

University of Montana

## ScholarWorks at University of Montana

---

Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, &  
Professional Papers

Graduate School

---

1963

### History of radio broadcasting in Montana

Ron P. Richards

*The University of Montana*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd>

**Let us know how access to this document benefits you.**

---

#### Recommended Citation

Richards, Ron P., "History of radio broadcasting in Montana" (1963). *Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers*. 5869.  
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/5869>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@mso.umt.edu](mailto:scholarworks@mso.umt.edu).

THE HISTORY OF RADIO BROADCASTING  
IN MONTANA

by

RON P. RICHARDS

B. A. in Journalism Montana State University, 1959

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Journalism

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

1963

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman, Board of Examiners

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean, Graduate School

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

UMI Number: EP36670

All rights reserved

**INFORMATION TO ALL USERS**

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI EP36670

Published by ProQuest LLC (2013). Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.

Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code



ProQuest LLC.  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

## PREFACE

The development of radio broadcasting in Montana has an important place in any survey of the state's history since 1900. Radio broadcasting assisted in the process of bringing the residents of the state together in terms of social, cultural and political attitudes.

Particular attention has been given to the very early days in Montana radio broadcasting, when the development of a radio broadcasting station acquired unusual characteristics, dictated by the character of the people the broadcasting station served. Furthermore, there is very little documented material relating to the early period in Montana radio broadcasting and therefore special emphasis was given to this part of the story. Less attention has been devoted to the post-World War II period in broadcasting in the state.

The writer is especially grateful for the assistance of the State Historical Library, Helena; Mr. Ed Craney, Butte; Mr. E. C. Krebsbach, Williston, North Dakota; and Mr. Charles O. Campbell, Billings.

## CONTENTS

### CHAPTER

I.	INTRODUCTION.....	1
II.	THE TINKERERS.....	10
III.	MONTANA'S FIRST LICENSED STATION.....	16
IV.	BUTTREY BROADCAST, INC.....	24
V.	BROADCASTING FROM THE UNIVERSITY.....	36
VI.	ED KREBSBACH AND STATION KG CX.....	52
VII.	RADIO BROADCASTING COMES TO NORTHWESTERN MONTANA.....	64
VIII.	THE RADIO STATION BUILT TO SELL RADIO RECEIVERS.....	73
IX.	STATION KGIR AND THE Z-BAR NETWORK.....	87
X.	THE VOICE OF FIVE GREAT VALLEYS.....	106
XI.	PERIODS OF ADJUSTMENT, STABILITY AND RAPID CHANGE.....	114
XII.	CONCLUSIONS.....	125
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	132

Radio broadcasting in Montana began very early in the 1920s, at about the same time as the historic programs of the nation's first "radio station," KDKA in Pittsburgh.<sup>1</sup> The results of the 1920 presidential election were broadcast on KDKA Nov. 2, 1920. An estimated 500 to 1,000 persons heard the broadcast and knew that Warren G. Harding was the next President of the United States.<sup>2</sup>

In Montana, unlicensed radio broadcasting was under way in at least one locality at the time of the KDKA election night program, and the first licensed radio broadcasting station in the state began in May, 1922.<sup>3</sup>

Radiotelephone broadcasting, however, had its origins in the experiments of Dr. Lee deForest. From the Eiffel Tower in Paris in 1908, deForest and his assistants succeeded in transmitting recorded music reliably over a distance of 25 miles. One listener reported hearing the broadcast from Marseilles, more than 500 miles away.<sup>4</sup>

Following his success in Paris, deForest returned to the United States and began experiments with "live" radio broadcasts.

---

<sup>1</sup>The claim of station WWJ in Detroit to have been the first licensed radio broadcasting station has been disproved. Gleason Archer, in his book "History of Radio to 1926," documents the Commerce Department radio records, showing conclusively that KDKA was the first licensed radio broadcasting station in the United States.

<sup>2</sup>Archer, Gleason L., History of Radio to 1926 (New York, 1938) p. 204.

<sup>3</sup>See "The Tinkerers" and "KDYS" in this paper.

<sup>4</sup>Archer, op. cit., pp. 98-99.

He arranged for a broadcast of a performance of the Metropolitan Opera Company in New York City. The world-famous Caruso was to sing from Pagliacci.<sup>5</sup> The event was described this way:

A little half-kilowatt transmitter through which the chief arias were to pass was installed in a vacant room at the top of the Opera House....Listeners were stationed at the Park Avenue building. (The Broadcast) was heard by perhaps 50 listeners... the inventor felt convinced from that minute that broadcasting was destined to go forward, perhaps even as far as his own wild dream of uniting the scattered corners of the globe.<sup>6</sup>

The early experiments of deForest in radiotelephone broadcasting opened speculation by other inventors that the human voice could be reliably transmitted across distances of many miles. Dr. Frank Conrad, an employee of the Westinghouse company in Pittsburgh, began tinkering with wireless in 1916.<sup>7</sup> The United States government suspended all amateur wireless broadcasting during World War One. In 1919, Dr. Conrad resumed wireless radiotelephone experiments from his home, filling the time on the air with favorite phonograph records and talk. "By the summer of 1920," one radio historian wrote, "listener response was becoming a bit troublesome. Letters and telephone calls were coming in, many of them making odd requests..."<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup>Until the development of more efficient amplifiers, broadcasters found it necessary to use singers with tremendous volume in order to create the required modulation for transmission.

<sup>6</sup>Archer, op. cit., p. 99.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 199.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

Westinghouse executives, anxious to enter the radiotelephone business, recognized the potential in Dr. Conrad's experiments. They envisioned a radio broadcasting station that would create a demand for radio sets--sets the Westinghouse company would manufacture. The company financed the construction of KDKA in a metal-covered shack atop the Westinghouse plant in East Pittsburgh. Subsequently, the radio station was moved into more appropriate quarters, and regular evening broadcasting began.

The early KDKA broadcasts are truly significant. The event spurred the construction and sale of radio receiving sets, particularly the "crystal set." It aroused amateurs and others to construct more sensitive and complex receiving instruments to pick up the KDKA broadcasts. The prospect of hearing "entertainment" by radio captured the imagination of hundreds of thousands in this country. Another radio historian has pointed out that

it is hard for a push-button generation of radio listeners and television viewers to appreciate the quality of interest such transmission could arouse in 1920.... Practically the only signals on the air in 1920 were in radiotelegraphic code. To hear news, music and other entertainment instead of the monotonous drone of code in the earphone was an electrifying experience for any listener, amateur or professional.... It is, therefore, not surprising that KDKA was an immediate and overwhelming success.<sup>9</sup>

The advent of radio broadcasting in the United States precipitated what has been described as "one of the most

---

<sup>9</sup>Head, Sydney W., Broadcasting in America (Cambridge, 1956) pp. 107-108.



extraordinary booms in the history of the American people."<sup>10</sup> Orders for radio receiving sets and for transmitting equipment for would-be radio broadcasters flooded the manufacturer's offices. The most curious aspect of this development is that no one, particularly in 1921 and 1922, could have had any prospect of monetary gain from the construction and operation of a radio broadcasting station. The only individuals who stood to profit from the boom were the equipment manufacturers. The costs for the construction of a broadcasting station were staggering; a would-be broadcaster could expect to spend more than \$50,000 on equipment.<sup>11</sup> Despite this fact, the number of broadcasting stations increased rapidly. During May, 1922--the same month Montana's first licensed station, KDYS, went on the air--the Department of Commerce had authorized 98 additional radio broadcasting stations.<sup>12</sup> In 1922, Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover reported that

we have witnessed in the last four or five months one of the most astounding things that has come to my attention in American life. This Department estimates that today, more than 600,000 persons possess wireless telephone receiving sets, whereas there were less than 50,000 a year ago.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup>Archer, op. cit., p. 241.

<sup>11</sup>Archer, op. cit., p. 241.

<sup>12</sup>While 98 other stations were authorized, not all of them were on the air. Furthermore, many were formally authorized which subsequently surrendered their licenses.

<sup>13</sup>Archer, op. cit., p. 284.

In the West, the radio boom was equally amazing. Rural families and others who were relatively isolated recognized that radio broadcasting could bring them amusement and something to brighten the routine life of farm or ranch merely for the cost of a radio receiving set. A West Coast writer in 1922 wrote:

The average man on the street had never more than vaguely heard of radio until two months ago.... All of a sudden it hit us. The first most of us saw of it beyond random and rather dull newspaper and magazine accounts of developments was in a first page, first column headlines from New York, not over two months ago, proclaiming that the East had gone mad over radio. Within twelve hours, the interest swept over the Coast.<sup>14</sup>

While statistically the contribution of Montana to the development of radiotelephone broadcasting is relatively small, the state nevertheless played a part in the development of radio in the West. The development of early-day broadcasting stations in Montana is a unique and colorful series of experiences.

Two factors motivated the early-day broadcasters in Montana to construct a radiotelephone station. One was the genuine desire to bring entertainment and information to the radio listeners. The other was a vested interest in promoting the sale of radio receivers. Three of the eight "pioneers" in broadcasting in Montana recognized the advertising potential of broadcasting stations, but none accurately perceived what this form of income would ultimately mean to the success of the enterprise. The first so-called "commercial" on radio in the United States was heard during the summer of 1922 over

---

<sup>14</sup>Archer, op. cit., p. 276.

the American Telephone and Telegraph Company's WEAJ broadcasting station in New York City. It was described as

well-written....would today be termed institutional advertising rather than the ballyhoo for the sale of lots....It is reported that the price was \$100 for each of the five spots (ten minutes each) on five consecutive days.<sup>15</sup>

WEAJ provided the breakthrough for advertising on radio, and the practice spread as other stations adopted the idea and business firms became better acquainted with the new method. The effect of this development on the East Coast was slow to reach Montana but, once arrived, it was quickly adopted. Broadcasters in Montana were somewhat like the executive Goliaths at the Radio Corporation of America and the American Telephone and Telegraph Company who

did not themselves realize what a social revolution was taking place. To them, advertising on the radio, except during the business hours, was an intrusion on the sacred privacy of the home. Their idea of the sanctity of the home and of the role of family life in society was essentially in the 19th century tradition. But a profound social upheaval was underway in the 1920s....The temper of the times favored radio's commercial trend....The advertising man, more conscious of the trend of the times than the network executives, took advantage of the jazzed up tempo of the age. Almost before the broadcasters knew what had happened, the advertising agencies took over--and it was they who set the tone.<sup>16</sup>

Montana was swept along with the intensive interest in radio-

---

<sup>15</sup>Archer, op. cit., p. 276.

<sup>16</sup>Head, op. cit., p. 124.

telephone broadcasting and experienced the "explosion" of radio station construction, the shortage of radio receiving sets and the advent of commercial announcements on the air.

Montana's radio broadcasting history can be divided into four general categories:

1920-1932: The period of the early pioneers, beginning with the radiotelephone "hobbyists" operating unlicensed stations, followed by the establishment of six stations still operating today. The "pioneer" period began with the construction of KDYS, Great Falls, in 1922 and was climaxed with the construction of KGVO, Missoula, in 1931. The operators of radio stations during this period frequently were as concerned with the technical aspects of radio broadcasting as they were with the schedule of programs offered to the public.

1932-1936: A period of no activity in new radio broadcast station construction. However, these four years put the acid test to each of the existing stations as Montana struggled through the Great Depression. Management tightened business practices and attempted to create more sophisticated programs to attract skeptical advertisers. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Fireside Chats" are credited with bringing radio a measure of true prestige, "taking the front page of the daily newspaper and putting in on the radio."<sup>17</sup> Stations were subjected to severe growing pains.

---

<sup>17</sup>Conversation with Ed Craney, Butte, Montana (April 27, 1963). Craney operated radio station KGIR, Butte, during the Depression years.

1937-1946: A period of gradual, steady development of broadcasting stations and practices. Radio broadcasting stations came to several of the smaller communities within Montana.<sup>18</sup> Network affiliation became commonplace. The period also witnessed the early development of the state's first "network" and the first attempt at group ownership of broadcasting stations in Montana.

1947-1963: A period of rapid change. The number of broadcasting stations increased rapidly in the years following World War II. Every major radio station market became highly competitive. The so-called "independent" stations became the dominant feature of the radio broadcasting business. The former concepts of "block" programming and heavy network affiliation were replaced with a music and news concept. Group ownership and absentee ownership grew. The impact of television began to be felt in a few selected areas within the state.<sup>19</sup>

The arbitrary categories that have been cited closely parallel what was happening to radio broadcasting throughout the United States. While Montana frequently was slow to react to changes in

---

<sup>18</sup>KPFA was established in Helena, 1937; KRBM in Bozeman, 1939; KATL in Miles City, 1941. These were the last stations to be constructed in the state until 1946.

<sup>19</sup>A more detailed discussion of this period of development will be found in the last section of this report.

the radio broadcasting business, stations in the state were often spared the violent ups and downs characteristic of the industry as a whole. The impact of television, for example, has not been as severe for the radio broadcasting industry in Montana as it has been in neighboring states such as Washington and Oregon. The problem of heavy radio "overpopulation" has not reached the proportions experienced in markets such as Denver and Omaha.

The history of radio broadcasting in Montana can be characterized as crude, folksy, colorful, and, for the most part, prosperous. The frontier way of life existing in some remote areas of Montana during the 1920s left a mark on the history of radio broadcasting in the state. Because of the geographic location of Montana, her people were often unaware of the newest innovations in the major cities. For this reason, perhaps more than any other, Montana's radio broadcasting industry grew up without the customary "metropolitan" influence.

## THE TINKERERS

In the early days of broadcasting in Montana a number of low-power radiotelephone transmitters, most not licensed through the Department of Commerce, were in operation.

There is no evidence that any of the early-day unlicensed radiotelephone broadcasters entertained the idea of using the electronic gadget as an instrument to sell advertising. Montana's early-day broadcasters were "tinkerers," men acquainted with the fundamentals of electricity and wireless and eager to experiment with wireless telephone transmission. The story of the "tinkerers" is by no means complete in this study. Because most of the stations were not licensed, no official records are available. When the operator complied with the federal regulations and secured authorization the fact was duly noted in the Department of Commerce files. However, the Federal Communications Commission--successor to the licensing agency in Commerce--reports it does not maintain a list of stations which were licensed but which subsequently surrendered their license.<sup>20</sup> The story of the "tinkerers" can be harvested only from local newspapers, personal interviews and occasional glancing references to them in books and periodicals. A few of those case histories which are available are of significance for an understanding of this peripheral phase of broadcasting in Montana.

---

<sup>20</sup>Letter from the Federal Communications Commission, Washington, D.C., Sept. 20, 1962.

Perhaps the earliest radiotelephone broadcaster in the state was a young man from Chicago, Ill., who came to the Bitterroot Valley of western Montana during the land speculation days in 1916. Ashley Clayton Dixon was reasonably well-to-do and purchased an adequate parcel of land just north of the Three Mile Trading Post near Stevensville. He constructed his home and developed an orchard of McIntosh apple trees. As early as 1919 (several months before the first official broadcast of station KDKA) Dixon was "broadcasting" with a makeshift studio in his country home. Much of the time he would content himself with talk on the broadcasting station. Occasionally a group of men from Stevensville would form an orchestra and travel to the Dixon home studio for a short broadcast. Dixon was a prominent figure in Stevensville community affairs and was one of the organizers of the First National Bank in the community. In 1922, Dixon and his family moved to Portland, Ore., thereby closing the Stevensville broadcasting station.

A license for an "educational" broadcasting station was issued Nov. 7, 1922, to the Billings Polytechnic Institute in Billings. The station was authorized at 100 watts of power at a frequency of 360 meters (834 kilocycles) with the call letters of KFED.<sup>21</sup> The date of issuance of the license curiously coincides with publicity in the Billings newspaper concerning the "Electric Service Station" and the "Gazette" radio programs on a broadcasting station with the call letters KFCH.

---

<sup>21</sup>Frost, S. E., "Education's Own Stations" (Chicago, 1937) p. 34.



An extensive review of the Billings Gazette radio logs and news stories during this period reveals considerable mention of KFCH but no mention of the "educational" station licensed to the Institute. Glen West, instructor in electricity and radiotelegraphy, required students to construct a radio receiver before they could receive credit for the class.<sup>22</sup> It could be reasonably assumed, therefore, that the call letters KFED were assigned to a transmitter used primarily to test the receiving ability of the sets assembled by the students and for related experiments in radiotelephone broadcasting. However, there is no evidence to support this contention other than that a station was authorized for operation at the Institute and was used for experimental purposes. Broadcasts of KFED

were largely in the form of tests, with no scheduled programs having been presented. All music came from phonograph records, with a homemade electric pickup....it is believed that this was the first electric pickup to be used in broadcasting work.... [The] station was not supported financially... [and] the license was allowed to expire on February 6, 1923.<sup>23</sup>

KFCH, the so-called "Gazette" broadcasting station, began operation Nov. 7, 1922, with a program of local talent consisting of an orchestra and vocal soloists. The Gazette reported that the "radio program was well received" and noted that "the selections by Ben Lewis were so popular that he was requested by telephone

---

<sup>22</sup>Billings Gazette, (Nov. 26, 1922).

<sup>23</sup>Frost, op. cit., p. 34.

immediately after the concert to render another selection, which he did."<sup>24</sup> The newspaper reports promised another broadcast for Thursday evening featuring a varied program of Brunswick records furnished by the Hammond Furniture Company of Billings. The day following the second broadcast of the new station, the newspaper said that "reports from Bridger, Columbus and Belfrey...and other points reveal that the program had been received."<sup>25</sup>

KFCH continued broadcasting throughout the month of November, 1922, with three broadcasts each week. The Gazette Sunday radio section would list a "log" of programs to be aired on the station during the following week. Early in December the management of the broadcasting station began advertising radio receivers for sale. One advertisement contended that "a radio set makes an interesting... radio parts are available here...our operator will be glad to assist you."<sup>26</sup>

Seven days later--Dec. 10, 1922--all reference to the "Electric Service Station" disappeared from the newspaper. The KFCH radio log was not published in any editions of the paper after Dec. 3, either Sunday or daily. An extensive check of the December issues of the Gazette failed to give any clue regarding KFCH. Walter Nulton had been reported to be the operator of the broadcasting station,<sup>27</sup> but

---

<sup>24</sup>Billings Gazette, (Nov. 8, 1922).

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., (Nov. 10, 1922).

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., (Dec. 3, 1922).

<sup>27</sup>Billings Gazette, (Nov. 12, 1922).

his name does not appear in any of the December issues of the newspaper.

An unlicensed broadcasting station is reported to have operated for a few months in Missoula in 1923-1924. A. J. Mosby, himself a radio broadcasting pioneer, has recalled that he loaned a small experimental broadcast transmitter to two unidentified men who established a broadcasting station in the Wilma Theater Building. However, at the height of a sponsored political rally broadcast in the station studio, the drinking and enthusiasm of the participants went beyond the socially allowable limits, and the police had to be called to stop the broadcast. A scuffle ensued, and the two would-be "broadcasters" were arrested and sentenced to several days in the city jail. The transmitting equipment was repossessed by Mosby and subsequently became part of the original transmitting equipment used by radio station KUOM, Montana State University.<sup>28</sup>

Certainly Montana had many more broadcast "tinkerers." The process by which the human voice could be transmitted through the air and heard by others many miles away caught the imagination of the hobbyist, the electrician, the musician, and others who understood basic physics. The early 1920s was a period of experimentation and high interest in wireless. The relatively large Sunday newspaper sections devoted to the radio fan were evidence of this interest.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup>Conversation with A. J. Mosby, Missoula, Mont., Mar. 20, 1963.

<sup>29</sup>The Great Falls Tribune and the Billings Gazette consistently devoted as much as a full page to radio information each week, ranging from circuit diagrams to complete program listings for "regional" stations in the larger cities.

Gleason Archer has observed that

the advent of radio broadcasting created one of the most extraordinary booms in the history of the American people. From all over the United States, orders for equipment came pouring into manufacturers of such apparatus. The unexplainable part of it is that no one at that time, except the manufacturers, had any reasonable prospect of monetary gain...<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup>Archer, op. cit., p. 241.

## MONTANA'S FIRST LICENSED RADIO STATION

Forty-nine radio broadcasting stations were in operation in the United States before Montana's first licensed station took to the air May 19, 1922. However, KDYS in Great Falls remained on the air only 18 months. O. S. Warden, the station owner and publisher of the Great Falls Tribune, concluded that central Montana was not yet ready for local radio. It would be 25 years before the Warden family would again venture into the radio broadcasting business.

---

The radiotelephone experiments of a Great Falls automobile electric system specialist paved the way for the construction of radio station KDYS. C. W. Wilks successfully demonstrated the radiotelephone transmission of phonograph records from a "talking machine" in his home at 1027 Seventh Avenue to the Palm Room of the Hotel Rainbow during a copper metal products exposition in Great Falls in May, 1922.<sup>31</sup> Visitors to the exposition discovered "the music was as clear and even louder than played on a talking machine at the sending point."<sup>32</sup> Wilks and "H. E. Cowden of San Francisco,

---

<sup>31</sup>Great Falls Tribune, (May 4, 1922).

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., (May 7, 1922).

commercial first class, first grade radio operator,"<sup>33</sup> were responsible for construction of the Tribune radio broadcasting transmitter.

The Wilks' public demonstrations of radiotelephone transmission during the copper metal products exposition came at a time when work was being completed on the installation of the KDYS equipment. On May 14, the Tribune announced that

with the mechanical equipment and the recording room in order, the Tribune announces the installation of a 100 watt radiotelephone broadcasting station, one of the most modern and completely equipped stations in the Northwest and the only one of its kind in Montana.<sup>34</sup>

A picture in the May 14 edition of the newspaper showed the broadcasting station "flattop" antenna on the roof of the Tribune building in downtown Great Falls. Additional news stories in the same edition outlined some of the programs that would be offered, including "musical programs, weather forecasts, market reports, stockyard clearings and news."<sup>35</sup> No specific date was cited for the start of regular programs, but "the Tribune station will start broadcasting just as soon as it receives its license and call numbers. The set is completed and ready to 'shoot'.<sup>36</sup>

On May 17, 1922, the Tribune published an advertisement offering free tickets for a public "radio concert" of the station's first

---

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., (May 14, 1922).

