foresight the racial tensions that were beginning to build in many parts of the country and which have heightened during the latter decade of the twentieth century. Here's what he said to the press, reported in *The News and Courier* and *The Evening Post*:

> "When WCSC first started in 1930, Mrs. Gaillard did a series of broadcasts in Gullah, and they were well received. Gullah is a part of the folklore and history of this region.
>
> After the new series began, the first positive complaint we received was in the form of a letter from a school teacher in Mount Pleasant, indicating that the spirit and intention of the series had been misunderstood. Later on, after about four or five weeks, there was apparently an organized effort on the part of certain people, mostly anonymous, who complained directly to the station. But most of the complaints were in the form of highly abusive telephone calls directed to Mrs. Gaillard, including threats on her life.
>
> Mrs. Gaillard is an old lady. She became properly nervous about the abuse and threats, and while the management of the station did not attach any great importance to them, they made her unhappy. We cannot ask our talent to submit themselves to abuse and threats, so the only alternative is to comply with her request and discontinue the series.
>
> Strange to relate, aside from a few calls to the station itself, none of those highly abusive calls were made to the management of the station. The people, whoever they are, chose to assail a defenseless woman who

> was merely interpreting a part of the Carolina Lowcountry life as she knew it some 50 years ago."

The reporter who wrote the story (there was no byline) concluded it with these two paragraphs:

> "Recently there has been a movement to get all dialects off the air, but it has not succeeded and dialects of various kinds still are heard, even on some nationally broadcast programs.
>
> Gullah is a dialect spoken by some Lowcountry negroes (sic), especially those on the sea islands. It contains a few African words. It has a considerable literature and has been made a subject of serious study by writers and scholars, but it is dying out as a spoken tongue."

The early program schedules published in the newspapers for WTMA give an interesting insight into the kind of programming that was typical of local radio stations in the 1940s. WTMA signed on the air at 6:30 each morning with a show called "Hillbilly Harmonies." At 6:45 a.m., there was the "Nation's Family Prayer Period." From 7 a.m. to 7:15 a.m., a show called "Sunrise Serenade" was aired. The first newscast of the day was from the NBC network at 8 a.m. It is interesting to note that all of the local programs, which were sponsored by Charleston businesses, carried the sponsor's name printed in the program schedule: e.g., News at Noon sponsored by the West End Dairy, the 12:05 p.m. Weather Report sponsored by Chasonoil, the Clemson-Wake Forest basketball game at 2 p.m. sponsored by Fort Sumter Chevrolet, and the News at 11 p.m. sponsored by the South Carolina Power Company.

In 1945, the WCSC program schedule began to appear in *The News and Courier* and, oddly enough in a one-column position directly above that of WTMA, which was owned by the Charleston newspapers. WCSC went on

the air at 6:30 a.m. with a show called "The Yawn Patrol." Local and national news followed and went on until 7 a.m. At 7:45 a.m., an "Album of Organ Music" was sponsored by West End Dairy. At 11:45 a.m., the Sons of the Pioneers held forth with their western music program sponsored by Grove's Cold Tablets. Evenings on WCSC started with "Lum and Abner" at 7 p.m. That was one of the most popular radio programs in America for several years. Major Bowes "Amateur Hour" was also a highly popular show which aired on WCSC at 9 p.m. on Thursday nights, followed by "Corliss Archer" at 9:30 p.m. and sponsored by the Anchor Hocking Glass Company. The Esso Reporter came on at 11 p.m., followed by the Burger Beer "Dance Party," which lasted until midnight when the news from CBS was the final program of the broadcast day.

Radio broadcasting in the 1930s and 1940s was dominated by the major networks. CBS and NBC (actually two networks NBC-Red and NBC-Blue) were established in the 1920s, and the Mutual Broadcasting System was formed in 1934. These four national networks controlled 50 percent of advertising revenue. Nationwide in 1941, over 700 of the 850 stations on the air were affiliated with one of the four major networks. The American Broadcasting Company (ABC) was formed in 1943 when the FCC required NBC to divest its Blue network. For most of the years WCSC served the Charleston market, the station was affiliated with the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS). WTMA hooked up with the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). The two networks provided a wealth of entertainment to supplement the programs produced locally by the two stations. The top network program in the 1930s was "The Amos and Andy Show." NBC's immensely popular "Breakfast Club" with Don McNeil gave that network a virtual lock on morning audiences throughout the country.

WCSC and WTMA dominated the local radio scene during the 1940s. Meeting in head on commercial combat, the two radio stations, with their network affiliates, brought Charleston the best that radio had to offer. And that of course, set the stage for the dynamic expansion that was to come as more and more radio stations took to the airwaves following World War II.


*Jay Mullen in one of WCSC's familiar promotion vehicles—an A-Model Ford dubbed "WCSC Mobile Unit."*

# The Heyday of AM Network Broadcasting 1947-1960

In the years immediately following World War II radio, after a rather slow infancy, grew into an economic powerhouse that few had envisioned in 1930. In the late 1940s, two more radio stations went on the air in the Charleston area: WFAK at 730 AM (which later became WPAL, WGSE, and then WSC), and WHAN at 1340 AM (later WOKE then WQSC). These two new stations were only the beginning of a proliferation of radio stations with myriad broadcast formats that grew steadily in the latter half of the twentieth century.

When WHAN went on the air on January 19, 1947, a story in *The News and Courier* that same day announced that still another radio station was in the planning stage for Charleston. That would be WFAK owned by J.B. Fuqua of Augusta, Georgia. The WHAN studios were located on the second floor of a building that also housed the Riviera Theater on Beaufain Street. WFAK's studios were in the Atlantic Coast Life Insurance Company building at the corner of Wentworth and Smith Streets (in 1999 that building was renovated as a hotel). The newspaper story about the two new radio stations concluded with this paragraph: "... local radio officials say no more than three [radio stations] could operate profitably. They point out, however, that the more stations operating here the more the public will benefit by choice of programs." Probably none of those radio officials could possibly have envisioned the way the number of radio stations has grown in Charleston over the last four decades of the twentieth century.

Charleston's fifth radio station, WUSN, went on the air in April 1948. It was headed by C. Norwood Hastie, president of Southern Broadcasting Company, and J.

Drayton Hastie as commercial manager. WUSN occupied the 1450 spot on the AM dial. The call letters of the station were well chosen because the last three of them were symbolic of the United States Navy, and Charleston was, after all, a Navy town. The station was situated in a small wooden frame building at the edge of a marsh on Tenth Avenue on the upper part of the peninsula.

By 1949, *The News and Courier* and *The Evening Post* were publishing the daily radio program schedules of five local radio stations: WPAL, WTMA, WCSC, WHAN, and WUSN. By then, however, the names of program sponsors had been dropped from the printed schedules. All of the stations were then signing on at 6 a.m instead of 6:30 a.m. WPAL began its broadcast day with a show called "Cornfield Frolics." It's mid-day program at noon was called "Swap Shop," which featured items for sale by local people. The station's popular "Blues and Boogie" show came at 4 p.m. and ran until 5 p.m. just before sign off time at 5:15 p.m.

WTMA had a lock on the afternoon soap operas, starting with "Today's Children" at 2:30 p.m. The lineup continued with "Light of the World," "Life Can Be Beautiful," "The Road of Life," "Pepper Young's Family," "The Right to Happiness," "Backstage Wife," "Stella Dallas," "Lorenzo Jones," and finally "Young Widder Brown" at 4:45 p.m. Evening variety and drama shows included "The Great Gildersleeve" and "Mr. District Attorney."

WHAN aired programs of the American Broadcasting Company (ABC). WHAN's morning offering from 6 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. was a program called "The Time Keeper." Don McNeil's "Breakfast Club" aired from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. and gave WHAN considerable strength among its competitors. "Jack Armstrong, the All American Boy" came on at 5:30 and lasted until 6 p.m. Another powerhouse program aired by WHAN in 1949 was "The Lone Ranger" from 7:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. Previously, "The Lone

Ranger" had been broadcast on WCSC. "The Night Owl Club" at 11:30 p.m. ended WHAN's broadcast day, with midnight sign off.

WCSC's "Yawn Patrol" was far and away the most popular morning radio show in Charleston from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. At 10:15 a.m., a man who became the premier radio personality in America came on the air. The "Arthur Godfrey Show" from CBS gave WCSC a lion's share of the mid-morning radio audience in Charleston, as in most other cities across the country. WCSC also had a formidable lineup of afternoon soap operas to challenge WTMA: "The Romance of Helen Trent," "Our Gal Sunday," and "Young Dr. Malone." The Edward R. Murrow news program at 7:45 p.m. also attracted a large audience. After the news and sports at 11 p.m., WCSC's extremely popular "Wax Works" held the airways until sign off at midnight.

The 1949 program schedule of WUSN, an affiliate of the Mutual Broadcasting Company, began at 6 a.m. with a show called "Carolina Roundup." Early afternoon on WUSN featured a program at 2 p.m. called "Queen for a Day" which put WUSN on the map and later became a television mainstay. It was followed by "Ladies Fair," which attracted a sizeable audience of women, and advertisers flocked to it. Evenings also provided WUSN with strength in the market when shows like "Can You Top This?" and "International Airport" proved popular with listeners. WUSN's challenge to the supremacy of WCSC for late night audiences was called "The A Train." It aired from 9:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. Like WCSC's "Wax Works" it featured the most popular music of the day.

Network programs were the "meat and potatoes" of local radio, right up to the time when television began to drain audiences away from radio. In the early 1950s, sports fans would tune in to WTMA to hear one of America's best known sports announcers, Bill Stern of NBC. Jack Benny, Red Skelton, and "Amos and Andy"

provided great entertainment and laughter aplenty from CBS on WCSC. Gabriel Heater, "The Shadow," Nick Carter and Roy Rogers were among the network features from Mutual on WUSN. WHAN had ABC to thank for such programs as "The Old Fashioned Revival Hour," Drew Pearson, Louella Parsons reporting on the doings of Hollywood stars, and a popular quiz show called "Stop the Music."

It was uncertain what Charleston's future would hold after World War II ended. Some thought there would be a mass out-migration of people who had come here to work in defense industries, but that did not happen. Charleston in fact began to grow after the war, and civic leaders began to develop plans to attract new industries and businesses that could capitalize on the vast pool of skilled labor which had congregated in Charleston during the war. They had tremendous help from Congressman L. Mendel Rivers (no relation to John M. Rivers), who was determined to put Charleston on the economic map of the United States. Rivers, who was chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Armed Services Committee, saw to it that the Charleston Naval Shipyard got a major share of construction and repair work on ships of the Atlantic Fleet, and that kept employment at the shipyard at a desirable level. Although there was somewhat of a post-war letdown in the economic health of the Charleston area, it was only an adjustment period. By the mid-1950s it was obvious that the South Carolina Lowcountry was becoming a highly popular destination for tourists and the tourist industry was off and running. Today it is one of the mainstays of the Charleston economy, and radio played a key role in that the radio stations expanded their coverage of news, sports, business and local news, of which there was plenty as the economy grew and more and more people moved to Charleston to live.

Incentives for advertisers to buy time on radio stations were a must. That fact led radio into the field of promotion, and radio people excelled at promotion. Indeed, they set the stage for the kind of promotion that is common on television today. Advertisers were assured that if they bought time on a radio station, they would get a certain number of promotional announcements in addition to the actual commercials that would be aired. Promotions accomplished a double and very important purpose. First, they called attention to the program; and second, they called attention to the advertiser, who felt he was getting something for free. It went something like this: "Be sure to tune in to WTMA today for 'The Man on the Street' with Howard Ozment, sponsored by Rodenberg's Supermarkets." Just another clever innovation that made radio user-friendly to advertisers in Charleston. The same was true in cities all across America.

Radio commercials popularized beer, bread, automobiles, soft drinks, margarine, vegetable oil, shoes, shirts, peanuts, crackers, and all kinds of products which vied for consumer acceptance. WCSC's late night Burger Beer "Dance Party" was probably the most popular radio program with teenagers and young adults in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Merita bread was the only bread that would be eaten by millions of youngsters across the South because Merita sponsored "The Lone Ranger." Pepsi Cola hit the spot with countless numbers of people: "Twelve full ounces, that's a lot. Twice as much for a nickel too. Pepsi Cola is the drink for you." People in Charleston knew the most popular advertising jingles by heart and sang them. It was a toss up as to which ones were the more popular—the national or the local ones. There are still old-timers in Charleston who can sing the Burger Beer commercial: "Here's to you, both far and near. Here's to you with Burger Beer. Burger Beer is plenty tops. Made with barley malt and imported hops."

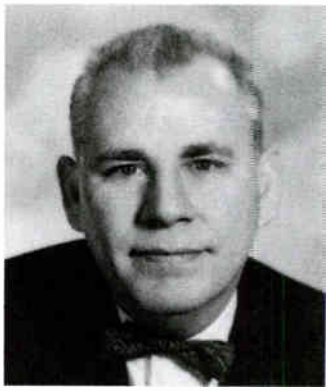
Radio stations in Charleston began to feature local on-air personalities after World War II. Prior to that time, there were only "announcers." One of the first local radio names to appear in the newspaper was that of Ned Webb. But only half of his name was published in the log of radio station WUSN. He conducted a late evening record show called "The Spider's Webb," which had a two year run in 1948 and 1949 and was quite popular with young people. Webb later became a newsman on a local television station, and still later an executive with Advertising Service Agency.

Morning radio personalities emerged to vie for supremacy in the local market. They were mostly young men, clever, funny, off beat, and capable of attracting and holding audiences. They played music and they cracked jokes, gave weather reports and sports results, talked about events taking place in the community, and enhanced their own ability to move on to bigger markets. Some of them did, too, but not many.

Two of the most popular morning radio personalities in Charleston were Bob Tamblyn and Chuck Simpson. They were the morning men who did the "Dawn Patrol" on WCSC. Later came Cecil Keels and his highly popular "Clapper Rail Show." The clapper rail, incidentally, is commonly known in the Lowcountry as the marsh hen, a game bird which some people like to eat.

Jack Gayle was tremendously popular as the morning man on WTMA in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Gayle was a talented young man who intrigued his audiences with such gimmicks as his "rusty, dusty, crusty old scrap book," which contained irreverent stories about Charleston's social history. Probably his most significant contribution to Charleston lore was his composition of a song which was used for years as the advertising theme of J.L. Goldberg's Furniture Store on King Street. S.I. "Sonny" Goldberg, son of the owner, sang "The Old King Street

Singer" and pretty soon just about everyone in Charleston knew the words. Gayle left Charleston and went to Baltimore where he became a popular morning show host in that city for a number of years.



*1961 photo of Harry C. Weaver, owner and general manager of Radio Station WOKE. He also was known to WOKE listeners as Buck Clayton and Tennessee Weaver.*

Then there was Harry Weaver, also known as "Buck Clayton" and "Tennessee" Weaver, owner of WHAN (which later became WOKE and remained WOKE until Weaver sold the station in the mid-1990s). Weaver, who bought WHAN from J.B. Fuqua of Augusta, was the only station owner in Charleston who was also an on-air personality. He took over the morning show on his station from Jeff Warner, whose real name was Elmo Litchfield. Weaver is well remembered for his poetry readings, which he did each evening on WOKE just before the station signed off the air. Weaver was somewhat of a maverick among radio station owners and operators. A Tennessee native, he personally supervised every aspect of his radio station, WOKE, through all of the years of its existence in the Charleston market. He served as host for many WOKE programs, including the longest running Saturday afternoon football scoreboard in the history of Charleston radio. Ned Webb recalls with delight the way Weaver handled the calls that came in to the Scoreboard Show. "You could only hear one side of the calls," said Webb. "You could not hear the caller who wanted a score. Weaver would say: 'Hello, Wonderful WOKE Football Scoreboard. Who? Oh, yes, Michigan. Let's see now. Yes.

Here it is. They won 24-12.' He wouldn't say which team Michigan was playing. I once heard him say 'Hello. Wonderful WOKE Football Scoreboard. Yes. Okay. New Mexico State. Let's see now. Okay, we have a partial score on our Wonderful WOKE Football Scoreboard. New Mexico State 18. Thanks for calling.'" Many Charleston area residents were awakened in the morning by Weaver's "Happy Rooster," a sound effect of a rooster crowing. It was corny, as were quite a few of Weaver's gimmicks, but the truth is that they worked. Weaver and that rooster were cussed and discussed by Charlestonians for years. Weaver was an innovator, although some of his innovations were laughed at by people at other radio stations who thought they were corny or old hat. Weaver approved a promotional spot, done by Red Evans, which described WOKE as Charleston's number two radio station. He put the station promo, as they were called by broadcasters, on the air at a time when radio stations began to proliferate in the 1960s. Self-aggrandizement was the order of the day and quite a few of the stations began to run their own promotional spots, touting the claim that they were the number one station in the market, whether or not it was true. That's when Weaver's genius for understatement and simplicity came to the fore. In the WOKE promo, which described the station as Charleston's number two radio station, Evans paused ever so slightly and then said "We must be number two. All the others say they are number one." Of all the station promos, with the possible exception of WCSC's "1390 since 1930," Weaver's claim that WOKE was number two stands out to this day as one of the most original and effective radio promos in the history of Charleston radio. It was a tearful Weaver who went on the air the day the station went off the air and spoke about the many years he had operated WOKE after coming to Charleston from Knoxville, Tennessee. During a special tribute to Weaver,


*Russ Long (holding microphone) describes the joyful scene as a troop ship arrives in Charleston, bringing soldiers home from Europe after World War II. Engineer (with earphones) is Wilbur Albee. A 1945 photo.*

radio personalities from every other radio station in Charleston showed up to honor him.

