LOOKING BACK AT RADIO IN 1930

by Gene Martin

The North American broadcast band of 1930 extended from 540 to 1500 kilocycles, and it contained 642 U.S. stations, 81 Canadians, 27 Mexicans, and 17 Cubans. (Please allow me to use the term "kilocycles," for that was the word used in those days, 25 years or so before "kilo-Hertz" was coined to replace it.)

1930 also preceded such things as regular news broadcasts, 24-hour stations, directional antennas, singing commercials, soap operas, and Arbitrons. 1930 was at least a dozen years before the first disc jockey -- a time when stations did not have program formats; instead, they aimed at

providing something for everybody.

This article is accompanied by a reproduction of a log of the broadcast tand of 1930. The log is from the December, 1930, issue of Radio Index, better known as Radiox. To the DA-ers of the day, Radex was the essential tool to pursuit of the distant station. It was the most reliable DA publication available in North America.

The <u>Radex</u> frequency list contains a world of information. Take time to study the <u>publisher's</u> key which precedes the listing. The key contains the explanation for the various symbols in the columns.

Today's DX-ers can have a field day wondering what it would be like to go over this broadcast band with a good radio. DX-ers of the present day will find similarities as well as major differences between the bands of 1930 and now. There are changes, addition, and deletions on every frequency yet from 550 to 720 much has remained the same. Over all these years, KFI has been on 640, WGN on 720, WMAQ on 670, WGR, WKRC, and KSD on 550. There is San Francisco on 680 and New York on 660, although in these cases the calls have changed.

Today's $\Im X$ -ers may be astonished to see only two 500 watt stations --both Canadians -- on 1030. Many $\Im X$ -ers used to report in $\Im A$ -ext that they had heard stations on every frequency except 10301. From Dallas, I was able to log both these Canadians, and for a long time, Vancouver was my most prized catch: 1740 miles!

The sadex list shows how extensive was the practice of sharing time on the same frequency. There were five stations in Calgary on 690, and I believe they all used the same transmitter. But most shared time arrangements required separate transmitters. KEX and KOB divided time on 1180, WBEM and KFAB on 770, WWL and KWKH on 850, and so on. When there was sufficient distance between station sharing time, each was permitted to operate at the same time during the day. I don't recall if WBAL and WTIC, on 1060, had this sort of arrangement but probably not, as 1930 was in the era of flat-top antannas radiating superior skywaves. WWL and KWKH had to share time both day and night. However, WBBM and KFAB only had to share time at night, and daytime listeners in central Iowa often complained about interference between the two.

Two stations sharing time on a frequency was quite a feasible arrangement inasmuch as not many stations of the time figured they had to be on the air all day or past midnight anyway. A typical broadcast schedule might have a station signing on at 7 a.m. for a courle of hours, then returning to the air at 11 a.m. for another two or three hours, then returning to the air once again at 5 p.m. until 10 or 11 at night. It is my impression now, many years after the fact, that it was the Chicago stations which first carried programs into the hours past midnight. The program fare in these hours was always the same--dance bands from some hotel or ballroom.

No self-respecting radio station of 1930 would ever be caught playing records! Everything which reached the air was live, obliging stations to hire musicians, singers, and other entertainment. Needless to say, a lot of this talent was medicore. Yet the other side of the coin is that readio of that day offered local artists oppurtunities to be heard; this is not often the case nowadays. In all portions of the country the cream of this local talent eventually gained national recognition and was heard on the networks, making it into Show Biz.

The Federal Radio Commission, which preceded the FCC as radio's governing body, frowned on any station which broadcast popular records of the day, though the practice was never forbidden. The idea was that the people's airwaves should not be used to broadcast records which were easily available to anyone on the retail market. The FRC saw radio as much more than a jukebox! How times have changed!

The FRC attitude on records greatly irritated W. K. Henderson, owner of KWKH, Shreveport, La. (His memory is preserved in the call-letters.) To say that Henderson is a colorful character in U. S. radio history would be a vast understatement. He carried on a perpetual feud with the FRC and in the late 1920's and early 1930's he would personally go on the air and spend many minutes at a time denouncing the FRC. His grievances would make a long list, often having to do with FRC regulations: the KWKH power, having to divide time with WHL, and more. But one of his biggest complaints was over the FRC's discouragement of playing records. KWKH played records and Henderson defended this, telling listeners over and over again that his recorded music was far superior to any local talent he could find on the Shreveport scene.

