COMMERCIAL RADIO AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA: WRUF--AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

By

EDWARD LANE BURROWS

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE COUNCIL OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATIONS

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate Council of the University of Florida in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Communications

COMMERCIAL RADIO AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA: WRUF--AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

By

Edward Lane Burrows

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Chairman: Kenneth A. Christiansen
Major Department: Journalism and Communications

This study describes the creation and development of radio station WRUF, a commercial AM and FM broadcasting facility owned by the State of Florida and located on the University of Florida campus at Gainesville. Prior to this study, no organized body of information had existed to trace the history of what many consider to be an unusual communications organization.

Data was gathered from the WRUF station files, the University Archives, accounts in newspapers and other publications and from personal interviews with past and present WRUF staff members.

The study determined that WRUF was originally established in 1928, largely at the urging of a state-wide citizen's group interested in creating a powerful publicity voice to broadcast the merits of Florida living

to residents of northern states.

State funding support grew thin in the great depression of the 1930s and WRUF had to sell commercial advertising time to stay in operation. Also in the 1930s, the dream of a nationwide publicity voice faded away as technical limitations forced WRUF to concentrate on serving a local and regional audience.

Under the guidance of directors Garland W. Powell (1929-56) and Kenneth F. Small (1956-74), WRUF has for more than four decades provided entertainment and information to a large area of north-central Florida. In addition, the station has contributed to the training of young men and women for the broadcasting profession. Since 1930, WRUF has been staffed largely by student announcers, supervised by a cadre of professional broadcasters.

In the past two decades, WRUF has been under increasing economic pressure from competing local stations. Although not the dominant regional communications voice it once was, WRUF continues to survive as a training unit for young broadcasters and a revenue-producing agency of the state government.

Chairman

INTRODUCTION

WRUF is a radio broadcasting station whose operating license, granted by the Federal Communications Commission, is held by the Board of Regents of Florida's state university system. The station transmits signals in both the AM and FM frequency spectra; its studios and transmission facilities are located at Gainesville, on University of Florida property.

The modern WRUF serves a variety of functions. It is at once a training center for students interested in broadcasting careers, an entertainment medium for citizens in the surrounding area, a revenue-producing unit of the state government and an outlet for informational and cultural material reflecting University and community activities.

Reasons for the Study

It appears that there exists no organized body of information tracing the evolution of the WRUF broadcasting station from its origin to the present. Isolated bits of information have appeared in a variety of forms, but because these factual morsels have stood alone, unrelated

to other facts, they have in the past been of scant value.

Numerous former WRUF staff members have, in recent years, expressed the view that the story of the station's development should be told. Reasons given for such interest in the station's past have been diverse. Some former staff members have expressed feelings of nostalgia; others, the conviction that the station has been of extraordinary service through the years. Still others have advanced the idea that WRUF's creation and development took place in circumstances which marked the station as highly unusual, significantly different from most others in the nation.

Former WRUF employees, many still active in broadcast-related careers throughout the country, seem to have little knowledge of the station except for memories of the time they were employed there. Despite the lack of detailed knowledge, many former WRUF staff members seem to feel a strong sentimental attachment to the station, because it was there that they received their first training and encouragement in their profession.

Broadcasting educators and their students at the University of Florida and elsewhere utilize specific case studies to illustrate principles affecting various broadcasting practices. Students and practitioners of radio broadcasting in Florida have so far been denied a potentially valuable close-at-hand example.

It is also suggested that, since no comprehensive account of WRUF's existence has been available in the past, it would now be worthwhile to preserve for historical purposes as much information on the subject as possible. It seemed important to delay no further, for with the passage of time fewer and fewer persons associated with the station in its earliest years would remain alive to share their memories.

Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to provide what might be termed a basic or introductory history of the WRUF radio station. Such an account could be of value in several ways. First, it may serve as a helpful case study in station evolution for broadcast educators and students. Additionally, the product of this research is intended to be an addition to the accumulated historical material on Florida and its institutions, with the realization that the role of radio and other mass communications media in the development of this state should not be neglected. Finally, it is intended that this study illuminate, for the broadcaster and the general public alike, aspects of radio pioneering that were for many years known only to a few.

Limitations of the Study

Constituting, as it does, the first attempt to detail

the development of WRUF, this study is essentially a job of straightforward reporting. Attention is primarily devoted to recording events as they occurred, rather than to analyzing why those events occurred as they did. This is not to say that the reasons behind events are totally ignored. In a preliminary study such as this, however, it seemed most appropriate to concentrate primarily on the unfolding of events.

This study, then, will serve as an overview of the subject. It is to be expected that certain aspects of the development of WRUF will be deserving of more detailed study by other researchers in the future.

Sources of Data

For this study there was, unfortunately, no ready supply of prior research to use as a springboard to further study. However, information has become available from a variety of sources. Often one source has led to another which, in turn, has given clues as to where more data could be found.

It has been possible to obtain valuable data from newspaper accounts of the founding of WRUF, since the state-wide news value of the project caused close attention to be focused on it. Reporters and editors of newspapers throughout Florida wrote thousands of inches of copy, some of which has been preserved in microfilm form. Additionally, government documents and other publications

have added valuable insights, not only into WRUF's case in particular, but also into other aspects of radio broadcasting in the United States during the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Further, the station's own files, along with other University of Florida documents were important sources of data. Some of this material is preserved in the University of Florida Archives, partly in the form of correspondence between station personnel and administrators elsewhere in the University.

Perhaps the most important sources of data have been the people involved in the operation of the station. Extensive use has been made of personal interviews. In addition to providing essential factual information, these interviews have helped to introduce an added warmth, a more personal dimension to the WRUF story.

Data Collection Methods

Collection of data began with a systematic, chronological search of newspaper accounts of the station's founding and early operations. This was combined with a thorough perusal of station documents and archive materials, dating from the earliest relevant entries and working toward the present. This was done in order to assemble a basic framework of material which could be later cross-checked and built upon, especially by means of the personal interviews. Throughout

the data-gathering process, the systematic, chronological approach has been helpful in preserving a sense of continuity.

The personal interview phase of data gathering began after most of the documents had been examined. An effort was made to conduct the personal interviews in a chronological sequence, that is, the earliest employees were interviewed before the more modern ones whenever possible.

A card file maintained by WRUF, listing most former employees and their dates of service, aided in the compilation of a list of potential interview subjects. Additional names were suggested by persons who knew the present whereabouts of former WRUF staff members. Also, the Executive Director of the Florida Association of Broadcasters placed a notice in that organization's April, 1974 newsletter soliciting responses from former WRUF staff members. Replies were received from as far away as Denver, Colorado and Richmond, Virginia.

A standard list of questions served as a guide during face-to-face interviews. The questions were phrased in such a way as to lead the subject into detailed descriptions rather than short yes-or-no answers. The question list was not intended to be restrictive and, in fact, other questions were asked in practically all face-to-face interviews, as suggested by the nature of the conversation.

A basic list of suggested questions was thought to be

more appropriate in this case than an inflexible questionnaire, since each person interviewed had a unique set of experiences to relate. The question list could be custom-tailored, and was in several instances, to elicit remembrances of important events known to have taken place while particular individuals were associated with WRUF.

Some former WRUF staff members with important information to provide were located far from Gainesville and could not be questioned in person. To those persons a cover letter, question list and audio tape cassette were sent via first-class mail. The research project was explained and the interviewees were requested to use the question list as a stimulant to their memories, recording their comments on the audio tape cassette. Each completed cassette was to be returned in the postage paid envelope provided in the packet of materials.

↓

J F M A M J J A S O N D

CHAPTER I
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STATION

At 8:30 p.m. on October 13, 1928, University of Florida President John J. Tigert stepped to the microphone as master of ceremonies for the official dedication of Florida's new "super-powered"[1] radio voice. The assembled dignitaries, including a United States Senator, a member of the United States House of Representatives, a candidate for the governorship of Florida, the state Attorney General and other visitors crowded into the newly-constructed studios of what was intended to be the state's electronic ambassador of good will. This powerful radio voice, so the predictions went, would reach out to millions of listeners across North America, singing the praises of life in Florida. The new station was WRUF.

Advertising Scheme for Florida

The story of WRUF can be traced much farther back in time than its official opening day. In fact, the station's origins are rooted in the desire for rapid economic growth that marked Florida during the boom-time of the early 1920s. By early 1925, many businessmen of the state were giving serious thought to the idea that Florida

should advertise its advantages to the rest of the nation. This, some felt, would spur the state's economic growth by attracting new residents and business interests.

A New Year's Day dispatch from Tallahassee by an Associated Press writer said that at least one state government official, Agriculture Commissioner Nathan Mayo, appeared to be in sympathy with the advertising idea.

The article noted:

> Too little is being done by the state of Florida--that is the state government itself--to spread before the people of the country the message telling of the advantages this state offers.... While the legislature now provides a total of $8,500 yearly in appropriations which...may be considered for advertising purposes by the Department of Agriculture, many of the cities...are devoting larger sums...to encourage persons to settle, or at least sojourn within their borders during the winter.
>
> Commissioner of Agriculture Nathan Mayo expresses the opinion that the state should adopt a more progressive attitude.
> .....
> He feels that a fund of not less than $100,000 should be provided, to be administered by and used entirely for the state-at-large.[2]

The possible use of radio in advertising Florida to the nation was not mentioned in the report. Through the winter of 1925, newspapers in various sections of Florida called attention to what they perceived as growing public support for an advertising campaign.

On March 26, 1925 in West Palm Beach, at a meeting of businessmen from throughout Florida, the feasibility of carrying out a publicity campaign for the state was one of

the main topics for discussion.[3] Among those attending the day-long conference was Governor John W. Martin.

The Governor's presence at the businessmen's conference having lent at least the illusion of high official support for the advertising idea, other branches of the state government also felt the need to act. On April 21, the Associated Press reported:

> Recommendation of an appropriation of $200,000 to be used for the creation of a state advertising board will be made to the legislature by the joint senate and house appropriations committee.[4]

Radio Station Proposed

Shortly after the joint appropriations committee made its recommendation, the idea of placing a radio station at the University of Florida was advanced. On April 28, 1925 the Gainesville Daily Sun commented:

> Friends and supporters of the University of Florida have asked the legislature for an appropriation sufficient to install an up-to-date radio broadcasting station at the University of Florida....
>
> There has been expressed an undercurrent of fear whereby Gainesville might receive some publicity from the broadcasting station at the expense of the taxpayers of the state. Of course the view is taken only by the most narrow-minded and should not be considered with any degree of seriousness as a barrier to the station at the University. The station would be operated by the University and talent from all over the state and country would be invited to give programs from the University station, however, occasionally some Gainesville talent would be used.[5]

The newspaper added optimistically that talent from across the United States could be reasonably expected to perform on the station. Perhaps this was an indication of the powerful mystique surrounding radio broadcasting of that era. It should be noted that at the time the newspaper article was written, there were few radio stations on the air in Florida. It may have been that circumstances made the idea of locating a radio station at the University a grand prospect indeed, far more so than might be the case today.

Radio Appropriation Approved

By late May, 1925, a bill proposing the installation of a radio station at the University of Florida had been introduced in the legislature.[6] The bill, as approved by both houses and signed by Governor Martin, read as follows:

> AN ACT to make an appropriation for the installation of a Radio Broadcasting Station at the University of Florida, in Gainesville, and to provide for connecting with Same by Remote Control the State Capitol and the Florida State College for Women at Tallahassee.
>
> Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:
>
> Section 1. That the sum of Fifty Thousand Dollars, payable in two annual installments of Twenty-Five Thousand dollars each, is hereby appropriated out of any monies in the State Treasury not otherwide appropriated for the purpose of establishing and putting into practical operation a super-power radio broadcasting station to be located at and operated by the University of Florida, located at Gainesville, in Alachua County.
>
> Section 2. That said sum shall be expended

by and under direction of the Commissioners of State Institutions of the State Institutions of the State of Florida, who shall have the power to enter into a contract for the erection and installation of said broadcasting station.

Section 3. Said station when installed shall be of five kilowatt power maximum, and shall be connected by suitable remote control apparatus with the State Capitol at Tallahassee and the Florida State College for Women, at Tallahassee, and the time for broadcasting on said station shall be divided in such a manner as the commissioners of State Institutions may prescribe.

Section 4. It shall be the duty of the Commissioner of Agriculture to cause to be broadcast all useful and necessary information concerning market conditions, crops, and weather, as he may deem for the best interests of the state.

Section 5. The slogan for said station shall be "Watch Florida lead all" and the call letters, subject to approval of the United States licensing authorities shall be WFLA to symbolize said slogan.

Section 6. This Act shall take effect upon its becoming a law.

APPROVED June 8, 1925.[7]

Roughly coincident with the governmental move to locate a radio station at the University, increased attention was being paid to advertising north Florida in particular. Governor Martin sounded that theme in a July 14 speech in Jacksonville. The Governor endorsed a plan to raise a $200,000 fund to promote the northern section of the state which, he predicted, would soon come into its own as the state's growth continued.[8]

On August 23, 1925, Agriculture Commissioner Mayo appeared before the state Board of Control (forerunner of

today's Board of Regents), which regulated the state-supported system of higher education. Mayo, made responsible by the new radio law for getting agricultural information on the air regularly, became active in the planning of the station, though it was to remain more directly under the authority of the Board of Control.[9]

As planning for the radio station continued through the fall of 1925, business groups throughout Florida were becoming alarmed at what they considered false and unscrupulous publicity about Florida appearing in northern news media. Committees were formed and conferences were held by concerned citizens aimed at stopping untruthful reports about the state.[10]

Radio Technology Progresses

Meanwhile, radio technology was making progress. On January 2, 1926 the Radio Corporation of America was reported to have experimented with the simultaneous transmission of program material by AM stations in various parts of the United States, along with stations in Great Britain and Argentina. The stations were interconnected either by direct wire or short wave radio transmission.[11]

It was also in early 1926 that progress was made in another technical area, one that may be assumed to have had a far greater impact on radio's growing popularity with American listeners. Early in January, a group of radio set manufacurers met in Chicago to formulate a code

of standards for radio parts. This was apparently in response to consumer demand for easy-to-obtain interchangeable spare parts, capable of use with any brand of receiving set.[12] Industry efforts of this type could only have aided radio's rise in popularity.

