

When WCCO FM first went on the air in August, 1973, many people feared it would sound just like its parent, WCCO AM. The studios were even symbolically located in the old Nicollet Hotel, the same place mother WCCO was born forty nine years earlier. (The selling of the hotel to Soul's Harbor forced WCCO FM to move to its present 11th Street location.)

Rob Brown, the station's first general manager, had been promotional director at AM for many years. Larry Haeg, Sr., (boss of it all — AM, FM, and TV), who cut his radio teeth with WCCO some three decades back was pouring a lot of exciting ideas into the new station. Even the Mark Durenberger (the station's first chief engineer who is now at Sound 80) touch was there as it had been for many years at the elder WCCO.

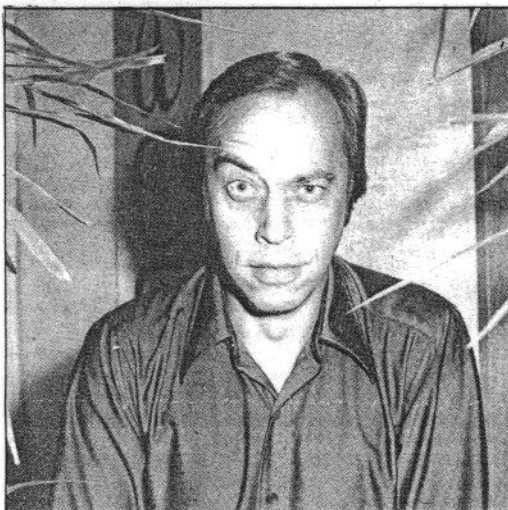
The presence of Hubert Humphrey didn't dampen worries either. The Senator had been on AM so often he was beginning to sound like a staff announcer. When at Twins games in either Bloomington or Washington D. C., he would pop into the broadcasting booth and help Halsey Hall with color. Then there was that legendary Boone and Erickson telephone interview that CBS interrupted with a net alert announcing that President Johnson had picked Humphrey as his 1964 running mate. The network commentator went on to say that Senator Humphrey hadn't been informed as yet. . . the President had been trying to reach him but his phone line was busy and had been for a long time.

But, fears were ill founded. WCCO FM 103 did not sound like its mother and it does not now. There is less talk (yet the announcers are still individual personalities). Although WCCO AM plays contemporary music, FM is more consistent in the popular vein, without being tagged a Top-40 station. Interviews and public affairs are broken up into short segments, instead of half and quarter hour and even five minute programs on one topic are heard throughout the day. Just compare that cool musical signature of FM to the production number AM uses. All this and more according to present general manager Paul Jay, makes the station "a consistency twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week."

That first broadcast day was a long ways from twenty-four hours. Paul Stagg (program director) and Dave Teller (now in Phoenix) were the entire on-the-air-staff. Each jock took four hour shifts. But, it didn't take long to increase that (it seemed as if a new personality was hired each week), and soon air time was expanded from eight to eighteen hours.

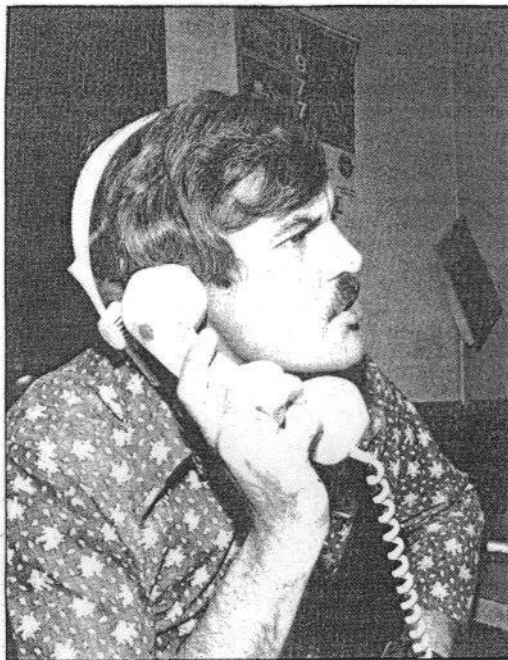
Most of the present announcers

## WCCO FM — AT THE TOP OF THE RATINGS



Paul Stagg

Ron Stoyke Riley



Carl Lensgraf

Ron Stoyke Riley

were hired during those early days. Terri Davis, WCCO FM's all night jock came in the spring of 1976 when the station went on a twenty-four hour day. Miss Davis was hired by Jay, who had hired her once before when he was chief of a Des Moines station, KIOA. She, with her unique voice and special warmth, did much for the Iowa station, as she is doing now for WCCO FM.