<sup>34</sup>Great Falls Tribune, (May 14, 1922).

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

regular broadcast and encouraged radio fans to acquire their own receiving sets. The advertisement stated "Mr. Wilks has opened a radio shop here in the store and is prepared to sell complete receiving sets, special equipment for making your own and service that is invaluable to those interested."<sup>37</sup>

Friday, May 19, was scheduled for the opening broadcast of radio station KDYS. Operators of the broadcasting station were optimistic on the basis of "listener" reports received after earlier test broadcasts. The newspaper reported that "in tests made last week, radio fans as far south as Los Angeles tuned in to a Victrola concert broadcasted by the Tribune. It's expected that Friday's program will be heard in all of the western states..."<sup>38</sup>

At 7:30 p.m., May 19, 1922, KDYS officially began radio broadcasting from studios in the offices of the Tribune with a program of dedicatory remarks and music performed by local talent. Publisher-owner Warden said that

this date, we believe, may be written into the pages of history in bold face, 72-point type. There is the inspiration or progress at this moment when we reach out to the nationwide radius of radio and begin to tell the world what heretofore could only be given out to our friends and patrons in Montana....the installation of radio is little more than playing the game of progress.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup>Great Falls Tribune, (May 17, 1922).

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., (May 18, 1922).

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., (May 20, 1922).

Mrs. Warden took a few moments on the opening broadcast to say "hello" to friends in San Francisco, and Great Falls Mayor R. M. Armour was present to extend greetings on behalf of the city.<sup>40</sup>

The entire dedicatory broadcast would have been judged a complete success had it not been for a series of unfortunate technical failures that plagued the soprano performance of Mrs. Albert Beckman of Great Falls. The "radio concert" audience at the Paris Drygoods store was listening to the broadcast with a defective receiving set

which spoiled the effectiveness of her beautiful singing. So great was the range in the song...which she sang in Italian... that the vibration of the metal in the magnavox through which the concert was being broadcast to more than 500 persons in the store deflected the quality of the tone of her singing. The microphone (sic) at the Paris became heated, handicapping the reproduction. In this song also Mrs. Beckman was the victim of misfortune in that the voltage of the city electric current suddenly dropped, which caused the quality of her singing to be destroyed.<sup>41</sup>

Radio reception reports were received early from distant points such as Susanville, Calif.; Ashton, Idaho; Ogden, Utah and Lovelock, Nev. The Tribune boasted

in its initial program, the Tribune's radio station blazed the trail of wireless telephony in the Intermountain states.... Reports came from lonely cabins in the heart of the mountains, where the program was heard plainly...<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup>Great Falls Tribune, (May 20, 1922).

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.



Radio station KDYS began programming with a regular schedule on Sunday, May 20--the day following the opening broadcast--including a church service conducted by the Rev. J. A. Pine of the First Christian Church and a special bedtime story program for the youngsters at 7:45 Sunday evening.<sup>43</sup> Both program features were retained on the Sunday schedule of KDYS until shortly before the station left the air 18 months later. However, the majority of programs on KDYS were so-called "live" programs, originating from the radio station studios. Much of the time the station had to rely upon local talent. Occasionally, visiting artists would participate in special broadcasts. Phillip Rider and Mabel Kronin of the California Opera Company were featured on a special program of this type, and Franklin Hunt of Kansas City, in town to conduct a summer music workshop, created mild panic at the Great Falls Telephone exchange when, after his program

the city telephone service to radio station KDYS had to be cut off during part of the encores. The constant ringing of the telephone bell for encores temporarily stopped the concert.<sup>44</sup>

Programs continued to be broadcast three and four days each week on the Tribune station throughout 1922 and up to October, 1923.

The newspaper reported

KDYS will be silent for the next ten days or two weeks. Breakage of the parts of broadcast equipment, which it will be impossible to

---

<sup>43</sup>Great Falls Tribune, (May 20, 1922).

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., (June 30, 1922).

replace this side of New York City, has crippled the set beyond even temporary use until these parts are replaced. All program schedules will be rearranged to conform with the wishes of the artists as soon as a definite date for the resumption of broadcasting is fixed.<sup>45</sup>

The regular advertisement for the broadcasting station, which had been appearing three to four times each week during the previous 17 months, disappeared from the paper for several days but was printed Oct. 8 through most editions until Nov. 12, 1923, with a regular program schedule. No explanation was offered in the columns of the Tribune regarding the apparent contradiction between the Oct. 1 news story and the consistent advertisements for the broadcasting station after that date.

On Sunday, Nov. 25, 1923, the Tribune announced the broadcasting station would close for six months and that "service at that time will depend upon the state of affairs in the radio world and upon the demand that may be made by radio fans within the Tribune's territory that the station be reopened."<sup>46</sup> However, the remaining sentences of the Nov. 25 news story clearly indicate there was little optimism at the Tribune that the station would ever return to the air:

The station was sealed Saturday after the station's management came to the conclusion that to successfully compete with the many

---

<sup>45</sup>Great Falls Tribune, (Oct. 1, 1923).

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., (Nov. 25, 1923).

excellent broadcasts of stations along the Pacific Coast and in the middle west it would be necessary to expend several thousands of dollars to bring the KDYS setup to standards that the Tribune would like to have it. Further it must be admitted that it is impossible for KDYS to obtain for all of its programs as many talented artists as are available in larger cities...<sup>47</sup>

The problem faced by KDYS was commonplace among the early-day radio broadcasting stations. New developments in transmitters and microphones advanced the quality of the modulated sound and made it more pleasing to the ear of the listener. Stations in the larger cities could more easily afford to purchase improved equipment, while the small station in sparsely populated areas was frequently hard pressed to stay on the air. Recruiting enough quality talent for the radio broadcasting programs was a definite problem in the smaller communities. Recordings could not be adequately reproduced for radio transmission in the 1922-1923 period. The burden was on the local station for "live" music. The Tribune observed

this has worked a disadvantage to KDYS, for persons in Montana having sets capable of receiving the larger cities naturally will prefer to tune in to the station with the best program.<sup>48</sup>

The Tribune management assured the public that "the local broadcasting station will be reopened when it is believed

---

<sup>47</sup>Great Falls Tribune, (Nov. 25, 1923).

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

that by doing so a real service will be performed for the people of the Northwest."<sup>49</sup> Radio station KDYS did not return to the air. The license subsequently was surrendered, and the call letters of Montana's first licensed broadcasting station remained open in 1963.

As KDYS left the air, however, another station in a nearby community already was broadcasting on an infrequent basis. In contrast to KDYS, radio station KFBB in Havre, Mont., would become one of the state's outstanding broadcasting stations.

---

<sup>49</sup>Great Falls Tribune, (Nov. 25, 1923). The Great Falls Tribune returned to radio broadcasting May 30, 1948, with station KNOH in Great Falls.

## BUTTREY BROADCAST, INC.

F. A. Buttrey was a Canadian immigrant who journeyed to Havre, Mont., as a young man and established a general merchandise store. Havre was a railroad center, and young Buttrey's business prospered, affording him the chance to experiment with additional commercial ventures. The Buttrey store had radio receiving sets for sale, but demand was slight. The result was the construction of radio station KFBB on the top floor of the Buttrey Building. Federal Communications Commission records reveal Buttrey received a license to broadcast in July, 1922, but the station did not begin broadcasting until October of that year.<sup>50</sup>

The KFBB studios consisted of one room that housed the home-made "composite" transmitter, desk, microphone, and associated equipment. Atop the Buttrey Building was the customary "flattop" antenna suspended between two poles attached to the roof. The transmitter power was rated at 50 watts.<sup>51</sup>

Regular broadcasting hours were not consistently observed during the early years of KFBB's operation, although the station is credited with being "constantly in service for more than 2,600 consecutive days, a record equalled by few stations in the country" in a 1929

---

<sup>50</sup>Letter from the National Association of Broadcasters, Washington, D. C., Sept. 2, 1962.

<sup>51</sup>Conversation with Anthony Lopuch, chief engineer, KFBB, Great Falls, Mont., Nov. 30, 1962.

newspaper report.<sup>52</sup> Most of the early-day KFBB radio broadcasts were limited to weather forecasts, stock and grain market reports, and an occasional musical selection.<sup>53</sup>

The one-room studio in Havre was abandoned in 1929 when KFBB was moved from Havre to Great Falls. The decision to move undoubtedly was easy for Buttrey to make. He had been informed by the federal government that he could not increase transmitting power while located in Havre; he had expressed concern regarding the lack of talent for the increasing number of musical programs on the station; and he was aware that Great Falls businessmen were anxious for Great Falls to have a radio station.<sup>54</sup>

The matter of increased power for station KFBB was of particular importance. In January, 1929, radio station KGIR began broadcasting in Butte, Mont., and the Federal Radio Commission had ordered KFBB to "share" time with the Butte station. With an increase in power, KFBB would be assigned to a different frequency. Buttrey applied for 1,000 watts and received a permit for the increase before announcing the move from Havre to Great Falls.<sup>55</sup>

Havre area residents were truly saddened to hear the news of the intended move. A newspaper report from Havre referred to the station as "one of the most distinctive features" of the territory, and

---

<sup>52</sup>Wolf Point Herald, (April 16, 1929).

<sup>53</sup>Conversation with W. C. Blanchette, KFBB manager, Great Falls, Mont., Nov. 30, 1962.

<sup>54</sup>Havre Daily News, (April 24, 1929).

<sup>55</sup>Wolf Point Herald, (April 26, 1929).

has been of particular importance in the farming communities of this section of northern Montana in broadcasting of marketing and weather reports, local announcements and news items and messages to people on remote farms....the Buttrey station's noonday program has been listened to probably by more people in this section than any other program coming into this territory.<sup>56</sup>

During the summer of 1929, Buttrey closed the one-room Havre radio station, loaded all the existing equipment into a delapidated truck and drove to Great Falls. Arrangements had been completed to put the studios of the station in the Park Hotel. As the truck pulled up to the lobby entrance, one spectator in the small crowd that had gathered to watch the moving operation shouted, "It will never work!"<sup>57</sup>

On July 11, 1929, Buttrey announced "contracts for the erection of aerial towers and construction of the transmitter house for KFBB would be let today" and speculated that the broadcasting station "will be ready for operation by August 15, but it may be possible completion may be delayed until September 1."<sup>58</sup> Actually, KFBB did not begin broadcasting from Great Falls until the latter part of September.

The broadcasting station transmitting plant was located five miles south of Great Falls, bordered by two 100-foot aerials with the antenna wire suspended between them. The transmitting plant was

---

<sup>56</sup>Wolf Point Herald, (April 26, 1929).

<sup>57</sup>Great Falls Tribune, (Nov. 11, 1959).

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., (July 11, 1929).

connected to the downtown radio station studios by two telephone lines, one for the actual program material and the other for direct communication between studio and transmitter.<sup>59</sup>

Federal Radio Commission authorization had been received to increase the power of the broadcast station to 1,000 watts. However, KFBB began broadcasting from Great Falls with 500 watts, later increasing power to 1,000 watts at night. The station is credited with being the first broadcasting facility west of the Mississippi River to install equipment that would insure 100 per cent modulation,

enabling broadcasts of the station to be heard in every county in Montana and under most favorably conditions as far north as Edmonton and as far south as Panama and every state in the Union.<sup>60</sup>

The Park Hotel studios of the broadcasting station consisted of one large room and a small room, the larger adequate for orchestras and choral groups and the smaller designed for soloists and talks.<sup>61</sup> Clearly, radio station KFBB was in the broadcasting business to stay, and station manager Stephen I. Gaylord had ambitious program plans, as he promised "at least 220,000 listeners in Montana will be able to find a program every day from noon to 7 and in the evenings from 8 to 12, three times a week."<sup>62</sup> With the

---

<sup>59</sup>Conversation with Lopuch, op. cit.

<sup>60</sup>Great Falls Tribune, (Sept. 15, 1929).

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Great Falls Tribune, (Sept. 15, 1929).



increased transmitting power from the Great Falls location, KFBB began to make new friends among the radio listeners and among the advertisers in the Great Falls area.

In 1932, radio station KFBB moved from the Park Hotel to \$100,000 studios in the First National Bank Building. Virtually all of the studio broadcast equipment was the latest available, complete with a heavy but reliable set of remote equipment for special broadcasts. The studios and offices of the station occupied approximately half of the total area of the sixth floor of the bank building. Included in the new complex were a "control room" and a reasonably large acoustically-treated studio, isolated through the use of double-glass windows.<sup>63</sup>

Virtually all of the equipment was battery-powered in the 1932 studio, including the broadcast equipment for special "remotes." However, KFBB originated numerous "remotes" from basketball and football games, church services, and the downtown Liberty theater, where the staff organist entertained with a pipe organ concert every weekday in an effort to keep the organ in adjustment.<sup>64</sup>

Despite the move from Havre to Great Falls and the rapid growth of radio station KFBB in the years immediately following 1929, the Buttrey facility wisely retained the elements of

---

<sup>63</sup>Conversation with Lopuch, *op. cit.* The studios of KGHL in Billings were among the finest in the state, rivaled only in this period of the early 1930s by the KFBB studios in Great Falls.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

programming that had so strongly appealed to rural folk in the Havre vicinity. Particularly appreciated by farm and ranch residents was the KFBB custom of sending direct messages over the air to specific families.<sup>65</sup> Telephone facilities in the rural areas were not common in the early 1930s: KFBB became something of a central Montana "party-line," transmitting personal messages from one farm family to another. A long-time employee of the radio station recalled an instance involving a farm family that had traveled to Great Falls for the annual fair only to discover the tickets were at home. A telephone call to KFBB was followed by an on-the-air message to a neighboring family, and the tickets were in the hands of the unlucky group that evening.<sup>66</sup>

In 1936, radio station KFBB increased power to 5,000 watts and joined the Columbia Broadcasting System. The new, higher-powered transmitter and 420-foot steel antenna were innovations in broadcasting. The transmitter, manufactured by Western Electric, employed an "inverse feedback" feature to improve the quality and the efficiency of the broadcast signal. The tower, designed by John F. Morrison of the Bell Telephone Company laboratories, was

---

<sup>65</sup>KGCX, Wolf Point, Mont., also frequently engaged in this type of service. Other Montana broadcasting stations occasionally provided announcements of the "direct" message type, but not with the frequency of KFBB and KGCX.

<sup>66</sup>Conversation with Lopuch, op. cit.

directly grounded and featured a "shunt excited feed" for the antenna.<sup>67</sup>

CBS network programs added to the daily program schedule of the station, and central Montana radio listeners became accustomed to regular programs from the major entertainment centers of the United States.<sup>68</sup> Radio listeners in other cities throughout the country got to know about Great Falls, Mont., as well. KFBB originated several broadcasts for CBS, including "Transatlantic Call," an exchange broadcast between CBS and the British Broadcasting Company, and several broadcasts for the CBS "Church of the Air" series.<sup>69</sup>

Throughout the late 1930s and the 1940s radio station KFBB pursued a policy of conservative, home-town programming. The station's first competition in Great Falls came in 1947 with the construction of KKIK, a National Broadcasting Company affiliate, owned and operated by the Z-Bar network. Additional competition came to the Great Falls market in 1948, with the construction of the Tribune station, KMON.

---

<sup>67</sup>Lopuch interview, op. cit.

<sup>68</sup>An interesting incident involving KFBB, KGVO, Missoula, and CBS regarding network affiliation in 1936 is related in the section on KGVO. Both Montana stations affiliated with CBS at the same time but at different cost rates. When the apparent deception was discovered, CBS was obliged to offer a compromise to KFBB.

<sup>69</sup>Lopuch interview, op. cit.

In 1946, Great Falls contractor Fred Birch purchased the KFBB station from the Buttrey Company but retained the corporate name of Buttrey Broadcast, Incorporated.<sup>70</sup> Five years later, Birch attempted to transfer his control in the corporation to the Fairmont Investment Corporation, thereby setting in motion a chain of events that revealed the Anaconda Copper Mining company was attempting to secure a communications medium in the only major Montana city in which the ACM did not control the daily newspaper.<sup>71</sup>

On Jan. 29, 1951, Birch requested that the Federal Communications Commission approve the application to transfer control of KFBB from himself to Fairmont "to reduce financial responsibility and place control in the hands of desirable, responsible parties."<sup>72</sup> Consideration in the proposed transfer involved 1,428 shares of Buttrey Broadcast stock--representing 51 per cent of all shares--valued at \$157,080.<sup>73</sup> When the news of the proposed transfer became public in Great Falls, letters of protest arrived at the FCC. The Cascade County Trades and Labor Assembly secretary, John Evanko, wrote that his organization was

strongly opposed to the sale of the controlling stock of radio station KFBB to the Fairmont Corporation. Mr. Glover who is chairman of the Fairmont Corporation, is chief counsel for ACM. The ACM already owns or controls all except

---

<sup>70</sup>Conversation with W. C. Blanchette, op. cit.

<sup>71</sup>ACM owned stock in newspapers in Billings, Missoula, Helena, and Livingston.

<sup>72</sup>Federal Communications Commission, record group 173 (docket 10026) State Historical Library, Helena, Mont.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

one of the daily newspapers in the state.<sup>74</sup>

A druggist in the small community of Joliet, near Great Falls, protested to the FCC, charging

such a move is entirely uncalled for in our state and completely unnecessary to the welfare of the radio broadcasting business in Montana. This ACM company already holds our state in a viselike grip... it constitutes a veritable monster over men and the affairs of men.<sup>75</sup>

Meanwhile, the FCC determined there was some question regarding the so-called "character qualifications" of the Fairmont Corporation. An FCC order of Aug. 1, 1951, stated the agency wanted to look into an ACM company conviction for violation of Section I of the Sherman Act, occurring Feb. 6, 1941, for conspiracy to unlawfully restrain interstate trade and commerce in western pine lumber. A public hearing on the proposed transfer of control and the 1941 case was set by the Commission for Sept. 24, 1951.<sup>76</sup>

Telegrams were received at the Commission offices from numerous labor and farm groups, requesting permission to testify at the scheduled hearing. Protests continued to be received. One letter from the Judith Basin County Farmers Union was addressed personally to President Harry S. Truman and asserted that "we do not believe that the acquisition of any radio stations in the state by ACM to be in keeping with the best interests of the state of Montana."<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup>FCC record group 173, op. cit.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>FCC record group 173, op.cit.

A Helena newspaper publisher, Harry Billings, complained to Senator James E. Murray of Montana that there was an attempt not to inform the people of the state of the scheduled hearing through the ACM company control of a majority of the daily newspapers in Montana.<sup>78</sup>

As the number of protests swelled, the Fairmont Corporation and Birch requested an indefinite postponement of the public hearing. In May, 1952, both parties appealed to the Commission to "reconsider" the matter of the public hearing, but the FCC turned down the request and advised the Fairmont Corporation executives that more of ACM company's past bouts with the Justice Department would be on the agenda of the hearing.<sup>79</sup>

Clearly, the case was hopeless for Fairmont. Public opinion in Montana had been aroused against the company, and the Commission had made it certain the "character qualifications" of the ACM company and Fairmont would be under meticulous scrutiny. On July 10, 1952, attorneys for Birch and the Fairmont Corporation quietly filed a petition with the Commission to dismiss the application for transfer of control of radio station KFBB. Commission Secretary T. J. Slowie responded with an order to that effect July 15, 1952.<sup>80</sup> The attempt of Anaconda to get into radio broadcasting had been stopped.

---

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

Unsuccessful in his attempt to sell his controlling interest in KFBB to the Fairmont Corporation, Birch relinquished control to the man who had been manager of the station since 1940, Joseph P. Wilkins. Under his guidance KFBB moved ahead with the construction of Great Falls' first television station and the first major reconstruction of the radio studios since 1932. On Sept. 13, 1953, ground was broken for a radio and television building at the site of the radio broadcasting transmitter west of Great Falls.<sup>81</sup> On March 21, 1954, KFBB Television began telecasting on channel 5 with an opening program of live and film shows and a special motion picture, "Meet John Doe," starring Gary Cooper.<sup>82</sup> The radio broadcasting studios in the new radio and television center had been in use since several days before the official dedication of the television station.

In 1960, Joseph P. Wilkins stepped out of broadcasting and sold his interests to an out-of-state firm incorporated as KFBB Broadcast. The stations were sold again in June, 1962, to the Harriscope Broadcasting Corporation.<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>81</sup>Conversation with Blanchette, op. cit.

<sup>82</sup>Great Falls Tribune, (March 18, 1954). Cooper, born and raised in central Montana, was a favorite of motion picture fans, and it is notable that the station included one of his many pictures on the first telecast.

<sup>83</sup>Broadcasting, 1963 Yearbook issue, p. A-55. Harriscope also has financial interest in KITWO AM-TV, Casper, Wyo.; and KLFM, Long Beach, and KKAR Pomona, both in California.

KFBB Television now operates on channel 5 with 25,100 watts video power and 12,600 watts aural power.<sup>84</sup> The station receives line network programming through the privately owned facilities of Skyline TV from a pickup point near Salt Lake City. KFBB Television is affiliated with the CBS Television network.

KFBB Radio operates at 1310 kilocycles with a full-time power of 5,000 watts, employing a directional antenna pattern at night. The radio station was affiliated with CBS in 1936, but severed the relationship in 1962 because of "additional program demands of the network that hurt the local station."<sup>85</sup> KFBB Radio operates as a so-called "independent station," without network affiliation of any kind.

Montana's oldest radio station built an image in central Montana that was carefully nurtured in the programming format of the station for many years. The picture of the close, personal radio station, informal yet authoritative, sensitive to what the rural people wanted to hear and anxious to please everybody with a homespun style of broadcasting, remained intact until the early 1950s. Ownership changes, competition in the form of additional radio stations and television, and a search for better devices to sell advertising chipped away at the old format.