Simpson, Keels, Gayle, Warner and Weaver were among the pioneers of morning radio programming which captivated early risers in Charleston. Prior to their emergence as personalities, early morning radio was dominated by announcers who were not necessarily personalities.

In the late 1940s, one of the most popular mid-day programs in Charleston was hosted by Russell Long. He did his program by remote control from in front of the Walgreen Drug Store at the intersection of King and Wentworth Streets. Long's informal and friendly style of talking to people on the street attracted one of the largest mid-day audiences in the history of local radio in Charleston.

An announcer named Henry Hoppe created quite a stir in Charleston in the late 1940s when he hosted a program called "The Supper Club" from 6:30 to 7 p.m. each weekday on WUSN. Using sound effects that made it appear as though he was broadcasting live from a nightclub, Hoppe pushed the fantasy to the hilt. Talking over the subdued sounds of background conversation, clinking glassware and china, he would say, "And now here's the Supper Club band's version of 'String of Pearls.'" What the radio audience heard, of course, was Glen Miller's orchestra playing "String of Pearls." Hoppe got in hot water when a number of Charleston residents complained about hearing their names mentioned as patrons of the club. Each night he would say such things as, "I see Marvin Jaques and his lovely wife Janice are here at table six," or "there's a well known Charleston couple, Mr. and Mrs. Arlington Stringer at table fourteen." People called the station to complain that they had never been to the Supper Club. One man insisted, "I wouldn't be caught dead in a place like that." It turned out that Hoppe picked the names out of the Charleston phone book. "The Supper Club" was abruptly canceled by WUSN.

Later came such personalities as Hubert Wilke on WUSN which went on the air in 1948, Mike Hiott on WCSC, Dub Phillips of WQSN (formerly WUSN), Bob Tamblyn of the "Yawn Patrol" on WCSC, Woody Thompson of WCSC, Doug Clements of WTMA who used the name Doug Randall on the air, and a host of others. Some other radio announcers who became well known to Charleston audiences during those early years were Herman Aaron, Charlie Caudle, Ken Klyce, Jack Luker, Nolly Sams, Jack McKee, Bill Evanson, John Watkins, Tom Hennesey, Bob Smith, Jim Rourk, Ken Crook, Howard Ozment and Fred Manus.

Radio brought high drama and stark realism into thousands of Charleston homes with news coverage of hurri-

*Ken Klyce of WCSC at the height of his reign as the Charleston area's number one newsman.*

canes, floods, fires, spectacular crimes and other events which were reported by the ever vigilant newscasters who made radio such an indispensable part of life in the Lowcountry of South Carolina. One of the most dramatic and poignant of all radio broadcasts in Charleston occurred shortly after World War II when the weather suddenly turned nasty one late summer afternoon and caused a ship, which was anchored just north of the old Cooper River Bridge to drag its anchor and drift into the bridge. Wind gusting up to 60 miles an hour pushed the big ship into the pilings about 300 yards from the eastern shore of the river, and a section of the bridge roadway collapsed. An automobile containing five people was on that section and they were killed when the bridge plunged into the river. Divers located the car three days later. Russell Long of WCSC was on the crane barge which lifted the


*Two of WCSC-TV's well known personalities who started out in radio, Ken Klyce (left) and Bob Smith.*

car with its five occupants out of the water. His description of that awful moment still ranks as one of the most vivid on-the-scene radio broadcasts ever heard in Charleston. It was also a defining moment for radio news, coming as it did before the advent of television. Many people have said that Long's gripping description of the event could not have been improved upon even by television pictures.

Voice was the big thing among radio announcers—and in the early days, 1940s and 1950s, they were always referred to as announcers; the term disc jockey had not even been heard of. Most of the announcers were serious about their voices. They had deep bass voices and their pronunciation was precise—no accents. Most of them were serious about their work, too. They brooked no nonsense in the studio or the control room when they were on the air. This led, inevitably, to occasional tomfoolery among those other members of the radio staff who were not so serious off the air.

One evening in 1947, when all of the station personnel had left for the day, except for the announcer on duty and the engineer in the control room, there occurred in the main studio of WCSC atop the Francis Marion Hotel an incident which became legendary among radio people in Charleston. The announcer on duty was one of those very serious, very precise and very intolerant of any kind of nonsense fellows. He was preparing to do a newscast and had carefully read over all of the news reports he would be giving. When the studio light went on, signaling that he was now on the air, he began, "And now here's the latest news from the wires of United Press." In the hallway outside the studio, three of his fellow announcers and a statuesque brunette, clad only in a long raincoat, stood waiting for the right moment. When the announcer had finished the first news item, the door to the studio opened and in walked the statuesque brunette in the long rain-

coat. She walked about half way over to where the announcer was seated at the microphone, continuing with the newscast, seemingly unperturbed by the woman's entrance. As he started the third news item, the woman flung open the raincoat to reveal herself in a state of complete nakedness. The announcer choked. The woman was well endowed, and her smile could only be described as "inviting."

Nothing was considered worse in those days than dead air time. That evening, however, listeners to WCSC didn't hear anything at 1390 on their AM dial for a full 30 seconds. The announcer was so awestruck that he forgot one of the basic gestures that every radio announcer instinctively did when he wanted the engineer to cut off his microphone—run his finger across his neck. Then listeners heard the announcer gasp "What th'...," and then there was dead air for another 30 seconds. Meanwhile, the statuesque brunette gathered her long rain coat about herself and walked casually out of the studio. The engineer was doubled over with uncontrolled laughter, but before he fell out of his chair, he flipped a switch that turned on a recorded commercial for Efird's Department Store which was having a sale on raincoats. The announcer let out a yell and dashed for the door through which the statuesque brunette had disappeared. The hallway was empty. He searched every nook and cranny of the top floor of the Francis Marion Hotel, but he soon determined that he and the engineer were the only people there.

It was nearly a month before one of the three who had concocted the scheme let it slip out one night at Leddy's Bar on East Bay Street that he and two fellow announcers were the culprits. He said the engineer wasn't in on the gag, and so he was of no help when the victimized announcer frantically tried for days to find out who was behind such a dastardly deed. When word finally filtered back to him that three of his fellow announcers were the

perpetrators, he confronted them with a tirade about their lack of professionalism and dire threats about having them all fired. He also accused them of endangering his career, because it was well known that he aspired to one day make it to the big time and be a staff announcer at the Columbia Broadcasting System in New York. His gesticulations and his fiery rhetoric set off howls of laughter by his three fellow announcers, who readily admitted that they admired his professionalism so much they just had to see if they could cause him to break up on the air. That soothed him a little bit, but not before he snarled, "I was in complete control all the time." That set his three fellow announcers into another fit of laughter. When everything had calmed down, the announcer grinned rather sheepishly and asked, "Who was that woman?" One of the others replied, "You'll never know." And he never did. It was rumored that the woman was from Greenville and had come to Charleston specifically for this one brief appearance. She is probably a grandmother today, but it is unlikely that she ever told any of her children or grandchildren about it.

Two other WCSC announcers were involved in a humorous caper in 1953 that became a part of radio lore in Charleston. Al Stone still gets a chuckle when he recalls what happened early one evening when he was giving the weather report. Stone described it this way: "I had recorded the weather forecast which we did periodically each day. When I said 'now here's the latest on the weather from the U.S. Weather Bureau at the Charleston Airport,' the man at the weather bureau started giving the weather report. Jay Mullen was in the broadcast booth next to the one I was in, and he put on a sound effect of an airplane in flight. It went out over the air while the man at the weather bureau was talking. It sounded as though the airplane was coming closer and closer and then all of a sudden there was this tremendous crash that sounded as if

*Al Stone, program director at WCSC in 1956, conducts a discussion by the station's "Teen Panel," an innovative way of attracting teenage listeners and also sponsors interested in attracting the business of teenagers.*

the airplane had slammed into the tower at the weather bureau. We received quite a few phone calls from people who wanted to know if an airplane had crashed into the weather bureau."

Stone was one of a very few radio personalities to be featured in a full page ad for a supermarket. On the morning of Thursday, January 28, 1954, a cutout of Stone's face appeared throughout the ad for the Piggly Wiggly store. At the top right hand side of the ad were these words beneath Stone's face: "Yes sir, buy Al Stone's specials at your Piggly Wiggly Store and make your food cost less than ever before." Among the many items featured in the ad, with Stone's face and cartoon body pointing to them were Heather Bell Red Salmon, tall pound can, 59 cents; Borden's Instant Coffee, two-ounce jar, 49 cents (equal to a full pound of coffee); Snowdrift shortening, three-pound can, 85 cents; and Peter Pan peanut butter, 12-ounce jar, 29 cents. Perhaps the reason why Stone's face was used in the ad was because he had started making the transition to WCSC-television and his face was familiar to the many viewers of Charleston's first TV station.

WCSC had a long-standing association with churches and religious organizations in Charleston. For five years in the late 1940s and early 1950s the station began its Sunday morning broadcast schedule with a program from the Star Gospel Mission, Charleston's oldest Christian welfare organization. And at 11:30 a.m. it aired the service from Citadel Square Baptist Church. Years later, WCSC-TV televised the Sunday morning worship service from that same church.

Radio in Charleston, as in the nation, for its first decades, was dominated by AM (amplitude modulation) broadcasting, on frequencies assigned from 535 to 1,605 kilocycles (this was later extended by the FCC to 1,705 kilocycles in 1979 to increase the number of available AM channels). To avoid problems of frequency interference between stations, the FCC developed an intricate system of allocating channels based on power, signal direction and hours of operation. FM frequencies (frequency modulation) were first made available for commercial use in 1940. FM signals, on frequencies between 88 and 108 megacycles, are sent directly on a line of sight and are thus limited to the range of the horizon, about 100 miles (the broadcast range is a factor of power and antenna height, and in fact is usually between 15 and a maximum of 60 miles). The great advantage of FM is superior reception quality, with less static. WTMA-FM was launched in October 1945, and WCSC-FM began broadcasting in March 1948. At that time, the FCC had no regulations covering combined ownership of AM and FM stations. The advent of television put FM briefly on hold until the late 1950s, when FM stations expanded rapidly.

But first came television.

Just as it had led in radio broadcasting, WCSC launched the television era in Charleston with the establishment of WCSC-TV, channel 5 on June 19, 1953. WUSN-TV on channel 2 was the second TV station in

*When one of the world's greatest showmen came to Charleston (Bob Hope), Charlie Hall (left) and Ken Klyce were on hand to greet him.*

1956. In 1957, the Atlantic Coast Broadcasting Corporation, which owned WTMA, made an abortive attempt to establish Charleston's third television station. The move was opposed by the Southern Broadcasting Company, which owned WUSN-TV, and by John M. Rivers, president of WCSC-TV. Charles E. "Chuck" Smith, who had purchased WTMA from the Evening Post Publishing Company in 1954, appeared before FCC examiner Thomas H. Donahue to press the case for the issuance of a television broadcasting license to Atlantic Coast Broadcasting for the operation of channel 4 in the Charleston market. Rivers contended that the cost of launching a new television station would be higher than WTMA's estimates and available capital. He also noted that he was not a disinterested witness in the proceedings, indicating that the expected entry of WTMA into the tele-

vision field would reduce WCSC-TV's revenue. He estimated that half of the new station's income from local and national spot advertising would be taken away from WCSC-TV. But Rivers conceded that, although WCSC-TV's revenues had dropped temporarily when WUSN-TV came in as Charleston's second television station, subsequently WCSC-TV's gross receipts had increased from $268,690 in the first six months of 1955 to $336,345 in the comparable period for 1957.

*Charles Smith*

The first voice heard on television in Charleston was that of Charlie Hall. His first words were "Channel 5 is now alive." Hall's name became the consummate symbol of the broadcasting business in the city. He started his radio career with WCSC when that station had its studios on the top floor of the Francis Marion Hotel. He moved with WCSC to 485 East Bay Street, and when WCSC established the first television station in Charleston, Hall gradually moved over to the new medium. For years, Hall was the Atlantic (Refining Company) weatherman on radio. People in Charleston who talked about the weather —and they all did—frequently quoted Hall by saying such things as "Charlie said it is going to rain today." Hall remained the public's favorite weatherman when he moved full time to television, and in the mid-1990s he was still going strong as *the* best known TV weatherman in Charleston until his death in February 1997. Even though WCSC-TV had two or three other people who also did the weather, Hall was the mainstay. Indeed, he was the dominant on-air personality among all of the people who have ever worked for WCSC, radio or television. He and his wife Stacy also did a mid-day TV talk show for several years on the station. His versatility as a broadcaster was

*Ned Webb, Red Evans and Tom Crenshaw prepare equipment for a remote broadcast in 1969.*

demonstrated time and time again. Few, if any, would dispute the fact that he was a broadcasting legend in Charleston. When WCSC moved from its East Bay headquarters to a new studio west of the Ashley River, the street where the station is located was named Charlie Hall Boulevard.

In Charleston, as in the rest of the country, television advanced rapidly during its first five years of commercial existence. By the late 1950s, the local newspapers were publishing the daily program schedules of two Charleston television stations, and also those of WBTV in Charlotte, WJBF-TV in Augusta, WMFD-TV in Wilmington, WTOC-TV in Savannah, and WBTW-TV in Florence and WIS-TV in Columbia. These schedules appeared in a two-column format above those of local radio stations. Obviously television was gaining media ascendancy. Other TV stations followed WCSC-TV and WUSN-TV in Charleston:

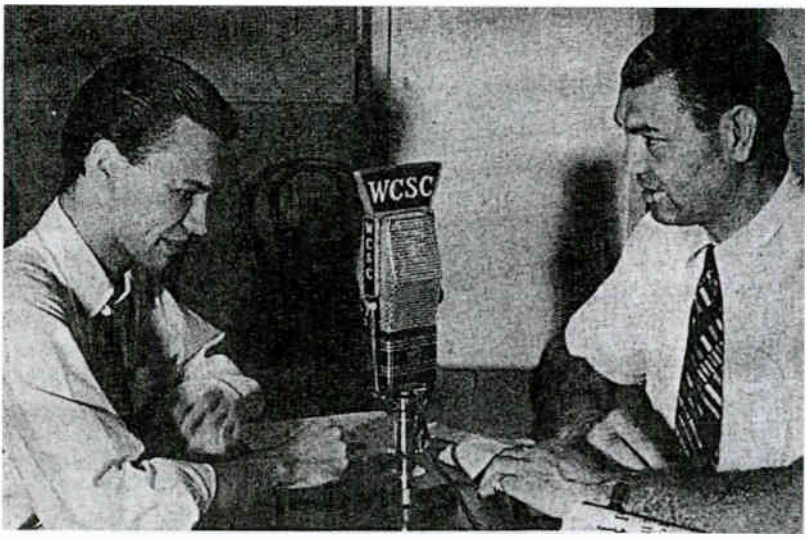
WCIV-TV channel 4, WTAT-TV channel 24, WBNU-TV channel 36, and WITV-TV (part of the Public Broadcasting System) channel 7. WUSN-TV eventually changed its call letters to WCBD-TV. In those early days, the frequent fluctuation in program schedules, which the TV stations submitted weekly to the local newspapers, caused a flurry of complaints from readers of the newspapers. The complaints were, at least, consistent; they all related to TV shows people wanted to watch but couldn't because the TV station to which they were tuned ran another show in its place. Some pretty irate letters to the editor were written about that situation.

Meanwhile, what happened to radio? With the specter of television looming larger and larger on the horizon, the complexion of radio was rapidly changing in the 1950s. Evening audiences in increasingly greater numbers switched to television, although radio clung doggedly to its daytime audiences and such shows as "Fibber McGee and Molly," "Judy Canova," "Mr. District Attorney," "The Bob Hope Show" and "The Great Gildersleeve" were still enticing large evening radio audiences. But the decline of network radio during this period was obvious. There were dire predictions in the mid-1950s that radio's days were numbered because of the growing popularity of television. Those predictions were dead wrong. It is true that radio lost vast numbers of listeners during the 1950s. Advertising revenue dropped as the major networks (ABC, NBC, CBS) focused efforts to establish themselves in television programming. In addition to the competition from TV, the FCC also reduced the distance required between AM radio stations, allowing multiple use of frequencies previously used by stations that operated on an exclusive "clear" frequency, thus reducing the audience size of the AM radio stations. Only eleven clear frequency 50 kilowatt stations were retained to cover the United States in a national emergency.

A radio "vacuum" thus developed, but innovative local station owners and programmers quickly moved to fill that vacuum. Radio was forced to undergo some painful and fundamental changes. As Charleston radio audiences grew smaller, competition to win the available listening public intensified. Radio stations probed for a foothold in the market, and they found new niches where they could drive a wedge and attract audiences. They did it mostly with music for a while, focusing programming on playing records and a skeletal news operation. The words "disc jockey" became an integral part of the radio lexicon. Announcers had to learn to operate the control boards and spin the records, whereas previously they had sat before a microphone in a sound-proof studio while an engineer handled the controls and manipulated the equipment. Because they had to "ride" the control board and spin the records, they naturally became known as disc jockeys.

In the early 1950s and throughout the decade, the disc jockey became a force to be reckoned with. The really good ones, and even some of the mediocre ones, built up huge followings as listeners were attracted to them because of their personalities and the particular kind of music they played. Spot advertising, consisting of 30 second and one minute advertisements, instead of sponsorship of half hour shows, became the norm. Live music virtually vanished from local stations and recorded music took its place. This, of course, led to a period of knock-down-drag-out competition between record companies to get disc jockeys to play their records on the radio, and the payola scandal rocked not only the radio industry but also the record industry.