Radio Regulation Organized

The federal government, meanwhile, was taking steps to organize what had been haphazard regulation of radio broadcasting in the United States. In March, 1926, a bill to create a five-member regulatory commission was introduced in the U. S. House of Representatives. Although approved by the House,[13] the measure languished for the rest of 1926 without Senate approval, as that body debated the advisability of various proposals. Finally, in January, 1927, both houses reached agreement on the idea of a commission whose five members would be appointed by the President. Supervised by the Secretary of Commerce, the commission would issue broadcasting licenses and rule on controversial issues.[14]

Gainesville's First Broadcast

On April 13, 1927, an unusual event gave north-central Florida listeners a preview of things to come when the Redpath Chautauqua traveling show arrived in Gainesville for a week's series of programs. A portable radio transmitter was reportedly set up to broadcast each night from University

Auditorium, where local talent played prominent roles in the programs.[15] The Gainesville Daily Sun reported:

> Radio fans within a radius of two hundred miles of Gainesville, last night, were treated to the first concert ever broadcast from the University City when the Redpath Chautauqua portable transmitting set sent out an interesting program from the University auditorium.
> .....
> The concert was broadcast directly from the stage of the University auditorium where the one hundred watt transmitting set has been installed for a series of concerts each night this week.[16]

Local artists appearing in that premiere broadcast from Gainesville included organist Claude Murphree, who was later to appear many times on WRUF, the University of Florida Glee Club and the University's "Floridians" orchestra.

Second Radio Appropriation Passed

By the spring of 1927 it had become apparent to state government officials that the original $50,000 legislative appropriation would not be sufficient to establish the new radio station. The state legislature enacted a second law, likewise signed by Governor Martin, this time allocating $100,000 for installing the station on the University campus. The new law differed somewhat from the original, and was worded as follows:

> AN ACT To Amend Chapter 10241, Laws of Florida, Acts of 1925, Same Being An Act Making An Appropriation to Install a Radio Broadcasting Station at the University of Florida at Gainesville.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

That Chapter 10241, Laws of Florida, Acts of 1925, be and same is hereby amended to read as follows:

Section 1. That the sum of fifty thousand dollars appropriated by said Chapter 10241 be and same is hereby continued and made available for the purpose of this act, and an additional sum of fifty thousand dollars or as much thereof as may be necessary be and same is hereby appropriated out of the "General Inspection Fund" created by Chapter 10149, Acts of 1925, not otherwise alloted or contracted for. The said one hundred thousand dollars or as much thereof as may be necessary is hereby appropriated for the purpose of designating, constructing, operating and maintaining a radio broadcasting station to be located at the University of Florida, and operated under the supervision of the Engineering College of the University located at Gainesville, Alachua County, Florida.

Section 2. That said sum or as much thereof as may be necessary shall be expended by and under the direction of the Board of Control, who shall have power to enter into a contract or contracts for the design, erection, installation, operation and maintenance of said broadcasting station.

Section 3. Said station shall be of a power not to exceed 5 K.W. maximum, and shall be so designated and constructed by the use of suitable pickup apparatus that the State Capitol at Tallahassee and the Florida State College for Women at Tallahassee and the Florida State Marketing Bureau at Jacksonville, may broadcast over a leased wire; and the time for broadcasting on said station shall be divided between the same and the University of Florida in such manner as the Board of Control may prescribe.

Section 4. It shall be the duty of the Commissioner of Agriculture to cause to be broadcasted all useful and necessary information concerning market conditions, crops and weather, as he may deem for the best interest of the State.

Section 5. This Act shall take effect upon its becoming a law.

Approved June 3, 1927.[17]

Radio Equipment Purchased

Following the passage of the second appropriations law, little action was taken until late in the summer. In September the Board of Control, designated by the legislature as overseers of the station, approved the call letters WHBN as those to be used by the new station.[18] This was apparently a reference to what had been a St. Petersburg station, owned by the First Avenue Methodist Church of that city, the transmitting apparatus of which had been purchased by a citizens' committee and transported to Gainesville.[19]

While full details of the transfer of the WHBN equipment to state control are not clear, a group of Gainesville area businessmen apparently took the initiative and bought the station in order to secure an assigned transmitting frequency.[20] It had been feared that, if the state had applied in the normal fashion to the Federal Radio Commission for a transmitting frequency, it might have been placed at the end of a waiting list already more than 500 names long.[21] Thus, the citizens' group was, in effect, able to purchase a frequency by purchasing the transmitter of an established station.

State Radio Committee Formed

On October 11, 1927, the Gainesville Daily Sun reported

the formation of the Florida State Radio Citizens Committee, noting that the committee had the support of such groups as chambers of commerce, Kiwanis, Rotary and other clubs and civic groups. The committee, whose members included businessmen from all areas of Florida, passed a resolution urging prompt action by government officials to get the station on the air.[22] The committee referred to the new station by the call letters KVOF, the last three of which were to stand for "Voice of Florida."

It is not certain who was the first to use the call letters KVOF, nor what prompted that departure from the original suggestion of WFLA. However, the references to the proposed station as KVOF persisted in news reports throughout the state until late in the summer of 1928.

The proposed station was indeed getting attention in other areas of Florida. The Leesburg Commercial, in October, 1927, added its own expression of support to the venture, saying in an editorial "This [the proposed station] is a very desirable adjunct to the other public efforts that are being made to put Florida favorably before the people of the whole country and we hope there will be nothing in the way of the state board of control acting favorably and quickly upon it."[23]

Slow Progress Criticized

Meanwhile, businessmen in Sarasota recognized the

potential value of radio broadcasting and purchased the transmitting equipment of station WJBB, moving it from its original site in Tampa. This, coupled with official slowness in getting the state station ready, caused the Clearwater Sun to remark:

> No doubt this will bring a cry of anguish and further pleadings from Gainesville, Tallahassee and Jacksonville who are still trying to evolve some means of bringing action toward installing KVOF.... It is safe to say that there are others in the state just as interested in seeing the station erected as the three cities mentioned but someone or something seems to have slipped.[24]

The Board of Control was scheduled to meet on October 17, 1927 and many Floridians expected that action would finally be taken on the radio station matter. More than two years had passed since the original radio legislation had been enacted in Tallahassee. On the day before the meeting, the Gainesville Daily Sun commented in an editorial column that, in addition to purchasing the WHBN equipment, "The committee of citizens also secured the permission of the Radio Commission to change the name of the station to KVOF (Voice of Florida), and this has now become a familiar word to every Floridian."[25] The editorial concluded with the optimistic prediction: "If permission is given [by the Board of Control] the station should be in operation by January."[26]

On the following day, the day of the Board of Control meeting, the Gainesville Daily Sun declared in a burst of

poetic fervor: "...all Florida will have a great and powerful voice--a voice equal to that of the great KDKA, WJZ and other stations--to tell its story and to broadcast its joy.... Is it any wonder that the action of the board of control is breathlessly awaited."[27]

Contrary to what many had expected, the board postponed action on the station. Instead, the board instructed the Attorney General to deliver an opinion as to whether the legislature's funding measure actually required the board to construct a station or merely permitted it to do so if it saw fit. The board indicated it wished to know if necessary construction funds were actually available for use before proceeding with the project. This prompted criticism from those who considered these to be unnecessary delays. The Tampa Times commented:

> It will, of course, have to be known if the money is avialable. It looks as if this might have been determined before now, had there been a real desire to do so. And there must be something concrete to go on--such as plans, specifications and estimated costs. These too, might have been in hand--with little effort.
>
> The opinion of Attorney General Davis as to whether the legislative act authorizing the station is mandatory or directory doesn't appear to be necessary to progress in the matter, if it is desired to progress. If the legislation in question is mandatory the station must be constructed. If it is merely permissive the board of control will provide it--if it wills to. What has happened makes it look a bit as if it does not so will.[28]

By the end of October, it was announced that Governor

Martin had personally arranged to make building funds available and had said "It is up to the board of control to establish it."[29] This left little doubt as to the position of the board--it appeared to have no choice in the matter. To make the record clear, however, the Attorney General did issue a legal opinion declaring the legislature's appropriations bill mandatory upon the Board of Control.[30]

By the beginning of November, 1927, the belief was spreading that the last obstacle to the construction of the radio station had been removed. On November 8, Governor Martin and state Comptroller Ernest Amos arranged to place the appropriated $100,000 at the disposal of the Board of Control for the building of the station.[31] Finally, on November 14, the board voted to proceed immediately with construction.[32]

Radio Commission Approves Station

Late in November the Federal Radio Commission officially approved a transmitting frequency of 1480 kilocycles (kc) and a power of 5000 watts for the state station. A committee consisting of University of Florida President Albert A. Murphree, M. M. Parrish, chairman of the Florida State Citizens' Radio Committee and C. Addison Pound, chairman of the radio committee of the Gainesville Chamber of Commerce had conducted negotiations with the commission. A statement

attributed to Vice-Chairman Sykes of the Federal Radio Commission indicated that "if Florida should want to increase her power, there will be no difficulty in increasing up to 50,000 watts, in accordance with the arrangement just concluded."[33]

Confusion Over Call Letters

The conclusion of these negotiations brought renewed hope that the new station could be placed in operation within a short time, perhaps in the early spring of 1928. Before the end of 1927, however, another difficulty arose regarding the name of the station. What many Floridians saw as a monumental problem arose from the fact that, while the suggested call letters KVOF had become so well accepted by the state's citizens, all the state's negotiations with the Federal Radio Commission had been conducted using the call letters WHBN, those assigned to the St. Petersburg station purchased and moved to Gainesville.

It must be kept in mind that Florida had not petitioned the Federal Radio Commission for a frequency and power assignment to operate a new station; rather, they had asked for a change in frequency and power of an existing station. As the Gainesville Daily Sun explained the situation:

> ...it was found that there would have to be special action of the Federal Radio Commission to have the power allotted to WHBN raised from ten watts to 5,000 watts, which is to be the power of the new Florida station. Finally, efforts

were successful to have the wave length of WHBN changed to a channel where there will be minimum interference.

Thus it is that all negotiations have been conducted with the commission under the designation of WHBN. The station has been popularly known as KVOF, and the next thing to be done is to urge the Federal Radio Commission to make this change official. It is understood that use of the letters KVOF will be somewhat at variance with the system established by the Federal Radio Commission [except for the special case KDKA in Pittsburgh, call signs beginning with the letter K had been customarily given only to stations west of the Mississippi River], but the letters are so desirable and so universally approved, that it is hoped the commission will see fit to make the change.

WHBN is hardly distinctive enough to be of much value to the new Florida state-owned station. It signifies nothing and is very difficult to remember. The great majority of Floridians supporting the station are desirous of securing KVOF as the call signal, and they will stand squarely behind all efforts to secure it.[34]

The question of what letters would make up the call sign of the new station would not be answered until late in the summer of 1928, when the station was only a few weeks away from the inauguration of its service. The most frequently discussed call sign possibilities, WFLA, KVOF and WHBN were all discarded by the Federal Radio Commission. Finally, the account of the new station's transmitter tests conducted in August, 1928, reported that "The station which has had many names since its inception...has finally been given a permanent name by the Federal Radio Commission. In future the station will be known as WRUF."[35] The public would come to recognize the last three letters as symbolizing "Radio-University of Florida."

Aside from other difficulties hampering the radio station establishment efforts, supporters of the station and the University of Florida were shocked by the sudden death of President Albert A. Murphree on December 20, 1927. Dr. Murphree had guided the University since 1909. Although he had lent his assistance to the establishment of the radio station on the University campus, Murphree did not live to hear its first broadcast. By the time of his death, it had been more than 2 1/2 years since the radio station idea had been proposed.

The year 1927 became 1928, still with no "Voice of Florida" on the air. On New Year's Eve, America's listeners were treated to special programs from radio stations across the nation. New York's WJZ featured the New York Symphony Orchestra at 8:00 p.m. and a New Year's Eve religious service at 11:15. Dance music to usher in the new year was a standard offering on many stations. In the south, Nashville's WSM broadcast a 10:00 p.m. barn dance. KTHS in Hot Springs, Arkansas offered a special New Year's eve celebration, as did KOA in Denver.[36]

It would not be until 1928 was more than half spent that Florida had its own state broadcasting operation on the air.

Progress in 1928

Work on the state's radio station proceeded again in early 1928, when in mid-February the contract was let for construction of the station building. The contract was awarded to T. H. Crisp and Company, of Sarasota, on their estimate of $12,594, lowest among four bidders. A published report of the transaction noted:

> The contract price calls for the erection of a one story control building of brick construction, without grading work or electrical wiring. The building will contain a room for the broadcasting apparatus, a studio, director's office and watchman's room.
>
> The building will be situated some 1,500 feet south of the auditorium on the university campus.[37]

By the beginning of April, work was under way on the station building; the concrete foundations designed to support the two steel transmitting towers had already been poured. At least one University spokesman, an engineering professor named Higgins, was willing to predict that the station would be "open" by May 1. Whether "open" meant on the air is not known but, if so, that estimate was to be missed by a wide margin.[38]

Work on the station continued through the summer of 1928. Meanwhile, observers of the radio industry began to develop new ideas of its potential power. The Miami Herald offered its comments about the impact of the medium on politics:

> The radio will affect politics and influence the campaign methods to be observed by candidates.... The country has grown too large for any person to expect to reach a majority of the people through personal visitations. It is too strenuous, too big a job for any man to accomplish.
> .....
> It is here that the radio enters. Heretofore the people might hope to hear the candidates if they were fortunate enough to be in a town which they visited. Now the people may listen in on most of the addresses they deliver regardless of where the speech is made.... It is this national use of the radio which makes its governmental control without political bias so important. If a party would supervise the radio in its own interests, then it could silence the opposition on the air.[39]

By August, 1928, the building and the two transmitting towers just north of it had been completed. The steel towers were 200 feet high and 400 feet apart. On August 8, the transmitting equipment underwent its initial tests, directed by D. H. Newman, an engineer from the Bell Telephone Laboratories whose affiliated company, Western Electric, had manufactured the equipment. The tests were observed by Dr. J. R. Benton, Dean of the Engineering College and by engineering professor A. M. Skillett, who had been named Engineer-in-Charge of the station.[40]

WRUF's First Test Broadcasts

At 10:00 a.m. August 8, 1928, the new station began a series of on-the-air transmitter tests--the first time the station broadcast a signal as WRUF. The initial engineering trial was described as a short program "...that consisted of only a few victrola selections"[41] with engineer Skillett acting

as the announcer. Those radio listeners who might have heard the new station's broadcast test were urged by the announcer to write to the station, telling how clearly they received the signal.

The tests, it should be pointed out, were for technical purposes only. The choice of program material, records and chatter, was immaterial; some kind of sound had to be broadcast in order to determine how far the station could be clearly heard. Testing was needed because the Federal Radio Commission required stations to conform to certain technical standards as part of the licensing procedure; that body's successor, the Federal Communications Commission, still does the same.

In late August, as it became clear that the station would begin transmitting regular programs before much more time had passed, news media again furnished reminders that all sections of Florida should cooperate in providing program material and that the station could serve as the state's primary means of advertising itself to the rest of the nation.[42]

In early September WRUF conducted more engineering tests, this time broadcasting music and short announcements from midnight until 1:00 a.m. each night for a week. The tests were done by special permission of the Federal Radio Commission. By this time Bobby Griffin had been appointed Program Director and Jack Phessington had been retained as

Chief Transmitter Operator.