---

<sup>84</sup>KFBB Television has received a construction permit to increase power to 100,000 watts video, 50,000 watts aural. (Jan., 1963).

<sup>85</sup>Conversation with Blanchette, op. cit.



## BROADCASTING FROM THE UNIVERSITY

It was on May 17, 1923 that a young physics instructor from Wisconsin stepped from the train in Missoula. Walking to the University of Montana campus to discuss the possibility of becoming chairman of the physics department, G. D. Shallenberger, Ph.D., passed the display window of the Mosby Electric Company and noticed a fifty-watt broadcast transmitter. The sight interested Dr. Shallenberger, for he had spent much of his time during the preceding year assisting physics students at Beloit College with the construction of a radiotelephone transmitter.

By dinnertime that evening, Dr. Shallenberger had agreed to accept the position of physics department chairman at the University. In addition, agreement had been reached between Dr. Shallenberger and University President Charles H. Clapp that a broadcasting station should be constructed on the Missoula campus as soon as possible.<sup>86</sup> However, 18 months passed before work began on the University station. Oct. 7, 1924, Dr. Shallenberger revealed work was under way and predicted programs would be broadcast for the first time in the fall or early winter.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>86</sup>Conversation with Dr. G. D. Shallenberger, Missoula, Montana, May 26, 1960.

<sup>87</sup>Montana Kainin, (Oct. 7, 1924).

The second floor of Simpkins Hall was assigned to Dr. Shallenberger and four student assistants for the studios and transmitting room of the new station. The station antenna was planned for suspension over the building.<sup>88</sup> The five would-be broadcasters worked through October and November constructing the transmitter from assembled parts and frequently manufacturing parts that could not readily be obtained. Of particular help in this respect was a graduate student at the University and former undergraduate student of Dr. Shallenberger's at Beloit College, Earl Lenigen.<sup>89</sup>

In November, Dr. Shallenberger reported "plans for the new radio station are coming along nicely" and promised that the station would broadcast with 500 watts of power.<sup>90</sup> Early the following month, program tests were promised during the Christmas holidays "between 3 and 7 p.m. at 243 meters," but it appears the tests were never made.<sup>91</sup> The campus newspaper reported after the Christmas holidays that the station antenna was yet to be erected, although the station was expected to be on the air within three weeks.<sup>92</sup>

During the cold days of January, volunteers from the local

---

<sup>88</sup>Simpkins Hall was torn down during the summer of 1962.

<sup>89</sup>Conversation with Jack Ryan, Missoula, Mont., Jan. 21, 1963. Ryan was one of the four students involved in the early work of the broadcasting station.

<sup>90</sup>Montana Kaimin, (Nov. 18, 1924).

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., (Jan. 9, 1925).

office of the Montana Power Company erected two 110-foot utility poles directly to the north and south of Simpkins Hall and installed a pulley at the top of each pole, used to draw the assembled antenna into place.<sup>93</sup>

As completion of the station drew near there was speculation the radio station could broadcast the results of a scheduled basketball game and that the 500 watts of the University broadcast station transmitter might reach listeners as far as 1,500 miles away.<sup>94</sup> The speculation died quickly, however, for there were additional delays.

Late in January, 1925, the delay was blamed on the lack of two "filament lighting transformers" which reportedly were all that remained to be installed. Otherwise, the station was ready to begin broadcasting. A reception room, control room, studio, and workshop had been finished, the equipment had been installed, a new \$100 microphone had arrived, and spirits of the hard-working station staff were high.<sup>95</sup> Test programs were under way early in February, and listener reports confirmed that the signal was "loud and clear." Only federal government authorization for a frequency and assignment of call letters were needed before regular broadcasting could begin.

---

<sup>93</sup>Conversation with Ryan, *op. cit.*

<sup>94</sup>Montana Kaimin, (Jan. 25, 1925).

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., (Jan. 23, 1925).

On Feb. 13, 1925, Dr. Shallenberger announced the University broadcasting station would be on the air to relay results of the Montana-Utah State basketball game and the highlights of the traditional University Charter Day activities Feb. 17, concluding the broadcasting day with the formal opening ceremonies of the station.<sup>96</sup> The last several days before the official dedication and opening broadcast were hectic as the broadcasting station staff of student volunteers completed minor adjustments to the equipment and confirmed who would appear on the various programs to be offered. A large Baldwin grand piano had arrived from Chicago, and moving it to the second floor of Simpkins Hall was not an easy task. The piano was loaned to the University station in exchange for occasional mentions of the name of the firm. Jack Ryan, one of the four students involved in the early work at the broadcasting station, recalled the Baldwin company loaned pianos "at the drop of a decibel" in return for mentions such as, "Now, here is Miss Susan Jones at the Baldwin."<sup>97</sup>

The microphone was the only complete piece of manufactured apparatus in the broadcasting station. It had cost \$100 and consisted of a metal case nine inches in diameter, covered by a polished metal screen that protected the gold diaphragm and the

---

<sup>96</sup>Montana Kaimin, (Feb. 13, 1925).

<sup>97</sup>Conversation with Ryan, op. cit.

polished carbon granules that converted sound waves into electrical energy.<sup>98</sup>

Several days before the official opening of the broadcasting station, representatives of the Pathe News Service arrived to photograph University football star "Wild Bill" Kelly and the studios of the new station, with the promise that both would "be shown in theaters throughout the state."<sup>99</sup>

During the week of Feb. 12, 1925, the University broadcasting station went on the air with results of the Montana-Utah State basketball game, although there is some doubt that the station was officially licensed to operate.<sup>100</sup> Listening reports following this first broadcast were encouraging. A fan in Bozeman reported "results of the basketball game were very clear." Another listener in Nelson, British Columbia, said the "basketball announcements were very clear and I thought I could hear people through the telephone." Additional reports were received from Seattle, Salem, Ore., and Absarokee, Mont.<sup>101</sup>

At precisely 8 p.m. on Feb. 17, 1925, the University broadcasting station--KUOM, operating at 1230 kilocycles with 250 watts of power--officially began regular programming with formal opening

---

<sup>98</sup>Montana Kaimin, (Jan. 16, 1925).

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., (Feb. 3, 1925).

<sup>100</sup>The campus newspaper reported Feb. 13 that assignment of call letters and frequency had been received by telegram Feb. 12. However, Dr. S. E. Frost, in his book "Education's Own Stations," states "On Feb. 17, 1925, the broadcast station...was officially opened, though federal licensing authorization was not issued until Feb. 26," p. 227.

<sup>101</sup>Montana Kaimin, (Feb. 17, 1925).

ceremonies from the lecture auditorium in Main Hall.<sup>102</sup> President Clapp stepped up to the station's only microphone to confess to the radio listeners that "we are showing off tonight, so to speak, in that we are broadcasting the talent of the University to those who cannot be here with us....Education to improve man's work and improve his recreation in art, music and science is our purpose."<sup>103</sup> The University Symphony was featured on the opening program as well as several baritone selections by Dean DeLoss Smith of the music school. Reaction to the official opening program and other broadcasts in the weeks that followed originated more from points outside Montana. Frequent and enthusiastic reports were received from radio fans in Alaska, Florida, Maine, and southern California. Reception of station KUOM was particularly clear along Beacon Street in Boston.<sup>104</sup> A ship's captain, N. H. Kramm, wrote that the KUOM broadcasts were heard on shipboard 300 miles off the Florida coast clearly enough to carry across the deck.<sup>105</sup> The shipboard report, coupled with an earlier letter from a radio enthusiast in Haines, Alaska, stood as the distance records for KUOM. Unfortunately, reports from Helena, Butte, and Billings indicated reception of

---

<sup>102</sup>Main Hall was located approximately 150 yards from the studios in Simpkins Hall.

<sup>103</sup>Montana Kaimin, (Feb. 20, 1925).

<sup>104</sup>Conversation with Shallenberger, op. cit.

<sup>105</sup>Montana Kaimin, (May 19, 1925).

the station within the state was only fair.

Regular programs on the University station were scheduled for Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings. Monday customarily was reserved for performances by University talent, while local church groups and townspeople contributed to the Wednesday and Friday programs. Generally, all scheduled programs were so-called "live" broadcasts, originating from the station studio or the nearby Main Hall auditorium. Occasionally, phonograph records were used to "fill time" when scheduled talent was delayed reaching the studio.<sup>106</sup> Broadcasts did not fit any particular format and often were changed at the last minute. The relatively heavy schedule of "live" broadcasts increased the possibility of crises arising while the programs were on the air. There were numerous cases of so-called "mike fright"--situations when the performer suddenly would become paralyzed with fear--and one of the regular student staff members would find it necessary to step in and "fill" with any comments that came to mind. Jack Ryan recalled his experience with "mike fright" in the person of a young lady who was to play the piano:

She...launched into a selection I was familiar with and then began improvising in places that I did not recognize. I got around to the back of the piano to look at her...to see if anything was wrong. Something definitely was wrong, for tears were streaming down her face. She had completely forgotten the piece, but she was enough of a show woman to realize that she had to continue making some noise with that piano. She improvised

---

<sup>106</sup>Conversation with Ryan, op. cit.

for some ten minutes, then remembered how the piece wound up.<sup>107</sup>

The most ambitious sports broadcast of the University station occurred during the first year of operation. The University basketball team was playing in Bozeman, some 220 miles away, in the classic rivalry between the State College and the University. Dr. Shallenberger and his student assistants arranged for a long distance telephone hookup from the floor of the gymnasium in Bozeman to the station studio in Missoula. Because the funds of KUOM were very limited, the students financed the cost of the telephone line by setting up loudspeakers in the Main Hall auditorium and charging each student 50 cents to get in to hear the re-creation of the contest. The device raised about \$50, enough to cover the cost of the telephone hookup. Ryan was involved in the broadcast:

I was on this end [Missoula]. I don't remember exactly who was at the other end in Bozeman but it was probably "Red" Brennan. I had a telephone receiver...at the microphone... and would relay what he told me into the microphone. At first, I tried to re-create what I was hearing. Early in the game I was about twelve plays behind...but later I caught up with an automatic repeat...repeating exactly what I heard.<sup>108</sup>

During home games the station would locate an old Western Electric amplifier on the running track above the playing floor,

---

<sup>107</sup>Conversation with Ryan, op. cit.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid.



sending the voice reports of the action back to the studio by wire and then transmitting them into the air. An airplane-type microphone was used in broadcasts of this kind because of its very high directional characteristics, which successfully cut down the crowd noise in the gymnasium. The remote equipment used at the home basketball games was used at least once for a "live" broadcast of Phil Sheridan's orchestra during the campus junior prom.<sup>109</sup>

Radio station KUOM's studios in Simpkins Hall were not pretentious but did reflect the interest of the student volunteers in the control of sound. The main studio was approximately 25 by 30 feet and was acoustically conditioned with scrap carpet tacked to the walls, then covered with muslin.<sup>110</sup> Dr. Shallenberger complained the studio was almost "too dead" for every kind of broadcast. The so-called "operating room" was neatly arranged and was dominated by a large marble panel in which were mounted the various control switches. The switching panel "stood out like a house afire on a dark night."<sup>111</sup>

---

<sup>109</sup>Conversation with Ryan, op. cit.

<sup>110</sup>Dr. Shallenberger recalled the scrap carpet was a gift of the Hotel Florence and the muslin a gift of the Missoula Mercantile Company.

<sup>111</sup>Conversation with Shallenberger, op. cit. Jack Ryan states the panel of marble was a gift from the University physical plant as the result of remodeling on a campus lavatory.

Musical programs were the bread and butter broadcasts for the University radio station. Virtually all music programs originated in the Main Hall auditorium because the station's one studio often was too small for large groups, particularly those groups from the University music school. Dr. Shallenberger recalled that the music school faculty was very helpful to the radio station.<sup>112</sup> Student staff member Ryan recalled the music school was indeed helpful but frequently troublesome:

We had what amounted to a head-on argument with the music department. It...came to a head when we put dance music by Phil Sheridan's orchestra on the air. It was the feeling that this was not appropriate for a University radio station.<sup>113</sup>

Despite complaints from the music school, it would appear the Phil Sheridan orchestra was a popular, if not culturally uplifting feature of the station programming. The campus newspaper reported "two telegrams from Chicago, one from Seattle, another from Kalispell and more than a hundred telephone calls from points in and around Missoula were received by KUOM last night as evidence of the reception with which the program of Sheridan's orchestra was being received."<sup>114</sup> While Sheridan's orchestra might have been the focal point of the disagreement between the radio station

---

<sup>112</sup>Conversation with Shallenberger, op. cit.

<sup>113</sup>Conversation with Ryan, op. cit.

<sup>114</sup>Montana Kaimin, (Mar. 20; 1925).

staff and the music school faculty, other musical programs likely served to keep the controversy alive. On the evening of April 16, 1925, Miss Solvay Andresen highlighted the KUOM program with her rendition of "The Flapper's Wife...a song adapted from the Newspaper Enterprise Association serial running in the columns of the Missoula Sentinel."<sup>115</sup>

Very early in the life of the radio station, Dr. Shallenberger envisioned numerous services he believed the station could provide western Montana. Several days following the formal opening of KUOM he wrote, "one of the features of the broadcast station is the service it is expected to give the forestry interests, particularly in the way of assisting in the prevention of fires."<sup>116</sup> He outlined a proposal to work with the state government in the formulation of an informational program to acquaint prospective tourists with the interesting things to do and see in Montana; he speculated about a proposed series of experiments directing "smokechasers" to areas of suspected trouble in the forests; he commented upon the benefits of radio broadcasts from the University station to "break the monotony of the lone fire lookout."<sup>117</sup>

---

<sup>115</sup>Montana Kaimin, (Apr. 17, 1925).

<sup>116</sup>Ibid.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid.

Whether all aspects of Dr. Shallenberger's plan ever were implemented is questionable. Student staff member Ryan recalled that he was not particularly concerned with the summer broadcasts and has reasoned that the project was not entirely successful.<sup>118</sup> Some broadcasts undoubtedly were conducted for the benefit of the Forest Service, however. A report of June 16, 1925, quotes Dr. Shallenberger as saying the station would resume programming on June 20, dispatching forest reports, weather forecasts and current news items.<sup>119</sup>

The facilities of KUOM occasionally were used for public assistance announcements, much in the same manner that "public service" announcements are handled in broadcasting today. The announcements in the early days of KUOM ranged from crass promotion of scheduled events to appeals for help for fire fighters and assistance in locating individuals who were lost or missing. In May, 1928, the parents of two Chicago youths--missing on a hike in Glacier Park--requested that KUOM alert persons in the park for any trace of the boys.<sup>120</sup>

During September and October, 1928, KUOM set aside program time for discussion of the presidential campaign, inviting representatives of both major political parties to state the

---

<sup>118</sup>Conversation with Ryan, op. cit.

<sup>119</sup>Montana Kaimin, (June 16, 1925).

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., (May 8, 1925).

cases for their respective candidates.<sup>121</sup> Dr. Shallenberger reported that the University radio station broadcast a political campaign talk by the Democratic presidential candidate, Alfred E. Smith, during an appearance in Helena. Dr. Shallenberger states that when he was consulted in advance of Smith's arrival regarding the possibility of broadcast of the talk, he stipulated that a Republican should appear on the same platform to balance the opinions offered by Smith. The state GOP leaders agreed to the idea, said Dr. Shallenberger, but the Republican candidate did not appear.<sup>122</sup> The broadcast was originated by a team of professional radio engineers traveling with the Smith party. The program was "fed" to Missoula over long distance telephone lines. There was no charge for the broadcast.<sup>123</sup>

While the fall of 1928 brought the historic Smith political broadcast to the University radio station, it also ushered in the first of a series of misfortunes that brought an end to the operation of the station. Limited funds were available to operate the station. There was virtually no money for the purchase of new equipment. The hand-made transmitter and control room facilities could not be improved. Meanwhile, the broadcasting industry was making rapid

---

<sup>121</sup>Montana Kaimin, (Oct. 30, 1925).

<sup>122</sup>Dr. Shallenberger explained that because the University station could not charge for a political broadcast, he felt both political parties should be fairly represented.

<sup>123</sup>KUOM was not the only radio station to broadcast the speech. The Anaconda Standard, (Sept. 25, 1928) reported "Al Smith spoke the night of the 24th in Helena....More than thirty radio stations were hooked up for the broadcasting the meeting."

progress with respect to the quality of radiotelephone transmission, and listeners were becoming more critical of stations that could not offer quality transmission similar to that of the larger stations in metropolitan areas. Equipment breakdowns became more frequent at KUOM; coverage in the state was spotty; commercial radio stations were frequently petitioning the Federal Radio Commission to move KUOM's frequency assignment to avoid interference with their own signals. Between April 22, 1928, and Oct. 30, 1929, the University station was ordered to change frequency three times and reduce its program time.<sup>124</sup>

During the fall of 1928 Dr. Shallenberger and several student assistants attempted to devise a solution to the problem of poor reception of KUOM within Montana. One proposal called for erecting the antenna atop 2,000-foot Mount Sentinel, at the eastern edge of the campus. Dr. Shallenberger, Ryan, and others trudged to the top of the mountain carrying approximately 100 pounds of batteries and radio receiving equipment. Once on top of the mountain they assembled the receiver and confirmed what most of them had suspected; it was a "hot" area for reception. They reasoned the mountain would be an ideal location for the University broadcasting station antenna. The Anaconda Copper Mining company offered to donate the necessary wire to link the antenna with the studio, and the Montana Power

---

<sup>124</sup>Frost, op. cit., p. 227.

Company again offered the services of linemen to construct the proposed line. However, the lack of money and the reluctance of the University administration to expand the broadcasting station combined to kill the proposal.<sup>125</sup>

The 1929 legislative assembly found it necessary to cut back on state spending, and Montana's institutions of higher learning were forced to operate with severely limited funds. In the fall of 1929 station KUOM was in serious trouble. Equipment failures were commonplace, and the station broadcasts became infrequent. At midnight, Oct. 31, 1929, radio station KUOM's broadcast license expired. There had not been any attempt to renew it, although there remained some hope the station could resume broadcasting. Dr. Shallenberger stated that "although lacking sufficient appropriations with which to operate radio station KUOM, plans are being made for overhauling of the plant. We want to have everything in readiness in case we get some financial support from any source. At present, prospects for financial means with which to operate the station seem poor..."<sup>126</sup> The station departed from the broadcasting scene quietly.

Certainly the University of Montana radio station was not unique in this respect in 1929. Twelve additional educational

---

<sup>125</sup>Conversation with Ryan, op. cit.

<sup>126</sup>Montana Kaimin, (Nov. 1, 1929).

radio stations closed as well. Applications for new educational radio stations dropped to zero in 1930. In contrast, 25 radio stations were licensed to educational institutions in 1925, the same year KUOM received permission to broadcast.<sup>127</sup>

Dr. Shallenberger had conceived a more ambitious plan for educational radio in Montana prior to the financial troubles that plagued KUOM. Had the Great Depression not struck the nation in 1929, Montana likely would have been among the first to exploit the advantages of educational radio broadcasting. Dr. Shallenberger's plan called for construction of a powerful radio transmitter near the center of the state--possibly Lewistown--with radio studios at each of Montana's six institutions of higher learning. Each unit would contribute a specified amount of program material each week. In this way the responsibility for the radio programs would be shared among the various units, and educational programs could be patterned more closely to the area of instruction emphasized at each unit.<sup>128</sup>

Such an ambitious plan has not since been seriously advanced.

---

<sup>127</sup>Frost, op. cit., p. 227.

<sup>128</sup>Conversation with Shallenberger, op. cit.



## ED KREBSBACH AND STATION KG CX

A young bank clerk and an imaginative eastern Montana rancher huddled in the back room of the First State Bank in Vida, Mont., during the winter months of late 1924 and early 1925, studying the rudimentary circuit diagrams for a radiotelephone transmitter. E. E. Krebsbach and Joe Jacobs had become interested in radiotelephone transmission and eventually constructed a small  $7\frac{1}{2}$ -watt transmitter. In the fall of 1926, application for authorization to broadcast was made to the Department of Commerce, and authorization was subsequently received Oct. 5, 1926.<sup>129</sup> Staff workers at the Department offices in Washington, D. C., might well have been surprised upon receipt of the application, for the population of Vida in 1926 totaled 25 persons.<sup>130</sup>

The Vida broadcasting station was assigned the call letters KG CX. It was eastern Montana's first radio station. The two men responsible for the construction of KG CX were pioneers in their own right. Krebsbach had ventured to Montana in 1914 and homesteaded 320 acres of land near Vida. He married a Vida schoolteacher in 1920 and branched from farming into the banking business.<sup>131</sup> Joe Jacobs a rancher near Vida and a man

keen of mind as well as hand. Though his

---

<sup>129</sup>Broadcasting, 1963 Yearbook issue, p. A-317.

<sup>130</sup>In 1929, prior to the station's relocation in Wolf Point, Vida was the smallest city in the United States to have a licensed broadcasting station.

<sup>131</sup>Letter from E. C. Krebsbach, son of E. E. Krebsbach, Feb. 22, 1963.

occupation was ranching he was a tinkerer as well. For example there was the ski-mobile, the contraption with an automobile body, an airplane motor and propeller, all mounted on skis. It would travel at speeds upwards to 40 miles per hour...<sup>132</sup>

There was no telephone communication in the Vida area in 1926--a fact that may have stimulated Krebsbach and Jacobs to construct the radiotelephone transmitter--and the remote character of the plains country surrounding Vida offered little diversion for the dry-land farmers. Krebsbach, an amateur musician,

liked to talk to people and he enjoyed music. He enjoyed music so much that on many occasions he would ride as many as 40 miles on horseback, saxophone slung over his saddle horn, to play for dances, the chief entertainment of the period. Perhaps it was this keen interest in people and enjoyment of music that drew Ed Krebsbach to infant radio.<sup>133</sup>

Radio station KGCCX was not a pretentious affair in 1926. The one small studio was located in the back of the bank building, and the microphone was a converted telephone transmitter. Phonograph records were played on a hand-wound turntable, although the pickup device was electrically operated. Broadcasting was on an irregular basis, with programs originating during those hours Krebsbach could be away from banking affairs in the front of the building. There were no commercials, although grateful farmers occasionally would bring Krebsbach livestock or poultry in return for a special announcement he had made for them.<sup>134</sup>

---

<sup>132</sup>Krebsbach letter.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid.

