



## KYW Radio



# KYW Radio

*The Cleveland Years*

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CLEVELAND, OHIO



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# Introduction

Today's commercial radio-industry faces a persistent business problem. Much of it stems from the large number of highly desirable apps and useful streaming platforms that feature personalized music and podcasts. Clever rivalry among media specialists is not something new to the U.S. radio-industry. The astonishing success of television during the post-war years dramatically diminished the size of radio's listening audience. Starting in the 1950s, successful radio broadcasters fought the rapid advancement of television by overhauling some of their out-of-date programs. Many influential large radio outlets including Westinghouse's KYW rose to the occasion. In the case of KYW, its hands-on approach towards broadcasting enabled that 50,000-watt radio giant to regularly exercise its leadership role during its nine-year tenure in Cleveland.

Its ability to set aside its middle-of-the-road format in the early 1960s to become a leading Top 40 contender demonstrated KYW's determination to succeed using sensible program improvements. This book will explore some of the methods used to achieve its business objectives and what lessons we might learn from its experience. The broadcasting model perfected by KYW-Cleveland may well help some of today's struggling outlets that are forced to fight unyielding competition initiating from numerous new business fronts.



# Chapter 1: New Market Challenges Facing Radio Today

A new challenge known as digital alternatives rocked the very heart of commercial radio broadcasting at the turn of the 21st century.<sup>1</sup> Whether streamed through Amazon, Pandora, Spotify, YouTube or some other sources didn't matter much to radio leaders who were flabbergasted by their breathtaking success. From its modest beginnings, these digital alternatives have offered a wide selection of specific apps and streaming platforms. Through numerous devices provide their subscribers with highly desirable, personalized music and podcasts on a 24/7 basis. Such dramatic developments should not have greatly amazed commercial radio experts. After all, signs of trouble first emerged in the late 1980s when the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) sold its company owned radio outlets including its much prized flagship station WNBC-New York to Westwood One for \$55 million.<sup>2</sup> Other financial shortfalls over the next decade resulted in the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company (WBS) purchasing the Columbia Broadcasting Company (CBS) for \$5.4 billion in 1995.<sup>3</sup> Fourteen years later, the all-new CBS became a vital part of today's Viacom.<sup>4</sup>

Disney Productions also expanded its earlier, more narrowly-focused broadcasting objectives in the mid-'90s when it bought Capital Cities and the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) for a whopping \$19 billion.<sup>5</sup> Those mergers highlighted by compelling new dramas, provocative news-talk shows, outrageous reality offerings; off-beat sitcoms and exciting sports have literally changed the face of 21st century conventional television. Similar merger activities and a noted relaxing of federal restrictions regarding the number of stations an individual broadcaster might own with a targeted area had also radically altered traditional commercial radio broadcasting. From Maine to California, more and more local radio stations have deserted their individual formats for more homogeneous ones.

Usually owned and operated by large regional or national broadcasting concerns, many of those local outlets have deliberately discouraged competition. Those recent actions do not represent a sinister plot hatched by aliens from another planet; but rather, the logical outcome of highly motivated station owners that have purposely chosen to lower their overall costs by streamlining their operations. Such measures have led many radio broadcasters to bring together some the latest rock and roll music with today's favorite dance music to create a new format they

1. "2021 Outlook: Challenges, Opportunities facing U.S. TV, Radio Stations," S&P Global Market Intelligence, <https://www.spglobal.com>. Larry S. Miller, "Paradigm Shift: Why Radio Must Adapt to the Rise of Digital," *Musonomics*, <https://www.musonomics.com>.
2. Richard W. Stevenson, "NBC to Sell Its Radio Network," *The New York Times*, July 21, 1987.
3. Geraldine Fabrikant, "CBS Accepts Bid by Westinghouse; \$5.4 Billion Deal," *The New York Times*, August 2, 1995.
4. "CBS & Viacom Complete Merger," <https://www.cbsnews.com>.
5. Steven Rosenfeld, "Disney to Acquire Cap Cities/ABC in \$19 Billion Merger," <https://apnews.com>.

call the “contemporary urban sound.” Others have adopted affordable, new program alternatives. They include the likes of shock jocks, politically-charged talk shows, sports talk or 24/7 news as well as classical music and contemporary jazz. Yet, in their attempt to update their programming few have addressed the pressing needs and wants of the post-1990 generations. Left to their own devices, those younger people have relied more and more on newer music and video streaming services and specially attuned podcasts. Some services even incorporate live games, sports, e-sports and sports betting. Those extras are not readily available through more traditional broadcasting means. These latest developments have not escaped the attention of shrewd investors that have encouraged the expansion of these new, highly profitable digital alternatives.

Unquestionably, most of today’s leading recording companies fully support these latest approaches. They consider them to be the wave of the future. They particularly like the idea that many streaming services pay royalties on the songs they play daily. That pay-as-you-go arrangement did not exist earlier. Over the last decade or so, unique streaming services, rather than traditional broadcasting outlets, have increasingly governed the musical preferences for millions of their faithful listeners. Exceptionally high returns are out there for those who willingly invest in those latest technological advances. As you might expect, the general acceptance of high-tech digital listening devices has done a great more than simply line the pockets of shrewd investors. In a real true sense, such devices have meaningfully heightened the listening experience for their subscribers. Smart speakers, such as Amazon Echo and Home Pod Minis, help in this process.<sup>6</sup>

Algorithmic, linear lean-backs to self-driven, on-demand have become the number one choice in our new digital alternative age. Attuned listeners are also keenly aware of the discount plans and listening options currently available to them. They also understand their limitations. For example, the recently hyped Apple Music voice plan that requires its subscribers to ask Siri whenever they want to hear a specific album or song may have done away with the need to thumb through endless playlists or rely on music apps. However, it might severely restrict their song choices and listening range. Apple Music represents only one of a multitude of affordable competing services available to the general public.

Commercial radio broadcasters must stay on top of the latest technical breakthroughs if they want to remain in the game. But, their obligation to the public extends beyond just staying abreast of the latest developments. Extraordinary business and technical advances, made by digital alternative leaders over the last five years, may well signal the beginning of the end for traditional commercial radio as we know it. If the radio-industry expects to endure this latest attack then it must be primed to gain an upper hand over its many digital rivals. That might include reaching a workable arrangement with its chief competitors that would allow it to pursue certain aspects of new technology without possible piracy from outside sources.

In the case of the new digital alternative, working closely with today’s highly flexible consumer market has inspired it to experiment with a wide assortment of audio as well as music apps capabilities. The radio industry takes a much narrower perspective when it comes to that. The many preconditions placed on it by the feds over its more than one-hundred-year history has stymied its ability to grow freely with the market. Keeping that in mind, today’s radio leaders are still hunting for that sweet spot where broadcasting might flourish unmolested from

6. Chris Velazco, “If You Need Your Music Everywhere, Apple Music’s Voice Plan Isn’t For You,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 9, 2022. Miller, *Musonomics*.

unwanted, outside forces. Many of today's traditional broadcasting companies consider automated broadcasting that sweet spot. They view it as a practical way in which to lower their overall operating expenses while keeping watchdog agencies such as the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) at a safe distance.

Alternative programming might also be the key to their future success. Such things as personalized, continual community newscasts might represent an affordable, effective way to ensure survival. It might be a bonus especially to insightful listeners that want to know the latest developments as they unfold within their communities. Of course, first hand programming is not something new to radio broadcasters. However, 24/7 broadcasts geared towards the ever-changing urban landscape might be exactly what is needed. It also might end the tiresome programming that has flooded the airwaves recently. Escalating consumer costs, a byproduct of the new alternative digital age might be another way in which to convince former radio listeners to return to the fold. Don't forget that commercial radio programs are free while apps, smart phones, platforms, podcasts and satellite radio can be very costly. Consumers might want to keep that in mind especially if inflation continues to grow.

This new digital age is not the first time that U.S. commercial radio has faced formidable business challenges. The radio-industry has been under fire countless times over its more than one-hundred-year history. In its infancy, many outlets had to regularly match their wits against dominate local newspapers. Those dailies not only successfully covered regional and world events; but also, offered their readership some of the best in personal advice, comics, community features, editorials, horoscopes, sports and weather. Most large U.S. cities into the 1930s supported many newspapers. In order to survive such fierce competition, the majority of radio stations began broadcasting their own locally-edited shows. They varied from cooking lessons, comedies and dramas to news, soap operas and sports. Almost any program was okay as long as it attracted a reasonable following and followed accepted federal guidelines. By the mid-1930s, the rapid increase in the number of NBC, CBS, MBS and WBC affiliates ended many of those local offerings. That trend favoring national broadcasts over local shows continued into the Second World War.

The National Broadcasting Company immediate success as a radio broadcaster encouraged its owner the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) to create two separate networks Red Dot and Blue Dot. Larger radio affiliates generally subscribed to Red Dot while smaller outlets mostly chose Blue Dot. Fearing that NBC was gaining a stranglehold on the national radio market led the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to order it to rid itself of one of them.<sup>7</sup> That separation in January 1942 resulted in Red Dot remaining a part of the parent company with Blue Dot breaking off. Four years later, the Blue Dot network became the American Broadcasting Company (ABC).<sup>8</sup> Had commercial radio remained the primary source of entertainment, news and sports in the Cold War years then those same networks would have enjoyed soaring revenues.<sup>9</sup> The idea that an upstart such as television might overturn the apple cart seemed very unlikely. However, its many advocates thought differently. Hoping to compete in the big leagues ASAP, experimental television made its debut at the New York World's Fair in 1939. Its approval among fairgoers led NBC's President General David Sarnoff (1891-1971) to begin to keep files on New Yorkers who purchased television sets. In fact, NBC sent them a list of its own televised programs. Not to be outdone by the National Broadcasting Company, the Philco Corporation debuted its own Philadelphia-based

7. Federal Communication Commission, *Report on Chain Broadcasting*, May 1941, p. 92.

8. "Evolution of Radio Broadcasting," <https://open.lib.umn.edu/mediaandculture/chapter/7-2-evolution-of-radio-broadcasting/>.

9. "From the Birthplace of Broadcasting, California Historical Radio Society," <https://www.californiahistoricalradio.com>.

television station the next year. As we will see later, that particular Philly outlet was to play a critical role in the future of both NBC and WBC.

The rapid expansion of television in the late '40s and early '50s encouraged many eager broadcasting companies to exercise their option of purchasing combined radio and television stations as single packages. That generally meant that future deals would pertain to both outlets whether that was actually spelled out or not in discussions. Frequently, local market size and revenue returns determined their individual value. That practice of jointly buying radio and television outlets as one remained popular into the 1960s. Pre-war commercial television experiments came to an abrupt end with the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Television technicians for the remainder of the war directed the bulk of their energies and resources towards much needed defense work. Fortunately, many of them continued to experiment with television during their spare moments.

Following the war, many of those technicians returned to their first love which was television. Through the help of jointly owned radio and television networks such as NBC, CBS and Dumont many large U.S. cities including Boston, Chicago, New York and Philadelphia had television stations in operation by 1947. As you might have already concluded, those networks determined pretty much what was or wasn't shown on the tube. Primarily, they broadcasted homegrown shows, old movies and plenty of news. ABC joined in on the fun after merging with United Paramount Theatres in 1948. Yet, in spite of television's instant popularity, sparked in large measure by those same enthusiastic networks, few in the radio industry believed that that this new media posed any real threat to traditional broadcasting.<sup>10</sup> High production costs pretty much eliminated television as a serious competitor.

However, the lightning speed in which telecasters improved their broadcasting capabilities while lowering production costs soon changed everything. By the mid-1950s, most major U.S. cities had at least two television outlets. Surprisingly, the extraordinary growth of this new medium did not seem to bother most radio broadcasters who shrugged it off. Television's limited broadcasting range; fuzzy picture, poor sound quality and scant offerings all but guaranteed radio's dominance at least for the foreseeable future. Once television's early technical glitches were resolved than television networks began broadcasting all kinds of comedies, dramas and news along with entertaining quiz shows, sports and local variety specials. Recognizing that the future of broadcasting might well belong to television led many successful radio programs to migrate there.<sup>11</sup> As you might well imagine, radio's harshest critics pointed out that those recent staggering financial losses could have been pretty much avoided with some insight. They strongly recommended that the radio industry develop some electrifying new program format quickly if it intended to avert future disaster.

The extraordinary success of television did much more than undermine radio's dominance within the broadcasting field. It also challenged many long held business practices. Unquestionably, television was a byproduct of a much larger, very persuasive national grassroots movement that was gaining tremendous traction throughout the late '40s and early '50s. That nationwide effort called for the abandonment of some of our nation's most cherished cultural and social traditions for what many consider to be very questionable new initiatives. Cloaked in rebellious overtones, it was related to the U.S.'s emerging economic and political importance worldwide and the emanate

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

threat posed by the Soviet Union once the Iron Curtain was established. What it failed to address at all was the positive benefits equated with America's post-war prosperity.

Not directly affected by the devastation and agonizing slow recovery that had beleaguered much of Central and Western Europe in the decade following the Second World War, the U.S. had achieved unprecedented new heights of prosperity and wealth during that same period of time. Starting with the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, the feds provided returning servicemen and their families excellent new educational and job training options. That federal response resulted in better jobs and higher wages for millions of Americans.<sup>12</sup> Spending that extra cash posed no problem whatsoever once civilian production kicked into high gear again. By 1947, the national economy was producing a groundswell of highly desirable goods. Autos, cooking ranges, refrigerators and washers/dryers were musts for everyone along with high quality radios and television sets.<sup>13</sup> Most people were equally fascinated with the new broadcasting medium called television. It was not like nothing else they had seen before in that it brought quality programs into their living rooms each and every day.

If radio hoped to survive the advent of television then it would have to reinvent itself very quickly. Of course, the radio industry was aided in this process by some musical icons of the era. Those that helped included Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Count Basie, Duke Ellington and Les and Larry Elgart, to name but a few. Also, leading crooners of the day like Bing Crosby, Rosemary Clooney, Frank Sinatra and Jo Stafford enabled commercial AM radio to weather this latest business storm. Other singing sensations such as Nat King Cole, Perry Como, Frankie Laine, Peggy Lee, Patti Page and Johnny Ray helped commercial radio by updating their musical scores. In spite of this groundswell of support, larger and larger numbers of record buyers began turning away from standard musical choices preferring to embrace more off-beat, often newer sounds instead. Those more adventurous recordings ran the gamut from jazz to Latin sounds and from boogie woogie to country music.<sup>14</sup> Classical music along with opera, Gospel music and R&B also rekindled the public's imagination. Some radio stations welcomed them as worthwhile alternatives to the humdrum television shows of that time. Fortunately, ground-breaking programming was not limited only to big city radio outlets. Brilliance seemed to be popping up everywhere.

Big and small radio outlets fought long and hard to gain as many new listeners as possible. Regrettably, with limited available resources their daring efforts often resulted in similar sounding broadcasts. What that meant was that any revenue gains those ground-breaking programmers might have achieved over their rivals initially was quickly lost. Also, the growing number of teen listeners posed a Catch-22 especially for traditional radio managers many of which were still cautious when it came to playing large amounts of rock and roll music. Teen's relatively small allowances did not greatly improve their chances of hearing more rock and roll music on those stations at least for the near future. Bottom line, most radio broadcasters still relied on outmoded teen information when determining their playlist. Let's explore this idea of this slowly emerging teen market a bit further. Prior to the Second World War, the number of U.S. teenagers earning a decent week's pay remained small. In fact, pre-war studies of adolescents suggested that teen exposure to popular music was limited to either local playlists or the few records they might have purchased. Unfortunately, lack of cash and tight parental controls influenced both.

12. "The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944," Pub L. 78-345, 58 Stat. 284.

13. "From the Birthplace of Broadcasting."

14. "Evolution of Radio Broadcasting."

All that changed during the Cold War as larger and larger numbers of teens ventured beyond their immediate neighborhoods. What they soon discovered was that surviving in that “brave new world” was not easy.<sup>15</sup>

Frequently alone, many of them became very defensive and ill-mannered. Those growing fires of discontent aimed at the unfair world lurking around the corner fueled a heightened cynicism among many. It terrified them that this heartless world might well determine their fate. Increasingly, teenagers found themselves caught between a rock and a hard place. Parental compassion, if it existed at all, only aggravated it even more. Was that youth rebellion a warning of worse times yet ahead? Who knew? But, one thing became apparent to commercial radio broadcasters by mid-century. They would have to revise their thinking regarding the value of teenage audiences. The post-war surge in the number of teens and young adults required a new approach towards broadcasting. As everyone knew, AM radio stations lived and died by the ratings. Yet, many program initiators seemed confounded when it came to tapping into that growing market while maintain high ratings. The explosion in the number of good paying after school jobs for teenagers by the mid-1950s, held the key to radio’s future success. New part-time jobs gave them lots of disposable cash which they quickly spent on a variety of fun things such as casual food, fashionable clothes, grooming aids, magazines and records.

Skyrocketing record sales in the late 1940s and early 1950s impressed jukebox operators, record store owners and jocks alike.<sup>16</sup> You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that the U.S. radio-industry was caught in the middle of a serious bind. It had to come up with an effective new way in which to take advantage of this fast-changing market or face the grim prospects of irreparable financial harm. That realization prompted many conservative broadcasters to begin to play an assortment of records. Those recordings spanned the spectrum from black inspired music and folk music to jazz and R&B. In spite of increasing evidence to the contrary, many conservative business leaders zealously opposed this new form of broadcasting. They thought those radio stations were out of step with the times. Rebellious teenagers more and more protested against what they considered to be very old fashion thinking. The younger generation loved this new kind of music and wanted to hear more of it on the AM dial. Recognized by its repetitive, sharp beat, the “cool” music of the early ‘50s comprised a host of dissimilar black and white musical genres that were blended together to create a new and powerful sound experience they called rock and roll. A term first coined by a Cleveland DJ named Alan Freed at the Moondog Coronation Ball on March 21, 1952, rock and roll music quickly made a name for itself.<sup>17</sup>

Interesting side note here, Alan Freed’s close friend Leo Mintz first introduced him to this dramatically different kind of popular music in 1950. Mintz owned a favorite downtown record shop in Cleveland called “Record Rendezvous.” Soaring sales in R&B or “Race Music” convinced WJW’s Alan Freed to play it. The Cleveland audience immediately loved it. Rock and roll music got another very positive boost in February 1955 when WERE radio personality Bill Randle arranged for Elvis Presley to sing at Brooklyn High School in Brooklyn, OH. That was Presley’s first concert outside the South. Some experts in the music field have suggested that Rock and Roll referred to “rockin” and “rollin” a part of earlier race songs. Many modern-day critics often minimize the importance of the exceptional sound traceable to the earliest forms of rock and roll. Those early songs did much more than just set the stage for the upcoming, more sophisticated British rock invasion, Motown,

15. “From the Birthplace of Broadcasting.”

16. Ibid.

17. “The Rise of Top 40 Radio,” <https://www.britannica.com>.



the Philadelphia sound, hard rock, punk rock or disco. Early rock and roll music delivered a well-defined sound that was symbolized by its very fast, hard-driving beat. In fact, it's rhyming verses and loud repetitive drum beat definitely separated it from other popular musical forms of that same era.

Most importantly, the lyrics of rock and roll songs dealt with both the joys and tragedies of being a post-war teenager. Its unbridled passion for love and hate, as seen through the eyes of teens, was second to none. Early rock and roll music also concentrated on love gained and lost from the distinctive perspective of the individual performer. Most importantly, it reflected the emotions and fears experienced by teens as they made the tough adjustment from childhood to adulthood. Rock and roll music undoubtedly furnished them a safe haven where their pent-up anxieties and daily frustrations could come out without fear of reprisal from others. Wanting to do the right thing for the growing number of teen listeners convinced many smart broadcasters to add rock and roll music to their daily lineups. Often featured on special "Hi-Fi" shows, they proudly showcased the latest 45s to their many excited listeners. Some programmers went so far as to integrate rock and roll music directly into their playlists. Those newly expanded playlists also featured "cool" sounding jazz, popular crooners, and of course, the very latest in instrumentals. But, few early '50s broadcaster mothballed traditional formats. That was too risky. If rock and roll music really set out to become a permanent fixture in U.S. radio then its dedicated promoters had to develop some effective new marketing device to ensure its success. It took the genius of Gordon McLendon (1921-1986) of Dallas, TX and Todd Storz (1924-1964) of Omaha, NB to come up with the perfect solution.<sup>18</sup>

Called Top 40 Radio, it ruled the commercial airwaves from the mid-'50s to the late-'70s. Fast paced and frequently irreverent, Top 40 carefully followed the accepted business principles of that day to their logical conclusion. Of course, selling large amounts of advertising time remained tops on their to-do list. Many writers in trying to engender nostalgia for "good old" Top 40 radio often over-emphasize the role played by big city jocks in its initial stages. In particular, they detail the rise and fall of well-known Top 40 celebrities and how their stations made them or broke them based on their novel approach towards broadcasting. Although those writings are lots of fun to read, those highly personalized accounts rarely do justice to early Top 40 radio. They often forget that it was something that millions of teenagers everywhere enjoyed simply by turning on their portable radios. Unquestionably, its availability accounted for its initial success, yet few modern-day writers acknowledge it. Instead, they claim that the sudden explosion in Top 40 broadcasters nationwide resulted from the ceaseless efforts of big city stations and their desire to mollify the growing demand placed on them by teens for their own outlets. That might have some validity in big city markets; however, Top 40 radio as a social phenomenon was more broad-based than that. It affected nearly everyone it touched regardless of location. If in fact that was true then over emphasizing Top 40's impact in big city markets, at the exclusion of other smaller areas, may offer a somewhat distorted view as to what actually unfolded. In reality, both mid-sized and smaller markets played large roles in shaping Top 40 broadcasting as we knew it then.

Many of those same authors similarly assume that the Top 40 format of the '50s and '60s was an inevitable part of the future of AM radio. That they were interchangeable. Let me tell you right here and now that is not correct. Many broadcasters well into the '50s remained skeptical about the future of rock and roll let alone its highly controversial new format. The fact that many stations still relied on middle-of-the-road programming well into the '60s says a great deal about what was really happening throughout the country. It took mushrooming advertising

18. Ibid.

costs and fierce new competition generated by the ever expanding teen and young adult market before the scales finally tilted in favor of Top 40 programming over others.

From the start, McLendon and Storz never lost faith in their Top 40 formula. They firmly believed that it would provide large numbers of teens and young adults hours of fun. More than anything else, their keen salesmanship persuaded their listeners to remain faithful to their new Top 40 stations. Without question, that new found success proved to be contagious. Listener surveys in the mid-1950s showed that large numbers of teens wanted to listen to plenty of rock and roll music played by their favorite DJs. Gordon McLendon and Todd Storz began marketed their new product but only after they had proven to cynics that it did indeed work. Soaring revenues at KLIF-Dallas and KOWH-Omaha brought that home very quickly.<sup>19</sup> McLendon soon owned many stations including WNUS-Chicago, KNUS-Dallas, KOST-Los Angeles, WAKY-Louisville, KXOX-St. Louis and KABL-FM San Francisco. Storz controlled important outlets such as WHB-Kansas City, WQAM-Miami, WDGY-Minneapolis, WTIK-New Orleans and KXOK-St. Louis.

Clearly identified by its fast-talking jocks and its forty record playlist, Top 40's lifeline depended on frequent personal appearances, catchy station jingles, abundant promotions and numerous publicity stunts.<sup>20</sup> It also featured news, sports coverage, traffic checks and weather forecasts. Jukebox sales, record sales and playlists most often furnished through leading trade publications such as *Billboard*, *The Amusement Industry's Leading Newsweekly* determined which records received airtime and which ones never saw the light of day. Not to be outdone by their growing number of competitors, many record labels went a step further by offering local radio celebrities all kinds of incentives in the forms of gifts and money if they agreed to plug certain recordings over others. In the early 1950s, few industry leaders considered such "courtesies" wrong. As we will see later, the feds only curbed those practices when they learned that some unscrupulous DJs had illegitimately profited from them.

The rapid increase in low-cost transistor radios set the stage for much of Top 40's success. Although it became the preferred rock and roll format, no two stations sounded alike. Although NBC and CBS remained lukewarm to the idea, ABC instantly incorporated it. Let's not forget that WABC in New York and WLS in Chicago remained pacesetters in Top 40 radio into the '70s. Local market conditions and listening habits mostly determined the formats for Westinghouse stations. In the case of KYW-Cleveland, it found itself caught in the middle of this controversy. Initially a middle-of-the-road music station noted for its quality programs, news, sports and weather, it's managers gradually phased out that format to embrace Top 40. How and why, they did that will be discussed later. Also, we will see how that future radio legend successfully handled the challenges confronting it. Finally, we will discover how many of the common-sense business approaches used by KYW officials during those most troubled years may still be valid in today's equally unsettling radio climate.

19. Ibid.

20. "Evolution of Radio Broadcasting"

## Chapter 2: A Cleveland Radio Legend is Born

On February 13, 1956 Clevelanders woke up to a brand new radio sound with the call letters KYW. Gala programs that ended with a very lively cocktail party and dinner at the stately Hotel Statler marked this special occasion. In fact, over eight hundred leaders welcomed the all-new Westinghouse Broadcasting Company to Cleveland. If you think that was a big deal to Clevelanders, you are absolutely right. The former WTAM was one of this country's oldest stations dating back more than thirty years. Located at 1100 on the AM dial, this 50,000 watt giant first gained national recognition in 1924 when it broadcasted the Republican Presidential Convention held in Cleveland. One of its jovial announcers Samuel E. (Eddy) Leonard (1897-1967) played an influential role in convincing the National Broadcasting Company to purchase WTAM in 1930. Owned and operated by the Radio Corporation of America (RCA), NBC over the next twenty-five years broadcasted several very popular radio shows from its Superior Building studios. After the Second World War, NBC expanded its Cleveland operations to include WNBK-TV and WTAM-FM. Although this AM outlet remained profitable, the National Broadcasting Company, in the early '50s, envisioned a much larger network presence in the East Coast and that didn't include its Cleveland station. Specifically, RCA's Board of Directors concocted a broad business plan that among other things called for relocating its Cleveland radio and television stations to Philadelphia. The hefty business agreement hammered out by Philco and Westinghouse in 1953 that resulted in WBC purchasing Philadelphia's Channel 3 set those wheels in motion.

In early 1954, the National Broadcasting Company first approached the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company about the possibility of exchanging stations. Under this agreement, NBC's current broadcasting arm in Cleveland WTAM would relocate to Philadelphia while Westinghouse's moneymaker KYW would leave Philly for the Lake Erie shores. What should have been a simple transfer rapidly became a complicate mess. We will soon see how that controversial trade not only affected both NBC and WBC; but also, altered the U.S. radio industry forever. Rumors of a two city station swap first surfaced in January 1955. Supposedly, NBC and WBC were about to reach an agreement that would lead to them exchanging those two outlets. However, those recent actions taken by Westinghouse's higher ups seemed somewhat strange. After all, it had recently bought Philco's profitable Philly affiliate WPTZ-TV for a whopping \$8.5 million and was about to shell out an additional \$9.75 million for Dumont's Pittsburgh outlet WDTV.<sup>1</sup> Why would Westinghouse want to move its Philly station to Cleveland at that moment? Had WBC bigger fish to fry who knew? But everyone in the radio industry recognized that something was afoot. The appointment that summer of Donald H. McGannon (1920-1984) as Westinghouse's latest GE and

1. "Philadelphia Story Again," *Broadcasting Telecasting, The Business Weekly of Radio & Television*, January 17, 1955.

VP meant that something major was about to happen. A top ranking member of the Dumont Television network, McGannon was known as a tough negotiator prepared to fight at any moment.<sup>2</sup>

By the mid-‘50s, the five Westinghouse owned and operated radio stations had achieved an amazing first in U.S. broadcasting. They now reached 26% more homes than any other network. Clearly, its shrewd business managers had utilized their 50,000 watts outlets to successfully promote their many goods and services to an ever expanding audience base. In terms of KYW-Philadelphia, that radio station had successfully maintained high ratings for the last decade. In fact, its daytime ratings were legendary in the industry.<sup>3</sup> KYW’s long-term success was not some fluke. As one of its proud advertisements so accurately described it “Best Buy Nationally, Best Buy Locally, Best by Any Standard of Measurement, KYW 1060 on Your Dial.”<sup>4</sup> It represented a success story with an honored past and an equally promising future. Founded in Chicago by Edison Electric and Westinghouse Electric in 1921, KYW-Radio was this nation’s seventh oldest station. Relocating to Philly in 1934, it advanced rapidly to become a leading force in local broadcasting by the end of that decade. In fact, it ruled the airways in eastern Pennsylvania, northern Delaware and southern New Jersey at the outbreak of the Second World War.

In order to better serve the growing needs of its expanding audience, KYW opened a new \$600,000 broadcasting studios in 1938. Three years later, this leading Red Dot affiliate upped its power to 50,000 watts and relocated it further down the AM dial from 1020 to 1060.<sup>5</sup> Regarded as a top radio station in the mid-‘50s, industry leaders thought that WBC would be foolish to give up that bread winner to the National Broadcasting Company. Westinghouse’s acquisition of WPTZ-TV in ‘53 seemed to demonstrate to nearly everyone that this up and coming, locally-oriented network was truly committed to Philly. Yet, persistent rumors said otherwise. By the early months of 1955 everyone in the U.S. broadcasting industry wanted to know exactly what WBC’s legal counsel had up its sleeves and what part RCA’s Board of Directors would play in it?

WBC’s future prospects were further assured when it’s President Chris J. Witting (1915-2005) announced the election of Don McGannon to its board along with the appointment of Joe Baudino (1904-1998) as its new Washington operations VP. Board members overwhelmingly believed that McGannon and Baudino were well-qualified for their new posts.<sup>6</sup> Later that same summer, Westinghouse officials announced that its corporate headquarters would soon be moving from Washington, D.C. to New York City. Much of that network’s current success stemmed from its recent purchasing of WPTZ-TV in Philadelphia, KPIX-TV in San Francisco and WDTV-TV in Pittsburgh, PA. The Philly deal alone was worth \$8.5 million while the San Francisco sale was valued at \$6 million. The Pittsburgh station cost even more at \$9.75 million plus stock options.<sup>7</sup> As you might have already figured out, major networks like Westinghouse rarely purchase costly outlets if they didn’t plan to stay there.

However, those high priced ventures seemed of little consequence when measured against the NBC-WBC station swap that was recently submitted to the Federal Communications Commission. Much of it hinged on the National

2. “Dumont’s McGannon Joins Westinghouse,” *Broadcasting Telecasting*, January 17, 1955.

3. “No Selling Without,” *Broadcasting Telecasting*, January 17, 1955.

4. “Day & Night More People Listen to KYW than any other radio station in the Philadelphia area” *Broadcasting Telecasting*, March 28, 1955.

5. “History of Philadelphia Radio Station 1060 KYW,” <http://www.phillyradioarchives.com/history/kyw>.

6. “Two WBC Executives Names to New Offices,” *Broadcasting Telecasting*, May 16, 1955.

7. “NBC, WBC Trade Properties in Cleveland, Philadelphia,” *Broadcasting Telecasting*, May 23, 1955.

Broadcasting Company paying the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company a \$3 million bonus upfront. Once that was resolved then NBC's President Sylvester L. Weaver (1908-2002) and Westinghouse's Chief Chris J. Witting (1915-2005) proceeded ahead with their plans.<sup>8</sup> All that remained was for the FCC to approve the deal and that occurred on December 29, 1955. Financially speaking, that one-time KYW Class A rating stood at a firm \$450 while the WTAM class AA rating was slightly higher at \$520.

In terms of earnings, KYW-Philadelphia reported that its previous year's gross income was \$1 million while WTAM's earnings stood at a highly respectable \$900,000.<sup>9</sup> Both leading networks admitted that perennial moneymakers such as KYW and WTAM, and not costly, large network-supported operations accounted for the bulk of their revenue. In both cases, those profitable networks spent most of their time either purchasing or selling locally-based broadcasting outlets or improving their properties. Common sense and practical needs most often dictated who got what. In this case, RCA-NBC's extensive holdings in Lancaster, PA, Camden, N.J., Harrison, N.J. and Princeton, N.J. made it far more practical for that network to become the "prime stakeholder" in Philadelphia leaving Cleveland to WBC.<sup>10</sup> Although nothing was said by Westinghouse officials regarding that arrangement, it apparently didn't trouble them greatly. Its board members had previously discussed the possibilities of expanding their Midwest operations. Gaining a sizeable foothold in the growing Cleveland market might be a major step towards attaining that worthwhile business goal.

Realistically speaking, moving NBC's top executives Lloyd E. Yoder (1903-1967), Samuel E. (Eddie) Leonard and Curtis Peck from Cleveland to Philadelphia made the greatest sense. Two WBC managers from Philadelphia Roland V. Tooke (b. 1909) and Frank A. Tooke (1912-1999) would handle the relocation efforts to Cleveland.<sup>11</sup> If for some reason that did not happen as planned then NBC officials, with the blessing of its RCA board, intended to swap WTAM for another prime Philly station. Apparently, it was considering an exchange with the ABC affiliate there WFIL.<sup>12</sup> Talk on the street strongly suggested that this transfer might involve more than just one station. If that occurred then the National Broadcasting Company planned to trade its Washington, D.C. outlet WRC for the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company's station in Boston WBZ. Acquiring WRC would have enabled Westinghouse Broadcasting to erect a new, high powered television antenna somewhere between Baltimore and Washington. Servicing two big markets from a single giant tower would have lowered broadcasting costs considerably.<sup>13</sup> However, that idea was scuttled quickly.

The process of relocating the two stations continued throughout that summer. In term of actual wealth, NBC's corporate assets for 1955 were an extraordinary \$50.5 million. That excluded plant equipment which was worth an additional \$43 million. Its \$17.5 million in network reserves was equally impressive. NBC's ledger also included \$31.2 million in liabilities and \$6.5 million in capital stock. Its reinvestment earnings alone exceeded the \$39.6 million mark. In today's world that would be worth more than \$396 million.<sup>14</sup> Not too shabby for a twenty-nine year old broadcasting network. Also, WBC's revenues had grown substantially over the past two years from \$10.9 million to \$13.9 million. Its corporate expenses had climbed from \$8.7 million and \$10.6 million while its net

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. "NBC, Westinghouse Seek Approval of Cleveland-Philadelphia Swap," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, June 20, 1955

income had increased from \$1.15 million to \$1.61 million. That would equal \$4.6 million in today's market.<sup>15</sup> Any way you might look at it, both broadcasting companies were top investment choices then.

In terms of the actual stations, they owned NBC controlled WRCA–New York; WRC–Washington, D.C., WMAQ–Chicago, KNBC–San Francisco, and WKNB–New Britain, CT.<sup>16</sup> WBC owned and operated KDKA–Pittsburgh, WBZ–Boston, KEX–Portland, OR and WOWO–Fort Wayne, IN.<sup>17</sup> One of NBC's principal ways to increase its revenue stream involved swapping lackluster outlets for potentially more profitable ones. RCA's shrewd Board of Directors knew that the FCC would never allow any network to exceed its allotted number of company-owned stations. However, trading one outlet for another was very much legal and that's what prompted this exchange. You might wonder if that deal contained an escape clause. Tentatively approved in May 1955, this agreement did indeed include one. Either network did have the legal right to pull out during the first year should it discover something wrong. However, the details for pulling out were very sketchy.

In the middle of these negotiations, one of the leading Buffalo, NY broadcasters WGR challenged it. Its legal representatives questioned the motives that had led the National Broadcasting Company recently to try and purchase one of its chief rivals WBUF-TV.<sup>18</sup> WGR's counsel argued that pending federal litigation against NBC's parent corporation RCA would compel the Federal Communications Commission to flatly deny the petition. WGR-Buffalo further contended that the National Broadcasting Company had forced the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company to consent to this Cleveland-Philadelphia station exchange. WGR's attorneys went so far as to suggest that two of WBC's prime television stations would lose their NBC affiliation if present negotiations were not brought to a speedy conclusion. The possibility of foul play on the part of the National Broadcasting Company was to reappear numerous times over the next decade as the feds and other private corporations repeatedly attacked that network for its so-called unethical behavior. In the Buffalo case, NBC offered WBUF only \$918,994. Many experts in the radio industry believed that was a low ball figure. Also, WGR legal staff wanted to know why the FCC had not demanded a more thorough assessment of WBUF's financial worth upfront. Those concerns needed to be addressed immediately.<sup>19</sup>

Don't get me wrong, NBC's lawyers repeatedly reassured WBC that this upcoming exchange was fair. After all, the number of new spot sales on WTAM-Radio had improved by an amazing 60% over the previous two years.<sup>20</sup> That eye-opener led Westinghouse's shrewd programmers to scrutinize WTAM's programming very carefully and whenever possible retain its best DJs.<sup>21</sup> About the recent charges made by WGR; Westinghouse's legal team repeatedly claimed that NBC had never placed any undue pressure on it.<sup>22</sup> After all, why would the National Broadcasting Company knowingly engage in such unlawful practices? WBC firmly believed that this deal would be profitable for both parties. On another note, Chris Witting proudly reported that his company owned and operated stations had seen their spot advertising revenues increase by 30% over the previous six month period

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. "WGR Asks Hearing on NBC UHF Buys and NBC-Westinghouse Station Swap," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, June 27, 1955.

19. Ibid.

20. "NBC Owned Stations Report Spot and Local Gains for May," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, June 27, 1955.

21. Tom O'Connell, "Those Whiting Girls to Play Themselves in C.B.S. Series," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 3, 1955.

22. "No Duress in NBC Exchange, Westinghouse Tells FCC," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, July 4, 1955.

with KYW-Philadelphia leading the pack with a healthy 32% gain. When all was said and done, Westinghouse Broadcasting's earnings had improved by an astounding 60% over its previous high mark achieved in 1948.<sup>23</sup>

Believing that an ounce of prevention was well worth a pound of cure, the FCC in July 1955 ordered a second investigation of the upcoming station trade. This time the commission would focus on the precise allegations made by WGR-Buffalo against NBC. Some critics contended that the federal regulatory agency wanting to quickly approve the NBC-WBC trade may have overlooked some critical evidence and that a second investigation into it might clear up any earlier wrong doing. As you might expect, the Federal Communications Commission made it abundantly clear that they would leave no rock unturned especially if the commissioners should discover that NBC had coerced WBC. A second in-depth investigation would undoubtedly reveal whether the public's interests would best be served by such an exchange or not, and that was what really mattered. On another level, this inquiry might well determine whether NBC's alleged drummed up actions did indeed represent a violation of the anti-monopoly provisions as set down in the Communications Act of 1934. Any antitrust litigation resulting from fraudulent activities on the part of the National Broadcasting Company would have automatically canceled the exchange.