Twin City auto dealer, Wally McCarthy's Lindahl Olds, once had an all night sale, advertised exclusively on Terri's show. The 494 freeway dealer sold an unbelievable 93 cars, including a vehicle to an insomniac couple who wandered into the showroom at four AM wearing their pajamas.

Miss Davis wasn't the only asset Jay brought to WCCO FM. He took over the reins in 1975 and initiated his consistency policy. Ratings have been published four times since then, and the station has shown an increase with each book. Now WCCO FM occupies that choice number two spot (right behind WCCO AM) in the Twin City market.

Jay believes WCCO 103 is one of the top five FM stations in the country — ratings, revenue, and power wise. It's 100,000 watts pulsating from its tall Shoreview antenna, tops most stations in the nation (the FCC only allows major stations of the crowded East 3,000 watts.)

Program director Stagg concurs and adds, "being this young, that's really saying something. It's been a real team effort." And what a team it is. Morning drive time man is Stagg, who is known for his very smooth, but yet friendly delivery. One listener described him as "the smooth radio guy who you would like to have for a next door neighbor." He also has dialog with sportscaster, Howard Hotsell during his show. Hotsell is one of the many humorous voices announcer Tim Russell does.

Russell follows Stagg in his own voice and holds up until noon. The afternoons are filled by Carl Lensgraf, who also voices a few characters: Stella Sagwell and Sven Skarnasdag.

From four to eight, the music should be pretty good because those hours belong to music director Curt Lundgren. Late evening man Tom Ambrose follows Lundgren. Ambrose has been around the area quite a long time. He has broadcasted over WAYL, KQRS, and WWTC, and has produced and directed at University Station KUOM. After Ambrose comes Miss Davis, capping off, or beginning the day. (Your Preference.)

The two part-time announcers are Greg Gears and Peter May. May

once did afternoon drive time for KDWB. Gears was full time with WCCO FM, but his part-time business, a recording studio, did so well it became full time forcing announcing into the part-time category.

Other voices heard belong to the news and public affairs people. News director Bill Henderson gives the news through the morning. Rick Olson keeps the listeners informed during midday, and Mark Johnson, who is also legislative correspondent, delivers the evening news.

The man who searches out interesting people and subjects to air in short segments throughout the day is public affairs director Dave Haeg.

There is, however, one special program that is longer than a vignette . . . News director Henderson stints from five to six in the morning Monday through Friday. It's an agriculture-type show filled with farm news and special features. "It has great importance," says Jay, "because we are told that sixty cents of every dollar is agri-business oriented."

Besides being talented, another important asset of the on-the-air staff is that they all fall into that age group WCCO FM is trying to reach (young adult), and they're all from the station coverage area, so they know their audience.

Manager Jay knows the territory too. He was born in Montevideo, Minnesota, broadcast from KFGO in Fargo, and KDWB, KSTP, and mother WCCO in the Twin Cities. He moved from the Minneapolis-St. Paul market to St. Louis' WIL, where he was given the prestige morning-drive time on that veteran Missouri station. He soon became assistant manager, which started his transition from talent to the administration side of broadcasting. Following WIL was a ten year stint with Mid-American Media, serving the company owned radio stations in the midwest from Iowa to Michigan. Eight of those years he performed as general manager of KIOA in Des Moines.

Now, back home, Jay is combining his managerial skills and his knowledge of the area and injecting it into the station.

Records that are very popular throughout the nation but don't govern well in the station's coverage area are dropped or don't even find their way to the list.

Recordings of many local groups and singers have been placed on the playlist, and with good result. Mary McGreggor, now nationally famous, is a good example of this. Danny Stevens is very grateful to WCCO FM for spinning his latest. Now other stations are picking the group up. Danny was placed on the list because he's very good, and countless WCCO 103 listeners have grown up with

Danny and His Reasons, digging them in places like downtown Minneapolis' Depot. (now Uncle Sam's). Regional taste Jay calls it.

Another interesting aspect about people in the FM station's broadcast area . . . they're practical thinkers. Give away a fantastic prize, maybe in four or five figures, as a promotion (many stations do) and they will say, "I'll never win that."