In the test broadcasts, Griffin asked listeners to write, phone or send telegrams to the station giving their location and telling how they received the signal. A report of the tests indicated some of the replies were acknowledged by Griffin on the air. The report further noted that "A Victor electrolar is used to play the latest records, and such music as is put out by Guy Lombardo's Royal Canadians, Paul Whiteman, Coon-Sanders Night Hawks, and other famous orchestras is played."[43]

By mid-September, WRUF had received enough reply cards from listeners to indicate that the earlier test broadcasts had been heard over long distances. As the Gainesville Daily Sun reported on September 16, "...the number of persons reporting reception of test programs in states north of the Mason-Dixon Line exceeds the number in any other section of the country. Practically every report from northern listeners has been favorable and many listeners have been under the impression that WRUF is more powerful than it really is."[44]

The report went on to say that reply cards had been received by Program Director Griffin from 25 states and Canada. Listeners in Pennsylvania, New York, Ohio and Illinois reportedly sent in more replies than those in any other states outside Florida. The mail-in response from

of

listeners was apparently the reason for the Gainesville Daily Sun's comment that "WRUF's apparent effective broadcast area is bounded by a great arc extending from Port Arthur, Texas to Rockland, Maine."[45]

Advertising to be Allowed on WRUF

It was early in September that first official mention was made of what would become perhaps the most important factor in WRUF's future operations. State Attorney General Fred H. Davis, in a legal opinion rendered from his Tallahassee office, reaffirmed the view that the Board of Control was authorized to operate WRUF not only as a University station but as an instrument of statewide purposes, adding that the board "...has the right to make such rules and regulations governing its use as it sees fit."[46]

Then, Davis said that the board also had the power to allow commercial advertising, explaining his position in the following terms:

> The legislature...in passing the law, is presumed to have passed the same in the light of usual customs and practices incident to the operation of radio stations generally, which customs and practices were known to the legislature to involve a limited use of the station for advertising purposes and realization of fees therefrom, which are used to defray the expenses of operation. In this way, a station is made to a certain extent to pay its own way.[47]

The Gainesville Daily Sun, in its editorial columns of September 13, 1928 agreed with the Attorney General's

opinion. On the matter of the station's being the entire state's tool instead of strictly for the University, the Sun contended "...it would have been absurd to have placed an initial investment of almost a quarter of a million dollars in laboratory equipment for students studying radio along with their other courses."[48]

Additionally, on the possibility of WRUF's accepting paid advertising, the Sun commented:

> Thus our Attorney General...has opened the door for programs of such scope as to enable WRUF to compete favorably with other great stations of the nation. It will be possible for Florida's five kilowatt outfit to secure the very best of talent.[49]

Commercialism may have held the solution to another of WRUF's problems, thought the Sun. It appeared that station planners, while appropriating money for construction, may not have allowed sufficient funds to operate it for long. The Sun said:

> One of the first problems which confronted Major B. C. Riley, who has direct charge of the station, was a paucity of funds with which to carry on until the legislature meets in 1929. Those who had followed the developments surrounding the station had hoped that commercial programs, and programs for the various cities and civic organizations of Florida, could be admitted and a reasonable fee charged for such services. It was easily seen that were this possible the lack of finances would not cripple the station to any great extent.
>
> It is to be hoped that the new station will be offered to commercial organizations at limited times and also that it will be offered to the Democratic and Republican national committees for the present campaign at reasonable fees.[50]

Following WRUF's test period, it was not intended to go on the air again until about October 1, at which time it was scheduled to begin continuous operations. The Federal Radio Commission had recently given WRUF a different transmitting frequency, changing it from the original 1480 kc to 1470 kc. The change was not immediate however, and the commission intended WRUF to inaugurate its regular program service on the old frequency. The change to the new one was to take effect on November 11, 1928.[51]

Programs Planned for WRUF

Bobby Griffin, variously referred to as Program Director and as Chief Announcer of WRUF, announced in mid-September, 1928 that efforts would be made to provide something of interest to every class of listener. Published information indicated that both educational and entertainment programs would be provided from the very outset of the new station's operations.

It was reported that program offerings would include "...special agricultural talks by experts from the Florida Experiment Station, talks for rural and urban housewives, children's features, scientific and literary lectures by University Professors, and numerous programs planned by civic organizations over the state."[52]

It was apparently intended that, despite the effort

to include program material from interests elsewhere in the state, heavy reliance would have to fall on local talent for the presentation of musical and other entertainment. During September, 1928, auditions were held in Gainesville for those who were interested in appearing on the air for WRUF.

Emergency Service by WRUF

Even before the start of regular operations, WRUF was pressed into emergency service late in September, 1928. With special permission from the Federal Radio Commission, WRUF went on the air ahead of schedule to solicit aid for south Florida residents after a hurricane swept through the lower part of the state.

First, as the storm struck the lower east coast on September 16, WRUF stayed on the air through the night, monitoring downstate radio broadcasts and relaying information about the hurricane's fury to listeners and other stations farther north.[53]

Then, beginning on September 24 and for several days thereafter, prominent local citizens went on the air to appeal for donations of funds and supplies for the relief of south Florida storm sufferers. Dr. John J. Tigert, who had succeeded Dr. Murphree as University of Florida President, made a personal appeal as did various local clergymen and

B. C. Riley, overall supervisor of the station and Director of the University's General Extension Division. Program Director and Chief Announcer Bobby Griffin was also heard frequently on the air during the special broadcasts.[54]

According to Griffin, WRUF managed to raise at least $1,200.00 in cash through its broadcast appeals. Some of the donations came from as far away as South Carolina and Illinois.[55]

WRUF Begins Regular Operations

In what the Gainesville Daily Sun called "An event of monumental interest to this community and to all of Florida,"[56] WRUF began regular broadcasting operations on October 1, 1928. The first program was broadcast at 10:00 a.m. and the station was to be on the air each day beginning at that time with broadcasts also scheduled on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday evenings.[57]

By Saturday, October 13, all was in readiness for the official dedication of the new station. Dignitaries invited for the occasion were honored guests at the afternoon's football game on Fleming Field, in which the Florida Gators trounced Auburn University, 27-0.

Then, at 8:30 p.m., organist Claude Murphree sounded the strains of "The Orange and Blue" on the massive Anderson

Memorial Organ in University Auditorium, linked by microphone and cable to the WRUF studio. The dedication ceremony began.

An account of the event from the WRUF station files noted that:

> The important guests on the inaugural broadcast included University President John J. Tigert; U. S. Senator Duncan U. Fletcher; Doyle E. Carlton, Democratic nominee for governor of Florida; Fred Davis, Attorney General of Florida; Congressman Lex Green; and P. K. Yonge, Chairman of the Board of Control.
>
> The program also featured the University String Quartet, under the direction of R. DeWitt Brown. Selections included "Old Black Joe," "'Til the Sands of the Desert Grow Cold," "Home Sweet Home," and "We are The Boys of Old Florida."[58]

The dedication ceremony, according to contemporary accounts, was held in connection with "...state trials in the second annual Atwater-Kent radio scholarship auditions."[59] The Atwater-Kent Company, a manufacturer of radio receiving sets, had apparently devised this nationwide music scholarship competition to publicize their products. The auditions were held from 6:00 to 8:30 p.m. and were resumed following the dedication broadcast.[60]

At the time of the station's dedication, the belief still persisted that WRUF would be the servant of the entire state, rather than only the University or the Gainesville area.

Regarding the dedication of the new station, the

Gainesville Daily Sun remarked in an editorial column:

> Few events have been more significant in the history of this city than the formal opening of WRUF...
>
> In getting these speakers to come here for this occasion the authorities had in mind the fact that they will impress the people of this state, and make folks realize that here is the state owned station for the benefit of all Florida, and not any one particular section.
>
> WRUF can do much to eliminate sectionalism in this state and to knit it into a composite whole.[61]

Accompanied by optimistic tributes from many Floridians, the new radio "Voice of Florida" took to the airwaves. By the time it had begun regular operations, more than 3 1/2 years had elapsed since interested citizens first began talking of a massive advertising scheme for Florida.

The initial organization of the station had been accomplished, although that phase had been by no means trouble-free. The next few years would bring new difficulties for the WRUF staff to overcome, before the new station could be considered firmly established.

Notes

1. "Announce Full Membership of Voice of Florida Radio Committee of One Hundred," Daily Sun (Gainesville, FL), October 11, 1927, p. 6. This was just one of many references to the station as super-powered. Its transmitting power has never exceeded 5,000 watts, although by January, 1928 standards it was considered a strong station.

2. "Too Little Done In Publicity Line for Sunshine State," Ibid., January 2, 1925, p. 8.

3. "Prominent People Gather to Attend All State Meeting," Ibid., March 26, 1925, p. 1.

4. "Bill Creating Advertising Board and Calling for $200,000 Appropriation is Pending Before Both Houses," Ibid., April 22, 1925, p. 1.

5. "A Broadcasting Station For the University," Ibid., April 28, 1925, p. 4.

6. "Radio Station at University Asked," Ibid., May 25, 1925, p. 3.

7. Laws of Florida: General Laws, (1925) I pp. 456-457, quoted in Donald W. Poucher: "The Voice of Florida," brief research paper, University of Florida, 1964.

8. "North Florida Must Advertise, Martin," Daily Sun (Gainesville, FL), July 15, 1925, p. 1.

9. "Mayo to Present Radio Station Plans Today," Ibid., July 15, 1925, p. 1.

10. "Most Prominent Men of State Will Serve on Truth Committee," Ibid., November 19, 1925, p. 5.

11. "Radio Corporation Attempts to Link World Through Air," Ibid., January 2, 1926, p. 1.

12. "Code of Standards Formed for Radio," Ibid., January 7, 1926, sec. 2, p. 1.

13. "First Big Bill in Favor of Radio is Sent on By House," Ibid., March 16, 1926, p. 1.

14. "Tentative Agreement on Radio is Reached," Ibid., January 23, 1926, p. 1.

15. "First Radio Program is Broadcast from Gainesville Station," Ibid., April 14, 1927, p. 1.

16. Ibid.

17. Laws of Florida: General Laws, (1927) I pp. 1065-1066, quoted in "Radio Station WRUF, Part I," unpublished manuscript from WRUF station files (author not listed, but reported to have been written about 1950 by Station Director Garland W. Powell), pp. 16-18.

18. "Florida State Station Authorized To Be Established Here By State Board of Control," Daily Sun (Gainesville, FL), September 13, 1927, p. 1.

19. "The Board of Control Meeting," Ibid., October 16, 1927, p. 8.

20. The author of the manuscript titled "Radio Station WRUF" mentioned in Note 17 reports that it was the University which purchased the WHBN transmitting equipment and moved it to Gainesville. He is thought to be in error on this point, since repeated news articles referred to the WHBN purchase as the work of a radio citizens' committee made up of businessmen.

21. "Florida State Station Authorized To Be Established Here By State Board of Control," Daily Sun (Gainesville, FL), September 13, 1927, p. 1.

22. "Announce Full Membership of Voice of Florida Radio Committee of One Hundred," Ibid., September 13, 1927, p. 6.

23. Editorial comment from Leesburg Commercial, quoted in Ibid., October 12, 1927, p. 2.

24. Editorial comment from Clearwater Sun, quoted in Ibid., October 13, 1927, p. 2.

25. "The Board of Control Meeting," Ibid., October 16, 1927, p. 2.

26. Ibid.

27. "K.V.O.F.," Ibid., October 17, 1927, p. 2.

28. Editorial comment from Tampa Times, quoted in Ibid., October 23, 1927, p. 4.

29. "The Governor To The Rescue," Ibid., October 26, 1927, p. 2.

30. Editorial Comment from Tampa Times, quoted in Ibid., October 28, 1927, p. 2.

31. "Martin and Amos Take Final Steps," Ibid., November 9, 1927, p. 1.

32. Editorial Comment from Tampa Tribune, quoted in Ibid., November 17, 1927, p. 4.

33. "Florida Put on National Air Channel by Admiral Bullard," Ibid., November 27, 1927, p. 1.

34. "A Name for the Broadcaster," Ibid., December 8, 1927, p. 2.

35. "Test is Made Radio Station at University," Ibid., August 9, 1928, p. 1.

36. Nationwide radio program listings, Ibid., December 31, 1927, p. 7.

37. "Contract Let for Erection of Radio Control Building," Ibid., February 15, 1928, p. 1.

38. "Hope to Have Radio Station Open by May 1," Ibid., April 3, 1928, p. 1.

39. "Radio In Politics," Miami Herald, quoted in Ibid., July 6, 1928, p. 4.

40. "Test is Made Radio Station at University," Ibid., August 9, 1928, p. 1.

41. Ibid.

42. "Our Radio Responsibility," Ibid., August 23, 1928, p. 4.

43. "Radio Test Proves Good," Ibid. September 6, 1928, p. 7.

44. "Local Station Far Reaching In Its Scope," Ibid., September 16, 1928, p. 9.

45. Ibid.

46. "Radio Station Is Statewide In Its Sphere," Ibid., September 12, 1928, p. 3.

47. Ibid.

48. "WRUF is State Station," Ibid., September 13, 1928, p. 4.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.

52. "WRUF Planning Fine Programs, Griffin Claims," Ibid., September 22, 1928, p. 12.

53. "WRUF Proves Real Worth," Ibid., September 30, 1928, p. 5.

54. "Performing A Service," Ibid., September 26, 1928, p. 4.

55. Ibid.

56. "A Monumental Event," Ibid., September 30, 1928, p. 4.

57. Ibid.

58. Account of inaugural ceremonies for WRUF, from station files. The material is on paper bearing the official station letterhead; the author and date written are unknown.

59. "WRUF Will Hold Formal Opening On October 13," Daily Sun (Gainesville, FL), October 7, 1928, p. 3.

60. Ibid.

61. "Opening The Radio Station," Ibid, October 13, 1928, p. 8.

CHAPTER II
WRUF'S FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION

It was with considerable fanfare and statewide public interest that WRUF began broadcasting and Floridians expected a new surge in national recognition for their state.

Since the new station was intended by many of its supporters, if not by the exact letter of the law, to be a publicity tool for the state, it appeared that certain departures from customary station practices would be necessary. In the area of programming, many Floridians expected the station to seek participants for its broadcasts from among citizens throughout the state. Such large-scale talent searches were not normally practiced except by large metropolitan stations or by the emerging networks.

The new station, though, had more than one mission. WRUF was also to provide information on weather, agricultural conditions, government and educational activities. These services, if they all were not explicitly required by the legislature, were at least suggested by the deliberate interconnection of the Gainesville studios with the Capitol and with the Florida State College for Women in Tallahassee,

plus the Florida State Marketing Bureau in Jacksonville. Such interconnections, it was predicted, would also be helpful in presenting entertainment as well as information, permitting performers to transmit from the remote locations instead of having to travel many miles to the Gainesville studios.

