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Volume I, Issue IV



News and Information about Buffalo Broadcasting

RF Newsletter

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It's Time to Renew!

The end of the year means it's time to renew your membership in the Buffalo Broadcasters Association. Or, if you're not a member, why not become one! Our president, Dave Gillen, has sent you a letter of reminder. So, please send in your membership dues today.

Remember, only members can vote in our board elections. And only members can participate in the selection of the 2009 Buffalo Broadcasters Hall of Fame class.

As always, we're seeking your help in putting together this quarterly newsletter. Share your broadcasting memories by writing a column. And please remember to send news of your radio or television station to editor Mark Scott at mScott@wbfo.org.



Celebrate the Holidays with Your Broadcasting Colleagues

It's a holiday tradition — the Buffalo Broadcasters Association luncheon at Chef's Restaurant. We have the big rear room at Chef, so there will be plenty of room for everyone. The date of this year's luncheon is Tuesday, December, 16th at 12noon. Cost is \$18. Send your check payable to Buffalo Broadcasters Association to Herb Fleming, 112 Knowlton Ave., Kenmore, NY 14217.

This year, we're combining the holiday luncheon with our annual meeting. We'll update you about our latest initiatives. So, we'll see you on the 16th!

Industry News

The Arbitron radio ratings, 12+, for the Buffalo market in Summer 2008 has WBEN back at number one with a 10.4 share. WYRK, number one in the spring book, is in second place at 9.5. Also in the top ten are WBLK, 7.0, WGRF, 6.8, WKSE, 5.8, WEDG and WJYE, 5.3, WHTT and WTSS, 4.1 and WBUF, 4.0. Here are additional ratings. WGR ranked 11th in the summer book with a 3.6, followed by WLKK, 3.2, CKEY, 2.5, CHWO, 2.3, WWKB, 1.7, WNED-FM, 1.6, WWWS, 1.5, WXRL, 1.4, WNED-AM and CHTZ, 1.2, WDCX and WECK, 0.7, CILQ, 0.6, WJL and WLVL, 0.5, and CFNY, WHLD and WUFO, 0.4. (Note: WBFO does not purchase the summer book.)

October was filled with controversy as LIN Broadcasting, owner of WIVB and WNLO, and Time Warner Cable engaged in a stand-off that saw the two stations removed from the local cable line-up for nearly a month. LIN's contract with Time Warner expired October 2nd. Many industry watchers expected the two sides would resolve their dispute by the deadline or an extension would be granted. To everyone's surprise, the morning of October 3rd dawned with Channels 4 and 23 gone, replaced by CBS' college sports network and the HBO Family Channel respectively.

Fans of the Buffalo Bills were outraged. The Bills were scheduled to play the Arizona Cardinals on October 5th. The installers of satellite services in the Buffalo area couldn't keep up with the demand. Time Warner handed out free "rabbit ear" antennas so subscribers could watch the game over the air. And sports bars were filled to capacity.

At issue was a demand by LIN Broadcasting to be paid by Time Warner for carrying Channels 4 and 23. Just a day before the November ratings period was scheduled to begin, the two sides announced an agreement. The two stations were returned to the cable line-up. Terms were not disclosed.

WKBW TV, Channel 7 brought back Eyewitness News in October. The station abandoned its long-time news identity in 2003, rebranding itself 7 News. The once dominant news operation had consistently been rated third. It rebounded to number two during the LIN-Time Warner dispute. The return of the Eyewitness News logo and its distinctive theme was accompanied by a look back to the glory days under Irv, Rick and Tom.

The LIN-Time Warner dispute and the return of Eyewitness News to Channel 7 seem to have had an effect on the local news ratings during the November sweeps. According to an analysis in the *Buffalo News*, the first two weeks of the November sweeps showed Channel 4 reclaiming the top spot in the local news ratings at 12noon, 5, 6 and 11pm. However, the competition has tightened. WGRZ, Channel 2 wins at 6am and 5:30pm. And Channel 7 saw its ratings increase significantly at noon, 5 and 5:30pm, though it remains in third place.