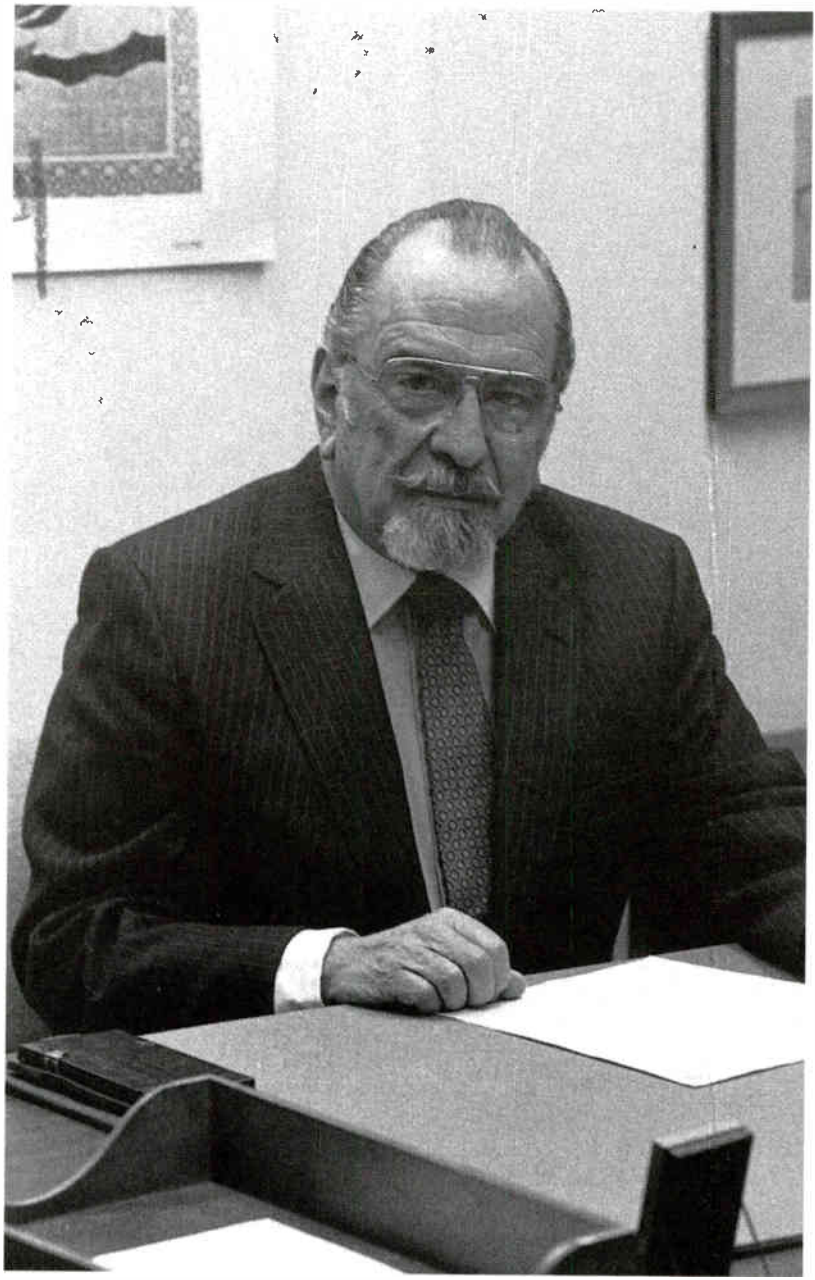
Radio also took advantage of opportunity where TV could not go, offering programs for what is called "drive time." That is the time when people are in their automobiles going to and from work. You can hardly find an automobile today that doesn't have a radio in it—a radio with




*On his visit to Charleston, the Manassa Mauler, Jack Dempsey, was interviewed by Phil Sutterfield. Dempsey was touring the country.*

both AM and FM. They did it with alert news departments that always got the jump on television. A radio news reporter could be on the scene of a news story and bring it to the public's attention long before television stations could arrive on the scene and set up a film camera. The film would have to be processed, further delaying the eventual airing of the news.

Charleston radio stations have produced a number of outstanding personalities who went on to bigger and better things in the broadcasting industry. One of the most notable is Frank Blair, who for years was the newsman on the NBC "Today Show." He got his start, while a student at the College of Charleston, as a newscaster and announcer with WCSC. Phil Sutterfield became one of the top sportscasters in the country after leaving WCSC. He worked the Kentucky Derby each year the great Clem McCarthy, who thrilled racing fans all over the country with his famous "aaaaand they're off" as the horses broke



*Stewart Spencer when he was senior news editor for the Voice of America. Spencer worked at WCSC before moving to WNCG in North Charleston.*

from the starting gate. Sutterfield worked for Mutual Broadcasting, but achieved his greatest fame as the play-by-play announcer for University of Kentucky basketball and football games when Kentucky virtually ruled those two college sports in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Stewart Spencer, another WCSC product, ended his broadcasting career as news director of the Voice of America, the world wide radio service operated by the U.S. State Department. Jim Whitaker, who formerly managed WCSC, had a syndicated program of music from the 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s that was heard on radio stations all over the country. The program was sponsored by the United States Army. Whitaker was known as the "Old Record Duster," and the program was called Whitaker's Waxworks.

Commercially, radio station ownership in Charleston was not a highly lucrative business in the 1950s, but a number of stations made enough money to pay staff and return a modest profit. The decade was one of no-growth for radio in Charleston, and no new stations went on the air. However, as radio struggled to hold its own against television in the late 1950s, it gained muscle and became television's toughest competitor because the people in radio became more imaginative and innovative. A story in the *The Evening Post* reported that radio had a big year in 1957. Indeed, it was a banner year for radio according to David E. Partridge, advertising and sales promotion director for Westinghouse Broadcasting Company, who was guest speaker at the annual meeting of the South Carolina Broadcasters Association at the Fort Sumter Hotel. He told approximately 120 delegates from radio stations throughout South Carolina that 1957 was the best year in the history of radio. Partridge noted that formerly the peak years for radio were in the late 1940s. Incidentally, Partridge's company, Westinghouse, at the time owned radio station KDKA in Pittsburgh, the very first commercial radio sta-

tion in the United States.

With competition between stations growing keener, radio stations were constantly seeking a new angle to attract advertisers. The individual who could come up with a new idea for a program to draw enthusiastic advertiser support could become an icon. The late Matt Roberts owned and operated a drive-in restaurant on Cannon Street, just west of President Street, in the 1950s. It was a favorite gathering place for high school and college students and night people in general, and radio station WOKE agreed to do a remote broadcast from that drive-in five nights a week. The show was an immediate success. People would come from throughout metropolitan Charleston to park at the drive-in and listen to the guy in the radio booth on their car radios. He would say things like, "If you want to hear Elvis sing 'Blue Suede Shoes' just blink your lights." You can imagine what happened. The drive-in owner paid good money to have that show broadcast from his place, and he got a good return on his investment. Realizing that the audience was out there in radio land, other advertisers bought commercial time on that program because they knew it had an army of listeners, so WOKE reaped substantial profits from this venture as well. Although this particular program format has not been repeated on a regular basis in the Charleston area, periodic remote broadcasts from locations other than radio station studios—new and used car lots, furniture store show windows, restaurants, department stores, shopping malls—are quite common. The late Cecil Keels once did a show from the top of the WCSC broadcast tower on East Bay Street. He stayed up on the tower for nearly a week without coming down. One of the longest running remote broadcasts in Charleston was the program which Dan Moon did every Friday morning on WTMA. He was the talkative host of an on-location show from many different spots for more than ten years, beginning in


*Radio newsmen Phil Sutterfield of WCSC and Red Evans of WNCG have a good view of parade on King Street.*

1989. Advertisers like these remote broadcasts because they bring people into their place of business; each visitor is a potential customer.

Red Evans, who thought up the "We must be number two" station promo when he was working at WOKE, came up with another idea in 1954 that resulted in the first bona fide news department at a Charleston radio station. He approached Ansley Cohen with the idea. Cohen owned WNCG in North Charleston, the newest station in town, and he was trying to gain a foothold in the market which was dominated by WCSC and WTMA. Evans proposed that WNCG employ him as a full-time newsman with no other duties at the radio station. He told Cohen that all he needed was a car, a radio that could monitor all the police frequencies and a radio telephone in the car. Cohen saw an opportunity to do something that no other radio station had done and also an opportunity to provide the listening public with news before any other radio or TV station or the newspaper could provide it. He gave Evans, a native of North Charleston, the go-ahead and in about a year Evans

*Jim Whitaker, who formerly managed WCSC, had a syndicated program of music from the 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s that was heard on radio stations all over the country.*

was one of the highest profile newsmen in the city. Evans later switched over to television in the early 1970s. He eventually left broadcasting and went to Washington to work for a congressman. There were, of course, other people who were billed as news "directors" at Charleston radio stations. But those individuals were staff announcers who also did other things—like commercials and public service announcements—in addition to gathering and broadcasting the news.

News reporters have long been among the best known Charleston radio personalities. The reason is simple. The newsmen were out in the community, talking to people and getting information for their newscasts. People dealt with them on a personal basis. One of the best known of

all the newsmen who ever worked in Charleston radio was Bob Truere, who was WCSC's first news director. He was a native of Charleston, but he worked at several other stations in North and South Carolina before joining the staff of WCSC in 1945. Jay Mullen, who worked for several radio stations in Charleston, was WTMA's morning announcer in the mid-1950s, and he established a strong reputation as a newsman. Mullen also achieved a degree of fame among local radio people when he coached Marian McKnight, the reigning Miss South Carolina, for her appearance in the Miss America Contest at Atlantic City, New Jersey. Miss McKnight went on to win the Miss America crown, something about which Mullen still likes to talk.

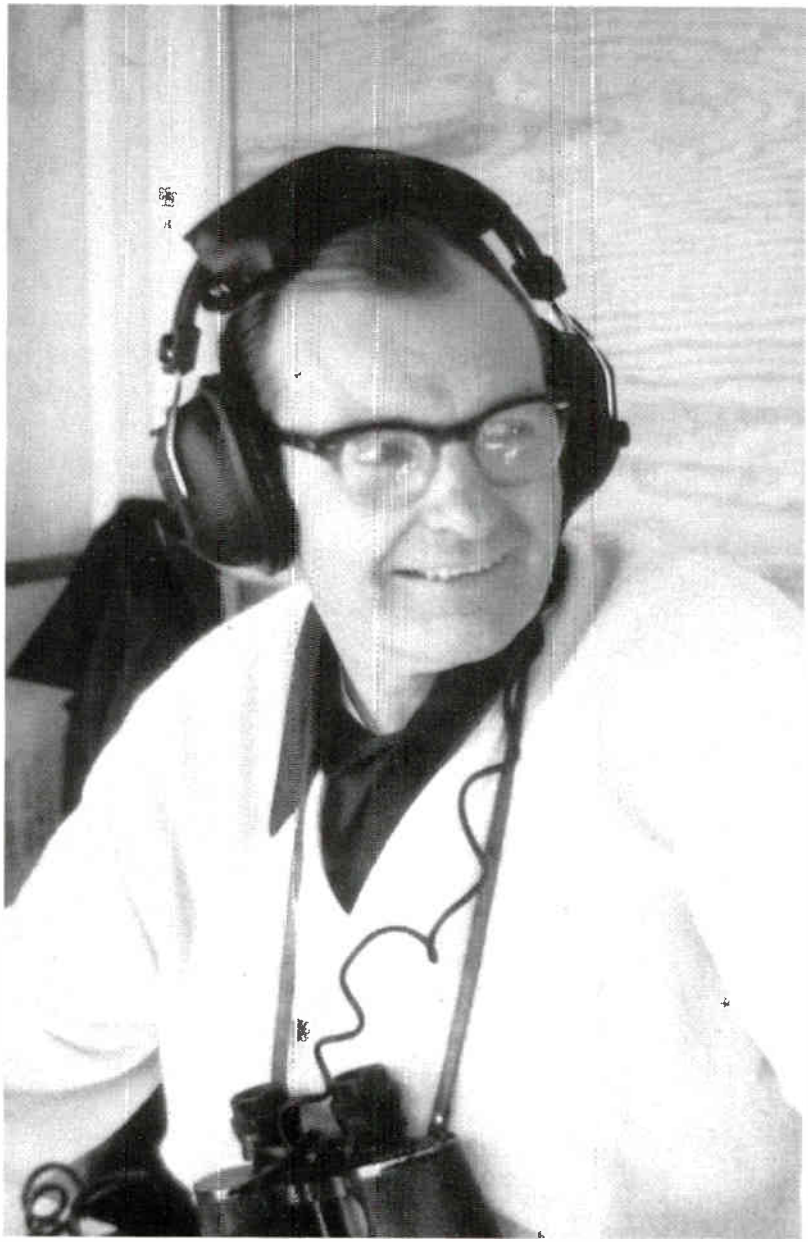
Another native Charlestonian, Harry Gianaris, worked as news director for WTMA in the 1950s. His Greek heritage and his Charleston accent proved an advantageous blend, making his voice one of the most familiar of all Charleston radio personalities of that time. Gianaris was known among members of the radio fraternity as "The Golden Greek." He later became anchor for Channel 5 news. Frank O. Hunt, who later moved over to television news, cut his teeth on radio news at WTMA and WQSN. Bill Sharpe began his broadcasting career with WCSC radio and later made the transition to WCSC-TV news.

Sports have played a major role in Charleston radio since the 1950s. There is South Atlantic League Class A baseball, the focal point of which in the 1950s was stately old College Park on Rutledge Avenue where the Charleston Rebels were developing future major league stars, a tradition that continues with the Charleston Riverdogs at the Joseph P. Riley Jr. Stadium on the banks of the Ashley River. The Citadel football team, though not a Southern Conference powerhouse, began to attract the attention of fans and sports writers and sportscasters in the 1950s. Radio sports announcers provided vivid

*Harry Gianaris, when he worked at WCSC, was the pride of Charleston's sizeable Greek Community. His nickname was "The Golden Greek."*

accounts of all the action. Wayne Poucher was the first sports announcer to become a big name in Charleston. He worked for WCSC. In 1950, Big Bill Ward was the first local sports announcer to have his name published in the newspaper program log. He came on the air at 8 p.m. with a show called "WUSN-O with Bill Ward." Ward did the play-by-play accounts of Charleston Rebels games from the press box at College Park on WTMA. A giant of a man, Ward once had part of the press box floor collapse under his weight. At the urging of Columbia wrestling promoter Henry Marcus, Ward became interested in wrestling and moved on to become the anchor man on a radio wrestling network that aired his bombastic accounts of wrestling matches throughout much of the eastern United States. Before Ward came on the scene, however, a local voice was heard broadcasting the games of the Charleston Rebels. The team in those days was managed Chick Autry, and featured a popular but weak-hitting shortstop named Mickey Livingston and a slugging left fielder named Ernie Logan. The play-by-play announcer was Nolly J. Sams, son of the sports editor of *The Evening Post.* Sams was an anomaly among radio personalities in Charleston because of his thick Charleston, or geechee, accent. When Ward became the play-by-play announcer, Sams became the public address system announcer at College Park for Rebel games. He later was the public address system announcer for games played at the park by semi-professional teams of the City League which were sponsored by local businesses. After World War II, Sams did a late afternoon sports show on WUSN.

One of the most durable of all sports announcers ever to come upon the scene in Charleston was George Norwig of WCSC. Norwig went over to WHAN briefly in 1952 as a result of an argument with WCSC management. After a while, however, he went back to WCSC and spent the remainder of his radio career with that station. The "Big



*George Norwig was an outstanding salesman with WCSC, but he is best known as the man who was the voice of The Citadel Bulldogs for 20 years.*

Swede" broadcast play-by-play accounts of Citadel football games for twenty years beginning in 1956, and his name became synonymous with sports announcing in Charleston. A native of Long Island, New York, Norwig attended Duke University for a year after World War II, but transferred to the University of North Carolina where he majored in journalism and was bitten by the broadcasting bug. In addition to his work as a broadcaster, Norwig was for years one of the top radio salesmen in the Charleston market. He often boasted that he was the best radio salesman around. Nobody ever accused him of being modest. He also had the biggest feet of all the people who ever worked in radio in Charleston. As a self-styled expert on everything, Norwig was asked near the end of his career to rate people and events with which he had been associated during his years in radio. Here's the list as it was published in *The News and Courier.*

Best Football Player—Paul McGuire, who played for The Citadel in the mid-1950s and was a premier kicker.

Best Golfer—Frank Ford Sr., followed by Dick Horne.

Best Basketball Player—Art Musselman of The Citadel, followed closely by Dick Jones, who later became mayor of Mount Pleasant.

Best Sports Writer—Neyle "Doc" Baker, who was sports editor of *The News and Courier.*

Best Radio Announcer—Charlie Hall, without a doubt.

Biggest Thrill—Seeing The Citadel beat the University of South Carolina and Steve Wadiak 19 to 7 in 1950.

Best TV Commercial—All those people standing on a mountain singing that they'd like to buy the world a Coke.

Worst TV Commercial—The fat guy sitting on the side of the bed saying "I can't believe I ate the whole thing." It was a commercial for Alka-Seltzer.