Radio station KGCK acquired additional listeners in the period 1926 to 1929, but Krebsbach earned little in the way of advertising income from the station. Late in 1928 Krebsbach undoubtedly realized his broadcasting station needed more than the  $7\frac{1}{2}$  watts of the original transmitter. To secure an increase in power, KGCK had to be relocated in a larger community. Early in 1929, the Wolf Point newspaper stated there was a possibility that the radio station might move to Wolf Point "if financial and other required arrangements can be made."<sup>135</sup> The item reported that Krebsbach already had made plans to move to Wolf Point to engage in other business and that he "is willing to bring the station to Wolf Point if the enterprise meets with a good reception and cooperative assistance."<sup>136</sup>

The community clearly was pleased at the prospect of having a broadcasting station. Businessmen had been approached on the matter and "were quick to see the advantages of having this means of close touch and regular communication with the tributary country."<sup>137</sup> The community's so-called "Commercial Club" listened to Krebsbach's plans for radio station KGCK and supported the proposal to solicit funds to help defray the cost of new equipment, which included new antenna towers and a new "generator."<sup>138</sup>

---

<sup>135</sup>Wolf Point Herald, (Jan. 4, 1929).

<sup>136</sup>Ibid.

<sup>137</sup>Ibid.

<sup>138</sup>Ibid., (Jan. 18, 1929). The reference to "generator" is probably incorrect. The reporter should have said "transmitter."

Krebsbach was fortunate to have found an enthusiastic booster for his proposed relocation in Wolf Point. C. W. Hamblin, operator of an electric service shop, had persuaded Krebsbach to broadcast occasional programs from Wolf Point while KG CX was located in Vida. Hamblin was known and respected in his community and unquestionably aided Krebsbach in the drive for Wolf Point community support for radio station KG CX.<sup>139</sup>

Within six weeks following his appearance before members of the Wolf Point Commercial Club, Krebsbach announced formally that KG CX would be moved to Wolf Point "as soon as the Radio Control Board issues the permit."<sup>140</sup> Authorization for the move and an increase in transmitting power to 250 watts in the daytime and 100 watts at night was received from the government early in May, 1929.<sup>141</sup> Krebsbach and Jacobs journeyed by airplane to Regina, Saskatchewan, and station CKCK to inspect the station's equipment and engage the services of the station's chief engineer--Bert Hooper<sup>142</sup>--to install the new equipment at KG CX.<sup>143</sup>

During his earlier discussion at the Wolf Point Commercial Club, Krebsbach had indicated the total cost for the move from Vida to Wolf Point would be in the vicinity of \$300.<sup>144</sup> However, by May it was

---

<sup>139</sup>Wolf Point Herald, (Jan. 4, 1929).

<sup>140</sup>Ibid., (Mar. 1, 1929).

<sup>141</sup>Ibid., (May 10, 1929).

<sup>142</sup>Identified as "one of the highest rated transmitter designers in the country." Wolf Point Herald, (July 19, 1929).

<sup>143</sup>Ibid., (May 10, 1929).

<sup>144</sup>Ibid., (Jan. 18, 1929).

clear Krebsbach had decided to add more improvements to the station. The Commercial Club had already raised what was termed "a substantial amount,"<sup>145</sup> and contributions were still being solicited on May 10. The local newspaper reported "a considerable amount will be needed to buy and install the new plant and to provide a studio from which the programs can be broadcast."<sup>146</sup>

By July 19, all of the newly purchased broadcasting equipment had arrived in Wolf Point, and assembly of the station got under way. Hooper came to Wolf Point by airplane--an event that created considerable interest in itself--for a stay of approximately ten days while he directed the installation of the broadcasting equipment.<sup>147</sup>

At seven seconds past 11:38 Tuesday night, after hours of work that ran far into the night and sometimes the early morning, the station building was completed. Tests were made and those who were tuned in heard, 'Oh, boy, she's on the air' come in from KGCX from its Wolf Point location.<sup>148</sup>

With testing of the broadcasting equipment under way, Krebsbach promised the formal opening of the station would occur in approximately one week.<sup>149</sup> The station operator could not foresee the delays ahead, however, and the station was not formally dedicated until Aug. 21,

---

<sup>145</sup>Wolf Point Herald, (May 10, 1929).

<sup>146</sup>Ibid.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., (July 19, 1929). The newspaper reported Hooper and "a pilot friend, Ted Holmes, arrived in 'The Moth'...a plane manufactured in England. 'The Moth' made the 210 miles in little over three hours."

<sup>148</sup>Ibid.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid.

1929.<sup>150</sup> Krebsbach hired Dallas Jensen of Kalispell--a licensed radiotelephone operator--to operate the station, although Jensen augmented his salary from KGCK with a job at a local drugstore.<sup>151</sup>

The dedicatory broadcast of radio station KGCK on the evening of Aug. 21 was an ambitious affair, featuring Winn's orchestra, the high school band, several vocalists, and a state senator who entertained the listeners with the discussion of "Forming of the Federal Land Board." The musicians "made a decided hit with the audience and complied as much as possible with the many requests. Robert Bruce's coronet solos were especially in favor."<sup>152</sup> The technical operations were conducted smoothly, as "manager E. E. Krebsbach and operator Dallas Jensen had all of the mechanical details well in hand..."<sup>153</sup>

Krebsbach had hoped the increased power of radio station KGCK would reach as far as 1,500 miles during the night-time hours.<sup>154</sup> Following the opening broadcast, listening reports from LaGrande, Ore., were received and reported the reception was excellent. Krebsbach's hopes were confirmed.<sup>155</sup>

---

<sup>150</sup>Wolf Point Herald, (Aug. 23, 1929).

<sup>151</sup>Ibid., (July 19, 1929).

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., (Aug. 23, 1929).

<sup>153</sup>Ibid.

<sup>154</sup>Ibid., (July 19, 1929).

<sup>155</sup>Ibid., (Aug. 23, 1929).

Merchants in the community capitalized on the operation of the new radio station. Radio receiving sets were advertised in the newspaper, although they were expensive and possibly beyond the means of most Wolf Point residents. The cheapest advertised model during the summer of 1929 was a "Templeton" eight-tube radio, priced at \$149.<sup>156</sup>

Radio station KGCCX had earned a reputation as a station interested in local sports events while located in the small community of Vida. When telephone circuits became available in the latter part of the 1920s, KGCCX broadcasted a high school game from a small gymnasium in Poplar, a distance of approximately 50 miles.

The Gymnasium was small and filled to capacity. The KGCCX announcer was forced to borrow a step ladder so that he might watch the game through a transom. The play-by-play description was made from this position.<sup>157</sup>

In the fall of 1929--only a few weeks following the opening ceremonies of the station from Wolf Point--the radio station arranged for running accounts of the baseball World Series through the Western Union facilities in the community. Local merchants raised enough money to pay for the \$20 charge on each game. A retired telegrapher, L. T. Crayle, volunteered to "copy" the accounts of the game as they were received in Morse code at the Wolf Point telegraph office. A messenger was dispatched with the copy to the KGCCX studio, where the

---

<sup>156</sup>Wolf Point Herald, (Sept. 27, 1929).

<sup>157</sup>Krebsbach letter, op. cit.

announcer re-created the action in the baseball park.<sup>158</sup>

Eastern Montana's economic situation grew steadily worse following the stock market crash in 1929. Despite the relatively isolated location of Wolf Point, the community and the territory did not escape the major effects of the Depression. Radio station KGCK had few advertisers because the Wolf Point merchants had few dollars for advertising. As the broadcasting station struggled through the Depression, appreciative radio listeners occasionally helped out.

On one occasion, friends in Wolf Point helped by staging a dance. Residents of the surrounding towns purchased tickets. A total of \$1,000 was raised and a check in that amount, printed on a one-by-three foot paper, was presented to Mr. Krebsbach. The gift was greatly appreciated and the spirit has never been forgotten. A dance was held in Glasgow, Mont., a community 50 miles west of Wolf Point, and a check for \$300 was given to KGCK. Thus, in the early, dirty Thirties folks showed their appreciation of KGCK in a tangible way.<sup>159</sup>

Krebsbach managed to keep the radio station on the air during the darkest periods of the Depression and by 1936--about the time the economy of the nation was turning upward again--the broadcaster applied for and was granted an increase in power to 1,000 watts.<sup>160</sup> Krebsbach believed the radio station should offer "network" radio programs but knew the cost of bringing the programs to Wolf Point via

---

<sup>158</sup>Wolf Point Herald, (Oct. 4, 1929).

<sup>159</sup>Krebsbach letter, op. cit.

<sup>160</sup>Ibid.



the overland telephone lines would be prohibitive.

There was, however, a distinct need for quality programming and particularly news. Ed Krebsbach approached the Canadian Broadcasting Company for the purpose of arranging off-the-air pickup of some of that network's programs. Although there was no precedent for such an arrangement, and no regulations prohibiting it, it was to some an odd request. The request was made and granted. KG CX had network quality programming for its listeners at a time when it seemed impossible.<sup>161</sup>

Despite the increase in power in 1936 and the addition of "network" programs from the CBC, Krebsbach realized the economy of the Wolf Point area could not adequately support the radio station. In 1940 the crops in eastern Montana were poor, and the general business climate in the community of Wolf Point was unfavorable. Krebsbach searched for a nearby community that he felt could support the broadcast station. In 1942 KG CX moved to Sidney, a community almost twice the size of Wolf Point and surrounded by 60,000 acres of irrigated farmland. Local residents boasted the city was "depression-proof."<sup>162</sup>

In June, 1942, Krebsbach and the chief engineer of KG CX, Gene Bunker, began staking out the site for the transmitter plant in Sidney. The decision to move the station had been made several months before, but the outbreak of World War II had delayed the actual work. Krebsbach promised, however, that KG CX would be on the

---

<sup>161</sup>Krebsbach letter, op. cit.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid.

air from Sidney about the middle of August, 1942.<sup>163</sup>

In July, Krebsbach announced studios for the radio station would be located on the second floor of the Suckstorff Building in downtown Sidney.<sup>164</sup> The transmitter plant site was already staked out on the William Hammes farm, about four miles northeast of Sidney.<sup>165</sup>

In an address to the Sidney Kiwanis club in August, Krebsbach apologized for the delay in getting the station moved from Wolf Point to Sidney but promised the opening broadcasts would be heard within four to six weeks. The broadcaster also stated "the studio here would be one of the finest in the state, comparable to studios at Billings and Missoula, two of the finest." Krebsbach also speculated that it would be possible to increase the power of the station from 1,000 to 5,000 watts because the station would be located in a larger community.<sup>166</sup>

In September, 1942, KG CX began broadcasting from Sidney with 1,000 watts of power at 1480 kilocycles. The station continued off-the-air pickup of network programs from the CBC, and only minor changes were made in the over-all programming of the station. The early years in Sidney were war years, of course, and Krebsbach had a difficult time employing adequate announcers.

Mr. Krebsbach had to rely on his own talents, the aid of high school students, and those experienced announcers that were available but often unreliable. The feminine voice became familiar to KG CX listeners. In spite of this, KG CX delivered the news of the

---

<sup>163</sup>Sidney Herald, (June 25, 1942).

<sup>164</sup>Ibid., (July 16, 1942).

<sup>165</sup>Ibid., (June 25, 1942).

<sup>166</sup>Ibid., (Aug. 6, 1942).

war that was so eagerly awaited...<sup>167</sup>

Following the war, KGCK announced affiliation with the Mutual Broadcasting System and established sales offices and additional studios in Williston, No. Dak., in a move to identify the Sidney station with both communities. Clair Krebsbach, son of the man who had started the station twenty years earlier, assumed the post of manager of the Williston offices and studios of KGCK while the elder Krebsbach remained in Sidney. The Williston studios were formally opened Jan. 2, 1946.<sup>168</sup>

In 1948 KGCK received permission to increase power to 5,000 watts during the daytime hours and two years later was authorized to operate at 5,000 watts during the evening hours as well. In 1951, Ed Krebsbach's second son--Keith--began working as a member of the radio station staff.<sup>169</sup> In 1963, the father and the two sons retain the positions of president, general manager and program manager, respectively. Radio station KGCK in Sidney has not undergone any major changes since 1950, although the Krebsbach family has pioneered in another phase of Montana broadcasting by establishing the first frequency modulation broadcasting station in the state at Plentywood, Mont. KPWD-FM began broadcasting June 1, 1962, at 100.1 megacycles and a power of 880 watts. The FM facility duplicates the programs of KGCK in Sidney less than 10 per cent of the time on the air and offers

---

<sup>167</sup>Krebsbach letter, op. cit.

<sup>168</sup>Ibid.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid.

stereocast by multiplex.<sup>170</sup>

Radio station KGCV unquestionably has served the northeastern area of Montana very well. During the early years of the station in Vida and Wolf Point, KGCV often became the countryside's "party-line," broadcasting personal messages to individuals on the isolated farms and ranches. It is significant to recognize that much of the early-day intimacy of the radio station and the listener continues to be revealed in the 1960s.

Many years earlier, KGCV had been referred to as an 'Angel of Mercy.' At least one occurrence in 1961 earned a similar honorary title. A farmer's wife had visited the Richland County extension office for the purpose of having eggs poisoned... to be used in poisoning skunks at the farm. The woman left the office and by mistake put the eggs in the wrong automobile. She went about her shopping and upon returning to her automobile discovered the eggs were not to be found. Meanwhile, the owner of the automobile containing the poisoned eggs returned to his car, discovered the eggs, and presumed them to be a gift. When the farmer's wife returned and discovered the eggs missing, she immediately notified KGCV. The announcement that poisoned eggs had been placed in the wrong automobile...was heard by the person then in possession of the eggs. This prompt action by the farmer's wife and by KGCV likely may have saved many lives.<sup>171</sup>

---

<sup>170</sup>Broadcasting, Yearbook issue, p. B-110.

<sup>171</sup>Krebsbach letter, op. cit.

## RADIO BROADCASTING COMES TO NORTHWESTERN MONTANA

The voluntary financial assistance of businessmen, farmers, and professional men made possible the construction of the first radio broadcasting station in the northwestern section of Montana. While at least two other early-day broadcasting stations were encouraged by voluntary financial help, radio station KGEZ in Kalispell apparently is the only station in the state completely underwritten in this manner.

Kalispell radio fans had been exposed to broadcasting. Advertisements in the local newspaper suggested that set owners tune in the "Ever-ready Hour" Tuesday evenings at 9 on WEAJ network stations.<sup>172</sup> Radio receiving sets frequently were advertised, ranging in price from \$65 for "Broadwater's One Dial Mohawk radio...sharper tuning, finer tone quality, increased volume and distance"<sup>173</sup> to the famous Atwater-Kent models.<sup>174</sup> However, it can reasonably be assumed that Kalispell radio fans were subjected to the same inconsistent and scratchy reception reported from other cities within the state.<sup>175</sup>

---

<sup>172</sup>Kalispell Daily Interlake, (Jan. 18, 1927).

<sup>173</sup>Ibid., (Jan. 26, 1927).

<sup>174</sup>Ibid., (Jan. 27, 1927).

<sup>175</sup>See information in this study in regard to Billings, Sidney, and Great Falls. The Department of Commerce designation of two frequencies for all broadcasting stations, made in 1921 remained in effect until February, 1927. More than 600 stations were simultaneously attempting to broadcast on one frequency or the other. For a detailed report on this aspect of early radio broadcasting, consult White, Llewelyn., American Radio (Chicago, 1947), p. 129.

The first public announcement of the construction of a radio broadcasting station in Kalispell appeared Wednesday, Feb. 2, 1927, in an Associated Press story from Washington, D. C., which reported that ten new radio broadcasting stations had been authorized by the government, including station KGEZ in Kalispell. The facility was reported to be licensed to the Flathead Broadcasting Association and was assigned the news and entertainment frequency of 352 meters.<sup>176</sup>

Two days later the president of the Broadcasting Association, Dr. J. A. Lamb, promised the Kalispell station would be operating within two or three weeks and stated

some of the apparatus is already here....  
Broadcasting will be done from the roof of the Elks Temple, with the operating room to be located in the cupola atop the roof and the studio in the Chamber of Commerce room....  
The opening night a few weeks hence will be a big event in Kalispell's history. Invitations will be extended to all organizations in town to participate and possibly the presidents of the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary and Kiwanis clubs will be asked to talk...<sup>177</sup>

Dr. Lamb stated that the Broadcasting Association was formed during the fall of 1926 "by Kalispell business and professional men and Flathead farmers who contributed to building the station."<sup>178</sup>  
He also announced that Carlos Gayhart and John Parker would be the licensed operators of the new station.<sup>179</sup>

---

<sup>176</sup>Kalispell Daily Interlake, (Feb. 2, 1927).

<sup>177</sup>Ibid., (Feb. 4, 1927).

<sup>178</sup>Ibid.

<sup>179</sup>John Parker subsequently left KGEZ and joined the police force in Great Falls, Mont.

Dr. Lamb had some ideas of his own regarding programming on the new radio broadcasting station. One concert was planned for each week during the evening hours. Broadcasting also was proposed for the noon and evening meal periods. Dr. Lamb hastened to assure Flathead Valley radio fans, however, that the new Kalispell station would try not to interfere with other stations, particularly those stations in large metropolitan areas.<sup>180</sup>

Gayhart, Parker, and Dr. Lamb continued work on the radio broadcasting apparatus during the following three weeks. The station was far from complete when the three men decided to conduct a daring experiment that would--if successful--be invaluable promotion. The Northwest district basketball tournament was scheduled to be played in the Elks Temple gymnasium, downstairs from the radio station operating room and studios in the same building. Parker and Gayhart hastily assembled the transmitting equipment while Dr. Lamb persuaded two local sports figures to serve as commentators for the public. On Friday, Feb. 25, 1927, the station began broadcasting with power reduced to five watts; the gamble had been successful.

Station KGEZ, Kalispell, went on the air for the first time to broadcast the games of the Northwest district tournament in the Elks gym yesterday. The station is by no means completed yet and is, in fact, at only five watt strength but hastily put together for broadcasting the games. It was highly successful. The station covered the whole town...and was known to

---

<sup>180</sup>Kalispell Daily Interlake, (Feb. 4, 1927).

be heard as far as Big Fork and Whitefish. R. B. McKee and T. H. McDonald shared the play by play honors for the afternoon and evening games.<sup>181</sup>

McDonald was quoted as saying afterward that "broadcasting is certainly harder than making a 40 minute speech and seems to be very personal." McDonald's difficulty with the basketball game might be traced, in part, to the fact that the level of noise from the cheering fans occasionally overrode the voice of the commentator, who was likely straining to be heard above the din. The newspaper, reporting on the broadcasts, observed that "all of the yelling went out too, so that fans were sometimes unable to distinguish the score."<sup>182</sup>

Following the basketball game broadcasts, Parker, Gayhart, and Dr. Lamb returned to the task of completing the installation of the transmitting equipment. The transmitter had been hastily assembled for the tournament programs and had operated at only five watts of power. The men now were faced with the task of reassembling the transmitter to attain the licensed power of 100 watts. Within four weeks, the radio station was operating with test broadcasts. The formal opening program was scheduled for Mar. 21, 1927.

On Mar. 22, 1927, the local newspaper reported that

at 1:00 yesterday afternoon, KGEZ, Kalispell began broadcasting stock reports, weather reports a little music and announcements, correct time signals and other items of interest to persons in the valley. The Kalispell Mercantile Company put on the first goodwill program yesterday and

---

<sup>181</sup>Kalispell Daily Interlake, (Feb. 26, 1927).

<sup>182</sup>Ibid.



telephone calls began to pour in immediately, applauding it. Pleasant Valley was among the earliest to report in.<sup>183</sup>

Dr. Lamb was elated about the coverage of the signal of the new broadcasting station, and reported "the station...has been heard for a radius of 100 miles in any direction. Havre reported hearing our broadcast of the basketball tournament. Now that we are coming on with more power, we expect to be heard at greater distances, especially in the evening."<sup>184</sup> The Broadcasting Association president added that "the services of this station are now at the disposal of the people of the Flathead Valley and any merchants, organizations or individuals wishing to use it may apply to the...association for information."<sup>185</sup> Operating hours were announced as 12:30 until 2 each weekday afternoon and 6:30 to 7:30 evenings, with a special concert each Thursday night. "If patronage demands more time, we will probably go on Tuesday nights until 9," he said.<sup>186</sup>

Radio station KGEZ had officially begun broadcasting Monday, but the Thursday night concert program was set aside for special dedicatory observances during the first week of radio broadcasting, including musical selections by the Kalispell band and the Flathead Six orchestra.<sup>187</sup> The dedicatory program was acclaimed a "notable success" by the local newspaper:

The big opening program of station KGEZ,

---

<sup>183</sup>Kalispell Daily Interlake, (Mar. 22, 1927).

<sup>184</sup>Ibid.

<sup>185</sup>Ibid.

<sup>186</sup>Ibid.

<sup>187</sup>Ibid., (Mar. 24, 1927).

Kalispell, broadcasting last night from the studio in the Elks Temple, was considered by members of the Flathead Broadcasting Association to have the attention of the entire valley.