University operation of a radio station was, by 1928, not a new idea. A study done for the National Committee on Education by Radio in 1933 indicated that the University of Florida was a relative newcomer to the broadcasting field. The report noted:

> Educational institutions were early entrants in the field of broadcasting. Records at the University of Wisconsin show that it was the first to be licensed and that was in June, 1916. Ohio State University started broadcasting in 1918, altho [sic] it had used radio-telegraph to broadcast weather reports and other information as early as 1912. The State University of Iowa started in 1919. These three institutions operated under an experimental privilege since no broadcasting licenses were issued by the Department of Commerce prior to 1920. Prior to and including 1922, fifteen of the institutions included in the survey received broadcast licenses.... The University of Florida was [by the time of the survey] the last to enter the field. It was licensed in August, 1928.[1]

Station Policies Announced

The University of Florida administration made public a statement of general policies for the new radio station, announced on October 7, 1928 by President John J. Tigert. The policies were reported at length the next day by the

Gainesville Daily Sun, as follows:

> WRUF, the Florida state broadcasting station located at the University here will be non-partisan in its politics, according to an announcement made yesterday by Dr. J. J. Tigert, president. However, the Democrat and the Republican parties may use the station at the same rate charged Florida cities for advertising. The station is not responsible for the opinions or sentiments expressed by speakers and only those whose ability measures up to the standards of the station will be acceptable.[2]

Standard policies covering some aspects of station operation were outlined as follows:

1. WRUF is a state and university station and announcements on the air will be made accordingly.

2. In general, state, municipal and other non-educational programs will be broadcast at night. Programs by the College for Women, universities and other state institutions will be broadcast for the most part during the daytime.

3. All state officers representing the various departments, boards and bureaus will be given an opportunity to broadcast their announcements and reports.

4. Florida cities and chambers of commerce will be urged to present evening programs of music and entertainment to advertise their communities and resources.

5. State institutions will broadcast special events, conduct radio courses and furnish programs of interest for the public schools and various groups of citizens.

6. Announcements concerning time, weather reports, Associated Press dispatches, agricultural and other information will be given.

7. In accord with the decision of Attorney General Davis, time will be sold for advertising purposes in order to help finance the station.[3]

Station Administration

The overall administration of the new station was made the responsibility of the state university system's General Extension Division, headed by Major Bert C. Riley. This division, which handled correspondence courses and other programs intended primarily to expand the skills of the state's public school teachers, is not to be confused with the University's efforts in agricultural extension.

There seems not to have been a staff position designated at Station Manager during WRUF's first year of operation. Instead, Bobby Griffin, referred to in various sources either as Program Director or Chief Announcer, was the chief executive of the station under Riley's supervision.

Programming on WRUF

Educational Programs

Apparently because station operations were administered by the General Extension Division, oriented toward information rather than toward entertainment, WRUF's first year on the air was devoted largely to educational and cultural programs. A report from the files of the station indicates:

> During the first year of the station's operation, numerous experiments and educational broadcasts were carried on. Members of the faculty of the University cooperated with the General Extension Division in inaugurating a series of lectures on the various subjects taught in the class room. Courses were given in

> Spanish, Psychology, Speech and various phases of teacher training. Groups of students listened to these lectures in their homes and, at the end of each day, discussed what was said during lecture periods by correspondence with the instructor. This was found to be very impractical as only a limited number of people listened to these broadcasts. The listening audience of the station was thus a "class" audience and the broadcasts were unsatisfactory to the public generally, and to the University officials, particularly.[4]

This public dissatisfaction with too much education on the air was to be dealt with later, as WRUF entered its second year of broadcasting with a new director.

Music and Variety Programs

Not all the programs, though, were of an educational nature. Musical programs featuring primarily local talent were broadcast. Organist Claude Murphree and pianist Ruth Dobbins appeared frequently and were on the payroll as staff musicians. Other local singers and musicians, representing the University and the community took turns before the microphones.

Special programs were produced, aimed at particular interest groups within the station's signal coverage area. Programs were dedicated to patients of the Veterans Administration hospital in Lake City,[5] and the American Legion used WRUF to promote its membership drive.[6] Arrangements were also made for WRUF to broadcast programs of instruction for the area's boy scouts.[7]

First Commercial Advertising

Not all the musical programs utilized live performers, however. Ralph Nimmons, a former WRUF staff member whose association with the station dated from mid-1929, recalled that:

> Every day, somebody would make a trip to the Gainesville Furniture Company, which was then run by Gus Cox.... We'd go down and get a stack of records, and of course we'd give him credit for [lending] them. If in the course of the day we'd run out of records, we'd just turn the stack over and play them again.[8]

This borrowing of recorded music, according to station documents, took place around September, 1929. Because the furniture company's generosity was acknowledged on the air in return for the loan of the recordings, this is considered to have been the first time WRUF engaged in commercial advertising activities.[9]

Shortage of Program Funds

As the new station's officials searched for talent to fill its program schedule during the first year, operating funds were apparently in short supply, prohibiting lavish entertainment efforts. One press report, even before WRUF's opening day, noted the existence of a financial problem: "One of the first problems which confronted Major B. C. Riley, who has direct charge of the station, was a paucity of funds with which to carry on until the legislature meets in 1929."[10]

After meeting the expenses of building the radio studios then buying, installing and testing the equipment, it appears that WRUF did not have the means to rival the programs produced by the large metropolitan stations. This shortage of operating capital was probably one reason for the early suggestions that WRUF rely partly on advertising revenues, including the charging of fees to broadcast programs for various cities.[11]

WRUF's seeming shortage of operating funds was commented upon again in December, 1928, as the Gainesville Daily Sun noted:

> It happens that under the plan adopted [for the establishment of the station] there was no appropriation made for securing programs for the new station. Consequently those in charge have been hard put to book features which could attract and hold the attention of listeners in this commonwealth and throughout the nation. This state of affairs was predicted before the opening of the station.
>
> .....
>
> While the chief concern of the big commercial stations is the variety of their programming, WRUF is forced to rely to a great extent upon the same talent day in and day out. The artists who have so generously given of their talents are to be commended; were it not for the "faithful few" Florida's broadcasting station would find itself without any programs.[12]

Throughout the station's first year, musicians Dobbins and Murphree continued their frequent appearances, often in organ-piano duets. Murphree is also said to have played early morning organ recitals from the University Auditorium, made possible by the microphone and amplifier installed there, connected by cable to the studios 1,500 feet away.[13]

Gradually other artists were added to the WRUF's roster of regular performers. Included was a jokester named E. Z. Jones, who referred to himself as "Dixie's Disciple of Fun and Frolic" and made many appearances during the station's first three years on the air. A band led by one "Banzai" Currie was heard frequently by remote pickup from the University "mess hall," a campus dining room.

Another artist heard regularly was local violinist and WRUF receptionist Pauline Mizell, whose radio concert was interrupted one night when the device which kept the violin strings fastened securely to the instrument came loose. She was unable to continue until it was repaired.[14] This and other unpredictable incidents were the occupational hazards of live broadcasting.

First Political Broadcast

Relating to the types of programs permissable on WRUF, the University had made its policies known in the announcement by Dr. Tigert early in October, 1928. It stipulated that the station was to remain politically non-partisan and that any political interests wishing to broadcast a program would have to pay the same fee as would be charged a Florida city for a similar program.

It was in late October, 1928 that the first political speech was broadcast on the new station. As foretold earlier by newspaper writers, candidates for office were not slow to discover the potential power of radio in reaching

the voters. On October 30, U. S. Congressman R. A. "Lex" Green spoke at the Alachua County Courthouse and WRUF took its microphones to the scene for a remote broadcast.[15] It is not known whether the program was paid for by Congressman Green, or if it was carried as a special news event with costs borne by WRUF.

Agricultural Programs

When WRUF took to the air in 1928, the University of Florida joined 19 other land-grant colleges and universities in the United States which operated radio stations.[16] Such institutions, required by the terms of their land grants to offer study programs related to agriculture, were generally interested in extending such information statewide, through networks of county agricultural agents and home demonstration agents. Thus, as indicated in the 1933 National Committee on Education by Radio study, "Discovering that they have in radio a new medium for reaching large numbers, the agricultural colleges have been quick to seize the radio and use it for giving weather reports, market reports, and technical information in agriculture and home economics."[17]

By November, 1928, farm-oriented programs were being broadcast regularly on WRUF and reports of station programming indicated "Practical farm and home talks by specialists of the College of Agriculture [are being given] Monday, Wednesday and Friday."[18] The programs were heard between

6:30 and 7:00 p.m. Agricultural programming was to play an increasingly important role in the WRUF broadcast schedule during the next three decades, especially with the inauguration of the "Florida Farm Hour" broadcasts each weekday at noon. This program, featuring reports by extension editor J. Francis Cooper, had its start during WRUF's first year on the air.

Sports Programs

The presentation of sports programs, for which WRUF would become increasingly well known over the years, began early. Within a week of the station's official dedication, WRUF presented its first play-by-play account of a sporting event. On October 20, 1928, in that year's "homecoming" football game, the University of Florida played Mercer University on Fleming field, just north of the present Florida Field stadium. The Florida Gators were victorious, 73-0, in that first game ever broadcast on WRUF.[19]

Later that autumn, the station reportedly broadcast a play-by-play account of a football game between Gainesville and Ft. Myers high schools.

WRUF'S Equipment and Facilities

While the administration and programming of WRUF was the responsibility of Major Riley's extension division, the operation and maintenance of station equipment remained

the duties of the College of Engineering, headed by Dr. J. R. Benton. By the time the station began regular programming, J. H. Fessenden had been added to the station staff as Chief Operator of the transmitting apparatus.

When WRUF began its service to the state, its transmitter was a Western Electric Type D-87691, capable of a power output of five thousand watts. Two 200-foot steel towers, built 400 feet apart in the field north of the station, held the transmitting antenna suspended between them.[21]

Both the transmitting equipment and the studio facilities were in the same building, an English Tudor-style structure located 1,500 feet south of the main campus buildings. The area was at that time mostly grassy pasture, used primarily by livestock of the University's agricultural experiment station. A sand road led west from 13th street through the pasture to the station site.

Inside the station building, three rooms on the ground floor had been built to serve as studios, although it is probable that not all of them were actually used regularly for that purpose. Studio #1 measured 12 x 15 feet, while studio #2 was the largest of the three, having dimensions of 20 x 30 feet. Studio #3, the smallest, measured 10 x 15 feet and contained a turntable output connection. It was from studio #3, then, that WRUF's tiny collection of recordings, many borrowed from the Gainesville

Furniture Company, must have been played.[22] Interior windows provided a view from one studio into another.

Also on the station's ground floor were a reception room, an office and a room for the transmitting equipment. Above, under the high-peaked roof, the attic space had not yet been partitioned into offices or other functional spaces. In later years, it would be used for a variety of purposes.

In the studios, putting programs on the air using equipment of that day required some production techniques that, compared with modern methods, seem rather unusual. Ralph Nimmons recalled some of the studio working conditions during WRUF's first year:

> The microphone was one of the old type carbon microphones...and to do anything out in the studio, we had one of these chemistry laboratory pedestals that had a little shelf that was adjustable with a set screw. We put the microphone on that thing.
>
> .....
>
> What you'd do before you turned the [microphones] on, you'd turn the things upside down and beat them to distribute the carbon [granules] in the microphone, otherwise they would sound like a pan of fish frying.
>
> Many a time, Banks Duncan [a transmitter operator] would kick on the window and he'd make signals so we'd cut the mike off and I'd turn the thing upside down and beat the hell out of it and then turn the thing on and it'd be okay.
>
> .....
>
> We didn't even have carpet on the floors, and we had wicker chairs that used to just squeak like everything whenever anyone would sit in them.[23]

The Broadcast Schedule

During WRUF's first year, the station was not a full-time operation in the manner of many modern stations. The first broadcasting license granted by the Federal Radio Commission called for WRUF to transmit on a frequency of 1480 kc, sharing broadcast time with another station, WTFF. While one station was broadcasting, the other was to stay off the air.

That was the arrangement by which WRUF began in October, 1928. A memorandum from Program Director Bobby Griffin to Chief Transmitter Operator J. H. Fessenden on September 27, 1928, outlined the broadcasting schedule that WRUF was to maintain during its first month of regular service. The schedule, effective at 10:00 a.m. October 1, stipulated:

> The broadcasting schedule for WRUF will be as follows:
>
> Monday-Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday-Friday
>
> 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM
> 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM
> 3:30 PM to 5:00 PM
> 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM
>
> Saturday
>
> 9:00 AM to 12:00 [Noon]
> 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM
> 3:30 PM to 5:00 PM
> 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM

W1 R F Sr Su M T

The evening schedules are as follows:

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday we are off after 7:00 PM.

Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday

8:00 PM to 10:30 PM

Saturday

Midnight to 2:00 AM

Sunday

1:00 PM to 2:30 PM[24]

In November, the station's frequency was changed to 1470 kc and it was allowed to broadcast for an unlimited time each day.[25] Even though allowed to do so, WRUF did not immediately begin conducting uninterrupted broadcasts throughout the day and evening hours, probably due principally to insufficient operating funds.

The WRUF schedule was rather irregular, according to contemporary accounts, with programs beginning or ending as the availability of material dictated. Regarding early "Florida Farm Hour" programs, Ralph Nimmons remembered:

> The clock didn't mean anything in those days, really. If it was five minutes before twelve and Mr. [agricultural extension editor J. Francis] Cooper came in and a record stopped--why, we'd start Mr. Cooper. He'd run until he ran out of material, then we'd go back to records.[26]

Evening entertainment programs shared the same unpredictability. Nimmons recalled:

> Every now and then on a Sunday night, the Canova family [a musical group] would come in from Starke [a small nearby community], which included Judy Canova and her brother Zeke--who later became quite famous--and they would go for two or three hours, as long as they could last and we'd keep them on as long as they could last. There was no publicity or anything because we never knew when they were coming.[27]

Griffin Departs WRUF

To add to the trials of the struggling new radio station, personnel changes apparently hindered efforts to develop a smooth-running operation. Program Director Bobby Griffin left before the end of the first year. Ralph Nimmons, then employed in the offices of the General Extension Division, remembers the circumstances:

> He [Griffin] had a rather severe injury in World War I and his legs were affected, and he couldn't stand the climate and he had to leave. He came from the middle west--Iowa, I believe.
>
> But he left very suddenly and one day Major Riley came by my desk...and he said, "Well, Bobby Griffin has had to leave us and I've tentatively put the station under Bill Mitchell. He doesn't know anything about it--do you want to go down there and help out?" I said "sure."[28]

As the end of the 1928-29 fiscal year approached, University officials and station performers evidently decided that some sort of celebration was in order. The end of WRUF's first fiscal year on the air was observed with a luncheon in the large studio and a special broadcast featuring many of the station's regular performers and some de-

local officials who were guests for the occasion. The date of the program is not indicated on the typewritten list of participants, but the end of the fiscal year would have placed the event at the end of June, 1929.

Speakers included University of Florida President John J. Tigert speaking on "My View of Radio in the American School"; Dr. J. W. Norman, Director of the University's summer school program; Professor Elmer J. Emig, head of the Journalism Department with a talk on "The Newspaper and the Radio"; and W. L. Goette, Supervising Principal of the Lake City Public Schools, who spoke on the value of WRUF to the schools of Florida.