Networks did exist in 1930. The National Broadcasting Company operated two networks, later to be known as the Red and Blue networks. The Columbia Broadcasting System was also operating in 1930, always referred to as "Columbia." It would not come to be known as "CBS" for many years. The key station of NBC-Red was WEAF, New York; the key for the Blue was WJZ, New York. WEAF is now wNBC and wJZ is now WABC. Columbia's key station was WARC, New York. Some time in the 1940's Columbia persuaded WCBS, a tiny station in Springfield, Ill., to give up its call. (You will find it in the list at 1210, a local channel.) Most likely, that was the most profitable transaction the Illinois station made that year. "ABC, New York then became WCIC; WJ? quickly appropriated the call which Columbia had abandoned. It was all very timely, for by that time NPC had sold NJZ and its Plue Network which became the American Broadcasting Company. It was at this same time that NFC itself got into the act, changing WAAF to WRCA. (RCA was and still is the parent company of NBC.) There is a certain lustre in call letters which date back to the early days of radio; they are surrounded by an aura of prestige. The prestige attached to WJZ was so strong that Westinghouse gave it new life and adopted it as the call for its TV station in Baltimore.

The anathema attatched to records existed strongly in the networks from the very teginnings in 1926 and 1927. The first recorded program ever heard on the networks was King Edward VIII's abdication speech in Lecember, 1936, as relayed via short wave from the BBC. NEC's high brass of that day spent hours restling with their broadcast standards before deciding reluctantly it had to be carried, recorded or not. The whole world new in advance of this broadcast that it would probably be the King's abdication. Winston Churchill was credited with being the King's ghost-writer on that occasion.

All during the great days of network radio, all programs on NEC and CES were live -- music, drama, comedy, quiz games, soap poeras, news reports and commentaries. However, by the mid '30's many individual stations across the country were playing records for all or a portion of their broadcast schedules. Still there were no program formats. Even a station which played records played every kind of music, from grand opera to modern jazz to spirituals on Sunday morning.

The manner in which broadcasting served the religious needs of the people in the 1930's deserves special attention because it is so drastically different from what reaches the airwaves nowadays. To put it bluntly, there were no "leather-lunged" evangelists on the air, peddling salvation and exhorting the pious for contributions. The stations of the day refused to sell time to any religious organization. Instead, broadcast time was given to churches as a part of the station rublic service obligations. Throughout the country the hour from 11 a.m. to noon on Stadays was donated to the churches of the community. The various denominations of a city would alternate broadcasting Sunday services in this hour. The networks also followed this policy, usually reserving time on Sunday afternoons for regular national broadcasts by the major denominations. The broadcast ethica of the day did not permit the commercialization of religion.

Popular network programs on the air early in the East were often repeated later that night for stations in the West. Thus Amos 'n' Andy was on the air at 7 p. m., Eastern time, on a Elue network of sixteen stations, the farthest west being WLW, Cincinnati. The program was on the air again at 11 p. m., Eastern time, on a network of twenty-six stations, the farthest east being WMMQ, Chicago. Since these were the days before tape recordings, Amos 'n' Andy actually had to perform their fifteen-minute stint twice each night. As late as 1943, Fred Allen's hour show on CBS was aired twice each Sunday night. Inasmuch as I was a great Fred Allen fan, I often heard his first show from KRLD in Dallas at eight o' clock and later, at 10, I would listen to the repeat show on KSL, Salt Lake City. I discovered that he often improved on his comedy between shows.

I do not recall the year that Mutual Proadcasting became the nation's fourth network, although I recall it coincided with WLW's use of 500,000 watts. Mutual was founded initially as a means of linking WOR, WLW and WGN.

These three stations formed Mutual with the intention of forming a small network to reach the lucrative markets of New York and Chicago with the vast audience of supernower alw. Eventually Wlw pulled out of the network and Mutual put aside its intention to remain small and began adding affilates wherever it could. However, WOR remained Mutual's key station and GN remained affiliated for many years.

Today's Da-ers, contemplating this frequency list, should remember that this relatively uncluttered spectrum was filled with stations that would sign-off every night. Every station on the Pacific coast, for example as potentially available to the Eastern DX-er at a certain time each night, sually by midnight or 1 a. m. For the Western DA-er many stations on the ast coast were possible by 3 or 4 a. m. if the Eastern station had an early ign-on. However, the reception reports of the early 1930's leave little foult that the "astern listener had the best of this coast-to-coast recer-

The first station I remember being on all-night is at 1200 on the list ith 100 watts.* "very Dx-er in the nation who was halfway proficient logged that station, and, from my Texas location, I soon had it classified is a "rest."