About 50 people gathered in the Elks gymnasium while the program was being broadcast and wherever there was a radio set in town, families and friends alike were assembled to hear what Kalispell's station sounds like on the air.<sup>188</sup>

One radio fan from a relatively large city served by a so-called "regional" station commented favorably on the KGEZ broadcasts. Leon B. Allen of Minneapolis was quoted as saying "the program was excellent...as good as I have heard in the big city." He particularly complimented the performance of the Flathead Six orchestra.<sup>189</sup>

Following the final selection on the special Thursday night broadcast, the station received a number of requests from the local radio fans for encores from the musicians, but the station was forced to ignore the requests. Gayhart, Parker, and Dr. Lamb had agreed to take the station signal off the air before the so-called "hot" reception for the West Coast stations, which generally began about 9 p.m.<sup>190</sup>

The Kalispell newspaper philosophically observed the day following the dedicatory program that

the progress of the station will be watched with considerable interest here and elsewhere. It is expected to mean much to the Flathead Valley in the way of advertising. Not only will firms and merchants, schools and churches

---

<sup>188</sup>Kalispell Daily Interlake, (Mar. 24, 1927).

<sup>189</sup>Ibid.

<sup>190</sup>Ibid.

secure its services, but also the assets of the valley itself as a great playground will be broadcast.<sup>191</sup>

Within a week following the first broadcast from radio station KGEZ, three Kalispell merchants had contracted for advertising on the radio. The Kalispell Mercantile Company, the Broadwater Drug Store, and Hoyt's Music Shop placed advertising announcements on the air.<sup>192</sup>

Donald Treloar, a close friend of Dr. Lamb, agreed to assume many of the announcing duties in the early days of radio station KGEZ. Treloar was the secretary of the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce when the station began broadcasting in 1927. As Treloar became more involved with the radio broadcasts, however, he turned his attention away from the duties of Chamber secretary and increasingly toward the operation of the radio station. Several months after the station first began broadcasting, Treloar agreed to move the station to his home on Fourth Avenue. The living room became the broadcasting studio. An addition was constructed at one side of the house to contain the station's transmitter and control room equipment. The so-called "flattop" antenna that had been located atop the Elks Temple was moved to the back yard of the Treloar home.<sup>193</sup>

The new location afforded radio station KGEZ the opportunity to broadcast programs with more local talent consisting of groups of

---

<sup>191</sup>Kalispell Daily Interlake, (Mar. 31, 1927).

<sup>192</sup>Ibid.

<sup>193</sup>Conversation with Lyle Carr, Missoula, Mont., Mar. 26, 1963. Carr appeared on many of the early programs on the station and was acquainted personally with the principals in the construction of the station.

six members or more. The original broadcasting studio in the Elks Temple had been too small; so small, in fact, that performers often were required to group around the upright piano with their backs pressing against the walls.<sup>194</sup>

One report indicates radio station KGEZ was moved at least two additional times before Treloar arranged for permanent broadcast studios in the First National Bank building in 1932.<sup>195</sup> In that year, the transmitter also was moved to a farm home near the Four Corners highway intersection south of Kalispell.<sup>196</sup>

KGEZ is unique among Montana broadcasting stations in at least one respect. As other early-day stations sought to increase transmitting power, Treloar was content to operate KGEZ at 100 watts until several years following World War II. KGEZ was one of the handful radio stations in the United States operating at less than 250 watts of power during the late 1940s and early 1950s. The exact date has not been determined, but it is believed KGEZ increased power to 250 watts in 1952 and to 1,000 watts in 1954.<sup>197</sup> Treloar disposed of the station in 1954, selling to the late Frank Reardon.<sup>198</sup> In June, 1958, the station was sold to Skyline Broadcasters, Incorporated, the current licensee.<sup>199</sup>

---

<sup>194</sup>Conversation with Carr, op. cit.

<sup>195</sup>Clyde Reichelt, "Radio in Montana," (Unpublished paper, School of Journalism, Montana State University, 1947).

<sup>196</sup>Conversation with Carr, op. cit.

<sup>197</sup>KGEZ currently operates at 600 kilocycles with 1,000 watts power.

<sup>198</sup>Reardon was the owner of KBOW, Butte.

<sup>199</sup>Broadcasting, Yearbook issue, p. B-109.

Radio station KGEZ continues to serve the Flathead Valley area with what has been described as

adult programming..with variety...news editorial, sports commentary, religion, comedy...not a "top forty" station. Through its editorials this station has exercised enormous impact on our listeners. We have been credited with being a major influence in defeating a questionable bond issue...shortening an unjustifiable strike. In fact, when we air anything controversial the response is immediate and conclusive.<sup>200</sup>

The significance of an early-day station such as KGEZ is difficult to measure. However, it would not be unfair to credit the station with considerable influence in the process of unifying the cultural and social interests of the people of the Flathead Valley. The fact that the station was located in Kalispell helped the community to become identified as the trade center for the valley region. The station very early was able to demonstrate the value of radio advertising. Above all of these considerations, however, is the manner in which business and professional men and valley farmers contributed to the construction of the station in 1927. Perhaps there is the true measure of the significance of KGEZ.<sup>201</sup>

---

<sup>200</sup>Letter from KGEZ, Kalispell, Mont., (Sept., 1962). "Top forty" is a reference to the practice of playing a single group of 40 recordings in repetition during a radio program or group of programs.

<sup>201</sup>No exact construction cost figures have been located, but one of the early-day performers recalled Treloar cited the figure of \$26,000 as the original cost of the station. Conversation with Carr, op. cit.

## THE RADIO STATION BUILT TO SELL RADIO RECEIVERS

The Northwestern Auto Supply Company was founded in Billings in 1914 as a distributor of automotive supplies in eastern Montana. Ten years later, under the management of Charles O. Campbell, the firm branched into the sale of radio receiving sets. In 1928 the firm entered the radio broadcasting business and gave eastern Montana and northern Wyoming a consistently superior broadcasting station.

Northwestern Auto Supply Company salesmen and sales representatives experienced considerable difficulty attempting to sell radio receiving sets in the period from 1924 to 1928. The firm marketed the sets through drugstores, jewelry houses, butcher shops, or anyplace where the owner would be willing to place the sets on the floor and demonstrate the operation of the receiver. Because eastern Montana was an agricultural area and lacked any large centers of population, it often was necessary to take the bulky receiver, heavy batteries, and the aerial over marginal country roads to the home of a farmer for a demonstration. The only station received with any kind of consistency in the Billings area during this period was the Hastings, Neb., facility.<sup>202</sup> Even the powerful Hastings station could not always be received, and when it could be heard, it was frequently much too

---

<sup>202</sup>The Hastings station was KFKX, an experimental broadcasting outlet of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company. The station is no longer in operation.

late in the evening for the early-to-bed, early-to-rise farmers.<sup>203</sup>

Campbell and his associates in the auto supply firm developed the idea that a local radio station in Billings would make it possible to demonstrate radio receivers both day and night within a radius of 50 or 60 miles from the city. Furthermore, the increased reliability of a signal from a local station would encourage more families to purchase receivers. For these reasons, radio station KGHL was constructed in 1928, although Campbell and others expected that the station would become self-supporting after a reasonable period of time through the sale of advertising to the local merchants.<sup>204</sup>

Late in 1927, Campbell went to Denver, Colo., to talk with "Doc" Reynolds regarding construction of a 250-watt transmitter for the new station. Reynolds agreed to build the unit and promised delivery sometime in the spring of 1928.<sup>205</sup>

Campbell returned to Billings to supervise construction of the broadcasting studios on the top floor of the three-story Northwestern Auto Supply Company building. Because the building paralleled the railroad tracks, the studios were particularly well constructed, with the so-called "Celotex" soundproofing material on the ceiling and walls, a dead air space between walls and ceilings, and double plate glass windows.<sup>206</sup> The studio construction was revolutionary for the

---

<sup>203</sup>Conversation with Charles O. Campbell, Billings, Mont., Sept. 6, 1962.

<sup>204</sup>Ibid.

<sup>205</sup>Ibid.

<sup>206</sup>The Billings Gazette, (June 9, 1928).

period. Few stations could boast of such design in broadcast studios.

A Billings youth, Jeff Kiichli, was hired by Campbell as the station's chief engineer. Kiichli had enrolled in electrical engineering at the University of Minnesota but was anxious to return to Billings. While he had a great deal to do with the original construction and installation of the equipment at the broadcasting station, Kiichli did not receive a government operator's license until three weeks before the official opening of the station.<sup>207</sup>

While work continued on the broadcasting studios, two 90-foot steel towers were erected on the roof of the auto supply firm building. The towers were placed 130 feet apart and a so-called "flattop" antenna suspended between each. On the third floor, in a room near the so-called "control room," a large motor generator capable of 4,000 volts of electricity was installed. The electricity was used to operate the station transmitter. Fifty 12-volt batteries lined the wall of the room, used to supply the necessary voltage to the tubes in the control room equipment.<sup>208</sup>

As the work on the new transmitter neared completion at the home of "Doc" Reynolds in Denver, Campbell arranged payment of the so-called "patent fees" that were required of all persons owning radio broadcast

---

<sup>207</sup>Conversation with Campbell, op. cit.

<sup>208</sup>Billings Gazette, (June 9, 1928).



transmitters. American Telephone and Telegraph Company held patents on many of the circuits used in the construction of the so-called "composite" transmitters, and levied a fee for use of the patented circuits. In the case of the new transmitter Campbell had purchased the patent fee was \$2,500, which was to be paid over a five-year period. Campbell recalled, however, that before the five-year period was over the telephone company had arbitrarily waived the balance.<sup>209</sup>

Campbell chose as his announcer for the station a handsome, articulate young man from radio station KOIL in Council Bluffs, Iowa-- Eric Thornton. Miss Dell Hair, an attractive primary grades teacher in Billings, was employed as the so-called "studio hostess" for the station. Miss Hair was responsible for the programs for the youngsters and the women in the audience.<sup>210</sup>

Late in the month of May and early June, 1928, Thornton conducted auditions of more than 200 aspiring radio stars and representatives of various organizations who desired to participate in the opening broadcast of the station. Thornton invited the famous baritone, Wendell Hall, to be the featured artist on the first program, but the station was not prepared to start broadcasting when Hall passed through the city early in June.<sup>211</sup>

The call letters KGHL had been assigned for the station, and during the first week in June, 1928, Kiichli had test programs under

---

<sup>209</sup>Conversation with Campbell, op. cit.

<sup>210</sup>Billings Gazette, (June 8, 1928).

<sup>211</sup>Ibid.

way on the station transmitter.

Precisely at 7 on the evening of Friday, June 8, 1928, Thornton stepped to the microphone of the KGHL studio and announced, "Radio station KGHL, coming on the air with the official opening program."<sup>212</sup>

The first program of KGHL was an ambitious affair even for a broadcasting station with two modern studios and the latest equipment. The Tavern orchestra, the Hopkins family trio and a young harpist were among the featured artists on KGHL's opening broadcast.<sup>213</sup>

The highlight of the evening, however, was the address by the Governor of Montana, J. E. Erickson--remarkable not in what the Governor said but because the broadcast came from the executive mansion in Helena, more than 250 miles from Billings. R. C. Thompson, Billings radio engineer, installed an amplifier in the executive mansion and "fed" the Governor's remarks to the telephone company. The sound was carried via the long distance lines to Billings, then transmitted over the station. The quality of the broadcast was considered to be excellent, and the Governor reportedly was awed at the experience.<sup>214</sup>

While the Governor may have been impressed with the remote broadcast, the engineer responsible for it unquestionably was thankful to be alive. The engineer, Thompson, and Wilson H. McDonald

---

<sup>212</sup>Billings Gazette, (June 9, 1928).

<sup>213</sup>Ibid.

<sup>214</sup>Script from the files of KGHL, June 8, 1938.

of Billings had agreed to fly in a plane of the National Parks Scenic Airways from Billings to Helena to set up the equipment for the special remote broadcast. Enroute to Billings the aircraft encountered bad weather. McDonald was quoted as telling

of battling a gale which delayed the plane more than an hour. He told of crawling out on the engine hood to gauge the gasoline tank as the pilot feared the delay occasioned by the bucking headwinds might have greatly diminished the fuel supply. Sufficient gas remained, according to the pilot's estimate, to carry the plane to Helena. The pilot's guess was accurate. As the airplane sailed over the state capitol he suddenly strove for altitude. Passengers thought he was going to stunt. The motor sputtered and stopped, but the pilot spotted a new field and made a safe landing. The pilot who surmounted the obstacles and brought his ship safely through was V. R. Lucas, managing pilot of the National Parks Scenic Airways.<sup>215</sup>

Aircraft played an important part in the opening broadcast of KGHL. On the evening of the dedication program, a pilot for the National Parks Scenic Airways and a cashier at the Northwestern Auto Supply Company installed a radio receiver in a small aircraft and attached the loudspeaker of the receiver to the landing gear. The two men had tested the method earlier and determined the loudspeaker would not be a safety hazard.<sup>216</sup> Shortly before radio station KGHL began broadcasting at 7 p.m., the two men took off and circled the city of Billings. When the opening broadcast began, the pilot brought

---

<sup>215</sup>Billings Gazette, (June 9, 1928).

<sup>216</sup>The pilot of the craft was identified as Lt. Wayne Surfuit and the cashier as T. W. Johnson.

the plane down to an altitude of approximately 1,000 feet, reduced the power of the engine, and turned up the receiving set to full volume. In this manner, the two men heightened interest in the station's opening broadcast by letting residents for several blocks hear a few moments of the program before applying engine power to regain altitude. It was one of the most unusual promotion devices ever used in Montana.<sup>217</sup>

Radio station KGHL began offering programs for approximately 10 hours each day following the formal opening. A typical broadcast schedule in the summer of 1928 listed the sign-on at 7 a.m., followed by recorded music, time signals, weather reports, news items, and general information for the housewife. At noon each weekday, KGHL presented a program of pipe organ music from the Babcock Theater. The afternoon schedule generally consisted of recorded music, baseball scores, one or two reviews of current books, and the usual time signals, news items, and weather reports. Special dinner hour programs were heard at 6 and 7. KGHL stopped broadcasting about 8 each evening, returning to the air at 11 with a program called "Frolic," an audience participation program originating from the studios, the Babcock Theater, the Tavern or the Airdome. The broadcast frequently continued past the usual sign-off time of midnight.<sup>218</sup>

---

<sup>217</sup>Billings Gazette, (June 9, 1928).

<sup>218</sup>Ibid. The relatively high incidence of "remote" broadcasts by KGHL in this period reflects the ability of engineer Kiichli. Remote amplifiers were uncommon in 1928, and those that were in use were frequently constructed by the engineer. Kiichli remained with KGHL until the late 1950s.

Campbell's gamble, constructing the broadcasting station, began to pay off almost immediately after the station went on the air. Sales of radio receiving sets began to increase at the Northwestern Auto Supply Company. With radio station KGHL on the air most of each day and several hours each evening, demonstrations of receiving sets were easy to arrange in farm and ranch homes. Even though the early-day broadcasts of the station were dominated by hog-calling contests, poorly reproduced phonograph records, and some rather marginal local talent, Billings area residents relied heavily on the station for entertainment and information. The frequent weather reports and grain market items were particularly important to the farmers and ranchers.<sup>219</sup>

Billings merchants were attracted by the advertising possibilities of the new station, and as the number of merchants "on the radio" increased, the Billings Gazette offered to lease the broadcasting station. Campbell refused. The Gazette management threatened to construct its own broadcast station and force KGHL out of business, but the threat never materialized. KGHL enjoyed a radio monopoly in Billings for almost 20 years.<sup>220</sup>

---

<sup>219</sup>Conversation with Campbell, op. cit.

<sup>220</sup>Ibid. Campbell alleged that the Gazette pressured some of the Billings merchants to stay away from radio advertising, although no additional evidence has been discovered to support the charge. The threat of the newspaper to construct another station is interesting in the light of the 1922 station the Gazette so lavishly publicized. (see section on "The Tinkerers," in this study).

Reception of the KGHL signal was good in the vicinity of Billings, but persons in Red Lodge reported they could not hear the station at all. The broadcasting frequency of 1350 kilocycles "scattered" the signal, and within two months after the first program in June, 1928, KGHL had received listening reports from all of the western United States and from Alaska and New Zealand.<sup>221</sup>

KGHL was involved in what appears to be the first "network" radio broadcast heard in Montana through the facilities of a Montana radio station. Early in 1929, KGHL<sup>222</sup> arranged with the National Broadcasting Company for the broadcast of the inauguration of President Herbert Hoover. Billings merchants and bankers were called upon to defray the \$1,500 cost of the broadcast. On Inaugural Day, Billings schools suspended classes, and students were ushered into auditoriums and theaters to listen to the historic "live" broadcast.<sup>223</sup>

There was considerable resistance to radio advertising in Billings during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Merchants were skeptical of the new medium and frequently had to be absolutely convinced of the value of radio advertising by means of graphic

---

<sup>221</sup>KGHL Scrapbook, clipping from the Billings Gazette. No date other than "Aug., 1929."

<sup>222</sup>Radio station KGIR in Butte also participated in the inaugural program.

<sup>223</sup>Conversation with Campbell, *op. cit.* The \$1,500 cost was almost totally for the telephone company lines carrying the broadcast from the nearest NBC station, which, in this case, was Spokane, Wash.

demonstrations, including "giveaways" and free merchandise. Perhaps a puppy would be offered free of charge to the first person who called in the answer to a relatively simple question. The skeptical merchant would be asked to be at the broadcasting station when the announcement was made over the air and would stand by to observe the telephone calls coming in. The giveaway activity had to be curtailed, however, when the manager of the Billings telephone office appealed to Campbell to spare the heavy load on the central telephone exchange equipment. The manager explained to Campbell that the sudden increase in the number of telephone calls to the broadcasting station caused the mechanical selectors to become jumbled. The manager stated that, on one occasion, this situation resulted in a minor explosion that damaged some of the telephone equipment.<sup>224</sup>

Another demonstration for a local advertiser resulted in a long-term contract for advertising on KGHL. A Billings jewelry store owner named Copy had purchased time signals on the station. When it appeared the jeweler was planning to cancel his advertising, Campbell brought him into the studio and ordered the announcer deliberately to announce the wrong time for the advertisement. Within a few seconds after the announcement, the station telephones began ringing with complaints from listeners that the station had announced the wrong time. The Copy Jewelry Store remained on the air with KGHL until the station was sold by Campbell in 1951.<sup>225</sup>

---

<sup>224</sup>Conversation with Campbell, op. cit.

<sup>225</sup>Ibid.

Within two years radio station KGHL began to show a slight profit.<sup>226</sup> Station power was increased to 500 watts in 1929 and 1,000 watts in 1930. With the increase to 1,000 watts, the transmitter plant was moved from the Northwestern Auto Supply Company building in downtown Billings to a site six miles southwest of the city.<sup>227</sup> In 1931, KGHL became affiliated with the National Broadcasting Company. A special one-hour broadcast, fed to all NBC affiliates, marked the occasion on Nov. 27, 1931. The special network program originated from NBC studios in San Francisco, New York, Washington, and Chicago and featured talks by Senators Thomas J. Walsh and Burton K. Wheeler. The two men stated they had received numerous requests from civic groups and individuals in Montana requesting the service.<sup>228</sup>

The NBC affiliation was a significant forward step for KGHL. For the first time the broadcasting station brought so-called "big time" entertainment to the eastern Montana area.<sup>229</sup> The network placed KGHL listeners in touch with the major news centers in the

---

<sup>226</sup> While it was two years before KGHL actually showed a profit, the radio had provided a major stimulus to the sale of radio receiving sets from Northwestern Auto Supply Company. Therefore, while KGHL did not "make" money between the years 1928 and 1930, it could not accurately be termed a liability.

<sup>227</sup> Billings Gazette, (Nov. 28, 1931).

<sup>228</sup> Radio station KGIR in Butte also became a network affiliate of NBC at this time and participated in the special program.

<sup>229</sup> The only other station in eastern Montana in 1930 was KGCK in Sidney. It was not affiliated with a network at the time.



nation. Prior to this time KGHL was without any kind of regular news service. In 1936--two years following the establishment of the so-called "Press Radio Bureau" of the nation's publishers<sup>230</sup>--Campbell felt the need for better news coverage on KGHL. He subscribed to the Trans-Radio Press, an organization formed particularly to provide radio broadcasting stations in the United States with several newscasts each day. The news items were transmitted in Morse code from powerful shortwave stations in the country. Individual operators at the subscribing stations would "copy" the information on a typewriter and hand it to the announcer for broadcast. Fred Bartlett was employed by KGHL in 1936 as a licensed operator and was responsible for monitoring the Trans-Radio Press transmissions. He recalled that the agency transmitted a total of three or four hours each day at approximately 35 words per minute. At this rate it frequently required an hour of monitoring the Morse code signals to produce enough material for a 15-minute news broadcast. Bartlett recalled the signals often were "covered" by interference, and the operator at the receiving end would be required to fill in some sentences with words of his own. The Trans-Radio Press service was cancelled at KGHL in 1939 when the newspaper wire services agreed to service broadcasting stations.<sup>231</sup>

---

<sup>230</sup>The "Press Radio Bureau" existed from 1934 to 1940. Under the arrangement, radio stations were restricted to 10 minutes of news each day, non-commercial, and available only after the news had been published in daily newspapers.

<sup>231</sup>Conversation with Fred L. Bartlett, Billings, Mont., Sept. 6, 1962. NBC commentator Chet Nuntley was associated with the Trans-Radio Press organization about this time.

Campbell continued to increase the coverage of KGHL with numerous improvements to the physical plant during the 1930s. In 1935 radio station KGHL completed construction on what was then the tallest self-supporting broadcasting tower in the United States--568 feet high--thereby replacing the old so-called "flattop" antenna behind the transmitter building. In 1938, the station power was increased to 5,000 watts.<sup>232</sup>

The increased station power and the tall antenna still were not always enough to convince the eastern radio time buyers that KGHL should be on the major nationwide network programs or that the station should be included in major "spot" commercial campaigns. Campbell recalled that his coverage claims for KGHL often were received with a patient smile from a skeptical time buyer. Few of them would believe KGHL reached into Cody, Wyo., or Mandan, No. Dak. Even if they did believe the coverage claims, Campbell had to convince them that Montana was not necessarily a barren land dotted with Indian villages, cavalry forts, and jackrabbits.<sup>233</sup>

Radio station KGHL operated in Billings without any direct competition until Sept. 6, 1946, when the Billings Broadcasting Company established station KBYM. In 1951, The Montana Network established another radio station in Billings, KOOK, and announced plans for the city's first television station.<sup>234</sup> Campbell was

---

<sup>232</sup>Conversation with Bartlett, op. cit.