The entertainment featured songs by Virginia McCall, Maude Ballentine, W. B. Parrish, G. O. Hack, the Low Speed Male Quartet and by Professor John W. DeBruyn of the Department of Music. Ruth Dobbins and Claude Murphree played piano selections, and Jack Williams and his Rhythm Kings provided additional instrumental music.[29]

By autumn of 1929, WRUF had yet to fulfill the role originally expected of it--that of a great publicity voice for Florida. Most of its programs were local in emphasis, the staff was still small and most of its members inexperienced in the running of a polished radio operation. Before the end of the year, however, a new station director would arrive to guide the financially undernourished station through the depression-ridden decade of the 1930s.

Notes

1. Tracy Ferris Tyler: An Appraisal of Radio Broadcasting in the Land-Grant Colleges and State Universities (Washington, D. C.: The National Committee on Education by Radio, 1933), p. 24.

2. "Station Here Non-Partisan," Daily Sun (Gainesville, FL), October 8, 1928, p. 5.

3. Ibid.

4. "Radio Station WRUF, Part I," unpublished manuscript from WRUF station files (author not listed, but reported to have been written about 1950 by Station Director Garland W. Powell), p. 19.

5. "Lake City Vets Enjoy Programs," Daily Sun (Gainesville, FL), December 2, 1928, p. 6.

6. "Legion Will Go On WRUF," Ibid., December 28, 1928, p. 5.

7. "To Broadcast Scout Instruction Work," Ibid., October 25, 1928, p. 5.

8. Personal interview with Ralph Nimmons, Jacksonville, Florida, August 9, 1974.

9. Kenneth F. Small, "Summary History of WRUF (and WRUF-FM)," brief highlights of station history compiled 1970; from WRUF station files.

10. "WRUF Is State Station," Daily Sun (Gainesville, FL),, September 13, 1928, p. 4.

11. Ibid.

12. "Bettering An Asset," Daily Sun (Gainesville, FL), December 19, 1928, p. 4.

13. Personal interview with Ralph Nimmons, Jacksonville, Florida, August 9, 1974.

14. Ibid.

15. "Green Will Speak Here," Daily Sun (Gainesville, FL), October 28, 1928, p. 1.

16. Tyler: Appraisal of Radio Broadcasting, p. 92.

17. Ibid.

18. "Farm Programs Now Being Sent Out Over WRUF," Daily Sun (Gainesville, FL), November 23, 1928, p. 3.

19. Untitled manuscript from WRUF station files dated September 29, 1968; known to have been written by continuity writer Jim Camp, this is probably the rough draft of a press release marking the station's fortieth anniversary.

20. "WRUF Aid To Floridians," Daily Sun (Gainesville, FL), November 18, 1928, p. 6.

21. "Description of Technical Equipment" from WRUF station files; original typed entries had been revised by hand and dated May 10, 1935; author unknown, but probably one of the WRUF engineering staff.

22. Ibid.

23. Personal interview with Ralph Nimmons, Jacksonville, Florida, August 9, 1974.

24. Memorandum from Bobby Griffin to J. H. Fessenden, September 27, 1928; from WRUF station files.

25. "Radio Station WRUF, Part I," unpublished manuscript from station files, p. 18.

26. Personal interview with Ralph Nimmons, Jacksonville, Florida, August 9, 1974.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Program and luncheon schedule observing end of WRUF's first fiscal year on the air; from WRUF station files.

CHAPTER III
THE 1930s--DECADE OF TRANSITION FOR WRUF

The depression decade of the 1930s would prove to be an important time for WRUF. The new station would change profoundly during the 1930s and emerge from the decade bearing little resemblance to the broadcasting operation which struggled hesitantly through its first year on the air.

As the 1930s began, WRUF was entirely dependent on the state legislature for operating funds--by the decade's end the station would be financially independent, earning its own capital and receiving none from the state.

During its first year of broadcasting, WRUF was a station with a split personality--partly devoted to educational programs and partly to entertainment, using mostly local talent. In the decade of the 1930s, although a few informational programs were retained, the emphasis turned overwhelmingly to the entertainment of the north Florida regional audience.

In addition, the decade would be one of colorful personalities at WRUF, people of diverse backgrounds

combining their talents for the station's development. The thirties would also see the first efforts toward improving WRUF's technical capabilities.

Another factor that would mark WRUF's transition would be the abandonment of the nationwide publicity "Voice of Florida" concept. That concept actually did not last very long and was probably dead, for all practical purposes, by the start of the second year of operation.

The decade of the thirties, then, saw the station change in several important ways. These changes would serve to define the service function of WRUF in a way that has not been essentially modified since. It was during the 1930s that, for good or ill, the WRUF we know today was given shape.

WRUF Needs New Leader

By the end of WRUF's first year on the air, Program Director/Chief Announcer Bobby Griffin had departed, leaving the station without experienced leadership. Ralph Nimmons recalled that the supervisory post was temporarily given by Extension Director Bert Riley to one Bill Mitchell, with Nimmons himself moving from the General Extension Division offices to the radio studios to assist Mitchell.

The acute local shortage of experienced leadership for the new station is indicated by Nimmons' memory of the exchange between Riley and himself after Griffin's departure:

> Bert Riley asked me--did I care to go down to the station and help out? And I said "sure, I'll go down and do what I can--I don't know anything about it." And he said "Well, who does?"--because radio was new. And so I started going down to the station every evening and sometimes on the weekends.... I did that, I guess, for around six months and somehow or other the radio bug bit me....[1]

Dr. John J. Tigert, who had only recently arrived in Gainesville to assume the presidency of the University of Florida, had a replacement in mind when he found that the new radio station needed an experienced leader. In the late summer of 1929, Tigert contacted his friend Garland W. Powell, in Washington, D. C. Tigert asked Powell to move to Gainesville and become the Chief Announcer of WRUF.[2]

An account of Tigert's invitation to Powell, from the WRUF station files, notes that

> ...on September 1, 1929, the President of the University, Dr. John J. Tigert, called Garland Powell in Washington, D. C., a man of approximately nine years of radio experience, and asked him to accept the position of Chief Announcer in order to study and survey the whole situation, which position he assumed on September 12, 1929.[3]

Garland W. Powell--Background

Garland Wheeler Powell, who was to guide WRUF for more than 27 years, was born August 8, 1892. He was a graduate of the University of Maryland and had also studied at Johns Hopkins University and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.[4] It was at M.I.T. where he received his introduction to radio broadcasting, or "wireless" as it was then known.

By the time the First World War began, Powell had

begun a career in law. He left his practice, took aviation training and commanded the 22nd U. S. Aerial Squadron in Europe, attaining the rank of Major. Returning home after the conflict, Powell served in the Maryland Legislature during 1920-22.

Following his wartime service, Powell also became active in veterans' organizations and served as chairman of the National Americanism Commission of the American Legion.[5] In 1921, he reportedly organized a simultaneous broadcast by an unspecified number of stations intended to help solve unemployment problems affecting war veterans. The broadcast was said to have been accomplished, not by cable or wireless interconnection as a modern network would operate, but by the simultaneous reading of the same script by all stations.[6]

It was while on the Legion's Americanism Commission that Powell became involved in the compilation of a standard code of etiquette for the handling of the national flag. After several instances of improper use of the flag had come to his attention, Powell, with the support of President Warren G. Harding, called a conference in Washington, D. C. on June 14, 1923. Attending were 69 representatives of military, patriotic and civic organizations.

Under Powell's leadership, a committee was appointed to draft a proposed code of flag etiquette. The code was adopted at the second National Flag Conference in Washington, D. C. on May 15, 1924. Although not formally adopted by the

U. S. Congress until 1942, the code and the date of the first flag conference were inspirations for the Flag Day holiday now observed each June 14. Powell has been called "the Father of the National Flag Code."[7]

Through the 1920s, Garland Powell continued his interest in radio broadcasting, spending four years in Washington, D. C. engaging in other radio-related projects for the American Legion. It was while in Washington that Powell became acquainted with Dr. John J. Tigert, while Tigert was serving as U. S. Commissioner of Education.[8]

Major Powell's widow, Mrs. Consuela Dolbeare, recalled that:

> Garland was at national headquarters for quite a while and--I think through the American Legion--they [Powell and Tigert] became friends, very close friends all through their lives. And the same with me [and] Mrs. Tigert...we're very, very close friends.[9]

While Major Powell heeded Dr. Tigert's invitation to join the WRUF staff, Mrs. Powell remained at home in Washington, D. C. Although Powell went on the station payroll on September 12, 1929, it was not until October that his wife traveled to Gainesville to join him.[10]

Although a university town and a regional commercial center, the Gainesville of 1929 must have presented quite a contrast to the atmosphere of the nation's capital.

Mrs. Dolbeare recalled that, as the young Mrs. Powell, it was with some misgivings that she made the trip to Gainesville, despite her husband's new job and her friendship with the Tigerts. She remembered that her first impression of the town

> ...was bad, [but] of course it was my fault. I left Washington and I felt like I was going to the end of the earth, after New York and all around.... I cried from Washington to Jacksonville.
>
> Garland and Edith [Tigert] met me at the train, and he looked perfectly awful...and I said "Oh, if Florida's done this to you, let's go back home." But I hadn't been here but just a little while and I just loved it.[11]

Administrative Changes

Garland Powell, when installed as Chief Announcer, apparently found that one of his first duties would be to "study and survey the whole situation."[12] It is not clear exactly what aspects of station operations were given closest attention. First year shortcomings in staff experience, funding and performer availability would seem to indicate that these areas were likely prospects for study and revision by the new station executive.

It was not long before changes were made by the University administration that would forever affect the radio station. As station files indicate, "A survey made shortly after [Powell's] arrival showed definitely that the radio station should be an independent part of

the University" and apparently the University officials agreed with that evaluation. In February, 1930, Powell was named Director of WRUF, a position title not previously used in the station staff structure.[13]

Although station records are not explicit on this point, the recommendation of more independence for WRUF leads to the supposition that when Powell was installed as Director, responsibility for the station's operation was withdrawn from the General Extension Division. In addition, although this point is also unclear, the Director apparently became responsible directly to the President of the University. No further mention was found of the General Extension Division as WRUF's supervising agency; there were, however, numerous later instances of direct correspondence and telephone conversations between the Director of WRUF and the President of the University.

To fill the vacancy created by Powell's promotion, Ralph Nimmons was elevated to the post of Chief Announcer. He became a full-time radio station employee, at a salary of $150.00 per month, and left his work with the General Extension Division.

Dream of Nationwide Broadcasting Fades

It was not long after the arrival of Garland Powell as Program Director/Chief Announcer late in 1929 that the

dream, long held by many, of national prominence for WRUF began to fade. The glowing expectations of a "super-powered" national publicity voice had been expressed largely by influential Florida businessmen and political figures whose knowledge of radio's technical aspects was probably quite limited. Ultimately, it was technical limitations that finally put the grand publicity dream to rest and forced station officials to concentrate on serving a more localized audience than originally anticipated.

By the time Powell arrived, WRUF had already changed its transmitting frequency from 1480 to 1470 kc. It was to change again soon, for there had been dissatisfaction with the transmitting range of the new station.

There must have been those who wondered if WRUF's transmitting equipment was operating properly, because a Bell Telephone Laboratories engineer, J. D. Herber, was brought to Gainesville for consultation less than a month after Powell's arrival.

Herber, from the company whose subsidiary, Western Electric, had built the transmitter, gave the apparatus a thorough inspection. On October 6, 1929, the University's student newspaper, the Florida Alligator, reported that Herber had signed an affadivit to the effect that the WRUF broadcasting apparatus was functioning properly. The Alligator noted that Herber's statement seemed to give "additional support...in the station's plea for a new

wave channel."[14]

The newspaper further reported that:

> Professor Bennett, electrical engineer of the station, considers the result of these tests as concrete proof that the difficulties of transmission are due to the inferior wave length assigned to it, rather than to any fault of the apparatus in operation.[15]

Early in November, 1929, the Federal Radio Commission authorized a change in WRUF's transmitting frequency from 1470 kc to 830 kc but placed a time limit on the station's broadcast day. The Commission wished to protect Denver, Colorado's station KOA, already on the 830 kc frequency, from interference by WRUF. Such interference was more likely to occur at night than in daylight, since radio signals often travel much farther at night. Therefore, WRUF was required to discontinue broadcasting each day at a time corresponding to the local sunset in Denver.[16] Due to the time zone differences, the ruling meant that WRUF could actually remain on the air at least through the early evening in Florida. In November, when the frequency change was announced, Denver sunset meant 8:00 p.m. in Gainesville; in the summertime Denver sunset would have been late enough to allow Florida listeners a longer evening of programs from WRUF.

Although the change meant no more late night broadcasting, as had occasionally been done in the station's first year, the frequency shift was hailed as a certain improvement to

WRUF's operations. The November 10, 1929 Florida Alligator noted that "The favorable part of this exchange is that it allows WRUF to reach the entire state of Florida. Under former circumstances only the local cities and those of the north could be broadcasted to."[17]

The newspaper's comment relates to the fact that, with a given amount of transmitting power (WRUF's power remained at 5,000 watts after the frequency change), the signal will ordinarily travel farther on a lower frequency than on a higher one. That seems to have been the principal reason for optimism following the Radio Commission's decision.

The reference to broadcasting to "the local cities and those of the north" with the apparent exclusion of cities in between deserves some explanation. Even on higher frequencies in the AM spectrum, signals can indeed be received at distant points, sometimes thousands of miles from their origin, but not always on a regular basis. Transmitted signals reaching the atmospheric layer known as the ionosphere, can be reflected back to earth, resulting in a signal "skip" that can occasionally carry a station's signal even across an ocean.[18]

Thus, even before the station's change to 830 kc, it was possible for the station to be heard in the Gainesville area and in parts of northern and midwestern states, without effective coverage in many parts of Florida.

Certain factors mitigated against strong transmission from Florida locations no matter what the power or frequency of a station. Broadcasting engineers knew in the early 1930s that strong transmission of radio signals depends in part on the ability of the soil to conduct electricity. Present-day WRUF Chief Engineer E. A. Slimak explained that a signal, as it radiates from a transmitting tower, is attenuated or reduced in strength as it gets farther away from the tower. One of the factors that affects the attenuation is the conductivity of the soil.

The Federal Communications Commission has measured soil conductivity levels across the United States and graded them on a numbered scale of 1 to 30. The lower the number, the more the soil absorbs the signal as it travels away from the station.

Slimak indicated that soil conductivity conditions in the sandy regions of northern and central Florida rank between two and four on the scale, placing these areas among the worst in the United States for the propagation of radio signals.[19]

Another factor influencing the range of WRUF's signal was the restriction to principally daytime broadcasting on 830 kc. By the Radio Commission's ruling, the station was forced to be inoperative during the very times when its signal

might have carried farthest. Although early reports during WRUF's first year on the air listed mail-in responses from as far away as California, Texas, Nebraska, Pennsylvania, Maine, Mighigan and parts of Canada and Cuba,[20] it is probable that reception at those distant points was made at night or early morning when signals traveled best and there were fewer stations on the air to interfere.