Golfers flocked to the Lowcountry from all over the eastern United States. The Azalea Golf Tournament, played annually at the Country Club of Charleston became one of the top amateur link events in the entire country. The popularity of golf spurred development of other golf courses such as Wild Dunes, Snee Farms, Stono Ferry, Eagle Landing, Oak Point, Plantation Pines, Shadowmoss, Patriot's Point, Edisto, Kiawah and Seabrook, Legend Oaks and others. Oddly enough, as golf grew in popularity in the 1950s, it was a weekly column in *The News and Courier,* written by a radio station salesman, that contributed significantly to the game's popularity. That newspaper golf column was written by Jack Hearn, a salesman for WCSC. Radio stations covered all the major tournaments, providing sponsors, players and the public with a place in the spotlight of a sport which was capturing the interest of millions of people. Charleston has taken a place as a mecca for golfers, and radio played a key role in the development of the sport.

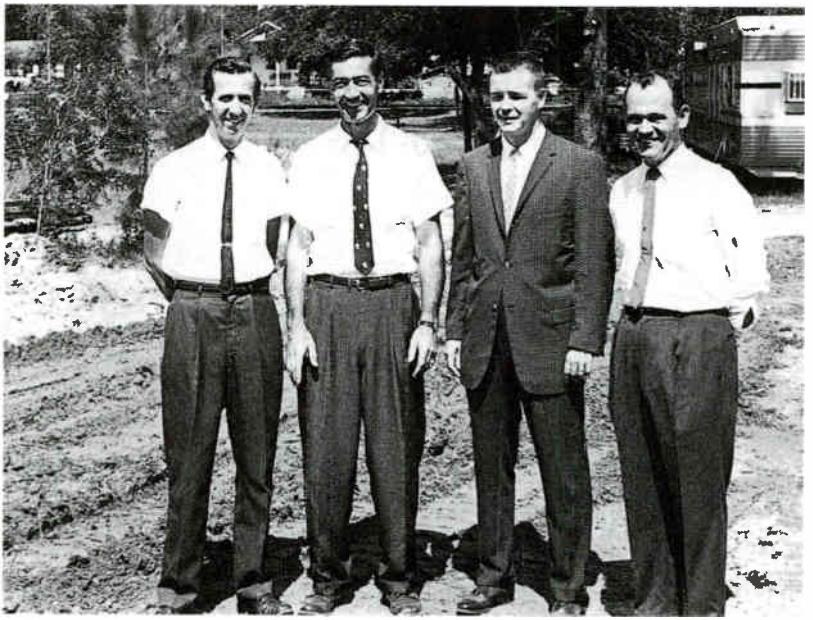
*Patrick Joyce did a little bit of everything at WCSC. His specialty was sports, however, because he had been sports editor of* The News and Courier.

A former sports editor of *The News and Courier,* Patrick Joyce, had a fair run at radio for awhile, doing a sports talk show and other miscellaneous announcing chores. He also was the voice on the public address system at College Park during the heyday of the Charleston Royals.

# The Development of FM and Target Programming 1960-1980

FM radio began to come into its own in the 1960s and today the majority of popular music stations in Charleston and around the nation are on the FM dial. FM stations are static free and much better suited to music formats than are AM stations. The FM signals have 20 times the band width of AM signals, which makes it possible for FM stations to broadcast in stereo sound. AM stations use mostly news, sports and talk formats and some of them are quite successful. Only a few AM stations play music, some in stereo sound (WCSC-AM was the first AM stereo station in Charleston).

The development of transistor receivers was a boon to the newly revitalized radio business in the 1960s. No one could have predicted the technological revolution that would eventually follow Bell Laboratories' announcement of a new invention on June 30, 1948. "We have called it the transistor," Research Director Ralph Brown told perplexed reporters, who paid little attention to the unveiling. The transistor is arguably the most important technological development of the twentieth century, paving the way for the "chip," the personal computer, the Internet and, ultimately, the information age. The transistor did all this "computing" with only two basic functions: switching current off and on, and amplifying it. Amplifying current paved the way for the transistor radio and a host of other hand-held devices. Ever smaller transistors rapidly replaced the vacuum tube, and enhanced the proliferation of stations which could target a specific, narrow segment of the listening audience. The single large "family radio" in the living room, where the entire household gathered to



*Breaking Ground for Radio Station WNCG*
*Looking over the site of the Charleston's area's newest and North Charleston's first radio station are (L-R): Jack McGinnis, Richard Kamradt, Al Stone and Bob Tamblyn.*

listen to a network broadcast, went the way of the vacuum tube receiver. Transistor radios were smaller and less expensive—now a radio in every room was not only possible, but also likely, allowing each member of the family to listen to a different programming format of choice. Smaller radios became increasingly portable too, allowing programming for people on the move, in their cars, walking, or at the beach. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, radio gradually changed from a sit-down, indoor, communal, audio drama theater to a mobile, out-of-home, primarily music background entertainment. Content changed from half-hour narrative programs to non-narrative units of 1-3 minutes.

By 1960, the "pioneer days" of radio in Charleston were obviously over. Radio actually began to flourish

anew, and became a horse race among competitors in the 1960s. By this time, the community of Walterboro had a radio station, WALD. North Charleston got its first radio station, WNCG at 910 on the dial, in 1960. It was situated on O'Hear Avenue. The license to operate WNCG was applied for by Louis M. Neal Jr. of Beaufort, South Carolina, and Robert S. Taylor of Lakeland, Florida, but the Federal Communications Commission eventually granted the license to KTM Broadcasting Company, headed by Richard F. Kamradt of Charleston. Stewart Spencer and Jay Mullen, both of whom had formerly worked as announcers for WCSC, were among the first voices heard on WNCG, a daytime only station. The commercial manager of WNCG was Ansley Cohen, who later owned the station. Summerville soon followed with radio station WAZS, and station WBER began in Moncks Corner. The floodgates were open, and radio stations began popping up all over the Charleston area. Four new AM stations and two new FM stations went on air in the 1960s.

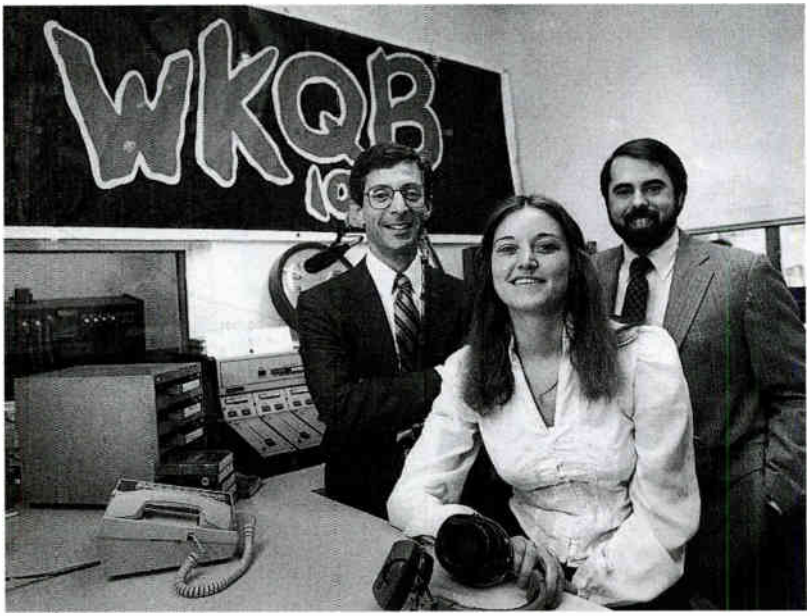
In 1965, the FCC ruled that in cities over 100,000 population, combined AM and FM stations could no longer duplicate more than 50 percent of programming. The 50/50 ruling further opened up the FM market. The decade of the 1970s saw an additional four FM stations in the greater Charleston market. As new stations came on the air, it was sometimes difficult to distinguish one from the other. Among the new stations were call letters such as WIXR, WWWZ, WXTC, WGCA, WJZX, WRFQ, WYBB, WSUY, WSSP, WGOX, WDXZ, WLNB, WKQB, WAVF, WDXC, WZJY, WKCN and a number of others. FM radio came on strong and music formats took the place of local and network programming. It seemed that the days of AM radio were numbered, and some so-called experts predicted that AM radio had no future, because the static-free nature of FM would draw listeners away from AM. At the same time, there was a freeze on new AM license awards (from 1962

to 1964 and from 1968 to 1973), so the AM percentage of radio listenership, on a weekly basis, declined during the 1970s from 60 percent to about 25 percent.

Contemporary music was the mainstay of most FM station formats. As audience segmentation took hold in the mid-1960s, and radio stations began to be identified by the kind of music they played, an expanding variety of music formats emerged. There were rock and roll stations, big band music stations, blues and boogie stations, jazz stations, easy listening stations, golden oldies stations, ethnic stations, country music stations, classical music stations and more. From 1960 right up until the end of the twentieth century, radio stations in Charleston, as in other parts of the country, changed formats whenever it was thought that such a change might increase the station's audience and subsequent profitability.

Of all the music formats, classical music is the one with the least enviable survival rate. When WKTM-FM dropped its classical music program called "Symphony in Stereo" in January 1967, an editorial in *The Evening Post* bemoaned the move: "In our own corner of that wasteland that is popular entertainment, a tiny oasis once protruded cautiously from the sand. It wasn't a very big oasis, but it was better than nothing at all. Here one took refuge from the raucous uproar that passes for music among the tone deaf and the culturally deprived. We refer, of course, to 'Symphony in Stereo,' the magnificent program once broadcast from 10 to 11 p.m. daily over WKTM-FM. In Charleston, one is, therefore, largely at a loss for music. In the face of such action, one is at a loss for words."

Radio sales people were out on the streets in increasing numbers, calling potential advertisers' attention to rating books which showed the strengths (never weaknesses) of their respective stations. Advertisers liked what radio was doing too, and they purchased commercial time on radio stations in increasing numbers, much to the con-




*WKQB was flying high when this picture of (L-R) owner Paul Neuhoff, Mary Russell and Steve Judy was taken.*

sternation of their television rivals. Radio was supposed to be dead. Ah, but it was most definitely alive and well in Charleston. More and more people were employed by radio stations—announcers, program directors, news directors, receptionists, secretaries, engineers, sales personnel, promotion specialists and others. Indeed, even AM radio made a startling comeback in the late 1980s with the advent of talk-shows, all news shows, and a heavy dose of sports programs, which the FM stations disdained.

As a consequence of the proliferation of stations and formats in the 1960s, and the demise of specific "programs," the Charleston newspapers stopped publishing radio program schedules. There were no longer real schedules, there was simply one music segment after another within a given station format—rock and roll, country, jazz, and the like—with no further delineation of pro-


*WCSC's chief engineer Wilbur Albee (civilian clothes) on site of remote broadcast from the Charleston Naval base.*

grams through the day other than a change of announcer. By 1965, the local newspapers were publishing only the daily television schedules of three Charleston TV stations and a small column at the bottom of the page that simply listed the call letters of local radio stations and their locations on the AM or FM dial. By the early 1970s, not even the listing of radio stations was published. Except for occasional notes about special radio programs, such as sports events to be broadcast, little is published about radio. A column in *The Post and Courier* entitled "This Week's Radio and TV Previews" generally mentions only television items.

As the number of radio stations broadcasting in the Charleston area grew, there were fewer personalities who stood out from the crowd. The duo of David B. Simmons and David Lloyd had a successful run of more than a year in the early 1960s with their morning show on WQSN. Their repartee was clever and for the most part original. Simmons later went into the advertising business, and Lloyd went to Atlanta to work in radio for a while before

switching to real estate. In the late 1970s, John M. Rivers Jr. turned C.J. Jones and Buzz Bowman loose to do their thing on WCSC in the morning. Jones and Bowman teamed up to bring a variety of wit, music, commentary and just plain fun in the form of contests with some healthy cash prizes to the airwaves and sent the station's ratings zooming. This went on until June of 1981 when Jones and Bowman left WCSC. Jones formed a consulting firm for radio stations. Coincident with the departure of Bowman and Jones, WCSC announced that George Adams had been promoted to vice president and station manager. Thomas J. Burkhart was named vice president and station manager for WCSC's FM affiliate WXTC.

Other popular morning radio personalities include such names as Michael Dee of WKQB, Charlie Lindsey of WEZL and WBUB, T.J. Phillips of WEZL, Jay Donovan of WTMA, Mark Cardenella, Charlie David, Janet Conklin, and Pat Joyce of WCSC and WXTC, Ted Byrne and Randy Lee of WGCA, Don Kendricks of WPAL, Brian Phillips, Nina Hunt and Bill Jordan of WSSX, Tony Hart of WWWZ, Robert Kessley and Al Shoch of WKCN, Kris Winston and Alyce Ian of WAVF. Names of a more recent vintage include John McNeil, Bill Peters, Jeff Evans, Clark Davis, Bob Nelson, Monty Jett, Doc Holladay, Bruce Cotton, Ken Goodman, Dave Bannon, Don Shelby, Scott Cason, J.J. Jackson, and Steve Russell and many others who came and went too rapidly to keep track of.

For sheer staying power, a real giant among Charleston radio personalities was Bob Nichols, who held forth on radio station WPAL for more than twenty years with his afternoon blues and boogie show. Nichols would tell his listeners, "I can see you out there." His audience may have been predominantly black, but thousands of young white males and females also tuned in to listen to the music Nichols played. Another WPAL personality who was immensely popular was Flo Myers, the first black woman

disc jockey to make a mark in the Charleston market. Bishop David Joyner was also a mainstay on WPAL for a number of years. Matthew A. Mouzon was another very well known radio personality in Charleston by virtue of the work he did for years at WPAL. He started with WPAL as a staff announcer and later moved into sales while continuing to do some announcing. Eventually he was named sales manager and then in 1969 he was named general manager. Mouzon had quite a following for his Sunday afternoon program which was called "Mouzon's Music Hall." He worked at WPAL from 1954 to 1971 when he went to St. Louis to work for Radio Station KWK. He stayed in St. Louis for a little over a year before returning to Charleston to become director of the Franklin C. Fetter Substance Abuse Center. Mouzon's daughter, Loretta, later became a news anchor on WCSC-TV in Charleston.

Another important radio personality is Jackson Arlington Knight who is a prominent realtor in Charlotte. He is a graduate of St. Andrews High School where he played right end on Coach Henry Haselmeyer's single wing football team. Not long after he was graduated from high school, he was drafted into the Army and he spent most of his 18-months in uniform at either Fort Jackson or Fort Bragg. After the Army, he came home to Charleston where he got into the radio announcing business. Jack had a deep base voice that was truly distinctive, even in high school. After a short stint in Charleston, he moved up to Orangeburg where he really found his nitch as a morning disc jockey, saying clever things and reading commercials between musical numbers. Then he went to Columbia and became one of that city's best known radio personalities. He even did a good bit of TV in Columbia. His last and most successful stop on his radio climb was in Charlotte. Once again, he dominated the morning market and enjoyed tremendous success. But a friend in the real estate business told Jack he could make a lot more money selling real estate than he ever could as a

radio announcer. Jack kicked the radio habit and never looked back. For all his moving about, however, Jack has remained a Charlestonian, even with the accent—when he wants to. He doesn't get back to the Holy City as often as he'd like because he no longer has family here. His well known trade mark is what he says every time he meets someone for the first time. He says: "Hello, I'm Jack Knight from Charleston." Jack says folks in and around Charlotte know Charleston well and almost always make some comment about his home town every time he uses that line.

Voices on radio are only the tip of the iceberg, of course. There are legions of people who work behind the scenes to make a radio station work the way it should. What it should do is make money. If a radio station does not make money, it soon goes out of business. The history of radio in Charleston includes many stations which have gone out of business—or dark, as radio people say. The ones with good sales people are the most successful, but the real secret of success in radio is a complex blend of on-air personalities and productive sales staff. Ralph Thornley, Jack Hearn and Roland Weeks of WCSC were considered the best radio salesmen in Charleston.

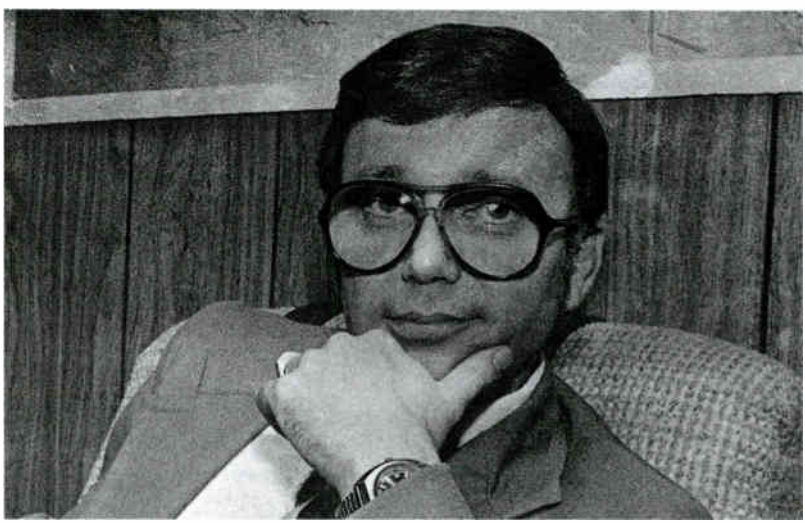
Also unheralded and working behind the scenes at every radio station are technicians and engineers whose job it is to keep their respective stations on the air. Without these people, no radio station could operate. They set up remote broadcast sites. They keep meticulous records so that equipment, such as transmitters and studio control boards, can be maintained or replaced on schedule. They stay abreast of the latest developments in broadcast technology and advise station owners and managers about what is needed in order to keep the station's signal strong and on its assigned frequency. They possess an assortment of tools that enable them to accomplish just about any job that needs to be done. They maintain a library of manuals and they know exactly what page to turn to when they encounter a problem.