<sup>233</sup>Conversation with Campbell, op. cit.

<sup>234</sup>Broadcasting, Yearbook issue, p. A-54.

tired. He wanted to quit. KGHL was sold in December, 1951, to the Walter Schott Company of Cincinnati.<sup>235</sup>

Campbell said

I got out of the business because I was getting tired of it. Taxes were getting heavy...the competition was getting rougher...I was a little older.

We tried to put on the best programs we could with the facilities we had...and we spared no money on equipment. I think we had very good people...<sup>236</sup>

The Walter Schott Company purchased KGHL along with a total liquidation of Campbell's properties, which included the auto supply firm and farms and ranches. On May 1, 1954, the Midland Broadcasting Company purchased the radio station and developed plans for television.<sup>237</sup>

Radio station KGHL was sold by Midland in 1963 to George C. Hatch of Salt Lake City, Utah. It remains an NBC radio network affiliate, broadcasting at 790 kilocycles with a power of 5,000 watts.

---

<sup>235</sup>Conversation with Campbell, op. cit.

<sup>236</sup>Ibid.

<sup>237</sup>Broadcasting, yearbook issue, p. B-109.

## STATION KGIR AND THE Z-BAR NETWORK

Butte, Mont., was a wide open mining town when a young wholesale radio parts salesman from Spokane, Wash., stopped in the city in 1927. E. B. Craney liked what he saw in Butte and determined to construct a radio broadcasting station in the community.

Craney's decision opened a colorful and important aspect of Montana radio broadcasting history. Twenty-one years later, in 1948, he would be recognized as the giant in state broadcasting, operator of five radio stations within the state, and creator of the state's first "regional network."

Ed Craney learned about the radio broadcasting business shortly following his graduation from North Central High School in Spokane in June, 1922. He went to work for a lawyer, Tom Symons, operating a radio store in a building owned by Symons in downtown Spokane. Craney's job was to assemble and sell the radio receiving sets, but the lack of consistent radio signals in the Spokane area in 1922 made it impossible to sell many sets.<sup>238</sup> Symons and Craney determined that a radio station would have to be constructed to encourage set sales. Radio station KFDC began broadcasting in October, 1922.<sup>239</sup>

---

<sup>238</sup>The 25th anniversary edition of Radio-Television Daily lists a station on the air in Spokane in 1921. Craney recalled the station was not on the air consistently, and there was little interest.

<sup>239</sup>KFDC later was changed to KFPY, then to KKLX following World War II.

The existence of the broadcasting station stimulated the sale of sets, and Craney and Symons branched into the wholesale radio parts distributing business throughout eastern Washington and western Montana. Craney was on a business trip when he arrived in Butte in 1927.<sup>240</sup>

Craney applied for and received permission to construct the Butte station. With the financial backing of Symons he returned to Butte in 1928 to start construction on the radio station. Thousands of dollars worth of transmitting equipment had arrived in Butte in the meantime. Craney had earlier made arrangements with the management of the Finlen Hotel to place the studios and transmitter in the hotel building. However, the manager called and told Craney the arrangement was cancelled. The manager could not offer an adequate explanation.<sup>241</sup>

Craney strolled down East Park Street in Butte and arranged with the management of Shiner's Furniture Store to remodel some of the space on the top floor of the four-story building to accommodate the studios, transmitting room, and offices of the proposed radio station. Moving swiftly, Craney immediately ordered carpenters to work and brought the crated transmitting equipment to the sidewalk in front of the store. The proprietor greeted him with the statement, "By golly, Ed, I'm sorry but I cannot let you come in here." Shiner

---

<sup>240</sup>Conversation with E. B. Craney, Butte, Mont., Sept. 25, 1962. The interview was recorded on tape and omissions within text of Craney's remarks have been made for the purpose of clarity, but occasionally result in incomplete sentences.

<sup>241</sup>Ibid.

explained he had received a call from Carlos Ryan of the Montana Power Company, inquiring about the radio station. Shiner and Craney went to Ryan's office.

Ryan wanted to know what I was going to do about letting people on the air. I told him I was going to try to run the thing so that everybody could get on the air. He indicated that wasn't the way they wanted it run...I said that's the way radio should be used in this country. The facilities belong to all of the people...<sup>242</sup>

Following the meeting with Ryan, Craney telephoned his partner in Spokane and related what had taken place. Craney said he knew Symons was friendly with an executive of the Anaconda Copper Mining company, Herman C. Bellinger. Craney contends he is not sure what occurred after his telephone conversation. However, radio station KGIR was permitted to go ahead with construction and remodeling in the Shiner building.<sup>243</sup>

Wednesday, Jan. 3, 1929, carpenters began work on the broadcasting studios as Craney assembled the transmitter. It was bitter cold in January, 1929, and workmen on the antenna towers struggled through sub-zero temperatures. The Butte Daily Post reported that "completion of the towers is expected to be in two weeks, when the first program to be broadcast from Butte will be made."<sup>244</sup> The radio station was authorized to operate at 1360 kilocycles with 250 watts of power but was required to share broadcast time with radio station KFBB in

---

<sup>242</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit.

<sup>243</sup>Ibid.

<sup>244</sup>Butte Daily Post, (Jan. 3, 1929).

Havre. The arrangement was indicative of the rather strict engineering requirements demanded by the federal government in the late 1920s.

According to Craney,

that gives you some idea of the engineering requirements of those days, when 250-watt stations as far apart as Butte and Havre could not operate simultaneously on the same frequency. Today, they (the FCC) allow stations to operate much closer than that simultaneously, and that is one of the reasons that they have broken down the standards of broadcasting so bad and one of the reasons why Minow of the FCC says today that we have too many broadcast stations. It's been a situation that the FCC brought on through its degradation of engineering standards.<sup>245</sup>

Craney's earlier prediction of having the broadcast station in operation by the middle of January proved to be wrong. On Jan. 18, 1929, radio station KGIR was still under construction, although at least one retail merchant in the community was promoting the sale of receivers on that date. Shiner's Furniture store offered the so-called "Freshman" radio, "complete with seven tubes," for \$150, "regularly \$250."<sup>246</sup>

On Jan. 29, 1929, the Butte Daily Post offered "free radio sets for the boys and girls" of Butte if the youngsters would "call at the office of the Butte Daily Post and ask for the radio man and he will tell you how you can get a free radio set in time to hear the first KGIR broadcast." Full details on the promotional campaign were promised the next day.<sup>247</sup>

---

<sup>245</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit.

<sup>246</sup>Butte Daily Post, (Jan. 18, 1929).

<sup>247</sup>Ibid., (Jan. 29, 1929).

The youngsters who wanted the radio sets<sup>248</sup> had to secure three subscription blanks for the newspaper and sign up three subscribers, with the first month's subscription paid in advance. When the youngster returned to the Post offices with the three subscriptions and the money, he would receive a free radio, "purchased from the Shiner Furniture Company." All youngsters were urged to "act soon," because the opening broadcast of radio station KGIR had been scheduled for the following evening.<sup>249</sup>

Thursday, Jan. 31, 1929, the newspaper reported

With the stroke of 6:00 tonight, Butte... will go on the air when radio station KGIR opens its 12-hour dedicatory programs for its new studios in the Shiner Building on West Park. Butte radio listeners will adjust their loudspeakers and earphones to hear a diversified program of music and talking, furnished by talent from this city and Anaconda, including the Butte Mines Band, the Butte Male Chorus...two of the city's largest musical organizations. Following the opening announcement and frequency call, in compliance with federal regulations, the station will be formally dedicated with a prayer by the Rt. Rev. George P. Finnegan of Helena.<sup>250</sup>

The opening broadcast of the station generated considerable interest and was considered highly successful. Craney recalled that approximately 3,000 so-called "crystal sets" were sold "almost overnight" and that "elevator operators were carrying the sets around with them."<sup>251</sup> The Post reported:

---

<sup>248</sup>The "radio sets" were in fact small crystal sets, which were satisfactory for reception but relatively inexpensive to manufacture.

<sup>249</sup>Butte Daily Post, (Jan. 30, 1929).

<sup>250</sup>Ibid., (Jan. 31, 1929).

<sup>251</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit.



The Butte program was heard in all parts of the country and more than 1,000 telegrams were received from the midwest states, the intermountain territory, and the Pacific Coast. Hundreds of visitors stood outside the glass enclosed studio on the fourth floor of Shiner's last night and looked on as some of the best talent in Butte and Anaconda stood before the microphone. The "mike," which has frightened even stage and screen veterans when they stood before it for the first time, brought several cases of stage fright but the program went off smoothly. E. B. Craney, manager of the station, encouraged by the hundreds of telephone calls and telegrams which began to arrive early in the evening, spent a few moments in expressing his gratification.<sup>252</sup>

The regular staff of the radio station was augmented with volunteer assistants during the first several days of broadcasting. The regular staff included Craney, office girl Mary Lubick, licensed operator Ralph Stewart, and a former hoisting engineer on the Butte Hill--Leo McMullin--as salesman.<sup>253</sup>

It should be noted at this point in the study of radio station KGIR that the Butte Daily Post consistently cultivated a curious negative attitude toward the radio station in a majority of the early-day news stories concerning KGIR. Early in the month of January, 1929, when reporting on the construction of the station, the newspaper stated:

Broadcasting from KGIR, Butte's newest radio station, will have practically no effect upon reception from larger stations which are usually heard here... KGIR is at a congested spot on the dial.<sup>254</sup>

---

<sup>252</sup> Butte Daily Post, (Feb. 1, 1929).

<sup>253</sup> Conversation with Craney, op. cit.

<sup>254</sup> Butte Daily Post, (Jan. 3, 1929).

The Post, reporting on the dedicatory broadcast of the station, observed that

besides providing excellent entertainment, [the broadcast] proved to Butte radio fans that sets of average quality would have no trouble tuning out KGIR and bringing in such other nearby and popular stations as KEX, Portland, and KSL, Salt Lake. On most sets a turn of two or three points on the dial tuned out KGIR and an additional few points brought the other stations in.<sup>255</sup>

Most of the Post news stories concerning the radio station were complete and well-written but generally included a negative reference of the kind reproduced above. While many of the implications of these references could possibly be traced to sarcasm on the part of the newspaper, it should be recalled that 1929 still found much of the standard radio broadcasting spectrum overcrowded, despite the efforts of the Federal Radio Commission to more effectively regulate radio broadcasting station interference. It may have been, therefore, a genuine concern for the Butte radio fan that motivated the Post to include references to the reception of stations other than KGIR.

The radio station operated on a schedule of eight hours of programming each day during February, 1929. Phonograph records were frequently used on the programs, but their use created a dilemma for Craney. He explained that the quality of the phonograph recordings frequently was much better than that of the local "live" programs. For this reason KGIR attempted to include more local programs in the

---

<sup>255</sup>Butte Daily Post, (Feb. 1, 1929).

daily schedule, and this occasionally got him into trouble, particularly with the musicians union:

We had an agreement with the musicians union... which insisted that we have live talent on. We couldn't put on any Tom, Dick or Harry after we opened up because we had to have union musicians. We sort of settled the thing by agreeing to hire the size orchestra they wanted us to hire. But, we hired the same one each night. We knew before long that they would soon play through their repertoire...and that before long people would be telling them about it. That's exactly what happened.

Later on, the union said we had to have eight pieces. I told the secretary of the union we would be happy to have his orchestra and would give them the time if he would go out and sell it. He wasn't too successful.

We got into trouble where we would have a kid's show and would have to hire some union musician to play for the kids; and sometimes a kid who had been singing with his mother playing for him couldn't sing with somebody else playing for him. We got into a few arguments on that, too. Finally, it settled down where, if we had the union musician on hand, the mother could play.<sup>256</sup>

Five weeks following the formal opening broadcast from radio station KGIR the Butte station broadcast the inaguration of President Herbert Hoover.<sup>257</sup> Butte city schools were closed, and the youngsters were ushered into theaters and auditoriums to hear the special program. Craney recalled the cost of the broadcast was \$1,045, most of which was covered by contributions from local

---

<sup>256</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit. Charles Campbell, KGHL, related a similar incident involving the musicians union.

<sup>257</sup>Additional details regarding the arrangements for this NBC broadcast are found in the section, "The Station Built to Sell Radio Receivers," in this study.

merchants.<sup>258</sup>

Approximately one year following the opening broadcast of KGIR the station moved to a nearby building and occupied what had been the office of "the copper king," William Clark. The building had once served as the headquarters for Clark's newspaper.<sup>259</sup> In 1937, KGIR was moved to Nissler--a tiny community approximately seven miles west of Butte--and the station power was increased to 5,000 watts, and a non-directional antenna was authorized for the station.<sup>260</sup> The antenna and transmitter are in use today, although there have been frequent attempts to change the non-directional feature of the station. Craney remembered that

we had to fight like hell to keep those birds off [our frequency] out in the sticks. We would end up before the commission often. We've taken back some notable witnesses from Montana to appear for us, which has helped.<sup>261</sup>

Station KGIR and the radio broadcasting industry in general truly became important to listeners and advertisers following the election to the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, according to Craney:

Radio... really got its jump ahead in the lives of people...after FDR was elected and he started his fireside chats. Radio broadcasting was looked upon by advertisers as not much until FDR started his fireside chats during the Depression. He took the front page off the newspapers and put in on

---

<sup>258</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit.

<sup>259</sup>Craney recalled Clark's newspaper had only recently shut down before the station moved to the newspaper building.

<sup>260</sup>A "non-directional" antenna radiates a signal of the same strength in a 360-degree pattern.

<sup>261</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit.

radio and that built the importance of radio tremendously. I think radio had a very difficult time up to that point...radio gained stature there and began to make money.<sup>262</sup>

Craney continued to experience difficulty with the Anaconda Copper Mining company and the Montana Power Company, particularly in regard to the company's newspaper. On one occasion, Craney has alleged, the ACM forced advertisers in the city of Anaconda to stay away from radio advertising:

We used to have a studio in Anaconda and operated from down there. We had a fellow living down there in the hotel and one day he called me up and said everybody was cancelling. He said, "All up and down the street, they (the newspaper representatives and representatives of the ACM) have been telling these fellas they are going to close up the paper unless they (the advertisers) get off the radio. Where they own the buildings, they are telling them they have to pay up their back rent right now."<sup>263</sup>

Craney states this incident occurred shortly after the ACM had issued a policy statement to all company-owned newspapers, instructing each newspaper to ignore news of radio stations in the respective communities. Craney said he thought there never was any appreciable moderation in the policy and said his station never again did much advertising business in Anaconda.<sup>264</sup>

---

<sup>262</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit.

<sup>263</sup>Ibid. Asked when the incident occurred. Craney said he believed it was approximately six months following the shutdown of the Clark newspaper in Butte, 1929.

<sup>264</sup>Craney's allegation regarding the ACM policy that its newspapers should ignore radio is unsupported by documented evidence. However, a survey of company-owned newspapers reveals a remarkable reduction in the number of news stories about radio stations, beginning about 1930.

Butte has a long history of violence. The Clark and Daly feud disrupted the city for many years, followed by the running trouble between the ACM and the various trade and mining unions. In this environment, it is not surprising that radio station KGIR became the focal point of a short but bitter dispute during a strike of miners against the company in 1936. The incident, according to Craney, almost resulted in the loss of the radio station in Butte.

Craney remembered he was returning to Butte from a trip to the East when his salesman, Leo McMullin, met him at the railroad depot with the news that the miners union considered the radio station "unfair" as the result of a news story on the station. The story, said Craney, concerned a strike in Syracuse, where the mayor of that city was quoted by the KGIR announcer as saying, "Here's a man among men." The union, said Craney, charged the announcer had said, "Here's a man that is a man." Whatever significance the union read into the statement, it was a fact a union committee "was going around town, knocking off all of our advertising."<sup>265</sup>

Craney said he reacted by asking the union secretary for clarification of the issue. He was invited to a special meeting of the union officials:

I sat and talked to them...they left. The (Robinson) union secretary called me about fifteen or twenty minutes later and told me I was still

---

<sup>265</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit.

unfair. I said, "Look, you're just breeding a scab on your nose with the best friend in town. Nobody reads your damn paper, you can't get anything in the company paper, and you're just barking up the wrong tree and I'm not going to take this laying down."<sup>266</sup>

Another meeting was scheduled for the same day, this time between Craney and members of the union central committee. The station owner walked to the Carpenters Hall, a block from the radio station studios in downtown Butte:

There were about fifty to seventy-five guys in this room and they all wanted to talk at once and they all wanted to know what the hell I was planning to do and blah, blah, blah. I said to them "I don't have much money, but while I have some money I'm going to keep this thing running. When I close it down, you guys aren't going to get it because you don't have enough money. The Anaconda Company will buy it. You'd hate like hell to see that happen..."<sup>267</sup>

Craney walked from the meeting back to the radio station. When he arrived, there was a telephone call for him from the sixth floor of the Hennesey building--the offices of the ACM. Craney said he told the party on the other end of the telephone that

"I'm going to tell you exactly the same thing. I don't know how many stool pigeons you have over there (in the union hall)...I know damn well now, with you guys calling me, that you probably instigated them declaring us unfair to begin with...I've never seen a strike around here yet that you guys didn't start.

"While my money lasts, you can broadcast, they can broadcast. When my money runs out, somebody's going to buy it. I'll find somebody from outside of town that will be a goddamn sight harder on you birds than I am"...<sup>268</sup>

---

<sup>266</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit.

<sup>267</sup>Ibid.

<sup>268</sup>Ibid.

Following the incidents with representatives of the company and the union, Craney determined to go on the air on the broadcast station the same evening with an explanation of what had happened and why it had happened. He placed announcements on the station, promoting the special broadcast at 9 that evening, then dispatched a copy of his scheduled talk to the union representatives along with a note offering the union 15 minutes to reply to his statement.

I gave the letter to the Western Union kid... and in another 30 minutes, I was "fair" with the miner's union. I've never had any trouble with them since...and never had any trouble with the company after that.<sup>269</sup>

As radio station KGIR prospered during the early 1930s Craney began to realize that to attract the lucrative national advertising business his station would have to have a larger audience potential. Clearly, the one radio broadcasting service in Butte did not constitute the size market that would readily attract national advertisers. Craney saw two possibilities. He could construct a 50,000 watt broadcast station that could--because of the tremendous power--reach virtually all of the major population centers in the state, and a majority of the scattered rural population as well. Or, he could construct several smaller radio stations in the major population centers, linking each of the smaller stations with KGIR in Butte. While the latter was his second choice, Craney elected to encourage

---

<sup>269</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit.



the development of radio stations in the major communities relatively close to Butte.<sup>270</sup>

With some financial encouragement from Craney, the "People's Forum of the Air" was incorporated in Helena and made application to the Federal Communications Commission for a license for a 250-watt broadcast station.<sup>271</sup> Permission was granted, and on Sept. 27, 1937, it was announced radio station KPFA would be on the air from Helena Oct. 1 with a power of 250 watts and an assigned frequency of 1210 kilocycles. KGIR staff member K. O. MacPherson was dispatched to Helena to manage the new broadcasting station. On Sept. 29, 1937, a large advertisement appeared in the Helena newspaper which read, "RCA All the Way, KPFA, 1210 on your dial, telephone 857."<sup>272</sup> However, that is the only reference to the first broadcasts of the station that could be located in a study of the Helena newspaper during the months of September, October, and November, 1937. The Helena radio station became an affiliate of the National Broadcasting Company.<sup>273</sup>

Meantime, Craney had been searching for another market for a broadcast station to be included in the proposed "regional network" arrangement of small broadcast stations, linked to the major station in Butte. Bozeman was his choice and in 1939, KRBM Broadcasters was incorporated and made application for a 250 watt station at 1450

---

<sup>270</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit.

<sup>271</sup>Former Montana Governor Sam C. Ford was secretary-treasurer of the corporation.

<sup>272</sup>Helena Independent Record, (Sept. 27, 1937).

<sup>273</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit.

kilocycles. The station was officially opened Aug. 15, 1939, as an NBC affiliate. Studios were located in the Baxter Hotel in downtown Bozeman, and the transmitter was located just south of the city.<sup>274</sup> The Helena broadcasting station cost approximately \$12,000 for equipment and supplies. The Bozeman station cost approximately \$40,000, although KRBM had a separate transmitter building constructed on a farm which had to be purchased in order to acquire the transmitter site.<sup>275</sup>

By October, 1939, the three NBC-affiliated stations were able to be linked together by so-called "land-line" telephone circuits in a three-station "network." Craney had arranged for reversible lines<sup>276</sup> to connect the cities, which enabled any one of the three to "feed" the other two at any time the lines were not in use for the NBC programs. All NBC programs were fed from the station in Butte, which placed KGIR in the position of being the "flagship" station and the originating station for a majority of the local programs.<sup>277</sup>

Following World War II, two additional stations were constructed. Stations KXLL, Missoula, and KXKX, Great Falls, began broadcasting in 1947 as NBC affiliates. Each of the new stations was formed under the

---

<sup>274</sup>The transmitter plant is now used as studios and transmitter for the station. Call letters have been changed to KXKL.

<sup>275</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit. Craney states the Helena station leased a building from Intermountain College.

<sup>276</sup>Reversible lines permit two-way exchange of broadcast material. The arrangement is not commonly found in station interconnection.