Everything remained copasetic into the autumn of '55. KYW-Philadelphia continued to broadcast its favorite shows that included the popular Princeton University football games. Herb Carneal (1924-2007) and Mark Olds (1921-2009) provided the play-by-play coverage.<sup>24</sup> Its skilled promoters through their cleverly worded newspaper ads, hyped merchandise and dazzling outdoor billboards promised their many sports listeners a super year for the fighting Princeton Tigers. That same autumn, the Westinghouse Board of Directors announced the appointment of Robert H. Teter (1919-2011) as KYW's newest GM. Teter's claim to fame was that he had single handedly increased that outlet's spot sales to lofty new heights over the last five years. Company loyalty certainly had its rewards as Frank Tooke advanced up the corporate ladder to become its new Special Assignments Executive Officer at year's end.<sup>25</sup>

Pesky legal issues continued to plague the FCC's follow-up investigation. One sticking point that remained unsettled concerned the allegation that the National Broadcasting Company had planned to end its affiliation with certain Westinghouse television stations if that swap had not happened.<sup>26</sup> Certain commissioners believed that this trade was essential if RCA-NBC was determined to secure a greater foothold on the growing East Coast broadcasting market. WGR-Buffalo legal team claimed that WBC's control of WTAM would ultimately result in a similar stranglehold over much of Northeast Ohio and Northwest West Virginia.<sup>27</sup>

The FCC had hoped that this latest round of talks might bring to an end this confusion. Of course, it didn't achieve that at all. On another very positive note, KDKA, KYW and WBZ in October 1955 received recognition from United Press International for two decades of dedicated news service.<sup>28</sup> A month later, WBC's advertising agency Free & Peters proclaimed that the network was "busting its buttons" now that it was this nation's largest independent broadcaster. Its five radio outlets, including KYW, furnished the finest in entertainment, music, news

23. "Sensational Gains Cited for Westinghouse Radio," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, July 25, 1955.

24. "Princeton KYW Hottest Football Package in the East!" *Broadcasting Telecasting*, August 29, 1955.

25. "KYW Names Teter General Manager," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, October 3, 1955.

26. "FCC Wants Hearing on NBC-WBC Swap," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, October 24, 1955.

27. "NBC-WBC Swap Hangs Fire," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, July 25, 1955.

28. "Westinghouse Stations, Esso Mark 'Reporter' Anniversary," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, October 31, 1955.

and sports.<sup>29</sup> Pleased with its new, sky-high earnings, Westinghouse's Board of Directors appointed President Chris J. Witting as its latest Westinghouse Electric's Consumer Products Division GM. Don McGannon was voted in as board president.<sup>30</sup>

Always dedicated to broadcasting community service, WBC proudly covered an education conference hosted by President Eisenhower on November 28, 1955.<sup>31</sup> KYW-Philadelphia received a great deal of praise from its many higher ups for its outstanding coverage of that event. Later that same month, NBC and WBC submitted their petition to the FCC for its final approval.<sup>32</sup> Guess what, the commission approved it by a six to one vote. Robert T. Bartley (1909-1988) represented the only dissenting vote. He believed that the National Broadcasting Company had strong-armed the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company into accepting what he considered to be a lopsided deal.<sup>33</sup>

In supporting this swap, the Federal Communications Commission temporally held back attempts by the Department of Justice (DOJ) or the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to prosecute RCA-NBC on charges of monopoly or restraint of trade. As everyone fully acknowledged, NBC was a powerful force in U.S. business. That network used its tremendous power to exert further pressure on the feds to end those allegations of wrongdoing. Its top leaders firmly believed that if those charges remained unchecked it might bring the whole house down. In retrospect, that seemed unlikely. However, odd makers at that time weren't so sure. Stranger things had occurred within the radio industry in the recent past. Who knew what lay ahead?

However, that trade did give the National Broadcasting Company exactly what it wanted a prime Philly station without any kind of protest from the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company. Such acquiesce on the part of WBC seemed somewhat out of character based on the fact that its negotiation team had a reputation for using hardnosed tactics to achieve its aims. Industry-wide leaders fully acknowledged that the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company was never a pushover at the bargaining table. One of the reasons its Board of Directors had hired McGannon in the first place was that he was known as a stubborn negotiator. Yet, in spite of the bravo when push came to shove, Westinghouse, led by McGannon, did very little to improve that broadcaster's bargaining position with NBC. Perhaps he was outwitted by NBC's skillful legal team, or maybe he thought that the exchange was equally beneficial for Westinghouse. Who knew?

Whatever the reasons behind this swap, NBC initially seemed to benefit the most from it. This being said, in order for this exchange to occur smoothly NBC had to first agree to retain its affiliation with those questionable WBC television stations. Westinghouse's Board of Directors had made it crystal clear to NBC's legal team that if it decided, in the last moment, to pull its affiliation from those outlets then the deal was off. Counsel representing RCA-NBC listened attentively to WBC's demand and agreed to do it. Also, both parties knew full-well that this Philadelphia-Cleveland exchange might be viewed by some legal eagles as a golden opportunity for both networks to establish powerful regional broadcasting monopolies by allowing them to skirt around current FCC ownership restrictions. The fact that there was no official change in ownership did not mean that the exchange

29. "WBC is busting its buttons-On," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, November 7, 1955.

30. "Chris J. Witting, Donald H. McGannon Appointed to New Westinghouse Posts," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, November 14, 1955.

31. "WBC Plans Heavy Coverage of White House Educ. Meet," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, November 14, 1955.

32. "NBC, Westinghouse Ask FCC to Approve Station Exchange," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, November 21, 1955.

33. "NBC-Westinghouse Swap Approved; FCC Stirs Justice Dept. Interest," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, January 2, 1956.



was completely above board. One tactic used by the National Broadcasting Company and the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company to lessen its impact on competing broadcasters in both the Cleveland and Philadelphia areas was to convince the feds that the upcoming trade was only regional affected about 8% of the country's population.<sup>34</sup> That seemed reasonable given the high revenues currently being made by long established radio and television stations in those districts.

Limiting the number of stations an individual broadcasting company might own within certain regions was not something new to the 1950s. Although the number of owner and operated outlets has increased in numbers over the past seventy years, the Federal Communications Commission still imposes tough restrictions on broadcasters wanting to control numerous radio and television stations within the same market.<sup>35</sup> Virtually all the accusations made against the National Broadcasting Company had vanished by the end of '56. The one exception was the claim that it had placed undue pressured on WBC to accept the exchange. Like a bad penny it kept popping up repeatedly. Part of the reason for that rested with the DOJ and the federal court system. In the DOJ's case, it has always considered itself to be straight shooter intent on righting legal wrongs when they occurred. Its actions against NBC were visceral. The same might be said for the federal courts that repeatedly would not let go of that nagging issue. Both knew something was wrong and they were determined to get to the bottom of it ASAP.

As you might have already figured out, NBC officials expected this deal to yield high returns quickly and they were entirely correct. In fact, in less than a year corporate sales at NBC had increased by 15%. During that same period, that network had experienced a huge 29% increase in its earnings. WBC reported a more modest 5% gain in gross sales with a slight dip in radio sales.<sup>36</sup> Again, KYW-Philadelphia led all other Westinghouse broadcasters with a striking 23% increase in its spot sales. WBC higher ups congratulated their Philly station for its significant increase in sales. In December 1955, NBC officially recognized WTAM-Radio for its productive Northern Ohio Sales Clinic.<sup>37</sup> Hosted by Harold W. Waddell, this forum provided worthwhile dialogue that centered on future business prospects for those investing in local radio. Eleven hundred AM also aired an information program detailing the many federal benefits available for returning Cleveland veterans.<sup>38</sup>

Last February, WTAM and WNBK-TV addressed some of the worst parking and traffic problems facing Clevelanders by broadcasting several programs on those issues. September, 1955, WTAM had sponsored an equally successful Red Cross blood drive.<sup>39</sup> The year ended with Westinghouse's Board of Directors announcing that Gordon W. Davis would be replacing Robert Teter as KYW's GM. Teter left the station to become the new Executive Assistant to the WBC President.<sup>40</sup> *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* on January 21, 1956 ran a special in-depth article that described in detail the many management changes that were about to occur at both outlets. George Cyr, Bill Dallmann, Bill Howard, Samuel E. (Eddie) Leonard, Jack McHale, Curtis Peck, Jean Strobel, Hal Waddell, Edward Wallace, Ted Walworth. Markie Wattenberg and Lloyd E. Yodis were going to Philly while Gordon W. Davis, Mark Olds. Sidney V. Stadig, E. Preston Stover, Rolland V. Tooke and G. Edward Wallis

34. "NBC, Westinghouse Ask FCC to Approve Station Exchange."

35. "FCC Broadcast Ownership," January 17, 2020, <https://www.fcc.gov>.

36. "WBC Radio Gross Up 5%; TV, 13.5%," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, November 28, 1953.

37. "WTAM Host to R&B Clinic," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, December 5, 1955.

38. "WTAM Airing Show for Veterans," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, December 5, 1955.

39. "Beep-Beep," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, February 21, 1955. "100 Answer Radio Blood Appeal," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, September 5, 1955.

40. "Davis Named Gen. Mgr. for KYW Philadelphia," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, December 19, 1955.

were coming to Cleveland.<sup>41</sup> To honor their arrival in Cleveland, that city's top business, civic and government leaders sponsored a daylong celebration on February 10, 1956. Festivities included floating 10,000 balloons over Cleveland Public Square.<sup>42</sup> The all-new KYW call letters officially replaced WTAM three days later.<sup>43</sup>

Being the new kid on the block meant that this radio broadcaster had to generate a tremendous amount of positive publicity very quickly. That was a major challenge for KYW's shrewd management team. Radio listeners depended on certain programs being broadcasted from their favorite radio stations. Any changes in station ownership might or might not gain their immediate approval. Glowing ratings for the new owners at the start usually indicated that everything was okay with their present offerings, at least for the time being. However, any sudden drop in ratings might suggest that major changes were required right now. The many programmers and promoters working at the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company knew their efforts directed towards winning over local listeners depended on them mastering two goals from the day they started. First, they must try as much as possible to calm any apprehensions Cleveland listeners might have regarding this new station's program lineup. That was achieved by carrying over as many of the programs, features and radio personalities from WTAM as possible before introducing their own new shows or superstars. Second, the new managers at KYW-Cleveland must uphold business principles and social values similar to their NBC predecessor even if Westinghouse's actual approach towards local broadcasting might be different. Those objectives seemed attainable since KYW-Radio had always prided itself on providing its many fans with exactly what they needed and wanted. If they could accomplish that task in a smooth and timely fashion then they would win over the WTAM audience with no questions asked.

KYW's newest GM Gordon Davis understood precisely what needed to be done and therefore did nothing to abruptly change the lineup. For the interim, this radio station would uphold the traditions of RCA-NBC by continuing to broadcast popular programs. Its initial programming covered a wide range of options everything from Shakespearean plays, farm reports and the latest album cuts at one end of the spectrum to symphony concerts, semi-classical music performances and reading aloud at the other. At the same time, this new station made sure that it continued to showcase some of WTAM's favorite jocks along with its NBC shows, newscasts, sports and weather forecasts.<sup>44</sup> The local press welcomed KYW to Cleveland by praising its many firsts in the broadcasting industry. For example, it was the first AM station in the Windy City to broadcast a Midwest college football game. It also presented the first live performance out of the Chicago Opera Company. That broadcaster had the distinction of being a part of the first national wire hookup.<sup>45</sup>

To celebrate KYW's debut in Cleveland, the managers at WBZ-Boston on February 14, 1956 extended their colleagues their best wishes.<sup>46</sup> Its sister station was glad that KYW was on the beam and it hoped that it would continue to prosper in its new home for many years yet to come. Programming changes at KYW began in late

41. George E. Condon, "NBC Pioneers Join Mass Exodus in Weekend Management Shift," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 21, 1956.

42. George E. Condon, "Westinghouse Co. Will Release 10,000 Balloons Next Week, Moscow Papers Please Copy," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 10, 1956.

43. George E. Condon, "Historical KYW Call Letters Make Bow on Monday," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 11, 1956.

44. Ibid.

45. "The Highlights and Sidelights of Radio-TV's Past 25 Years," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, October 15, 1956.

46. "WBZ-WBZA Boston, Aims Best Wishes to KYW Radio 1100 Television Channel 3," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 14, 1956.

February when a new radio personality named Wes Hopkins (1927-2008) entered the scene. A highly energetic disk jockey out of Trenton, N.J., Hopkins started playing records weekday evenings from 5 to 7 p.m.<sup>47</sup> KYW got a sizeable boost at the 5th Annual American Federation of Radio & Television Artists luncheon when its own Tom Field and Gene Martin were honored for their many years of devoted community service.<sup>48</sup> As I'm sure you realize by now, the need to expand its advertising base remained a top priority for KYW-Radio from the first day it arrived in Cleveland. Beginning in March 1956, the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company launched a new and exciting promotional campaign aimed towards increasing the amount of local advertising time ASAP. Its promoters repeatedly reaffirmed the many advantages awaiting those businesses that purchased large blocks of advertising time from these new 50,000 watts radio leader.<sup>49</sup>

Catchy KYW jingles not only brightened daily radio broadcasts, but also, captured the attention of many of the station's happy new listeners. Not surprisingly, they preceded each and every newscast, sports report, station break and weather forecast.<sup>50</sup> Ever wonder who produced those jingles? Apparently, many companies marketed them; however, BENS and PAMS excelled above most others. Fortunately, KYW's early popularity among its expanding listening audience went far beyond just playing catchy jingles on a regular basis. The arrival of happy go lucky DJs such as Malcolm (Big) Wilson (1924-1989) dramatically altered the tempo of Radio 11 forever.<sup>51</sup> Entering Cleveland in May 1956, Big Wilson rapidly adapted his own special radio persona to fit the needs and wants of his growing fan-base. KYW-Radio needed a new kind of fun guy to attract new listeners and he certainly fitted the bill. Big Wilson not only played the coolest sounds in town; but also, invigorated his audience even on Cleveland's dreariest days. A true showman he sang along with some of his favorite tunes or played them on his specially-adapted keyboard. Cleveland listeners loved his fresh new approach towards broadcasting as the station's ratings went through the roof.

Called "The King of All Night Broadcasting" Joe Mulvihill's late night show also premiered that July. His "1100 Club," featured some of the "coolest sounds" in town.<sup>52</sup> Setting aside KYW-Radio's great success for just one moment, the many legal controversies surrounding this station exchange were not dying out as one might have expected. What exactly was going on? The House Antitrust Subcommittee led by the outspoken U.S. Representative from New York named Emanuel Celler (1888-1981), began investigating the alleged business monopolies that had been overwhelming many television stations as of late.<sup>53</sup> His committee's decisive action on that very matter led to an additional probe into the recent NBC-WBC trade. The bitterness whirling around those alleged claims of double dealing on the part of the National Broadcasting Company infuriated Celler's committee. To no one's surprise, the DOJ placed that hotly contended issue right in front of a federal grand jury who immediately subpoenaed all related documents.<sup>54</sup>

47. George E. Condon, "Steve Allen Plays Himself in TV Comedy But He Wasn't Meant To," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 17, 1956.

48. George E. Condon, "Bill Gordon, Warren Guthrie Lead Top Broadcasters of 1955 at Annual Awards Luncheon," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 2, 1956.

49. "Your Market is Moving!" *Broadcasting Telecasting*, March 19, 1956.

50. George E. Condon, "Producer Defends 'Crossroads' as Carefully Checked, Approved by Subject," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 6, 1956.

51. "It's Sales, King-Size, as Mr. Big comes to KYW!" *Broadcasting Telecasting*, May 14, 1956.

52. "Now KYW Broadcasts all Nite Long 1100 Club Midnight to 6:00 A.M.," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 2, 1956.

53. "Celler Committee Probes NBC-Westinghouse Swap," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, July 2, 1956.

54. Ibid.

That same July, KYW announced an important shake-up in its daytime radio lineup. Local programming would now replace NBC's shows.<sup>55</sup> Specs Howard (b. 1926) was one of the first jocks to be hired by KYW following that crucial announcement. His all-new one hour morning gig proved to be an instant hit with Clevelanders.<sup>56</sup> Beginning on November 7, 1955, NBC began offering a new option to radio affiliates who might have been considered the possibility of broadcasting their own independent shows. Hosted by Margaret Truman and Mike Wallace and called "Weekday," it was geared mostly for housewives. It featured such things as life performances by popular singers, special short-story readings and in-depth interviews.<sup>57</sup> KYW's highly capable news editor Sanford Markey (1914-1995) and his several ace reporters successfully covered both Presidential Conventions in the summer of '56. Unquestionably, the overpowering success of Westinghouse's new programming took the U.S. radio broadcasting industry by storm. But, it symbolized much more than just a formidable challenge to traditional network programming. WBC's clever promotions had convinced even its harshest critics to desert their NBC radio shows for those exciting local offerings. KYW-radio markedly improved its ratings by consistently producing the kind of high quality daytime and nighttime shows that everyone seemed to need and want. However, promotional changes were not limited exclusively to new programming. In an attempt to reach out even further, KYW discerning promoters sponsored very pleasurable lake cruises on the "S.S. Aquarama" from July 26th through August 1st. Departing from Cleveland's Lederer Pier, those "Kooler Kruises" enabled KYW-Radio listeners to intermingle with some of their favorite DJs.<sup>58</sup> Banter with cool radio personalities would not be possible if the shows fans listened to originated from far off places such as New York, Chicago or Hollywood.

Eleven hundred on the AM dial also proudly sponsored a special girl's fashion show on August 5, 1956 courtesy of the Sterling Lindner Davis Department Store. Those teens that modelled Sterling Lindner's clothing automatically qualified for that summer's "Miss Kooler Cleveland Contest."<sup>59</sup> During that autumn, KYW reaffirmed its commitment to all Clevelanders by continuing to provide them with the finest in entertainment, news and community service. Station officials backed up that guarantee by introducing several exciting and new programs to glowing reviews. Clevelanders welcomed new entities such as "Dimensions;" "Saturday Night Dance Party" and "Hi-Fi from Studio K" to the KYW lineup.<sup>60</sup> All part of "the Spirit of '56," they symbolized the invigorating new sound that could only come from the brand new Radio 11.<sup>61</sup>

Clever publicity campaigns developed by professional promoters like Janet K. Byers and Tom Garagen helped the station's cause considerably. One of their many corny efforts called "KYW is Kooler" created quite a stir in the summer of 1956. The staff repeatedly yelled out "get kooler" as they paraded through downtown Cleveland wearing Bermuda shorts.<sup>62</sup> The people in the streets yelled the same thing right back at them. Star spangled marketing ploys, like that, woke everybody up to this new local radio station. How could they not notice? The April '56 Nielsen ratings showed that such strategies did work. Twenty-five percent of the Cleveland listening

55. George E. Condon, "KYW to Drop All Daytime NBC Radio Programs at End of Week," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 11, 1956.

56. "KYW Radio Declares Saturday, August 11th Independence Day," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 10, 1956.

57. "Weekday on the NBC Radio Network," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, November 7, 1955.

58. "KYW's Kooler Kruises," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 18, 1956.

59. "Campus Headlines for fall in SLD's College Shops, Sterling Lindner Davis," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 5, 1956.

60. "Join the Celebration KYW Radio-1100 on Your Dial," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 10, 1956.

61. "KYW, Cleveland's Newest Independent Radio Station Celebrates the Spirit of '56," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 12, 1956.

62. George E. Condon, "Korny KYW Kooler Kampaign Proves Kwrite a Komedly to Klevelanders," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 9, 1956.

audience now had their radios tuned every day to KYW between 6 a.m. and 12 Midnight.<sup>63</sup> The same rating service in July reported that KYW-Radio led its nearest competitor by over 40% and that between 6 and 9 a.m. an average of 90,000 homes listened to the new, fast-paced sound that only 1100 AM could successfully produce. That 90,000 figure embodied an amazing 51% of Cleveland's total listening audience.<sup>64</sup> Effective programming such as that certainly bolstered Westinghouse's corporate earnings in 1956. After all, everyone loves a winner and that includes the many successful advertisers who spent plenty of money on this new, top rated outlet. It's very proud advertising agency said it best when it proclaimed that when "in Cleveland, no selling campaign is complete without the WBC station...KYW."<sup>65</sup> According to the Hooper Radio Audience Index, other locally-based radio broadcasters such as WERE and WGAR were rapidly losing their edge to this latest rival.<sup>66</sup>

In October 1956, a longtime radio favorite of many Clevelanders named Bill Meyer departed KYW-Radio for the bright lights of Philadelphia. Big Wilson assumed his morning duties while a dashing young freelancer named Joe Finan (1927-2006) took over Wilson's afternoon gig.<sup>67</sup> After serving in the Second World War, Finan had joined the broadcasting team at WISR in Butler, PA. He later moved to Cleveland to become Channel 3's part-time weatherman. KYW-Radio's keen interest in education brought it together with the National Citizens Council for Better Schools to introduce a new, ten-minute radio segment called "Spotlight on Schools."<sup>68</sup> Aware of the latest breakthroughs in radio and television broadcasting led KYW cunning engineers to demand the latest IBM 650 Magnetic Drum Processing Machine. That technological marvel permitted its news team to process the upcoming election results faster than any other station in Cleveland.<sup>69</sup> That November, Westinghouse's President McGannon delivered an impassioned speech in front of the New Jersey Broadcasters Association.<sup>70</sup> He stressed the practical aspects of embracing his network's new combination music and news format. McGannon firmly believed that if radio programmers followed Westinghouse's latest guidelines they would undoubtedly win. He also contended that independent broadcasters should leave news gathering, writing and reporting to their experts. They were far more competent than the many of the lackluster reporters broadcasting nationally. He further claimed that today's radio audience demands far greater accountability from its local broadcasters than had been the case in years past.

Local DJs helped greatly in achieving those ambitious goals. McGannon strongly suggested that AM outlets should rely more on "The Block Programming Pattern," as perfected by Westinghouse, to handle their many daytime programming needs.<sup>71</sup> News, music and public service represented the leading hallmarks of this new approach towards broadcasting. McGannon concluded his speech by saying that news and information junkies have already seized the reins of nighttime broadcasting in many of his most prized radio stations and that WBC programmers deserved all the credit for creating such thought provoking new shows. Those offerings both amused and informed their listening audiences on a host of worthwhile topics. Apparently, McGannon's

63. "Time to Wake up to Independent KYW's Bigger Programming! Bigger Signal! Bigger Listenership!" *Broadcasting Telecasting*, August 13, 1956.

64. "Nielsen Reports KYW Again Breaks the Sound Barrier as Cleveland's Top Radio Station," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, October 1, 1956.

65. Ibid.

66. *Hooper Radio Audience Index, City Zone, Cleveland, Ohio*, October 1956.

67. "Bill Mayer Going to Philadelphia; Finan Joins KYW," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 4, 1956.

68. "WBC Begins Education Series," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, October 8, 1956. "Another Trail-blazing Public Service Program from WBC," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, March 4, 1957.

69. Tom O'Connell, "Bob Hope Not Happy About Gag on Indians," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 21, 1956.

70. "Defense of Music-News Made Before N.J. Assn," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, November 12, 1956.

71. "Bellwether Breakaway: What Happens to Westinghouse?" *Broadcasting Telecasting*, November 26, 1956.

convincing arguments struck a chord with those broadcasters as KYW-Cleveland continued to achieve high local ratings. Joe Finan, for example, swept the November '56 mid-day ratings with more than 30% of the listening audience.<sup>72</sup> Additional fireworks were to light up in the national legal skies that December when the DOJ accused the National Broadcasting Company of conspiring with other networks to gain control of the nation's five biggest markets.<sup>73</sup> It further argued that NBC's actions had not only weakened WBC's competitive edge in technology; but also, consciously violated the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890.<sup>74</sup> In particular, Westinghouse Electric found it next to impossible to satisfy large orders of their technically-advanced equipment so essential in transmitting clear radio and television signals.<sup>75</sup>

The NBC network denied all those allocations and more by arguing that the FCC had approved the '56 trade unconditionally, and that the DOJ was drumming up false charges to make itself look good in the public's eyes.<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile, the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company continued to drag its feet throughout those pertinent discussions. In response to KYW's discontinuing its daily radio programming, NBC announced that WHK would now be carrying them.<sup>77</sup> As part of a world tour, the General Director of the Iranian Ministry of Labor F. Aheiri paid KYW a special visit. He wanted to know more about how U.S. labor relations operated and how it influenced radio and television outlets such as KYW-Cleveland.<sup>78</sup>

72. "Everyone Loves Joe Finan: Noon to 4 p.m.-KYW-Radio, Cleveland," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, November 26, 1956.

73. "U.S. Fights RCA & NBC in Air Swap," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 5, 1956.

74. "Network Revenues in 1955," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, December 10, 1956.

75. "The Government's Charges against RCA-NBC," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, December 10, 1956.

76. "The RCA-NBC Answer to the Charges," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, December 10, 1956.

77. Tom O'Connell, "WHK Ties into new NBC News Network," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 8, 1956.

78. "Iranian Labor Chief Eyes Conditions Here," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 18, 1956.

## Chapter 3: Have a Blast with 1100 on Your AM Dial

The introduction of a new, fun-packed program called “On the Go” and a rejuvenated “Almanac” show helped to revitalize KYW’s morning lineup in the winter of 1957.<sup>1</sup> That February, McGannon celebrated National Electrical Week by reminding everyone about Thomas Edison’s many contributions to this important field.<sup>2</sup> Dazzling advertising, exclusive interviews and fun tours of the Superior Building’s studios highlighted that week-long event. To honor its first anniversary in Cleveland, KYW sponsored a Valentine’s Day party called “The Twin Heats Ball.” Hosted by a popular celebrity and singer Helen O’Connell, all of its proceeds went to charities.<sup>3</sup> A former WTAM-Radio announcer and Hollywood star named Jim Backus (1913-1989) made a guest appearance on KYW’s new nighttime talk show known as “Dimensions.”<sup>4</sup> While there he presented the station with his latest “Mr. Magoo” album. Backus’s nephew Johnny Bell was one of the station’s brightest new radio stars. February ‘57 ratings showed 1100 AM still at the top of the heap, and why not? Eighty-nine percent of all Clevelanders listened to KYW each and every morning. According to the latest Nielsen ratings it led its closest rival by nearly 93%.<sup>5</sup> Such a convincing lead encouraged Don McGannon to recommend that broadcasting executives throughout the country should hop on the WBC bandwagon. He said it would be silly for them not to do so.<sup>6</sup>

The second half of the ‘50s signified a time of rapid changes throughout commercial radio. Recognizing that industry’s impressive recent growth led the U.S. Bureau of Labor to devote an entire section of its latest edition of *Occupational Outlook Handbook* to radio and television announcers.<sup>7</sup> As it noted, commercial radio currently employed around ten thousand. They read commercials and news, introduced programs and station identifications. Those broadcasters also interviewed studio guests and served as Masters of Ceremonies at major events. Salaries for those announcers varied greatly based on market size, fees and commissions. In large urban markets, DJs could earn more than \$10,000 a year.<sup>8</sup> Often required to work both evenings and weekends, the announcer’s workday encompassed preparation as well as broadcasting time. Maintaining a loyal listening audience required local radio

1. “KYW-1100 KC,” *The Plain Dealer*, January 3, 1957.

2. “Now is the Time for All Good Men,” *Broadcasting Telecasting, The Business Weekly of Television and Radio*, February 4, 1957.

3. Tom O’Connell, “Helen O’Connell Looks Forward to Starring Here in Hearts Ball,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 9, 1957.

4. Tom O’Connell, “WEWS Completes Move Friday,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 10, 1957. George E. Condon, “Cleveland’s Backus Gets TV Charge,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 14, 1957.

5. “We Clobbered ‘em in Cleveland,” *Broadcasting Telecasting*, February 25, 1957.

6. “Broadcasters Told to Change Formats,” *The New York Times*, February 28, 1957.

7. Bureau of Labor Stats, “Radio and Television Announcers,” *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 1957.

8. Ibid.

stations to go beyond just playing records and promoting friendly banter. For example, radio personalities had to participate regularly in community events. All of that was considered essential for successful broadcasters.

Reworking and updating popular programs to better reflect changing public demands was expected industry-wide. In the case of KYW-11, its many intelligent celebrities did not hesitate to experiment in previously untested waters if such actions might help to improve their ratings. Topping that list of innovative young announcers was KYW's own Wes Hopkins. He epitomized that kind of self-confident disc jockey who didn't hesitate to push the envelope. In his case, he hosted an exciting new musical show called "Birdland Stars of '57." Broadcasted live from the Halle Brothers Department Store downtown, Hopkins interviewed some of the greatest jazz artists of that time. They included music legends like Count Basie (1904-1984) and Bud Powell (1924-1966) along with promising young singers such as Jeri Southern (1926-1991) and Sarah Vaughn (1924-1990).<sup>9</sup> Extending the bounds of broadcasting, exceptional new offerings including "Birdland Stars of '57" only added to KYW's growing reputation for providing some of the best shows in town. But, it included much more than just presenting outstanding new programs to eagerly awaiting audiences. Relying on new devices such as speedy mobile units, the latest phone systems and high quality tape recorders gave that award winning station a cutting edge over the rest. Being able to keep costs down while getting the biggest bang for the buck, enabled its discerning sales force to take full advantage of any spot advertising chances that might suddenly appear. They literally blew the competition away by consistently offering perspective advertisers reasonably priced broadcasting time. As they said themselves "it has proven to be importantly less expensive to reach more people by KYW radio than any other medium now available in Cleveland."<sup>10</sup>

This station also led its chief competitors in discussing difficult community problems as well as personal matters. That became apparent as early as June '57 when a KYW newscaster named Aaron Jackson conducted an in-depth interview with Common Pleas Court Justice Samuel Silbert (1883-1976). They pondered the major reasons leading to the growing backlog in the court docket system and what prompted the astounding increase in the number of divorce cases during the past year.<sup>11</sup> Other radio giants in Cleveland rarely, if ever, went beyond the surface when it came to discussing such matters. Later that month, KYW-radio again surged ahead in the ratings when it introduced its latest offering an in-depth nighttime talk show. Called "Program PM," this two hour program dared to be different. Hosted by former WDOK celebrity Bud Wendell (b. 1923); "Program PM" prided itself on its no holds approach towards some of that area's most provocative issues.<sup>12</sup> Not only did Bud Wendell converse with prominent business, civic, community and health leaders on countless crucial matters; but also, high profile celebrities and even some infamous characters that had made the recent headlines. He also explored Cleveland's highly respected cultural scene. Hailed for its diversity, radio programmers throughout the nation increasingly wondered whether their time would be better spent broadcasting similar talk shows. However, the verdict was still out as to how far KYW-Radio might better serve the growing needs of their locally-grown teenage audience.

Many leading the opposition to rock and roll music firmly believed that it would disappear once young people discovered something better. In fact, many of the area's most conservative religious leaders showed little, if

9. "Birdland Stars of '57" *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 10, 1957.

10. "Go Ahead. . .Read Our Mail," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, March 18, 1957.

11. George E. Condon, "Silvers is Sterling and Benny's a Gem," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 6, 1957.

12. "KYW to Air PM," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 18, 1957.



any, sympathy regarding this latest musical craze. Some went so far as to suggest that its wild sounding music and provocative lyrics encouraged violence among teens and young adults. However, its growing number of supporters claimed that rock and roll music was a positive good. It provided teenagers a safe harbor for them to unleash their pent up emotions. For those kids wanting a musical form of their own rock and roll was definitely it.<sup>13</sup> Many of its most ardent supporters within the recording world itself repeatedly reminded everyone that rock and roll music was supposed to be fun for everyone in the family. KYW-Cleveland took the many benefits attributed to late '50s rock and roll music very much to heart. Its promoters incessantly plugged it. The talk show "Program PM" also did its part to help by involving teens in pertinent discussions on that very issue.

Did that extraordinary surge in the popularity of rock and roll music convince the bulk of KYW-radio programmers to set aside their middle-if-the-road musical format for this new phenomenon? In light of 1957 audience preferences one would have to say no. In fact, 1100 AM prided itself on playing all kinds of music during the Fabulous Fifties. Given the fact that variety was the spice of life, it made perfect sense for KYW programmers to do just that. Playing a wide selection of recordings along with community bulletin boards, news, time and weather was much appreciated by local listeners. Simply supplying random records with useless chatter no longer was enough for the ever changing radio biz.<sup>14</sup> The fact that many Cleveland advertisers still preferred the middle-of-the-road approach towards broadcasting weighed heavily on less traditional promoters who increasingly favored the new Top 40 variety of radio. However, traditional advertisers and radio managers gradually acknowledged the importance of catering more to the needs and wants of younger listeners over their older fan base. This was true even if their actions ultimately resulted in them having to sacrifice their more affluent, traditional listeners for the less well-off, younger set. Periodic surveys, taken by KYW-Radio, enabled their sharp programmers to not only stay abreast of drastic changes occurring in listening habits; but also, make any adjustments whenever necessary.

Up-to-date program planning generally produced higher ratings and larger listening audiences. Everyone involved in radio broadcasting knew that was true. The keen business insight regularly demonstrated by KYW radio programmers extended far beyond playing the same old stack of records endorsed by long-established trade journals. Such old hat approaches towards broadcasting seemed less and less appropriate within this new, winner-take-all environment. Don McGannon was absolutely correct in his latest assessment of current industry trends. He said that canny listeners repeatedly demanded that their favorite radio stations not only play the latest hits; but also, broadcast up-to-the-minute community programs, newscasts, sports, traffic and weather. KYW-Radio precisely followed those new, broadly broadcasting guidelines.

Similar thinking affected the FM side of the dial even if its programming needs were different. KYW-FM introduced a number of intellectually stimulating shows intended for a more astute listening audience. Without a doubt, FM radio was changing both the breath and scope of local broadcasting forever. Once viewed as little more than a wasteland, the FM band in the '50s had begun to gain some credibility with industry leaders as it presented more and more top quality programming. In fact, the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company had taken that business challenge very much to heart and had instituted its own special shows aimed exactly towards its new FM listeners. Obviously, the FCC's earlier attempts to separate AM and FM programming had caught the attention of

13. Tom O'Donnell, "Rock 'n' Roll Dying, Jockey Carney Says," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 22, 1957.

14. "For Westinghouse WBC's Year-Old Non-Network Status," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, July 8, 1957.

Westinghouse's many discerning programmers. In July 1957, WBC publicized the fact that 105.7 on Cleveland's FM dial would soon be airing the very best in classical music during peak hours.<sup>15</sup> Westinghouse Broadcasting's VP Ronald Tooke headed a special tour of the City of Detroit as part of its highly publicized Cleveland-Detroit Day. The day's ceremonies included Edwin K. Wheeler (1882-1975), the GM at WWJ-Detroit, receiving a gold-plated mic that commemorated his radio station's 37th anniversary. Both Cleveland Mayor Anthony J. Celebrezze (1910-1998) and Detroit Mayor Albert E. Cobo (1893-1957) attended this event.<sup>16</sup> That September, WBC proudly unveiled its new traveling show. Called the "KYW Road Show," it provided talented teens with the chance of performing in variety shows in front of the elderly, invalids and orphans.<sup>17</sup> They were training grounds for young people who were planning to enter the entertainment field.

KYW radio's very skilled programmers knew just what they were doing on so many broadcasting levels. Much of the success of "lateral programming," as first introduced on "Program PM," originated with the ingenuity of its highly energized host Bud Wendell.<sup>18</sup> Within three months of its debut, "Program PM" had sold out all of its spot advertising blocks.<sup>19</sup> As you might well imagine, some of the old timers still working at KYW-Radio did not fully approve of that station's new broadcasting method. For that very reason, two dissatisfied radio veterans Tom Field and Joe Mulvihill left KYW for WRCV.<sup>20</sup> Their sudden departure enabled Dick Drury (b. 1935) to join this highly animated group of broadcasters. Previously, the youngest member of the successful WSRS-Cleveland lineup, Drury took over both the 10:00 and 11:15 p.m. time slots.<sup>21</sup> Following his departure the following year, Dick Drury enjoyed lengthy radio stints in both Pittsburgh and Los Angeles. On another note, the station's latest sensation Joe Finan proudly served as the Masters of Ceremonies at the "Bands of Tomorrow Contest & Dance." It was held that Thanksgiving Night at Public Hall. All proceeds from that fun event went to the Jaycees Youth Activities Fund.<sup>22</sup>

A survey conducted by a leading Chicago jock Howard Miller (1913-1994) discovered that teenage girls bought 90% of all 45s available on the U.S. market.<sup>23</sup> Inexpensive portable record players enabled them to play rock and roll music 24/7. Low priced 45s with one side featuring a hit song and the other a lesser known number usually performed by the same artist enabled them to purchase the latest releases without breaking their piggy banks. It did not matter to them whether Atlantic, Capitol, Columbia, Decca, Mercury, Motown, RCA Victor or Sun recorded their favorite song. They collected as many 45s as they could as quickly as possible. The commercial radio-industry did its part to stimulate local record sales by playing the latest rock and roll hits repeatedly. Actual playing time for individual records depended on several factors. Such things as the daring of a performer's manager, the perseverance of a record label or the doggedness of an advertiser routinely determined what got played and how often. Many record promoters had no problem whatsoever in offering extraordinary incentives to radio personalities who guaranteed to play their songs repetitively. Supposedly, marketers sought out advice from

15. "KYW-FM Plans Classical Policy," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 22, 1957.

16. "Detroit and Cleveland Say Howdy," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 22, 1957. "Welcome WWJ & KYW on Cleveland & Detroit Day," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, September 2, 1957.

17. Tom O'Connell, "Road Show Provides Chance for Amateurs," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 22, 1957.

18. "Lateral Programming The Sound Difference in Nighttime Radio," *Broadcasting*, July 15, 1957.

19. "Looks Like We Can't Accommodate Another Spot Program PM," *U.S. Radio*, October, 1957.

20. George Condon, "Kraft Theatre's Smart Boy Takes Puzzling Twists and Turns," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 10, 1957.

21. "KYW-1100 KC," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 1, 1957.

