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# RF Newsletter



Buffalo Broadcasters Association

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## Welcome to the Buffalo Broadcasters Association Newsletter

This is the first of what we hope will be a quarterly newsletter that we will deliver to you electronically by e-mail. My plan is to make this something that everyone participates in so that we can sustain it. This newsletter won't last if I'm the only one writing for it.

My vision for this newsletter is for it to be a place where you'll find the latest information about the Buffalo radio and television scene. So, if you're involved in marketing or public relations for your station (or even if you aren't), please add me to your email list so that I can pass along the information to our readers. My email address is [msscott@wbfo.org](mailto:msscott@wbfo.org).

We're looking for information on new hires, new programs, awards your station has received and anything else you'd like people in the broadcasting profession to know.

If you like writing, I'd love columns on your memories about Buffalo radio and television. This is an organization that is dedicated to preserving local



## Industry News

WECK-AM 1230, which is being purchased by Culver Communications from the Regent group, was expected to launch a news/talk format during the first week of March. Veteran radio broadcasters Harv Moore and Tom Donahue will host the morning show. Scott Leffler, who has a talk show on Culver's WLVL in Lockport, will also host one on WECK. Such syndicated talk show hosts as Bill O'Reilly, Dennis Miller and Jim Bohannon will round out the schedule.

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## Newsletter Welcome

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broadcasting history. It would be wonderful if some of you who have stories to tell would do so with us so that we can share them with a wider audience. What was it like to work at WKBW during its glory days? What memories do you have of working at Buffalo's first progressive station, WYSL-FM? How hard was it to work in a television newsroom before videotape? Write us a column, and we'll share it.

Will you help us out? Let's have some fun talking about the latest developments in our industry. I'll get things going with this edition. I hope to hear from you for the next!

Mark Scott  
Editor  
Industry News

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Donahue will man WECK's news desk during morning drive while program director Tom Schuh will do afternoon newscasts.

WGRZ-TV has dropped its daily 11am show, "Your Today in Western New York." The program, featuring WKSE Radio morning show host Janet Snyder, debuted in September 2007. WGRZ is now running a full half-hour of news at 12noon, directly competing with long-standing noon news shows on Channels 4 and 7.

WBFO 88.7 FM has received a \$223,500 grant from the federal Public Telecommunications Facilities Program (PTFP) to install a new tower and antenna that will increase and improve service to its Western New York audience. This is the largest single competitive grant ever received by the station. The tower and antenna will allow the station to deliver a significantly stronger signal to more than 1.15 million people within WBFO's broadcast area, and add 50,000 additional listeners to its broadcast reach. The work is expected to be completed this spring.

WNED-FM is providing its analog subchannel to the Niagara Frontier Radio Reading Service (NFRRS) for \$1 annually. The Radio Reading Service has offered daily access to print materials to thousands of area blind and print-handicapped persons since 1987. The new agreement saves the NFRRS about \$30,000 a year in leasing costs. Staff members from WNED volunteered to read from publications on March 3rd as part of the celebration launching the new partnership.

Newport (Rhode Island) Television chief and former Buffalo broadcasting executive Sandy DiPasquale is recovering after bypass surgery in January. His son Michael, VP of operations said Sandy is "doing great and will return to work shortly."

## Mark's Meanderings

By Mark Scott

The wind storm that hit Buffalo on January 30<sup>th</sup> got me to thinking about one that swept through our region when I was a kid. I must have been 12 or 13, which would put this storm around 1967 or 68. I was already interested in radio. I always had my transistor with me. Well, the strong winds began buffeting my home in West Seneca during the early morning hours. I turned on the radio to KB. Rod Roddy was doing the all-night show. As Rod was preparing to make way for Stan Roberts, KB was knocked off the air by the strong winds. The last thing I remember Rod saying was “Well, that’s all on this rickety-rackety…” and then silence.



At that point, I went to Clint Buehlman at WBEN for the latest school closing information. For many of us who grew up in the 60s and early 70s, our schools weren’t really closed until we heard Clint say it. “West Seneca Central, closed today.” Those were the five most joyous words of my boyhood.

At some point, I tuned back to KB. And there was Rod Roddy doing the morning show. Apparently, he made his way to KB’s transmitter site in Hamburg and went on the air from there while Stan remained back at 1430 Main Street, waiting for the power to return.

Some 40 years later, I was again awakened by strong winds, this time outside my home in Snyder. And this time, I would be part of the media coverage of the storm. Knowing it was going to be a crazy morning, I got up and headed to WBFO, which is about two miles from home. I was in the newsroom by 6am, and began coordinating our coverage. Meanwhile, my colleagues at the other news stations, WBEN and WNED-AM, provided outstanding coverage.

Local television also provided up-to-the-minute coverage during their morning news shows. We were tracking 7 News that morning. The station went with wall-to-wall coverage for seven hours. When I took a breather from our own coverage, I was amazed at the video of the lake ice that had breached the ice boom, clogging the Niagara River. Later in the day, I checked out News 4 and Channel 2 News at home. My friend and fellow Buffalo Broadcasters board member Rich Newberg was holding on a rail for dear life as he was reporting from the waterfront.