<sup>277</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit.

auspices of a separate corporation, although Craney held controlling financial interest in each.<sup>278</sup>

As the regional network expanded to five stations, Craney sought a distinctive trademark or "brand" for the group of stations. He searched the broadcasting journals and found a combination of call letters not in use--XL. Shortly after the war the stations in Butte, Helena, and Bozeman received new call letters, all employing the combination "XL." The new stations in Missoula and Great Falls received their original broadcast licenses with the combination in the call letters assigned. To identify the group of stations as a whole, Craney called the regional network "The Z-Bar Network." In late 1947, the Z-Bar Network was composed of KXLF, Butte; KXLQ, Bozeman, KXLJ, Helena; KXLL, Missoula and KXIK, Great Falls. In addition to operating as a true network in the technical sense, time on the stations frequently was sold to national advertisers at a package rate. Craney recalled

Montana was a place that if a national advertiser did not need to come in here, he would usually stay out. Distribution was expensive in this state. We made it easier to reach a goodly portion of the state.<sup>279</sup>

---

<sup>278</sup>Conversation with Craney, *op. cit.* Pat M. Goodover was early involved with the Missoula station as manager. Barclay Craighead was the main figure in the Great Falls station.

<sup>279</sup>*Ibid.* At this time Craney also had formed the Pacific Northwest Broadcasters, primarily as a sales network. The PNB included all of the Z-Bar Network stations as well as stations KXL, Portland, Ore.; KXLY, Spokane, Wash.; KXLE, Ellensburg, Wash., and KING, Seattle, Wash. Craney had financial interest in the Portland, Spokane and Ellensburg stations. He contends the PNB helped the Montana Z-Bar Network considerably, because advertisers often would buy all of the stations simply to get advertising into the Seattle, Portland, and Spokane markets.

Craney encountered considerable difficulty from the Federal Communications Commission regarding the programming structure of the individual stations within the Z-Bar Network. The Commission questioned the apparent excessive use of "network" in comparison with the amount of so-called "local" programs at each station. The problem became particularly troublesome following World War II:

Helena happened to be up for renewal at the time. They (the FCC) questioned the amount of time of network that I had, and I decided that we had gone through this with the FCC often enough...and that we ought to have a hearing... out here. I was particularly anxious to have it on the Helena station since we always broadcast the legislature.<sup>280</sup>

The proposed hearing never was conducted. Craney's attorney in Washington, D. C., former Montana Senator Burton K. Wheeler, persuaded the government to drop the scheduled hearing and accept an affidavit outlining the somewhat unusual arrangement of network programming in lieu of the hearing. The Commission, recalled Craney, was concerned that the so-called "network" was usurping too much of the program time of each station at the expense of local programs. In effect, the local stations in each city were participants in the network programs, not merely relay outlets for programs from one central point. Following this incident the re-licensing of the Z-Bar Network stations was not seriously contested on the same grounds.<sup>281</sup>

---

<sup>280</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit.

<sup>281</sup>Ibid. Material collected for exhibit at the proposed Commission hearing by the Z-Bar Network subsequently was submitted to the Peabody Foundation and resulted in an award for coverage of the legislature, 1947.

In Craney's opinion, the collective nature of the Z-Bar Network made it possible for the stations to conduct broadcasts of a public service nature that otherwise would have been economically prohibitive:

We were able to show [to the FCC] ...that without the network, the local station would have a hard time justifying the expense it went to for the kind of broadcast it put on. With the help from other towns in Montana on the network it was a fine network feature, but for the local station to devote the time and hire the people necessary to stay up there at the legislature during the day...it just wasn't in the cards.<sup>282</sup>

The Z-Bar Network remained intact until 1957, when Craney began to liquidate the individual stations. He had become involved with television in Butte and Helena and was conducting a bitter dispute with the owners and operators of cable television in Helena.

The thing [television] was so bad in the state...and we got involved with fighting the cable situation with hearings and lawsuits... I just decided life was too short.

You had a situation where the cable people were wanting to buy the Helena station (radio and television) and I just didn't want to sell to them. I felt...you shouldn't have the same people in the same business in the same town. They had a \$1,430,000 lawsuit..charging me with anti-trust. For the last three years all I had been doing was paying lawyers, so I decided to get out. Joe Sample<sup>283</sup> made a deal with them that they would dismiss the lawsuit and he would get both stations (radio and television, Helena) and work out a deal with them in Helena.<sup>284</sup>

---

<sup>282</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit.

<sup>283</sup>Joseph S. Sample, owner of Garryowen Stations KOOK AM-TV, Billings, and KXLF AM-TV, Butte.

<sup>284</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit. KXLF AM-TV in Helena was sold to the Helena TV, Inc., March, 1961.

Prior to the difficulty with the cable television interests, Craney had begun to repeat in television the pattern of ownership he had established in radio. Butte and Helena were on the air stations in 1957, and Craney had applications before the FCC for television stations in Missoula and Great Falls.

The impact of the Z-Bar Network on the development of radio broadcasting in Montana is impossible to assess in this study. Clearly, the five radio broadcasting stations of the network constitute a major contribution to the development of radio broadcasting within the state. Craney has offered some observations on the significance of the network:

My hope was that it was going to try to make Montana people realize that there was more in Montana than the little town that they lived in. Montana is a tremendously big state, and all over Montana people get tied too close to the little town that they are in.

Butte, possibly, was the wrong place to have this thing start because Butte was thought of...as trying to run everything...and over the past has been distrusted. My hope was to be able to make a state out of this thing instead of a feudal system of individual cities. I think we helped somewhat in that.<sup>285</sup>

---

<sup>285</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit.

## THE VOICE OF FIVE GREAT VALLEYS

Radio broadcasting was not new to Missoula in 1931. The University of Montana radio broadcasting station, KUOM, had operated with reasonable consistency until 1929.<sup>286</sup> However, for Arthur J. Mosby, owner and operator of Mosby's Electric shop, radio broadcasting reception in 1931 was not good enough and not consistent enough to encourage the sale of radio receiving sets. The answer, as Mosby saw it, was to construct a radio station. Thus, on Jan. 18, 1931, radio station KGVO began broadcasting.<sup>287</sup>

Mosby has remembered:

When out demonstrating sets, we didn't get home until 1 or 2 in the morning and we had wiring through the shop..and had to be down there at 7:30 in the morning to get the boys off to work. So we started this thing [the radio station] to relieve that load. People got to liking it...<sup>288</sup>

Mosby had experimented with radio broadcasting prior to the opening of radio station KGVO in 1931. In 1928, he attempted to broadcast a Missoula performance of the famous Sousa Band:

I had purchased from Norman<sup>289</sup> a 10-watt transmitter for \$300. Finally, with the help of Sid Howard I got it working. We got a wooden bowl...strapped the microphone to the front of it and held it in place with rubber bands. We called up everybody around here that had a crystal set...to tune in to the big program coming up. Sousa came out on the Wilma theater stage and started making his

---

<sup>286</sup>See "Broadcasting from the University," in this study.

<sup>287</sup>Daily Missoulian, (Jan. 18, 1931).

<sup>288</sup>Conversation with A. J. Mosby, Missoula, Mont., Mar. 13, 1963.

<sup>289</sup>Norman Mosby, younger brother of A. J., who lived in Kalispell.

introductions. Then he spotted this microphone and said, "Good God, there's a microphone," and he picked it up and threw it against the wall of the theater and broke it. The microphone was worth about \$125.<sup>290</sup>

Radio station KGVO was authorized to operate at 1420 kilocycles with 100 watts of power in 1931. The transmitter was constructed in the Mosby Electric shop from new parts ordered in Spokane, old parts from the original KFBB transmitter in Havre, and some radio receiving set parts. Mosby and his associates followed a diagram from an amateur radio magazine in assembling the unit. Studios were located in the Union Block<sup>291</sup> on East Main Street. The "flat-top antenna" was suspended from towers atop the Union Block building and the Missoula Mercantile Company building, across the alley from the Union Block.<sup>292</sup>

Construction of the radio station began early in December, 1930. Before Christmas, 1930, Mosby announced that the station would be on the air about Jan. 15, 1931, with programs from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. He reported that most of the equipment had been installed and that James A. Barber of Campbell, Mo., had been hired as announcer.<sup>293</sup> Jan. 13, 1931, test broadcasts were under way with a plea from Mosby for out-of-town listeners to report the quality of the reception.<sup>294</sup>

On Saturday, Jan. 17, 1931, Mosby completed final arrangements for the opening broadcast the following day. A final test program was

---

<sup>290</sup>Conversation with Mosby, op. cit.

<sup>291</sup>The Union Block is now owned by Mosby and has been renamed the Radio Central Building, although no radio stations are located there.

<sup>292</sup>Conversation with Mosby, op. cit.

<sup>293</sup>Daily Missoulian, (Dec. 23, 1930).

<sup>294</sup>Ibid., (Jan. 13, 1931).



conducted from 1 a.m. to 6 a.m. Jan. 18, and the formal opening broadcast was begun at 1 p.m. the same afternoon. Missoula Mayor W. H. . Beacom gave the introductory address, which was followed by 5½ hours of local entertainment.<sup>295</sup> Mosby had recalled that "when we opened up, there were people crowding on the back stairway. The halls were packed...it was quite a novelty."<sup>296</sup>

Mosby said the sales of radio receiving sets began to increase following the start of regular broadcasting. Programs generally were made of local talent, although a few phonograph records were used. Sunday was the important day for the presentation of local talent, with personalities such as "The Kilowatt Kid, pianist; Whistling Sally; Sol Andresen, the girl tenor, and Kelvinator Katy" appearing often.<sup>297</sup> Other artists frequently heard on the early-day broadcasts of the station were "Mr. Kreidle, the zither artist; The Singing Saw; Ike, Mike and the Uke and Joe Mudd, the Sensational KGVO Juvenile Songster."<sup>298</sup>

Once each week, the Missoula City Bank conducted a special radio concert, paid for by the Musicians Union Local 126. Mosby has recalled that "Larry Daly was the secretary of the Missoula band....He played the drums and was very anxious to get on the air."<sup>299</sup>

---

<sup>295</sup>Daily Missoulian, (Jan. 18, 1931). Only a small amount of information was published in the newspaper regarding the radio station.

<sup>296</sup>Conversation with Mosby, op. cit.

<sup>297</sup>Daily Missoulian, (Feb. 8, 1931).

<sup>298</sup>Ibid., (Feb. 1, 1931).

<sup>299</sup>Conversation with Mosby, op. cit.

Whether the Musicians Union Local 126 was the first advertiser KGVO had on the air, it soon became clear to Mosby that the broadcasting station had the potential to support itself through the sale of advertising messages. However, the early 1930s and the economic situation of that period had adversely affected the economy of Missoula as well as that of the state and the nation. Mosby has said that

the early days were rough going. It was quite a job to meet a payroll, particularly in the panic of 1932. It was a job to sell enough to meet the payroll...then, too, the only way you could sell anything was to trade it out. We traded out groceries for advertising, clothing and things like that for the boys. That's what they were paid off with, plus a few bucks extra....I had to borrow money on my house on University Avenue to make it through this period.<sup>300</sup>

By 1935 radio station KGVO was beginning to prosper, and Mosby received authorization to increase the power of the station to 1,000 watts. The tenfold increase in power made it necessary to construct a transmitter plant five miles west of the city. In 1936, KGVO began broadcasting with 1,000 watts at 1290 kilocycles and received permission in 1938 to increase power to 5,000 watts during the daylight hours, retaining 1,000 watts for radio broadcasting after sundown.<sup>301</sup>

Radio station KGVO became affiliated with the Columbia Broadcasting System in 1936. CBS made affiliates of KGVO and KFBB in Great Falls at the same time, although Mosby has said the arrangement

---

<sup>300</sup>Conversation with Mosby, op. cit.

<sup>301</sup>Ibid.

was almost ended before it ever started. He related that the CBS representatives established \$500 as the fee KGVO would pay each month for the network service, while the charge was \$1,000 at KFBB. The negotiations between the network and the station were customarily confidential. However, when the formal contracts between each station and the network were returned by mail from New York City, KGVO received the KFBB contract and KFBB received the KGVO contract. The Great Falls station management immediately recognized the Missoula station was being charged exactly half the monthly fee in Great Falls. The matter was renegotiated, and KFBB was required to pay only \$750 each month for the CBS network service.<sup>302</sup> In 1936 network service consisted of two hours of programming each day, although Mosby stated the quality of the broadcasts was good.

The addition of CBS programs to the regular daily schedule of radio station KGVO "gave us more prestige...something to sell. As time went on, we learned how to get more shows on...found that we could go to the good customer of the large corporations and ask him to request the company to put Missoula on the network."<sup>303</sup>

The late 1930s was a prosperous period for Mosby and radio station KGVO. Broadcasting in Missoula had progressed considerably since the early days of commercial advertising on KGVO:

---

<sup>302</sup>Conversation with Mosby, op. cit.

<sup>303</sup>Ibid.

In 1932 we got advertising because the people that we owed money to in the electrical business got alarmed and were afraid I would go broke, so they bought time on the air so I could pay up their bills.<sup>304</sup>

In 1939, the broadcasting station studios were moved to 132 West Front Street. The new location was a broadcasting showpiece, with studios and facilities often described as "the best west of the Mississippi."<sup>305</sup> Mosby spared no expense on the new studios, consisting of one large studio "A" and two smaller studios, newsroom, recording library, sales offices, and two private offices. The new location of radio station KGVO in 1939 formerly housed an auto supply firm on the ground floor and a house of prostitution on the second floor. Mosby purchased the building in 1938 for \$6,000 and was anxious to begin remodeling the second floor for the radio station:

After we bought the building, I went upstairs and found out it was an old whorehouse. I told the woman we had bought the thing and that she would have to get out. She said she had paid her rent three months in advance.

Well, when that time was up, Marion Dixon<sup>306</sup> and I went up there to talk to her and tell her we wanted to get in there to remodel. She called us a bunch of sons-of-bitches and so on, then called her boyfriend, who was a cab driver. He came up there and wanted to knock us out, so we left. But it wasn't very long after that she was persuaded to leave.<sup>307</sup>

---

<sup>304</sup>Conversation with Mosby, op. cit.

<sup>305</sup>See "Ed Krebsbach and Station KGCV," this study.

<sup>306</sup>Marion Dixon was a long-time employee of KGVO. He now is engaged in insurance and real estate in Missoula.

<sup>307</sup>Conversation with Mosby, op. cit.

When carpenters began remodeling work on the second floor of the Front Street location, they discovered a clever device that had been used during the Prohibition period. Mosby said that "in the partitions, they had put in copper cans with a faucet attached, hidden behind a picture."<sup>308</sup>

Radio station KGVO continued broadcasting from the studios on West Front Street until an early morning fire in 1949 badly damaged the studios, control room, and recording library. Temporary studios were hastily constructed in the Radio Central Building,<sup>309</sup> and the station did not miss any time on the air, a fact with which Mosby has found considerable satisfaction. He has stated that it took a little more than 36 hours to re-establish regular station operations from the temporary studios. During the 36-hour transitional period, all programming originated from the station's transmitter building, west of the city.<sup>310</sup>

In 1951 Mosby constructed a \$75,000 transmitter plant south of Missoula and received authorization from the FCC to broadcast at 5,000 watts of power fulltime, with directional antennas during the non-daylight hours. In 1956, the KGVO studios on West Front Street were restored, and the station moved from the temporary quarters in the Radio Central Building.<sup>311</sup>

On Nov. 4, 1959, Mosby sold radio station KGVO to Dale G. Moore,

---

<sup>308</sup>Conversation with Mosby, op. cit.

<sup>309</sup>The Radio Central Building formerly was named the Union Block, where station KGVO first began broadcasting in 1931.

<sup>310</sup>Conversation with Mosby, op. cit.

<sup>311</sup>Ibid.

operator of radio stations KCAP, Helena, and KBMH, Bozeman. Moore retains ownership today.<sup>312</sup>

Although the development of radio station KGVO is not as colorful as that of many of the other early-day broadcasting stations in Montana, it was an important link in the consistent growth of broadcasting in the western part of the state. Mosby has steadfastly encouraged superior news on radio and was one of the first broadcasters in the Rocky Mountain area to employ a full-time news director and news staff. KGVO enjoyed a radio broadcasting monopoly in Missoula until 1947, when Ed Craney established radio station KXLL. However, KGVO continues to use the slogan developed by Mosby in 1931 for use on the station identification breaks--"The voice of five great valleys...KGVO, Missoula."

---

<sup>312</sup>Broadcasting, Yearbook issue, 1963, p. B-111.

**THE PERIODS OF ADJUSTMENT, STABILITY,  
AND RAPID CHANGE**

From 1932 to 1937, new radio station construction halted in Montana. The effects of the Depression discouraged new investment despite the growing popularity of radio broadcasting and its apparent importance in the lives of the people.<sup>313</sup> In 1937 the spell was broken when Ed Craney constructed a broadcasting station in Helena, marking the beginnings of the state's first regional network and the first attempt at group ownership of radio stations in Montana. In 1939, Craney established KRBM in Bozeman.<sup>314</sup>

Three months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, eastern Montana's third radio station began broadcasting. The Star Printing Company in Miles City established radio station KRJF at 1340 kilocycles with 250 watts of power. Studios and transmitter for the broadcasting station were located on South Haines Avenue, near the Miles City Country Club.<sup>315</sup>

On Friday evening, Sept. 5, 1941, KRJF went on the air for the first time with

dedicatory exercises...conducted last night from 7 to 10, formally opening to the public Miles City's newest and Montana's tenth radio station. One full hour was devoted to the dedicatory program, followed by an hour of

---

<sup>313</sup>Additional observations on the important role of radio in this period can be found in "KGIR and the Z-Bar Network," this study.

<sup>314</sup>Ibid.

<sup>315</sup>Miles City Daily Star, (Sept. 5, 1941).

entertainment, rendered in person by Miss Ethel Warren and Jose Silva, banjoist and guitarist of California.<sup>316</sup>

Radio station KRJF was one of the first stations in Montana to take advantage of the recent release of wire service news to broadcast stations. In 1933, the three major wire news agencies--United Press, Associated Press, and International News Service--had suspended service to all broadcast stations and networks.<sup>317</sup> In 1940, the three services reinstated broadcast stations and networks to the lease agreements that theretofore had been reserved only for newspapers. KRJF was among the first broadcast stations in the state to subscribe for wire news service.<sup>318</sup>

World War II halted all new radio station construction in the United States. At the time of the beginning of the war in 1941, network radio broadcasting in the United States had achieved major importance as one of the favorite mediums of entertainment. During the period 1942 through 1945, network radio broadcasting achieved additional importance through memorable news broadcasts. The Columbia Broadcasting System in particular, under the direction of Paul White, pioneered in bringing important war news from overseas into the living rooms of millions of Americans every evening. Six Montana radio broadcasting stations were network-affiliated during this period and unquestionably

---

<sup>316</sup>Miles City Daily Star, (Sept. 5, 1941).

<sup>317</sup>An excellent discussion of the wire service boycott of radio broadcasting can be found in Sydney Head's Broadcasting in America (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1956), pp. 138-139.

<sup>318</sup>Miles City Daily Star, (Sept. 4, 1941).



profited from the high-caliber news presentations of men such as Edward R. Murrow, Howard K. Smith, Charles Collingwood, Richard C. Hottelot, Elmer Davis and H. V. Kaltenborn.<sup>319</sup>

The wartime years were a period of relative stability in radio broadcasting in Montana. Individual stations consolidated economic resources from advertising, and station managers were comforted knowing competition could not come until the war was over.

When the war did end, radio broadcasting in Montana expanded rapidly, bringing multiple stations to markets previously dominated for many years by a single station. In the period 1922 through 1945, a total of 10 commercial radio broadcasting stations went on the air in Montana.<sup>320</sup> Within three years following the end of World War II the total had more than doubled; 12 new broadcasting stations went on the air from 1946 through 1948.<sup>321</sup> Multiple station markets existed in Missoula, Butte, Billings, and Great Falls in 1948. The communities of Anaconda, Havre, Lewistown, Livingston, and Shelby had acquired one station each in 1948.<sup>322</sup>

---

<sup>319</sup> Stations KFBB and KGVO were affiliated with CBS. KGHL, KGIR, KPFA, and KRBM were affiliated with NBC. The only other stations in Montana at this time--KGCK, KRJF, and KGEZ--did not become network-affiliated until after the war.

<sup>320</sup>In 1945, only nine stations were in operation. Montana's first station, KDYS, operated 18 months before leaving the air permanently.

<sup>321</sup>Broadcasting, Yearbook issue, 1963.

<sup>322</sup>Ibid.

The rapid expansion of radio broadcasting in Montana was not unusual, however. Throughout the United States there was a tremendous increase in new radio station construction. In October, 1945, there were 909 commercial radio broadcasting stations in the United States. Sixteen months later, in February, 1947, approximately 600 new stations were on the air or under construction, and there were more than 700 applications for new stations still pending before the Federal Communications Commission.<sup>323</sup>

During the period of expansion in Montana, in the years immediately following the war, there was an increase in the number of stations under group ownership. Craney brought in two additional stations on the Z-Bar Network, bringing the total number of that group to five stations. A. J. Mosby in Missoula constructed a new station in Anaconda and seriously planned a 5,000-watt station in Great Falls.<sup>324</sup> The Great Falls Tribune, owner and operator of the state's first radio broadcasting station in 1922, constructed radio station KSON in 1948, thereby giving Great Falls the distinction of being the first Montana market with three radio stations.

Absentee ownership developed for the first time in the early postwar years in Montana broadcasting. A Washington, D. C., consultant engineer--Frank C. Carman--constructed radio station KOPR in Butte in 1948.<sup>325</sup> The postwar "boom" in the construction of new broadcasting

---

<sup>323</sup>Need, op. cit., p. 150.

<sup>324</sup>Reichelt, Clyde., Radio in Montana, term paper (Montana State University School of Journalism, 1946).

<sup>325</sup>Although Carman was the first individual to exercise absentee ownership, it was several years before other Montana stations were placed under the same conditions.

stations hit a peak in 1947, with a total of seven new stations. From 1948 through 1962 an average of two new stations have been constructed each year, most of them in the relatively small communities of the state.