22. "Bands of Tomorrow," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 24, 1957.

23. Kitta Turmell, "Bopsters Buy 80% of all Discs, and Nine out of Ten Are Girls," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 14, 1957.

seasoned DJs as to which ones of their records might sell well and which ones might not. As paid consultants, those jocks recommended certain recordings based on their alleged merit. As long as the celebrity declared those incentives as earned income then the feds were okay with it. However, those not reporting that additional unearned income soon found themselves facing the real possibility of federal prosecution.

Regarding future trends in popular music, some experts in the late '50s including Columbia Records Director Mitch Miller (1911-2010) argued that the charisma of rock and roll music stemmed from many teenagers wanting other 'cooler' teens to accept them as equals.<sup>24</sup> Purchasing the same rock and roll records as the "cool" kids on the block meant they were now supposedly part of the "in-crowd." In a less serious vein, KYW's morning man Big Wilson suggested to his bosses that they might considering making him the host of a new weekly talent show. Geared for young performers, it never got beyond the initial stage.<sup>25</sup> Before arriving in Cleveland, Big Wilson had worked in both Plattsburgh, N.Y. and Scranton, PA. His big break in radio came in 1955 when he joined the staff at KYW-Philadelphia. Little did he know then that he would soon become an even bigger celebrity in the emerging Cleveland market? In December 1957, a nationally-respected trade publication *Katz Table Totes Radio Spot Costs* released its latest market standings. The Cleveland national market ranking was twenty-first with a \$30 one-time day rate.<sup>26</sup> Twelve one-minute announcements per week over a thirteen week period determined its present ranking. In terms of recent promotional campaigns, KYW proudly hosted a special night at Cinerama on December 19th. It featured Johnny Bell, Gloria Brown, Joe Finan, Pete French, Wes Hopkins, Specs Howard, Bob Neil, Linn Sheldon and Big Wilson.<sup>27</sup>

Gloria Brown (1926-2017) symbolized one of the few big name female radio personalities in the late '50s. Originally teamed up with Mildred Funnell (1901-1977) on WTAM, she remained a staple at KYW-Radio into the 1960s. The A.C. Nielsen ratings, released in February 1958, ranked 1100 AM as Cleveland's number one "overall" station. It enjoyed a 134% lead over its nearest two rivals daily from 6 a.m. to 12 Midnight.<sup>28</sup> KYW's latest promotional effort labeled "Winter Heat Wave" starred an incredible lineup of extremely talented radio personalities. It began with Big Wilson, Specs Howard and Gloria Brown in the morning followed by Joe Finan and Wes Hopkins in the afternoon, Bud Wendell and Dick Reynolds in the evening and ending with Johnny Bell overnight.<sup>29</sup> An April 1958 article published in *US Radio* underscored the growing importance of DJs as prominent local business leaders.<sup>30</sup> They were considered by many to be the "kings of local radio." Not only did they choose the records played on their shows; but also, frequently influenced programming decisions. Over the long haul, many of those same celebrities deliberately increased the amount of rock and roll music they played daily. They saw it as the future of AM radio and they wanted to be a part of it from the start. From a business perspective, it made perfect sense for many of the large AM stations to promote this new sound. By the end of the '50s, many radio personalities justified playing more rock and roll based on their growing reliance on a newly perfected program tactic that was designed for that kind of music. Called the "Balaban Approach to Formula Programming,"

24. Ibid.

25. Tom O'Connell, "Wilson Pines to Help New Talent," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 15, 1957.

26. "Katz Table Totes Radio Spot Costs," *Broadcasting*, December 16, 1957.

27. "Tomorrow Night, Dec. 19, is KYW Radio-Television Night at Cinerama," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 18, 1957.

28. "Time Buyers Light Up over Northern Ohio's Hottest Station-KYW Radio," *U.S. Radio*, February 1958.

29. "KYW Radio 1100 KC. . .the Hottest Station in Town!" *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 10, 1958.

30. "Disc Jockey's Changing Role is Viewed, Storz Conference Studies DJ's Changing Role in Mapping Programming Trends," *U.S. Radio*, April 1958.

this latest broadcasting technique relied on persuasive jocks that repeatedly promoted numerous products and services to their loyal listening audience.<sup>31</sup>

This highly successful on-air approach towards radio broadcasting gained even wider acceptance within the highly competitive new world of advertising that was emerging in the early 1960s. Increasingly, larger and larger number of radio listeners trusted their local disk jockeys when they endorsed certain products and services over others. They knew that their favorite radio personalities always had their back. Hollywood actors doing voiceovers rarely enjoyed that kind of blind faith. For example, large numbers of rock and roll enthusiasts were quite familiar with the voices of WABC's Dan Ingram, WQAM's Rick Shaw, KXOX's Johnny Rabbit or KJR's Pat O'Day, to name but a few, but only a handful recognized popular Hollywood celebrity voiceovers such as Mason Adams, Harry Landers, William Schallert or David Wayne. Increasingly, the radio industry relied on this newly sharpened program formula to sell more and more products and services to its many eager fans. That April, KY-11 received the prestigious Alfred E. Sloan Award for its acclaimed highway safety programs.<sup>32</sup> KYW-Radio's growing number of useful service-related activities covered the gamut. They included such things as broadcasting traffic court, promoting good citizenship at local schools and airing current traffic congestion.

Meanwhile in Washington, D.C., the Federal Communications Commission reaffirmed its previously approval of the NBC-WBC trade. Presented its argument in front of the U.S. Supreme Court, the commissioners maintained that their decision had not prevented the U.S. Justice Department from conducting its own extensive antitrust investigation on that very same issue.<sup>33</sup> Its argument might have been valid if the courts had chosen to view the scope of that regulatory agency actions from a much broader legal perspective. However, the court thought otherwise. In December 1956, Judge William H. Kirkpatrick (1885-1970) of the U.S. 3rd District Court in Philadelphia refused to listen to a countersuit filed by the U.S. Department of Justice on that issue. Apparently, that judge believed that only the FCC had legal jurisdiction when it came to station transfers. On another issue, Westinghouse's legal counsel in May 1958 strongly objected to a harshly worded petition recently submitted to that commission by the Daytime Broadcasters Association.<sup>34</sup> It called for standardizing operational hours for all daytime AM outlets. WBC's attorneys argued that such federal action would not only interfere with high quality prime broadcasts; but also, end secondary skyway service provided by some prime carriers such as KYW, KDKA and WBZ. Westinghouse officials further argued that more than 50% of the U.S. would lose its prime service should that that petition be approved. They said that certainly wouldn't serve the public's best interests.<sup>35</sup>

Hoping to gain an even bigger listening audience prompted KYW's programmers to broadcast the Benny Goodman's concerts performed at the Brussel's World Fair in 1958.<sup>36</sup> KYW radio personalities Johnny Bell, Joe Finan and Dick Reynolds participated in Thistle Downs' Annual Open House Party held on May 25th.<sup>37</sup> Guess what, May ratings found KYW-Cleveland Number One again.<sup>38</sup> A June '58 article featured in *U.S. Radio* congratulated the U.S. broadcasting industry on its first annual "National Radio Month" celebration. Trade

31. Ibid.

32. "KYW Will Be Given Public Service Award," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 30, 1958.

33. "FCC View on NBC-WBC Swap Reiterated to U.S. Supreme Court," *Broadcasting*, May 12, 1958.

34. "WBC, CCBS Oppose Daytimers' Plea," *Broadcasting*, May 19, 1958.

35. Ibid.

36. "KYW Radio Plans Goodman Jazz Series," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 24, 1958.

37. "Open House Today Sunday May 25th 2 P.M. to 5 P.M. Thistle Down," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 25, 1958.

38. "KYW's On Cloud 1 'Cause Our Radio Ratings Are Out Of This World," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, May 26, 1958.

publications and civic organizations everywhere praised commercial radio stations for their news accuracy; detailed sports coverage and excellent entertainment programs.<sup>39</sup> To honor that occasion, the Cleveland Welfare Federation, and seven Cleveland stations, including KYW, launched a drive to provide used radios to shut-ins.<sup>40</sup> That same summer, a new station promotion highlighted several up-and-coming rock and roll concerts. Those planning to attend this “Party Package” were asked to donate old board games, canned goods and unwanted clothing to local charities.<sup>41</sup> The controversy surrounding the Westinghouse trade in ’56 heated up again on June 16th when the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to examine the U.S. Department of Justice’s charges directed against the National Broadcasting Company.<sup>42</sup> The DOJ asked the court to determine whether the FCC decision in 1956 approving the NBC-WBC station swap should be allowed to stand.<sup>43</sup>

When asked by reporters why his new talk show was so popular, Bud Wendell purportedly said that his curiosity had much to do with it.<sup>44</sup> An *NBC Spot Sales Timebuyer Opinions* survey reported that the majority of respondents preferred to listen to more detailed newscasts, interesting community features and gentler music rather than be exposed to traditional rock and roll.<sup>45</sup> NBC officials presumed that those AM station that played quieter tunes would not only cultivate a more pleasing listening environment; but also, encourage their fans to purchase greater and greater quantities of more costly advertised goods. That desire on the part of shrewd listeners to willingly spend more, rather than less cash on higher priced items rarely affected the budget-conscious Top 40 outlets where low prices were all that really mattered. NBC further stated that 69% of the listeners they surveyed preferred playlists that featured musical variety.<sup>46</sup> So, what was the best program format to follow in the late ‘50s and early ‘60s? Many passionate supporters of the middle-of-the-road format contended that their approach towards radio broadcasting was unquestionably the best. Yet, they believed that the deck was often stacked against them by aggressive advertisers who wanted higher and higher returns on every dollar they invested in local broadcasting. Repeatedly, the backers of finer sounding music yelled “foul” as larger numbers of local radio stations, such as KY-11, played greater and greater amounts of rock and roll music.

Not surprisingly, many rock and roll enthusiasts totally disagreed with their argument. They contended that advertisers in larger and Larger numbers were not preferring rock and roll music over more middle-of-the-road popular tunes. If anything, they thought that the majority advertisers were actively working against their vested interests. At a national conference that spring Joe Finan and KYW Program Manager Mark Olds discussed the many pros and cons of local stations adopting the Top 40 format.<sup>47</sup> They conceded that Top 40 was not a sure cure for what might be ailing your station; but it might help many fledgling broadcasters who were seeking a credible new identity. At the same time, Finan pointed out that the record industry was not standing still. The latest trends strongly suggested that popular music was increasingly turning towards a more mellow sound with a heightened beat.<sup>48</sup> Recently statistics compiled by the A.C. Nielsen Company confirmed what many industry-wide already

39. “America Listens and Hears: Radio is Close to You,” *U.S. Radio*, June 1958.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Russell W. Kane, “Gordon Told to Can Talk During Records,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 5, 1958.

42. “Supreme Court to Review City Radio-TV Deal,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 17, 1958.

43. George E. Condon, “Condon on This ‘n’ That,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 20, 1958.

44. Russell W. Kane, “PM Turns First Lap as Husky Air Infant,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 22, 1958.

45. “The Top 40 Formula Under Fire,” *Broadcasting*, June 30, 1958.

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*

strongly suspected that teenagers did not represent the bulk of its daytime listeners. A July 1958 study reported somewhere around 6.3 million out of a total 9.2 million, mostly women and children, were radio's prime day listeners.<sup>49</sup> Of course, mastery was everything to program directors on either side of the radio dial. Hoping to make KYW-FM "Cleveland's Fine Arts Station" led its eager programmers to significantly expand their classical music offerings.<sup>50</sup> Beginning in July 1958, Cleveland's 105.7 FM started playing longer album cuts as well as broadcasting a greater assortment of fine arts shows, theatre reviews and book discussions. Westinghouse backed up their promises to their budding FM audience by hiring a soft spoken Cincinnati broadcaster Dave Hawthorne (1924-2013).<sup>51</sup> He and Mylas Martin ran KYW-FM.

Problems with clear channel broadcasting resurfaced that August when Westinghouse Broadcasting Company representatives pointed out to the FCC that 12% of this nation's population relied on skywave service as furnished through AM giants like KYW-Cleveland. WBC's legal counsel further reminded everyone that this service covered 1,460 square miles and involved 114,000 people.<sup>52</sup> It wouldn't be in the public's interests if KYW's powerful signal should suddenly overlap with its sister station in Pittsburgh KDKA. That would have happened if the Federal Communication's Commission forced KYW to move from 1100 to 1020 on the AM dial.

A newly launched KYW publicity campaign gave local listeners a chance to win \$2 for every broadcasting mistake they picked up. KYW's News Director Sanford Markey (1914-1995) also invited everyone to win a free ride in one of his four snazzy mobile cruisers.<sup>53</sup> In an unexpected move, Controller Irwin C. Ruby became Westinghouse's latest Auditor and Business Manager.<sup>54</sup> In September 1958, the Federal Communications Commission renewed KYW's license for an additional three years. Federal entanglements earlier that summer had held up that long expected announcement. The station's commitment to community safety through repeated news bulletins and warnings was certainly put to the test later that same year following a brutal murder downtown. Similar to modern-day "Amber Alerts," regularly broadcasted warnings on KYW-Radio throughout that day led to a quick apprehension. When the accused was asked why he turned himself into Cleveland police, he responded that KYW's extensive news coverage had him fully convinced that there was no safe place for him to hide. He thought that it was better to give up rather than be chased down by the police department.<sup>55</sup> Again, great work KYW!

Station officials sponsored a one-of-a-kind Halloween contest for younger kids. Out of the more than two hundred applications submitted by local listeners half received a "KYW Treasure Barrel." Each barrel contained ten records and twenty bags of candy. The first thirty children to knock on a participant's door and ask if his or her home was a "KYW Treasure House" would receive either a record or bag of candy. Participating households got a variety of KYW promotional items for their help.<sup>56</sup> On November 1st, KYW's manager Rolland V. Tooke made a most important announcement that many future newscasts will also include station editorials. That inclusion of

49. "Teenagers are Radio's Small Fry," *U.S. Radio*, July 1958.

50. George E. Condon, "Goal of KYW-FM is to be City's Culture Station," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 27, 1958.

51. George E. Condon, "WSRS Sale \$500,000 Transfer Awaits Only FCC Green Light Which May Come in October," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 1, 1958.

52. "WBC Comments," *Broadcasting*, August 18, 1958.

53. "KYW Awards Dollars for Errors," *Broadcasting*, August 18, 1958.

54. Russell W. Kane, "KYW-FM Shuns Cash Until Format is Set," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 28, 1958.

55. "Newsworthy News Coverage by Radio and TV," *Broadcasting*, October 6, 1958.

56. "Halloween Pranks Get Station Break," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 25, 1958.

editorial opinions represented a major breakthrough in local broadcasting.<sup>57</sup> Traditionally, AM stations, including KYW, had believed that it was their chief responsibility to report the news without any commentary. Any opinions expressed by station officials were reserved for talk shows or special programs that focused on such matters. However, changing times required broadcasters to re-evaluate their responsibilities.

Increasingly, Cleveland listeners had turned to 1100 AM for important advice on a host of critical issues. Locally-based newsrooms, like KYW, were brimming with energetic reporters who had access to all kinds of inside information. Perhaps it was time for those newscasters to explain to their many loyal listeners, through their editorials, exactly what was going on behind closed doors, and how those covert actions might impact their lives. If those commentaries were presented in a professional, straightforward manner it might help the public to make better decisions especially at the ballot box. After all, local newspapers had been allowed to present editorials and opinions for years why shouldn't respected radio stations be afforded the same privileges? It made sense. As you might have already figured out, the time was ripe to expand the role of local news broadcasting. Under this arrangement, station managers and owners would determine which subjects were appropriate to address in their editorials and which ones weren't.

Greater community responsibility by KYW-Cleveland led to more of its radio personalities reporting on local conferences and events to interested fans. KYW's Big Wilson and Joe Finan not only attended the Eastern Ohio Teachers Association Meeting on October 17, 1958; but also, presented their findings regarding the many critical problems currently facing today's teachers.<sup>58</sup> Dramatic adjustments in commercial radio broadcasting had convinced Westinghouse's very perceptive Board of Directors to rely on a far more aggressive sales team to sell its word. Am Radio Sales replaced Peters, Griffin & Woodward in July '59.<sup>59</sup> That decision to switch agencies extended beyond the need for change per se. The fact that WBC had recently become the majority owner of Am Radio Sales played a big role in that choice. Apparently, the board's strategy paid off well. Within a year, KYW's advertising revenue had increased by 340%. Its nighttime talk show "Program PM" set the stage for much of it.<sup>60</sup> A 12% local increase in new car sales over the past year, due mainly to KYW's extraordinary sales growth, was truly amazing especially when you consider that during that same twelve-months there was a 20% drop countrywide.<sup>61</sup> Hoping to significantly improve the marketing skills of its competitors led Westinghouse to distribute its-own *How to Make Radio Campaigns Move Goods in Local Markets*. Cleveland's current unstable market scene led RCA-NBC to select WJW over WHK as its latest local radio affiliate.<sup>62</sup> National Broadcasting Company spokespersons claimed that WJW at 850 AM attracted a far bigger listening audience than WHK. KYW-Radio did not comment on that development. Little did that Westinghouse station realize that its extraordinary business and financial success would soon be wrought with scandal?

Nineteen fifty-nine began with the station's highly acclaimed News Director Sanford Markey moving his operations from Cleveland to Washington, D.C. to become Westinghouse's new Chief Congressional Correspondent.<sup>63</sup> His in-depth reports became a daily feature of KYW-Radio. At the same time, this outstanding

57. Russell W. Kane, "KYW Dips its Toe in Editorial Waters," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 1, 1958.

58. "KYW D.J.'s Provide New Angle," *Broadcasting*, November 3, 1958.

59. "WBC Subsidiary Unit to Rep Radio Outlets," *Broadcasting*, November 17, 1958.

60. "Detergent 'A' is Moving Well Tonight," *Broadcasting*, December 1, 1958.

61. "KYW Cleveland," *U.S. Radio*, July 1959.

62. George E. Condon, "TV-Radio Realm Was Busy Place," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 28, 1958.

63. George E. Condon, "TV-Radio Realm Was Busy Place," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 28, 1958.

outlet began expanding its record library to better serve the growing needs of its many DJs. On the FM side of the dial, programmers increased their daily air-time. Currently available from 5 p.m. to 12 Midnight, KYW-FM would soon be broadcasting twelve hours a day beginning at Noontime.<sup>64</sup> A well-known Cleveland radio personality Ronnie Barrett (1925-2005) joined the KYW-FM team led by Dave Hawthorne, Mylas Martin and Leslie Biebi. The station's GM Gordon Davis believed that more broadcasting hours per day would better satisfy the growing needs of his FM listeners who wanted to hear even more classical music and cultural discussions.

On February 8, 1959, KYW announcers engaged in a wildcat strike.<sup>65</sup> Westinghouse negotiators had repeatedly argued that the demands place on them by the American Federation of Television & Radio Artists were totally unreasonable. Its top broadcasters earned salaries up to \$30,000 a year and that station was not about to increase their wages. Fortunately, an agreement was reached between the two parties quickly. It called for a one year \$5 a week raise with a top weekly rate of \$140 in '59 followed by \$145 in '60 and \$150 in '61. Recently hired announcers and newscasters were to receive weekly pay increases ranging anywhere from \$85 to \$95. This new pact also included a tape rate of \$85 for wild spot announcements.<sup>66</sup> During the strike, the U.S. Supreme Court heard the latest U.S. Department of Justice appeal to overturn the Philadelphia-Cleveland station trade. U.S. Justice Department lawyers contended that the National Broadcasting Company had knowingly and willingly violated federal antitrust statutes. Many legal experts firmly believed that the upcoming court ruling might well determine whether the FCC or DOJ had the last word when it came to upholding federal antitrust laws affecting broadcast regulations.<sup>67</sup>

KYW's Rolland Tooke took exception to the way in which Cleveland officials were handling the proposed Mall C Hilton Hotel deal.<sup>68</sup> He strongly recommended that the powers-to-be at Cleveland City Hall should carefully review the Cleveland Development Foundation's suggestions for this project before making any final decision on it. Regrettably, city leaders did not heed Tooke's advice and the proposed hotel went nowhere. KYW-AM latest promotional campaign called "Nicest Things Happen" concentrated on "nice" stories and songs.<sup>69</sup> Part of that promotion included giving away a houseboat to one lucky visitor at the Cleveland Mid-America Boat Show. Fortunately, that publicity campaign did not begin and end with that single give away. It also involved a red costumed imp who paid customer bills at numerous popular supermarkets. However, for someone to win, the grocery bill had to include the number eleven in it. In addition, KYW advertisers received complementary drinks courtesy of Kroger Foods. Of course, there was a catch to it. Those persons eligible for those free drinks had to prove that their birthdays were within the last three months. KYW-FM also led the local pack when it introduced a new, highly informative five-minute segment called "Point of View."<sup>70</sup> Experts from a wide host of fields covered the arts, business and education to music, science and sports. The U.S. Supreme Court in March 1959 decided that the DOJ did indeed have the legal authority to initiate antitrust law suits against the FCC especially when it concerned the issuance of broadcasting licenses.<sup>71</sup> However, before the U.S. Justice Department could proceed with its prosecution of NBC, it had to first prove that the network had knowingly and willfully engaged

64. George E. Condon, "KYW Expansion Good News for Radio's Minority," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 17, 1959.

65. "Announcers for KYW Go Out on Strike," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 9, 1959.

66. "KYW Strike Settled With 3-Year Pact," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 11, 1959.

67. "Option Opinion," *Broadcasting*, February 9, 1959.

68. Russell W. Kane, "Alert Bobble-Spotters Keep KYW on Toes," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 24, 1959.

69. "Nicest Things Happen For Audience, Advertisers," *U.S. Radio*, March 1959.

70. "Cue Magazine Adds FM Programming After Its Research Affirms Audience," *U.S. Radio*, March 1959.

71. "Two Supreme Court Haymakers," *Broadcasting*, March 2, 1959.



in fraudulent activities that prompted a new monopoly to ensure its control of its company-owned stations. In the end, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the U.S. Department of Justice by claiming that the federal courts, and not the Federal Communication Commission, had the last say when it came to examining antitrust violations committed by third parties.<sup>72</sup>

At the same time, the Philco Company filed a formal legal complaint against that federal regulatory commission pertaining to NBC's latest request that focused on renewing its Philadelphia television license. Philco's legal defense contended that automatically renewing the WRCV-Philadelphia license would have given the National Broadcasting Company a decided business advantage over other, equally qualified broadcasters who wanted to seek out that same lucrative franchise. The feds rejected Philco's claim. They said that its legal arguments were full of loopholes and that NBC had not participated in any illicit business practices based on so called fears that other Philly stations intended to challenge its right to renew its present television license.<sup>73</sup> A subsequent law suit filed by Philco's attorneys demanded triple damages stemming from alleged legal infractions committed against it by RCA-NBC.<sup>74</sup>

A press release on March 4, 1959 announced that Johnny Bell had left KYW-Cleveland for the Sunshine state and WINZ in Miami.<sup>75</sup> He had been at 1100 AM for the past three years. That same month, Gordon Davis presented a very powerful editorial decrying state officials for their improper handling of auto plates fees.<sup>76</sup> In the past year alone, they had collected more than \$35,000 in additional charges. According to Davis, this was "party political gravy" all part of what he labeled "Operation Stickup." In the spring of '59, KYW welcomed the dynamic Wally King to its popular nighttime lineup.<sup>77</sup> After a brief stint in Philly, Joe Mulvihill, also known as "Jump for Joe," returned to Cleveland and took over Wally King's former time slot on WJW-850.<sup>78</sup> Called "the King of Hearts," King remained in Cleveland for two years before relocating to WNEW in New York City.

On March 28, 1959, KYW, in cooperation with Kroger Foods, sponsored its annual "Easter Hunt."<sup>79</sup> Big Wilson hosted this popular family event that was held in Cleveland's Edgewater Park. Westinghouse also announced that it was about to move its radio and television studios from the Superior Building to the former East Ohio Gas Company Building. The radio station would occupy the third floor of its new facility.<sup>80</sup> In April, KYW welcomed the long anticipated baseball season by sponsoring a special marathon.<sup>81</sup> It featured some of the Cleveland Indians greats of the day such as Joe Gordon, Frank Lane and the team's owner William Daley. Later that same spring, the U.S. Weather Bureau made KYW's transmitter in Broadview Hts, OH one of its official local reporting sites.<sup>82</sup> The following month, its VP Rolland Tooke left KYW to become the new Executive VP of Westinghouse Operations. A highly respected manager with a long list of great accomplishments, Tooke had supervised the

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

75. "Bell to Leave KYW for Miami, Fla., Job," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 4, 1959.

76. "KYW Blasts Aimed at Tag System," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 7, 1959.

77. "Wally King Cleveland's King of Hearts Moves to KYW Radio 1100 as Host of the All Night Show," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 21, 1959.

78. George E. Condon, "Playhouse 90 to Break TV Precedent in Presenting Hemingway's Saga of Spanish War," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 11, 1959.

79. Russell W. Kane, "Peter Gunn to Shoot Chapters in Hospital," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 26, 1959.

80. "KYW Move to Old East Ohio Building Gets Approval," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 2, 1959.

81. Russell W. Kane, "Mass in Jazz to Get Airing on WERE-FM," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 9, 1959.

82. "KYW is Going Into the Weather Reporting Field," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 28, 1959.

relocation efforts that brought KYW radio and television to Cleveland in January '56.<sup>83</sup> April 17th was the final day of the West End Furniture and Appliance Company's "Caloric Gold Star Sell-a-Bration." Intent on selling a record breaking number of big and small appliances, West End Furniture had arranged for Joe Finan to remotely broadcast his popular show from its crowded showroom. Finan's exciting broadcasts motivated hundreds of customers to purchase all kinds of appliances from that well-known westside distributor.<sup>84</sup> Star studded celebrations, like that one, assured KYW's long-lasting popularity within Greater Cleveland. How could it be otherwise? Everyone wanted to be a winner and KYW radio certainly met that criterion in the Fabulous Fifties. The second half of 1959 led to some unexpected changes and new developments that shook the very foundations of KYW-Cleveland.

83. George E. Condon, "Condon on Tooke KYW Head Soon to Leave Post Here for New Duties as New York Executive," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 3, 1959.

84. "Last Day of the Fabulous Caloric Gold Star Sell-A-Bration!" *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 17, 1959.

## Chapter 4: Broadcasting Honesty the KYW Way

KYW-Radio became an even more vital component of the Greater Cleveland broadcasting scene beginning in the spring of 1959. It began when that station sponsored an impromptu record hop on May 22nd. Its proceeds went towards the Vince Wayne Memorial Fund. That popular singing star had died in a freak accident the previous day.<sup>1</sup> Westinghouse was very pleased when the Radio Division of the Association of Broadcasters elected Gordon Davis as its new VP.<sup>2</sup> On numerous occasions, Cleveland charities thanked KYW for its heart felt contributions and its sponsoring of numerous successful events that included a party for retarded children. The “Nice Things” promotional campaign, mentioned earlier, was one of many successful efforts coordinated by the talented Janet K. Beyers.<sup>3</sup> Another innovation she came up with was “New Horizons.” Considered a revolutionary breakthrough in talk shows, it spread like wildfire throughout the broadcasting industry. It permitted studio audiences to actively participate in discussions that were happening right in front of them.<sup>4</sup> That May, the station’s management asked if any of its advertisers might be interested in sponsoring a full day of programming once each week on KYW-FM.<sup>5</sup> They thought that some smaller Cleveland-based companies with more limited advertising budgets might jump at this chance. Like its AM sister station, KYW-FM symbolized a growing Westinghouse outlet with a vital listening base. Its officials argued that the big difference between those two outlets was that the advertising costs on the FM side of the dial were much less. That would have meant more bangs for the buck for shrewd businesses that were willingly to purchase large amounts of advertising time there. The idea of buying large blocks of advertising time on its local FM station might have seemed reasonable on paper; unfortunately, not a single business bought into it. However, that did not stop Westinghouse from following up on other leads intended to bring in more revenue.

Throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, KYW-Radio habitually set Cleveland’s broadcasting community on its ear. Through its extremely clever advertising, targeted promotional campaigns and strict policy of playing more music per hour, this emerging powerhouse had all but eliminated its chief competitor WERE-1300 AM from the ratings race. It’s specially-devised “formula programming” that repeatedly spotlighted its many “super cool” DJs and catchy jingles caught nearly everyone in the Cleveland radio business off-guard.<sup>6</sup> Its rivals found it next to impossible to compete against KYW although WJW did briefly try to challenge it with its own version

1. Russell W. Kane, “Untouchables Deeply Interests Mrs. Ness,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 21, 1959.

2. “Radio, TV Said to Lack Responsibility Editorially,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 25, 1959.

3. “Nice Campaign Thousands Vie to Name KYW’s Friendly Imp,” *Broadcasting*, April 27, 1959.

4. “Music-and-News Format Is Being Broadened,” *U.S. Radio*, May 1959.

5. Russell W. Kane, “KYW-FM is Looking Around for Sponsors,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 8, 1959.

6. Russell W. Kane, “Eight-Sided Struggle Engulfs Radio Fans,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 10, 1959.

of Top 40 radio. That kind of cut throat competition did little to galvanize other less competitive Cleveland radio broadcasters such as WDOK or WGAR. They continued to play middle-of-the-road music aimed primarily towards more conservative listeners. In May 1959, KYW's nationally-acclaimed program called "Traffic Court" found itself engaged in its own legal fight for its life.<sup>7</sup> Repeatedly attacked by the Cleveland Bar Association along ethical grounds, that show now faced its own day of judgment in the Parma Municipal Court. Former Cleveland Mayor and U.S. Senator Thomas A. Burke (1898-1971) chairing the proceedings. Judge Burke ruled that "Traffic Court" had violated Municipal Canon # 35 which prohibited news gathering organizations and services, such as KYW, from interfering in anyway with court proceedings. He ordered the program stopped immediately.<sup>8</sup> That same month, KYW's leading daytime celebrity Joe Finan spoke at the annual International Radio Programming Seminar & Pop Music Disc Jockey convention held in Miami Beach. His talk focused on "What Is a Personality Today."<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, WBC's President Don McGannon attacked the disparaging remarks recently made against the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company by NBC's Radio Executive VP Matthew J. Culligan (1919-2002).<sup>10</sup> Culligan had claimed that WBC represented little more than a group of loosely-affiliated, undisciplined radio and television stations. McGannon roared back by saying that his radio and television outlets did not have to follow the same kind of inflexible rules and regulations imposed by large networks like RCA-NBC. He concluded by saying that individual Westinghouse stations exercised full autonomy when it came to choosing their programs. That meant that station managers and not big city wigs determined the kind of network shows that best suited their listeners.<sup>11</sup> *U.S. Radio* in its July '59 issue addresses a perplexing problem that continued to pester the commercial radio industry. Were local radio personalities first and foremost performers or businessmen?<sup>12</sup> Recent studies indicated that playing records and engaging in clever banter with their listeners was only one aspect of their daily job responsibilities.

Both local and regional advertisers repeatedly said that the nimbleness displayed by radio's most successful jocks especially when it came to peddling vast quantities of merchandise over the airways had helped to boost weekly sales figures enormously.<sup>13</sup> Not only did their banter sell vast amounts of items; but also, convinced their listeners to purchase those same goods over and over again. Joe Finan took that that job responsibility a step further to suggest that radio celebrities should work closely with local charities to ensure future listeners.<sup>14</sup> Increased corporate earnings and top ratings seemed to go hand and hand for those stations that did the right thing. Finan concluded that being a respected community leader would become even more important for broadcasters in the immediate years ahead as the wants of their fans changed.

The second half of 1959 was a defining moment for both KYW-Cleveland and the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company. It began that July when KYW's much acclaimed Program Manager Mark Olds resigned to join the

7. Russell W. Kane, "Bar Group's Verdict Dooms Traffic Court," *The Plain Dealer*, May 14, 1959.

8. Ibid.

9. "Platter of Platter Voices, D.J. Meet to Double Attendance Last Year," *Broadcasting*, May 18, 1959.

10. "McGannon Says WBC Network Label Wrong," *Broadcasting*, June 8, 1959.

11. Ibid.

12. "Disc Jockey: Performer or Businessman?" *U.S. Radio*, July 1959.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

coveted ranks of one of this nation's most respected independent broadcasters New York's own WNEW.<sup>15</sup> Bud Wendell assumed his role. That same summer, the FCC established an October 1st deadline for the Philco Corporation to present its closing arguments regarding the WRCV license renewal case. If that company's objectives did indeed have merit then the regulatory commission might well reconsider reversing its earlier stance on the '56 NBC-WBC trade.<sup>16</sup> That August, Gordon Davis left KYW-Cleveland for a similar position at Westinghouse's newest radio outlet in Chicago WIND. WOWO's Program Manager Carl Vandergrift (d. 1991) took over his duties with Edward Wallis replaced him in Ft. Wayne, IN. Prior to coming to Cleveland, Wallis had been the Supervisor of Sales and Publicity at WIP-Philadelphia. He also worked in sales promotions at two other leading television leaders in Philadelphia WPTZ and KYW.<sup>17</sup>

Increasingly, Westinghouse turned to Radio-11 to groom some of its brightest stars and that had included Gordon Davis.<sup>18</sup> Cleveland's media praised Davis for his many years of devoted service. It was through his diligent efforts that "Program PM" had become the success story so envied by others in the field. Furthermore, his belief in the future of FM broadcasting led him to invest over \$150,000 to expand KYW-FM. Davis's efforts produced a highly respected classical music station. Westinghouse programmers sincerely hoped that KYW-FM's new, handpicked coordinator Leslie Biebi would continue to uphold that same tradition of excellence first begun by Gordon Davis. *Cleveland Plain Dealer* radio and television columnist George Condon (1917-2011) let the cat out of the bag in August 1959 when he announced that "Program PM" would be cut from two hours to one and that its new host would not be Specs Howard.<sup>19</sup> He also wrote that Wes Hopkins would soon be replacing Gloria Brown and her Mid-Day program. Although Westinghouse officials had thrown around the possibility of creating a new women's program aimed at showcasing Brown's many talents as a broadcaster nothing came of it. Other changes in the KYW lineup that autumn saw Wally King reassigned to the 6 to 10 p.m. slot while Dick Reynolds resumed his late night assignment. Specs Howard played records from 11 p.m. to Midnight. The station's "New Horizons" service offered guided bus tours to some of Cleveland's favorite landmarks. All those proceeds from those special tours went towards purchasing historic markers.<sup>20</sup>

On the positive side of the financial ledger, the station's gross sales had improved slightly over a year earlier. Radio advertising during the first six months of '59 was 10% higher than the same period in '58 while television sales had grown by 6.3 %.<sup>21</sup> Over that same time period, the number of new advertising accounts had risen by 18.2%. WBC's national spot TV advertising for the first half of 1959 had increased by 14.1% with local billings improving by 19.1%. Radio sales were also at a new all-time high. They saw a 3.4% increase that June over the previous month's high level. That August, KYW-Radio along with WERE-Radio strongly recommended that Cleveland voters approve the proposed Cuyahoga County Charter reform bill.<sup>22</sup> Rumors had begun circulating that same month that a possible settlement was pending that would bring to an end the recent controversy over

15. George E. Condon, "Search for New Sound Keeps Pot Boiling Madly," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 19, 1959.

16. "Philco vs. NBC Oct. 1," *Broadcasting*, August 10, 1959.

17. "Week's Headliners," *Broadcasting*, August 17, 1959.

18. Russell W. Kane, "Pat on the Back for Gordon Davis," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 23, 1959.

19. George E. Condon, "KYW Schedules to Get Reshuffle as New Program Boss Takes Over," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 14, 1959.

20. "The New Horizons Community Service Project of KYW Cleveland," *Broadcasting*, August 17, 1959.

21. "WBC Sales Curve Up in Both Radio & TV," *Broadcasting*, August 24, 1959.

22. Russell W. Kane, "Dudley and Neal to Revive Graneyism," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 26, 1959.

the '56 NBC-WBC swap. Supposedly, NBC's legal counsel led by a sharp legal mind Bernard Segal had been working closely with the U.S. Antitrust Division to reach some kind of workable compromise.<sup>23</sup>

The September 1959 issue of *U.S. Radio* featured a highly inflammatory article that lambasted the commercial radio-industry's blasé attitude when it came to broadcasting a wide selection of the latest released recordings.<sup>24</sup> Experts in the field led by Mitch Miller of Columbia Records, Joe Reisman of Roulette Records, Charles Green of RCA-Victor Records and Henry Meyerson of Decca Records argued that many AM stations were mistakenly catering to a small group of highly vocal listeners. In pursuing that strategy, they were essentially ignoring a much larger, perhaps less organized group of equally loyal fans. Those record executives then proceeded to point out that \$.80 of every dollar spent on new recordings went towards the purchasing of albums and not 45s.<sup>25</sup> If that was true, then why did so many commercial AM stations play more and more Top 40 hits rather than the many other popular recordings currently available? Putting aside for just a moment the never ending complaints of increasing corporate expenses and mounting competition the answer to that baffling question was analogous to the growing number of noisy teens and their very narrowly focused buying habits. Although they rarely purchased higher priced albums, preferring instead to buy cheap 45s, teenagers in the late '50s were anything but shy when it came to demanding that their favorite stations play more and more rock and roll music often at the expense of other popular songs.

That insistent for more and more rock and roll music should not have negated the responsibilities of local radio outlets to equally serve the growing needs of their more even tempered, often well-heeled listeners. Those record executives made it abundantly clear that young adults, and not teens, truly represented the bread and butter of the U.S. record industry and that commercial radio should have more ardently supported their demands to hear "better quality" music played over those same stations.<sup>26</sup> Those critics of rock and roll music went a step further to suggest that local broadcasters should look beyond the hype currently being spread around by Top 40 stations to find out what was really going on in the world. They claimed that if imaginative programming, once the bloodline of U.S. commercial radio, had been allowed to grow naturally over the years, without having to cope with the pressures exerted on it from the tenacious rock and roll music industry, it might have meaningfully lessened the total impact of today's Top 40 radio. If, in fact, steps had been taken by leading record companies to nip Top 40 in the bud then most commercial stations would have been playing a much broader range of popular music than they presently do. That would have created a new class of discerning radio listeners, people who really valued high quality music over the tedious sounds of late '50s rock and roll.<sup>27</sup> As everyone knew, recently developed multi-track recordings of some of the best popular music of the day were designed specifically for the fine crafted, new sound systems.