The change to the lower frequency of 830 kc did make it possible for WRUF to provide stronger signals to the north-central Florida region with the allotted 5,000 watts of power. At the same time though, the restriction to primarily daytime broadcasting, along with the already present soil conductivity difficulties, did away with the station's ability to project a signal that could be received regularly with acceptable strength and quality in the northern and midwestern states.

So it was that the dream of a powerful "Voice of Florida," shared by so many Floridians, faded away forever. Early supporters of the station must have gradually realized during WRUF's first eighteen months of operation that it had no real hope of ever realizing the lofty status planned for it.

Before the end of the decade, WRUF would have to change its transmitting frequency once more. Station documents say that a December, 1937 treaty between the governments of the United States and Cuba contained the

provision that WRUF and its companion on 830 kc, Denver's KOA, change their frequencies. This was probably done to avoid interference with Cuban stations on the same frequency. WRUF changed to the transmitting frequency of 850 kc, which it still occupies.

Providing Service to a Regional Audience

Expanding the Staff

With the realization that WRUF did not have the means to become a nationally celebrated radio station on the order of New York's WEAF, Pittsburgh's KDKA or Cincinnati's WLW, the station staff began to devise programs with a regional and local appeal. Powell, after assuming the directorship early in 1930, retained some of the old staff members to help handle the program chores. An announcer, Jack Thompson, was added to the staff which still included Ralph Nimmons and musicians Claude Murphree and Ruth Dobbins. Miss Dobbins was listed in station files as having been on the staff as of "7-1-29 or earlier" as station pianist at a salary of $65.00 per month.[21]

Claude Murphree evidently was a part-time WRUF staff member who also served as University Organist. R. DeWitt Brown was listed as director of the station orchestra, dating from "July 1, 1929 or before" at what was evidently a part-time salary of $30.00 per month.[22]

First students added to staff

By March, 1930, Powell had begun to employ students as part-time staff members at WRUF. The first such student employee is thought to have been Walter L. "Red" Barber, who was added to the payroll as of March 4, 1930.[23]

Ralph Nimmons who, by the time Barber joined the WRUF staff, had transferred from the General Extension Division to work full time as Chief Announcer, remembered that Barber was not the only student added in the spring of 1930. Nimmons recalled a talented youth named James Leonard Butsch, who appeared professionally as James Leonard and was used both as an announcer and a singer. "I think Red came before Jimmy, and they both came about the same time,"[24] Nimmons recalled.

The idea of using students to help in the running of the station was not new in 1930. One of the original justifications for locating WRUF on the University of Florida campus was that engineering students could be given practical training there. If such training was indeed given, the students were apparently not on the payroll. Even after Red Barber was hired for a salary, other student assistants were evidently not so fortunate, as Nimmons recalled:

> Of course, we'd audition anyone that came along, that wanted any sort of a job--we used a lot of students on a part-time basis, picking out the best...and a lot of them were unpaid because we didn't have the money. They [the students] were just doing it to see whether they liked it. It was a laboratory...for radio technique, announcing, singers and what-have-you.[25]

The policy, begun in 1930 of hiring students as part-time employees, is still in effect as of this writing. Initially, it seems that the student's academic program was not a major factor in his employment; in more modern times however, preference seems to have been given to students majoring in broadcasting or another communications-related discipline.

Educational Programs

After Powell's appointment as Director, efforts continued toward the development of quality educational programs. As the station files indicate,:

> Many experiments were tried, in the following year, in the use of radio for educational purposes. The Director, through the cooperation of the State Department of Education and RCA Victor inaugurated a program of music appreciation for the public schools. This was found to be unsuccessful, due to the curricula setup and to the fact that schools were unable to buy radios. There was also much opposition to these broadcasts among the school teachers as they felt there was an attempt on the part of the University to supplant them instead of supplementing their work.[26]

The reference to the inability of schools to purchase radio sets is perhaps an indication of the severity with which the great depression had hit the state and its institutions. The economic impact of the depression would later affect WRUF and its staff more directly.

Movement Toward a "Well-Rounded Radio Program"

In the programming area, with the failure of music appreciation broadcasts for the schools, Powell recognized that broadcasts for small, specialized audiences would not increase the popularity of the station.

> ...upon further study by the Director, the broadcasts to certain groups were found to be unpopular except with those groups and as more and more people purchased radios, demands were made that WRUF enter the general broadcasting field, presenting newscasts, popular music programs and a well-rounded radio program, which was gradually done.[27]

Comedy and Musical Entertainment

Accordingly, a variety of new entertainment programs was tried, beginning early in 1930. In January of that year it was reported that among the WRUF program offerings were "The Adventures of Bud and Easy," featuring the previously mentioned E. Z. "Easy" Jones and Claude Lee, who managed Gainesville's Florida Theatre. The "Hour With the Masters," broadcast in the afternoons and the "Variety Musical Parade," in the mornings were programs utilizing music recorded on 78 rpm discs.

In addition, pianist Ruth Dobbins appeared with Jones several times a week in programs of jokes and music. An orchestra known as the Suwannee Serenaders also entertained, under the direction of R. DeWitt Brown. Apparently one of the most popular musical groups throughout the thirties was

the Orange Grove String Band, formed early in the decade under the leadership of McKinley "Mac" Criswell.

To supplement the efforts of the small station staff, participants in various programs continued to be recruited from the surrounding campus and community.

Agricultural Programs

Although Director Powell sought to increase the general entertainment appeal of the station, WRUF did maintain an array of informational programs, of which the "Florida Farm Hour" was a mainstay. It was prepared and hosted by extension service editor J. Francis Cooper, and his assistant, Ralph Fulghum. Much of the material in the broadcasts consisted of lectures on various farm-related topics, prepared and read on the air by members of the agriculture faculty.

When the authors of such lectures could not visit the studios to read their own work, Cooper or Fulgham had to read them and, occasionally, find an extra voice to add variety to the presentation.

It was Fulghum's effort to find an extra voice that one day led to the recruiting of Red Barber, the young man previously identified as the probable first student employee of WRUF. Barber would later become nationally famous for his announcing on radio and television, though not on farm programs.

Barber, then a student, recalled returning early from the 1929 Christmas holidays to work on a research paper. As a resident (and the janitor) of the University Club, a rooming house occupied principally by young male faculty, Barber was acquainted with farm broadcaster Fulghum. One day near the end of December as Barber sat in the University Club working on his paper, Fulhgum walked in and asked Barber to substitute for a radio lecturer who had gone out of town.

Fulghum had three ten-minute lectures scheduled for the day's broadcast. Barber later wrote that Fulghum pleaded, "Red, please. Come on. It would be a big help to me, having a change of voice. If I sit there and read all three papers, one after another, it'll be terrible."[28] Barber, after protesting, finally agreed to read one of the lectures on the air when Fulghum promised to buy his dinner.

Barber reported that his first announcing on WRUF consisted of that reading for Fulghum, a lecture he referred to as "...a heavily documented, detailed treatise on 'Certain Aspects of Bovine Obstetrics.'"[29]

After the reading, done without rehearsal, Major Powell asked Barber if he would be interested in working part-time at WRUF. Barber, busy with other jobs, declined. It took Powell more than two months, using Fulghum as an intermediary, to wear down Barber's resistance. After Powell offered him $50.00 per month, Barber gave up his other jobs as waiter and janitor and joined WRUF on March 4, 1930.

By the mid-1930s, the Agricultural Extension Service had established the practice of distributing monthly program guides giving advance notice of the subjects to be discussed on WRUF by agriculture faculty members. One or more faculty talks were scheduled each day, Monday through Saturday, with remarks by agriculture students occasionally included.

A sample monthly bulletin from February, 1935 indicates that during the month the program offered listeners information on such topics as "Pitfalls in Chick Management," "Control of Melon and Pickle Worms," "Preventing Damage to Citrus from Thrips and Aphids," and "How 4-H Club Work Helped Me Come to College."[30]

The "Florida Farm Hour" was to continue as a regular part of WRUF's noontime program schedule until the mid-1960s. Its popularity through the 1930s apparently encouraged the planners of the program in the University's Agricultural Extension Service to export, in script form, similar program material to other radio stations in the state.

Saturday farm hour programs were evidently given over mainly to short items called Farm Flashes on a variety of subjects, the program being billed as "Radio's Weekly Farm Newspaper." The Farm Flashes were sent out to other stations, for on-the-air delivery by station personnel or by local county agricultural agents.

News Programs

In the station's earliest years, not much emphasis was placed on news coverage although the relaying of information from downstate following the 1928 hurricane did, in effect, constitute coverage of an important news event.

WRUF had no news teletype service in the early 1930s, although a machine was reportedly installed before the end of the decade. A cooperative arrangement was made with the Gainesville Daily Sun which enabled WRUF to have access to much of the material used by the newspaper.

One early mention of news was in the Florida Alligator of February 22, 1930, which indicated that WRUF would soon inaugurate a weekly campus news program. Editors of the student newspaper would take turns appearing on the program, scheduled for Saturday mornings at 11:30. No indication was given as to how long these programs would be.[31]

It is clear that, at least in the 1930s, WRUF personnel did not operate actively as news reporters. Instead, news events reported on the air were apparently read verbatim from other sources. Albert Hendrix, a WRUF employee who joined the staff in 1933, indicated that throughout the thirties a favorite source of on-the-air news was the Jacksonville Times-Union newspaper.[32] Red Barber also indicated the Times-Union had frequently been used.

Even after WRUF had installed its own national and world news teletype machine in the late 1930s, the local newspaper still supplied material for broadcast, evidently local news. Twice each day, Hendrix, WRUF's custodian and messenger, would make a trip downtown to the Sun's offices for the latest bulletins.

> I rode a bicycle down there and I never will forget...[once] I came back on the bicycle just as fast as I could ride it and the bicycle came apart, just broke. I just left the bicycle--the announcer was standing in the door, waiting for me to bring it in--and I just left the bicycle and went running with the news...and met him at the door and he took it and went upstairs with it.[33]

Hendrix recalled that a newscast was scheduled around noon each weekday, and that nothing was to interfere with his regular pickup of the reports from the Sun. "I had to do that through the rain and cold and wind and everything--you name it."[34] Another newscast was eventually added in the late afternoon.

Another former WRUF staff member, J. Sam Fouts, remembers those news runs made daily by Hendrix...

> ...then he would roar back on his bicycle and come up the lane, and we'd see him coming up there about ten minutes 'til five and we had a big news program at five o'clock to five-fifteen. [Hendrix] would have in his basket all the latest goodies and we'd lean...out the window and spur him on so he'd get up there in time for the hot news.[35]

Through the 1930s, WRUF acted as a relay unit for news gathered by others. It would be another 25 years beyond

the decade's end before the station would have a news reporting staff of its own.

Sports Programs

It had not taken WRUF very long to get into the business of reporting sports events. That play-by-play account of the Florida Gators' football game against Mercer, just a week after the station's dedication in 1928, was but the first of an uncountable number of sports broadcasts presented through the years.

Though football was the first sport broadcast on WRUF, it was by no means the only one. Red Barber found in 1930 that an annual event was the broadcasting of the state high school basketball tournament, held each year on the University campus. Barber remembered:

> ...they played basketball all day long and into the night for three consecutive days. Because the tournament was statewide and because the radio station was supported by state funds, the regular broadcasting schedule was thrown out and every last one of those high school basketball games was broadcast in full.... Games were played consecutively; as soon as one was finished the next one would start.... One announcer handled the microphone all the way through. Jack Thompson did it the first year I was there, but I did it all myself in 1931, 1932 and 1933. It was the most gruelling broadcasting job I have ever had. You sat right next to the official scorer and read off his book. You had no assistant, nobody to spell you, nobody to give the listeners a change of pace.... It gave me a complete distaste for basketball; I have never liked the game since.[36]

Those marathon basketball broadcasts were to continue on WRUF at least through 1939, and after Barber left in

1934, a variety of announcers handled the chore.

Other sporting events broadcast occasionally were track meets, boxing matches (the University of Florida in those days engaged in intercollegiate team boxing), and baseball.[37]

Although football has, over the years become the most prominent of the sports broadcast on WRUF, coverage of it was not always the polished, sophisticated operation now employed. When the 1930 season began, several WRUF announcers including Jack Thompson, Ralph Nimmons, James Leonard Butsch and Red Barber alternated in doing the play-by-play account while Major Powell tried to decide who did the best job.

Gradually, it became apparent that Barber had become the most proficient at such reporting, principally because he spent extra hours of preparation, learning from the Florida coaching staff. Advance preparation was only half the work involved in each game broadcast. The other, and perhaps equally difficult, was getting the game on the air.

Prior to 1930, the University's games were played on what is now called Fleming Field, an expanse of flat ground on the north side of the campus, adjacent to University Avenue and just north of the present Florida Field stadium. The only seating was provided by bare wooden bleachers, exposed to the weather. As Nimmons remembered, the

play-by-play announcer and his assistant would set up operations "...anyplace we could find; they didn't have press boxes--sitting out in the sun."[38] Red Barber indicated that a crude press box was eventually put up at Fleming Field.[39]

By mid-season in 1930, Florida Field was dedicated and came into regular use, although it is not likely that broadcasting conditions were substantially improved. Barber recalled that a somewhat better press box was built for the new stadium, but the announcer was not isolated from the crowd's roar as he would be in a modern broadcasting booth. Even so, the occasional shouts would not have been terribly distracting to the radio listeners, thought Barber, "...because the announcer would be closer to the microphone; the engineer would be listening with his ear-phones and would motion me to move closer. And then, if you had a big roar from the crowd--you learned early--you'd just have to stop talking."[40]

The equipment taken to the stadium for a football broadcast was apparently not elaborate, at least by modern standards. Although Barber emphasized that he left all technical matters to the engineers, he recalled "They brought an amplifier and they hooked onto telephone lines; they brought a microphone and cable and certain spare equipment..."[41] Barber brought his own materials, charts of his own design which enabled him to identify players at a glance.