The distribution of new radio broadcasting stations within the state since 1945 is interesting. At the close of World War II, radio station distribution involved nine communities:

Billings:	KGEL, 5,000 watts, NBC affiliate
Butte:	KXLF, 5,000 watts, NBC affiliate
Bozeman:	KBBM, 250 watts, NBC affiliate
Great Falls:	KFBB, 5,000 watts, CBS affiliate
Helena:	KPFA, 250 watts, NBC affiliate
Kalispell:	KGEZ, 100 watts, no affiliation
Miles City:	KRJP, 250 watts, no affiliation
Missoula:	KGVO, 5,000 watts, CBS affiliate
Sidney:	KGCX, 1,000 watts, no affiliation

In the postwar "explosion" of the number of broadcast stations it is interesting to trace the development on an annual basis:

1946:	KANA, Anaconda; KBNY, Billings.
1947:	KBOW, Butte; KXLK, Great Falls; KOJM, Havre; KXLO, Lewistown <sup>326</sup> ; KPRK, Livingston; KXLL, Missoula; KSEN, Shelby. <sup>327</sup>

---

<sup>326</sup>The use of the "XL" in the call letters of this station was coincidental to the Z-Bar Network use of the same combination. There was no financial or program relationship between the network and KXLO.

<sup>327</sup>1947 was the peak year for the construction of new stations.

1948: KOPR, Butte; KXGN, Glendive; KMOH, Great Falls.

1949: KBMN, Bozeman; KCAP, Helena.

1950: KLCB, Libby.

1951: KOCK, Billings.

1952: No new radio stations constructed.

1953: No new radio stations constructed.<sup>328</sup>

1954: KLTZ, Glasgow.

1955: KOYN, Billings; KUDI, Great Falls; KOPI, Kalispell; KQNE, Missoula.

1956: No new radio stations constructed.

1957: KBMN, Dillon; KVCK, Wolf Point.

1958: No new radio stations constructed.

1959: KGVW, Belgrade; KURL, Billings.

1960: No new radio stations constructed.

1961: KLYQ, Hamilton; KRBN, Red Lodge.

1962: KHDM, Hardin; KGLE, Glendive; KPWD-FM, Plentywood.

The earlier pattern of bringing radio stations into single station markets abated considerably following 1950, and the tendency has been to establish new radio stations in smaller communities.

Three radio stations cited in the listing are not now broadcasting. The Federal Communications Commission has advised it does not keep a list of stations which have surrendered their licenses nor any list

---

<sup>328</sup>The outbreak of the Korean War halted construction in 1952 and 1953.

of stations which received a permit for construction but did not complete construction.<sup>329</sup> However, it should be noted that radio stations KAVR, Havre; KGTE, Missoula; and KXLL, Missoula, are not now on the air.<sup>330</sup>

Apart from the rapid increase in the number of radio broadcasting stations in Montana since 1945, the most striking characteristic of the postwar radio industry in Montana is the tendency toward increased group ownership of broadcast stations. In 1945, three of the state's nine broadcasting stations were owned in part by one individual or corporation.<sup>331</sup> In 1962, 18 of the state's 39 broadcasting stations were controlled through group ownership.

Group ownership and the properties controlled:

Christian Enterprises, Incorporated: KGVW, KGLE, KURL.<sup>332</sup>

Garryowen Stations: KOCK and KXLF.

Harriscope Broadcasting Corporation: KFBB.

Hatch, George: KOPR, KMON, KGHL.<sup>333</sup>

---

<sup>329</sup>Letter from Ben F. Waple, acting secretary, Federal Communications Commission, Washington, D. C., Sept. 20, 1962.

<sup>330</sup>KXLL, Missoula, was sold by June, Inc., to Christian Enterprises, Inc., owners of stations KGLE, KGVW, and KURL in April, 1963. Radio station KAVR went off the air sometime in the late 1940s, but no record of the exact date has been found.

<sup>331</sup>The Z-Bar Network, owned by Ed Craney, controlled stations in Butte, Helena, and Bozeman.

<sup>332</sup>The organization has acquired radio station KXLL, Missoula, in addition to the properties listed above.

<sup>333</sup>George Hatch and his wife are listed as full or part owners of KALL and KUTV, both Salt Lake City; Mrs. Hatch is listed as full or part owner of KLIK AM-TV, KGEN, both Idaho; and KLO, Utah.

Moore, Dale G.: KCAP, KBMN, KGVO.<sup>334</sup>

Tri-County Radio Corporation: KANA, KSEW.

Other:

KOYN, affiliated with KQDI, KQDY, both North Dakota.

KGCX, KPWD-FM: E. E. Krebsbach.

KUDI: The Hadlock stations.<sup>335</sup>

Another significant feature of the postwar radio broadcasting station development in Montana is the increased number of markets served by one or more stations. In 1945, nine communities were served by a local radio station. In 1962, 25 communities were served by one or more radio stations. The period following the war also reflects the tendency of many broadcasters to locate radio stations in relatively small communities, including Hamilton, Dillon, Hardin, Libby, Belgrade, Wolf Point, Red Lodge, and Shelby--all with less than 4,100 population.<sup>336</sup>

In the United States radio broadcasting on the whole has been "a remarkably lucrative industry for those who were fortunate enough to receive grants of desirable frequencies in sizeable markets."<sup>337</sup> The same statement could be applied to the radio broadcasting industry in Montana, although the increase in the number of stations within the state has resulted in a general reduction in the profit of individual stations and significant losses in several of the so-called

---

<sup>334</sup>Dale Moore is listed as president of each of the three stations, although each station is incorporated under a different name. See the 1963 Broadcasting yearbook issue.

<sup>335</sup>James F. Hadlock owns two stations in California.

<sup>336</sup>The World Almanac, 1963, and Book of Facts (New York City: New York World Telegram), p. 289.

<sup>337</sup>Head, op. cit., p. 269.

"major" broadcasting markets in the state.

In the period 1958 through 1961, radio stations in Billings have a collective reported loss each year. That is, all Billings radio stations together report the industry in that city failed to show any profit, and reported a peak loss of \$111,826 for the year 1961.<sup>338</sup>

During 1958 all Great Falls radio stations reported a collective loss of \$3,730, while Missoula and Butte stations together reported a profit.<sup>339</sup>

During 1959 Billings reported a loss totaling \$83,540; Great Falls reported a profit of \$56,897; Missoula reported a loss of \$22,222, and Butte reported a loss of \$6,764.<sup>340</sup>

During 1960 Billings reported a loss of \$111,826; Great Falls reported a profit of \$28,908; Missoula reported a loss of \$17,019, and Butte reported a loss of \$2,858.<sup>341</sup>

During 1961, all four markets reported a loss with Billings reporting a high total of \$105,916; Great Falls, \$1,377; Missoula \$15,652, and Butte, \$18,082.<sup>342</sup>

While the reported losses reflect generally what was occurring in the radio broadcasting industry as a whole,<sup>343</sup> the situation was in contrast to the prosperous period during World War II:

---

<sup>338</sup>Final Broadcast Financial Data--AM-FM (Federal Communications Commission, Washington, D. C., 1961). The FCC does not offer a station-by-station breakdown of annual financial reports.

<sup>339</sup>Final Broadcast Financial Data--AM-FM, 1958, op. cit.

<sup>340</sup>Ibid., 1959.

<sup>341</sup>Ibid., 1960.

<sup>342</sup>Ibid., 1961.

<sup>343</sup>Ibid.

A general measure of the industry's economic health can be obtained by calculating the ratio of income to revenue or investment. Both of these indices rose very rapidly during the early 1940s until the glut of postwar radio stations began to lower the average income. In 1944, the ratio of the income to original costs had reached 1.09, which means that radio stations as a whole were realizing over 100 per cent of their total investment in tangible property in the course of a single year.<sup>344</sup>

Truly meaningful figures regarding the economic health of the radio broadcasting industry are lacking. The reported difference between total broadcast revenues and total broadcast expenses may indicate a loss, as in the case of the four Montana markets reviewed in this study. However, station owners frequently "write off" expenses for the acquisition of tangible assets not directly associated with the operation of the radio station, but associated with the investment function of the corporation. Consequently, the FCC financial reports do not accurately reflect the economic health of the broadcasting industry. At the present time, however, these reports are the only measure available.<sup>345</sup> Furthermore, the FCC does not report the financial condition of single stations, thereby making it impossible to assess thoroughly the economic health of the 16 Montana single-station markets.

---

<sup>344</sup>Head, op. cit., p. 268.

<sup>345</sup>The Federal Communications Commission has recently instituted the use of a new form on which stations are to report annual financial data. The new form is designed to correct many of the deficiencies outlined above.



In general, however, the owners and operators of Montana's 39 radio broadcasting stations do not appear to be particularly unhappy about the economic health of the industry.

## CONCLUSIONS

In any history of a particular period in human events there traditionally exists the desire to appraise or evaluate what has happened in terms of the overall effect on the culture. Others want to know, "What does it mean?" or "What consequences did it have?"

It would be very difficult accurately to assess what effects the development of radio broadcasting has had on the people of Montana. It does not appear, for example, that the network radio programs--many of them portraying truthfully the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the East and others reporting objectively conflicting views of world events--had any measurable effect of the general provincial attitude of most state citizens. Nor does it appear the radio broadcasting stations made any particular progress toward breaking down the traditional opposition of the state regarding strangers, ideas from Washington, D. C., and industry.

However, Montana's early-day radio broadcasting stations contributed much in the way of breaking the bitter loneliness and isolation of the ranch or farm. The nearest radio station often became a genuine friend of the family--cheerful, dependable, entertaining, informative, and helpful in emergencies. The location of the radio station was of considerable commercial value as well, for the community merchants found it was profitable to advertise Saturday specials on the radio to urge the rural patrons into town. The radio station frequently

donated free time on the air for various merchandising schemes, stimulating trade in the community. There was also a general feeling among the so-called "city fathers"--particularly during the late 1920s and early 1930s--that a community with a radio station "was on the map."<sup>346</sup> During the early period in radio broadcasting development in Montana many citizens felt a profound personal identification with the nearest radio station. The radio stations responded with a variety of "service" functions and a standing offer of free announcements for those who needed help. Furthermore, the intimacy between listener and radio station that was developed in the early history of Montana broadcasting exercised a certain amount of restraint on radio programming and, in general, made the broadcasters more cognizant of their responsibility. Ed Craney has said:

I think stations operated more in the public interest, convenience, and necessity during that time...and tried to limit themselves....We didn't take Ex-Lax, we didn't sell time to religious organizations but we gave it away to them....We did a lot of different things that aren't being done today....the stations have so much competition today they break down their rates and they put on so much advertising in order to try to break even.<sup>347</sup>

Montana radio broadcasting today does not, generally speaking, reflect the same kind of responsibility and concern typical of the

---

<sup>346</sup>For particularly good examples of the importance attached to the location of a radio station, consult "Ed Krebsbach and Station KGCX," in this study.

<sup>347</sup>Conversation with Craney, op. cit.

radio broadcasting station in the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>348</sup> The influence of the early-day radio pioneers in Montana has been diluted owing to the increased number of radio stations in operation, the high level of competition for the advertising dollar in most multiple station markets, and the fact that the pioneers are growing older and are leaving the radio broadcasting business.<sup>349</sup> They are being replaced by younger men, trained to be financially successful in an industry that has a reputation for being lucrative.

Montana's pioneer radio stations "grew up" in a particular community, often miles from the next nearest community with a radio station, and relatively isolated from signals from outside stations.<sup>350</sup> There were no networks in Montana in the early days of broadcasting. The early-day broadcasters themselves had no actual experience in the operation of a radio station. Concepts for various programs, methods of conducting programs on the air, service projects for the community and even hours of operation were most often dictated by the actual needs of the community the station served. "We had no mother to guide us" was the comment of an early-day announcer.<sup>351</sup> The result was an interesting and varied array of types of radio broadcasting stations in Montana, each contributing something a little different and something unique. With the increase in the number of radio stations

---

<sup>348</sup> Many Montana stations conduct excellent projects of community service, news, and special events, however.

<sup>349</sup> Among those who have left radio broadcasting are Craney, Mosby, Campbell, Treloar, and Wilkins.

<sup>350</sup> Signals from outside radio stations were difficult to receive particularly after the frequency re-allocation of the Federal Radio Commission, 1928-1930.

<sup>351</sup> Conversation with Ryan, op. cit.

following World War II and the domination of network radio broadcasting, Montana radio stations began to adopt a "metropolitan" program sound and attempted to emulate radio stations in larger cities that had successfully thwarted competition.

Of particular interest in the history of Montana radio broadcasting is the motivation for the construction of the early-day radio stations. While several of the pioneer radio broadcasters felt a radio station would stimulate the sale of radio receiving sets, at least three of the pioneers apparently were motivated by nothing more than a genuine desire for entertainment of the people they knew.<sup>352</sup> All of Montana's early-day radio stations were modest broadcasting plants, often employing second-hand parts from radio receivers and amateur transmitters. However, radio apparatus was very expensive, and even the most modest plant was worth several thousands of dollars. Still, several of the pioneers invested hard-earned dollars from personal savings to construct radio stations "to entertain." By the late 1920s, of course, all of them realized radio broadcasting was a powerful advertising instrument that could be very lucrative.

It was unfortunate that Montana's first radio station--KBYS, Great Falls, did not remain on the air. As the first broadcasting station in the state and under the control of the Great Falls Tribune, KBYS would have had an opportunity to serve in the role of "pacesetter"

---

<sup>352</sup>The three were Krebsbach, Buttrey, and the members of the Flathead Broadcasting Association. Campbell and Mosby wanted to stimulate the sale of radio receivers. Craney apparently recognized the commercial value in terms of advertising when he constructed his station, although he also was a distributor of wholesale radio parts as well.

for subsequent broadcasting stations, and--because of the financial resources of the Tribune--would have had the necessary economic reserves to implement innovations in programs, engineering, and radio broadcasting service. Montana's first radio broadcasting station to remain on the air--KFBB, Havre--began very modestly and during the very early days did not serve as much more than an infrequent crop and weather reporting device.

There seems to be little doubt that there was an organized attempt on the part of the ACM company newspapers in Montana to ignore news of radio broadcasting stations after 1930. An examination of company newspapers, located in communities with radio broadcasting stations, reveals there was a distinct reduction in the number of column inches and the frequency with which the newspaper reported news of the local radio station.<sup>353</sup> The exact reasons for the relatively sudden reduction cannot be documented, although one pioneer radio broadcaster has alleged the reduction was ordered by the company from its state offices in Butte, sometime in late 1929 or early 1930.<sup>354</sup>

The attempt of the Fairmont Corporation in 1951 to purchase the controlling interest in radio station KFBB is significant, for it marks the only time the Anaconda Copper Mining company attempted to

---

<sup>353</sup>The Daily Missoulian and Butte Daily Post are examples of the contrast. Heavy coverage was afforded KGIR, Butte, in 1929, while in 1931 the Daily Missoulian almost completely ignored KGVO, Missoula.

<sup>354</sup>Conversation with Ed Craney, op. cit.

become directly engaged in broadcasting in Montana. It is curious that the ACM company did not recognize the potential of radio broadcasting during the 1930s and did not attempt at that time to construct radio stations in communities served by company-owned or controlled newspapers. The ACM company apparently decided too late. The heavy opposition to the proposed purchase of KFBB by the Fairmont Corporation clearly indicates the feelings of most Montana citizens toward the so-called "company press" in the state.<sup>355</sup> This development can be contrasted with later developments regarding KFBB, when the radio and television properties were sold to the Harriscop Corporation of California in 1961. Despite the fact the firm is out-of-state and would exercise absentee ownership control over the broadcasting stations, there were no protests of the magnitude of intensity associated with the attempted Fairmont Corporation ten years earlier.<sup>356</sup>

The names of three men are particularly important in the development of radio broadcasting in Montana. F. A. Buttrey, Ed Craney, and E. E. Krebsbach are the dominant personalities in the state's radio broadcasting history. Each was a pioneer broadcaster, bringing radio-telephone signals into separate areas of Montana during the 1920s. Krebsbach and Buttrey established radio stations very early and guided the small, somewhat crude broadcasting facilities to a place

---

<sup>355</sup>The Fairmont Corporation is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Anaconda Copper Mining company and is considered the "holding" company for the ACM company newspapers formerly published in Montana.

<sup>356</sup>Other radio stations are owned all, or in part, by newspapers, but the newspapers are not controlled by ACM; KMOB, Great Falls, formerly owned by the Tribune, and KRJF, Miles City, owned by the Star Publishing Company.

of prestige and public service.

Craney established the Butte radio station relatively late in the early period of Montana's broadcasting history. However, Craney's accomplishments are perhaps the most significant of any single individual in Montana broadcasting. He was the first to formulate group ownership of radio stations; he was the first to establish a regional network of radio stations, and he was the first individual to formulate group ownership of television stations within the state.<sup>357</sup>

In 1962, Montana broadcasting has younger men who are making different but significant contributions to the industry. Whether they will be regarded as important to the development of broadcasting in Montana remains to be seen.

---

<sup>357</sup>Craney owned KXLF-TV, Butte and KXJ-TV, Helena.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### A. BOOKS

Archer, Gleason L., The History of Radio to 1926 (New York, 1938).

An excellent review of events in radio broadcasting during the early period. Major developments are detailed and well documented. Particularly useful for background and source material.

Frost, S. E., Education's Own Stations (Chicago, 1937).

An adequate review of educational radio broadcasting during the 1920s and early 1930s. The author relies largely on summaries submitted by the station administrators. Interesting but not generally useful.

Head, Sydney W., Broadcasting in America (Cambridge, 1956).

This is an excellent work, documenting the significant developments in broadcasting from the early days of radio broadcasting through the early developments of television. The author also reviews the regulatory and social controls of broadcasting.

White, Llewelyn, American Radio (Chicago, 1947).

This book deals with later developments in radio broadcasting. It is not as detailed regarding the early period of broadcasting as contrasted with the Gleason work, although it is well documented and handles more recent information adequately.

World Almanac and Book of Facts (New York, 1963).

Invaluable general information work. Hard-to-find information is readily found in the book.

### B. OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

Federal Communications Commission, record group 173, docket 10026  
(State Historical Library, Helena, Mont.)

Complete microfilm of the files and correspondence relative to the application of the Fairmont Corporation to purchase controlling interest in KFEE, Great Falls. The material is interesting and details many of the financial arrangements of Fairmont and the ACM Company newspapers in Montana.

Federal Communications Commission, Final Broadcast Financial Data--  
AM-FM, 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961 (Washington, D. C.).

Statistical data relative to annual broadcast revenues compared with broadcast expenses as reported by radio and television stations. Data is reported by cities, and the Commission report does not offer a station-by-station breakdown. The data also does not always accurately reflect the financial condition of the industry in a particular community, although the Commission announced plans in 1963 to revise the forms on which stations report financial data to make the information more accurate.

C. CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE AUTHOR

KGEZ, radio station, Kalispell, Mont., Sept., 1962.  
Krebsbach, E. C., Williston, No. Dak., Feb. 22, 1963.  
Shields, Dan W., Washington, D. C., Sept. 2, 1962.  
Waple, Ben F., Washington, D. C., Sept. 20, 1962.

D. INTERVIEWS

Bartlett, Fred L., Billings, Mont., Sept. 6, 1962.  
Blanchette, W. C., Great Falls, Mont., Nov. 30, 1962.  
Carr, Lyle, Missoula, Mont., Mar. 26, 1963.  
Campbell, Charles O., Billings, Mont., Sept. 6, 1962.  
Craney, Ed, Butte, Mont., Sept. 25, 1962 and April 7, 1963.  
Lopuch, Anthony, Great Falls, Mont., Nov. 30, 1962.  
Mosby, A. J., Missoula, Mont., Mar. 20, 1963.  
Ryan, Jack, Missoula, Mont., Jan. 21, 1963.

#### E. UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS

KGHL radio station scrapbook, 1928 through 1962, Billings, Mont.

Available through the radio station. Contains clippings from newspapers and station photographs of various highlights during station development. However, there are significant periods that are not documented in the scrapbook.

Reichelt, Clyde, "Radio In Montana," term study paper, School of Journalism, Montana State University, Missoula, 1947.

Reichelt's research was not thorough, and much of the information is unreliable. He did not include a bibliography and did not include footnotes. The paper is interesting but frequently inaccurate.

Shallenberger, G. D., interview with Dr. Erling S. Jorgensen, Montana State University, Missoula, May 26, 1960.

Dr. Shallenberger's remarks are particularly interesting and valuable. The interview is 55 minutes in length and is on tape in the School of Journalism.

#### G. PERIODICAL LITERATURE

Broadcasting Yearbook (1963).

An annual publication of Broadcasting magazine, the Yearbook is a comprehensive directory for the broadcast industry. Information is quite detailed and reliable.

#### H. NEWSPAPERS

Anaconda Standard (Sept. 25, 1928). Issues of September were reviewed for background information.

Billings Gazette (Nov. 3, 1922 through Dec. 31, 1922; June 8, June 9, 1928; Nov. 28, 1931).

Butte Daily Post (Jan. 3, 1929 through Feb. 1, 1929; other selected issues in this same period were reviewed for any additional background).

The Daily Missoulian (Dec. 23, 1930 through Feb. 8, 1931).

Great Falls Tribune (May 4, 1922 through Nov. 25, 1923; Apr. 26, 1929 through Sept. 15, 1929; Mar. 18, 1954).

The Tribune unquestionably provided the state with the best overall coverage of events in the radio and television broadcasting industry. Contrasted with ACM Company newspapers, the Tribune coverage did not suddenly drop off in the early 1930s.

Havre Daily News (Apr. 24, 1929).

Helena Independent-Record (Sept. 27, 1937). Other selected issues during September were reviewed for any additional information.

Kalispell Daily Interlake (Jan. 18, 1927 through Mar. 31, 1927).

Miles City Daily Star (Sept. 4 through Sept. 7, 1941).

Montana Kaimin (Oct. 7, 1924 through Oct. 30, 1925; Nov. 1, 1929). Other selected issues in the period from 1925 through 1929 were examined for background and additional information.

The Kaimin provided excellent coverage of the developments of the campus radio station.

Sidney Herald (June 25, 1942; Aug. 6, 1942).

Wolf Point Herald (Jan. 4, 1929; Oct. 4, 1929).