Many advocates of rock and roll music believed that the sudden opening of the flood gates to a wide variety of music choices was inappropriate. It didn't make a great deal of sense to them. Supporter of rock and roll further claimed that local radio stations that preferred to play a wider assortment of popular music would soon discover that their profitable advertisers were leaving them in droves for the more exciting Top 40 broadcasters. The

23. "Consent Decree Near?" *Broadcasting*, August 31, 1959.

24. "Is Radio Playing Music In a Single Groove?" *U.S. Radio*, September 1959.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

recording executives interviewed in this article said that the exact opposite was true. Those AM outlets playing a variety of top quality recordings were experiencing a surge in new advertising opportunities while those that didn't ascribe to it were losing out. They concluded that the run-of-the-mill rock and roll music currently being broadcasted on many radio outlets nationwide failed to meet the rising expectations of their more sophisticated audience. The former GM at WBZ-TV Franklin A. Tooke became the latest KYW VP. Before settling in Boston, Tooke had served as the GM at WOWO-Ft. Wayne, KDKA-Pittsburgh and KYW-Philadelphia.<sup>28</sup> A recent consent decree filed by the DOJ demanded that NBC sell its Philly station before December 31, 1962. Although the National Broadcasting Company agreed to comply with this federal demand, the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company's Board of Directors remained uncertain as to how that decision might affect the future of its Cleveland outlet.<sup>29</sup> The U.S. Department of Justice further stated that RCA-NBC's actions directly violated the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890. It concluded that NBC's recent activities had indeed weakened Westinghouse's capabilities to compete efficiently in the growing Philadelphia market place. This was true especially when it came to selling high volumes of its most technically-advanced products. Apparently, NBC strategists fully intended to eliminate Westinghouse as a major local competitor.

At a September 1959 banquet that climaxed a three-day public service conference Don McGannon announced the upcoming distribution of free spot advertisements dedicated to education. As he explained it, those ads stressed the many problems presently facing education in general and higher education in particular. This event successfully brought together some of this nation's most talented educators.<sup>30</sup> Heated discussions continued industry-wide regarding the consequences that might unfold from that DOJ consent decree. One of its provisions, flatly rejected by RCA-NBC officials, stated that it could no longer exchange or purchase another radio and television outlet without first getting the permission of the U.S. Justice Department.<sup>31</sup> NBC attorneys claimed that such a restriction would not be binding in the courts.

Also, the National Broadcasting Company could no longer apply any undue pressure on another broadcaster when it came to either acquiring or trading stations. NBC's legal counsel made it clear that it had only agreed to the DOJ's consent decree because it permitted its parent company the Radio Corporation of America to retain all of its present licenses. Besides fighting the U.S. Justice Department might result in that network losing a great deal more than just a single company-owned station. Also, there was a distinct possibility that the consent decree might be overturned by the federal court and especially if serious legal conflicts were to suddenly flare up between the DOJ and FCC. As you might have expected, it also prohibited NBC from securing another Philly television station.<sup>32</sup> Finally, the U.S. Department of Justice's consent decree prevented the National Broadcasting Company from representing other of its affiliates through its Spot Sales Service. Of course, all of the provisions spelled out so carefully in this '59 consent decree might be thrown out by subsequent federal appeals. But first, NBC's shrewd legal staff would have to prove that the network had not deliberately threatened other broadcasters that had rejected similar station exchanges due to its rigidly enforced requirements. The DOJ further reserved the legal right to examine any records belonging to the National Broadcasting Company whenever warranted. This consent

28. "Week's Headliners," *Broadcasting*, September 7, 1959.

29. "Ruling Seen Not Hitting KYW Outlets," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 23, 1959.

30. "Colleges to Benefit by WBC Spot Campaign," *Broadcasting*, September 28, 1959.

31. "Now TV Has a Consent Decree, Some Key Network Practices Must Stand Antitrust Tests From Here On," *Broadcasting*, September 28, 1959.

32. *Ibid.*

decree was scheduled to run for nine years beginning on the day that RCA-NBC divested itself of its current Philadelphia station.<sup>33</sup>

With the hope of dramatically expanding its local listening audience, WHK-Radio picketed one of Big Wilson's remote broadcasts that autumn. Picketers said "the new 'HK is unfair to other stations because it sounds so good." Westinghouse retaliated with signs saying that "KYW welcomes Cleveland's number two station. Glad you were listening to KYW."<sup>34</sup> In October '59, the Cleveland Police Department participated in an exciting, new promotion sponsored by KYW-Radio. Hoping to lessen the anxiety of commuters, a new two way hookup between a police helicopter and that broadcaster began reporting traffic congestion during peak hours.<sup>35</sup> The station sponsored an Election Day phone bank that was staffed by the Cuyahoga County League of Women Voters. Those volunteers furnished callers with important information they needed to know before voting.<sup>36</sup> That autumn, KYW's respected Editorial Research Supervisor Neil (Mickey) Flanagan was promoted to become KYW's latest Radio News Supervisor while its Television Producer Bart Clausen took over Flanagan's former duties.<sup>37</sup>

WBC also introduced a whole new concept in marketing designed to assist discerning spot advertisers who wanted to tap into the many growing suburban markets ASAP. Called "Megatowns," the fifteen available urban areas represented approximately 50% of this nation's biggest cities.<sup>38</sup> Using Pittsburgh as its prime example, Westinghouse promoters pointed out that one of their inexpensive radio or television ad could reach more potential buyers than that area's fifty newspapers combined. That marketing ploy proved quite successful. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, insightful radio stations in growing urban settings like Cleveland constantly broke all previous sales records, and why not? Like so many other popular outlets of the day, KYW-Radio not only sponsored exciting local events and hosted numerous guest appearances by their popular jocks; but also, repeatedly presented electrifying publicity campaigns. All those highly energetic daily activities not only kept KY-11 in the spotlight; but also, enabled it to diligently sell large blocks of spot advertising daily. In fact, many companies relied time and time again on KYW's insightful promoters to assist them in attaining their monthly sales quotas. As the unabashed promos of the day said "Give KYW the chance and it will deliver!" Such was the case when a discerning local car dealer named Del Spitzer (1933-2019) first approached KYW's promotion's team for help in the autumn of 1956.<sup>39</sup> Working together, they came up with a very effective marketing strategy that certainly stimulated new car sales for Spitzer's. It was called the "Battle of the Dealerships."

Begun in 1957, it pitted Joe Finan against Wes Hopkins in a head-to-head competition to sell the greatest number of new cars.<sup>40</sup> Finan represented Spitzer Ford and Hopkins Spitzer Dodge-Plymouth. Each DJ ran remote broadcasts from his respected agency. Bottom line, their constant chatter brought enormous attention to both dealerships. In the end, Finan won the contest and was rewarded with a \$900 trip to Acapulco, Mexico.<sup>41</sup> Del Spitzer was indeed a happy man. Sales at Spitzer Ford in July 1959 increased by more than 30% over '58 figures

33. Ibid.

34. "Cleveland Stations Battle," *Broadcasting*, October 5, 1959.

35. "Helicopter Might Watch Traffic," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 11, 1959.

36. "Voters Register," *Broadcasting*, October 12, 1959.

37. "Fates and Fortunes," *Broadcasting*, October 19, 1959.

38. "Megatown Idea WBC Area Study Shows Radio-TV Best Engulfer," *Broadcasting*, October 26, 1959.

39. "Sponsor Contest," *U.S. Radio*, November 1959.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.



while Spitzer Dodge-Plymouth posted 20% sales gains. Zany advertising stunts, like that, apparently paid off well especially for businesses that depended on high sales volume such as Spitzer's. From that point forward, Del Spitzer ran an average of fifty to seventy radio spots a week on his favorite radio station KYW-Cleveland.<sup>42</sup>

Job advancements were a regular thing at KY-11. One of the biggest announcements in that regards occurred that November when Gil Faggen, the former Director and Producer of "Program PM," became that station's latest Music Policy, Special Programming and Spot Sales Development Director.<sup>43</sup> Responding to audience requests for more cultural programs led KYW-FM to begin to read poems on-air.<sup>44</sup> On the AM side, its latest promotion "KYW the Station with the Million Dollar Sound" unquestionably appealed to its listener's greedier side. Developed by Janet K. Byers, this off-beat contest featured a \$100,000 life insurance policy and seven days of luxury living for its lucky winners.<sup>45</sup> Disc jockeys chauffeured around in fancy limousines gave passer byes 100,000 in fake million dollar checks. Another campaign enabled two winners to either walk through a bank fondling \$1 million in cash or live like millionaires for a week. Growing complaints against its new one-hour format, led KYW to restore "Program PM" to its two hour slot at year's end.<sup>46</sup> The new two hour format began with Carl Stern answering phone calls while Pat Patterson talked sports. That was followed by Stern, Big Wilson and Tom Manning talking about the day's events.<sup>47</sup> Wilson and Manning may have been well-known celebrities but Carl Stern was not. A top-rated announcer with a commanding presence, he soon gained a substantial following at KYW. In 1967, Carl Stern left Cleveland for NBC-News. He remained there for many years.

A darker side of the rock and roll music business began to unfold in late 1959. It shocked both the radio-industry and its many followers. Regrettably, KYW was one of a number of commercial radio stations caught in its web of lies and deceit. Surprisingly, the public was pretty much unaware of what was going on until after Thanksgiving. In fact, the month of December began quite normally at KYW-Radio with its many listeners enjoying the traditional lighting of the enormous Christmas tree at Sterling, Lindner Davis Department Store downtown. Joe Finan, Wes Hopkins, Wally King, Big Wilson and Gloria Brown participated in the festivities.<sup>48</sup> However, the season's cheerful mood rapidly soured when on December 4, 1959 Westinghouse announced the firing of Joe Finan and Wes Hopkins two of KYW's most popular jocks.<sup>49</sup> Radio officials claimed that their firings resulted from their failure to follow company guidelines regarding the accepting of favors, gifts or money from various record companies and distributors. It was "payola."

As mentioned earlier, many record companies and distributors in the mid to late '50s had repeatedly showered select DJs with all kinds of special incentives if they agreed to play certain of their 45s repeatedly over others.<sup>50</sup> The feds did not ban this practice as long as those radio personalities did two important things upfront. First, they had to report and then pay to Uncle Sam any back taxes owed from receiving such gifts. Second, those same jocks

42. Ibid.

43. George E. Condon, "Condon's Notes Will Only the Contestants Be Punished In The Television Quiz Show Frauds?" *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 4, 1959.

44. Russell W. Kane, "FM-Your Ticket to Quality Music," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 8, 1959.

45. "KYW's Billion Dollar Promotion," *Broadcasting*, November 16, 1959.

46. "Program PM Returns to Old Form," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 28, 1959.

47. Ibid.

48. "Look and Listen All Day Tomorrow: KYW Holiday Kick-Off," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 29, 1959.

49. George E. Condon, "KYW Signs Off Finan and Hopkins," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 4, 1959.

50. Richard Shepard, "Disk Concern Cites Payola," *The New York Times*, November 2, 1959. Ralph Blumenthal, "Charges of Payola Over Radio Music," *The New York Times*, May 25, 2002.

had to tell their fans that they were being paid by outsider groups to play certain recordings at specific times and that those records were not currently on their station's playlist. Easy enough to do; yet, few of them complied.

In both Finan and Hopkins cases, their attorney H. Donald Zimmermann said that their dismissals were uncalled for and that KYW officials should have taken suitable steps to protect them from the onset.<sup>51</sup> He further argued that since that outlet had no formal policy regarding payola then they should not have been punished for participating in it. Apparently, the WBC board had discussed the idea of establishing a formal policy pertaining to payola; however, it had not taken any formal action on it. Whatever personal feelings one might have had regarding their firing really didn't matter much to Westinghouse's higher ups. They spent very little time deliberating their fate. "Finan and Hopkins did the crime they must pay the price." What most concerned the Board of Directors was how best to minimize the long-term damage created by their latest actions.<sup>52</sup> All agreed that firing them was the quickest and simplest solution. It would definitely send out a clear message to others who might want to engage in similar activities in the future. In less than a blink of an eye, Specs Howard replaced Joe Finan as Channel 3 weatherman while Wally King shouldered Finan's very popular afternoon gig. Specs Howard also took over Wes Hopkins's show.<sup>53</sup>

The widening federal probe into payola activities resulted in the prosecution of roughly twenty DJs. That included several Westinghouse Broadcasting jocks working at WBZ–Boston as well as a host of national record companies and regional distributors. Both Finan and Hopkins wasted little time before launching breach of contract suits against the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company.<sup>54</sup> Again, their lawyers had hoped that WBC would reinstate them ASAP. Both jocks repeatedly claimed they had done nothing wrong. They were paid consultants who were asked by reputable recording companies and distributors to pick out potentially profitable 45s from their extensive record collections.<sup>55</sup> Their keen business instincts in those matters had proved invaluable to the record industry in the past why couldn't they do the same thing now and in the foreseeable future?

Nineteen Fifty-Nine concluded with 1100 AM proudly broadcasting its one hour review of that year's top events.<sup>56</sup> The '60s ushered in a brand new era of broadcasting for KYW-Radio. It began with Carl Stern and his ace reporter Paul Sciria hosting a revamped "Program PM."<sup>57</sup> Many listeners truly believed that this Westinghouse outlet was truly their own personal station and as such they had the right to make a slew of suggestions that they believed would dramatically improve its depth and quality. Such was the case when a group of high school students from Independence, OH asked station officials to restore Dick Reynolds to his Midnight gig.<sup>58</sup> They didn't like his replacement Dave Hawthorne. The pressing need to keep costs down and revenues high while maintaining high ratings and honoring the contracts of their prized jocks often encouraged managers to ignore off-the-wall requests like the one recently submitted by those high school students. However, that didn't prevent KYW program coordinators from radically altering their daily lineup whenever necessary. Just such a development affected the

51. "KYW Signs Off Finan and Hopkins."

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. "9 Record Firms, One Here, Are Charged With Payola," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 5, 1959.

55. "KYW D.J.'s Fired," *Broadcasting*, December 7, 1959.

56. "The Year in Review," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 27, 1959.

57. "PM Expands Again in Listener Victory," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 2, 1960.

58. Ibid.

10 to 11 p.m. time slot. The newly expanded “Program PM” meant that something else had to give somewhere else. In this case, the hour long show “Big Jazz” was cut in half. Its recent drop in the ratings led to that action.

Joe Finan and Wes Hopkins served as the key note speakers at the January ‘60 meeting of the Cleveland Jaycee’s.<sup>59</sup> Both defended their recent actions by claiming that nothing in their contracts specifically forbade them from engaging in such activities. Finan blamed Cleveland Mainline Distributor for his difficulties.<sup>60</sup> He said that Mainline had thoughtlessly placed his consulting fees under “payola.” Finan further argued that the station’s managers fully knew what he and Hopkins were up to and they said nothing about it. He believed that this recently drummed up scandal had given KYW-Radio the golden opportunity it was looking for to clean its house without causing a public stir. In this instance, cleaning house meant firing some of its highest-paid celebrities which of course meant them. Finan then went on to say that there was nothing inherently wrong with Top 40 radio. It was neither corrupt nor immoral. He reminded everyone to not heed high-brow corporate leaders within the music industry itself who repeatedly berated Top 40 programming for their own gains. The first round of federal hearings on payola ended later in ‘60. Penalties included \$10,000 fine and prison time. One of the new remedies adopted by many AM stations allowed their business managers and not radio personalities, to determine which records received airplay and which ones didn’t. Rational thinking like that allegedly ending future illegal activities by unscrupulous local jocks. Payola has periodically resurfaced in commercial broadcasting over the last sixty years but not with the same intensity.

At the end of January 1960, the radio-industry learned for the first time that the Board of Directors at RKO-General (RKO) had approached RCA-NBC about exchanging its Philadelphia station WRCV for RKO’s Boston equivalent WNAC radio and television. Part of that proposed arrangement also called for transferring WRC, the NBC affiliate in Washington, D.C., to RKO.<sup>61</sup> Once RCA-NBC successfully secured a new foothold within the Boston market, it planned to purchase another prime Philadelphia outlet. If that transpired it would have enabled the National Broadcasting Company to have blanketed control of the East Coast broadcasting market running anywhere from southern Maine to northern Virginia. Also, RKO’s attorneys hoped their actions might divert the attention of the feds away from the controversial ’56 swap and the recent DOJ consent decree.<sup>62</sup>

If the feds had accepted the RKO-General petition unconditionally, it would have radically altered commercial broadcasting within one of our nation’s largest markets. Furthermore, if the Justice Department’s consent decree was quashed by the Federal Communications Commission that would have paved the way for similarly station exchanges nationwide. However, if the commissioners absolutely rejected the proposal that might have been the first in a series of steps that would have eventually led to the breakup of two of this country’s largest radio networks. It was a gamble full of potentially devastating business consequences, and yet, RKO’s legal counsel took it on.<sup>63</sup> Everyone speculated as to how the federal courts, the DOJ and the FCC might react to this previously unexpected petition. But, the majority of odd makers in 1960 were more than willing to bet against it. Most of them thought that RKO petition would be hopelessly stuck in the federal court system for years. If that occurred that would not be good for either RCA-NBC or RKO-General.

59. Russell W. Kane, “Finan Argues Case in Talk to Jaycees,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 7, 1960.

60. Ibid.

61. “NBC Plans Shift for Two Stations,” *The New York Times*, January 21, 1960.

62. “NBC Swap With RKO Taking Shape,” *Broadcasting*, January 25, 1960.

63. Ibid.

Eager to increase its number of early evening listeners led KYW to incorporate an existing outside radio show into its daily lineup on January 25, 1960. Formerly broadcasted over WDOK-Radio, the “Hi-Fi Club” successfully switched from its old haunts at 1260 AM to its new digs at 1100 AM.<sup>64</sup> Heard weekdays from 8 to 9 p.m. and again on Saturday at 9 p.m., it was geared explicitly for teenagers. Acting as both judge and jury, a different panel of teens every week selected the particular records they wanted to hear on KYW that evening and the next day. Setting aside the exciting changes affecting KYW’s daily broadcasts, what exactly was going on in the legal world at that moment?

The initial NBC–RKO discussions focusing on a possible station exchange re-emerged in May ‘60. This time NBC stoked the flames of this controversy by announcing that it planned to sell its popular Washington, D.C. radio and television outlet for a whopping \$11.5 million.<sup>65</sup> However, that deal hinged on two other things occurring upfront. First, RCA-NBC must be permitted to acquire another big city station, perhaps in San Francisco. Second, the U.S. Department of Justice must agree to that arrangement. Another legal issue to arise concerned the upcoming Philco case. You might remember that this looming court battle revolved around so-called unfair business dealings initiated by NBC against that well-established Philadelphia corporation. Amazingly, that regulatory agency remained silent on Philco’s most recent legal action perhaps due to the fact that its commissioners had not yet fully processed the oral arguments that company had presented the previous October. If RKO-General was successful in acquiring WRC-Washington, D.C. then it would have to divest itself of its current holding in the district WGMS.<sup>66</sup> WBC President Don McGannon said that all of this legal mumble jumble could be resolved very quickly if Congress enacted a commercial bribery law with some teeth in it.<sup>67</sup> However, he knew such actions were highly unlikely based on the hesitation of Congressional leaders to act swiftly on payola.

February 1960 saw the House Legislative Oversight Subcommittee begin its long overdue hearings on that subject.<sup>68</sup> Early testimony showed that both KYW and WBZ had done nothing to stop several of their jocks from receiving thousands of dollars in consulting fees and gifts. In the case of Boston’s WBZ, three of its favorite celebrities Alan Dary (1920-2009), Dave Maynard (1929-2012) and Norm Prescott (1927-2005) had received a total of more than \$16,000 in gifts and money from the record industry.<sup>69</sup> Unlike its sister station in Boston, KYW-Cleveland brazenly refused to supply that committee with either its program logs or playlists. That bold action by KYW was astonishing given the weightiness of this situation. Remember its DJs had received more than \$30,000 in “consulting fees” from numerous record labels and distributors covering a two year period. In Joe Finan’s case, his annual KYW salary ranged from \$38,000 to \$40,000.<sup>70</sup> Further investigation by this same house committee discovered that he had received roughly \$15,000 from a number of record companies and distributors. That breakdown included \$1,250 from Mainline Distributor; \$2,500 from Cosnat Record Distribution Company, \$5,200 from Mercury Records, \$450 from Big Top, \$600 from United Artists and \$1,400 from Shad.

64. “Hi-Fi Club Moves; New Cards Needed,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 23, 1960.

65. “NBC Swap With RKO Taking Shape,” *Broadcasting*, January 25, 1960.

66. *Ibid.*

67. “TV Official Urges U.S. to Ban Payola,” *The New York Times*, January 26, 1960.

68. “Harris Drums Up Payola Parade and a Surprised Westinghouse Finds Itself Leading the March,” *Broadcasting*, February 15, 1960.

69. *Ibid.*

70. Edward Kernan, “Got \$12,000 on Side, Finan Says Only \$450 was Payola He Insists,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 10, 1960.

Finan also got \$1,400 from Hugo & Luigi Productions, \$600 from Decca, \$450 from Cameo, \$1,050 from Carlton, \$400 from Epic, \$600 from Coed, \$300 from Meridian Music Publishers (Red Label), \$200 from London Records and \$150 from Madison. Chess Record Company also furnished Finan a \$2,000 no-interest loan of which \$1,700 of it remained outstanding.<sup>71</sup>

Hopkins reported an annual salary of \$21,800. He had received \$5,000 in 1958 and \$7,000 the following year. That included \$1,300 from Mainline Distributor; \$3,400 from Mercury Records, \$1,675 from Cosnat and \$300 from Big Top. Hopkins also received \$575 in consulting fees from Shad Records plus \$75 from Cameo, \$950 from Carlton, \$900 from Jubilee, \$275 from Coed and \$200 from End Records. Apparently, the recently fired KYW record librarian Charles Young had assisted them in choosing the records they played. Young had received \$450 from Mainline Distributor; \$800 to \$900 from Mercury Records, \$300 from Time Records, \$500 from Roulette, \$50 to \$75 from Coed and \$300 to \$350 from Cosnat. He claimed that he was always above board in his business practices and that he never knowingly promoted one record company over another.<sup>72</sup> A WBC publicity campaign in February 1960 proudly announced that KYW-AM was once again Cleveland's number one radio station.<sup>73</sup> As a tribute to local radio legends, station managers praised Tom Manning for his many years of devoted service to both WTAM and KYW. For quite a while its highly confident promoters had been searching for a new station identity, one that would resonate well with their emergent listening audience. That March, they moved ahead with plans to convert "good old" KY-11 into the all-new "Big K." Station promoters, thinking they had indeed found the perfect solution to their dilemma, asked their trusted fans to start thinking "K-Konscious."<sup>74</sup> That promotion effort also included a quirky contest in which the lucky winner won a free trip to beautiful "Kopenhagen, Denmark."

This "krazy" publicity campaign purposely focused the public's attention on "kazoplaying" contests, kayak races and kite flying races. Panned by critics and listeners alike from its first day that promo disappeared as rapidly as it appeared. On the positive side of the corporate ledger, KYW's special Sunday show starring Ronnie Barrett continued to attract a large number of new followers. Aptly named "Album of the Week" it originated from the record department at Halle Brothers department store downtown.<sup>75</sup> That same month, more legal details began to unfold concerning the current RKO-General petition. That entire \$11.5 million deal hung in the balance unless the feds allowed the National Broadcasting Company to acquire KTVU-Oakland for the \$7.5 million figure.<sup>76</sup> Network officials considered that deal well within their ball park. The one problem still looming on the horizon for RCA-NBC was whether the DOJ and FCC would approve it.

KYW's Program Director Bud Wendell proudly represented the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company at a White House Conference on children and youth.<sup>77</sup> Local programmers added racing results to Wally King's afternoon gig.<sup>78</sup> The successful Road Show reflected that station's unyielding commitment to provide Clevelanders with excellent community service. A recipient of the American Legion prestigious "Citation of Merit," the Road Show

71. "Harris Drums Up Payola Parade."

72. Ibid.

73. "KYW Is Way Up in Cleveland!" *Broadcasting*, February 15, 1960.

74. George E. Condon, "New Radio Riddle: Who Took a Big Cue from WABQ?" *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 6, 1960.

75. "Listen to Album of the Week with Ronnie Barrett on KYW Radio," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 20, 1960.

76. "NBC, RKO General Trades Three-City Station Sales are Announced," *Broadcasting*, March 21, 1960.

77. Russell W. Kane, "Censorship is Topic for Debate Program," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 22, 1960.

78. "KYW-1100 KC," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 1, 1960.

demonstrated time after time the very best in civic pride.<sup>79</sup> It had also won the much coveted Sylvana Award, as well as the Edison Award and the Freedom Foundation Award. In April '60, WBC officially unveiled its latest plans for a new radio and television studio. Located at 1405 East 6th Street in the former East Ohio Gas Building and designed by the architectural team of Sidney Stadig and Jack Bialosky, Sr. (1926-2020), this beaux arts complex featured two large television studios, state-of-the-art office space and a well-stocked cafeteria.<sup>80</sup> Riding the crest of his many recent successes, the head of WBC Don McGannon offered some sage advice to his colleagues. Stepping down as Chairman of the National Artists & Broadcasters TV Code Review, he reminded everyone that the incredible rebirth of commercial broadcasting over the past fifteen years or so was not just due to the ever growing popularity of that new phenomenon we know as television. He said that commercial radio stations also deserved a great deal of the credit for its success.<sup>81</sup> In fact, radio far outstripped television when it came to offering the most up-to-date newscasts as well as many high quality shows. He further suggested that sharing useful broadcasting tips across the mediums through annual corporate sponsored conferences produced a wide array of highly ingenious, new business ideas. The many outstanding managers and skilled technicians that currently worked in Westinghouse radio and television provided all of that and so much more to their co-workers. McGannon believed that today's radio industry connected millions of listeners to the world around them on a daily basis. No other broadcasting medium could boast that in the early '60s.

WBC's counsel awaited the impending WRCV's license renewal storm that was about to unleash its fury and might on the federal courts. Philco's pending proposal called for not only spend an astounding \$4.1 million to erect a new, top-of-the-line on-site television antenna; but also, an additional \$5 million to improve that station's overall operational capabilities.<sup>82</sup> As previously noted, the Philco Corporation in 1953 had sold its original Philly television station to the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company for an amazing \$8.5 million. Its legal staff insisted that NBC had repeatedly shirked its responsibilities when it came to providing Philadelphians with top quality live programming.<sup>83</sup> RCA-NBC countered that charge directly by claiming that Philco had been harassing it needlessly. Would that fight ever end peaceably no one knew?

79. "Our Helpless and Handicapped, KYW Cleveland," *Broadcasting*, April 11, 1960.

80. Adin C. Rider, "KYW to Have New Home In Ex-Gas Building," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 27, 1960. "KYW-AM-TV Moves Into New Studio Facilities," *Broadcasting*, December 12, 1960.

81. "The Road Ahead," *U.S. Radio*, May 1960.

82. "Philco Wants Ch. 3 Philly," *Broadcasting*, May 9, 1960.

83. *Ibid.*

## Images



Harry Martin and Specs Howard



Jerry G and Phil Harper





Jim Graner



Jim Runyon and Larry Kenney



Joe Finan and Rig Wilson outside of Brinks truck



Joe Finan, Don Zimmerman, and Wes Hopkins



KYW staff with beards



KYW record library



Mildred Funnell and Gloria Brown



Radio personalities holding holiday sign





Specs Howard, Tom Griffiths, Harry Martin and unidentified woman



Tom Manning and Jerry Dudley signing contracts



WTAM neon sign



Joe Mulvihill



Bud Wendell and Victor Borge



Bill Mayer receiving Key To The City from Mayor Celebrezze

## Chapter 5: A Cleveland Love Song

KYW-radio loved the many good people who lived and worked in Greater Cleveland. Without a doubt, making that station fun for everyone was one of Westinghouse's primary business objectives. Relying on fast-talking DJs who played only the very best in contemporary music while providing accurate daily weather forecasts, valuable traffic reports, precise sports coverage and in-depth newscasts fulfilled that station's unwavering promise. Everyone that listened to KY-11 in the late '50s and early '60s knew that was true. Its many trendy programmers never lost sight of the importance of promoting that "happiness" factor each and every day. Inserting cheerful jingles hundreds of times a day helped them to achieve that goal successfully.

That being said, this highly dedicated local radio outlet took its latest publicity efforts to an even higher level in 1964 when it proudly released its own 45 single. With music by the popular Madison Avenue composer of the day Mitch Leigh (1928-2014) and lyrics by Jane Griffin, "A Cleveland Love Song" made its debut on the June 19th edition of the Jim Stagg Show. An immediate hit, it was re-released just in time for the Christmas holiday. Some of you might remember its composer Mitch Leigh. He later gained much acclaim for composing the musical score for the Broadway blockbuster of the '60s known as "Man of La Mancha."

Although the melody of this song was in some ways similar to the contemporary hit by the Ray Charles Singers called "Love Me with All Your Heart," this particular release stood on its own. The chief purpose behind this song was for KYW to praise its newly adopted city and its many great people. The words and the music may seem simple in today's highly sophisticated world, but don't let that fool you it achieved its purpose. Most importantly, this very likeable tune forged a strong bond between KYW-Radio and its many loyal listeners, a connection that still exists among its most dyed-in-the-wool fans right to the present day. However, before we get ahead of ourselves, let's see what was happening before that song's release. Known at the beginning of the 1960s as "the Station with the Million Dollar Sound," KYW-Cleveland never disregarded the important role played by its outstanding news team. Who could forget its famous byline "When its news elsewhere, its history at KYW?"<sup>1</sup> As we will see later, the frequent replaying of its jingles only served to reinforce that close connection being shaped between its growing fan-base and the broadcasting outlet they loved so much. Abrupt changes in its radio lineup started as early as May 1960 when Dick Reynolds unexpectedly left KY-11 for the bright lights of Philly and WIP 610 AM. A freelancer named Keith Morris took over his show.<sup>2</sup>

1. Russell W. Kane, "Bob Hope to be Star of TV Political Farce," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 13, 1960.

2. Russell W. Kane, "Rebirth of Germany's Military Documented," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 10, 1960. "KYW-1100 KC," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 17, 1960.

A May 13th *Cleveland Plain Dealer* article dealt with a new growing concern that was affecting the broadcasting industry in general. The increasingly high value that major broadcasting networks were placing on owning and operating prime facilities within some of our nation's biggest markets appeared to be overriding their long-term commitment to provide the very best in entertainment and news 24/7.<sup>3</sup> Few of those networks ever considered the repercussion that might result when their own particular business needs took precedence over the public's interests. That never ending parade of new station owners within major radio markets proved especially unnerving to naïve listeners who were ill prepared for such frequent, intense changes. Of course, both the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company and KYW radio and television believed in those tenets although officials in both camps remained coy when it came to explaining to the public what exactly prompted their actions. Nevertheless, they rarely tried to minimize or soften the negative aspects of regularly swapping outlets. Instead, they preferred to showcase their many outstanding programming achievements occurring in the late '50s and early '60s. What they didn't talk much about were their future plans and how they might affect local broadcasting. Some of those long-term plans, if actually adopted, would have radically changed traditional broadcasting norms.

Many of those more immediate, often seemingly cosmetic changes occurring in mid-'60s radio broadcasting really represented an assimilation of the many suggestions for improvements submitted by its loyal fans over the past several years. As its promoters reiterated "we are dedicated to providing our many fans with what they need and want." What they failed to mention was the fact that most of those new programming initiatives were aimed at one thing and only one thing achieving high returns. After all, KYW-Radio was not some local, non-profit charity, far from it. Whether anyone cared to acknowledge that fact or not was of little consequence to its profit seeking board. This radio station was first and foremost a for-profit enterprise whose very survival depended on a continually expanding listening audience driven by well-heeled advertisers. If that was done effectively that would generate exceptionally high returns. Successful radio broadcasting, from its humble beginnings in the 1920s, rarely deviated from that business model.

Regarding the current legal squabble, the feds reluctance to act quickly on the RKO-General petition surprised many in the broadcasting industry including those at WBC.<sup>4</sup> The disinclination of the U.S. 3rd District Court in Philadelphia to respond rapidly to Westinghouse's recently filed counter suit aimed at stopping it greatly alarmed its Board of Directors. It was not alone in its concern. *The San Francisco Chronicle* aided by its very powerful broadcasting arm KRON-TV went through a similar experience when they approached the court. In fact, this highly influential, powerful West Coast media giant was not subtle when it reminded the 3rd District Court that NBC's high handed corporate dealings had obliged the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company to accept what many experts in the field believed to be a less than perfect business arrangement in '56. The *San Francisco Chronicle* insisted that the feds must initiate stricter exchange guidelines before considering any petition submitted by RKO-General.<sup>5</sup>

That California-based broadcasting giant further contended that before initiating any substantial changes to the present station trade guidelines, federal officials must first maintain the status quo regarding the procedures local stations must follow whenever they intended to switch network affiliations. Federal compliance to this

3. George E. Condon, "Battle of TV Chains is Boiling Once Again," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 13, 1960.

4. "NBC-RKO Swap Under Fire," *Broadcasting*, May 16, 1960.

5. *Ibid.*



West Coast media's demand would not bode well for either RKO or RCA-NBC. Both networks defended their rather callous actions by claiming that their request would serve the best interests of the public. In their minds, there was no other plausible argument. Furthermore, RKO and RCA-NBC had willingly fulfilled all the legal obligations required of them under the '59 DOJ consent decree. Yet, in the eyes of Westinghouse's board members their actions seemed highly orchestrated. The uncanny ability of the National Broadcasting Company lawyers to skirt around the purported business improprieties further infuriated U.S. Rep. Emanuel Celler and his house committee.<sup>6</sup> An outspoken New York politician, with a long history of defending the downtrodden, Celler immediately re-convened his committee to see if any further legal action could be taken to stop the RKO-General deal.

Both Westinghouse and Philco believed that they had every legal right to challenge this swap. They claimed that RKO's legal actions, occurring only after all the parties involved in the deal had signed the consent decree, seemed to directly challenge both the DOJ's legal authority and its position in this matter.<sup>7</sup> In this instance, the reluctance of the U.S. Department of Justice to dispute RKO's rather narrow interpretation of the law followed by a misrepresentation of its own submitted petition sent shockwaves throughout the commercial radio-industry. Some of the best legal minds of the day seriously questioned the DOJ's judgment. Logic dictated that if the recent actions taken by RKO and NBC were in some way fraudulent then why didn't the feds just flatly deny the request? Increasing opposition from many legal circles lent further credence to that particular bone of contention. Yet, nothing was done to stop it. As you might have already figured out, there was much more to it than what first met the eye. Clever legal teams representing RKO-General and RCA-NBC were very well prepared on a multitude of legal levels. The National Broadcasting Company took the lead in all of this by having its counsel present a most convincing counter argument. It claimed that local broadcasters frequently change affiliations with few ever thinking twice about what had just transpired. Everyday broadcasting pressures that ranged from escalating overhead costs to plummeting profits generally took center stage over such inconsequential things as changing affiliates. The prevailing feeling among most broadcasters of that era was that if one affiliate did not meaningfully improve their local ratings then perhaps another would. That fundamental legal defense proved very effective.

In an unforeseen reversal in roles, the U. S. Department of Justice openly attacked some of the National Broadcasting Company's harshest critics. It said that the network had done nothing wrong legally when it submitted to the FCC its NBC-WBC petition in '56. The two networks viewed it as an honest swap. Mr. Celler's committee strongly disagreed with this latest DOJ contention by claiming that the unusually high number of antitrust-related complaints and violations leveled against NBC in the past several years required that the federal courts begin to re-examine whether that network had indeed violated the Sherman Act during negotiations.<sup>8</sup> In an equally alarming move, the U.S. 3rd District Court in Philadelphia in June 1960 rejected WBC's earlier appeal calling for the feds to deny the current RKO-NBC station trade.<sup>9</sup> The Justice Department's legal counsel further stunned leaders in the commercial radio industry when it said that if the National Broadcasting Company should decide in the next several months to pull its affiliation from one or more of WBC stations in question that its actions would not be construed as directly violating its '59 consent decree.<sup>10</sup> That 180-degree reversal by the DOJ

6. "NBC-RKO Deals Under New Fire," *Broadcasting*, June 6, 1960.

7. "New NBC Roadblock: Rep. Celler," *Broadcasting*, June 13, 1960.

8. *Ibid.*

9. "NBC-RKO Deal in Court Again," *Broadcasting*, July 4, 1960.

10. *Ibid.*

greatly angered Westinghouse's higher ups. They felt the U.S. Department of Justice had somehow betrayed them at a time when they needed the feds to remedy this alleged wrong. Of course, WBC publicists were smart enough not to vent out their frustration to the general public. They knew that the adverse publicity resulting from such an unconcealed attack against a media giant, such as NBC, would unquestionably have serious repercussions for both the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company and its many successful affiliates including KYW-Cleveland.

However, the hesitancy on the part of the feds to deny the RKO-NBC petition outright greatly worried Westinghouse's legal counsel. What if in the process of reviewing the current exchange proposal federal officials should decide that the '56 station exchange was indeed illegal that might compel NBC and WBC to return their stations to their original cities? Such action might not be viewed as earthshattering by the commercial radio industry in general, but it would certainly prove costly and time consuming for the two networks involved. Nevertheless, both KYW-Cleveland and WRCV-Philadelphia began preparing for just such an event should it develop. Odds makers in the spring of '60 said that the chances of the federal courts reversing that earlier FCC decision were slim to none. They said that the worst might be that the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company would receive a generous check from NBC to cover any inconveniences that WBC might have experienced during its relocation to Cleveland nearly a decade earlier. But, that would surely be the extent of it.

Concerning the pending RKO-General request, WBC's legal team presented a very strong argument saying that if the feds approved the petition unconditionally that would lead to RCA-NBC gaining control of five of this nation's top broadcasting markets.<sup>11</sup> Equally important, it would nullify the U.S. Department of Justice's consent decree. Westinghouse's legal team concluded that the many complaints leveled against the National Broadcasting Company over the past decade were very much warranted based on its malicious and willfully repeated violations of the current federal law. If that was proven to be true that might well set into motion specific legal actions designed to overturn a rejected WBC appeal adjudicated previously by 3rd U.S. District Court's Judge William H. Kirkpatrick. You might also remember that in rendering that decision Judge Kirkpatrick had contended that his actions were prompted by his limited jurisdiction powers that only permitted those parties directly involved in the '59 consent decree to apply to his court for additional orders. After having made the rounds, that yet to be resolved RKO-NBC petition returned to the same U.S. District Court in Philadelphia that July for additional consideration.