There’s so much talk about how the Internet is growing as a primary source of information for people. And it may be. But in a storm situation – and the power goes off – it’s radio that is providing the lifeline to people. All that’s needed is a good battery! People who need crucial information during a severe storm can get it through this now 100-year-old technology. So, kudos to everyone who went above and beyond on January 30<sup>th</sup> to keep Western New Yorkers informed!

For many of us who grew up in the 60s and early 70s, our schools weren’t really closed until we heard Clint say it. “West Seneca Central, closed today.”

## Comings and Goings...

WIVB-TV sports director Dennis Williams was released in late February after more than 11 years with the station. He was told by station management that his contract was not being renewed. For now, Williams will continue his nightly radio show on WGR Sportsradio 55, which he began doing in January.

Veteran Buffalo radio announcer Tom Schuh has been hired as program director of WECK-AM 1230. The station is in the process of being sold by the Regent group to Culver Communications, owner of WLVL Radio in Lockport. Schuh is best known for his years as program director of WHTT-FM, Oldies 104.

WNED-AM's longtime Morning Edition host Sam Anson retired in early January. Anson joined WEBR Newsradio 970 as its first sports director in 1976. Sam left WEBR in the early '80s for a short stint at WGR where he was part of Buffalo Sabres broadcasts. But he soon returned to WEBR and anchored the station's morning sportscasts through 1993, when the station changed to WNED-AM. Sam was a street reporter for WNED-AM for a short time before becoming host of the station's Morning Edition broadcasts.

Replacing Sam as Morning Edition host at WNED-AM is Jay Moran. Jay was a longtime music host on WJYE and was mostly recently with Metro Traffic. Veteran Buffalo newscaster Mark Leitner was named local host of All Thing Considered on WNED-AM. He will also continue his street reporting duties.

WBFO assistant program director and local All Things Considered Host Gabe DiMaio is leaving to become program director of WNED-FM. DiMaio, who has a law degree from the University at Buffalo, serves on the board of Public Radio Program Directors group.

WGRZ-TV has hired Dave McKinley as a reporter for Channel 2 News. This is a homecoming of sorts for Dave. He once worked at WBEN Radio before heading to Rochester, where he spent many years at WHAM Radio followed by a stint at Rochester 24-hour cable news station, R News.

Buffalo Broadcasters Association President Dave Gillen is now an account executive for WIVB-TV. Dave moved to Channel 4 from the Regent group of stations where he served in a similar position and was occasionally heard on WJYE.

Former WBLK Radio program director Skip Dillard has been named operations manager of urban/AC WBLS and gospel WLIB-AM in New York City.

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## Av Westin Critical of TV News Industry...

By Mark Scott

Av Westin was going to be a doctor. But he found himself working as a copy boy for the legendary Edward R. Murrow at CBS News. He would buy coffee and cigarettes for Murrow and wonders to this day whether that contributed to the newsman's eventual death from cancer. Westin monitored the teletypes at CBS News. He remembers thinking that when he tore off an important story from the wire, he was the only person in the newsroom who was aware of the news event in question until he turned it over to the newscaster. Westin says it was a heady feeling and caused him to change his career plans.

Av Westin went on to become one of the industry's most innovative news executives. He produced the "ABC Evening News" and its successor program "World News Tonight," and was the man behind the success of ABC's "20/20." Westin was the Buffalo Broadcasters Association's first guest in its new speakers series program, appearing before about 100 people at the WNED studios on February 20<sup>th</sup>.

Westin says the model developed by Murrow for television news is still in use today. But he says the industry has changed – for the worse – since he began at CBS News in 1949. Back then, he said, network news departments were "jewels." News was the loss leader that brought prestige to the networks.

Westin says things began to change in the 1970s. Television executives found they could make money from news. News budgets were cut. The focus was no longer on quality but on the bottom line, said Westin.

"Titillation meant ratings," said Westin. "Newscasts began giving viewers what they wanted to watch rather than what they needed to know."

Westin said television news is not going away. "But the cell phone is the future," he said. The average person can now feed pictures and voiced comments to news sources immediately. Westin cautioned that could open the door to fakery.

Westin did share some anecdotes from his time in the business. While producing for the CBS Morning News in the 1950s, Westin and his staff were preparing for a fashion show one morning. One of the program's bookers found out at the last moment that one of the models canceled, leaving a gaping hole that needed to be filled. So, Westin told the booker to fill in for the missing model. And that, he said, was the first television appearance of Barbara Walters.

Westin urged a large contingent of college students in the audience to learn how to protect themselves. He says the media are no longer viewed as the "white knight," and that management won't defend them if they find themselves in trouble during their careers.



## Don't Be Left in the Dust

By Susan Banks

It's no wonder young up-and-comers in broadcasting roll their eyes when we veterans of television news get together. We reminisce about the racket from the typewriters, the clackety-clacking of news wires and the screeching police radios at the assignment desk. We wax nostalgic about how we smoked on the set just before a newscast and kept bottles of bourbon in the bottom drawer.