Barber recalled that in 1931, at least one of his WRUF broadcasts of University of Florida football games was interconnected by cable with the studios of WJAX in Jacksonville and WDAE in Tampa so those stations could broadcast the game at the same time. This interconnection arrangement, although discontinued after a short trial, was to be revived after World War II as the Florida Gator Football Network.[42]

When Barber left WRUF in 1934 to join station WLW in Cincinnati, George Walsh took over the football announcing, followed by Dan Riss. Otis Boggs, who presently does the play-by-play announcing for University of Florida football and basketball games, joined the staff in March, 1939.[43]

A live, on-the-spot broadcast was not the only way to bring a sporting event to the radio audience in the 1930s. As Boggs remembered:

> Sometimes in those days another thing that they did a lot...they used Western Union 'recreations.' Rather than send a crew out, say, to Philadelphia to do a Villanova game, they'd get Western Union to supply an operator up there and they'd re-create the game with sound [based on information telegraphed from the scene]. You never knew whether the guy was sending you the right information--he'd leave out things and you'd have to fill in ad-lib, so it was a wild deal doing those.
>
> I did about three or four of them and...as money became a little more available after the depression, they decided it was better to send a crew and do it live, on the spot.[44]

When Boggs joined the WRUF staff, the sports announcer of that time, Dan Riss, would take a group of aspiring

play-by-play men out to spring football practice scrimmages and had them practice their techniques for his critical ear. Boggs remembered that after he had gone through about three such sessions,

> ...[Riss] told me to be over at the gym the next morning because the state high school basketball [tournament] was going to start and WRUF carried every game. And the guy who was supposed to do play-by-play on the second game at nine o'clock didn't show up, so [Riss] said 'You're it--you've got to do it.' And the first thing I ever did on the air was the play-by-play of a basketball game between Mulberry High School and Green Cove Springs.[45]

With WRUF as the only regular radio source of University of Florida sports broadcasts the games, especially football, evidently achieved wide popularity. Barber recalled that, after an especially good broadcast of an exciting game, as many as 150 letters and telegrams might be sent in from listeners.

The importance of such broadcasts was noted by state officials in Tallahassee, many of whom were alumni of the University of Florida. In 1935, station files indicate, the legislature required that WRUF continue to broadcast University of Florida football games in order to continue getting operating funds from the state treasury.[46]

Facilities in the 1930s

Through the decade of the 1930s, there were apparently no drastic changes in the physical facilities of WRUF.

The small house-like structure on the southern edge of the University campus rested in what remained a grassy pasture throughout the decade.

Physical Plant

The station remained accessible only by a narrow dirt road through the fields. In the early 1930s, Red Barber recalled that the only road led in from Thirteenth Street, on the east. Barber said that in order to head north from the station toward the University Auditorium and other buildings of the main campus, it was necessary to follow a sandy path and pass through a gate in the fence which kept the agricultural experiment station's livestock from straying.[47] By the end of the decade, said former staff member Clifford Beasley, that path through the pasture had become the main access way to the station, surfaced with lime rock which, he declared, was miserably dusty in the hot summer months.[48]

Beasley, who joined the WRUF staff in September, 1935 as a combination announcer-clerk-bookkeeper, said that the previously little-used attic space had to be pressed into service during the time he was employed there.

Although Red Barber had indicated that the previously unused attic area had been made accessible as storage space while he worked at WRUF prior to 1934, it apparently was expanded during the middle and latter part of the decade. Barber's recollection was that a crude, almost vertical

stairway led up from the transmitter room to the attic. In the upstairs space was added a small talk studio and racks for the storage of records.[49]

Beasley agreed that the attic space served as a record library for the expanding stock of 78 rpm discs. The upstairs area had only one small window and, said Beasley, was "hot as Hades...and [had] no air conditioning."[50] Before Beasley left WRUF in 1939, the attic work area had been expanded to include a cubicle for a teletype machine and a room for the editing of written material in addition to the small studio which was used for the news programs.[51]

Technical Facilities

The original studios on the ground floor were still in use throughout the decade as was the original Western Electric transmitter. Broadcasting a proper signal demanded that the antenna, a cable suspended between the two steel towers, be periodically cleaned and lubricated. Albert Hendrix recalled that during the 1930s,

> ...I had to help the engineer let that [the antenna] down, and grease that antenna every once in a while. And that was a job, rolling that thing up. On Sundays we opened the station [went on the air] at about eight o'clock and we had to get in there with time enough to let it down, grease that antenna and then roll it back up.... We had to get it back up in time to go on the air. [The antenna-cleaning job took] 45 minutes to an hour.[52]

By the mid-1930s a wider variety of more modern microphones had been added to the stock of original carbon

microphones. Station files indicate that in 1935, WRUF owned five Western Electric model 618-A dynamic microphones and two RCA model 44-A velocity or ribbon-type microphones. The inventory still listed 19 of the older Western Electric carbon microphones, models 600-A and 387-N, with the notation "the use of which are largely discontinued."[53]

For the playing of recorded music, WRUF increased its equipment from a reported single turntable in 1929 to six, of different styles and speeds, by 1935. As early as 1933 the station possessed a double turntable setup, made by Western Electric, capable of playing 78 rpm discs. The station also had obtained two other turntables which could play 16-inch diameter electrical transcriptions at 33 1/3 rpm. By 1935 two more of the 33 1/3 rpm turntables had been added.[54]

Also by 1933, the station had been equipped with an interphone communication system connecting every room in the building. Phones in studio areas had "calling lights and low level buzzers."[55]

A feature of WRUF's technical operation in the 1930s was the use of remote facilities for broadcasts. The 1933 technical report mentioned but did not identify four places on the University campus, five places in the city of Gainesville and one point in Jacksonville from which remote programs could be easily done. This is likely to have meant the existence of permanently installed audio connections whose cables led to telephone company facilities

for transmission of the program back to the main studio.

By 1935, when the technical report was updated, the Jacksonville connection had been removed from the list of remote origination points. It is probable that the connection in Jacksonville was abandoned due to infrequent use, for as Red Barber recalled,

> I don't think it was used too much. The George Washington Hotel had a little orchestra that played in the hotel dining room, and once in a while they'd play [via the connection]. Maybe once in a while, somebody would speak from over there.[56]

Of campus locations, it is evident that by far the most frequently used was the University Auditorium. Soon after WRUF took to the air, a small audio mixer and amplifiers were installed in the auditorium, enabling various programs including organ concerts by Claude Murphree to be sent with ease 1,500 feet south to the studio.

Surviving the Great Depression

The decade of the 1930s was a time of trial for WRUF. Financial support from the State of Florida, meager enough in the station's crucial first year of operation, certainly became no more abundant after the full force of the economic depression hit the state.

It had been the low operating budget that restricted the size of the station staff and limited the possibilities for securing high quality talent during that first year on the air. After Florida and the rest of the nation had

sunk deeply into the great depression, reports indicate that WRUF's financial state grew increasingly desperate. The thought that the radio station was probably not alone in its dilemma and that many of the state's institutions were having financial woes could not have offered much comfort to those employees directly affected by the money shortage.

Red Barber remembered:

> The financial plight of the station was desperate. In addition to the small amount of money the station was going to get through the University and from the legislature, there was when I was there--in fact in 1931--[an employee pay cut].
>
> The reason I can date it is because Ralph Nimmons left early in 1931 and I got his job [as Chief Announcer] and I was supposed to get $150.00 per month. I'd planned to get married on that, on the 28th of March. And before I could get my first check and get married, there was a ten percent cut [for state employees in Florida] which meant that I got $135.00, not $150.00 so I know very well when it happened. And that was not restored during the time that I was there, and I left in March of 1934.
>
> At one time during that period, the state was unable to pay on schedule its salaries at the University and they used scrip for a short time.[57]

The early 1930s financial crunch was vividly recalled by WRUF staff member Albert Hendrix, who also reported that there were times when the University could not meet its payroll obligations.

> The state just couldn't pay off because they didn't have the money and it lasted a good

> long time before we got paid. And we didn't get paid all at once anyway; we got a check, like today, maybe two weeks hence we got another one--oh, we finally got paid, let's make sure of that....
>
> During the time when we didn't get paid, [the University's agricultural experiment station] gave us milk,...they gave us bunches of greens, they gave us sweet potatoes, they just helped [and] you could go down there and pick it up.[58]

Troubled Relations with Citizens and Government

By 1933 WRUF had begun to face opposition, and there seemed to be a growing mood around the state that the benefits derived from the radio station did not outweigh the costs of operating it.

By the spring of 1933, state officials were beginning to consider the sale or lease of WRUF to private interests. Meanwhile, the state's newspapers, many of which had so energetically supported the station's establishment only a few years before, had begun to turn their backs on the enterprise. A report on March 26 indicated:

> Sale or lease of the state-owned radio station, WRUF, at the University of Florida, to a chain reported to be in the market for it, was opposed by the Associated Dailies of Florida, meeting [in Tampa] today.
>
> A resolution passed unanimously said: 'The Associated Dailies of Florida opposes any sale or leasing of the state-owned radio station WRUF to any commercial interests and recommends the abolition of said station in as much as it does not have the power to advertise Florida nationally, and is not needed by the agricultural department of the University of Florida whose needs can be served gratis by other radio stations in the state.'[59]

It is not clear why the newspaper group would rather have seen the station abolished entirely when some money for the state's treasury might have been realized by a sale or lease to private interests.

Not everyone had turned against WRUF, however. On April 16, the Florida Engineering Society, meeting in Gainesville, reportedly declared in favor of keeping the station on the air. The society, said the report, actually urged "the extension of time on the air for radio station WRUF and urged that radio research by the engineering experiment station be further encouraged."[60]

Less than a month later, the Gainesville Daily Sun reported:

> A special [state] senate committee... recommended to the senate that the state continue to operate radio station WRUF...and that the legislature appropriate $42,000 a year for this purpose.

The Sun quoted the senate committee as declaring:

> ...failure to continue this station as a state activity...would be equivalent to junking equipment valued at a total of $109,521.70... students who act on the staff of the station... receive compensation averaging about $15.00 monthly toward their expenses at the University.[61]

The Florida Senate narrowly passed, then rescinded the committee's recommendation and shifted its own position to conform with a bill passed in the Florida House of Representatives. The house bill allowed a $25,000 appropriation for WRUF, but only if the station would agree

to broadcast all football games played in the state by the University of Florida team.[62]

Additionally, the bill provided that "authority to lease the station for commercial purposes would be given the state board of education..."[63] The University was to continue to operate WRUF until a suitable party could be found to lease the station.

This development forced Director Powell to begin seeking advertisers for the station. It was obvious that if WRUF did not do more to pay its own way, state officials would turn the station over to private interests. Red Barber, who remained on the staff of WRUF until the spring of 1934, said he did not remember any commercial advertising while he was there, but apparently the director at least made an effort to secure such advertising.

A document in the WRUF files, which was probably written by Powell, indicates:

> It was at this time [after the 1933 legislative session] that an attempt was made to get a network and the Director, a close friend of the President of the Columbia Broadcasting System, was able to get CBS to feed an hour of network in the late afternoon, provided WRUF carried the Chesterfield Cigarette Company fifteen-minute program. This hour proved to be most popular and showed the necessity for building a well-rounded entertainment program.[64]

While the station was still struggling to build its income high enough to win approval of state officials, a plan was generated late in 1935 to move WRUF to new quarters.

The downtown Kelly Hotel, whose ten floors had been left unfinished in 1927 following the crash of the Florida land boom, was purchased for use by the University. It was renamed the Seagle Building and construction was to be completed at last. When finished, according to a September 27, 1936 report, "On the top floor will be located broadcasting studios, and an experiment station for the state and university radio station WRUF."[65] For a short time the station did use some of the Seagle Building space for recording, on discs, material transmitted to the site through leased telephone lines. The studios, however, were never moved to the the Seagle Building. No mention of the proposal could be found in WRUF station files.

WRUF Loses State Funding

By 1937, the prospect of continued state funding for WRUF did not appear favorable. Station documents note that State Senator Spessard Holland, a University of Florida alumnus, vigorously opposed continued funding.

> [Holland] demanded that the University Radio Station become self-supporting and that no money be appropriated to operate it. After a long and tiring fight in the legislature, monies were appropriated with the provision that the station earn more through the medium of advertising to help sustain itself.[66]

With the legislature's anti-appropriation sentiment seemingly growing stronger year by year, Director Powell was also finding it more difficult to secure advertising. As the station files indicate:

> In the meantime, CBS...withdrew their programs from WRUF, which caused a general demand from all over the area covered by the station that another network be obtained and that less time be devoted to educational programs. It was difficult to get a network because of the location of WRUF in a rural section, as it is difficult to sell time to national advertisers on a station so located and with a limited number of listeners.[67]

Once again, in 1939, WRUF had difficulty convincing the legislature to continue funding the station. Although an appropriation was narrowly passed, it was vetoed by Governor Fred P. Cone.

Several meetings were held by the Board of Control to determine the fate of WRUF. Strong consideration was given to leasing the station to private interests, a power within the board's authority since 1933. Director Powell and the station's Washington, D. C. attorney evidently convinced the board that the Federal Communications Commission was not likely to approve an arrangement whereby the state continued its ownership of the station while allowing control to pass into other hands.

As it appeared that no satisfactory arrangement could be made to dispose of WRUF through sale or lease, the board apparently decided to make the station a more active commercial competitor. Station documents indicate "...the Board instructed the Director to go all out and accept all manner of advertising, except whiskey, beer and wines."[68]

So by the end of the depression decade, WRUF had become a fully commercial radio station, having begun the ten-year period as an entirely state-supported one. The change in funding brought no change in the station's ownership or management.

The change from state funding to self-sufficiency also made necessary a shift away from educational programs to a more appealing entertainment format, one that would reduce the difficulty in attracting listeners and, through them, advertising.

The difficult times were by no means over for WRUF at the decade's end. There would be continued hard times ahead as the station sought to build its advertising revenues. With the early 1940s would come the Second World War and an entirely new set of problems. It was the decade of the 1930s though, in which the most crucial questions were answered and the most difficult problems solved. From state-supported and primarily educational to self-supported and primarily entertaining, this was the transition decade in which the essence of the station's style and character was finally determined.

Notes

1. Personal Interview with Ralph Nimmons, Jacksonville, Florida, August 9, 1974.

2. "Radio Station WRUF, Part I," unpublished manuscript from WRUF station files (author not listed, but reported to have been written about 1950 by Station Director Garland W. Powell), p. 19.

3. Ibid.

4. "Garland Powell, Mr. WRUF, Dies Following Illness," Gainesville Sun, August 30, 1959, p. 1.

5. "Major Garland Powell is Father of the National Flag Day Code," Ibid. June 14, 1953.

6. "Radio Station WRUF, Part I," unpublished manuscript, p. 20.

7. "Major Garland Powell...Flag Day Code."

8. Personal interview with Mrs. Consuela Dolbeare, widow of the late Garland W. Powell, Gainesville, Florida, July 25, 1974.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. "Radio Station WRUF, Part I," unpublished manuscript, p. 19.

13. Ibid.

14. "WRUF Equipment is Proved by Tests to be Free of Defects," Florida Alligator (Gainesville, FL), October 6, 1929, p. 1.

15. Ibid.

16. "Changes Made In Operation Of Radio Station," Ibid., November 10, 1929, p. 1.

17. Ibid.

18. This will explain how, for example, the signals from Jacksonville, Florida's station WAPE can occasionally be heard in England, or how New York City's WABC was clearly received by the author as far south as San Juan, Puerto Rico. Information related in this section was based on a personal interview with present WRUF Chief Engineer E. A. Slimak, Gainesville, Florida, October 21, 1974.