As was mentioned previously, Keith Morris's tenure at KY-11 proved to be very short-lived. However, he soon reappeared on WHK-Radio. His replacement at KYW was a Youngstown DJ called Frank "Swingin' Sweeney (1933-2017). Joining the Westinghouse-Cleveland radio team that same summer, Sweeney split his evening duties. KYW's promotional department proudly proclaimed "The Swing's to Sweeney, Swingin' Sweeney That Is," As we will soon see, he was a wild and crazy guy who provided all sorts of fun contests for his loyal listeners. Viewed from the beginning as a pacesetter for Cleveland's growing teen audience, Frank Sweeney was well worth his weight in gold. In terms of the current Philly situation, the National Broadcasting Company proudly declared a small victory in July 1960 when the feds didn't convene their WCVR license renewal hearing.<sup>12</sup> Federal officials also threw out Philco's earlier charges against NBC. Yet throughout it all, the RKO-General proposal remained on the table. In a last ditched effort, Philco's attorneys reminded the U.S. 3rd District Court in Philadelphia that the

11. "New NBC Roadblock: Rep. Celler," *Broadcasting*, June 13, 1960.

12. "NBC-RKO Deal in Court Again," *Broadcasting*, July 4, 1960.

DOJ consent decree specified that RCA-NBC could no longer either own or operate WCVR.<sup>13</sup> Many legal experts at that moment seriously wondered whether that legal argument would hold up in the federal courts should the Federal Communications Commission reverse its earlier decision on the '56 swap.

Meanwhile on the home front, a July '60 Westinghouse ad proudly proclaimed that its radio network now broadcasted more music, news, service announcements, traffic alerts and weather reports than anyone else. It also pointed out that its consistent high ratings meant even greater sales for advertisers that bought large blocks of KYW-Radio airtime. The intensifying public demand for more national and international news convinced the WBC Board of Directors to increase the number of its Washington bureau's phone lines.<sup>14</sup> It said that any financial losses incurred by stations in adding those lines would be made up once the system was fully operational.<sup>15</sup> A new program debuted in the summer of 1960 to very positive local reviews. Called "Poliscope," it replaced the nightly Jazz Show.<sup>16</sup> Some highly incensed listeners were very much distracted by the booming voiceover now heard at all KYW-FM break. Apparently, it not only overpowered the music being played; but also, repeatedly reminding everyone that the station was a public service.<sup>17</sup> Personnel changes that August saw Jack Linn, a former Accounting Executive at Howson Advertising become KYW's newest National Sales Representative. That announcement was on the heels of the arrival of Jack N. Bennett. Formerly of WCAR-Detroit, Bennett assumed the role of KYW News Editor. At the same time, Perry M. Beaumont took over as that station's lead salesmen.<sup>18</sup>

*The Cleveland Plain Dealer* reminded KYW's many listeners that if they intended to lodge a phone complaint, any Friday, on "Program PM's" newest segment "What's on Your Mind" expect to talk to Carl Stern and not Specs Howard. Stern will gladly tape your complaint for that night's broadcast.<sup>19</sup> The first week of August saw the hotly contested legal debate over the RKO-NBC petition rear its ugly head once again. WBC's legal eagles asked the Federal Communications Commission to reconsider RKO General's petition along with related trafficking licenses and construction permits.<sup>20</sup> The team further reminded the feds that any hasty decision, on their part, might well be perceived as not properly serving the public's best interests. That same summer, the FCC's Radio Advertising Bureau released a report that included, among other things, the latest percentages of teenagers listening to commercial radio from 4 p.m. to Midnight. Those percentages hovered around 10% to 11% depending on the hour.<sup>21</sup> During that same period, Westinghouse's advertising agency boasted that KYW-Cleveland provided the best news coverage in Greater Cleveland. Local ratings substantiated that claim as the station again achieved number one ranking.<sup>22</sup> That triumph seemed even more impressive considering the fact that KY-11 was not technically a Top 40 rock and roll radio station. It still played a wide variety of music geared for different age groups. However, its diverse musical format did not stop it from playing more and more hours of rock and roll music as the months passed. Knowing that rock and roll music was a growing national phenomenon, with no end in sight, had persuaded KYW's shrewd programmers to devote more airtime to it.

13. Ibid.

14. "WBC Makes Own New Network," *Broadcasting*, July 25, 1960.

15. Ibid.

16. "KYW-1100 KC," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 29, 1960.

17. Emerson Batdorff, "You and Your Hi-Fi," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 30, 1960.

18. "Fates and Fortunes," *Broadcasting*, August 1, 1960.

19. Russell W. Kane, "From Mouse Club to Zorro," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 6, 1960.

20. "WBC Asks Transfer Hearing," *Broadcasting*, August 8, 1960.

21. "Who Listens?" *U.S. Radio*, September 1960.

22. "KYW is Way Up in Cleveland!" *U.S. Radio*, September 1960.

Adding Swingin' Sweeney to the daily lineup in July 1960 represented a sincere attempt by its program coordinators to appeal more directly to the emergent number of teens that were increasingly listening to KY-11. An offbeat kind of guy, Sweeney appeared to understand the deep-rooted emotions that touched most young people. Without a doubt, he was a "wild and crazy" guy as everyone in local radio knew. But, he was also lots of fun. To illustrate that last point, Sweeney helped many teens overcome the summertime doldrums by offering them a fantastic contest. It began with him dressing up like a jungle character and swinging from cage bars in the Cleveland Zoo.<sup>23</sup> Contestants first had to track him down by following the detailed clues provided by the studio. Once they found him, they then had to carry him back to the station seated in a plush sedan chair. Participants finally had to place him next to his favorite turntable where he announced the winners. His audience loved such wacky adventures!

A former WGAR jock named Hal Morgan (1916-1988) joined the KYW staff at the end of August where he stayed for four years. He replaced Ronnie Barrett whose job responsibilities were changing.<sup>24</sup> An article published in the October 1960 issue of U.S. Radio explored the many reasons why Westinghouse's successful new business model worked so well in so many places. Now a listening companion at both home and work, modern-day radio fans more and more turn to one station to supply them with their daily news and entertainment rather than skip around the AM dial.<sup>25</sup> According to Don McGannon, Westinghouse's jocks not only encouraged a loyal following by offering them exactly what they wanted most; but also, did everything within their power to become active members of the community they so proudly served. He further stated that the news coming out of the Washington Bureau was far superior to many of its competitors in that one size did not fit all. In fact, the news items broadcasted daily out of the Washington Bureau were customized to suit the needs of its different stations. A staple of all WBC outlets; "Program PM" had done the unthinkable when they successfully combined the best in local news coverage with the finest commentary.

Don McGannon additionally reminded everyone that the emerging electronic media represented a new and effective way in which to advertise the latest products and services to the biggest possible fan base. Since Westinghouse led in this up and coming field it made perfect sense for advertisers to avail themselves of that network's many affordable new services and vast technical resources.<sup>26</sup> Following an eighteen month pause "Traffic Court" returned to the KYW airways starting October 4th.<sup>27</sup> The Ohio Supreme Court ruled that Municipal Canon # 35 did not apply to courtroom sessions scheduled to be broadcasted at a later time. That court ruling overturned an earlier decision that had banned it. Some new industry-wide guidelines strongly recommended that AM radio stations should make every effort possible to air more home grown programs. They should also try to be friendlier; more humorous and show greater empathy for the problems affecting their listening audience.<sup>28</sup> KY-11 did all of that admirably.

Nineteen Fifty-Nine expenses for select Cleveland radio outlets stood at a whopping \$5.44 million while their combined annual incomes topping \$634,628.<sup>29</sup> Sales for that year had exceeded the \$3 million mark with national

23. Russell W. Kane, "New Disk Jockey Swung Into Town on Big Grapevine," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 4, 1960.

24. Russell W. Kane, "Paige to Have Male Exercise Competition," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 22, 1960.

25. "The Westinghouse Approach to Radio," *U.S. Radio*, October 1960.

26. Ibid.

27. Russell W. Kane, "Traffic Court Returns to Radio," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 2, 1960.

28. "The Real Meaning of Modern Radio," *Broadcasting*, October 3, 1960.

29. "Selected Revenue Items and Broadcasting Revenues, Expenses and Income," *Broadcasting*, October 24, 1960.

and regional sales equaling \$3.12 million. The return of Ken Courtwright (1935-2010) to the KYW airways revitalized weekend radio newscasts.<sup>30</sup> Unexpectedly, one of KYW's Chief Promoters Janet K. Byers resigned to assume similar duties at KFWB in Los Angeles. A highly-respected business manager from KQV-Pittsburgh Frank Maruca took over her responsibilities.<sup>31</sup> KYW's VP Frank Tooke proudly announced that this AM station would continue to play lots of rock and roll music along with plenty of folk music, jazz, standard ballads and show tunes. He believed that the key to success in local broadcasting was to maintain a balance in the kind of records played daily.<sup>32</sup> November 1960 saw the return of the highly anticipated Higbee's Christmas Open House. As always, it showcased KYW's top radio personalities as well as some of the best performers in the recording industry.<sup>33</sup> That year's lineup included Conway Twitty, the Playmates, the Orchettes and Carl Dobkins Jr.

A new and exciting broadcasting personality entered the local radio scene later that month. Tom E. Griffiths (1937-2011) was undoubtedly an important part of that new exciting sound that made this particular radio station so great.<sup>34</sup> WBC board members congratulated Barton Clausen on his recent election to the Cleveland City Club's Board of Directors.<sup>35</sup> The Kiplinger Report, a daily business synopsis that among other things rated the sturdiness as well as quality of consumer products, now filled the 10:30 p.m. weekday slot.<sup>36</sup> It fitted in well with the existing evening newscasts and talk shows. A year-end investigation by the National Labor Relations Board based on assertions made by the National Association of Broadcasting Employees and Technicians that KYW had improperly discharged several custodians before moving into its new studios was little more than a misunderstanding. Their contract with WBC did not expire until January 31, 1961.<sup>37</sup> On a more personal note, KYW commemorated Christmas Eve by broadcasting a three-hour tree trimming musical extravaganza hosted by Tom Griffiths.<sup>38</sup> The show was intended to make that challenge easier.

Nineteen sixty-two began with the U.S. 3rd District Court in Philadelphia denying Westinghouse's latest appeal disallowing the RKO-General petition.<sup>39</sup> On a much brighter and happier note, the improved KYW-FM signal now covered twenty-seven Northern Ohio counties. That represented 33% of that station's listening area.<sup>40</sup> In order to keep the enthusiasm of its listeners up during the dreary winter months of '61, KY-11 introduced yet another promotional campaign. This time, the station asked everyone to come up with a catchy new stage name for its latest jock Tom Griffiths.<sup>41</sup> After some deliberation, the listeners decided on Griff Thomas. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics *Occupational Outlook Handbook* reported that the need for well-paid radio announcers had lessened considerably in many of this nation's largest markets due to the growing industry-wide dependence on a new technical breakthrough called automated broadcasting. However, broadcasters within smaller communities still relied on them. In our biggest cities, broadcasters might earn anywhere from \$13,000 to \$25,000 a year.<sup>42</sup>

30. Russell W. Kane, "Takeoff on Politics Too Light Hearted," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 25, 1960.

31. "Fates and Fortunes," *Broadcasting*, October 31, 1960.

32. George E. Condon, "Beautiful Music Pays Big Dividends," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 6, 1960.

33. "Christmas Open House," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 13, 1960.

34. "Saturday Radio Program Schedules, Schedule of Sunday Radio Programs," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 19, 1960.

35. "Four Elected as Directors of City Club," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 6, 1960.

36. "Cleveland Plain Dealer Radio Programs, KYW-1100 KC," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 8, 1960.

37. John W. Rees, "Ohio Forge, Union Agree on Contract," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 9, 1960.

38. "Music to Trim Your Tree By," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 24, 1960.

39. "Westinghouse loses NBC-RKO Appeal, Supreme Court Denies Status in Station Swap Case," *Broadcasting*, December 26, 1960.

40. "FM Station Key," *U.S. Radio*, January 1961.

41. Russell W. Kane, "Mozart Lovers Unite and Swamp WDOK," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 17, 1961.

42. Bureau of Labor Stats, "Radio and Television Announcers," *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 1961.

Cleveland newspapers that February reported that negotiations between WBC officials and KYW engineers had reached a feverous, new pitch.<sup>43</sup> The National Association of Broadcast Engineers & Technicians repeatedly complained that the station's recent wage offers were utterly unreasonable. Union reps sought out a \$17 wage increase for employees who made \$171 a week. Westinghouse's shrewd negotiating team responded to that demand by pointing out that the present salary cap for KYW employees was not \$171 a week; but rather, \$162.50 and that the team was prepared to offer \$175 plus the right to discipline workers who refused to cross union picket lines during strikes.<sup>44</sup> Before agreeing to the new wage package, the union insisted that the station hire more part-time employees. On a positive note, KYW's Road Show proudly announced that it had contributed \$53,000 to local charities over the past three years.<sup>45</sup> Many listeners were sad to learn that Tom Manning was about to retire from broadcasting. He had been a sports announcer at WTAM and KYW for the past thirty-five years. Among his many achievements, Tom Manning had received *Sporting News* Outstanding Sports Announcer Award in 1938.<sup>46</sup>

In early 1961, "Program PM" introduced a brand new segment to its night broadcast called "Counseling Session." Hosted by Carl Stern, it examined some of the recent divorce cases handled by Cleveland's Jewish Family Services.<sup>47</sup> Social workers from that very respected locally-based institution carefully examined and then discusses those files in detail. That February, KYW programmers introduced a new, abbreviated newscast that was broadcasted right in the middle of "Program PM." In an unexpected move, WBC's Board of Directors announced the appointment of Perry B. Bascom (1924-1997) as KYW's latest GM.<sup>48</sup> This highly experienced manager replaced Carl Vandergrift who had taken over the responsibilities of WBC Special Programs Coordinator. Before coming to Cleveland, Bascom had served as an Account Executive at WIP-Philadelphia as well as the National Radio Sales Manager for Westinghouse in New York.<sup>49</sup>

Beginning that March, Eugene M. Plumstead (1916-1992) took over the reins as KYW's state-of-the-art Program Coordinator. Previously, he had been VP at Plough Broadcasting Company.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, Bud Wendell, KYW's highly distinguished nighttime talk show host, had become its Late Night Programming Coordinator. For the second year in a row, Westinghouse corporate earnings reached an impressive mark of \$79 million.<sup>51</sup> The dazzling March '61 KYW-Cleveland lineup began with Big Wilson mornings followed by Ronnie Barrett and Specs Howard mid-day and "Swingin'" Sweeney afternoons. Program PM assumed the early evening broadcasting chores followed by Griff Thomas who lit up the late night skies.<sup>52</sup> A new 7:00 p.m. national broadcast called "Radio News Day" with Jerry Landay debuted at month's end. It dealt with world news, in-depth stories and important events.<sup>53</sup> New developments, stemming from Philco's latest attempt to stop RCA-NBC from obtaining its WRCV license renewal, suddenly appeared on the legal horizon.<sup>54</sup> The DOJ again reminded the FCC that it must not ignore its consent decree when evaluating the National Broadcasting Company's current request.

43. John W. Rees, "KYW Pact Talks Go Past Deadline," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 1, 1961.

44. Ibid.

45. "Fund Raising," *U.S. Radio*, February 1961.

46. George E. Condon, "Manning Ends 35 Years on Air," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 1, 1961.

47. Russell W. Kane, "Real Divorce Cases to Be Dramatized," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 7, 1961.

48. Russell W. Kane, "Spring Must Be Near; Radio Stations Buzz," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 14, 1961.

49. "Fates and Fortunes," *Broadcasting*, February 20, 1961.

50. George E. Condon, "Life's TV Show: One Thing after Another," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 3, 1961.

51. "Westinghouse Report Cites Broadcast Property," *Broadcasting*, March 6, 1961.

52. "KYW-1100 KC," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 8, 1961.

53. "Westinghouse Starts Own Network News Show," *Broadcasting*, March 27, 1961.

54. "New Broadcast Licensing Criteria?" *Broadcasting*, April 3, 1961.

Even if that particular regulatory agency had the legal authority to grant that network its request without any further discussion or review that did not mean that it should deny the Philco Corporation the legal opportunity of trying to convince it otherwise. The U.S. Department of Justice further reminded the commissioners that once NBC divested itself of WRCV-Philadelphia it would no longer have the legal right to exchange any other company-owned station for the desired Boston radio and television outlets.

Reb Foster (1936-2019) was the latest addition to the growing list of “groovy” jocks that now called KYW their home.<sup>55</sup> His fast-paced approach towards radio broadcasting was the antithesis of his immediate predecessor the softer sounding Dave Hawthorne.<sup>56</sup> WBC’s revolutionary Megatown marketing plan radically changed U.S. retailing practices forever. Pre-selling items and services through unfiltered advertising means eliminated, once and for all, cumbersome geographical lines and unwanted middlemen.<sup>57</sup> Many listeners were sorry to learn that Big Wilson was leaving KYW for WNEW in New York. A popular Boston radio celebrity Dexter Card (1933-2018) took over his popular morning gig.<sup>58</sup> In an enlightened piece of journalism, *U.S. Radio* that June presented a very thoughtful account on the surging \$10 billion teen market.<sup>59</sup> A recent *Seventeen* magazine survey found that this nation’s teenage population had increased from 10.7 million to 13.5 million over the previous decade. In terms of spending habits, that magazine soon discovered that teenage girls spend more than \$300 million a year on beauty aids and cosmetics.<sup>60</sup> This was a very impressive sum even if their parents still bought most of those items. The teen market was there for the taking, yet few in radio actively pursued it. The article argued that AM stations nationwide should more actively pursue that growing market especially as broadcasting expenses continued to rise at an alarmingly pace.

One reoccurring complaint made against many popular AM stations, such as KYW-Radio, concerned the frequent hiring and firing of locally-inspired DJs. Some critics perhaps correctly likened it to a revolving door. In the case of KYW-Cleveland the rapid departure of many local favorites such as Ronnie Barrett, Gloria Brown and Dave Hawthorne seemed to bring that point home to many Clevelanders. Even if those same radio personalities quickly resurfaced on other local stations it was never the same. In fact, that hard to describe magnetism that first brought them together with their many fans in rarely reoccurred in another setting. However, the business aspects of broadcasting were ever demanding and frequently unkind on the personal level. Everyone involved in the managerial side of commercial radio in the 1960s knew the critical importance of regularly balancing their company’s books.

The question continually plaguing them was whether balancing the budget should always take precedent over important human aspects of the business? There was no right or wrong answer; however, much confusion. As everyone readily conceded, the individual choices made by the listening audience, as reflected through local ratings, ultimately determined the winners and losers within the local AM radio game. Some critics contended that business managers might want to listen more attentively to the wishes of their listening audience rather than follow the stern advice offered by their accountants. We must also remember that many listeners long-term

55. “KYW-1100 KC,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 12, 1961.

56. “Questions, Answers on Timely TV Topics,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 15, 1961.

57. “Electronics Determines Market Limits-Goldberg,” *Broadcasting*, May 22, 1961.

58. Russell W. Kane, “Arise! Valentino Fans and Flip to Channel 3,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 25, 1961.

59. “\$10 Billion Teen Market-And Radio Owns ‘Em,” *U.S. Radio*, June 1961.

60. *Ibid.*

loyalty towards one outlet over another could literally disappear overnight once their favorite jocks were no longer there.<sup>61</sup> Looking at it from the DJ's perspective, how could they establish any real connection with their fans from the community that they served if their future employment was so indefinite? As everyone knew, one false move and you were gone.

We must remember that Joe Finan, Wes Hopkins, Frank "Swingin'" Sweeney and Big Wilson came and went in no time. Many broadcasting veterans wondered who might be thrown under the bus by their employers next. They rarely had to wait too long to find out. If you're thinking there was more to hiring and firing than what first met the eye you're right. The fundamentals guiding business principles for virtually all commercial radio stations in the U.S. during the 1950s and 1960s centered on two things balancing the books while staying at the top of the game. If broadcasters, like KYW, didn't do that then their rivals would not hesitate to seize the moment if they could. Any station might win or lose instantly especially if their loyal fan-base should for one reason or another suddenly sour towards them. Paying smaller salaries to lesser known radio personalities at the expense of high paid celebrities certainly represented one very credible way in which to balance the books. Although the local press and eager listening audiences might not have liked the results, radio outlets everywhere did just that as a way of ensuring the status quo.

Let's pursue this accepted practice of rapidly firing and hiring of broadcasters a bit further. If a top notch DJ should discover without any previous warning that his show was rapidly dropping in the local ratings that might be enough in itself to guarantee his prompt dismissal. Troublesome behavior on the part of that same jock might also hasten his release. In both cases, the station responsible for the firings rarely suffered financially from such decisive action. In fact, shrewd radio managers knew full-well that there was a slew of equally talented broadcasters ready on a moment's notice to replace veteran announcers at a fraction of the cost. That need to up their game by rapidly firing and hiring radio celebrities proved crucial to fledgling AM outlets that were forced to repeatedly cut soaring overhead costs while still maintaining the appearance of being winners. Critics outside this field often looked the other way when stations aggressively and repeatedly employed such cutthroat business practices. However, the majority of disc jockeys knew exactly what led station managers to act so cold-bloodedly. A sudden plunge in revenue or rocketing overhead costs frequently overrode any personal feelings station managers might have towards specific radio personalities.

For its consistently high quality reporting on locally important education issues, KYW received the National Education Association's School Bell Award.<sup>62</sup> *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* was surprised to learn that KYW's management had agreed to permit its new morning man Dexter Card to use his real name both on and off the air.<sup>63</sup> A Maine native, Card had previously worked in Portland, ME; Providence, RI and Milwaukee, WI prior to joining the WCOP team. Several leading KY-11 personalities led by Reb Foster made positive news headlines that same summer by participating in amateur baseball games courtesy of the Cleveland Recreation Department. They wanted to keep the kids out of trouble and off the streets.<sup>64</sup> In late August 1961, the press praised one of KYW's chief radio rivals WERE for actively promoting "good music" programming over traditional rock and

61. George E. Condon, "Broadcaster Aflutter in New Payola Scare," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 9, 1961.

62. Russell W. Kane, "TV in Paris Could Revive Old Thriller," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 29, 1961.

63. Russell W. Kane, "It's Rare DJ Who Keeps Own Name," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 15, 1961. Russell W. Kane, "Disgusted Jockey Gets His Name Back," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 31, 1961.

64. Chuck Heaton, "Radio Gives Sandlots a Boost," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 15, 1961.



roll. WERE officials said that its earlier rock and roll format had not sufficiently improved their ratings and that station managers were ready for a major change.<sup>65</sup>

The questions surrounding the NBC-WBC swap in '56 and the current RKO controversy brought to light some overlooked legal issues pertaining to certain license agreements. Federal courts concerns centered on such things as to whether two year television affiliation contracts with successive two year terms could be or should be considered depreciable assets or not? The legal ruckus that ensued over that specific, contentious issue encouraged the U.S. Tax Court to reconsider the unique tax arrangement it had made with Westinghouse following the Philco deal in '53. Apparently, the court had empowered the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company to repay all advances it made towards spot advertising through a special fifty-five month depreciation schedule. That schedule consisted of two independent, two-year renewals.<sup>66</sup> Under this agreement, the federal court required WBC to repay the more than \$1 million it saved by the end of FY-1955. That repayment would be added onto the federal income tax the company already owed to Uncle Sam.<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately, Westinghouse officials never fulfilled their obligation.

After due consideration, the U.S. Tax Court in September 1961 reversed its earlier ruling which meant that Westinghouse must pay back taxes owed. WBC's legal counsel promptly appealed it.<sup>68</sup> Its appeal emphasized the fact that the value of the Philco station at the time of purchase was \$5 million and that figure included all depreciation costs. Understandably, WBC's legal team furnished that crucial piece of information in the hope that the court would reverse its stance in May '62. In *Westinghouse Broadcasting Company v. Commission of Internal Revenue*, the court made it quite clear that the plaintiff's arguments were not convincing and that Westinghouse did indeed owe the back taxes.<sup>69</sup> Part of the backlash from that ruling led U.S. Senator Gale McGee (1915-1992) to request the FCC to reconsider the implications of automatically granting television licenses to very large corporations such as General Electric and Westinghouse Electric.<sup>70</sup> The senator saw potential conflicts of interest especially for the subsidiaries held responsible for operating those outlets. However, further probes into that matter turned up nothing.

Late September 1961 saw a further shakeup of the KYW lineup. Reb Foster and Joe Mayer (1926-1997) replaced Frank "Swingin'" Sweeney.<sup>71</sup> Thomas (Harve) Morgan (1927-2003) also joined the exciting team.<sup>72</sup> Harve Morgan had previously been the News and Program Director at WHM-Charlestown, WVA and at WMNI-Columbus. He had also briefly hosted a morning show on WCAO-TV in Baltimore. He was hired by KYW officials to host an overhaul of "Program PM." That autumn saw further changes when the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company purchased the rights to a series of special radio shows on some of Hollywood's greatest movie stars.<sup>73</sup> Behind the scenes, this very forward thinking enterprise was rapidly transforming itself from a local middle-of-the-road music station into a regional Top 40 rock and roll music contender. The brand new

65. George E. Condon, "Good Music to Get Trial Spin on WERE," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 28, 1961.

66. "Tax Court Disallows Affiliation Writeoff," *Broadcasting*, September 4, 1961.

67. Ibid.

68. "WBC to Appeal," *Broadcasting*, October 2, 1961.

69. *Westinghouse Broadcasting Company v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue*, 36 TC 912, (1961). "Westinghouse Loses Round in Tax Fight," November 5, 1962.

70. "McGee Poses Questions on GE, WBC Licensing," *Broadcasting*, September 25, 1961. "Those WBC-GE Renewals," *Broadcasting*, November 13, 1961.

71. "KYW-1100 KC," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 5, 1961.

72. "Schedule of Saturday Radio Programs," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 30, 1961.

73. "First Oral History Series Covers Movies," *Broadcasting*, October 16, 1961.

Rod Roddy Show represented a major departure from earlier milder shows that mostly played different kinds of popular records highlighted by occasional banter and plenty of ads. Rod Roddy (1937-2003) broke away from the humdrum with a healthy dose of corny jokes and all sorts of bells, shouts and whistles.<sup>74</sup> Roddy's zany antics, both on and off the air, definitely woke up his fan-base to the undeniable fact that major program changes were rapidly occurring at KY-11.

Community-minded KYW-Radio proudly hosted a special performance of the "The Miracle Worker" geared for blind and deaf persons.<sup>75</sup> On the business front, radio experts repeatedly emphasized that the current switch from nationally-based to locally-oriented programming did not exclusive belong to WBC. Other broadcasters like McLendon, Plough, Storer and Storz had also experimented with it. However, those competing radio broadcasters had to admit that the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company's recent success was like no other. Relevant programming on all levels seemed to separate WBC broadcasting from its rivals.<sup>76</sup> Independents, such as WBC, swept aside the earlier held notion expounded by many radio leaders that nationally-based programs whether comedies, dramas or soap operas would be more than adequate when it came to fulfilling the growing needs of their many listeners. Literally overnight, WBC's shrewd business managers and programmers had reinvented locally-based radio stations with KY-11 playing a foremost role in its development stage and implementation cycle. Regularly achieving high ratings in a highly competitive market showed all doubters that this kind of independent programming did indeed work over the long haul.

The station scored another ratings victory after co-sponsoring Higbee's One Day Only Christmas Open House in 1961.<sup>77</sup> Its many lively musical performances enhanced by KYW radio and television personalities and helpful household demonstrations appealed to nearly everyone. KYW's radio personalities such as Dexter Card, Reb Foster, Tom Griffiths, Specs Howard and Rod Roddy added their own flair to this very festive event. On another note, the American Federation of Television & Radio Artists (AFTRA) union announced that it would accept WBC's latest wage offer.<sup>78</sup> It specified that 5% of employee wages be deposited into a newly created AFTRA pension fund. On the broadcasting side, Al James, one of the station's newest stars, took over both the early evening and late night weekend slots.<sup>79</sup> He remained a fixture of Cleveland radio into the 1970s.

In another federal related matter, WBC that December turned over to the FCC legal documents proving that this broadcasting arm of Westinghouse Electric was truly independent of its parent company.<sup>80</sup> That formal separation occurred in 1953. As part of a continual effort to provide the very finest in both news and commentary, KYW-Cleveland expanded its daily Noon newscast beginning in January 1962. Jack Bennett broadcasted from the studios while his partner Hugh Danaceau (1929-2003) read the news from the nearby Citizen's Federal Bank Building on East 6th Street.<sup>81</sup> Two months later, the feds renewed the station's license for an additional three years.<sup>82</sup> Also, Harve Morgan wrote a fascinating book on President Lincoln later that same year. Thousands

74. "The Roddy Thing," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 14, 1961.

75. "KYW's Deaf and Blind Guests," *Broadcasting*, October 24, 1961.

76. "Radio Highlights: 1957-61," *U.S. Radio*, October-November 1961.

77. "Higbee's One Day Only Christmas Open House," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 12, 1961.

78. "KYW and AFTRA OK Pension Plan," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 20, 1961.

79. "Schedule of Saturday Radio Programs," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 9, 1961.

80. "Charges Refuted by Westinghouse," *Broadcasting*, December 18, 1961.

81. "See and Hear KYW Radio Noon News," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 22, 1962.

82. Russell W. Kane, "Challenge to Ponder Changing U.S. Scene," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 1, 1962.

of phoned-in questions he received during his Lincoln-a-Thon program that February led him to write it.<sup>83</sup> In a candid Cleveland Plain Dealer interview with KYW's chief publicist Mike Ruppe Jr., he admitted that his clever advertising campaigns had played a key role in that outlet's recent power climb to the top of the local ratings.<sup>84</sup> Building up its image by telling its many listeners about upcoming station events and hiring exciting new radio personalities was exactly what winning promotion departments did regularly. Ruppe concluded by saying that KYW's many catchy jingles definitely separated this enterprise from its rivals. He reiterated that "a happy listener is a loyal listener."

That same March, an NBC Accountant Robert D. Johnson became KYW's latest business manager. He replaced Irv Ruby who assumed similar responsibilities at Westinghouse's West Coast radio affiliate KEX.<sup>85</sup> KYW thanked everyone for the positive feedback it had been receiving regarding its latest brochure entitled "If You Are Arrested."<sup>86</sup> Without a doubt, this popular broadcaster had gained a well-earned reputation for helping those in need. The lucky winner of the "Why I'd like to be Dex Card's Boss for a Day" contest had him clean her house top to bottom.<sup>87</sup> WBC's rosy financial picture in early '62 convinced its corporate heads to move ahead with plans to purchase one of New York City's most prestigious AM outlets. The addition of 1010-WINS to its growing list of well-respected stations brought the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company's total number of stations to nine.<sup>88</sup> The May 14th edition of *Broadcasting, The Business Weekly of Television & Radio* explored the extraordinary renaissance of U.S. commercial radio over the past ten years.<sup>89</sup> Many experts agreed that, in all probability, the future of commercial radio in the U.S. would be closely connected to the willingness of local broadcasters to relate more directly to the ever changing needs and wants of their loyal listeners.

Automation in broadcasting was making tremendous strides in radio over the past several years.<sup>90</sup> In fact, more and more programmers were relying on it when developing their playlists and new advertising strategies. The number of stations changing hands skyrocketed in the early '60s as the abundance of advertising dollars and the gradual lifting of severe federal restrictions freed up the buying and selling of AM outlets. The unrelenting competition among leading radio broadcasters was responsible for much of it. Buying numerous stations at a drop of a hat demonstrated two important things about contemporary buyers. First, it confirmed that the buyer had the extra capital needed to embark on such ventures and second that it expected its efforts to do very well financially. If that was not true then why expose yourself to such a risky thing? Whether that symbolized an accurate portrayal of an outlet's financial picture, in the early 1960s, was of little consequence in that most big city radio stations appeared to be building up enormous profits with only minimum debt. As nearly everyone involved in radio broadcasting knew then allowing an outlet to stand still while a parade of your closest rivals marched by triumphantly was no longer a viable business option. The prevailing attitude was that you've got to fight for what you want right now or all may be lost very quickly!

Experts in broadcasting repeatedly reminded everyone that much of radio's fantastic resurgence during the late

83. Russell W. Kane, "Poor British! Lag in Commercials," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 11, 1962.

84. Russell W. Kane, "Dream Men Zero In on Swingin' Air Fans," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 18, 1962.

85. "Business Spotlight," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 21, 1962.

86. "Drumbeats," *Broadcasting*, April 16, 1962.

87. Russell W. Kane, "No, Jonathan Winters Didn't Flip His Top," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 3, 1962.

88. "Westinghouse Buying WINS," *Broadcasting*, May 7, 1962.

89. "Radio Feels Confident in its Future," *Broadcasting*, May 14, 1962.

90. *Ibid.*

1950s and early 1960s reflected the unbelievable increase in the number of inexpensive transistor radios available in the market.<sup>91</sup> That was enhanced even further by many programmers who relied on the many very desirable broadcasts available through emergent independent entertainment companies to help fill their days. Those sources specialized in providing surplus shows to money-strapped broadcasters that had some difficulty filling up their airtime. Critics strongly recommended that all radio outlets regardless of their influenced and size should follow three basic rules. First, they should limit the number of commercials they broadcast per hour. Second, they should insist that their advertisements follow the script. Third, they should demand flexible programming at all times.

Shrewd executives at KY-11 closely followed those guidelines. However, they also knew that when all was said and done high ratings and increasing revenues were really all that mattered. As we saw earlier, that precarious balance had to be maintained even when it limited program creativity. That was especially true when big city stations unexpectedly introduced pie in the sky programs without first examining the possible pitfalls that might occur from such actions. That proved especially dangerous for smaller outlets. Any misstep by those operating on a shoestring might prompt disaster. But, don't think for a moment that large city radio broadcasters were immune from it they weren't. That's where shrewd business managers often came into the picture. Many leaders in the radio-industry depended on versatile promotion departments and outspoken public relations specialists to handle just such emergencies when they occurred. KYW's Public Relations Director Charles L. Getz Jr. (1924-2008) was just that kind of seasoned executive they relied on. Part of his responsibilities included handling any unexpected programming glitches that might suddenly pop up out of nowhere.

Those scenarios repeatedly played out throughout the '50s and '60s. High revenues often encouraged wildcat program speculation sometimes with awful results. At one time or another nearly every radio programmer working at a major outlet believed that his or her suggestion for a new show would be an instant hit with listeners. Positive thinking like that might have been more welcomed by radio managers if those same program planners had successfully ironed out any of the problems inherently a part of introducing most new shows. However, few followed that logical line of reasoning. That promulgated program speculation throughout the crazy 1950s and 1960s. Potential pitfalls resulting from such maverick actions covered the gamut. They ranged from previously unimagined high production costs, particularly during the initial phases of production, to whether or not the local audience would accept this new radical programming concept. Certainly, surprising breakthroughs in broadcasting such as "Program PM" and the Mike Douglas Show encouraged many others in the field to experiment with a wide range of similarly inspired programs. The fact that those programs were immediate successes did not mean that analogous endeavors would be as profitable.

Regrettably, impractical programs and promotions rarely fared well in the open market especially in cities such as Cleveland. Let's not forget the recent Big K promotional disaster. That was why most station managers including those at KYW increasingly turned to recognized experts in the field such as Getz to come up with new programming ideas that would excite audiences without straining the station's budget. They knew full well that any miscalculation on their part might produce a negative ripple effect that might reduce profits in the years ahead. Prior to approving any new show, Charles Getz's had WBC's shrewd accountants analyze its prospects. The corporate higher-ups determined whether those new programs would fly or not with local audiences based on earlier, similar offerings broadcasted by KYW-Radio. Modifying existing shows, based on the changing needs

91. Ibid.

and wants of its fan base, represented an easy way to ensure continued success. Unfortunately, hastily conceived shows by eager programmers wanting to make a name for themselves might have serious financial repercussions further down the road.

As we saw earlier, the frequent hiring and firing of radio personalities might be viewed by some critics as very impulsive behavior displayed by tight fisted business managers or program executives leveled against defenseless employees. In reality, such decisions were considered as necessary stop gap measures all a part of running a successful radio station. Program cutbacks and frequent changes echoed the many budgetary constraints facing most broadcasting companies during those anxious times. They were often triggered by economic and social forces that were slowly unwinding within the existing market. Very powerful businesses and equally determined federal regulators encouraged much of it. Sadly, the listening public had little empathy in that regard. Whether the actions taken by KYW leaders to counter those limits were appropriate or not is probably not the right question to ask here. Given the growing rivalry among local AM stations and the accelerating costs involved in running those operations, a more appropriate question might be whether those station managers really had any other choices? In all likelihood the answer is no. Therefore, when radio broadcasters suddenly suspended shows or fired high paid celebrities, without apparent cause, most fans wrongly presumed that the station's own selfish interests governed their actions. In reality, outlets like KYW had little choice if they wanted to sustain high profits year after year. You have only to follow the careers of two local radio personalities Mark Allen and Jim Runyon to see how that played out in real time. Both joined the KYW-Radio team in the spring of 1962.<sup>92</sup> Allen symbolized the typical freelancer of his day who was looking for his first real break in broadcasting. Unfortunately, that was not in the cards for him at least not at KYW-Cleveland and here's why.

A good announcer with great possibilities, Allen apparently did not overly impress his management team who quickly dismissed him. Fear not, he soon reappeared as the first nighttime DJ on Cleveland's new rock and roll sensation WIXY-1260. Allen later relocated to WCFL-1000 AM in Chicago where he was known as Bob Dearborn. He remained active in radio broadcasting into the Millennium. On the other hand, Jim Runyon climbed the ranks at KYW-Radio very rapidly. A Korean veteran, he first hosted a radio show on WLW-Cincinnati followed by stints at WLWD-Dayton and WTVN-Columbus. He remained in Cleveland for three years before moving to WCFL. Four years later, he returned to Cleveland as WKYC's new morning man. He may or may not have been as talented as his colleague Mark Allen, but he sure had better luck at least at KYW-Radio. After receiving his pink slip in April '62, Dexter Card appeared on WERE-Radio; however, not before engaging in a legal fight with his old bosses.<sup>93</sup> In fact, Westinghouse had threatened him with a court injunction if he started to broadcast on WERE right away. His contract at Westinghouse expressly prohibited him from broadcasting on any other station within a fifty-mile radius of Cleveland for twelve months. The rapid firing of several other KYW jocks resulted in Joe Mayer assuming both the late afternoon and early evening slots. Later called "Emperor Joe," Mayer remained a Cleveland favorite for over two decades.