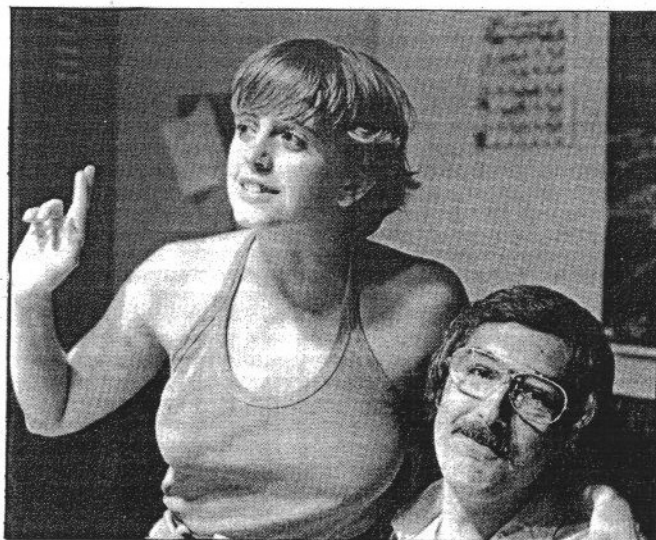
But, give something small and nice, as WCCO FM does, from a record album to a pair of skis and they will say, "well, maybe I can do it." And the simplicity of the prizes don't force people to tune into a station they may not enjoy, just to make a killing. . . but they do get people involved in WCCO FM, and have fun doing so.

Sometimes give-aways are presented as a public service, to get people involved in community activities. One such campaign won the station a new announcer for a day, and terrific coverage over the rest of the press media.

The occasion was Arbor day and WCCO FM decided to give trees away. Legislative correspondent Johnson who has a good rapport with Governor Rudy Perpich recruited the Governor to award the plants over the air. Perpich accepted, and when he sat in front of a microphone, he confessed a boyhood dream — that of being a radio announcer. The station was so grateful for his participation in the Arbor Day program they made his dream a reality. They set a later date and he became DJ for a day.

Of course, the governor isn't the only Minnesotan who likes to talk over radio. The station has given many listeners that opportunity thru its prize give-away "Trivia." The game is played ten times a day. Here's how it works; The jock will ask a question like, "On the old Donna Reed Television Show, who was Donna Reed's neighbor?" Then the listeners will start calling fast and furious with one quick answer, and sometimes, no answer, just a "Hi" (they forgot what they were going to say), until the question is correctly answered. At first many of the announcers thought the questions would be too hard, but they were surprised on how quickly the correct answers came along. A few questions have stumped the people though. One being the Donna Reed neighbor query. But of course it was Bob Crane who later became Hogan of TV's Hogan's Heroes.

Speaking of neighbors, and phone calls to the station, many listeners consider WCCO FM's personalities as (no intent of stealing a slogan from another member of



Terri Davis, Peter May

Ron Stoyke Riley

the family) good neighbors and once in a while they will phone an announcer. Terri Davis, because of warmth and the time of the day she is on receives an enormous amount of phone calls. Most are quite positive from people her delivery has turned on. But, once in a while, she'll get a bad one. One woman caller just couldn't believe Miss Davis was for real. Terri had just told her listeners how she had enjoyed a country drive, where she saw billions of stars. And if they (the listeners) felt depressed, she suggested they step outside and look at the sky.

"Aw come on!" the listener said over the phone, "Where are you coming from?" Terri told her and also how she felt about the simple things of nature. The caller then realized that the young lady who shared her excitement of star gazing with her radio audience was genuine and sincere, and that was her real personality that she projected over the air.

"I see what you mean and I'm sorry I came down on you. It's true people don't get into the simple things anymore."

Maybe that's the secret of WCCO FM's success. Technically it's a complex operation, but its personality touches on the simple things of life, whether they be music, "Trivia" to awake a pleasant memory, Stagg's soft and friendly laugh while trading quips with Howard Hotsell, the chief executive of a state announcing a hit record, or the voice of a young lady in the wee hours of the morning suggesting you enjoy the stars.

This lack of hang ups has been with the station since conception. Announcer Russell was tipped by WCCO AM's Charlie Boone when FM was going to be launched.

Russell made a tape and sent it to the new station. The small staff listened and enjoyed it. Stagg remembers, "the tape had us all cracking up with all these voices, so we hired him."

Both WCCO AM and FM employs the engineer and announcer team. This gives the jock a better chance to relate one to one with his listeners. And there's no hassle in FM's engineering department either. In fact (unlike AM) there isn't even a window between engineer and personality. There are nine highly skilled people, including chief engineer Tim Prouty in the department. Three of the technicians are women.

Elaine Brubaker, one of the ladies who puts the station on the air, also helps with bookkeeping and traffic and fills in evenings and weekends when a fellow engineer gets sick.

Besides engineering at WCCO 103, Benji McHie works the controls, announces and produces at KQRS. His Sunday morning KQ "Insight," a program he uses to produce and narrate on black perception has won many raves. It's (McHie's employment) a cooperate arrangement between WCCO FM and KQRS neither station minds.

And that's how the whole operation works, hard work, but no hassle. The results; music that reflects regional tastes, public affairs and news programs that inform

Jay sums up WCCO FM's success this way: "Music sounds the same on virtually any facility, except we have stereo and AM has monoral. So it's between the grooves that's terribly important, and that's what we're doing."