One radio engineer who worked his way to the top is William G. Dudley, who started his radio career in Charleston in the late 1960s with WTMA and later made a most fortuitous switch to WNCG in North Charleston in 1973. By the mid-1990s, Dudley owned no fewer than six Charleston radio stations. Dudley originally came to Charleston at the behest of Charles Smith, who had bought WTMA from the Evening Post Publishing Company. He came to Charleston from Roanoke, Virginia where he had known Smith. Shortly after Smith purchased WTMA, his engineer resigned and it was imperative that he find a replacement in short order. He called Dudley. Ironically, Dudley, John Trenton and Robert "Booby" Nash had all worked together in Greensboro, North Carolina, and they wound up as the three key people at WTMA when that station was probably the hottest radio property in Charleston. Not one to rest on his oars, however, Dudley responded to a call from Ansley Cohen in 1973 and went to WNCG in North Charleston as that station's engineer. His work impressed Cohen and eventually Dudley was named general manager of the station. Later he married Cohen's daughter. When Cohen decided to retire, he sold Dudley a half interest in the station. Dudley was later able to buy complete control of WNCG and his appetite for radio station ownership was thus whetted to the point where he embarked upon a course that eventually led to his ownership of six radio stations: WSSX, WSUY, WTMA, WTMZ, WKTM, WXTC AM and WKCN. When asked by the author how many radio stations he had owned in Charleston, Dudley laughingly said, "I guess it would be easier to name the stations I haven't owned." There can be no doubt that Dudley's influence on radio in Charleston has been profound. His collective knowledge of the technical, broadcasting and advertising side of the business puts him in a class all by himself among local radio station owners.

Another engineer who left an indelible mark on the radio business in Charleston was Wilbur Albee, chief engineer for WCSC. He came to work for WCSC in 1941 and was named chief engineer in 1943. Albee was killed in a tragic accident near Georgetown in the early 1970s when he and another engineer were testing equipment to see how well the WCSC-TV signal was coming in that far away from Charleston. He was electrocuted when some of his antenna equipment came into contact with a high tension power line. Albee supervised construction of WCSC's 5,000-watt transmitter and tower just west of the Ashley River and also supervised the installation of the WCSC frequency modulation station. He supervised an engineering staff that consisted of John Broughton, Louis Austin, Homer Galloway and Herman Drews. Albee succeeded James M. Weaver as WCSC's chief engineer. Although he was not an on-air personality, Albee was a familiar figure to thousands of Charleston area residents as he manned remote broadcasting equipment for the many on-site programs WCSC did in and around Charleston. He was a graduate of the First National School of Television and Radio Engineering in Kansas City, Missouri, and was a native of Arkansas City, Kansas. His son Ronald, who was two years old when Albee was killed, is manager of Charleston Hardware Co. on Wappoo Road.

Internal competition is commonplace in radio stations, just as it is in television stations and newspapers. The people at a radio station who are involved in programming like to think that programming is what makes a station successful. Those on the technical side will say that unless they keep the station on the air, the best programming isn't worth a hoot. The sales people are quick to point out that they have the most important job because programming and technical operations don't mean a thing if they don't sell air time. It is more or less the same in television and newspapers. They all have a point of course.

Personnel turnover is one of the peculiarities of radio in Charleston, as it is in most other local radio markets across the country. It is not uncommon for one person to work for two or three or more radio stations in Charleston. That goes for sales people as well as for on-air people. Of all the radio announcers, personalities, and off-air personnel who have come and gone from the Charleston scene, more have left radio broadcasting than have stayed in it. Those who have left the world of microphones, turntables, music carts, computers and sound proof studios have migrated to other fields of endeavor such as insurance, real estate, teaching, retail sales, farming, military service, politics and religion, among other things. Of all the local stations, WCSC has been by far the station with people (both on-air and behind the scenes) who stayed the longest. The station's owners paid people well, and at the same time demanded a high standard of excellence from them. Thus, it became the mark of real success among radio people in Charleston if they worked

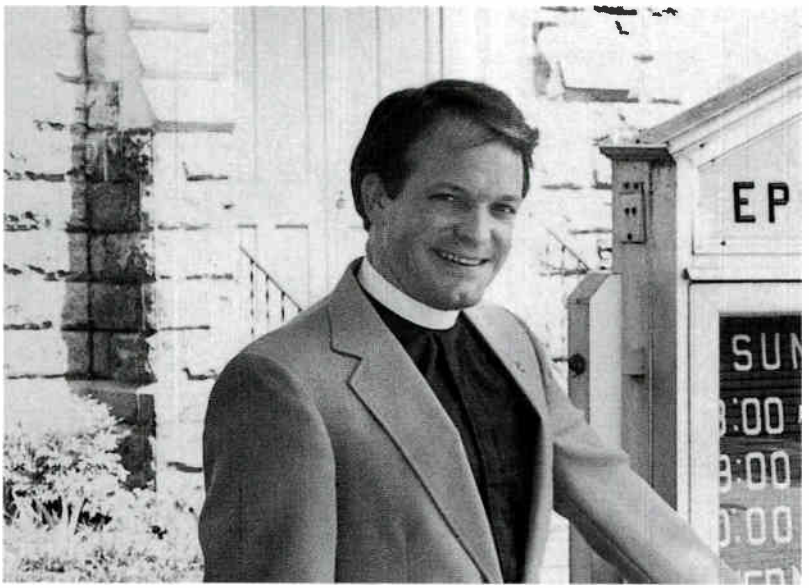


*Bob Nash, well known as Booby, was a popular disc jockey on WTMA. He later went into the ministry and is pastor of a church on James Island.*

for WCSC. The station's aggressive sales staff brought financial stability and good profits.

The late Charles Smith, who purchased WTMA from the Evening Post Publishing Company, subscribed to a radical philosophy with regard to the importance of on-air personalities. He told his announcers that WTMA listeners were not interested in their chatter. They were interested, he insisted, in hearing the music they played and nothing more. His announcers referred to the studios in which they worked as the "boiler room." Such an atmosphere was definitely not conducive to the development of on-air talent. They merely spun records and read commercial announcements. One announcer who defied Smith's philosophy was Robert "Booby" Nash. Short of stature and fast with the one line quips which were a must for any good disc jockey in the 60s and 70s, his bouncy comments between records helped build him a personal following, and he eventually became one of Charleston's best known radio personalities during the period from 1969 to 1977. He later worked at WCSC. A religious experience in 1979 changed his life, and he turned from radio to the ministry in 1984. In June 1999, when WTMA celebrated its sixtieth anniversary, Nash was an honored celebrity guest at the festivities in the Colonial Room of the Francis Marion Hotel. At the time,

*Warren Ashmore, WTMA news director in 1986 and part time Methodist lay preacher.*




*The Rev. John Burwell, rector of Holy Cross Episcopal Church on Sullivan's Island, was formerly a staff announcer and disc jockey on Radio Station WTMA.*

he was pastor of the Living Word Church on Folly Road. Nash told the story of his conversion to an audience of long-time admirers at the WTMA party. He said he was invited to join a prayer group, and at the first meeting he attended he had what he described as "a strong experience with God." He noted that he was a Roman Catholic at the time and his wife was Baptist. He made no bones about the fact that he was heavily into sex and alcohol during his heyday as a radio disc jockey. Both were easily available, he said, "But when I went to that prayer group and had that life-jolting experience, my whole life changed. I didn't know what it meant to be 'born again,' but that is exactly what happened to me."

Nash was not the only radio personality who later entered the ministry. One of the smoothest talking disc jockeys ever to sit before the WTMA microphone was

John B. Burwell. He left radio to become an Episcopal priest. Burwell's handsome features and easy smile, in addition to the sincerity in his voice, made him popular as a radio personality and subsequently served him even better when he became rector of the Episcopal Church of the Holy Cross on Sullivan's Island.

John O'Hare, graduate of the College of Charleston and announcer on WCSC, also left radio to become an Episcopal priest. Following his ordination he located in Wilmington, Delaware.

Adrian "Specs" Munzell was another radio announcer who went into the ministry and served as pastor of Presbyterian churches in Miami, Florida, Columbia, South Carolina, Covington, Louisiana, and Knoxville, Tennessee. He first came to Charleston in 1944 to work for WCSC radio. In 1974, he switched over to WCSC television and worked as a reporter, assignment editor and producer of that station's news programs. Widely known in the Charleston area as "Specs," he was given that nickname by Russ Long when the two of them worked together at WCSC. Munzell died in 1989, and his funeral was held in the First Baptist Church of Mount Pleasant, tribute perhaps to his universality in broadcasting and the ministry.

Wayne Long, who was news director at WTMA during the late 1960s and early 1970s, was one of the most aggressive radio newsmen ever to work in Charleston. He left radio to work for Congressman Mendel Davis.

Changing demographics of the Charleston area in the 1960s increased the "drive time" market for local radio stations. Urban flight and rapid development of suburban areas west of the Ashley and east of the Cooper meant that more and more time was spent in the automobile commuting to and from work and driving to suburban shopping centers. With heavy competition among radio stations for the "drive time" audience in the 1970s, traffic reports became a large factor in morning programming.

Two stations, WCSC and WKTM, had a fixed wing airplane and a helicopter respectively up in the sky over the Charleston area for several months in the spring of 1979, weather permitting. The airplane and the copter pilot would watch the traffic flow in and around the metropolitan area and tell people in their cars on the roads and highways which arteries were the least congested. The aerial surveillance of traffic was short-lived, however, because it proved prohibitively expensive. The aerial warfare between WCSC and WKTM for morning and afternoon listeners spawned some comic relief which, in and of itself, demonstrated the innovative lengths to which radio stations will go to capture and hold an audience. WWWZ came up with its own traffic reporter called the "Traffic Chicken." Motorists who were gnashing their teeth in frustration over traffic delays, or biting their nails while worrying about being late for work, began chuckling over the antics of the WWWZ Traffic Chicken. Ken Goodman, general manager of WWWZ, explained the origin of the idea for the "Traffic Chicken." He said, "We simply decided to do a humorous takeoff on all this serious traffic reporting by airplanes and helicopters. We had him report on traffic on the bike lanes at Charlestown Landing, or he might say he had eaten too many donuts this morning and couldn't get airborne. It was always something which we thought would give motorists a good laugh." The "Traffic Chicken" was in reality Gray Eubank, a WWWZ staff announcer who achieved a chipmunk sound for the Chicken's voice by recording his own voice on tape at four inches per second. He then played the tape at six inches per second to achieve the desired sound.

WCSC was the first radio station in Charleston to have a woman station manager, Gloria Wilson. Although not an on-air personality, Mrs. Wilson proved to be a highly skilled administrator. She was named station manager by John M. Rivers Jr., who succeeded his father as president

of WCSC in 1973. In selecting Mrs. Wilson, young Rivers proved to be the kind of innovative radio executive who kept WCSC at the forefront of broadcasting in Charleston. When given the reins as station manager in 1977, Mrs. Wilson honed WCSC to a fine point, insisting on nothing but the best in all areas of the station's operations. Mrs. Wilson later taught a media course at the College of Charleston, and she was instrumental in setting up the John M. Rivers Communications Museum at the College of Charleston.

The museum is in the Elliott House on the corner of George and St. Philip Streets on the College of Charleston campus in downtown Charleston. The exhibition rooms in the museum depict past eras of radio, television, the phonograph and cinematography and highlights the scientific achievements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which made today's "information age" possible. It is the most comprehensive display of the history of broadcasting in South Carolina, recognized by The Smithsonian and the Antique Wireless Association.

The John Rivers Communications Museum is named for the man who pioneered radio in Charleston. Opened originally in the WCSC television and radio complex at 485 East Bay Street, the museum was moved to its permanent location on the College of Charleston campus under an endowment from the Rivers family. Visitors to the museum can easily trace the development of radio broadcasting in Charleston and actually hear many of the early programs from radio's Golden Age. There is a fascinating variety of radio broadcasting equipment, including many of the earliest models of table-top and beautiful cabinet radios, some of which are still in splendid working condition. Visitors who are technically inclined are able to trace, step-by-step, the development of all the elements which made radio broadcasting possible and brought a whole new world of information and entertainment into millions of homes throughout the country.

# The Close of the Twentieth Century 1980-1999

Radio in Charleston has fought its way back from the gloomy days when television first came on the scene and sent radio advertising revenue plummeting. In the last two decades of the twentieth century an ever-increasing number of radio stations has touched off an on-going controversy over the quality of what is being sent out over the airwaves, both AM and FM.

Let's face it, radio is not as interesting as it once was. The intrigue, the romance, the headiness, the variety and the sheer satisfaction of listening to radio has long since vanished for many people. In 1930, when WCSC went on the air, there was a feeling of awe among the people of Charleston who bought radios in increasing numbers and set their dials to 1360. Voices and music came out of that "thing," and there were programs that made people laugh and cry. Even after Charleston got its second and third, and even its fourth radio station, radio still retained an aura of sophistication and magic that made the people who worked for these stations feel as though they were special. And they were. Their names were known and thousands of listeners felt that they knew them personally. Listeners knew what programs their favorite announcers were associated with and what time their programs came on the air.

None of that today. In a very real sense, the radio business is focused on one thing—the bottom line. Owners and operators of radio stations in Charleston pay lip service to programming, but programming today is little more than deciding which music or talk format to broadcast, especially for FM stations. There are so many radio stations and so many people working in radio that only a very few of their names are even recognized by people

throughout the community. All you have to do is work your way across the AM or FM dial to get an illustration of how homogenous radio has become. Nevertheless, there are some who argue to the contrary.

It is somewhat like professional baseball. When there were only eight teams in the American League and eight teams in the National League, baseball was truly the national pastime. Baseball fans knew who played second base for the Red Sox, or the Dodgers, or the Cubs, or the Athletics. They knew that Forbes field was in Pittsburgh, that Shibe Park was in Philadelphia, and that Fenway Park was in Boston. They were even quick to recognize the voices of the announcers who broadcast the games on radio: Mel Allen, Red Barber, Vin Scully, Russ Hodges and Ted Husing. Not so any more. There are so many teams in the National and American Leagues today that, sad to say, there are players whose names are not now and never will be known in Charleston or Savannah or Jacksonville or Macon.

The business of radio today is to make money. Like any business, of course, if you don't make money you go out of business. But there was a time when radio was more than just a business. Astute radio station owners like John M. Rivers, who had come from a banking background, knew how to make money with WCSC. But he also knew how to attract people to his spot on the dial. He gave WCSC listeners and advertisers something very worthwhile and he made money in the process.

In this final chapter of the history of radio in Charleston it is obvious that radio, while it has not lost its grip as a viable communications medium, is not the powerhouse it was a few decades ago. There are lots of reasons why: television, multiplicity of radio stations, audience segmentation, the internet, drastic changes in people's lifestyles, and so on.

Most stations today target an increasingly specific seg-

ment of the audience, and attempt to attract them throughout the broadcast day. *Narrow*-casting within each specialized format tends to create a sameness in content. Introduction of any diversity within the given format runs the risk of losing the targeted audience. The aim is for the audience to know exactly what they will get when they tune in a particular station at any hour of any day. It has been said by some knowledgeable radio people that variety and creative imagination in radio programming has all but vanished. Many of them blame segmentation, as radio stations address themselves only to narrow target audiences, thus producing a grayness which the poet Robert Browning observed "silvers everything." One longtime broadcaster in Charleston has made the comment that the radio audience is split in so many ways that it is impossible to advertise intelligently because it is difficult to guess where so much of the audience is. For the prospective advertiser, this can be a nightmare.

*William (Bill) Saunders*

WPAL for years had the African-American market all to itself because it was the only Charleston station to target that segment of the population, but the format naturally limited the station's audience. Brothers Broadcasting Corporation, headed by local attorney Arnold Goodstein and veteran radio executive Kenneth Goodman, bought WPAL from Speidel Broadcasting (which had bought it as WFAK from J.B. Fuqua and changed the call letters). Brothers Broadcasting converted WPAL to an all-Black format in the 1970s. William Saunders, a native of John's Island, came from a poor rural background to become head of WPAL after taking over the station from Brothers Broadcasting. Saunders was elected to the South Carolina Broadcasters Hall of Fame in 1993. In 1999,

*Charlie Lindsey an upstate native of Tigerville, known as "Charlie Bird," was the morning man on WEZL for 18 years. He also worked for WBUB and WQSN.*

WPAL's call letters and black-format changed to WSC, a news-talk station, to the disappointment of WPAL's long-time African-American audience.

In a sophisticated old-world community like Charleston, some people think it is ironic that radio station WEZL-FM, with its country music format, consistently ranks as one of the top rated stations. WEZL-FM, started out in 1970 with an easy listening format broadcasting from the Dock Street Theater studios formerly occupied by WTMA. Buddy Barton, formerly general manager of WCSC, bought the radio station and changed the format to country, using the station moniker "Weasel." Weasel's country format has managed to hold on to a large segment of the Charleston radio audience for two decades. Both Black and White listeners in the Charleston area seemed to like the music. It has been the good fortune of WEZL to have an aggressive sales and management staff, as well as a talented staff of announcers well versed in the field of country music.

In the 1980s, religious radio stations began to crop up in the Charleston market. WKCL, WYFH, WFCH, WJNI programmed preachers, gospel music, religious drama presentations and other forms of religious programming, but in spite of a loyal audience the ratings of those stations were always at the bottom when compared to all of the other Charleston radio stations.