As Cleveland Plain Dealerchannel checker Russ Kane so carefully pointed out that June the non-stop merry go round of radio personalities continued at KY-11 with Al James expanding his duties after the firing of Reb

92. "Schedule of Saturday Radio Programs," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 19, 1962.

93. Russell W. Kane, "Ruark Safari Nothing of Value," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 29, 1962.

Foster.<sup>94</sup> In mid-1962, Cleveland ranked seventh nationally when it came to the percentage of families listening to FM radio.<sup>95</sup> That breakthrough in listeners enabled KYW-FM to retain a sizeable lead over its closest rival. After all, it featured the very best in classical music and cultural features. Pulse Incorporated, a very trusted name in the ratings game, helped substantiate that claim by announcing that 36% of all Cleveland families listened to FM radio. That signified a major jump over the previous year's percentage of listeners. KYW's Chief Publicist Charles Getz resigned that same month to join an ambitious Cleveland-based public relations firm headed by Norman Wain (1928-2020).<sup>96</sup> Getz later partnered with Bud Wendell before establishing his own firm at the end of the decade.

The pairing of Harry Martin (1928-2009) with Specs Howard in July '62 to create the all-new KYW morning team was pure genius.<sup>97</sup> It changed the nature of Cleveland broadcasting forever even though some successful radio duos already existed. Klavan and Finch on WNEW–New York and Baxter and Riley on WERE–Cleveland immediately come to mind. But what made this pair so different from their competitors was that KYW matched a straight man Specs Howard with the outrageous Harry Martin. Many critics, at the time, wondered if such vastly different personalities could work together successfully in this conservative blue collar town. However, KYW's programmers were willing to take the chance.

A madcap jock from KCBQ–San Diego, Harry Martin shook up his local listening audience whenever and wherever possible. Meanwhile, Specs Howard handled everything else. You'll never guess what happened. Clevelanders loved this radio duo from the very start. The whole Martin and Howard radio stick began when Harry Martin, dressed in full Indian garb, jumped onto Cleveland Municipal Field during an Indians home game and began dancing around.<sup>98</sup> Much to the dismay of KYW's creative promotional department, WERE, the radio home of the Indians, paid little attention these antics. However, that did not stop Martin and Howard from shaking hands and signing autographs much to the delight of the many Indians fans. Martin's pranks may have seemed out of character in "good old" Cleveland; however, that did not slow him down not for a single minute. If anything, it encouraged him to do even crazier things in the years ahead. KYW promoters that July hosted a special night cruise as a way of introducing this new morning team to the public. Over eleven hundred fans paid \$2.75 a piece for this special trip. Cruise goers participated in amateur performances, a sing-a-long, a puppet show and, of course, various prize winning contests.<sup>99</sup> It proved very successful and within weeks Martin & Howard's morning ratings shot right through the ceiling. They dominated the Cleveland morning radio scene for the next several years.

In a far more serious vein, the FCC in July '62 held a special hearing on broadcasting monopolies and their impact on present day network practices.<sup>100</sup> The U.S. Attorney General and representatives from NBC and WBC testified in front of this committee regarding the proposed RKO-NBC exchange. The National Broadcasting Company had made it quite clear that it wanted to receive two WRCV renewal licenses one for 1957 and another for

94. Russell W. Kane, "Condon Blacked Out for Jury Research," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 6, 1962.

95. "FM's Zing Shown in Market Study," *Broadcasting*, June 11, 1962.

96. Russell W. Kane, "Policemen Object to Portrayal on TV," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 18, 1962.

97. Russell W. Kane, "Yuk, Yuk, Yuk Team Takes Over Early Show," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 1, 1962.

98. Ibid.

99. "Get-acquainted Cruise," *Broadcasting*, July 2, 1962.

100. "FCC Sets NBC-RKO Hearing," *Broadcasting*, July 23, 1962.

1960.<sup>101</sup> As you might remember, the U.S. Court of Appeals in Philadelphia had overruled a similar request made by RCA-NBC previously. Increasing accusations by both government and business leaders over potentially serious violations of federal antitrust laws committed by that same network continued to pester NBC's very sharp legal counsel. Topping that list of complaints was again the unwarranted threat made by NBC that it would have pulled its affiliation from certain Westinghouse owned television stations if that trade had not proceeded along as planned. Some critics went so far as to claim that NBC's actions constituted outright blackmail. Of course, NBC denied all charges leveled against it by its opponents by saying that its officials had scrupulously followed accepted procedures. A new radio personality Jim Stagg (1935-2007) made his 2 p.m. debut on KYW-Radio in August '62.<sup>102</sup> Prior to his arrival in Cleveland, he had worked at WYDE-Birmingham, AL; KYA-San Francisco and WOKY-Milwaukee. Stagg remained an important part of Cleveland radio until a shrewd new manager named Ken Draper recruited him for WCFL three years later. WCFL soon featured a very hip lineup. Not only did it include the likes of Jim Stagg and Ron Britain; but also, Jerry G, Larry Lujack, Barney Pip, Joel Sebastian and Dick Williamson. They quickly became major forces in Top 40 radio.

The September 17th issue of *Broadcasting, The Business Weekly of Television & Radio* focused on what was radio's secret to its current success. A new study conducted by CBS of its affiliates came up with the seven common denominators most responsible for radio's incredible accomplishment.<sup>103</sup> First, successful stations display their new found confidence by following a reasonable business agenda intended to promote their long-term success. Second, profitable outlets encourage their many employees to be actively involved in community affairs. Third, well-respected radio enterprises establish a dependable local news operation that complements their national affiliates. Fourth, they hire strong radio personalities for all shows but most especially their morning gigs. Fifth, successful broadcasters emphasize music diversity. Sixth, leading broadcasting entities feature extensive local sports coverage. Seventh, they actively promote their efforts by seeking out advertisers who think the way they do. That same CBS poll strongly hinted that Top 40 radio was rapidly losing its luster in the radio market.<sup>104</sup> Of course, that was not true at all. In fact, Top 40 stations were popping up in more and more places nationwide each and every day.

The drawn out legal battle being waged between Philco and NBC over the right to control WRCV's license was far from over.<sup>105</sup> In late October, the FCC under the watchful eye of its Chief Examiner James D. Cunningham (1900-1976) attempted to settle this rather awkward issue through a special hearing.<sup>106</sup> This licensing case in some ways bore a resemblance to the 1956 swap especially when it came to the National Broadcasting Company threatening to pull its affiliation from select television outlets if their parent companies did not comply with the many stipulations contained in their unique agreements. It is interesting to note at this time that the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company, for a brief interlude in '54, seriously considered exchanging its highly sought after Philly station for an equivalent CBS outlet.<sup>107</sup> Had that ensued, then this whole legal mess between NBC and WBC would never have happened.

101. Ibid.

102. "Schedule of Saturday Radio Programs," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 11, 1962.

103. "What's Radio's Success Secret?" *Broadcasting*, September 17, 1962.

104. Ibid.

105. "Showdown in NBC, Philco Dispute Arrives," *Broadcasting*, October 22, 1962.

106. "A Muscling Job in Philadelphia," *Broadcasting*, October 29, 1962.

107. Ibid.

In the autumn of 1962, KYW negotiators met with representatives from the American Federation of Radio and Television Artist (AFRTA). They wanted to not only resolve the present chaos resulting from the sudden firing of Kenneth A. Bichl; but also, hammer out a new contract.<sup>108</sup> The unexpected firing of Ken Bichl who had served as the AFTRA union president and chief steward led to a massive station walkout that had lasted for weeks. The final agreed-upon contract gave station announcers making \$156 a week a \$10 weekly raise for year one with an additional \$10 the following year. Also, in one fell swoop they updated out-of-date termination rules while increasing the amount of compensation for performance time.<sup>109</sup> Traditional talent fees paid for spot announcements were increased from \$5 to \$7.50. Meanwhile, Bichl's case went to a special arbitration board for its consideration.

A new corporate-wide strategy first introduced that November changed the name "Program PM" into "Contact."<sup>110</sup> Not surprisingly, the feds unanimously denied RKO's most recent petition that had asked for a temporary exchange of stations with the National Broadcasting Company.<sup>111</sup> Had the U.S. 3rd District Court in Philadelphia upheld the '59 DOJ consent decree and refused to extend NBC's December '62 deadline then that network would have had to forfeit its Philly license at an estimated loss of \$20 million. Of course, the FCC did not hesitate to grant NBC its deadline extension while rejecting Philco's latest petition calling for it to operate WRCV-TV for the time being. However, that denial in itself did not stop Philco from seeking a building permit to erect a new WRCV television antenna. Both the U.S. Justice Department and the Philco Corporation continued to oppose NBC receiving any kind of a deadline extension.<sup>112</sup> NBC said that it would never have agreed to sign the consent decree in the first place had it suspected then that it might lose its rights to its Philly station.<sup>113</sup> The network further argued that its board members had not violated any antitrust laws and that it should be allowed to exchange any station it wanted to anyone at any time. Over the past five years, NBC's nearly \$5 million investment in WRCV-Philadelphia had yielded it very impressive returns.<sup>114</sup>

Nineteen sixty-two ended with NBC repeatedly denying allegations that it had coerced WBC into accepting the trade in '56. NBC's chief negotiator Charles R. Denny (1912-2000) who had previously served as the FCC Chairman as well as NBC's VP and General Counsel further claimed that the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company had always been treated fairly.<sup>115</sup> He also reminded everyone that the Westinghouse Electric Company was nearly twice the size of the National Broadcasting Company.<sup>116</sup> RCA-NBC's negotiators had considered the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company trade as part of the much larger "Denny Plan." That strategy had mandated extensive improvements for company-owned facilities nationwide once the commissioners had granted RCA-NBC control of WBC's station holdings in Boston, Detroit, Philadelphia and San Francisco. In exchange, the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company would have received NBC's very profitable radio and television outlets in Cleveland and Washington, D.C. However, problems soon popped up regarding the WRC-Washington, D.C.

108. "Strike Looming at KYW Radio," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 29, 1962.

109. "Strike is Ended at KYW; Bichl Firing to Arbitration," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 19, 1962. "KYW-AM-TV Strike Ends After Two Days," *Broadcasting*, November 26, 1962.

110. "Plain Dealer Radio Programs," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 18, 1962.

111. "FCC Vetoes Temporary NBC-RKO Swap," *Broadcasting*, November 12, 1962.

112. *Ibid.*

113. *Ibid.*

114. "Denny Denies Threats to Westinghouse," *Broadcasting*, December 24, 1962.

115. *Ibid.*

116. *Ibid.*



part of the deal. According to Denny, Westinghouse's disinclination to handle the red tape equated with owning and operating a major outlet in the District quickly narrowed the playing field down to only the Cleveland outlet.<sup>117</sup> During the winter of 1954 negotiations between the two networks suddenly came to a screeching halt when WBC redirected the bulk of its daily attention towards purchasing the Pittsburgh television station owned and operated by the Dumont Network. That delay lasted for months.<sup>118</sup>

117. Ibid.

118. Ibid.

## Chapter 6: The Crucial Years

Nineteen Sixty–Three and Sixty–Four proved to be very challenging years for the U.S. radio-industry in general and NBC and WBC in particular. At long last, the U.S. Supreme Court under the direction of Chief Justice Earl Warren (1891-1974) had finalized the legal procedures that commercial broadcasters must follow whenever trading stations. However, the fate of the '56 exchange and the more recent RKO petition still hung in the balance. On the first week of January 1963, Philco and NBC announced that a tentative compromise had been reached between those two parties.<sup>1</sup> Had the FCC's accepted the RKO-General proposal, at that moment, it would have led to an instant Philadelphia-Boston station swap. While everyone anxiously awaited the fed's decision, the feds denied Philco's most recent request pertaining to WRCV-TV's license renewal. Now a part of the Ford Motor Company, Philco's new set of lawyers redirected their current efforts.

That new approach called for Philco to drop its legal objection to NBC getting its license renewal with the full understanding that the network would pay Philco \$9 million in damages.<sup>2</sup> That \$9 million figure would have amply covered any of Philco's incurred radio equipment patent fees. In exchange, its sharp legal team guaranteed that the National Broadcasting Company would receive all of Philco's earlier, very profitable color television patents. However, Philco representatives wanted to retain the legal right to hold on to all future color television patents at the customary license rates. It also sought all non-exclusive, RCA-licensed radio devices yet to be filed under domestic patents or patent application laws. In response, NBC demanded the right to avail itself of any future domestic color television patents that might be issued to the Philco Corporation. That agreement if approved by the federal courts would have nullified its earlier \$150 million damage claim against the network as well as voided NBC's \$174 million countersuit.<sup>3</sup>

RKO hoped that its carefully worded arguments presented in front of the U.S. Court of Appeals would be sufficient enough to reverse that court's recent decision that had required NBC–WBC to flip their Cleveland and Philadelphia stations once again.<sup>4</sup> If that reverse decision held it would prove to be a costly endeavor that neither NBC nor WBC wanted to participate in at that moment. At the same time, RKO lawyers demanded a further Federal Communications Commission inquiry directed specifically towards finding any other legal improprieties that might have taken place during the '56 exchange. On another issue closer to home, the Cleveland newspaper strike entered its 68th day on February 6, 1963 with no end to it in sight. A number of local radio and television

1. "RCA-Philco Multi-Million-Dollar Suits Settled," *Broadcasting, Business Weekly of Television & Radio*, January 7, 1963.

2. "9 Million Kiss Between RCA and Philco Settled; Patent Dispute and Ch.3 Philadelphia Hassle," *Broadcasting*, January 7, 1963.

3. Ibid.

4. "That NBC-WBC Deal," *Broadcasting*, January 28, 1963.

outlets, including KYW, held a major debate and Q& A session on that issue. KYW's Editorial Manager Bart Clausen split the production costs among participating locally-based outlets.<sup>5</sup>

Regarding Philco's recent decision to drop its pending law suit against NBC, federal officials made it absolutely clear to all the parties involved that they had no intention of recusing themselves from that case or any other related legal matters. The unwillingness of the federal government to stand down seriously jeopardized the National Broadcasting Company's chances of achieving a workable arrangement with RKO-General at least not at that particular juncture.<sup>6</sup> It also stopped NBC from readily disposing of its Philly station. RCA-NBC officials firmly believed that their proposed swap with RKO met all the stringent federal requirements as set down by the '59 DOJ consent decree. However, the FCC begged to differ on their pretense. It insisted that the Philco Corporation make a final decision as to whether it was going to pursue this Philly issue any further or simply end it here and now.<sup>7</sup> Also, the commissioners reminded Philco's legal team that WRCV-TV was fully operational and that the public wouldn't be served if its legal counsel continued to pursue what many experts in the field viewed at that time as a worthless case.

The Federal Communications Commission's Broadcasting Bureau also expressed some serious reservations regarding Philco's upcoming case and its legal defense. In the eyes of the bureau, it appeared to be a last ditched effort presented by a very desperate Philadelphia company that was hoping to salvage what was left of its remaining business reputation. Again, the feds made it abundantly clear that it couldn't approve any pointed agreement, like that, if it didn't serve the public's needs.<sup>8</sup> The National Broadcasting Company had hoped for a quick response from the FCC provided that the Philco Company didn't figure out somehow to gum up the works. However, if in desperation, Philco should decide at the 11th hour to pull out of this \$9 million damage package that would destroy any chances NBC might have of recovering anything from the original proposal. It was a slippery slope that NBC might have to climb very soon. Undoubtedly, any further antitrust actions instigated by the Philco Corporation against RCA-NBC would have to be placed on the back burner by the feds as they redirected their attention towards what they considered to be more pressing legal issues.

NBC had already determined that any long-term delay on its license request would be considered a bone crushing defeat for this major network. In an unexpected move that greatly displeased NBC's legal counsel, Philco officials announced that they would continue to oppose the RCA-NBC renewal application.<sup>9</sup> Many experts in the field seriously doubted the wisdom of Philco's attorneys choosing to pursue such a narrowly-focused legal course of action. But, that did not faze Philco's sharp legal team who moved ahead with their plans even though they knew full well that their chances of winning that case were slim to none. By this point, it didn't matter much to Philco whether the National Broadcasting Company had or had not intentionally violated numerous antitrust laws over the past decade starting with the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company trade eight years earlier. It was out for revenge.

During the prolonged Cleveland newspaper strike many of local newspaper columnists, reporters, technicians

5. "Cleveland Radio-TV Pool for Strike Debate," *Broadcasting*, February 11, 1963.

6. "FCC Insists on Making a Decision," *Broadcasting*, March 18, 1963.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. "Philco Keeps its Hat in the Ring," *Broadcasting*, March 25, 1963.

and writers worked temporarily at KYW-Cleveland.<sup>10</sup> As a public service, the station increased its daily news coverage from just over three to six hours. Apparently, that was the right strategy to follow then as first quarter KYW revenues for '63 reached a new all-time high level.<sup>11</sup> Appreciating its expanded news coverage led the public to clamor for even more. The first years of the 1960s also foreshadowed fantastic breakthroughs in the way in which advertisers and their broadcasting partners sold their heralded merchandise over the local airwaves. Very simple messaging increasingly replaced the more in-depth analysis of the recent past as the advertising world gradually changed its mind as to what exactly constituted effective new promotional strategies and techniques. In larger and larger droves, advertising firms throughout the U.S. began to emphasize cooler” sounds and simpler presentations. That new approach towards advertising fitted right into KYW-Radio’s wheelhouse. Its shrewd promoters were always seeking effective new ways in which to expand their corporate brand and image by utilizing bright and effective new advertising methods.

Depending on greater detailed customer surveys became increasingly important whenever updating a corporate image. Powerful surveys encapsulated much broader-based business and social issues that were affecting radio broadcasting companies throughout the country. The majority of those well-executed customer surveys not only dealt with the particular likes and dislikes of their locally-based listening audience; but also, provided a boatload of useful hints and suggestions intended to significantly improve current program options. Such was the case when marketers for the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company tabulated their own surveys in late '62. They discovered that the public wanted Westinghouse Broadcasting to modernize its old fashion corporate image. They saw it as a way for WBC to identify more directly with their many listeners. Westinghouse officials took that idea to heart and in May 1963 they dramatically changed their rather outdated logo. Don McGannon saw that change as part of a much larger overhaul that would lead to some new programs directed towards younger people.<sup>12</sup>

Westinghouse programmers were not alone in revising their corporate image. Both NBC and CBS had done the same thing at the beginning of the 1960s. The public loved Westinghouse’s new “Group W” logo. It was cool! Not only did it embody a modern image: but also, epitomized the many new economic and social forces that were sweeping across the radio industry at that very time. Group W publicists made it quite clear that their network was not some enormous, uncaring broadcasting company; but rather, six independent radio and five television outlets that had banded together to provide the best possible news and programming to its many loyal followers. A well-known industrial design team called Lippincott and Margulies oversaw it.<sup>13</sup> Those smartly operated local radio outlets knew exactly what needed to be done to spruce up their corporate image and they were more than willing to do just that to maintain their lead over their competitors.<sup>14</sup> Exploring new vistas enabled WBC’s many clever radio personalities to make the most out of their limited budgets while still outperforming their closest rivals. You might wonder whether that business approach would hold up over time. Well, the proof was in the pudding as Westinghouse radio repeatedly achieved high local ratings nationwide well into the following decade. As they said then “No one beats Westinghouse and that’s a fact.” Their cool DJs, relevant programming and desirable promotions became the new standard of broadcasting excellence that was soon emulated by many others from coast to coast.

10. Bert J. Reesing, “Radio and TV News Coverage is Lauded,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 8, 1963.

11. “Cleveland Radio-TV Back to Normal,” *Broadcasting*, April 15, 1963.

12. “Westinghouse Broadcasting Unveils Communicative Name,” *Broadcasting*, May 20, 1963.

13. *Ibid.*

14. “Group W, A New Name in Broadcasting? Almost,” *Broadcasting*, May 27, 1963.

The summer of '63 saw the return of Tom Griffiths to late nights at KYW while Carl Reese (1931-2014) assumed the early evening duties.<sup>15</sup> Also, KYW's Music Director Jim Leckrone (1936-2012) was promoted to producer of "Contact." Like so many other local radio leaders of the day, Leckrone ascribed to the tightly-held professional standards first established by Bud Wendell and others in the rebel rousing days of the late '50s. Over the years, KYW-Radio had received its fair share of prestigious awards for its many outstanding community-based programs. But, nothing seemed to equal the American Bar Association's "Silver Gavel Award."<sup>16</sup> The previous November, KY-11 had broadcasted a series of interviews that led to a better overall understanding of how the law affects the average person. This special award thanked KYW for conducting such thought provoking presentations. An ad in the July 23rd *Broadcasting, The Business Weekly of Television & Radio* proclaimed that the new Group "W" now had their own European news bureau headed by Rod MacLeish.<sup>17</sup> That overseas connection provided them with daily news feeds as well as weekly summaries on important world events.

On August 7th, the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company named Don McGannon to replace E.V. Huggins as its board chairman.<sup>18</sup> That autumn, federal officials moved closer towards reaching a decision regarding the WRCV license renewal case.<sup>19</sup> The FCC's Broadcast Bureau strongly recommended that Chief Examiner James D. Cunningham deny NBC's latest request.<sup>20</sup> It argued that the network had secured its Philly outlet by bullying WBC into accepting it.<sup>21</sup> Earlier that summer, KYW proudly announced the hiring of Jerry G. His fun loving nature was greatly appreciated at KY-11 as that station evolved from a local middle-of-the-road music and information station to a regional Top 40 block buster outlet.<sup>22</sup> Jerry (Ghan) (Bishop) (1936-2013) not only had the privilege of touring with the Beatles during both their triumphant U.S. tours; but also, had recorded his-own popular 45 single called "She's Gone." He replaced Carl Reese who would later gain local recognition as a top notch broadcaster on WJW and WCLV-AM.

Jerry G's arrival in Cleveland was not some random act initiated by desperate program coordinators needing to cover airtime hardly. He came to that city at a time when KYW-AM was rapidly developing into a Top 40 sensation. The many heated arguments among its many programmers over the past decade regarding the long-term value of middle-of-the-road music vs. rock and roll were finally put to rest. All of them had to admit that Top 40 broadcasting was here to stay and that KY-11 needed to assume a leading role in it ASAP. As you might have already guessed, the big question facing KYW program personnel in 1964 was whether that outlet should gradually ease itself into Top 40 by embracing the more moderate "contemporary sound" first or plunge right into rock and roll without looking back. It took the soaring numbers of teen listeners in the late '50s and early '60s, before the scales finally tilted in favor of Top 40 programming over the more mellow sounds of "contemporary music."

Highly vocal local advertisers that had progressively favored fast-paced Top 40 formats over more "contemporary

15. Bert J. Reesing, "Hitchcock Grammar Are Odd," *Broadcasting*, June 12, 1963.

16. Alvin Beam, "From Chairborne to Airborne," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 16, 1963.

17. "Group W Means a Direct News Line from the World to Boston, New York, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago," *Broadcasting*, July 23, 1963. "WBC to Document Peace Corps," *Broadcasting*, June 11, 1962

18. "Westinghouse Names Officers," *The New York Times*, August 8, 1963.

19. "Broadcast Bureau Charges Coercion by NBC," *Broadcasting*, September 30, 1963.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. "Radio Programs," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 27, 1963.

sounds,” also played a decisive role in the outcome. The majority of those buying spot advertising on KY-11 fully believed that Top 40 stations, with very rare exception, gave them the biggest return. As you might remember, KYW-Cleveland had attempted to please its growing teenage audience in the late 1950s by playing more rock and roll music primarily through targeted programs such as the “Hi-Fi Club.” However, as everyone now knew “the times, they were a changin.” Its many program advocates also fully recognized that most Top 40 outlets made tons of money when compared to most of their rival “contemporary music” stations. If anyone had any doubts on that score they had only to review the extraordinary success of leading regional AM outlets such as WABC in New York or WLS in Chicago. By the 1970s, WABC reported a daily listening audience of over 8 million. Hard to beat that figure. Mid-sized broadcasters, such as KYW, fully understood that they must follow a similar programming format if they planned to stay on top. But, it was more than just that realization alone that sealed the deal for leaders such as 1100 AM. Growing competitive by Cleveland rivals such as WHK and WJW made that switch imperative.

Realizing that major changes were about to occur prompted the Board of Directors at the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company to approve the transfer one of its brightest programmers from KEX–Portland, OR to KYW in Cleveland, OH. Within a few months, Ken Draper had successfully converted this middle-of-the-road Westinghouse broadcaster into one of this nation’s fastest growing Top 40 stations. Now called KY–11, its fast-talking, fun-loving radio personalities were some of America’s finest. They included Jerry G, Specs Howard, Harry Martin, Jim Runyon and Jim Stagg. The addition of a host of acclaimed newscasters along with continual high ratings was the icing on the cake. You might wonder how that programming change affected local advertisers. It revolutionized everything as more and more ad men joined the growing KYW bandwagon. Skyrocketing earnings meant that this Group “W” powerhouse was rapidly becoming a prominent force within the growing Top 40 radio market. Everything was cool as more and more people listened to the fabulous new and exciting sounds resonating out of the KY-11 studios.

On October 20th, station officials received a special award from the Ohio State Nurses’ Association for its many outstanding shows promoting better health.<sup>23</sup> Influential leaders from a variety of fields such as broadcasting, education, entertainment and government participated in the 5th annual conference held in Cleveland starting on November 11, 1963.<sup>24</sup> Featuring comedians Steve Allen (1921-2000) and Dick Gregory (1932-2017) along with Michael H. Dann (1921-2016), the VP of CBS Programs, this influential gathering included a wide range of well-known experts including Robert Lewis Shayon (1912-2008), the Television Editor of *Saturday Review* and Dr. Henry Lee Smith Jr. (1913-1972), a Professor of Linguistics at SUNY-Buffalo. Guest speakers included the U.S. Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel, U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk and FCC Chairman E. William Henry.<sup>25</sup> Those sessions dealt with such important things as the great economic opportunities awaiting those were about to enter either advertising or broadcasting.

That same autumn, the feds released the latest *U.S. Census* figures. Philadelphia was the fourth largest market with 4.3 million people while Cleveland ranked eleventh at 1.9 million.<sup>26</sup> Nineteen sixty-three ended with *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* interviewing James P. Storer (1927-2012). The GM at Cleveland’s WJW, Storer made

23. Bert J. Reesing, “Networks, Stations Must Limit Output,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 21, 1963.

24. “Westinghouse Plans Public Service Parley,” *Broadcasting*, October 28, 1963.

25. “Westinghouse Conference Draws 300 to Cleveland,” *Broadcasting*, November 11, 1963.

26. “New Market Area Rankings,” *Broadcasting*, October 28, 1963.

some startling predictions about the future of radio broadcasting in the U.S.<sup>27</sup> He envisioned the day when music and not talk shows would rule the local radio airways. Storer also hoped that his company owned and operated station in Cleveland would continue to maintain a prominent place in local broadcasting. However, he had to admit that WJW-Radio was no match against the likes of local radio giants such as KY-11.<sup>28</sup>

The commercial radio industry in 1963 recorded a remarkable 78% increase in earnings since 1961. Also, billing had grown by 13% while the percentage of houses with one or more radios had reached a new, all-time high of 94%. Similarly, weekly radio listening time had nearly top 100 minutes while somewhere around 14 million to 15 million homes regularly tuned into FM broadcasts. Ken Draper introduced two major changes to the KYW daily radio lineup starting in January, 1964. The first one involved Al James who briefly took over the Midnight time slot following the resignation of Thomas Griffiths.<sup>29</sup> The second change concerned a well-respected linguist and nationally-recognized television celebrity named Bergen B. Evans. He now hosted a new Wednesday night show on KYW-Radio called “Words in the News.” It immediately followed “Contact.”<sup>30</sup>

One writer at *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, James B. Flanagan, wrote an in-depth piece on January 18th devoted to KYW-Radio’s highly successful morning team of Martin & Howard. He had to admit that it took him a while before he fully appreciated their off-the-wall humor.<sup>31</sup> But, he also had to confess that once you got used to it they were hilarious. Debuting in July ‘62, this dynamic duo had to fill the large void created when the city’s favorite Big Wilson left Cleveland. They did it admirably with memorable offbeat characters such as a songwriter named Clark Freeway; a drunk known as Barney Gulch and two prissy nieces appropriately called Bertha and Millicent Bandelaise Brown. Both jocks had engaged in some acting in college with Harry Martin singing briefly with the Robert Shaw chorale. With zany antics and a host of corny jokes ready to go at any minute, Martin & Howard rapidly became local broadcasting legends. Their combined talents made KY-11 the prime leader in the local Top 40 market by the mid-‘60s.<sup>32</sup>

February 1964 saw the arrival of another popular DJ that was destined for stardom. A Miami entertainer and brother of the popular Hollywood actor Larry Storch, Jay Lawrence found himself drawn to the city of Cleveland by the phenomenal success of KYW-Radio.<sup>33</sup> Everyone in commercial radio was talking about that AM station, and why not. Lawrence quickly became an influential force in Cleveland radio until 1968 when he left for Los Angeles. He later did broadcast stints on both WNEW-New York and KTAR-Phoenix. More recently, he served as an Arizona State Congressman. Without a doubt, his successful broadcasting career in Cleveland began when he took over the 12 Midnight slot. Lawrence’s colleague Jim Stagg also made quite a name for himself that same winter when he hiked all the way from Akron to Cleveland for the March of Dimes.<sup>34</sup> When station officials praised him for this daring effort, he simply shrugged it off saying that it was a part of his job.

27. James B. Flanagan, “WJW’s Jim Storer Never Cries Over Blinding Tear Gas Stroke,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 28, 1963.

28. Ibid.

29. James B. Flanagan, “Sportscaster McKay Spends Days Off Watching Sports,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 15, 1964.

30. Ibid.

31. James B. Flanagan, “Martin-Howard Rouse Drowsy with Corny Humor, Zippy Music,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 18, 1964.

32. Ibid.

33. “Schedule of Saturday Radio Programs,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 8, 1964.

34. James B. Flanagan, “Disc Jockey’s Life Not Easy, Says Stuntman Jim Stagg,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 29, 1964.

KYW's high ratings in March 1964 demonstrated Ken Draper's program mastery at its finest. He was doing all the right things repeatedly.<sup>35</sup> The station's new and exciting rock and roll format did not represent some half-baked idea that would explode in their face at any moment. Everything affecting daily programming was carefully orchestrated by Ken Draper and his innovated crew. At the same time, his seemingly off-handed approach towards it all left the rest of Cleveland's radio managers frantically searching around for their own new format. Nothing seemed outside their capabilities and yet everything seemed just beyond their immediate grasp. However, the internal programming struggles and turmoil facing so many of KYW's local competitors in early '64 rarely reached the public. In fact, radio leaders appeared not to care in the least as to what KY-11 was doing. Nowhere was that more evident than in a special interview conducted by Alvin Bean of *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* with Jack G. Thayer (1922-1996) the GM and VP at WHK. Thayer expressed every confidence that his successful outlet could easily ride out the present ratings storm.<sup>36</sup> He was equally sure that the Cleveland market would not have any trouble supporting several high quality "contemporary music" AM stations. Thayer firmly believed that the time was right for such massive programming changes and that KYW's recent antics both on and off the air might produce the exact opposite effect it wanted with its many Cleveland listeners. Instead of guaranteeing fan loyalty, its recent actions might encourage some of them to make the switch to the all-new adult sounds of WHK at 1420 on your AM dial. A thoroughly competent and highly respected leader, Thayer later became President of the National Broadcasting Company.

If you think for one moment that Ken Draper gloated over his recent success you'd be dead wrong. If anything, he often tended to downplay his many program triumphs. However, that did not prevent him from taking great pride in the fact that a highly respected, unnamed rating service had purposely gone out of its way to congratulate him on his outstanding program achievements.<sup>37</sup> When all was said and done, KYW and WHK jointly controlled about 50% of Cleveland's early '64 radio market. What gave WHK a slight edge in the local ratings occurred later that same year when 1420-AM was named the "official Cleveland station" for the Beatles.

Guess what, the legal bickering occurring in Philadelphia over the NBC license renewal continued right into the spring of '64 with no apparent end in sight. However, the prolonged legal battle between Philco and NBC appeared to have turned a corner that March.<sup>38</sup> In its closing arguments, Philco made it incredibly clear that the public's interest would not be served if the FCC granted the National Broadcasting Company its license renewal. The rapidly approaching June 30th deadline requiring that this prime network rid itself of its Philly station only added further fuel to this already raging legal fire. Chief Examiner Cunningham's earlier recommendations that had called for the FCC to approve both the NBC license renewal and RKO exchange only muddled those legal waters more.<sup>39</sup> Who would have ever imagined that the commission's Broadcasting Bureau would ever humble itself enough to support Philco's claims over those articulated by RCA-NBC? But, that's exactly what happened that spring. The Bureau argued that the National Broadcasting Company had a long history of coercing other broadcasting companies into accepting their questionable offers. The mounting pressure placed on Westinghouse's legal counsel by RCA-NBC in the mid-1950s to accept the station swap showed the extent to which that network

35. Alvin Bean, "WHK's Rock 'n' Roll Sound Runs into Challenge by KYW," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 7, 1964.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. "NBC-Philco Reargued for Channel 3," *Broadcasting*, March 30, 1964.

39. Ibid.



was willing to go to achieve its highly ambitious business goals and objectives. The bureau said that NBC must be punished for its unfair actions.<sup>40</sup>

NBC's counsel responded to Philco's direct assault by challenging the legal motives responsible for Philco's recent unprecedented actions. The network's legal team further claimed that Philco's original legal objection to NBC receiving its license renewal symbolized a feeble attempt by that Philadelphia-based corporation to justify its pending \$150 million patent suit against RCA-NBC.<sup>41</sup> As you might have already figured out, NBC's signing of the DOJ consent decree took much of the wind out of Philco's legal sails by provided NBC lawyers some sorely needed time in which to build up an airtight defense. Philco now had to face the fact that it would have to come up very quickly with a new legal justification for introducing its latest suit intended to gain WRCV-TV. Its hastily conceived suit represented its latest attempt to right this alleged wrong.

The irony in all of this was not lost to NBC's very sharp defense team. After all, its network leaders knew full-well that the Philco Corporation had not hesitated in the least eleven years earlier when it sold that same Philadelphia station to Westinghouse for a high price. In spite of all the recent hype to the contrary, Philco, in the early 1950s, had not come up with any worthwhile new business strategy intended to ensure the long-term loyalty of its growing listening audience in Philadelphia. Instead, it took the first train out of town when a legitimate buyer showed up. Philco countered those arguments by reminded the feds that NBC, and not Philco, had used coercive tactics to force the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company into agreeing to the '56 exchange. Considered by many legal experts as a compelling argument, the federal government still remained unmoved by the logical case presented by Philco's legal staff. Federal officials claimed that Philco's arguments weren't nearly sufficient based on the seriousness of those charges.

In what many critics considered to be a very bold move, Group W President McGannon strongly suggested that more broadcasters become involved in the civil rights movement and in fighting poverty.<sup>42</sup> A recent recipient of the National Association of Broadcasters' Distinguished Service Award, Don McGannon further contended that the radio-industry had an obligation to its listeners to expose arrogant business leaders and dishonest politicians. He concluded that fighting corruption everywhere year after year only helped to make this country stronger. That May, two clever North Olmsted High School students formed the Hugh Danaceau Fan Club.<sup>43</sup> A popular KYW newscaster in the early 1960s, Danaceau's broadcasting career spanned six decades. KY-11's Jim Runyon (1931-1973) warned club members that if he ran a record hop he would probably play Edward R. Murrow's "Hear It Now" recordings. That same month, KYW-Radio won the local ratings war again beating its chief rival WHK.<sup>44</sup> Not too bad for the newest kid on the block.

That messy RKO-General petition ran into another roadblock in mid-June. The possibility that WRCV might be compelled to stop broadcasting if NBC failed to comply with the DOJ deadline only worsened when its legal team discovered that the new FCC ruling prohibiting different television facilities from overlapping might apply to its client. This new ruling specified a "minimum separation for all classes of stations."<sup>45</sup> Regrettably, the

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. "McGannon Calls for Leadership," *Broadcasting*, April 13, 1964.

43. Bert J. Reesing, "WJW Will Pick Up Another Big Band," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 1, 1964.

44. Ibid.

45. "Philadelphia Dilemma," *Broadcasting*, June 15, 1964.

broadcasting radius of WOR-TV New York and WRCV-TV Philadelphia intersected. The only legal way out was to ask the FCC to exempt its recent application by invoking a carefully devised grandfather clause.<sup>46</sup> However, that seemed highly unlikely given the current hubbub over that possible trade.