**WKBW TV,
Channel 7
brought back
Eyewitness News
in October.**

Industry News, continued

On Election night, NBC's coverage on Channel 2 was number one followed by ABC, Channel 7. Interestingly, CNN came in third with an average rating of 6.6 from 8pm to midnight, beating Fox, Channel 29 and CBS' coverage on Channel 4. For more on the elections, check out "Elections Reflections" on page 4.

And WTSS and WJYE flipped to an all-holiday music format on Friday, November 14th. Interestingly, it seems the shift to Christmas music brought an end to a mild November as cold and snow moved into the region.

Comings and Goings

It was a difficult fall for employees of the three major radio broadcast groups in Buffalo. All three — Entercom, Citadel and Regent — issued pink slips to veteran employees.

Entercom released WBEN News Director Monica Wilson. Citadel laid off WGRF-97 Rock evening personality "Slick" Tom Tiberi and WHTT, Mix 104 morning co-host Gail Ann Huber. Regent released WJYE afternoon host Bob Galli and promotions director Katie Benson.

WGR evening sports talk show host Dennis Williams has moved to Channel 2 in a sales capacity. He is continuing a Monday morning call-in show on WGR through the end of Bills season.

Channel 2 meteorologist Chesley McNeil will leave the station on January 9th. He'll be joining WXIA in Atlanta, where former Channel 2 News Director Ellen Crooke now works. McNeil did weather during Channel 2's "Daybreak" and 12noon newscast.

Succeeding Crooke as news director at Channel 2 is Jeff Woodard, who moves up from an executive producing role. Joe Arena has joined WIVB's News 4 as a reporter. He comes to Buffalo from Louisiana.

Photographer Rick Swenson has retired from Channel 7 after 38 years of documenting the local news scene, first on film and then on video.

Former Buffalo Sabres player Matthew Barnaby is now a hockey analyst for ESPN.

And Tom Calderone, whose storied career began at Buffalo State's WBNY, has been named president of VH1.



Chesley McNeil

Elections Reflections

By Mark Scott



For 34 of the past 35 years, I've spent the first Tuesday of November covering an election. My first was in 1973 when I was a freshman at St. Bonaventure University. I have no memories of that first election. But I do remember my second one in 1974. I partnered with Bob McCarthy in anchoring coverage on Bona's carrier current station, WOFM. That was the year Hugh Carey was elected governor of New York. Little did Bob know that night that he would have a stellar career as one of the most respected political reporters in all of New York State. The only election year I missed was 1987, the year Dennis Gorski beat incumbent Ed Rutkowski in the race for Erie County Executive.

For all the TV and radio anchors and reporters who covered this year's elections, it's likely to rank as one of the more memorable ones in their careers. There was the seemingly endless primary season. For Buffalo media, there was a statewide angle for us to cover because of the presence of Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton in the race.

Once Barack Obama became the presumed nominee of the Democratic Party, the attention zeroed in on the party conventions held in late August and early September. This is where TV excelled. Thirty-eight million people watched Obama accept his party's nomination at the Broncos stadium in Denver. Then, less than 24 hours later, that story was overshadowed by John McCain's unexpected choice of Alaska Governor Sarah Palin as his running mate. Nearly as many people tuned in to watch her history-making address at the Republican convention in St. Paul. And millions watched the presidential and vice presidential debates.

Yet, cable TV and talk radio contributed to the polarization that is so much a part of our politics today. It was reprehensible the way some far right commentators tried to raise unjustified fears about Obama. Fox's Bill O'Reilly shouting with Congressman Barney Frank did nothing to advance our political discourse. And lest someone accuse me of siding with the left, MSNBC executives should be taken to task for the unwise decision of having their left-leaning commentators, Keith Olberman and Chris Matthews, serve as anchors of their convention coverage. Realizing that the very integrity of NBC News was at stake, the head honchos had White House Correspondent David Gregory assume anchor duties for the rest of the campaign.



Elections Reflections, Continued

Yet, there is much to tout about his year's election coverage. WBEN Political Analyst Kevin Hardwick's Sunday morning show is "must listen" for anyone interested in politics. He doesn't shy away from asking the tough questions and holding candidates accountable when they dance around their answers. But Hardwick does so respectfully and without the theatrics so common in talk radio today. And he succeeds more than anyone in being able to get competing candidates in the same studio on his Sunday show.