Charleston also has a National Public Radio station, WSCI, which went on the air in 1973 as the third public radio station in South Carolina (today there are eight pub-


*When word got out that the South Carolina Public Radio Network was going to close down Charleston's Public Radio Station aboard the aircraft carrier* Yorktown, *public sentiment against the move was roused and the station was temporarily saved. About a year later it was closed, however.*

lic radio stations in the state). The fact that the station was home based aboard the Yorktown gave it the unique distinction of being the only radio station in America that was located aboard an aircraft carrier. In 1987, the South Carolina General Assembly sought $770,000 in budget cuts for the Educational Television Network, parent organization of the Public Radio Network. Those budget cuts would have led to the closing of WSCI. Supporters of WSCI in Charleston and throughout much of the Lowcountry rose to the occasion and protested the planned cuts. A group called Friends of WSCI rallied support and collected about 8,500 signatures on a petition

supporting the station. Later that year the General Assembly restored the funding for ETV. Locally produced programs were the staple of WSCI, augmented by programs from the National Public Radio Network. Eventually, the WSCI did lose its local studio in 1995 in an economy move. Before the station lost its home on the *Yorktown*, it operated with six paid full-time employees, one part timer and several volunteers. The last manager of that station was Marcia Warnock, daughter of Glenn P. Warnock, a former president of the South Carolina Broadcasters Association. Ms. Warnock is a graduate of the University of South Carolina School of Journalism. As Ms. Warnock noted in an interview with David Quick of *The Post and Courier*: "Our station provided listeners with programs of local and regional interest that no other radio station in Charleston provided. We liked to think of WSCI as the thinking person's radio station." Since 1995, locally pro-

*Marcia Warnock was the last manager of Public Radio Station WSCI when the station had its studios aboard the aircraft carrier* Yorktown *at Patriot's Point.*

duced programs are taped in Charleston, sent to Columbia and aired from there via local transmitters. It is a jury-rigged system, but it somehow seems to work. The local audience of public radio station WSCI seems to be satisfied with the arrangement. John M. Rivers Jr., son of the former owner of WCSC Inc., served three terms as a commissioner on the South Carolina Educational Radio and Television Commission, and is currently chairman of the Commission.

During the last two decades of the twentieth century, audience reaction to the sameness of commercials and music on most stations was reflected in the letters to the editor of local newspapers. The letter writers complained louder and louder, for instance, that not one commercial radio station ever played "good" music. In 1999, radio station WTMZ which had been the area's only all news station, abruptly switched from news to semi-classical and popular standard "oldies." WTMZ didn't have much to lose because its ratings were so low there was only one way to go and that was up. The switch in formats had a surprisingly exhilarating effect on writers of letters to the editor of *The Post and Courier*. They praised the management of WTMZ for fulfilling the needs of a large segment (that word again) of the local population and even went so far as to urge newspaper readers who listen to WTMZ to patronize the sponsors who advertise on that station.

Earlier in the decade, Ansley D. Cohen Jr., who had owned radio stations in Charleston, wrote a letter to the editor of *The News and Courier* in an attempt to explain why so-called "good" music stations have difficulty. He put the blame directly on the listening public. Here is the text of his letter, as it was published in *The News and Courier* on the morning of August 31, 1992:

> "All these people crying about not having any good music radio stations in Charleston have only themselves to blame.

Radio stations must have some revenue in order to sustain any kind of decent operation. This comes from advertisers willing to spend their money in the hopes of attracting some customers from the audience the radio station has managed to generate with its programming.

In simple terms, the potential of a radio station is measured in two basic ways: the audience response to commercial messages broadcast over the station, and listener levels reported in surveys.

Members of the public have failed to support a good music station in both of these two ways. They do not respond to the merchants' advertising either by purchasing advertised merchandise, or even telling merchants they hear his advertising on their favorite station. And they don't fill out survey diaries faithfully or honestly. The public can get whatever it wants, but it must do its part to get it.

I owned and operated two good music stations and saw my audience eroded away every time a new rock and roll station went on the air.

The public did not support my stations and gave survey diaries to their kids, who reported only their listening habits. They distorted audience levels and caused advertisers to place their schedules on stations showing the largest audiences. I maintained that one point on my stations was worth 10 on the rock and rollers because of the adult purchasing power.

Due to the adult composition of Hilton Head, the children do not influence ratings so drastically and the adults express their appreciation for the programming they enjoy.

To have a responsible radio station, you must have a responsible audience and since the Charleston market

is ten times larger than Hilton Head, there should be no difficulty in supporting one or more good music stations.

WLOW in Hilton Head is a good radio station, but it is not near as good as a good radio station in Charleston could be."

In today's radio broadcasting industry the local station is the basic unit, responsible for virtually all radio content. The local station attracts the audiences, it sells the advertising, and it earns the revenues. However, little content is generated locally, as program sources are increasingly national. More and more stations have adopted pre-programmed syndicated formats that feature non-stop music. Large syndication and format companies, primarily within the music industry, provide music in specific formats, supplemented by national news and features fed from networks and wire services. The development of satellites, automated broadcast technology and computers have helped stations streamline operations and control costs. Syndicated music formats are delivered simultaneously via satellite to all subscriber stations, which can tune in at any time of the day.

In the 1980s the FCC began to pull away from its tight regulation of the radio industry, allowing companies to own more stations and to sell them sooner. Deregulation has lead to what is sometimes referred to as a "casino" marketplace. In 1985 the FCC raised the number of stations a single company could own from 7 AM / 7 FM / 7 TV to 12/12/12. In 1987 it reduced the time a company was required to maintain ownership from three years to one. This step toward deregulation led to a rush of acquisitions and mergers, and new stations going on air, and above all rapid turnover of stations. New owners, looking for quick profits, often switch formats with little advance notice, causing confusion among the listening audience.

With rapid turnover of ownership, mergers and acquisitions, the resulting changes in call letters and formats make it almost impossible to accurately reconstruct the specific history of any given broadcast frequency over the past 15-20 years. Even without ownership turnover, most radio stations in Charleston change their broadcast format on average every five to ten years. There are exceptions, to be sure. WEZL-FM has successfully stuck with its country music format for over twenty years.

Another phenomenon in radio today is ownership of multiple stations in the broadcast area by a single parent company or syndicate. Passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 further loosened federal control of the industry. This act allowed a single company to own an unlimited number of stations throughout the nation, and to exceed the previous four-station-per-market maximum. For instance, Clear Channel Communications, Inc., headquartered in San Antonio, Texas, operates 830 radio and 19 television stations in the United States, and has equity interest in more than 240 radio stations internationally. In early 1999, Clear Channel Communications, Inc. acquired Charleston FM stations WEZL, WALC, WRFQ and WXLY from Jacor Communications, Inc. It subsequently acquired also WSSP and WSCC. According to Ron Raybourne, general manager of Clear Channel's Mount Pleasant operation, it is computerization which allows all six stations, with six different formats, to be run out of Clear Channel's single local studio. The commercial strength of single ownership of multiple stations is that the company can offer more marketing solutions to advertisers.

*Ron Raybourne*

According to the Radio Advertising Bureau, Charleston radio revenues grew almost 12 percent in 1999. Todd

Metz, general manager Citadel Communication's West Ashley studio, attributes the revenue growth to clustering. Citadel Communications, based in Las Vegas, operates eight local stations, including five FM stations (WSSX, WSUY, WMGL, WWWZ, and WNKT) and three AM stations (WTMZ, WTMA, WXTC). Metz maintains that clustering will bring greater stability to the local radio industry, with fewer rapid changeovers in ownership and formats.

What about public service? It is contended by many people in the community that radio stations are no longer concerned with public service because public service announcements don't bring in money. When the Federal Communications Commission got out of the business of riding herd on radio stations, broadcasters were absolved from public service responsibility and community interest, even basic news. A few lines read directly out of *The Post and Courier* was enough, or nothing at all. Radio stations were left entirely free to respond to economic currents in the market place with no federal requirement for public service. Still, some stations in Charleston devote quite a bit of air time to free public service announcements, mostly for non-profit organizations. An oft-heard complaint, however, is that most public service announcements are aired in the wee hours of the morning when most of the radio audience is asleep, or at other times of the day and night when listenership is minimal.

With so many radio stations in Charleston claiming to be number one, meaning number one with *their segment* of the audience, it makes Harry Weaver's claim that his station was number two because "all the rest say they are number one" sound all the more valid. Ratings are a product of a rating company called Arbitron. There are so many categories in the Arbitron book (persons 25 to 54, women 25 to 54, persons 12+) that almost any station can find one in which they have improved their standing. Ratings are recorded by giving households "diary" forms

on which they write down their listening habits. A more accurate system would monitor how many stations a person actually listened to and for how long. For some stations, many of the demographic categories just are not important. An urban pop music station, for example, looks only at the 18 to 34 demographic that makes up that station's audience. They are not concerned with low ratings in 25 to 54 demographic group as long as they are number one with their target audience, and they can then show prospective advertisers that Arbitron confirms their popularity with that group.

The last two decades of the twentieth century have seen more changes in radio broadcasting, not the least of which has been the introduction of twelve new stations (11 new FM stations and one new AM station).

In the early 1980s, radio stations in Charleston were not content taking a back seat to television and began an aggressive promotion to attract listeners. They started to advertise themselves on television, and they also began to publish ads in the Charleston newspapers. Radio station WGCA, owned by C. Edward Little, former president of the Mutual Radio Network and also former owner of the Charleston Royals baseball franchise in the Class A South Atlantic League, purchased ad space in the local newspaper to call attention to his radio station. The ad was published at the bottom of the television program schedule: "GCA-AM radio 1450. Intelligent adult radio, 24 hours a day. Start your day with Charlie Boswell, 6 to 10 a.m." Soon after that, radio station advertising was showing up on billboards, on TV stations and in the newspapers. That simple ad was a typical Ed Little move. The man was a promotional genius, the like of which had not been seen in Charleston for years. He took over a radio station that had sunk to the lowest ranks in the ratings and pushed it to a commanding position in the market. Charlestonians had already seen evidence of Little's expertise in the field


*C. Edward Little, former president of the Mutual Radio Network, and wife Totsie outside their radio station.*

of promotion when he took over a long dead South Atlantic League baseball franchise and turned it into a profit making operation. His Charleston Royal baseball team, affiliated with the Kansas City Royals, was the hottest sports ticket in Charleston.

Little bought radio station WQSN for $500,000 and changed the call letters to WGCA. He had wanted to change the WQSN call letters to WCEL to match his initials, but the management of radio station WEZL-FM protested to the FCC, contending that the call letters WCEL would sound too much like WEZL. So, Little changed the station's call letters to WGCA (for Greater Charleston Area). That station was dying on the vine, but under Little's guidance it blossomed into a formidable competitor for all the other stations in the Charleston market.

After about three years of ownership, Little decided to sell WGCA to James O'Grady, a former New York City radio station sales representative. O'Grady dispatched his son Kevin and daughter-in-law Susan to Charleston to operate the station. The station did not prosper under the O'Grady's management, and their schedule of payments to Little became sporadic. A further bit of trouble for the O'Gradys cropped up when their accountant discovered that one of their employees had been stealing money from them. The employee was tried, convicted, and went to jail.

By this time, the O'Gradys had had enough and so, without informing Little, they sold the station to a man named Silverman. Little was incensed, because he said that the O'Gradys had agreed to pay him in full if the O'Gradys sold the station to another owner. Little found out about the sale only when his FCC attorney informed him of it. Silverman brought in C.J. Jones, who had worked at WCSC, to manage the radio station. Little contacted Jones and who told him that

Silverman would continue to make the payments. After one payment, however, Jones informed Little that Silverman no longer assumed responsibility to make payments. He told Little that he would have to get his money directly from the O'Gradys. That caused Little to blow a fuse. Little hired Charleston attorney Andrew Epting to go after Jones and Silverman to get the money that was owed him. It took eight months for the case to get to court. At a meeting in the lawyer's office before the trial, Little said Jones boasted that Little was going to lose everything. He couldn't have been more wrong. When the trial began, the O'Gradys testified that Jones had told them Silverman would pay Little; Silverman testified that Jones had made false statements. In the end, Little won the suit and wound up with what he said was "two or three times more money than I expected to get."

A major development in radio in Charleston, and in the nation, in the last two decades has been talk radio. Talk radio brought back radio personalities, and it put music in a back seat, if there was any music at all. It seemed Charleston audiences were growing weary of nothing but music on the radio. They wanted variety, and alert radio management recognized this trend. The pervading radio philosophy in Charleston became "try anything, and if it works go with it, because you can never tell what the public might like."

WOKE was the first station to break the music-mold, although WOKE had adhered to old-time radio programming more than any other station in Charleston. WOKE began to resurrect old radio broadcasts from the 1940s and 1950s which had been preserved on records and tapes. Such programming enjoyed a period of short lived popularity. WOKE also doggedly stuck to its heavy schedule of sports, broadcasting play-by-play accounts of University of South Carolina and Clemson football and basketball games. The station even picked up network feeds of

games played by the University of Alabama, Tennessee and Notre Dame. The audience for these games was extremely limited. WOKE had the longest running telephone scoreboard show of any in Charleston. It was on the air each Saturday afternoon during football season for more than 30 years. Harry Weaver, the station owner, was the host for the show, of which he was immensely proud.

Viewed in any light, the last decades of the twentieth century have seen the resurgence of AM radio, although almost three quarters of listening still occurs on the FM dial. One name stands out as the principal reason for the increased success of AM radio. Rush Limbaugh burst upon the AM radio scene in the late 1980s and the uphill climb of AM started. Most of the stations that initially signed with Limbaugh, like Charleston's WTMA, were struggling AM stations. Today, those stations are financially successful because of the listening audience Limbaugh commands. By 1995 Limbaugh had more than 20 million daily listeners, more than any other radio personality since the golden days of radio.

WTMA owner William Dudley decided, in June 1989, to approve a suggestion by Hugh Jett, his WTMA manager, to convert WTMA from a country music format to an all-talk format. Note the date that WTMA went to the all-talk format—July 1, 1989. Less than three months later, Hurricane Hugo struck Charleston and WTMA emerged as the South Carolina Lowcountry's most reliable voice for desperately needed information during those dreadful and uncertain days which followed the most destructive hurricane to hit Charleston in the twentieth century.

Even prior to Hurricane Hugo, events had moved swiftly to push WTMA, with its all-talk format, up in the ratings. Dudley enlisted the aid of his friend William Lucas, who had retired as general manager of television station WCIV, to curry favor with ABC executives in New York and acquire such network talent as Rush Limbaugh,

Michael Jackson, Dr. Susan Forward and Dr. Dean Edell. Prior to coming to Charleston, Lucas had worked with ABC in New York and was, therefore, able to put Dudley in touch with the top-level decision makers at ABC. Limbaugh, incidentally, was just out of the starting gate in 1989 and virtually unknown.

Taking their cue from Limbaugh, many stations began to develop their own local talk show hosts who dealt with local and national issues, giving their listeners an opportunity to express their views on such subjects as politics, education, medical affairs, transportation, the environment and a host of other sometimes touchy subjects. Once the listener became a major component of programming, as is the case on WTMA in Charleston, talk radio was on solid ground. It became what might be considered the conscience of America. It was the electronic town meeting where all kinds of opinions could be voiced and heard widely. This made talk radio more interesting and drove the format's success.

Long before Limbaugh, however, WCSC had ventured into the field of talk radio. It provided opportunities for listeners to air their views on a variety of subjects with an early evening program called "Phone Forum" which went on the air in 1952. The program became a mainstay of the WCSC schedule and was hosted by such staff announcers as Ken Klyce, Bob Smith, Phil Sutterfield, Carol Godwin, Harve Jacobs and others. "Phone Forum" often touched off controversy as listeners telephoned the radio station to complain about or defend such topics as Sunday Blue Laws, traffic congestion, schools, restaurants, mosquito control, city government, state government, the odor of the West Virginia Pulp and Paper Company mill, and a new James Island Bridge, which was talked about for at least ten years before it was started. "Phone Forum" had a vast Low Country audience and much of the everyday conversation heard in the Charleston area was related to

some subject which had been discussed on "Phone Forum" the previous evening.

Listeners to "Phone Forum" sometimes misunderstood or misinterpreted what was being talked about by the host of the show. On one such occasion, the subject under discussion was the "Blue Laws" which prohibited certain business establishments from doing business on Sunday. There were strong feelings, both pro and con, about the Blue Laws and callers were letting their feelings be known with vehemence. The host was doing his best to keep things from getting out of hand. He got some unexpected, and quite comical, help when a call came in from a listener who swerved completely off the subject. Generally incensed over restrictive laws of all kinds, the caller was particularly irate over a law, recently enacted by the South Carolina General Assembly, which required all motorcycle riders to wear helmets. He characterized the law as "just another infringement on individual liberties." The helmet law, like the Blue Laws, had been hotly debated in the legislature and feelings were strong both for and against. The host thanked the caller who had protested the helmet law, then the next caller really turned things topsy turvy and left the host completely at a loss for words. The caller said he had been listening to the show since it started, and he thought it was totally ridiculous for the state to pass a law requiring motorcycle riders to wear blue helmets on Sunday. When the host, almost breaking up with laughter, tried to explain to the caller that there was no connection between the Sunday Blue Laws and the law requiring riders to wear helmets, the caller said, "Well, it's just typical of the kind of nonsense that's coming out of Columbia these days." As "Phone Forum" waned in popularity during the mid-1970s, WCSC shifted it to its Sunday morning lineup. There it died.

To say that "Phone Forum" was the model for and forerunner of today's radio talk shows, at least in

Charleston, would not be understating the case. Like so many other radio programs that capture the fancy of an audience and enjoy a high degree of success for a time, however, "Phone Forum" eventually seemed hum-drum and went the way of Major Bowe's "Amateur Hour" and other programs which, for a time, rose to unprecedented heights of popularity with advertisers and audiences alike. The rebirth of radio talk shows in the 1990s is proof enough, however, that like wide neckties and mini-skirts a good idea for a radio program will resurface again and again, with new wrinkles of course, and once again attract enthusiastic audience support.