As noted earlier, “The Cleveland Long Song” also called “The Best Location Song” debuted on June 18, 1964.<sup>47</sup> Promoters asked random shoppers to listen to it. Nearly everyone loved this tune. Throughout that summer, Martin & Howard continually played the week’s top ten hits as part of the “KYW Sound-11 Survey.” During the week of June 19th, the top spot belonged to Billy J. Kramer’s “Little Children” with Stan Getz & Astrud Gilberto’s “Girl from Ipanema” holding the number ten slot. Bobby Freeman’s “C’mon & Swim” was the KYW “Pick of the Week.”<sup>48</sup> As expected, WBC went all out for the ‘64 Presidential Conventions. Team coverage included thirty reporters headed by its highly respected National News Director Jim Snyder (1925-2001). The Editor-in-Chief of the *Christian Science Monitor* Erwin Canham (1904-1982) along with author and arts critic Gore Vidal (1925-2012), Pulitzer Prize winning playwright Marc Connelly (1890-1980) and noted historian Allan Nevins (1890-1971) provided expert commentary.<sup>49</sup> The summertime blues finally hit two Willoughby students who broke the spell by conducting their own KYW listening marathon. Both said that their forty-two hour marathon was rewarding.<sup>50</sup>

Nationally, the U.S. 3rd District Court in Philadelphia granted NBC its second 90 day station extension.<sup>51</sup> That July, the FCC said that its new overlapping rule would not apply to applications submitted before June 9th which included the RKO-General request.<sup>52</sup> Later that same month, promoters advertised a Ruggles Beach extravaganza that featured Jerry G and two very popular singing groups the Majestics and the Secrets.<sup>53</sup> The top three Cleveland outlets reported a \$773,000 revenue increase over the previous year with spot advertising improving by an impressive \$1.03 million.<sup>54</sup> The long awaited federal decision concerning the Westinghouse trade was rendered on July 30th. The commission by a five to nothing vote ordered NBC and WBC to reverse their Cleveland and Philly stations. That meant they must return to their original home bases. This latest action by the feds overturned that federal regulatory agency’s decision rendered eight years earlier. The National Broadcasting Company immediately complied with the order.<sup>55</sup> Reoccurring occasions of RCA-NBC employing strong-armed tactics against smaller broadcasting companies such as Westinghouse led to that decision. At the same time, the commission also flatly denied the RKO-General petition. It claimed that such an exchange would have given an overwhelming business advantage to those two networks. More importantly, if that petition had stood it would have afforded NBC unlimited opportunities within the growing Boston market. In terms of the mandated reversal, the FCC totally ignored the \$3 million paid by the National Broadcasting Company to the Westinghouse

46. Ibid.

47. “Shoppers to Hear Best Location Song,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 18, 1964.

48. “Martin & Howard’s Pick Hit,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 20, 1964.

49. “WBC Sets Intensive Election-Year Coverage,” *Broadcasting*, June 22, 1964.

50. Bert J. Reesing, “Two Willoughby Youths Stage Summer Listening Marathon,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 23, 1964.

51. “NBC Gets Extension on Philadelphia Case,” *Broadcasting*, June 29, 1964.

52. “FCC Clarifies Overlap Rules,” *Broadcasting*, July 13, 1964.

53. “The Note Ruggles Beach,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 17, 1964.

54. “Individual Market Revenue for 1963 Compared with 1962,” *Broadcasting*, July 27, 1964.

55. “NBC Accepts Trade with Westinghouse,” *The New York Times*, September 29, 1964.

Broadcasting Company in order to seal the deal.<sup>56</sup> With the intention of completing this latest station reversal ASAP; the feds awarded RCA-NBC a two-month provisional extension of its current WRCV license.<sup>57</sup>

Throughout this grueling legal process, the Federal Communications Commission did not hold any meetings with other local broadcasters interested in procuring NBC's television rights in Cleveland. Apparently, that federal regulatory agency firmly believed that the public's interest would be best served by returning those stations, as is, to their original cities. At long last, the feds had resolved that legal mess and they were not about to ignite it up again.<sup>58</sup> The lopsided nature of the '56 swap became even more apparent when further investigations revealed that NBC's owned and operated WRCV had generated far higher profits annually than Westinghouse's KYW.<sup>59</sup> FCC commissioners further discovered that the unwanted business pressures leashed against the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company had only served to increase NBC's earlier business lead over its less than enthusiastic business partner. That revelation was not so surprising in itself although the clear difference in the two stations' asset values did strike a note with leaders in the commercial radio business. According to an August 3, 1964 article in *Broadcasting, the Business Weekly of Television & Radio* independent brokers had determined that the asset value of WRCV stood at around \$35 million while KYW was much less at \$20 million.<sup>60</sup> That appreciable difference meant a great deal to Group W board members. NBC's legal defense tried unsuccessfully to block the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company from receiving added punitive damages resulting from this unfair trade.

Meanwhile in Cleveland, Harve Morgan's nightly talk show faced two nagging problems.<sup>61</sup> First, some topics popped up repeatedly. Second, his use of phone calls to stimulate nightly discussion just didn't seem to work anymore. Some critics claimed that Harve Morgan was very capable of conducting intelligent conversations without relying on outside callers for direct assistance. On August 11th, KYW's Jim Stagg and its News Director Art Schreiber started covering the upcoming Beatles tour that included among other things a September 15th stop in Cleveland.<sup>62</sup> To celebrate this latest round of "Beatlemania," Jim Stagg gave away tickets to a Beatles concert that was scheduled for September 14th in Pittsburgh. Also, Jerry G visited the Opening Day Celebrations of "Miss Revlon of Higbee's" on the 17th.<sup>63</sup> Three days later a vicious rumor began circulating around that the National Broadcasting Company was planning to trash KYW's Top 40 format.<sup>64</sup> As everyone in the radio-industry already knew NBC owned and operated stations didn't play rock and roll music. In all probability, this emerging outlet would concentrate on network news and softer music while forgoing traditional talk shows.

Eliminating daily talk shows from the Cleveland lineup seemed a bit out of character for NBC. In fact, two years earlier New York's WNBC-Radio 66 had lured away popular talk show host Long John Nebel (1911-1978) from 710 AM-WOR for a whopping annual salary of \$100,000.<sup>65</sup> He remained a staple at WNBC's broadcasting house

56. Eileen Shanahan, "FCC Bids NBC Return Station," *The New York Times*, July 30, 1964.

57. Ibid.

58. "Philadelphia Circle is Complete," *Broadcasting*, August 3, 1964.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. Alvin Beam, "Harve Morgan's Fate Talk Show Limpes When Phone Rules," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 9, 1964.

62. Bert J. Reesing, "Local Teen-Agers Set to Back Beatles' Second U.S. Invasion," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 12, 1964.

63. "Miss Revlon of Higbee's," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 16, 1964.

64. Alvin Beam, "A Big Break for the Rock Gang," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 20, 1964.

65. Donald Bain, *Long John Nebel Radio Talk Master Salesman, Magnificent Charlatan*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1975).

until 1973. Why wouldn't a similar scenario develop in Cleveland? That was a crucial question needing to be addressed quickly by the National Broadcasting Company. Perhaps the experts were all wrong. A revamped AM program lineup that all but eliminated local talk shows might be just the thing that Cleveland's more sophisticated listening audience might need. After all, anyone listening to rock and roll on KYW could easily turn to that city's other Top 40 station WHK. So, what was the big deal? As everyone knew, only time would tell. On a happier note, the California sound hit Euclid Beach Park when the "Beach Boys" came to town that August.<sup>66</sup> Intended to be a promotion piece, A Cleveland Love Song sold more than two thousand copies in a month. Part of its proceeds went towards beautifying the Cleveland Mall downtown.<sup>67</sup>

In a last ditched effort to save its petition, RKO-General's legal counsel appealed to the Federal Communications Commission to reconsider its most recent action. Its attorneys claimed that RKO had racked up \$2 million in debt over the past two years to get its petition approved by the FCC and that the network could not begin to recoup its losses without it.<sup>68</sup> RKO's legal defense further contended that the recent decision leveled against the National Broadcasting Company was a total and utter sham. The August 30th "KYW Radio Days" was highly successful.<sup>69</sup> Led by Jerry G; Specs Howard and Jim Runyon, this joyous event ended with a rousing sing-along. On the flip side of the dial, KYW-FM and WCLV-FM were battling it out to become Cleveland's number one classical music station.<sup>70</sup> In the case of 105.7 FM, its twelve hour broadcasting day continually spotlighted great classical music. It didn't matter which classical album was currently being played, it was always an exhilarating adventure in good music.

On September 2, 1964, NBC, Philco and RKO submitted their respective appeals with the federal court. NBC took the lead by asked the feds to reconsider its recent denial of the RKO-General petition.<sup>71</sup> A feature article published in the September 7th *Broadcasting; the Business Weekly of Television & Radio* closely examined the federal decision that led to this most recent NBC-WBC reversal.<sup>72</sup> It also focused on why those federal commissioners rejected both Philco's request for WRCV-TV and RKO-General's petition. Although it never deliberately challenged the legal merits of either one of those federal decisions, Philco's legal counsel contended that it was grossly unfair that the National Broadcasting Company with only a modest interest in nurturing its Philadelphia market should be awarded a temporary license in that city. Waiving its overlap restrictions to assist NBC and RKO seemed a bit odd given the fact that the feds from the very beginning had opposed their petition.<sup>73</sup> What were the federal officials thinking and why did they so willingly acquiesce to the demands made by those two major broadcasting companies? Without a doubt, Philadelphia's WRCV-TV's broadcasting signal overlapped both New York's WOR-TV and Baltimore's WJZ-TV. Yet, the commissioners seemed to just shrug it off. It took Philco's acceptance of \$550,000 from NBC allegedly to cover its many application costs and additional fees that led the FCC to overwhelmingly vote against renewing NBC's Philadelphia license.

Kids returning to school that autumn enjoyed the all-new sounds of KY-11. It began on September 12th when

66. "Beach Boys on KYW," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 21, 1964.

67. Bert J. Reesing, "Promotional Song is Top 10 Hit," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 25, 1964.

68. "RKO Stays in Fight for Ch. 3," *Broadcasting*, August 31, 1964.

69. "Yesterday was KYW Radio Day," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 31, 1964.

70. Alvin Beam, "Curb on Simulcasts a Break for FM Listeners in Area," *The Plain Dealer*, September 3, 1964.

71. "Broadcasters Appeal Swap Order of FCC," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 3, 1964.

72. "NBC, Philco Attack Philadelphia Decision," *Broadcasting*, September 7, 1964.

73. *Ibid.*

it played Beatles recordings and aired previously recorded interviews with the “Fab Four.”<sup>74</sup> Narrated by Jim Stagg and Art Schreiber much of this show concentrated on the Beatles first U.S. tour. Over 11,000 teens knocked on their neighbors’ doors the next day as part of “The Aiding Leukemia Stricken American Children” drive. Done in cooperation with St. Jude Hospital, the money they collected went towards fighting that most dreaded disease.<sup>75</sup> The earlier legal controversy over the Federal Communications Commission’s denial of the NBC-RKO petition continued into the autumn months with Philco claiming that RKO still had no legal right to claim financial damages or injury based on recent losses.<sup>76</sup> The commissioners fought back by saying that repeated public outcries against it extending other RCA-NBC television licenses might compel the agency to reject other future requests submitted by RKO-General.

At the same time, Philco boldly pointed out that those same federal officials had undoubtedly overstepped their legal bounds when they ordered the most recent Philadelphia–Cleveland swap. Its counsel said that such actions directly violated all federal rules pertaining to radio and television license renewals.<sup>77</sup> The noticeable silence on the part of Westinghouse’s legal counsel throughout the summer seemed somewhat odd. Why weren’t its attorneys responding? Finally in September, 1964, WBC broke its long-held silence by saying that it 100% supported the decision.<sup>78</sup> In the end, the FCC’s, through its highly vocal Broadcast Bureau, made it quite clear that any future renewal requests brought forward by the National Broadcasting Company must first go through a rigorous federal evaluation process. Also, RCA-NBC did not have any legal right to transfer its WRCV-Philly license to another broadcaster or to claim that the July 30th decision that had ordered the re-swapping of the Cleveland-Philly stations had in some way violated Philco’s or RKO-General’s rights to a fair hearing.<sup>79</sup> In reality, the FCC decision originated from a legal case that resulted from an antitrust federal court order that had forced the National Broadcasting Company to dispose of both WRCV radio and television. NBC officials had attempted to circumvent that specific court order by exchanging its Philly outlets for the RKO stations located in Boston. That might have occurred without any legal hitches had the Philco Corporation not submitted its own application for WRCV–Philadelphia. The submission of the Philco application mandated a special federal hearing which delved into a number of relevant issues including NBC’s many responsibilities as a premier license holder.<sup>80</sup>

On a far more uplifting note, KYW-radio that October sponsored an overflow concert at the Cleveland Arena that featured the British rock sensation “the Animals.”<sup>81</sup> From a purely business perspective, the bulk of early ‘60s advertisers and program coordinators truly believed that Top 40 radio was the best deal in town.<sup>82</sup> Its limited playlist with plenty of time in-between for attention gripping commercials was the dream of every advertiser. In fact, its many catchy radio jingles and very convincing advertising pitches played critical roles in increasing sales volume. Although vaguely familiar to older, more traditional programming formats, its fast paced cadence outshone them all. KYW’s highly practical daily promotions successfully brought together that station’s very talented salesmanship with the many pleasurable aspects of rock and roll to produce an extraordinary

74. “Beatles Preview KYW Has Weekend Teen-Age Sound,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 10, 1964.

75. Ibid.

76. “RKO Plea to FCC Opposed by Philco,” *Broadcasting*, September 14, 1964.

77. Ibid.

78. “Broadcast Bureau and WBC Agree,” *Broadcasting*, September 21, 1964.

79. “RKO, Philco Turned Down,” *Broadcasting*, October 5, 1964.

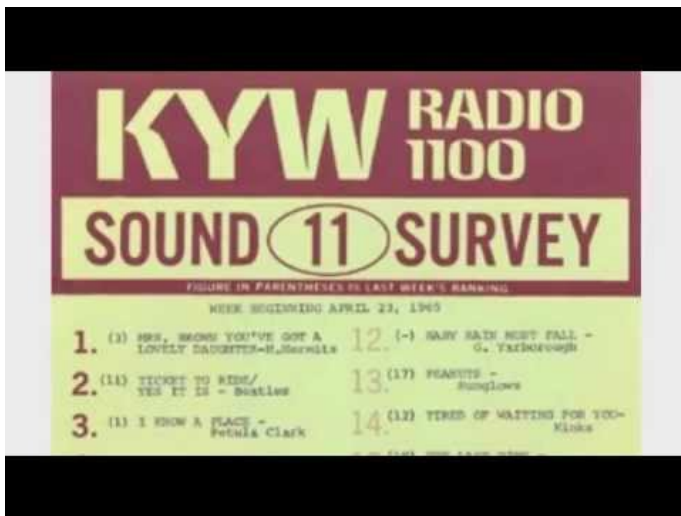
80. “RKO Claims Foul in Philly TV Case,” *Broadcasting*, March 1, 1965.

81. Mary Hirschfield, “Republican Perk Gets \$100 Bite from LBJ,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 25, 1964.

82. “Program Formats? Here’s How They Average Up,” *Broadcasting*, September 28, 1964.

new sound. In the case of its popular jingles, they not only spotlighted the fun loving jocks responsible for creating KY-11's many energetic programs; but also, served to introduce that station's numerous features such as newscasts, shows, weather forecasts, traffic conditions and sports reports.

Carefree melodies with simple messages, those jingles were updated on a regular basis. Some of the more memorable ones of the early '60s included "My Baby Listens to KYW, Yea, Yea, Yea,"; "KYW Has a Happy Sound," "Make Your Radio Feel Good Again, KYW Radio" or "Take KYW Any Time, Any Day." The station's DJs, known collectively as the "KYW VIPs in '64," also received extensive recognition. Examples included "Here's the Double-Martin & Howard," "Mr. Runyon, Someone is Calling You," "The Lovable Swinging Cat Jerry G & Company," and "The J' Bird Flies Tonight." Also, who can forget those striking sound bites such as "Jerry G Swinging at Record Hops," "Jay Lawrence Music & Comedy Bits," "Jim Runyon Spinning the Latest Pops" and "Jim Staggs Nightline for You."<sup>83</sup>



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/kyw-radio-cleveland/?p=31>

A September 28th press release announced that the National Broadcasting Company and the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company had reached an agreement and that they would adhere to the latest federal mandate requiring them to switch stations.<sup>84</sup> Both Philco and RKO maintained their right to appeal that Federal Communications Commission decision. However, if they decided to exercise that option it well resulted in a federal restraining order. The feds also rejected RKO-General's most recent proposal for a temporary station exchange with NBC by claiming that it violated the U.S. Department of Justice consent decree. This decision requiring the station switch further stated that NBC must pay WBC an additional \$150,000 to cover any needed improvements to its present downtown Cleveland studios.<sup>85</sup> Also, both parties had to reach an agreement

83. "KYW Jingles," <https://youtube.com/watch?v=pfCTD53udkY>.

84. "NBC, WBC Start Rewinding," *Broadcasting*, October 5, 1964.

85. *Ibid.*

regarding any additional expenses owed NBC by Group “W” television for showing its films.<sup>86</sup> The FCC also agreed to review any further appeals presented by Philco or RKO in a timely fashion.

That unprecedented ruling left the National Broadcasting Company for the first time without a Philadelphia television affiliate. Certainly, WBC had no intention of affiliating with that network.<sup>87</sup> As everyone knew, Westinghouse had showed no qualms whatsoever when it came to cutting its ties with NBC radio several years ago. That decisive action by Westinghouse’s Board of Directors enabled this smaller network to become a driving force in today’s independent broadcasting. As NBC officials weighed their future options in Cleveland, the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company forwarded its KYW call letters to their new Philadelphia home. To no one’s surprise, NBC’s latest Cleveland station still did not have official call letters.

<sup>88</sup> In terms of spot advertising revenue for 1963, Philadelphia ranked fourth nationally at a very impressive \$7.4 million while Cleveland was listed eighth at \$4.3 million.<sup>89</sup> Total broadcasting expenses for the National Broadcasting Company in 1963-64 had increased substantially from \$1.6 million to \$6.7 million. In what many thought to be a very expected move, Philco’s legal counsel announced that it would no longer pursue the WRCV license.<sup>90</sup>

In November 1964, the FCC announced that the station swap was moving along on schedule. With the exception of the Mike Douglas Show that had already moved its operations to Philadelphia, KYW programming continued on as usual from its downtown Cleveland studios.<sup>91</sup> Everything went along smoothly until later that month when the feds discovered that the National Broadcasting Company and the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company had been secretly working on another major station swap. This time the NBC leadership wanted to exchange one of its prime television stations for Westinghouse’s WBZ. At the same time as that was going on, the FCC demanded NBC and WBC to file a separate federal appeal that would have prevented RKO-General from interfering with the upcoming Cleveland-Philadelphia trade. In a surprising move, the feds granted the National Broadcasting Company a temporary television license for WRCV. However, network officials fully understood that once that transfer was completed it would have to surrender it to the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company. To assure a smooth transition, NBC placed a full page advertisement in the December 14th *Broadcasting, The Business Weekly of Television & Radio*. It said that the National Broadcasting Company fully intended to play popular music without excessive interruptions until the day of the official transfer. Referred to as “cluster music,” the National Broadcasting Company took great pride in still being able to offer its many WRCV listeners the best in music without the distractions equated with rock and roll music.<sup>92</sup>

No end of the year was complete without KYW’s annual review of major events. Narrated by Bob Hagen (1935-2004), it dealt with many things ranging from the Beatles concert in Cleveland to the NFL Champions Cleveland Browns and everything in between.<sup>93</sup> Who knew what lay ahead for the radio industry, but one thing

86. Ibid.

87. Ibid.

88. Ibid.

89. “Top 50 National Spot Radio Markets, 1963 FCC Reports,” *Broadcasting*, October 12, 1964.

90. “Philco Drops Off of Ch. 3 Merry-Go-Round,” *Broadcasting*, October 19, 1964.

91. Alvin Beam, “Last Roadblock is Withdrawn to Orderly Swap-Back of KYW,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 5, 1964.

92. “WRCV’s Emphasis Music,” *Broadcasting*, December, 14, 1964.

93. “KYW Reviews Year’s News,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 30, 1964.

was certain it had been an extraordinary year for NBC and WBC. In terms of Cleveland radio itself, a new day in local broadcasting was about to dawn with the departure of KYW and the arrival of a brand new NBC powerhouse and the public was very excited about it.



## Chapter 7: KYW-Cleveland Signs Off

Change is rarely easy and especially when it touches your daily life. The bottom line was that KYW's many fans did not want their favorite radio station to leave Cleveland. The KY "Sound 11 Survey" along with its familiar voices had been important part of their lives for nearly a decade. Its many listeners woke up with it on their clock radios, listen to it all-day and then fell asleep with it at night. Unfortunately, its days were numbered. That was too bad. It provided Cleveland with the very best in music, news, talk and sports. KYW-AM used its 50,000 watts advantage to its fullest extent by giving its listening audience what it wanted the purest enjoyment. To its credit, it rarely missed a beat.

Its staff throughout the spring of '65 continued to do its very best even though the handwriting was on the wall. With a well-earned reputation for program excellence, its many shrewd programmers fulfilled their daily tasks with both grace and style. Few knew what NBC might have in store. However, they sensed that nothing would be exactly the same once the National Broadcasting Company took over. Yet, industry-wide profits continued to soar that year topping \$636 million. Powerhouse AM outlets, like KYW, enjoyed exceptionally high revenues in those days. In the case of KY-11, its growing wealth was closely connected to its uncanny knack of selling tremendous amounts of spot advertising day in and day out. It took a team of highly dedicated individuals ranging from KYW DJs, managers, and programmers to clerks, receptionists and the cleaning staff to achieve that impressive goal.

As you might have already construed, business caginess and financial success were one and the same at KY-11. Sometimes the way in which a broadcaster selling team presented itself to potential advertisers ultimately tipped the scales one way or another. In most cases, the flashier the show and the higher the station's profits the better the chances of that outlet hooking a big fish. For example, in January 1965 Cleveland's radio market ascribed to the Radio Response Ratings Service (RR). It ranked KYW as the number two "overall" station slightly behind the present leader WHK. The key word here was "overall." That meant that certain KYW shows blew away their competitors while others not so much.<sup>1</sup> However, KYW's well-trained promoters were nobody's fool. They used their station's number two rating to their fullest advantage by repeatedly mentioning the many positive aspects of their highly successful programs while barely mentioning their lower rated offerings.

The positive publicity they generated month after month regardless of the ratings proved sufficient enough for eager advertisers who were interested in selling as many items and services as they could as quickly as possible

1. "Radio Response Rating, Cleveland, Ohio, Second Cycle," *Billboard, The International Music-Record Newsweekly*, January 2, 1965.

through this popular station. Most of their advertisers rarely read between the lines. KYW's sales approach went far beyond the clever maneuvering of aggressive business agents and cunning promoters. The responsibility for prompting high sales volume repeatedly rested in the skillful hands of fast-talking jocks, music librarians and program coordinators. Working collectively, they brought to life the many clever ads that were broadcasted daily on KYW-Radio. That highly polished, well-seasoned business strategy was aimed at sustaining a loyal listening audience that dutifully purchased the many products they advertised. KY-11's managers could depend on their fans tuning in as long as their station was fun. Local ratings may go up and down, and the public might be fickle at times, but one thing held true. Advertisers knew full well who their customers were and they catered to them directly through local radio outlets that welcomed them into their studios.

Ratings were similar in many ways to report cards in that program developers frequently measured a show's success or failure based on that station's present standing. Low ratings compelled many programmers to routinely cancel or change shows. Those that relied on their hunches generally won out in the ratings war. In fact, KYW-Radio had its program evaluation process down to a fine science. Here's how it worked on the news and information side. While KYW-Radio continually reminded its listeners of its highly reliable newscasts led by ace reporters such as Tom Carson, Ken Courtwright, Paul Sciria, its programmers periodically stirred things up by injecting thought-provoking news related spots.<sup>2</sup> One of those thirty to ninety second responses called "Cleveland Wants to Know" gained a great following. Q&A columns found in both the Cleveland newspapers served as its basis. "Cleveland Wants to Know" responded to important questions asked by their very attentive listeners. Experts in many fields lent their expertise.<sup>3</sup>

You had to have creative people both on and off the air if you wanted to remain number one in the Cleveland radio market. Harry Martin was exactly what KYW-Radio needed to bolster its morning ratings in the early '60s. His daily comedy bit called "Congo Curt" featured a well-intended, but highly inept jungle explorer. His misadventures appealed to almost everyone. Being able to make people laugh at a drop of a hat was no easy task. Each segment of "Congo Curt" required a great deal of production time upfront. Yet, he did it successfully over and over again. WBC had made a major commitment to Clevelanders to provide them with the finest in entertainment, news and talk, and Harry Martin's off-beat comedy was a crucial part of fulfilling it. However, that pledge by the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company extended far beyond Martin's daily pranks. Keep in mind that the mid-1960s symbolized a time of social upheaval when major issues, such as civil rights, were heating up. Surprisingly, some powerhouse AM radio stations such as KYW successfully bridged that growing racial gap by periodically presenting one-of-a-kind programs that crossed that color line. One example of that growing commitment came through loud and clear in February 1965. Following the untimely death of one of America's smoothest African American male vocalists Nat King Cole (1919-1965), that outlet paid tribute to that icon by broadcasting a special show at 9:30 p.m. on February 17th. Jim Runyon narrated it. That same night it also broadcasted a program on the Second World War.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout this period, its extraordinary staff received its fair share of attention from local media circles. For example, one of its foremost newscasters Ken Courtwright signed yet another lucrative contract in 1964 while

2. "Carson Overcomes Airwave Obstacles," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 14, 1965.

3. "KYW Launches Info Show," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, January 17, 1965.

4. Bert J. Reesing, "Perkins Attains Goal: Foreign Correspondent," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 17, 1965. "Radio Programs -KYW-1100 KC." February 2, 1965.

Jerry G joined Jay Lawrence in a number of well publicized appearances including Halle Brother's "Go-Go-Go Fashion Show" sponsored by *Seventeen* magazine on March 13th.<sup>5</sup> Downtown was still number one in retailing and large department stores continued to spend lots of money on all kinds of special advertising that included among other things fashion shows. Besides, adding favorite local radio personalities to those shows provided some glamour. Like so many other successful retailers of that same decade, Halle Brothers gladly welcomed large crowds of shoppers. On the flip side, station officials enjoyed the tons of positive publicity and increased revenue they derived from sponsoring those personal appearances. Although many competitors appreciated the full-court press being employed by KYW to promote its many spectacular events, other factors such as escalating overhead costs and smaller listening audiences limited their ability to compete in that way.

In spite of all the fanfare, radio newscasts still ranked second in the minds of most listeners. They still relied primarily on the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, the *Cleveland Press* and the *Akron Beacon Journal* for the bulk of their news and sports. As everyone knew, federal regulations mandated that all radio stations broadcast news on the hour. Some like KYW-Cleveland took it a step further by providing newscasts on the half hour and whenever breaking news unfolded. Its daily talk shows also furnished important news and information to their many followers. Speaking of talk shows, few were surprised when Harve Morgan received the much coveted Ralph H. Besse award for his outstanding performance as Cleveland's premier nighttime talk show host.<sup>6</sup> Eleven hundred AM had no trouble whatsoever in selling numerous hours of advertising based on its numerous top quality newscasts and daily talk shows. Receiving community awards gave KYW's savvy sales team the kind of ammunition it needed to sell even more spot advertising time.

We must not forget that fierce competition fueled in many cases by overly enthusiastic station managers also played a crucial part in determine the winner and losers in the local ratings war. The reality was that broadcasting represented a very mixed up world where one station might have high ratings one month only to be toppled by an upstart the next. Case in point was the continual battle for Cleveland's top radio spot that was being waged by KYW and WHK in the early '60s. The fact that WHK was Ohio's oldest commercial broadcaster and a leader in Cleveland radio for more than four decades did not prevent its chief nemesis KYW Program Director Ken Draper from bragging that his outlet was number one in the April '65 ratings. In the case of Metromedia-owned WHK, its 5,000 watts could not match the range or sound quality of KYW-Cleveland. Fourteen-twenty AM did indeed offer some first rate programs even though its new "contemporary music" format was not particularly a big hit with locally-based audiences.<sup>7</sup> Similar in program style to its New York flagship station WNEW, WHK-Radio lacked the enormous listening audience to draw upon when matched against WNEW-AM.

In terms of the DJs themselves, AM radio has always been a great place for nomadic broadcasters. As we mentioned earlier, those wanderers were never guaranteed job security which meant that the slightest infraction on their part might send them packing. Jim Stagg found that out the hard way.<sup>8</sup> Apparently, KYW managers had discovered that he had signed his name to a bar license in Lorain, OH and that some state liquor agents, in a recent raid, had caught underage customers drinking there.<sup>9</sup> The last thing Westinghouse officials wanted to

5. "Halle's and Seventeen's Go-Go-Go Fashion Show," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 12, 1965.

6. "Besse to Get Award for Leadership," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, March 11, 1965.

7. "WHK, KYW Beset by Tension, Turmoil," *Billboard*, April 3, 1965.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

deal with during this swap was a lengthy legal battle involving one of their popular radio personalities. It proved to be the deciding factor that prompted Stagg's sudden dismissal. Having been dragged through-the-mill by unsympathetic Westinghouse managers, you might think that his best option was to leave quietly. But, that was not Jim Stagg's style. His lawyer argued that he was not involved in the tavern's daily operations and that he had transferred the license to his relatives quite a while ago.<sup>10</sup> Whatever might have been going on behind the scene, Stagg's very vocal supporters were extremely unhappy when they learned that he had been fired without a proper hearing.

As everyone knew, KYW management had always held its staff to a very strict code of conduct. It's hard-nosed GM Perry B. Bascom firmly believed in it. When provoked, Bascom could end a promising career with a simple stroke of a pen. Living in fear of being "Bosomed," many KYW jocks considered suing the station after having been exposed to his uncontrolled rage. However, suing often proved costly in that word would get around quickly that you were "difficult" to manage. Branded a troublemaker was not the reputation you wanted shadowing you in the years ahead. As a radio personality you might win a battle here and there, but ultimately you would lose the war. Many jocks chose instead to lick their wounds and move on to another radio station rather than fight the establishment.

On another totally unrelated area, simulcast radio broadcasting increasingly came under scrutiny in April 1965 when the FCC began pressuring AM stations to broadcast twelve hours of independent programming on their various FM outlets.<sup>11</sup> Federal officials gave them an October deadline to comply or face the possibility of losing their licenses. Federal officials believed that program variety was important as more and more people were turning to the FM dial. In Cleveland's particular case, both KYW and WHK agreed to comply with it while others like WDOK, WERE and WGAR said they would try to meet the autumn deadline. WJW-Radio, on the other hand, pretty much ignored it.<sup>12</sup> Recognizing the enormity of that task, led the feds to eventually back down. The issue of independent FM broadcasting was pretty much shelved until '68 when it reappeared. Trying to buy additional time led WGAR-Cleveland to request an exemption in the summer of '65. They knew the new NBC station would soon be broadcasting its own shows many of which were currently being carried on WGAR-FM.<sup>13</sup> Its promoters sought additional time in the hope of picking up some other desirable alternatives prior to the October deadline. WGAR managers admitted that their FM audience enjoyed NBC's "Weekend Monitor" and that it accounted for its positive ratings.

KY-11 did some quick reshuffling of its AM lineup following Jim Stagg's quick departure. At the same time, a new program director came on board to assist KYW in its transfer from Cleveland to Philadelphia. Originally hired as a graphic artist, Tony Graham (1933-1992) rapidly became one of the top guns at KDKA-Pittsburgh.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, the KYW radio audience did not care a great deal about his business qualifications. They were only interested in what they heard broadcasted over their radios. A familiar voice Bob Irwin took Stagg's place prior to the arrival of a Philadelphia DJ Don L. (Scotty) Brink.<sup>15</sup> Brink took over the 2

10. Ibid.

11. Alvin Beam, "Cut Simulcasts, Stations Told," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 22, 1965.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Bert J. Reesing, "Indians' Orchids Due for TV Weatherman," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 28, 1965.

15. Bert J. Reesing, "Look What TV Plans for Football Fans!" *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 11, 1965.

pm slot which enabled Jay Lawrence to return to his Midnight gig. Lawrence had served as KYW's afternoon jock following the totally unexpected firing of Stagg. Without any warning, both Ken Draper and KYW's News Director Art Schreiber packed up their things and moved to Chicago's WCFL.<sup>16</sup> Draper remained in the Windy City until 1968. He later headed a well-known Hollywood consulting firm Programming Incorporated. Its many accomplishments included creating the soon to be legendary rock station in New York WPIX-FM.

To casual outsiders, the KYW-WRCV swap was moving along nicely. That was exactly what managers at both stations wanted to convey. However, behind the scenes confusion reigned and particularly among the few remaining KYW staff. They wanted to know what was going to happen to them when the swap was over. Many insiders in the radio game thought that this was no way in which to handle this important issue and especially for a successful radio enterprise such as KYW-Cleveland. Confusion in its ranks certainly did not speak well for the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company's shrewd management team. Its Board of Directors responded to this growing confusion by sending its chairman Don McGannon to Cleveland on June 7, 1965.<sup>17</sup> He attempted to untangle this mess by explaining how those changes would or would not directly affect Cleveland employees. McGannon continually reminded everyone involved that everything was moving along as planned. Station officials had every reason to believe McGannon since many of the Cleveland employees had already received lucrative new contracts from either WBS or NBC. In Philadelphia, WRCV was now known as KYW even though its Cleveland counterpart continued to rely on the KYW call letters.<sup>18</sup> The National Broadcasting Company told its many Cleveland listeners not to worry that the new station would have its own identity very soon. The positive moves by NBC and WBC made all the difference. They waylay any of the earlier fears expressed by some staff members that something had gone terribly wrong and that the managers were trying to cover it up. Nothing could be further from the truth.

A number of tape recordings captured the fury of the day when the switchover transpired. There was definitely some drama in the air on the morning of June 19th as both the National Broadcasting Company and the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company announced the exchange.<sup>19</sup>

16. "Schreiber Quits KYW to Join Chicago Station," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, May 12, 1965.

17. "KYW Move Due in 2 Weeks," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 5, 1965.

18. "Moving Day," *Broadcasting*, June 7, 1965.

19. "The Great Swap Takes Place June 19," *Broadcasting*, June 14, 1965. KYW Swap: <https://youtube.com/watch?v=-Z3Moxn1p0Y>.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/kyw-radio-cleveland/?p=33>

But, you had to be up pretty early to hear it live. Assigned the honor, Jay Lawrence repeatedly joked about NBC's David Sarnoff and his entourage arriving in Cleveland any moment to oversee this major event. His show was extremely boisterous with all kinds of bells and whistles to signal the occasion. The party atmosphere he created that particular morning closely resembled a three-ring circus. It was pandemonium from start to finish beginning with sidesplitting men on the street interviews and ending with "Happy Days Are Here Again."

KYW-AM ended its nine years in Cleveland at exactly 4:59 a.m. on June 19, 1965 when Jay Lawrence said good bye to Group W and said hello to NBC's newest affiliate WKYC. After veteran SOHIO Reporter Bill Tompkins delivered its first newscast, this brand new NBC station was up and running. At the other end, a soft spoken announcer said "Good Morning this is KYW 1060 AM in Philadelphia, a Group W station, owned-and-operated by the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company." Cleveland's listening audience wanted to know if there was any special significance to the new WKYC call letters. Some speculated that NBC had come up with them at the last minute. However, that was probably not the case. Similar sounding to KYW strongly suggested that the all-new WKYC might have hoped to ride on the coattails of its successful predecessor. However, NBC's management team put a somewhat different spin on the whole thing. Apparently, they believed that using similar call letters might lessen the amount of confusion for Clevelanders as they got use to the newest station in town. Even Jay Lawrence seemed somewhat confused during his first hour of broadcasting. At one point, he started to blurt out KYW and then quickly corrected himself. He admitted that old habits die hard.

That switch immediately strengthened Cleveland's total operational capacity as many of the former KYW radio managers remained at their posts. The same could not be said for KYW-Philadelphia where personnel changes revolutionized everything. Two noteworthy developments involved KYW's Perry Bascom and WBZ's Richard H. Harris. Bascom left for Boston while Harris transferred to Philadelphia. That same Richard Harris later served as Group W chairman.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, business in the newest Cleveland station continued on as usual. Martin &

20. James B. Flanagan, "Daly in Lions' Den with Capp, Condon," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 14, 1965.

Howard still did their morning gig with the other jocks doing their daily shows. Although those DJs remained hard at work they still worried about their future on the new 1100 Cleveland. Whether the new outlet would achieve its specific broadcasting goals and objectives depended on it continually gaining a steady stream of new listeners while ever expanding its advertising base. One interesting side note revolved around the growing number of top quality newscasters that were joining the new WKYC-Radio lineup. It included a slew of veteran broadcasters and reporter ranging from Bob Becker and Virgil Dominic to Joe Mosbrook and John O'Day *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* expressed every confidence that the new WKYC-Radio would continue to offer the very best in daily programming. That same newspaper also believed that NBC would keep its popular Top 40 format at 1100 AM while maintaining its classical music format at 105.7 FM. In a "look at us" ad in the June 19th *Broadcasting, The Business Weekly of Television & Radio* the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company listed all of its current stations that included the new KYW-Philadelphia.<sup>21</sup>

In terms of Jim Runyon, his fabulous timing, dry wit and an impeccable radio voice empowered him to become a leading local jock very rapidly. Unfortunately, he was not happy with the kind of treatment he had received at the new Radio 11. Officials at RCA-NBC really liked Runyon's style which meant that he received a very generous annual salary estimated to be \$22,000.<sup>22</sup> However, that high salary came with a stiff price. He was expected to work seven-days a week. Runyon was one of its big guns and WKYC-radio didn't want to lose him. But, that was exactly what happened following his June 18, 1965 show. Dissatisfaction with how the station exchange was conducted prompted his unexpected resignation. As you can well imagine, Runyon's unsolicited action sent shock waves throughout the National Broadcasting Company. Network officials responded by sending a group of Philly radio pros to Cleveland. The higher ups in New York had hoped that they could smooth over ruffled feathers quickly. Led by the former GM at WRVC Arthur Watson (1930-1991), those highly trained experts wanted to hold on to as many former Group W employees in Cleveland as possible and that included "A Runyon named Jim."

The rub in it all was that Watson was first and foremost a news junky.<sup>23</sup> Specifically, he wanted WKYC-Radio, like its predecessor KYW, to support a large news organization. Watson noted that WRCV-Philadelphia had nearly doubled its ratings by doing just that. His common sense approach towards radio broadcasting didn't go unnoticed by his colleagues and friends in Rockefeller Center. He later proudly served as President of NBC Sports. However, leaders inside both camps found it hard to deny that Top 40 had been a big winner for KYW-Radio. Its repeatedly high earnings were a testimony to its greatness. Experts throughout the commercial radio industry said that RCA-NBC would be silly to toss aside such a winning formula. When all was said and done, WKYC debuted as a Top 40 rock and roll station in the summer of 1965.<sup>24</sup> Its first broadcast as a Top 40 station was a Beatles countdown. Only time would tell if that program format would yield the kind of high revenues that NBC both wanted and needed.

During his brief stay in Cleveland, Watson repeatedly reassured his nervous staff that the transition was moving along well. He knew it would take weeks perhaps months before all the wrinkles would be finally ironed out. But, that didn't concern him. He also seemed to fully understand why some KYW stalwarts such as Dick Goddard

21. "Group W, Westinghouse Broadcasting Company," *Broadcasting*, June 19, 1965.