We tend to forget that it took hours to do what we can accomplish in minutes now. We forget how bad the quality of film and early tape was back then. In short, we forget that the good ol' days weren't always so good.

Recently, The Buffalo News asked for my opinion about where broadcasting in this market is headed. Like businesses everywhere, I said the industry is changing and will continue to change, in some cases dramatically, because of two key factors: economics and technology.

“Ask questions of your general manager. Talk to your sales people. They are the ones bringing in the money. Make it a point to know everyone in the building and what they do.”

Both, especially the economics side, have touched most of us. We have all heard repeatedly (ad nauseum, in fact) that the population in our region is shrinking and that all the stations, along with various publications, are grabbing for a piece of the smaller advertising pie. Owners want to make money. Duh. They have expenses, as do we all, but they have bigger expenses and must answer to corporate masters and stockholders. We can whine about corporate greed all we want, but that's pointless. It's a lot more beneficial to smarten up about what's happening around you.

I mean that literally. Find out all you can about the business end of the business you're in. Get the financial reports from your company and read them. Ask questions of your general manager. Talk to your sales people. They are the ones bringing in the money. Make it a point to know everyone in the building and what they do. Understand their challenges. Try to develop a very clear picture of the financial situation of your company, your city and the rest of the world.

While you're at it, get your own financial house in order. No matter how much you make, or how little, you should have a plan. It's never too early or too late. Find someone reliable to help you if necessary. Money is at the root of every-

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thing, not just evil. You want to be smart about yours and not keep your head in the sand when it comes to financial planning.

While you're at it, look at yourself as a "mini business" that you should invest in. Another fact of broadcasting life is that the jobs are getting fewer and the competition stiffer. You want the edge? Then do what it takes to be the very best you can be. (Full disclosure time: yes, I do image consulting and coaching in my new life. I have seen people improve and do better with some help. I suggest that you use whoever will help you, whether it's a consultant, your agent, former boss, or your cousin Thelma. Send them tapes and LISTEN to feedback.) Don't forget to maintain a current resume and tape. Oh yes, and do keep in touch with everyone you know in the business and keep in touch frequently. Your contacts will prove invaluable now and later. It's smart business.

Here's something else to add to your list of things to when it comes to being a smart businessperson: keep up with technology. That's the second major factor in our changing world. Become a multiple threat. Develop proficiency with the computer and any other equipment or gadget that will help you. Reporters, get a good working knowledge of what photographers do; photogs and engineers, learn how to write and plug in a script. The more you learn and the more skills you have, the better your chance of getting and keeping a job in this new century.

Reality check: never assume that because you have a job, you will keep it or that you "deserve" it. Your job is not an entitlement, it is a privilege and it can be lost so fast it'll make your head spin, sometimes because of forces you have no control over (see above paragraph on economics). Just don't be left in the dust because you didn't do everything possible to learn and improve yourself.

Oh, and while you're at it? Have some fun. Work on making great memories you can share with "newbies" when you become the "old timer." You're in a great business that I enjoyed for more than 30 years and watched metamorphose from a chugging locomotive to a sleek, super-fast train. Jump on and have a great ride!

(Susan Banks was a reporter and anchorwoman in Buffalo and other markets for 32 years. She is now president of Susan Banks Image Building and Marketing. You may reach her at [susan@banksimage.com](mailto:susan@banksimage.com).)

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Dillard was most recently program director of urban WPGC in Washington, DC. He was with WBLK from 1996-2003.

Citadel has announced that Victor Sansone has been appointed president and GM of its country outlets KSCS and KTYS in Dallas, Texas. Sansone joined Capital Cities in Buffalo in 1977 as a sales representative for WKBW Radio. He was promoted to local sales manager and left Buffalo in 1983. Citadel owns WGRF, WHTT, WEDG, WHLD-AM and WBBF-AM in Buffalo.

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## A Look Back at Buffalo Broadcasting History...

We're on the  
web...  
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Buffalo Broadcasters Association Hall of Famer Ed Little ended a 62-year career as he delivered his last newscast and turned out the lights at the WBEN studios at 2077 Elmwood Avenue on March 5, 2000. The next day, WBEN began broadcasting from 500 Corporate Parkway in Amherst.

WKBW Radio's legendary program director Jeff Kaye joined KB and did his first show from 7pm to midnight on March 10, 1966. In his first couple of breaks, Kaye said the call letters of his old station, WBZ in Boston, rather than KB. But those jitters quickly faded and Kaye went on to program one of the nation's most successful Top 40 radio station.

Van Miller joined WBEN-AM on March 21, 1955. Miller went on to become sports director at Channel 4 and was the longtime voice of the Buffalo Bills.

And WNED-TV, Channel 17, went on the air on March 23, 1959. Hall of Famer Mike Collins guided the public broadcasting station from those early days through the late 1990s.