Obviously, I'm partial to NPR's coverage. The network's national political editor, Ken Rudin, is known as the "political junkie." His analysis is not only right on but often entertaining. I highly recommend his "Political Junkie" column at npr.org. NPR News held national listening parties following each debate, and its series of conversations on race with voters from York, PA were compelling, and yes, quite uncomfortable at times to hear.

This historic election culminated on November 4th. It seemed the networks were very careful in proclaiming states for each presidential candidate to avoid the fiasco that was part of the 2000 election. I know that NPR News is very conservative in proclaiming individual states. So, I was very surprised to hear NPR give Pennsylvania to Obama when CNN was still saying it was too close to call. Kudos to CNN. It's more important to get it right than to be first.

Many news managers likely heard from viewers and listeners that their particular station was favoring one candidate over the other. The old bromide says if you hear criticism from both sides, you must be doing something right. NPR's ombudsman, Alicia Shepard, addressed this issue in a recent column at npr.org. She quoted Purdue University Sociology Professor Philo Wasburn, who co-authored a book on media bias.

"When people are really committed to some ideological position, especially with politics, even if you present them with empirical evidence that supports the opposite of what they believe, they will reject it," said Wasburn. "Core beliefs are very, very resistant to change."

Yet, a 2005 UCLA study on media bias found that 18 of 20 major news outlets, including NPR, were left of center, compared to the average US voter. So, what do you think? Please share your comments with me, and I'll include responses in our next edition, especially if you disagree with any of my analysis here. Send along your comments to me at msscott@wbfo.org.

"When people are really committed to some ideological position, especially with politics, even if you present them with empirical evidence that supports the opposite of what they believe, they will reject it,"

Blizzard a Challenge for New Engineer

By Dave May

I read with interest your reminiscences about some of the experiences of Buffalo Broadcasters (and listeners) during some of the more bizarre weather events in the history of Western New York (March 2008 newsletter). My own most vivid incident occurred shortly after I came to work at WBEN.

I was hired as Assistant Chief Engineer in October of 1976, working with Jerry Klabunde, Tom Whalen, Tom Gill, Stan Feld, and others. My experience with digital electronics and computers is what got me that job, and I was charged with developing a computer program to produce music play lists for the DJs based on a flexible format dictated by the Program Director, Dave Hammond. Of course, I had duties dealing with normal maintenance of the electronic plant as well. In a previous job, I had sold WBEN two automation systems, and my knowledge of these complex systems was another reason I was approached for this position. Anyway...

The Blizzard of '77 began on Friday the 28th while I was at work. Some with more flexible schedules (Sales, Managers, etc.) cut out early and went home. On-air personnel and engineering did not have that flexibility, so we stayed. I

I was lodged at a motel on Niagara Falls Boulevard (I'm not sure this place had even a one star rating!) while I searched for a home so I could move my family here. About a week after arriving, I was greeted by a thirteen-inch snowfall in the latter part of October, and there was more to come almost weekly in the fall and into early winter. Snow during that period was constantly covering the ground. I found a home in Williamsville, in December, and closed on the property in early January of 1977. My family moved up to join me on January 18th 1977. Ten days later, I, and all other WNY residents were in the middle of the worst weather I had ever experienced.

The Blizzard of '77 began on Friday the 28th while I was at work. Some with more flexible schedules (Sales, Managers, etc.) cut out early and went home. On-air personnel and engineering did not have that flexibility, so we stayed. I didn't get home that night although I called the family and found them all safe and warm at home. The DJs, news announcers, and we engineers on shift were among thousands of others who just had to make other arrangements. The only food in the building was from a couple of vending machines in the lunchroom in the basement of our Elmwood Avenue studios. Since literally busloads of travelers got stuck on the street outside our location, and we opened our doors to them, the meager supply of snacks and other junk food from these machines was quickly devoured. I actually got the last item – some kind of a cabbage salad – which apparently no one else was quite hungry enough to try!