Another very early all-nighter was JKS, Gary, Indiana, 1,000 watts on 1360, and a thir was AFTY, Hopkinsville, Fentucky, 1,000 watts on 940. Memory recalls that AMFB ("World's Most Reautiful Ballroom," the Trianon) in Chicago, a one-nundred watter on 1210 was another of the very early allnighters. Its demise had come some time before December, 1930, as it does not appear in the frequency list.

The Great Detression of the early 1970's resulted in the weeding out of many stations through bankrupcies, mergers, and the like, before this list was published. The process continued throughout the Dopression, and the number of stations existing two years after the list was smaller than that shown here.

Looking over the crowded local frequencies where powers ranged from or 10 watts up to 100, one will find many stations which have since graduated to positions on the regional or clear channels. The eye falls on $JJ\pi$, Mansfield, Ohio, on 1210. This is one of the ancestors of Gleveland's $\lambda J\pi$, now on 850.

The log shows that many stations have moved short distances over the /ears. FRC, Clarinda, Iowa, is now in Des Moines. WCR, Newark, is now ew York. FFAP has moved from Lincoln to Omaha, and FMMJ, Clay Center is low in Grand Island. Many more may be spotted in the list.

A number of stations prominent in the 1930's have vanished completely leaving no legacy in today's broadcast spectrum. Tuch is the case of WTG, tlartic fity, a major station in 1930, on a clear channel (1100, shared with a New York station that has since been replaced by JN (N). Such is also the case of "JAY, Cleveland, on £10, a well known station of the time. (FVL, Denver, became the parent of FIM) and bears no relation at all to the resent KFIL, Pueblo. On 1490, two of the three stations there in 1930 were interred perma-

mently years ago, "JAZ and WCRD in Chicago, which shared time with WCKY, then in Covington, Kentucky. WJAZ was about the most famous station in the country from 1925 until 1927. Owned by the Zenith Radio Corporation. AJAF took the Department of Commerce into federal court challenging its right to ssue station licences and assign frequencies. WJAZ was eventually upheld by the Supreme Court, inaugurating an era when all stations were free to pick any frequency they liked and no licence was required to start a new station. During this breakdown in radio regulation many new stations came onto the air picking their own frequencies and the broadcast band was thrown into chaos. Often the new stations ignored the usual ten kilocycle separation between charmels. It was a time of "wave jumping," as it was called. WJAZ picked 910 for itself, and WHT took up the practice of using two channels, using around 750 at night and 1260 by day. The chaos contined more than two years, until Congress passed legislation providing for a Pederal Radio Commission. The FRC proceded immediately to reorganize the proadcast band, assigning new frequencies and issuing licences. But that 927 reallocation lasted no more than about a year, when it was replaced by 1928 reallocation, a massive frequency shake-up. This 1930 set-up is essentially the same as that provided for in 1928. It is easy to see that the Commission assigned WJAZ to the cellar! Not long afterward, Zenith

gave up the idea of operating a radio station in Chicago. *Editor's note: The call KGFJ, according to some accounts, originally tood for "Keep Good Folks Joyful (24 hours a day)," at a time when a 24our-a-day station was truly a novelty.

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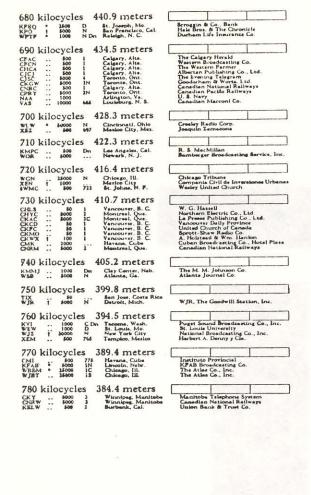