22. "Jim Runyon Signs Off," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 19, 1965.

23. James B. Flanagan, "NBC Returns to Cleveland," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 20, 1965.

24. "NBC Comes Back Tomorrow," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 18, 1965.

(1931-2020) and Tom Snyder (1936-2007) chose to relocate to Philly rather than stay in Cleveland. Apparently, they liked working for the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company and they wanted to be a part of a station they respected and trusted. However, Watson was equally sure that former WRCV's very trusted weatherman Wally Kinan (1919-2002) and that station's prime newscaster John "Bud" Dancy (1937-2021) would readily fit into the busy Cleveland scene.<sup>25</sup> Westinghouse had even bigger changes in store for the new Philadelphia-based KYW. Plans called for its middle-of-the-road format to be completely and totally scrapped for an all-news lineup.<sup>26</sup> This news format closely resembled the one first introduced earlier that spring on its sister station in New York 1010 WINS.

That significant change represented the next logical step for WBC as the public increasingly demanded more extensive news coverage on their many AM outlets. It was the perfect solution although it posed a certain degree of financial risk for the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company. As you might have already figured out, venturing into uncharted waters without a safety net to catch you was not something to be undertaken by the light hearted. However, initial surveys of local listeners strongly indicated that this new format should be an immediate winner. Also, the decision by WBC to experiment in the highly populated New York and Philadelphia markets seemed to make a great deal of sense in the mid-'60s. Their daily lineups featured hours upon hours of local, regional and national news supplemented by human interest features along with plenty of sports, frequent traffic updates and pertinent weather forecasts. Ten sixty on the AM dial has retained that program format with minor changes to the present day. In November 2020, KYW-FM also adopted the same format.

From the NBC network's perspective, this newest Midwest outlet would have to prove its financial value repeatedly. It could not be simply an updated version of the once popular WTAM. These new 50,000 watts broadcaster would have to be a totally different kind of animal. Of course, NBC acknowledged that fact and responded enthusiastically by publishing a full-page *Cleveland Plain Dealer* ad on June 21, 1965 in which it promised Clevelanders relevant programming along with the best news coverage possible.<sup>27</sup> However, those promises did very little to remove the hurt feelings many still felt over the callous firing of one of their favorites Jim Stagg. "A Runyon named Jim" charged Westinghouse with promoting "bad faith" when it fired one of his closest colleagues and friends without any warning. He argued that Stagg's firing had needlessly threatened his future job prospects. As everyone in the commercial radio business already knew few station owners sided with known "troublemakers" preferring instead to hire eager jocks waiting in the wings. Abundant complaints surfaced regarding those "unfulfilled promises" made to Jim Stagg by KYW-Radio.<sup>28</sup> Allegedly, the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company had told him that he could be released from his present contract if KYW changed hands. But, WKYC's new GM Bob Martin remained skeptical about the whole thing reminding everyone that Radio 11 had the discretion to hire or fire anyone it wanted at any time.<sup>29</sup> That power to hire or fire someone at will rapidly became a bone of contention between jocks and station managers alike. In fact, Runyon was not buying any of it and resigned from WKYC claiming that Stagg's dismissal was totally inexcusable. DJs and managers also argued as to whether this recent station trade should be legally considered an acquisition or exchange. Runyon's lawyers argued that those actions represented an acquisition with all the legal stipulations related to such a deal. NBC's

25. Flanagan, "NBC Returns to Cleveland."

26. Bert J. Reesing, "12-Inch Portable TV Operates 3 Ways," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 22, 1965.

27. "Hello Cleveland...NBC Calling," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 21, 1965.

28. James B. Flanagan, "Jim Runyon's Fate in Lawyer's Hands," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, June 28, 1965.

29. Ibid.



legal counsel totally disagreed saying it was an exchange with few legal ramifications.<sup>30</sup> To be perfectly honest, most listeners didn't care one way or another what it was. They wanted Staggs back on the air end discussion.

When you as a mid-'60s program director got wind of the fact that a great talent like Jim Runyon was available you acted quickly, and that was exactly what his previous boss Ken Draper did. He immediately hired him for his morning show at WCFL.<sup>31</sup> In response to Draper's actions, Bob Martin announced that RCA-NBC would be filing an injunction against Runyon. That legal action would prevent him from broadcasting in Chicago at least for the interim. Jim Runyon's reaction to Martin's harsh ultimatum was instantaneous. He cried "foul" claiming that his contract had permitted him under certain specified circumstances to begin to broadcast at another outlet without having to face possible repercussions from his former employer. As a last ditched effort, Runyon argued that WKYC's should have willingly released him from any further obligations after having read more carefully the fine print found at the bottom of his contract.

That same August, WGAR-FM said farewell to its few remaining NBC programs and joined the expanding ABC-Radio network.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, WKYC, taking a cue from its sister station WHK, began tapping into the potentially lucrative revenue stream pouring forth from its many local rock and roll bands. Labeled the "Cleveland Sound," WKYC radio personalities started showcasing different bands every hour.<sup>33</sup> It was that station's response to popular Motown and the Philly sounds. WKYC's broadcasters boasted that Cleveland bands literally outperformed all others. Maybe they were stretching the truth a bit, but it worked. Over the next several years, some record companies signed groups including the "Raspberries," "Twilighters" and "Visions" to lucrative contracts.<sup>34</sup> Pulse Radio Ratings, Arbitron and Nielsen between June and October '65 listed WKYC-Radio as Cleveland's number one station.<sup>35</sup> A new audience-base was unfolding right before our eyes. However, closer scrutiny strongly suggested that the hoopla surrounding the change of ownership followed by the heated controversies regarding the firing and resignations of some of that station's favorite jocks must be largely responsible for much of its extraordinary initial success. Undoubtedly, free advertising provided through daily news headlines helped to focus the public's attention towards these new 50,000 watts powerhouse at the expense of other competing local stations. Over time, more scathing alienation between easily provoked WKYC disc jockeys and their tight-fisted bosses occurring in conjunction with dwindling audiences forced NBC officials to stop popping their champagne corks.

Business problems began surfacing in July '66 when *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* started to question the positive publicity pieces regularly being released by the WKYC-Cleveland studios. Something was definitely going wrong when Harry Martin started to complain about the poor way he was being treated by station officials. Behind the scenes, he and his side kick Specs Howard wanted out of their contracts. Leaders in Cleveland morning broadcasting for the past four years, rumors had been circulating for several months that the duo wanted to relocate either to Chicago or Detroit.<sup>36</sup> Those rumors continued to fly for several more months culminating with Martin's

30. Ibid.

31. "Jim Runyon Working for Chicago Station," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 8, 1965.

32. "WGAR to Switch from NBC to ABC Radio," *Broadcasting*, August 16, 1965.

33. James B. Flanagan, "Nation Needs Cleveland Rock," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 12, 1965.

34. Ibid.

35. "Thank You for Making WKYC Radio #1," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 25, 1965.

36. James B. Flanagan, "Meeting May Decide Whether Martin, Howard Leave," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, July 20, 1966.

firing on November 8, 1966.<sup>37</sup> Specs Howard stayed on a bit longer. Two and a half months later, this fabulous morning duo reemerged on the ABC owned and operated station in Detroit WXYZ. Their new morning show called “Day is Here” ran seven days a week to mostly positive reviews.<sup>38</sup> However, the Detroit radio market proved to be far more competitive than Cleveland’s and they lasted a mere two years. Specs Howard soon returned to his old haunts at Radio 11.

A fast-talking pair of jocks out of Texas called Charlie & Harrigan filled the void created by the sudden departure of the much loved team of Martin and Howard. Within two years, Charlie & Harrigan left Cleveland for KFMB in San Diego. However, let’s not get too far ahead of ourselves. Another very popular Cleveland radio celebrity was also about to call it quits at Radio 11. Jerry G., who had traveled with the Beatles on both of their highly successful U.S. tours and had hosted a TV dance program that rivaled Don Webster’s nationally syndicated “Upbeat” show, also wanted out of Cleveland.<sup>39</sup> Apparently, Chicago beckoned him as well as he headed west to WCFL. America’s “Second City” was fast becoming a haven for former Cleveland DJs.

WKYC may have become a big city broadcaster literally overnight, but it still needed a dynamic new voice to fill the void created by the departure of Harry Martin, Specs Howard and Jerry G. It required someone with both magnetism and sex appeal. After interviewing a number of viable candidates, the National Broadcasting Company finally decide to hire a former pre-med student from San Antonio, TX called Bob Cole.<sup>40</sup> He possessed a smooth Texas drawl and RCA-NBC officials counted on him to draw in large numbers of female listeners into his new mid-day time slot. Cole lasted exactly three years. What the National Broadcasting Company programmers were unable to envision when they hired him in 1967 was the possibility of stiff competition from Larry Morrow at Cleveland’s newest rock and roll radio sensation WIXY-1260. An outgrowth of WDOK-AM, this new Top 40 outlet made its debut in December 1965.

Morrow may have been new to Cleveland, but he was already well-known to many CKLW listeners as “Duke Windsor.” Now called Larry “The Duker” Morrow, this very confidence jock instantly drew a line in the sand to see whether he or Bob Cole would draw in the greatest number of new listeners. At first, it looked as if WKYC-Radio enjoyed a decided advantage over WIXY-1260. Being a 50,000 watts powerhouse, WKYC could draw upon NBC’s vast war chest whenever necessary. The same could not be said about WIXY. It was only a 5,000 watts outlet with a signal that abruptly ended at the Cuyahoga County line. But WIXY possessed something that WKYC did not have a highly imaginative publicity department and very smart owners Norm Wain, Bob Weiss and Joe Zingale. That station’s undefinable aura that drew large numbers of people towards fun jocks such Larry Morrow soon tipped the balance in favor of this decided underdog.<sup>41</sup> Over the next decade, 1260 AM proudly showcased many top DJs. They included the likes of Billy Bass, Victor Boc, Jerry Brooke, Mike Kelly, Dick “Wild Child” Kemp, Lou King Kirby, Chuck Knapp, Bobby Magic, Mike Reineri and Joey Reynolds. Remember Joe Finan, he was there too. Those radio personalities did very well against WKYC’s

37. Bert J. Reesing, “2 TV Specials Slated Tonight, Unfortunately at the Same Hour,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, November 9, 1966.

38. “Day is Here! Martin and Howard, Seven Days Each Week, 6 a.m.-10 a.m. WXYZ-1270, An ABC Owned Station,” *Detroit Free Press*, January 30, 1967.

39. The Chatter Brothers, “Jerry G. Gone” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 31, 1966.

40. James B. Flanagan, “Texan Bob C Replaces WKYC’s Jerry G,” *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, February 2, 1967.

41. Interview with Media Specialist and Author Mike Olszewski on August 13, 2021 and August 27, 2021.

favorites such as Chuck Dann, Alan Douglas, Chuck Dunaway, Jay Lawrence and Jim LaBarbara.<sup>42</sup> In fact, WIXY's astonishing success drew the nationally renowned jock Chuck Dunaway to leave the rather drab NBC studios at 1405 East 6th Street for the riveting new WIXY facilities at 3940 Euclid Avenue.

Of course, a host of unexpected economic and social forces repetitively tinged the Cleveland radio scene in the late '60s and early '70s. They symbolized a troubling period in U.S. history when previously held beliefs were being vilified by teens and young adults alike. Escalating Cold War tensions, growing civil rights agitation and increasing opposition to the Viet Nam War appeared to sap America's earlier confidence and vitality as a nation. They unequivocally affected the course of commercial radio for the next two decades. Certain FM stations helped this cause greatly by seeking out larger and larger numbers of disgruntled radio listeners. Many of those new FM listeners directly ascribed to this counter culture that did not hesitate to challenge the long held beliefs enthusiastically expounded by most conservative elements. Spurred on by the election of Richard M. Nixon as the 37th U.S. President in 1968, those expounding this new counter culture saw old style conservative thinking as highly outmoded in today's ever changing, fast-paced world. They further claimed that conservative elements were responsible for this nation's growing despondency and that their selfish interests were destroying any remaining scraps of decency left in the nation. In terms of the emerging FM audience itself, many of them resolutely supported that embryonic Cultural Revolution no questions asked.<sup>43</sup> They insisted that those new FM outlets reflect their more radical views by playing bolder, more meaningful music over traditional "bubble gum" hits. The sudden appearance of this radicalized counter cultural greatly worried many commercial radio broadcasters who were ill prepared to deal with this phenomenon.

Its sudden arrival led to previously unpredicted advances in conventional broadcasting and the music industry. Many pacesetter clubs and equally broad-minded recording studios inspired young musicians and singers alike to experiment with avant-garde sounds. Beginning with some of the leading underground clubs in London such as Ladbroke Grove and Notting Hill that customarily welcomed inventive groups such as Hawkwind, Pink Floyd and Soft Machine, this highly impulsive music experience soon jumped across the pond to New York, Chicago and San Francisco. Trendy clubs in the states such as the Fillmores, the Scene, Whiskey a Go-Go, the Troubadour and Family Dog proudly supported their daring efforts.

That ground-breaking sound encompassed a broad range of extravagant and sometimes uncompromising new musical genres. They ranged from baroque ensembles and operettas at one end of the spectrum to folk music and American jazz at the other. Many of these forward-thinking performers used anything and everything they could get their hands as a way of loosening up the stranglehold that less culturally inspired rock and roll music still had on leading Top 40 AM stations. Inescapably, rock and roll music splintered into different kinds of one-off sounds. Formerly referred to as Underground Rock, it soon evolved into what was called Progressive Rock. By 1969, Progressive Rock was throwing an even wider net to embrace bigger, newer audiences who wanted to break away from more conventional rock and roll music.

So how did this trailblazing sound sweeping the FM dial affect giant AM stations? The key to radio success no longer resided exclusively in the hands of AM powerhouses like WKYC-Cleveland; but rather, with previously

42. Ibid.

43. "Evolution of Radio Broadcasting," <https://open.lib.umn.edu/mediaandculture/chapter/7-2-evolution-of-radio-broadcasting/>.

underappreciated local FM outlets. The FM band provided Progressive Rock the ideal broadcasting vehicle in which to test its very distinctive sound. Its importance in large and small communities alike grew considerably as access to FM radio became much easier. As you might have expected, AM radio traditionally controlled both morning and afternoon drive times in most cities well into the 1970s. It took the rising number of FM radios in cars to change those listening habits forever. That meant that leading crossover artists in the late '60s such as Jimi Hendrix (1942-1970), Jim Morrison (1943-1971), the Iron Butterfly and Janis Joplin (1943-1970) had a tough time gaining their fair share of drive time. They were often fighting against ingrained popular performers that ranged from Herb Alpert (b. 1935) and Engelbert Humperdinck (b. 1936) to Frank Sinatra (1915-1998) and Barbra Streisand (b. 1942).

With all its faults, commercial radio remained the main source of entertainment, information and news for young listeners into the late 1960s. However, that was rapidly changing as larger and larger numbers of teens and young adults were buying portable radios with FM bands. They wanted to avoid the boring sounds coming out of local AMs. At that same time, the quality of FM broadcasts was improving each and every year. That was something AM outlets could not boast. With the possible exception of added echo chambers and some limited experimentation with something broadcasters like to call "AM stereo," the actual sound quality for most AM stations had not improved considerably for years. Imprecise, erratic sounds interrupted by large amounts of static coming from nearby electrical wires, large steel structures or thunder storms severely restricted AM's ability to broadcast the kind of clean, crisp sound its many listeners now demanded.

Also, please keep in mind that most AM programming in the '60s and '70s was not targeted precisely towards younger audiences. In its wake, those listeners repeatedly turned to the FM side of the radio dial to get away from the monotonous programming that characterized most large Top 40 stations of that era including WKYC. The FCC's ban on simulcast broadcasting that took hold starting in '68 may have encouraged even greater numbers of FM listening, but it did not necessarily promote greater earnings. In fact, most advertisers of the late 1960s and early 1970s considered FM radio a less than profitable market. Featuring long album cuts with only brief commercial interruptions was not what publicists generally wanted. After all, that was not where the bulk of the broadcasting money went even if FM broadcasters led the vanguard when it came to breakthroughs in musical artistry and presented. As we pointed out earlier, AM broadcasters were labeled as fast-talking announcers whose prime responsibility involved squeezing in as many ads as possible in-between a limited playlist. However, that was not the prime force behind the new FM rock music sound.

That "freedom of expression," first promoted by ingenious FM radio personalities through custom made, free flowing formats was viewed by many in the commercial broadcasting field as a major breakthrough. It truly represented a new adventure in music and talk. FM rockers in Cleveland led by WMMS, WNCR and WNOB undeniably left their mark on Northeast Ohio radio in the enterprising '60s and '70s. You might wonder why those locally-based "underground stations" stood out among the crowd? The answer is quite simple. It began in '68 with the Metromedia owned outlet in Cleveland WMMS-FM. Its new programming closely followed the underground format first perfected by its very successful sister station in New York WNEW-FM. WMMS at 100.7 FM not only featured its own distinct shows; but also, featured a late night syndicated show hosted by WNEW-FM's top jock William (Rosko) Mercer (1927-2000). WNCR at 99.9 FM rapidly followed WMMS's example as did WNOB in nearby Newbury, OH. Interesting side note, the shrewd programmers working at WNOB took a somewhat

different approach when they chose to affiliate with the new ABC-Radio's "Everything is Love." Hosted by who else but Brother Love, 107.9 FM also enjoyed a loyal following into the '70s.

Was 1100 AM aware of the fierce rivalry unfolding on the flip side of the dial? Of course, it was. However, WKYC managers remained hesitant when it came to drastically altering their daily schedule. That was due to the fact that any significant changes in programming had to first go through a time consuming process that originated with its penny pinching Board of Directors. The prevailing attitude among the commercial radio industry in the late 1960s and early 1970s was that as long as most AM stations, including WKYC, continued to generate sufficiently high revenues then why change anything. WKYC's staff had convinced itself that FM's success was merely a passing fad and that it would end soon. They may have been able previously to eliminate any growing FM competition; however, unforeseen new developments on the AM side of the dial in the 1960s did not help their cause. Such things as WIXY-1260's meteoric rise in the Cleveland ratings in the mid-1960s had compelled successful program planners at major stations such as WHK to drastically change their traditional formats. Gone were the days when WHK with its Color Radio Channel 14 ruled the Cleveland AM airways. Closer to home, WKYC-Radio was still looking for its own unique identity while the world around it was changing outrageously quickly.

As we saw earlier, WIXY's programmers knew the steps necessary to groom a loyal listening audience in spite of their station's obvious weak signal. Its many highly electrified jocks, hard hitting news, over the top ads and crazy features that included multiple episodes of Dick Orkin (1933-2017) as "Chickenman" along with its ability to play records at 47 not 45 rpms gave that AM outlet a decided edge over its chief competitors such as WKYC.<sup>44</sup> Such things as the "WIXY Triple Play" and the "WIXY Six Pack" distinguished it even further. These regular song rotations without commercial interruption were used by WIXY managers to their full advantage. Don't worry they made up for any lost advertising time by broadcasting a series of ads back to back with loud jingles and plenty of community-based announcements. Top ratings quickly translated into high profits for 1260 on the AM dial. Its rapid success forced some of its chief competitors including WHK and WJW to retreat to the safer ground called the new "contemporary" sound. In adopting those newer, blander programming formats local broadcasters like WHK and WJW were essentially giving up the Top 40 fight to WIXY whether they admitted publicly or not. The sudden groundswell in new FM listeners only added to the financial woes.

In spite of the growing cynicism in the late '60s over the long-term value of Top 40 broadcasting, that overwhelmingly favored radio format was anything but dying. Instead, it was changing over time. You had only to look at the recent success enjoyed by locally-based outlets such as WERE-FM to see what was exactly unfolding within the exciting Cleveland market. Now called G-98, the former WERE-FM suddenly roared to life in a way it had never done recently. At its core, WGCL's all-new "hits radio" format was a refurbished, slightly more sophisticated version of traditional Top 40 radio. G-98 enjoyed a much clearer signal when measured against most of its AM competitors which enabled it to broadcast with much greater clarity the same kind of energized programming previously reserved for only the AM side of the dial. Its immediate success set the stage for a number of equally popular, static-free Top 40s FMs throughout the Midwest.

Another facet of FM radio to gain a substantial new loyal following was called "beautiful" or "easy listening"

44. Interview Mike Olszewski.

music. It served more discerning listeners who demanded a quieter, softer sound. Who can ever forget the mellow tones of the Larry Gold orchestra or the Holly Ridge Strings? One of the early leaders was Boston's WJIB FM-97. It literally came out of nowhere to become that city's number one FM station by the late '60s. People love to listen to 'JIB in their cars and homes. It also served as background music in many hotels, office buildings and retailers. Two other pacesetters in Cleveland were WDOK-FM hosted by two favorites Wayne Mack (1911-2000) and Tom Armstrong (d. 1985) and WQAL-FM featuring Frank McHale and Tall Ted Hallaman (1927-2010). Whatever the programming choice might have been, the crisp new FM sound won hands down over its less clear AM rivals.

How could Cleveland's 1100 AM possibly compete against the likes of successful local FM's whose radio signals were completely static free? Like so many other large businesses, radio stations were definitely creatures of habit. The fact that WIXY-1260 had surged ahead in the local Top 40 radio market by February 1969 did not mean that it totally controlled the younger listening audience in Cleveland. WKYC still had a chance to find its niche in the regional radio market and that was where Specs Howard entered the picture. He convinced the WKYC higher ups to embrace a more upbeat sound he called "Power Radio." This new "Power Radio" format was intended for young professionals between the ages of 25 and 34. Much of the problem facing WKYC-Radio stemmed from a disinclination on the part of the National Broadcasting Company to regularly introduce newer, more enlightened program strategies into their daily lineup. As I'm sure you have guessed by now, NBC might have talked the talk, but in the end, it rarely walked the walk.

Had that network been an early, nationally-recognized leader in Top 40 broadcasting then WKYC-Radio might have stood a reasonable chance of succeeding over the long-run. Let's face it, 1100 AM wasn't really a big hit with late '60s radio listeners. Much of the fault rested with WKYC's lackluster management team. Many of them outsiders, with little understanding as to how successful local radio operated, suddenly discovered much to their displeasure that they could not begin to compete against likes of other, locally-oriented broadcasters. Time was running out fast as the dominance of AM radio was rapidly being upended by upstart FM stations. New blood might have been able to save that 50,000 watt giant, but the chances of doing that successfully seemed more and less likely as the clock continued to tick.

Suddenly out of nowhere a John Adams High School grad named Nick Mileti (b. 1931) and a real go-getter entrepreneur known as Tom Embrescia (b. 1946) entered the local radio scene. Over the past fifty years, Tom Embrescia has forged quite a financial empire that included over fifty stations and a host of other equally profitable endeavors. One of their earliest joint business ventures in 1972 resulted in them purchasing WKYC-radio from the National Broadcasting Company for \$5.5 million.<sup>45</sup> Their first order of business as the station's newest owners involved changing its call letters from WKYC AM and FM to WWWE-AM (3WE) and WWWM-FM (105M). It was unclear at the time as to whether the "E" in the AM call letters stood for entertainment or Embrescia or the "M" for Music or Mileti. However, in the public's mind that really didn't matter. What did matter to them was the fact that 105.7 FM with its revamped classic rock format posed a direct challenge to WMMS. Major programming changes also greatly changed the direction and scope of possibilities for 1100 AM. Nick Mileti's close ties with several of Cleveland's professional sports teams prompted that critical change in its AM programming. He believed that his new 50,000 watts radio station, with a capability of reaching 38 states and much of Canada after sundown, could eventually become a regional sports broadcasting leader much

45. "First NBC Radio Properties Go," *Broadcasting*, January 30, 1972.

in the same vein as New York radio's WFAN. As part owner of the Cleveland Indians and Cleveland Cavaliers, Mileti insisted that all live broadcasts of both professional teams be carried on his new flagship station.

As you might have already figured out, the debut of 3WE radio marked the end of 1100 AM's sixteen year reign as one of Cleveland's leading rock and roll station. It had successfully survived messy lawsuits and questionable business deals only to succumb to previously unimagined cultural and social changes that affected radio audiences everywhere. Such unheralded developments abruptly altered the radio listening habits of most Clevelanders in ways that more traditional broadcasters such as NBC could not comprehend. The reluctance of the National Broadcasting Company to spend the money necessary to keep up with the times doomed WKYC-Radio 11. By the early 1970s, it was obvious to leaders in the commercial radio industry that NBC no longer wanted to own and operate a Top 40 radio outlet in Cleveland. Unquestionably, WKYC-Radio had not produced the kind of consistently high profits that NBC had been use to receiving from its WRCV-Philadelphia station. WKYC was as much a victim of the times as much as anything else. But, for many Clevelanders the abrupt end of WKYC as a Top 40 rock and roll station meant much more than an NBC tax write off. For many of its most enthusiastic listeners the moment when 3WE sports radio went on the air was indeed "the day the music died."

## Chapter 8: Top 40s Radio Legacy through KYW's Eyes

Top 40 rock and roll radio stations came in all shapes and sizes. First envisioned by Gordon McLendon and Todd Storz as a way of steadily increasing station revenues by promoting greater numbers of lucrative spot advertisements per hour, shrewd program planners rapidly seized upon this broadcasting sensation with great results. Unquestionably, Top 40 radio in the '50s captured the excitement of live broadcasting in a way few other past programming choices had done. By the 1960s, Top 40 programming had far exceeded any of its initial goals or objectives. It successfully brought together the never ending need of advertisers to sell greater and greater amounts of consumer items on air with the many ardent listeners who wanted to hear even more rock and roll music on their favorite AM station. That fabled story enabled Top 40 broadcasters to generate consistently high profits year after year.

It became clearer and clearer to most commercial radio programmers that the hype they had used to entice larger and larger numbers of advertisers did indeed reflect their company's carefully throughout business objectives. In their minds following any other agenda seemed less than smart given their current high return on their investment. That being said, station promoters and programmers in the 50s' and '60s more and more customized their advertisements to better reflect the changing needs and wants of their distinct listening audiences. Once perfected, advertisers repeatedly hammered home their special messages 24/7. Believe me, no radio listener ever confused a Manufacturer Hanover Bank advertisement being broadcasted on New York's leading classical music station WQXR with a Coppertone skin care product featured on that same city's leading Top 40 station WABC. Those products they advertised appealed to vastly different groups. The same might be said about popular Top 40 strategies found in mid-size markets such as Cleveland. No matter the promotion employed by a specific station, Top 40 programming played the same group of two to three minute 45s over and over again with plenty of ads; community announcements and jingles thrown in for good measure. Talk shows and special features only added to the daily fun. A fast tempo kept the whole thing going.

News broadcasts at the top of the hour, five minutes before the hour and sometimes on the half hour rounded off their daily lineup. Many also aired religious programming. Those shows were frequently broadcasted on Sundays or in the wee small hours of the morning. Local jockeys not only had the responsibility of coordinating the ads and music to be heard on their different shows; but also, engaging in friendly banter with their admirers. They were also to help lessen public anxiety when emergencies such as the Northeast blackout of November 9, 1965 occurred. It that was not challenging enough, those same jocks were expected to make it all fun. After all, teens



would not hesitate in the least to turn to another rock and roll station if for some unexpected reason their favorite spot on the AM dial should no longer entertain them.

For many Top 40 stations their daily broadcasting days closely resembled a three ring circus. In fact, many critics jokingly called it the “Greatest Show on Earth.” However, that was the whole point of it. Well into the ‘60s, most Top 40s exhibited a mishmash of loud bells and piercing whistles intended for the sole enjoyment of their highly energized, younger listener. That also meant slightly off-color jokes and of course non-stop talking with plenty of rock and roll music in between. Many listeners turned to Top 40 stations to escape their boring daily routines while others simply enjoyed its personalized form of entertainment. In fact, many young people established a close bond with other teens, both far and near, who listened to those same stations. Ask nearly anyone who was a teenager or young adult during the late 1950s or early 1960s what his or hers favorite Top 40 station was, and they will not only yell out the call letters; but also, sing its jingles or mimic their favorite DJs. This experience was magnified even further by 50,000 watt giants like WABC, WBZ, WSB, WLS, WLW and KYW. Their clear signals at night extended over much of the U.S. and Canada. Many kids living in states like Missouri, Kentucky, Georgia and New York forged a close bond as they listened to the fun sounds emanating from the greatest disc jockeys of the era. They included the likes of Bruce Bradley, Cousin Brucie, Jay Lawrence, Robert E. Lee and Joey Reynolds, to name but a few. The same held true in the West where Tom Donahue, Jimmy O’Neill and Real Dan Steele held court regularly.

Top 40 program coordinators more and more catered to their many devoted fans who depended on them for the very best in radio broadcasting. Of course, certain stations stood out among the crowd. Who can forget Top 40 leaders such as WMEX–Boston, WABC–New York, WFIL–Philadelphia, WQXI–Atlanta, WNOE–New Orleans, WLS–Chicago, KIMN–Denver, KJR–Seattle, KFRC–San Francisco and KHJ–Los Angeles? However, there were many others in smaller markets that left their indelible mark. WKBW–Buffalo, KXOK–St. Louis, WHB–Kansas City and KOY–Phoenix fitted into that latter category. Of all those mid-sized markets, Cleveland, OH has been largely overlooked by many researchers in this field. That seems somewhat surprising since that city produced some very influential Top 40 stations, important broadcasting icons and some of the greatest rock and roll bands this nation had ever seen. Also, don’t forget that Cleveland is the home of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.

KYW–Cleveland remained one of this country’s most admired radio broadcasters for over nine years. Its highly professional managers, fun lovin disk jockeys and top notched technicians were very impressive examples of how efficient AM outlets should have operated. As we saw earlier, the different managers at KY-11 did not automatically embrace the new Top 40 craze that was sweeping the nation in the late ‘50s. In fact, WBC eased into it gradually. It had every reason to proceed with caution. That proved to be a very wise move given the occasional cultural and racial flare ups that occurred in that largely blue collar community. That being said, its shrewd programmers knew that eventually their station would have to join the Top 40 bandwagon and they were entirely right.

Unfortunately, a host of internal and external business pressures made KYW’s successful transformation from a middle-of-the-road music, news and talk station to a Top 40 contender slower than one might have initially expected. Like a middle weight boxing contender, it had to repeatedly prove its worth in the broadcasting ring

before it could take the lead. Westinghouse's seemingly never ending legal entanglements with the National Broadcasting Company, the Philco Corporation and RKO-General throughout the late '50s and early '60s did not expedite this process. Given what transpired over those critical years, how could the results have been much different? As we saw repeatedly, the NBC-WBC exchange in '56 was anything but smooth. As was pointed out throughout this writing, legal problems beset the whole thing from the very beginning as the National Broadcasting Company repeatedly tried to secure blanketed television coverage from New York City to Washington, D.C. For that to occur, NBC had to own and operate one of Philly's prime television stations. Its Board of Directors considered several options before endorsing a station swap between WTAM in Cleveland and KYW in Philadelphia. The FCC finally approved the exchange in January 1956.

Questionable business ethics and thorny legal issues pertaining to NBC business practices greatly concerned the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. 3rd District Court in Philadelphia. The discovery that the National Broadcasting Company had coerced the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company into accepting that trade forced the feds to issue a cease and desist order against NBC in '59. Among other things, the DOJ consent decree demanded that RCA-NBC divest itself of its Philadelphia television holding no later than December 31, 1962. Additional pressure leveraged on NBC by the Philco Corporation in an attempt to snatch the WRCV-Philadelphia license out of the hands of the National Broadcasting Company resulted in a lengthy court battle that pitted the legal genius and financial resources of both parties against the other. Further legal complications surfaced in the fading months of 1960 when RKO-General approached the FCC to approve a similar NBC station trade. That exchange would have affected major radio and television stations in both Boston and Philadelphia.

After much legal wrangling, the feds finally denied the RKO petition claiming that it would not serve the public's interests. Meanwhile, the '56 exchange received even greater scrutiny by the courts. Evidence increasingly revealed that NBC had knowingly and willingly threatened to pull its affiliation from two Group W television stations, one in Boston and the other in San Francisco, if that deal failed to materialize. That network's wrongdoing coupled with other potentially damaging evidence of gross misconduct by RCA-NBC directed the feds in the summer of 1964 to do something it rarely did reverse their earlier consent to the '56 swap. The feds subsequently ordered both networks to return their stations to their original cities. That resulted in KYW-Cleveland going back to Philadelphia to become that city's all-news radio station while WRCV-Philadelphia returned to Cleveland as WKYC to assume its new role as that city's new prime Top 40 outlet.

All that legal uproar distracted Westinghouse from following through with its prime responsibility namely operating a successful AM-FM station and a local television outlet in Cleveland. Accomplishing that challenging business task was certainly a no brainer for Group W since that broadcasting company had a long history of success in that regard. It was the unnerving legal situation occurring from 1956 to 1965 that made what would have normally been a relatively simple task into an unsightly mess. During its first months of broadcasting in Cleveland, KYW managers wisely followed the same play book developed by its NBC forerunner at WTAM. KYW's growing reliance on middle-of-the-road music complemented by top quality newscasts, first class talk shows and very worthwhile community shows were reminiscent of its predecessor. However, that would soon change considerably. By mid-'57, Cleveland's KYW-Radio had started to break away from the accepted broadcasting norms. In fact, it debuted more, in-depth talk shows and highly sophisticated jazz programming as well as frequent newscasts and larger and larger doses of rock and roll music. It was all carefully orchestrated as

listeners became acquainted with the exciting new sounds emanating out of 1100 on your AM dial. Its insightful program planners eagerly promoted such things as “cooler” DJs as a new and perhaps better way in which to get the message across to their listeners. Those radio personalities also prided themselves on offering a wide range of easy-to-win, fun contests. That tactic worked very well from the very first day of broadcasting.

Improved local ratings was a testimony to that outlet’s growing importance in the Greater Cleveland area. On the flip side of the dial, its popular FM station at 105.7 relied less and less on simulcasts as it furnished more and more top quality classical music shows accompanied by a multitude of stimulating conversations dedicated to numerous arts-related topics. In a very spirited move intended to promote even higher profits, KYW’s savvy programmers began adding a great deal more rock and roll music to their AM playlist. That newly revised format came at a cost to more traditional listeners. The station increasingly downplayed such things as the traditional big band sounds; favorite Sinatra-like crooners and fantastic Broadway show tunes. In its wake, fast-talking jocks complemented by specially–attuned programming began to win the day. Community leaders in larger and larger numbers began publicly to thank KYW-Radio for promoting such things as better driving habits through its weekly broadcasts of traffic court. Its commitment to Cleveland also resulted in the decidedly successful “KYW Road Show.” Considered a prime training ground for future entertainers, this show donated most of its proceeds to local charities. That proud radio outlet also broadcasted the Westinghouse Broadcasting Company’s much acclaimed nightly newscast while simultaneously expanding its own prize winning newscasts.

More and more the latest folk tunes and rock and roll music dominated KYW’s broadcasting day in the early 1960s. It also regularly sponsored exciting record hops intended for teenagers and young adults. As was pointed out earlier, its astute officials soon realized that the immediate future of AM radio definitely belonged to Top 40 programming and that this powerhouse had better join that movement quickly. The Westinghouse Company’s Board of Directors immediately reacted to mounting pressure to convert KYW-AM from a comfortable, middle-of-the-road radio outlet to an exciting Top 40 contender ASAP. It did just that in the autumn of ’63 when the Westinghouse board appointed one of that network’s brightest stars KEX-Radio’s Ken Draper as the newest KYW Program Director. He rapidly transformed that middle-of-the-road music station into Northeast Ohio’s biggest rock and station now known as KY-11. Those inspiring business developments were not something new for this insightful station. After all, its leadership successes dated back to its earliest broadcasting days in Chicago. Understanding how both WBC and KYW operated not only enabled Ken Draper to gain the full trust of his many colleagues within months of his arrival; but also, encouraged him to pursue other, more radical program changes than were first proposed. A shoe-in as a major Midwest Top 40 station, 1100 AM quickly became Cleveland’s number one rock and roll outlet. That quick turnabout in its fortunes left many of its local rivals speechless. Had that popular station remained in Cleveland, in all probability, it would have continued to serve as a pacesetter. Its seeds for future greatness had been firmly planted within Cleveland’s very fertile soil by the late ‘50s. That is why many prominent radio personalities wanted to be a part of it.

However, KYW signified much more than just a great training ground for ambitious disk jockeys on their way up the corporate ladder. It was a rewarding experience for many jocks even if their station’s managers could be difficult. Most importantly for struggling radio stations, KY-11 afforded a workable blueprint that broadcasters could easily apply to almost any competitive setting. In fact, large and small stations alike frequently drew upon KYW’s vast programming content and unique delivery style to help them during difficult times. Fun guys,

exciting jingles and promos, great sounding records, timely newscasts and the very best in sports coverage, traffic conditions and up-to-the-minute weather reports distinguished KYW-Cleveland from the emerging pack. In addition, its shrewd management encouraged its many prime broadcasters to become both the eyes and ears of their listeners. The continued financial success of any major U.S. radio outlet, during the uncertain times of the '50s and '60s, rested exclusively on achieving two major goals repeatedly. First, it had to maintain an intimate relationship with its many loyal fans. Second, it had to consistently broadcast the very best in music, news, sports, talk shows and weather.

Those business practices that governed the not so distant past should not be lost to modern broadcasters who are forced to meet the growing challenges posed by the abundance of listening options available in today's market. Changes in broadcasting forms and styles may be good especially when your radio station takes a forceful lead when it comes to using them. Commercial radio leaders instantly knew that to be true seven decades ago. Their reward manifested itself repeatedly in large listening audiences, soaring revenues and minimum overhead costs. From Cleveland to Parma and from Rocky River to Akron, 1100 AM was always there for you day and night. "My Baby Loves KYW, Yea, Yea, Yea," but so did most of Cleveland and Northeast Ohio for over nine incredible years.

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## About the Author

Richard Klein, Ph.D. a recently retired professor from Cleveland State University has written a number of books on a wide variety of business topics. His three most popular ones focused on Cleveland Department Stores\*, the U.S. Pharmacy Industry\*\* and Cleveland's Drive-In Restaurants\*\*\*. His interest in radio began as a teenager in the '60s when he listened to rock and roll music every day. His battery operated transistor radio opened up a new world to a very energized teen who has remained a loyal radio listener ever since.

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