People in radio are, for the most part and with notable exceptions, transitory. It is not at all unusual to find people at radio station Y, for instance, who have also worked for stations X, Z, A, B, and R, all in Charleston.

Stories abound among radio people in Charleston about faux pas that occur on the air and announcers who walk away from them with reddened faces. Bill Sharpe is undoubtedly best known in the South Carolina Low-country because of his work for WCSC-TV, Channel 5. But Sharpe, like so many others in television, got his start on the radio. In the early 1990s, although well established in television, Sharpe took on a radio talk show on WTMA when that station was soaring with impressive ratings because talk had become the big thing in radio and WTMA was Charleston's talk station. Sharpe hosted the radio show in addition to his regular schedule as the news co-anchor for WCSC-TV newscasts at 6 and 11 p.m. Sharpe was good at talk radio. Lots of people called him, probably because they knew him from television, and he handled the show with aplomb. Everything was going along just fine until one day a caller started complaining about the way he had been treated in the service department of the automobile dealership where he had purchased a car. Good host that he was, Sharpe sympathized

*Bill Sharpe, during the last two decades of the twentieth century, was the best known TV anchorman in Charleston. Like many in TV, he started out in radio with WCSC.*

with the caller. But he got carried away—so far away, in fact, that he started making derogatory remarks about automobile dealerships in general, and in particular the one (by name) which had not played fair with his caller. He had doomed himself as a talk show host on WTMA, which had several car dealerships among its advertisers. Automobile dealers began calling WTMA and threatened to cancel their advertising if Sharpe was not given the boot. Given the boot he was, although the station tried to make it sound like a routine schedule change. It was never said that the station knuckled under to the dealers. The heat was not off just because WTMA canceled Sharpe as talk show host. Automobile dealers were still hot under the collar because of what Sharpe had said about them, especially the dealership which had been the brunt of his critical remarks. They turned their ire toward WCSC-TV to demand action against Sharpe as news anchor, again with the implied threat that they would take their advertising elsewhere. Only WCSC's top level management officers know how the issue was finally resolved, and they will not talk about it. However, Bill Sharpe was retained in his job as the co-anchor of WCSC-TV's "Live Five News" at 6 and 11 p.m., and that news program is consistently rated as the number-one television news program in the South Carolina Lowcountry.

One sports announcer who ran into some rough spots that caused him to get out of the sports business was John McNeil. His real name was John Magliola. In the early 1990s when the College of Charleston Cougars, under Coach John Kresse, was the hottest basketball team in South Carolina, McNeil was the play-by-play announcer for Cougar games. He was not well attuned to the fast paced style of play for which the Cougars were noted and his accounts of the game frequently did not keep pace with the action on the floor. Although his enthusiasm and his pithy comments helped, it soon became obvious that

announcing basketball games was not really his cup of tea. When a sports writer for *The Post and Courier* wrote a scathing criticism of the way McNeil announced the game, officials at the College met with him and told him they were going to get someone else to broadcast the games.

A young man named Gil Kirkman came to Charleston to seek his fortune in the radio business in 1981. A native of Charlotte, North Carolina, Kirkman grew up in Atlanta. He first got interested in sports when he worked as a spotter for the play-by-play announcer who did the Georgia Tech football games. Kirkman came to Charleston from Jacksonville, Florida, and married the daughter of Art Baker, who was the head football coach at The Citadel. For a time, he did play-by-play broadcasts of the Charleston Sally League baseball games at College Park. But his primary interest was in sales and his ambition was to own a Charleston radio station. When Harry Weaver retired and sold station WOKE, Kirkman bought it and changed the call letters to WQSC. He later acquired WQNT (which had been WUSN, WQSN, WGCA and WSSP before Kirkman bought it). He put heavy emphasis on sports, using both stations as outlets for broadcasts of baseball, football, basketball and hockey. By the end of 1999, Kirkman had cornered the sports broadcasting market in Charleston. He had come a long way from a sportscaster to the owner of two sports-oriented AM radio stations which broadcast the games of such teams as The Citadel Bulldogs, Atlanta Braves and South Carolina Stingrays. Kirkman points with pride to the fact the he was the first person to broadcast a Citadel baseball game and one of his stations, WQNT, was the first in South Carolina to broadcast the hockey games of the South Carolina Stingrays. He says he made a conscious decision to focus on sports "because no other station in Charleston was doing just that." One of his employees, Bobby Hartin,

*Dan Moon is easily one of the best known radio personalities of all time in Charleston. His talk show on WTMA is carefully monitored by community leaders.*

was turned loose to do a no-holds barred talk show in the afternoon and it easily became the premier local radio sports show. Hartin's repartee is sharp. He is knowledgeable about sports but will unashamedly admit that he knows nothing at all about women's field hockey. His wit and his fast-paced conversational exchanges with callers has built WQNT a sizeable and loyal audience among young adult men and women.

Unlike the earlier days of radio, there are few really dominant local radio personalities in Charleston in the 1990s. Dan Moon is unquestionably the best known. He does the morning show on WTMA and follows that with a controversial talk show that helps to keep WTMA highly rated among Charleston stations. Before moving to WTMA, Moon worked for other radio stations in Charleston, Columbia, and Beaufort and for a while worked in television on WCSC-TV and WCBD-TV. He also worked as a farm equipment salesman and cable television salesman in Summerville. He frequently makes speeches to civic and church groups, and he lectures at Charleston Southern University on the subject of radio broadcasting. Moon is often referred to as Charleston's version of Rush Limbaugh. Moon emerged as somewhat of a folk hero during the awful aftermath of Hurricane Hugo in September 1989. WTMA had just converted to a news/talk format, with Moon as host of a local phone in talk show on July 1, 1989. The night the hurricane struck, most Charleston radio stations were literally blown off the air. Largely because of the Herculean efforts of engineer Bruce Roberts, radio station WTMA managed to stay on the air when every other station except WPAL went down. Moon was on the air all day, every day for nearly a week after the destructive storm disrupted the lives of so many people in the South Carolina Lowcountry. WXTC-FM was one of the stations that returned to the air early after the hurricane, simulcasting with WCSC-TV. As other

radio stations got back on the air, they, too, provided much needed information for people without out power, water and other necessities. Most callers were desperate for information about when the electricity and phone service would be restored, and where they could obtain ice, a hot meal, batteries, generators, water and other things. When he wasn't on the air, Moon was on the phone gathering vital information to pass along to the thousands of people who were listening to—and depending on—Dan Moon and station WTMA for the information they needed. Moon became a vital link between those who had services to provide and those who had needs, or knew of others in need. It would not be incorrect to say that in a comparatively brief period of about two weeks, Moon became the best known radio personalty in the Lowcountry, as far out as WTMA's signal could reach. Nor did the man's popularity wane. In subsequent years, *The News and Courier* conducted polls among its readers, in which they were asked to name the number one radio personality in Charleston. In each poll, Moon stood out head and shoulders over other reasonably well known Charleston radio personalities. As the twentieth century drew to a close, Moon's distinctive voice and his cordiality with callers to his morning talk show still gave him the kind of on-the-street recognition that no other Charleston radio personality could match.

Lona Ann Lacour grew up with radio in Charleston as the twentieth century was drawing to a close. She had only heard some of the old timers talk about radio they way it was in its heyday. Near the end of 1999, however, Ms. Lacour talks somewhat nostalgically about radio in the 1980s as though those were the good old days. She started her career quite by accident when she was asked to go to St. George and do the voice-over for a commercial for Millie Lewis' Modeling Studio. She did the voice-over at a new radio station, WDWQ, which later became

*Lona Ann Lacour, one of the best known female disc jockeys in the history of Charleston radio, and her son Will at home in North Charleston. When this photo was taken, she was working for WXLY-FM, which was billed as Charleston's oldies station.*

WQIZ and then later became WNKT. The radio bug had bitten her. She was told that her voice had a strong and positive sound and that it exuded energy. She began working as a disc jockey part time at WKTM in 1983, and then was offered a full-time position with that station in 1984, working from 7 p.m. to midnight and loving every minute. This local girl made a career as a radio personality and she did it her way. She stayed positive. She learned from seasoned professionals and made the best of every bit of experience she gained through the years. She worked with WXLY, and for ten years was a fixture on WAVF. With a voice that to this day abounds with energy and enthusiasm, she enjoys the attention of audiences that range in age from 15 to 40.

During radio salad days in Charleston it would have been unheard of for an announcer to expound his or her own political views on the air. Today, however, it is not at all unusual for young announcers, some of whom may never have voted in a presidential election, to make blatantly derisive or complimentary remarks about issues and politicians they favor. Liberal, conservative or moderate. It doesn't matter. The result, of course is that the announcers who engage in such partisanship make both friends and enemies not only for themselves but also for their

radio stations. The wonder is that the owners or station managers allow such a practice to continue. In all likelihood it is because the announcers are expressing the views of the radio station's management. After all, stations are free within broad limits to do what they want to do. They are in business to make money, and if they do so they are considered successful.

A young announcer named Michael Graham carried on a morning and afternoon diatribe on AM station WSC, but his impact had been minimal as the twentieth century closed down. His "Live, Loud and Local" show often included rather tasteless name calling. For example he often fulminated against Charleston's daily newspaper, *The Post and Courier,* which he called "The Post and Urinal." Obviously given the green light by station management to intimidate and aggravate his audience, his objective seemed to be to stir controversy. Although native South Carolinian, he seemed to enjoy putting down the state and belittling its people. Graham also took shots at State Representative John Graham Altman and State Senators Glen McConnell and Arthur Ravenel over the issue of whether or not the Confederate flag should fly atop the state capitol building. His style was indicative of the reason why radio stations no longer enjoy the kind of universal popularity they once did. It has been said that he was trying to format a latter-day version of shock radio, but his version might be called infuriating radio or at least tasteless radio. Infuriating to many it may be, but someone must be listening or advertisers would not be paying for ads on the program. Perhaps it is all part of the versatility and magic of radio, a medium from which emanates the good, the bad and the ugly, just as long as it makes money.

Like most other competitive businesses, radio has had it share of legal troubles in Charleston. In October, 1992, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored

People (NAACP) claimed victory over Millcom, Inc., a company which had purchased radio station WMGL, promoted as Jazz 101.7. The station was accused of replacing five top black employees with whites to please advertisers or a potential buyer. State NAACP Executive Director Nelson B. Rivers III said the case "should warn station owners that they can't use a music format change as an excuse for discrimination." Rivers commended the Charleston branch of the NAACP for helping the five men get undisclosed monetary settlements for lost wages and "for bringing fairness to the broadcasting industry in Charleston."

As you turn the radio dial across the AM frequencies today, even late at night, there is quite a bit of space between the stations broadcasting. On the contrary, there is very little space on the dial between the FM stations, all of which mostly play music. Radio listeners used to identify which station they were tuned to by the kind of music being played. That became more difficult to do in the 1990s, however, because so many of the growing number of stations adopted similar formats.

Commercials, commercials, commercials! Music, music, music! Commercials and music are seemingly what radio is all about in Charleston as the twentieth century draws to a close. One or two stations have enjoyed a period of profitability with an all-talk format, but that seems to be losing its popularity with audiences. The only other alternative is Christian radio stations, of which there are three or four in the Charleston area.

Gone are the days when a radio station aired programs designed to interest a wide spectrum of listeners, at least some of the time during the time they were on the air. FM stations now design their music formats to appeal to one particular age and/or economic group, from high school students to their grandparents. They play the same kind of music throughout the day and night. Their advertisers zero

in on these formats because they are in businesses that get most of their customers from the small segment of the population that likes the kind of music the station plays.

Such an idea would have been considered preposterous by radio station operators in the early days of radio in Charleston. In the 1930s and 1940s they programmed their stations to appeal to the widest cross section of the Charleston area population. They aired a variety and range of programs to appeal to everyone, at least some of the time, and their success was well documented. Since then, however, radio in Charleston has moved through many evolutions and it is certain to continue this movement into the twenty-first century.

In one of the boldest experiments of the last two decades of the twentieth century, David Low, who had come to Charleston to manage television station WTAT, the area's first ultra high frequency (UHF) television station took over radio station WUJM. He set the AM station up as an all news operation. Low, who had attended The Citadel during his undergraduate years, did a year and a half of research before making his move and went on the air with his all-news format in February of 1992. During the research period, he heard both encouraging and discouraging comments about the possibility of succeeding with a radio station that broadcast nothing but news. "Charleston is *different*" was a remark he remembers having heard quite a few times from naysayers. "We went on the air with 16 or 17 advertisers locked in," Low said, "but as time went by I found out that Charleston really *was* different. The station lasted one year and one month before we had to call it quits because of a lack of advertiser support. We gave it our best shot, but as it turned out Charleston wasn't ready for an all-news radio station. Maybe it never will be. Charleston really *is* different."

The very fact that so many radio stations exist in the Charleston area today is adequate testimony to the viabil-

ity and adaptability of the medium. Like any other business, a radio station is either successful and makes money, or it goes out of business. Originally a radio station was considered a permanent fixture. As time passed, however, with seemingly increasing frequency stations were sold, call letters and formats changed. The broadcast frequency remained constant, but the content of the broadcast might be entirely different. It might appear, therefore, that the radio business is too precarious to venture into. Not so. Entrepreneurial individuals, even now, are standing in line to get licenses from the Federal Communications Commission to crank up new radio stations in Charleston and other communities throughout the country. The FCC issued three new construction permits for radio frequencies in the Charleston area in 1999. The owners have their own ideas about how to achieve success in the radio business and their ideas just might move radio to new heights and earn them a lot of money. On the other hand, they might lose a lot of money and wind up sorry that they got into radio. It is a gamble because radio stations depend totally on public acceptance, and the public, as most radio station owners know very well, is fickle.

Music, news, sports. Syndicate owned, and with content supplied primarily by syndication. That's radio today. It is no longer, as it once was "the theater of the mind." During the 1930s and 1940s, the people of Charleston gathered around their radios and were captivated by the programs that came over the airwaves. To them, and to millions of other Americans, Ma Perkins was a real person. So was Sam Spade, the detective. They felt kindly toward Cecil B. DeMille, host of the Lux Radio Theater. They heard the voices of FBI agents chasing America's most wanted criminals on the program called "Gang Busters" and they saw the action in their own minds. They laughed heartily at the antics of Fibber McGee and Molly. They were awed by Edward R. Murrow's reports

from London during World War II. When he said "This is London," nobody left their radio. People even felt kindly to the advertisers on the "theater of the mind". Many Charlestonians still remember radio ads for Rodenberg's Supermarkets, for Seigling Music House and Efird's Department Store, as well as Walgreen's Drug Store, Legerton's Book Store, for West End, Cream Crest and Rephan Dairy, for Bootles Barbecue, the Fork Restaurant, Avondale Pharmacy, and the Bandbox. Radio played a significant role in the success of such businesses as Edward's Five and Ten Cent Store, Silver's, Colonial Motors, Fort Sumter Chevrolet, Taylor's Men's Store, Blatz and Ruppert Beer, Maxwell Brothers and Hall Furniture Store. They remember ads for the Kaybee Store, Jitney Jungle, Old Fitzgerald Bourbon, Big Star Supermarkets and the Carolina Power Company.

There are still Charlestonians who remember when WCSC went on the air. There are not many of them but there are a few. They have seen the staying power of radio, albeit with changes, over the decades since 1930. Variety has been a key element in the success and staying power of radio in Charleston, as well as in hundreds of other cities across the United States. In the nation's largest cities, the number of newspapers declined during the last half of the twentieth century while the number of radio stations in those same cities increased. And, it should be noted that this proliferation of radio stations occurred despite the ever-increasing popularity of television. Indeed, radio, of all the components of what has become known collectively as the media, can be characterized as the phoenix among them. Like that mythical bird of ancient Egyptian history, which plunges into a funeral pyre only to rise from the smoke and ashes in a more beautiful state, radio continues to defy the prophets of doom who have declared it dead or obsolete so many

times. Radio keeps reinventing itself with innovative ways to attract listeners and advertisers who want to get their message to those listeners. Change is constant in the radio business — change of ownership, change of management, change of technology, change of program format, change of call letters, change of dial location, change of sales techniques and on and on ad infinitum.

And of course, change of on-air personalities who enjoy a degree of celebrity status and eventually realize an age-old truth — that fame is fleeting. Very few of them have had the staying power of Charlie Hall. The history of radio in Charleston is filled with names of men and a few women who caught the brass ring of popularity and rode the merry-go-round of fame for a time before they realized that they had reached the peak of their earning power in the market and would have to move to greener pastures in order to enhance their career aspirations and make more money — or switch to another field entirely. The very few who have remained in Charleston and reached their peak on local radio sooner or later, like Charlie Hall, move to television if their looks are commensurate with the needs of that medium.

As radio stations have proliferated in recent decades, the airwaves have been diluted with a variety of voices that seem far below the standards set by professional announcers who predominated in radio before television came on the scene. Some veteran radio announcers have drawn a parallel between radio and major league baseball to illustrate how the talent level declined when the major leagues began to expand far beyond the eight teams of the National League and the eight teams of the American League. They point out that there are players in the big leagues today who could not possibly have made it when there were only 16 major league teams. It seems a reasonable comparison.