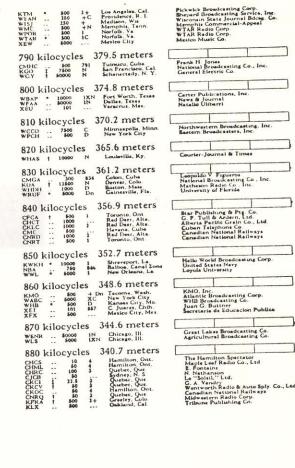
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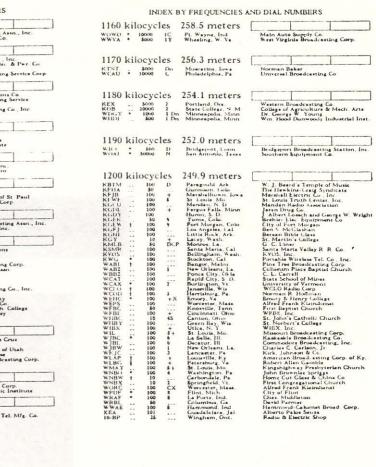
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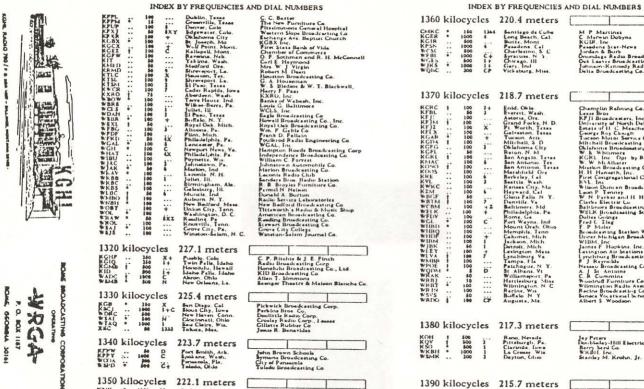
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1230 kilocycles	243.8 meters	
KFOD 100 KFOM 150 +	Anchorage, Alaska Albuquerque, N. Max. San Francisco, Cal. Boeton, Mass. Indianapolis, Ind. Boeton, Mass. State Collegs, Pa. South Bend, Ind.	Anchorage Radio Club New Merico Broadcasting Co. Pacific Broadcasting Corp. Stepard Broadcasting Service, Inc. Inclinated Broadcasting Service, Inc. Inclinated Broadcasting Service, Inc. Particle Processing Service, Inc. Pennsylvania State Gollega South Band Tribune
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Pasadana Star-News
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INDEX BY FREQUENCIES AND DIAL NUMBERS 1400 kilocycles 214.2 meters CNIBY ... KIO ... KOCW ... WBBA ... WBBC ... WKBI ... WKBI ... WKBI ... WKBI ... WKBI ... WSDA ... WSGH ... Line E Coccultus la Perry Building Co-College for Worsen Purduc University Procklyn Broadcasting Corp. Line Strong Corp. Central Broadcasting Corp. Company Corp. Havana, Cuba Ogden, Utah Chickasha, Okla, Lafayete, Ind. Brooklyn, N. Y. Brooklyn, N. Y. Culver, Ind. Intlanapolia, Ind. Brooklyn, N. Y. Brooklyn, N. Y. Brooklyn, N. Y. 1408 X + 1+ 1410 kilocycles 212.6 meters Rockford Broadcasters, Inc. Glah Radio Service Glah Radio Service Hational Radio & Broadcasting Corp. Press Pub. Co. Lasi Ingtun Air Stations Room Blaik Radio Carp. Richmund Development Corp. Richmund Developme KFI V 1 KGRS . *BCM * *DAG * *WLEX ... *WODX ... *WODX ... *WSFA * *VSSH ! Rockford, III. Amerillo, Teass Bay City, Mich. Amerillo, Teass Sheboygan, Wis. Leainguo, Mass. 5. Dertmooth, Mass Mobile, Ala Roanoke, Va. Montgornery, Ala. Boston, Mass. L C IX 500 500 150 500 500 500 500 150 500 Benson Polytechnic Institute RE ST. Printing Co. W. E. W. Frinting Co. W. E. W. Frinting Co. Berlice Radio Co. Berlice Radio Co. Berlice Radio Co. Let Victoria Co. Berlice Radio Co. Let Victoria Co. Let Victori 1420 kilocycles 211.1 meters 211.1 meters Portland, One, Was, Pand Sul, City, Cat. Sing, City, Cat. Namps, Habbo Flagistal, Arts. Namps, Habbo Flagistal, Arts. Alva, Ohia. KIPS ... KFOW ... WEIGH ... WEIGH ... WEIGH ... WING ... XY 5 ::: X+ 1430 kilocycles 209.7 meters Pacific Development Radio Co, Great Plains Broadcasting Co. Penna: State Policy Service Co. Commercial Radio Service Co. Memphis Broadcasting Co. Pennaylvania Broadcasting Co. Memphis Broadcasting Co. 1000 500 500 500 500 500 Los Angelos, Cel North Piatte, Neb. Harrisburg, Pa. Celumbus, Ohio Memphia, Tenn. Harrisburg, Pa. Memphia, Lann. N D X+

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