By late evening, everyone was getting very tired. There were only a couple of on-air guys taking turns ... same with the news folks. A couple of support people were also stuck there and chipped in with us engineers in trying to handle the crush of phone calls coming in regarding cancellations. We delivered these to the control room on pieces of paper bearing about nine different handwritings and in



Blizzard, Continued

no coherent order whatever. That night, I loaded up the Rock 102 automation with fresh tapes, and tried to get some sleep on top of a rack of filing cabinets in the Chief Engineer's office. The stranded folks from the busses and cars that littered Elmwood Avenue, slept mostly on the floor and tables in the lunchroom leaving that facility thoroughly trashed and smelling like an unattended gym locker room by Saturday morning.

On Saturday, we managed to get some fresh bodies in to relieve an exhausted air staff, and those of us who thought we had a chance, tried to get home. I dug my car out of the parking lot, and opened the hood. The engine compartment was completely filled with snow that had to be cleaned out before the engine could be started. I managed this and in mid afternoon, carefully picked my way through a kind of maze of streets and roads that were actually passable arriving home about an hour and a half later on the trip that was normally about 20 minutes. I was happy to be there, and immediately went to sleep for the rest of the day.

Sunday evening, the transmitter went down! I got the call from Jerry Klabunde, who had called all the engineers. Normally there was only one of us on call, but we had no idea who, if anyone, could get to our Grand Island transmitter site to correct the problem, as most roads were still choked. After about a half hour on the road, I was almost at the South Bridge when I heard the station come back on the air. I turned around and went home. I think it was Tom Whalen who got there first and discovered a blown fuse in the phaser's transfer system.

Perhaps the most notable event to come in the aftermath of the Blizzard came when I got summoned to Dave Hammond's office early the next week. "How's the work coming on the music list computer program?" he wanted to know. I told him I was making progress, and had received the brand new Altair 8800 computer the station had ordered for the project. "Can that thing help us to take and manage calls we get during snow storms?" he asked calmly. I thought about that for a minute, and said "I don't see why not." "Good," he said, "see if you can do that." With this unremarkable conversation, a new era in reporting emergency cancellation and notices was born, and by the time the snows of the next winter came, WBEN was using the first computerized system ever developed for managing the myriad calls radio stations get when the weather turns bad

An article about this system was published in BME magazine in the fall of 1977 before it was actually ever used on the air! Jeff Kaye was the first DJ anywhere to read school closings from a computerized system. It took only a couple of years before other stations in Buffalo were mimicking this with similarly good results, and I even sold my software to other stations elsewhere in the country. erized news operation. Ah, that computerized newsroom ... that's another story.

Dave May is a retired engineer. He also served as WBEN's traffic-copter reporter and hosted a talk show.

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Looking Ahead to 2009

By Dave Gillen

The Buffalo Broadcasters Association is looking forward to its biggest year yet. The board will meet with TV and radio general managers, program directors and promotions directors on Tuesday, December 16th to seek their involvement in our planned 5K Walk and Run in 2009. This event will raise money for our Association's film archiving project.

Buffalo Broadcasters

Association

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In fact, this archiving project is our biggest task. We have formed an Archiving Task Force, chaired by Rich Newberg, to oversee the digitization of the Channels 2 and 4 film libraries from the 1960s and '70s. We are very close to obtaining the grants to begin archiving the first year of film. We are about 50% of the way to obtaining a \$10,000 matching grant from BBA Member Ruth Ann Harnish to use for this project. Please consider making an end-of-the-year, tax-deductable contribution to the archive project.

Another project we're planning is cataloguing the memorabilia we've collected and are storing in our warehouse on Elk Street in Buffalo. We have everything from a TV camera and microphones to promotional tee-shirts and posters. Our goal is to someday display these items in a museum. Please consider volunteering your time for this effort.

Our Hall of Fame celebration in September remains our biggest event of the year. We also plan our "broadcasters night out" in June.

As we begin our new year, we invite all broadcasters to either join our organization or renew their membership. All members of the Buffalo Broadcasters Association receive a complimentary 2009 calendar and are able to vote for our Board of Directors and 2009 Hall of Fame elections.

On behalf of the board of the Buffalo Broadcasters Association, I thank you for your support and extend my very best wishes to you for a happy holiday season and a healthy and prosperous new year!

In Memoriam...

Joe D. (Jody) Foster, WIVB TV, November 2008

We're on the
web...[www.Buffalobroa
dcasters.com](http://www.Buffalobroadcasters.com)