In the 1990s, radio no longer prompts the listener

involvement of the "theater of the mind," nor do the voices on radio command the attention they once did. The radio may be on, indeed may be on all day, but few are listening as a primary activity. The music/information plays as background to the main activity of the moment, from waking in the morning to the clock radio, eating, on the go in the car and through the day, and finally sending the listener to sleep with a timed shut off switch.

Walterboro native Miles Crosby, who is sometimes called Uncle Miles by listeners to WAVF, the station known as Wave, takes gentle issue with those who would argue that radio had lost some of its pungency and rollicking good fun as the twentieth century drew to a close. Crosby got his start on the air with WALD, Walterboro's pioneer radio station. It was a 250-watt operation that adequately covered Colleton County. Though he was only 17 years old, he already had what promised to be a smooth, resonant voice. He worked on that voice and took every opportunity that came along to get more time on the air. He was hooked on radio.

"I feel just as enthusiastic about radio and the remarkable people with whom I work today as I did when I first broke in at WALD," the 40-year-old Crosby told the author, who was striving to find some elements in the atmosphere of radio today that could be linked to the past. Crosby provided good insights into what goes on at radio stations in Charleston today. He moved from WALD in Walterboro to Charleston and got his first job "up the road," as he put it, in 1978. By 1987, he had worked at WKTM, WQSN, WKQB, WXLY before moving over to WAVF. Why so many moves? Crosby smiled at the question. After a long pause he said, "Opportunity to do new and different stuff. Oh, yeah, and a little more money. Not much." Then he continued, "Radio is fun. You get to know people and they get to know you. Boy, do they get to know you. I was stopped for speeding by a highway

patrolman and when he asked to see my driver's license and registration, he looked at them and leaned down and looked at me. He said 'Uncle Miles, your registration expired two days ago. I'm gonna let you go if you promise me you'll get that registration renewed today.' "

Since joining WAVF, Crosby has expanded his horizons significantly. He is easily recognized by TV viewers as the weather reporter who frequently appears on a Charleston TV station. "But radio is my first love. TV is fun, but if I had to make a choice between the two I would take radio without a doubt. In radio, you have more control of what you are doing. The changing technology has been challenging but my generation has captured, or perhaps retained, that feeling for radio that previous generations of people who worked in radio had. They were always adapting to new ideas and new technology. We're doing the same thing today. We still have characters in our midst who are a little off the wall. There are still pranks played on and off the air. If I said it earlier, I'll say it again. Working for a radio station can be a lot of fun. Radio has changed with society. You hear things on radio today that would not have been tolerated a few years ago, and I have to admit some of it is not in the best of taste. Trouble is too many people don't care about taste."

Crosby has continued to hone his radio persona. The voice is smoother and more resonant today than ever. His voice has been heard on more than 18 radio stations in different parts of the country because he does promotion spots and commercials for a radio syndicate. He was the first disc jockey to play music by Hootie and the Blowfish on a commercial radio station — WAVF. That rock group went on to achieve national fame. Crosby said, "When we started playing stuff by Hootie and the Blowfish, listeners flocked to WAVF. Man, that was a score. Everybody at the station felt we had smashed a barrier. We had. We played

the music of a local group on the radio. Nobody had done that before. See what I mean about enjoying radio? Hootie and the Blowfish were signed by Atlantic Records and the rest, as is well noted, is history."

Recalling many of the radio people he has known and worked with over the years, Crosby chuckled, "I'm one of the few people in radio who uses his real name." When asked why that is, he said, "It might have something to do with a desire to preserve privacy, or it might be that some people think they would be more successful with a different name. Of course," he smiled, "There might be some deep-seated psychological reason for such a phenomenon."

When Crosby started in radio at WALD, announcers manipulated the knobs and switches on the control board in a radio studio. He recalls cuing up 45 rpm records on a turntable beside the control board and turning up the sound of the music. Today, he works with a computer in the control room and compact discs and cued up tape carts that contain music, station promotions, commercials, sound effects and all kinds of other material. "I never have been intimidated by technology," he said, adding, "I like change and the challenge of doing something new and different."

Listening to Crosby talk, one couldn't help but feel that he and his kind are an extension of the early pioneers of radio in Charleston. Yes, there are a lot more radio stations and a lot more people working in radio today. And yes, there are some radical differences in radio today when compared to the days when there were only two radio stations in Charleston, or maybe three or four or even five. Lots more radio stations today and lots more technology and lots more people and — perhaps most important — lots more competition.

In what has to be considered a classic example of the continued effectiveness of radio, when it is done profes-

sionally and expertly by people who know how to paint vivid pictures with words in the minds of listeners, a column by *Post and Courier* Executive Sports Editor Ken Burger in the February 21, 2000 edition of that newspaper says it all. In that column, under a headline which read "Sunday Drive: Doing Daytona On The Radio," Burger wrote:

> "As Mark Martin and Dale Jarrett barrel into turn two at Daytona International Speedway, I lean in to hear Eli Gold's split-second explanation of what's going on between the two drivers.
>
> Then, without hesitation, his voice is automatically replaced with flawless dialogue from Allen Bestwick who follows the leaders down the backstretch with a continuous call before they are picked up by Barney Hall who brings them back around to the start-finish line.
>
> So seamless is the commentary, you think these guys are riding shotgun in the race cars as they scream around the 2.5-mile race track Sunday afternoon. Instead, they are passing the action around the track like a baton in a verbal relay race.
>
> Even the guys down in the pits, Jim Phillips, Marty Snyder and Winston Kelly, give the broadcast that extra touch of reality as they bring immediacy to the travails of the drivers and crews.
>
> 'The car really got tight and we lost the lead draft,' a crew chief screams to be heard above the whine of engines and the whirring sounds of lug nut guns down in the pits. 'We gotta do something to get back into this dadgum race.'
>
> Television, of course, has taken over NASCAR racing as well as every other sport on the planet. And because of this image overload, we may be losing our ability to visualize with our imagination.
>
> But as you slide behind the wheel and switch on

the radio, you're right in the middle of the pack. That's what radio does. It puts a unique demand on your psyche. It makes your mind's eye squint to see between the lines of the obvious.

'Dale Earnhardt is up on the high banking, trying to get by Mike Skinner as they nose down into the turn and come out single file behind the leaders,' says Gold in a tone that makes you feel as though they are coming up on your bumper. 'It's a great day for racing.'

With the cars doing 190 miles per hour down the straightaways, the broadcasters are revving maximum rpms (rhetoric per minute) to keep up with the fast-paced action as 43 cars jockey for position in the 500-mile marathon.

And even without the aid of television, I know that Earnhardt's car is painted red instead of the customary black for the race and Jeff Gordon, known for his rainbow colors, is also sporting a new paint job.

Without car-cams or blimp-cams or helmet-cams, you're carefully fed what you need to know when you need to know it. 'Dale Earnhardt Jr. is three-wide coming around the turn but he's pulling a few drivers down the inside with him,' adds Bestwick. 'He's comfortable out there, even when his father is breathing down his neck. He's a heads-up race driver.'

Unlike other sports, NASCAR opens the season with its version of the Super Bowl. They don't build up to it slowly. There are no wildcard playoffs. They just go racing.

Which is why billions of people can't wait for Speed Weeks at Daytona to get that racing fix that went unfulfilled over the winter months.

And while we all are accustomed to watching our favorite sports with a remote control in our hand, the best way to watch a race is to get in your car, head out on a country road and tune in on radio.

It's like a drug.

Just hearing the announcers' voices rise and fall with the action will make you grip the wheel tighter as you feel yourself leaning into the turns with Tony Stewart and Bill Elliott.

'They're paint swapping now,' laughs Barney Hall in describing a war of fenders between two drivers. 'They're closer than kissing cousins. Somebody's gonna have to give and I don't know if either one of them is willing.'

That's when you find yourself breathing fast and checking your mirrors and looking at that old Buick station wagon behind you with sneering suspicion.

Truth is, there's a good amount of race driver in all of us, no matter what we're driving.

In the final laps, when the adrenaline is pumping faster than a fuel injector, the MRN radio crew elevates the intensity and brings the whole thing home.

'Last year's Winston Cup champion Dale Jarrett is caught in traffic, looking for help,' Gold declares. 'But it's Johnny Benson in a lone Pontiac leading a bunch of Fords as they head for the final laps.' I look down and the needle on my speedometer is edging up.

'Burton and Elliott are nose-to-tail as they follow in close order,' says Bestwick. 'But here comes Jarrett into the two spot.'

I blow by a slow Toyota and slide carefully back into my lane. I look into my rear view mirror for Jarrett and try to loosen my death grip on the steering wheel.

'It's gonna be a shootout here in the final four laps,' screams Gold. 'Jarrett throws down the gauntlet, the Fords are working together. Elliott thinks about it, but can't make a move and, oh my, there's a spin and a yellow flag and Dale Jarrett will win the Daytona 500 under caution.' As he pulls into victory lane, I back off the gas and coast into my driveway. Exhilarated and

exhausted, I switch off the radio and walk quietly inside after a really intense Sunday drive."

Call it a throwback, if you like, to the heyday of radio when stock car racing was barely in its infancy and nobody ever heard it being so dramatically described over the airwaves. Instead, there were captivating radio accounts of prize fights, world series baseball games, college football classics like the Army-Navy game and the post-season bowl games before they became so numerous, and horse races like the Kentucky Derby. Great radio sportscasters like Mel Allen, Bill Stern, Harry Wismer, Lindsey Nelson, Clem McCarthy, Red Barber and Russ Hodges, who described New York Giant Bobby Thompson's home run off Ralph Branca at the Polo Grounds, held millions of radio listeners enthralled with their never-to-be-forgotten descriptions of what they were seeing.

Burger's column captures the essence of what radio can do better than any other medium. In so doing, he pinpoints the delightful irony of the fact that after all these years of increasing competition from other media, radio can and does resurrect itself time after time to adapt to new ways of presenting its listeners a dimension of word pictures that, as Burger wrote, "puts a unique demand on your psyche. It makes your mind's eye squint to see between the lines of the obvious."

Any attempt to look into the future of radio in Charleston, or radio in general for that matter, as the twenty-first century begins, would be nothing but pure guesswork. Remember there were those who, at one time, surmised that Charleston could not possibly support more than three or four radio stations. And who could have predicted the many technological advances that have been made in commercial radio, although some visionary individuals like John M. Rivers came pretty darn close. In the decades since WCSC went on the air in 1930, radio

has grown from novelty to an integral part of daily life. It has undergone changes that few, if any, of the most optimistic visionaries in the early days of radio could have foreseen, such as working agreements between radio stations and television stations for the sharing of news, weather, traffic reports and promotional announcements. Who could have predicted the success of talk radio, segmented audiences, stations that do nothing but sports, stations that cater to black listeners, stations that are automated and operated by only two or three people. Although TV has usurped soap operas, game shows, children's programs, major sports events and myriad other kinds of programs that once were the exclusive province of radio, imaginative and enterprising radio people have managed somehow to fill in the empty spaces left open by television, newspapers, magazines, billboards and all other forms of what is today known as the media. With sound alone, radio can do what all other elements of the media can do with its adaptability, its commercial viability and its round the clock availability. It is there all the time with a variety of offerings that give listeners information and entertainment that is greatly changed from what it used to be, but it is alive and well.

Who can predict what lies ahead? It seems the only safe prediction where radio is concerned is that it is like the prize fighter who appears to be knocked out but gets up off the canvas and battles his opponent to a draw and even scores an occasional knockout. Charlestonians will probably be listening to radio when the first colony is established on the moon.

# APPENDICES

## Radio Frequencies Broadcasting in Charleston — in order of frequency:

Frequencies within listening range of Charleston, South Carolina (FCC Engineering Database 1999). Stations in italics are those which first went on air *prior* to 1950.

| Frequency | Call Letters | City | First Year On Air Previous Call Letters* | 1999 Format |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AM FREQUENCIES:** | | | | |
| ***730 AM*** | ***WSC*** | ***Charleston*** | ***1947 (WFAK***, WPAL, WGSE) | News/talk |
| 810 AM | WQIZ | St. George | 1962 (Simulcast WNKT) | Christian |
| 910 AM | WTMZ | Brentwood | 1960 (WNCG) | Golden Oldies |
| 950 AM | WMCJ | Moncks Corner | 1963 (WBER) | Christian |
| 980 AM | WAZS | Summerville | 1962 | Country/Gospel |
| ***1250 AM*** | ***WTMA*** | ***Charleston*** | ***1939*** | News/talk |
| ***1340 AM*** | ***WQSC*** | ***Charleston*** | ***1947 (WHAN,*** WOKE) | Sports |
| ***1390 AM*** | ***WXTC*** | ***Charleston*** | ***1930 (WCSC)*** | Christian |
| ***1450 AM*** | ***WQNT*** | ***Charleston*** | ***1948 (WUSN,*** WQSN, WGCA, WSSP) | Sports |
| 1480 AM | WZJY | Mount Pleasant | 1982 (WIXR) | Christian |
| **FM FREQUENCIES:** | | | | |
| 88.5 FM | WFCH | Charleston | 1986 | Family |
| 88.9 FM | W205BJ | Charleston | Construction permit | |
| 89.3 FM | WSCI | Charleston | 1973 | Public radio |
| 90.7 FM | WYFH | No. Charleston | 1984 | Christian |
| 91.5 FM | WKCL | Ladson | 1982 | Christian |
| 91.9 FM | W220CN | Charleston | Construction permit | |
| 93.3 FM | WWWZ | Summerville | 1974 | Urban contemp. |
| 94.3 FM | WSSP | Goose Creek | 1983 | Urban popular |
| ***95.1 FM*** | ***WSSX*** | ***Charleston*** | ***1945 (WTMA-FM)*** | Hit rock |
| 96.1 FM | WAVF | Hanahan | 1985 | Alternative rock |
| ***96.9 FM*** | ***WSUY*** | ***Charleston*** | ***1948 (WCSC-FM,*** *WXTC-FM)* | Adult contemp. |
| 98.1 FM | WYBB | Folly Beach | 1988 | Rock |
| 98.9 FM | WWBZ | McClellanville | 1995 | Beach,boogie,blues |
| 100.5 FM | WALC | Charleston | 1990 | New rock |
| 100.9 FM | WPAL | Walterboro | Construction permit | Rhythm |
| 101.7 FM | WMGL | Ravenel | 1986 (WGOX) | Soft soul |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 102.5 FM | WXLY | No. Charleston | 1962 (WKTM) | Oldies |
| 103.5 FM | WEZL | Charleston | 1970 | Country |
| 104.5 F M | WRFQ | Mount Pleasant | 1985 (WDXZ, WJUK) | Rock classics |
| 105.3 FM | WCOO | Moncks Corner | 1969 (WNST, WJYQ) | Oldies |
| 106.3 FM | WJNI | Ladson | 1998 | Christian |
| 107.5 FM | WNKT | St. George | 1971 (WBUB) | Country |

*Reconstruction of all changes in call letters for each frequency, particularly since 1980, is virtually impossible since turnover is rapid and new owners do not maintain historical records of events prior to their own ownership. The FCC supplies only current year licensing information.

## Charleston Area Radio Frequencies —in order of initial licensing:

| **AM FREQUENCIES: Original Call Letters (Current)** | | **FM FREQUENCIES: Original Call Letters (Current)** |
|---|---|---|
| ***1930*** | ***1390 AM - WCSC (WXTC)*** | |
| ***1939*** | ***1250 AM - WTMA*** | |
| ***1945*** | | ***95.1 FM - WTMA-FM (WSSX)*** |
| ***1947*** | ***730 AM - WFAK (WSC)*** | |
| ***1947*** | ***1340 AM - WHAN (WQSC)*** | |
| ***1948*** | ***1450 AM - WUSN (WQNT)*** | |
| ***1948*** | | ***96.9 FM - WCSC-FM (WSUY)*** |
| 1960 | 910 AM - WNCG (WTMZ) | |
| 1962 | 810 AM - WQIZ | |
| 1962 | | 980 AM - WAZS |
| 1962 | | 102.5 FM WKTM (WXLY) |
| 1963 | 950 AM - WBER (WMCJ) | |
| 1969 | | 105.3 FM - WNST (WCOO) |
| 1970 | | 103.5 FM - WEZL |
| 1971 | | 107.5 FM - WBUB (WNKT) |
| 1973 | | 89.3 FM - WSCI |
| 1974 | | 93.3 FM - WWWZ. |
| 1982 | | 91.5 FM - WKCL |
| 1982 | 1480 AM - WIXR (WZJY) | |
| 1983 | | 94.3 FM - WSSP |
| 1984 | | 90.7 FM - WYFH |
| 1985 | | 96.1 FM - WAVF |
| 1985 | | 104.5 FM - WDXZ (WRFQ) |

| | |
|---|---|
| 1986 | 88.5 FM - WFCH |
| 1986 | 101.7 FM - WGOX (WMGL) |
| 1988 | 98.1 FM WYBB |
| 1990 | 100.5 FM - WALC |
| 1995 | 98.9 FM - WWBZ |
| 1998 | 106.3 FM - WJNI |
| 1999 Construction permit | 100.9 FM - WPAL |
| 1999 Construction permit | 88.9 FM - W205BJ |
| 1999 Construction permit | 91.9 FM - W220CN |

## Summary of station/frequencies established, by decade:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1930-1939 | AM - 2 | FM - 0 |
| 1940-1949 | AM - 3 | FM - 2 |
| 1950-1959 | AM - 0 | FM - 0 |
| 1960-1969 | AM - 4 | FM - 2 |
| 1970-1979 | AM - 0 | FM - 4 |
| 1980-1989 | AM - 1 | FM - 8 |
| 1990-1999 | AM - 0 | FM - 3 (plus 3 FM construction permits) |

# Index