

WVMT Stereo ⁶²⁰

Burlington

Station 1-ARY

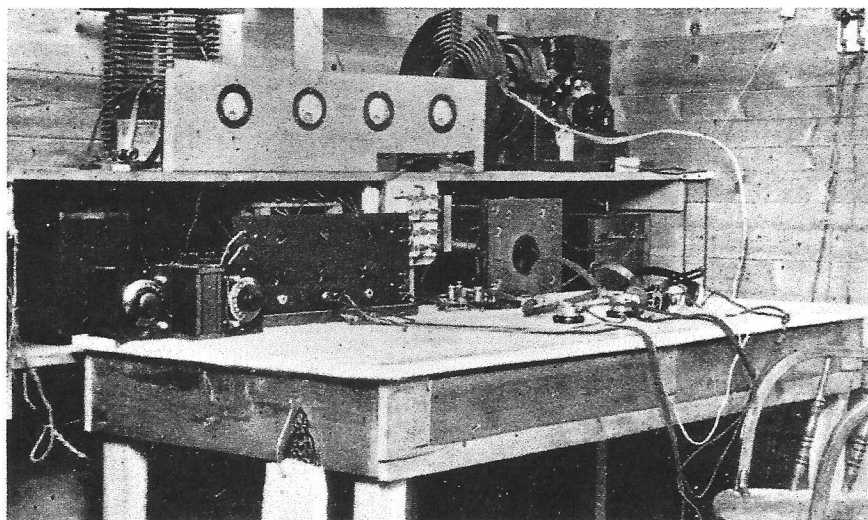
Vermont broadcasting was born on a college campus. Somewhere at sea during World War I was a young man named George Brodie, whose college career at the University of Vermont had been interrupted by the war. After serving as a radio operator in the Navy, he returned to UVM in the fall of 1919. He brought with him both experience and enthusiasm for radio, and is considered the founder of the University of Vermont Radio Club.

The club operated amateur station 1-ARY, which was licensed by the U.S. Department of Commerce in 1919. This was not radio as we know it today, but wireless telegraphy. They were not broadcasting to a mass audience but engaging in two-way, point-to-point wireless communication with other amateur stations, like the "Ham Radio" enthusiasts of today.

And they were very good at it! By 1921 they were in communication with points in 23 states, conversing daily with Princeton. Three club members demonstrated their radio receiving equipment at the State Fair that year. They received and reported news, weather, sports scores and market quotations. The purpose of their exhibit was to demonstrate to Vermont farmers how they could be kept informed of market conditions through radio. The exhibit managed to generate considerable interest, and club members helped install several radio sets for farmers the next summer.

During the International Transat-

lantic Tests conducted by the American Radio Relay League in December of 1921, the signals of 1-ARY were the first to successfully cross the Atlantic and be heard in Scotland. Both the



UVM amateur station 1-ARY circa 1919.

spark and continuous wave sets were used in sending these calls.

Begun in the autumn of 1921, club members and the University's Engineering Department completed the installation of a 100-watt continuous wave transmitter in the spring of 1922. The University's Agricultural College received a license from the Department of Commerce with the call sign "WCAX" at that time as well. It was operated by the University Extension Service and the "C-A-X" stood for "College of Agriculture Extension."

WCAX

WCAX broadcast the 118th Commencement Program at UVM on June 16, 1922. A receiving set was even installed on the steamer Ticonderoga for use during the alumni boat ride on June 18th. Broadcasts were sporadic at first and regularly scheduled programming did not begin until October 10, 1924.

By then a new station had been built by William M. Hall, an electrical engineering student at the time. WCAX was now a totally separate entity from 1-ARY, although they were housed in the same building. Leon W. Dean had become editor of the Extension Service and became WCAX's first regular radio announcer. For one hour every Friday night, the station broadcast farm information, University events, and lectures by Professors on just about any topic. They even did "remotes," by running phone lines to the Gymnasium and the Old Mill Building to broadcast University basketball games and music recitals.

The University operated WCAX until 1931, and as such it was the forerunner not only of commercial radio in Vermont, but of college radio and public radio as well.

WCAX Becomes Commercial

Col. H. Nelson Jackson, President of the *Burlington Daily News*, bought the station on Nov. 4, 1931 and transformed it into a commercial enterprise. The station was moved from the campus to College Street in downtown Burlington, and new 125 foot towers were installed. Power was increased to 250 watts in 1937 and a new 250 ft. antenna tower was put on the *Daily News* building.

In 1938 the *Daily News* and WCAX were purchased by Charles P. Hasbrook. WCAX became the Vermont outlet for CBS in 1940, and the power was increased to 1000 watts. Power was again increased in 1947 to 5000 watts. The newspaper was sold, and in 1954 WCAX-TV was born (see

separate article on page 33).

In 1958, the two stations moved to the WCAX Radio-TV Center at 100 Market Square on Shelburne Road. It was the first location designed specifically for broadcasting. In 1960 WCAX radio switched from CBS to NBC, a change from soap operas and classical music to increased local programming.

WCAX Becomes WVMT

In 1963, WCAX radio was sold to Vermont Radio, Inc. (Simon Goldman, President), which is owned by James Broadcasting Company, Inc. The call letters were changed to WVMT. The station moved to its present location in Colchester in 1967.

The most recent excitement at WVMT is the change to AM stereo. □

Sources

"Radio Work at the University of Vermont", by Ralph Spalding, from *The Vermonter* (magazine), Vol. 27, Number Two, 1922; "Radio Broadcasting Comes to Vermont: WCAX, the University of Vermont Station," by William M. Hall, from *Vermont History*, the proceedings of the Vermont Historical Society, Vol. 49, Number 2, Spring 1981; "Programming Practices and Ascertainment of Community Needs in Vermont Radio Broadcasting: An Analysis of License Renewal Applications," a 1976 Master's Thesis by Millyn Dana Moore; George Goldring (WVMT's present General Manager); George Cameron (past G.M. and V.P.); Lillie Brown (NAB); and "A History of Vermont Broadcasting," a 1961 undergraduate UVM term paper by Richard J. Cooper. □



WVMT was awarded one of the first National Association of Broadcasters' Crystal Radio Awards for its public service programming in 1987. WVMT competed with hundreds of stations for this award. □

Profile: George Cameron

Pictured here at home casually relaxing after his retirement in 1987 is George Cameron, long-time manager and part owner of WVMT.

A Rutland native, his first job in radio was at WHWB as a sportscaster in the early '50s. By 1960



You know I hate having my picture taken.

he had worked his way up to the position of manager of WDOT in Burlington, and came to WVMT in 1965. He was the guiding force of WVMT for over two decades, as well as at WSYB in Rutland during the seventeen years that Vermont Radio, Inc. owned that station from 1970 to 1987. □



Bolton Valley Ski Challenge 1970, WVMT staffers left to right: Ernie Farrar, Burt Dean (kneeling), Tom Cheek, Jack Barry, George Cameron and Bill Arnold.

WCAX Radio Notables

A.E. Spokes
General Manager, 1963

Whitey Killick
WCAX News Editor in the 1940's

John Millar
Vice President and General Manager, 1964

WVMT Hall of Fame

Jim Donovan
left WVMT in '86 to become an NBC sportscaster

Tom Cheek
left WVMT in '77 to become the voice of the Toronto Blue Jays

Chip Hobart
left WVMT in '69 to work for Drake/Chenault, and WAAP in Boston