19. Personal interview with E. A. Slimak, Gainesville, Florida, October 21, 1974.

20. "Radio Programs Are Praised By Fans Over U. S.," Florida Alligator (Gainesville, FL), October 28, 1928, p. 1.

21. Employee card file at station WRUF.

22. Ibid.

23. W. L. "Red" Barber and Robert Creamer, Rhubarb in the Catbird Seat (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1968), p. 145.

24. Personal interview with Ralph Nimmons, Jacksonville, Florida, August 9, 1974.

25. Ibid.

26. "Radio Station WRUF, Part I," unpublished manuscript, p. 21.

27. Ibid.

28. Barber and Creamer, Rhubarb in the Catbird Seat, p. 143.

29. Ibid.

30. "Farm Radio Programs for Florida," February, 1935 program listings from University of Florida College of Agriculture's Cooperative Extension Service.

31. Florida Alligator (Gainesville, FL), February 22, 1930.

32. Personal interview with Albert Hendrix, Gainesville, Florida, October 21, 1974.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Recorded comments by J. Sam Fouts of Richmond, Virginia, in response to written questions from the author; received September, 1974.

36. Barber and Creamer, Rhubarb in the Catbird Seat, p. 150.

37. Ibid., p. 154.

38. Personal interview with Ralph Nimmons, Jacksonville, Florida, August 9, 1974.

39. Personal interview with Walter L. "Red" Barber, Tallahassee, Florida, October 17, 1974.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Personal interview with Otis Boggs, Gainesville, Florida, October 8, 1974.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Kenneth F. Small, "Summary History of WRUF (and WRUF-FM)," brief highlights of station history compiled 1970; from WRUF station files.

47. Personal interview with Walter L. "Red" Barber, Tallahassee, Florida, October 17, 1974.

48. Personal interview with Clifford Beasley, Gainesville, Florida, August 13, 1974.

49. Personal interview with Walter L. "Red" Barber, Tallahassee, Florida, October 17, 1974.

50. Personal interview with Clifford Beasley, Gainesville, Florida, August 13, 1974.

51. Ibid.

52. Personal interview with Albert Hendrix, Gainesville, Florida, October 21, 1974.

53. Description of Technical Equipment, from WRUF station files; the latest entry in which is dated May 10, 1935.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. Personal interview with Walter L. "Red" Barber, Tallahassee, Florida, October 17, 1974.

57. Ibid.

58. Personal interview with Albert Hendrix, Gainesville, Florida, October 21, 1974.

59. "Newspaper Group Opposes Sale of WRUF," Daily Sun Gainesville, FL), March 26, 1933, p. 1.

60. "Ask for WRUF Time," Ibid., April 16, 1933, p. 1.

61. "State Committee favors WRUF," Ibid., May 12, 1933, p. 1.

62. "Broadcasting of Games Made Mandatory," Ibid., May 28, 1933, p. 1.

63. Ibid.

64. "Radio Station WRUF, Part I," unpublished manuscript, p. 21.

65. "Work on $198,000 John F. Seagle Building Project to Begin Tomorrow," Florida Alligator (Gainesville, FL), September 27, 1936, p. 1.

66. "Radio Station WRUF, Part I," unpublished manuscript, p. 22.

67. Ibid., p. 23.

68. Ibid.

CHAPTER IV
CRISIS, STRENGTH, CRISIS, 1940-1956

The period described in this chapter was a time of strengthening WRUF, of improving the variety and quality of program offerings and meeting the economic challenges of emerging radio and television competitors. This period was also the concluding phase of Garland Powell's tenure as Director of the station. Many of the advances made in the operation of WRUF during this period can be attributed to his efforts.

With the beginning of the 1940s, WRUF was entering a new era as a station fully dependent on its own efforts to secure funds through advertising. Much of the activity during the forties would be directed toward improving the station's economic position.

Station Administration

By 1940, the size of the staff had grown considerably from the tiny crew that had kept the station on the air during its first year. During the late 1930s, the staff is known to have consisted of at least 11 full-time and 49 part-time employees. Of those working part-time, most were

students who did announcing and production, assisted the transmitter operators, or did general office work. Some part-time employees were listed as musical or other artists who occasionally appeared in the station's programs.[1]

Aside from the production and office personnel, the station employed a seven-man technical staff at the start of the 1940s. Engineering College Dean Joseph Weil was listed as technical supervisor, with Albert Moreno serving as the engineer in charge of transmitter operation. Moreno was assisted by technicians Ovid R. Gano, Leslie Stroupe, P. D. Lacey, William R. Martin and W. E. Scott, some of whom were part-time employees.[2]

The entry of the United States into World War II, caused staffing difficulties for Major Powell. Until the early forties, WRUF had been training only young men for careers in radio, for the University of Florida was still a men's college. Realizing that many of his young male employees would soon be called into military service, Powell began to look for young ladies to replace them.

By January, 1942, Powell had hired at least two female announcers from the local community. Margaret Hopkins seems to have been the first, followed shortly by Anne Towson. Another young lady, Marian Rogers, served as the hostess of a regularly scheduled program for women each Saturday morning.[3]

The station card file listing dates of employment for most of WRUF's past staff members shows numerous instances of interrupted careers during the war years. E. D. "Ted" Covington, J. Sam Fouts, Dan Valentine and Richard Crago were among those who left for war service, then returned to the WRUF staff when they resumed their education at the University.

Some WRUF men, though they may have returned from the war, did not rejoin the staff; one who did not was William P. Carey, who had worked from September, 1940 to August, 1941 as an announcer and advertising salesman. The final entry on Carey's file card, placed there some time after his departure from the staff, was a grim forwarding address:

> William P. Carey, 1st Lt., USA
> American P. O. W. #1597
> Stalag Luft III, Germany
> via New York City[4]

Carey reportedly returned after the war and went into the advertising business.

Financing of Station Operations

Putting WRUF in sound financial condition and keeping it there was an important goal in the early forties. As the thirties ended with the state funding eliminated by Governor Cone's veto, alternate methods of support had to be found. A station document noted briefly that "the Citizen's Committee of Gainesville started a campaign to keep the station going.[5]

No other information has been found to indicate if such a committee actually raised money for WRUF's operations or, if so, how much.

No matter what citizens' groups were able to do, it became increasingly clear to Powell and other station officials that the attraction of commercial advertising was the task with the highest priority. In the early forties, Powell traveled to New York, Chicago and other large northern cities, seeking to interest large national and regional advertisers in buying time on WRUF. Powell established relations with advertising agencies representing large commercial companies.

In soliciting buyers for advertising time on WRUF, Powell quickly learned that many companies and advertising agencies were reluctant to consider stations not affiliated with a national network. Then, as now, such affiliations tend to confer a certain prestige on a station and indicate the potential for attracting a reasonably large listening audience.

Powell felt WRUF should align itself with a network, and began negotiations with the Mutual Broadcasting System. By September, 1941, Powell and Mutual had reached tentative agreement on the affiliation terms; Powell then had to persuade President Tigert and the Board of Control to approve the arrangement.

In a letter to Dr. Tigert dated September 2, 1941, Powell wrote:

> For your information and the information of the Board, Mutual carries on their business in the following manner. First, you maintain and pay the line charges [for the leased telephone company lines over which programs are transmitted from network headquarters to the station]. Second, they give you as many contracts with commercial accounts as they are able to obtain for you. At first these contracts will not be enough...to pay for...the line charges, but as they gradually build up your business the commercials not only pay the line charges but pay a considerable amount over it....
>
> When I first started to negotiate with Mutual they wanted $786.00 a month for line charges. After three trips to New York we have finally reached a minimum of $400.00 monthly....[6]

Powell's letter also referred to a plan whereby WRUF would occasionally supply the Mutual network with a program from Gainesville and indicated that the value of the Florida publicity obtained free in such programs would more than outweigh a year's worth of line charges.

Powell's letter continued:

> A station on a network is a better selling point for not only national accounts but for local accounts. It would mean a re-arrangement of our price scale, and in the long run the State of Florida and WRUF would reap untold benefits from such arrangements, I am fully convinced.[7]

Powell also told Tigert he had submitted a travel request form so he could go to New York again to seek more national advertising for WRUF. Powell explained:

> Have made three trips at my own expense and in each instance have brought back quite a bit of national business. I do not feel that I can afford to travel at my own expense in view of the fact that the station is, under the most adverse circumstances, showing a profit.[8]

By October 20, 1941, Florida Attorney General J. Tom Watson's office had examined the proposed contract between WRUF and the Mutual Broadcasting System and had approved it, allowing the Board of Control to sign the agreement. With the contract signed, WRUF joined the Mutual Broadcasting System on November 17, 1941,[9] prompting Powell to remark the next day, in a note to Dr. Tigert:

> Mutual Broadcasting System put on their nationwide network eight different salutes to the University Radio Station WRUF, on the opening day of our joining the network. From a Chamber of Commerce point of view these salutes were worth a good many thousands of dollars. On one program this morning, the young lady stated that she always took her vacation in Florida and loved it so. She sang songs about "Blue Skies" and other things that gave Florida a great boost. She wanted to visit the studios and urged everyone else to do so. I figured from the time cost on these programs, it would have cost the State of Florida $35,000 if they had to purchase same.[10]

By 1944 WRUF, through Garland Powell, was represented on three different advisory committees of the Mutual Broadcasting System. As Powell claimed in a letter to Tigert, "This fact has given us wide national prestige...."[11]

WRUF remained affiliated with Mutual through the mid-fifties; in 1953 some difficulty arose with the network over an added service charge which the network wished to assess

from the non-metropolitan stations [those serving primary coverage areas of less than 100,000 people]. Based on a report to then University President Dr. J. Hillis Miller by WRUF Assistant Director E. R. "Ray" Dantzler, Mutual wished to amend its contracts with many of its affiliated stations.

Apparently, WRUF was at that time earning a modest amount of money from the broadcast of Mutual programs. According to Dantzler, though, the imposition of a service charge would mean that WRUF would then be paying Mutual for such programs. Dantzler commented on Mutual's request to alter the affiliation contract:

> If the Board of Control alters the contract in any way, according to Mr. Heintz, the Assistant Attorney General, who made a ruling on it, the action would be contrary to the constitution of the State of Florida. The constitution, according to Mr. Heintz, will not permit a contract to be altered where such alterations cost the state money. This is exactly what it will do if any changes are made in the present contract, because it would lower our rates, and we would be paying Mutual, instead of Mutual paying us.
>
> The truth of the matter is, Mutual would like very much to get out of the contract, which is to our advantage. It would be to their advantage to get out of it. I strongly recommend that the present contract stand until the end of the contractural [sic] period.[12]

WRUF was to remain affiliated with the Mutual Broadcasting System until November 17, 1959.

Revenue realized by WRUF from advertising placed by the national business concerns and advertising agencies undoubtedly helped the station through the 1940s after the

cutoff of state funding. Powell, following a business trip to the north in 1944, reported to Dr. Tigert:

> The New York-Chicago trip was very productive of business and, from present indications, I will have obtained contracts amounting to something over $5,000 for the sale of broadcast time.[13]

To supplement revenues earned from national advertising accounts, WRUF became more active in soliciting local advertising during the 1940s. A small staff of salesmen made the rounds of local businesses, trying to get them to purchase time on the station. A staff writer provided all the continuity; that is, all the commercial copy and other scripts delivered by the announcers.

By the early forties, a student named J. Sam Fouts had gone to work part-time as the station's writer. Fouts said he replaced a graduating senior named Tom Watson who got a job writing soap operas in New York.

Fouts recalled some examples of the local advertising efforts in the early forties:

> One of our claims to fame was the Gainesville Laundry [account].... They bought a five-minute newscast at noon and I came up with the idea that their [commercial message] would be the story of two socks; these two socks would to the laundry and talk about the fact that they could go all the way through the process and never be separated--after all, they were mates and they should stay together.
>
> There were a number of other commercial successes. I recall that the wire recorder was just coming out in those days, and we had a brilliant idea one day: we had a number of hillbilly outfits that played on the station and

one of the finest was "Shorty" Shedd and his group. And one day we said to Shorty...'let's make up a 15-minute program for the Dixie Lily Milling Company'--they made flour, etcetera; good country folks were their customers. We called them the "Dixie Lily Hillbillies," and we put together a program...with big old tall Dan Valentine as the emcee for it.

We put this on a wire recorder and took it to the Dixie Lily Company...and they were flabbergasted when [the salesman] set this recorder on the guy's desk, flipped it on and here they were..."Shorty" Shedd and the Dixie Lily Hillbillies. [The Dixie Lily Company] loved it so much they bought it on the spot...and we had a 15 minute program three or four times a week, all paid for on WRUF.[14]

The Post-War Rise in Competition

During the thirties and most of the forties, WRUF was the dominant station in Florida's north-central region simply because it could be received more clearly there than other Florida stations. Tampa, Orlando and Jacksonville had radio stations but they were too far away to be clearly heard. This gave WRUF an uncontested grip on local radio advertising; all that there was in Gainesville and surrounding counties had to be placed with Powell's sales staff.

Florida's post-war growth meant competition for the University's station and in 1948, WGGG became its first local challenger. The WGGG management, noting WRUF's position as a state-owned station, claimed that WRUF should be forbidden to accept local advertising in competition with private business.

A station document, said by several informants to have been written by Garland Powell, describes the situation:

> ...when a 250 watt station was built in Gainesville in competition to WRUF, the methods and plans employed to berate the University station have caused some concern. They have circulated such rumors as this--WRUF is State-owned and should not be in business locally and even went so far as to have a bill drawn which was to be introduced in the Legislature prohibiting WRUF from accepting local advertising.[15]

Powell scoffed at the WGGG effort to get WRUF out of the local advertising business, saying:

> It must be remembered that...we are not competitors of WGGG, but they are competing with WRUF. WRUF has been in the field of broadcasting since 1928 and has been fully commercial since 1939. Anyone entering the field should have known these facts if they had been radio-minded and any argument to the contrary could be likened to the International Correspondence School opening an office in Gainesville and asking the University to close the General Extension Division.[16]

WGGG was not successful in having WRUF restricted in its freedom to advertise and the University's station withstood the first challenge from its new competitor.

WRUF Is Self-Sufficient

Although the station managed to increase both its national and local advertising revenues during the forties, WRUF's commercial success was limited by its location in a small city surrounded by a sparsely populated rural region. It is probable that the station would have done much better financially if located in an area where greater numbers of

potential listeners would have helped attract advertisers.

Competition for public attention increased in the early fifties as television began to take part of radio's audience, especially at night. By 1955 another Gainesville radio station, WDVH, had further increased the competition for audiences and for advertising revenues.

WRUF operated at a loss for several years in the mid-fifties, with deficits of $13,192.00 in the fiscal year 1954-55, $20,349.00 in 1955-56 and $25,806.00 in 1956-57. To offset these losses, the station could draw from funds accumulated in its state treasury account during its most profitable years.[17] Even so, the deficits were to cause concern among high University and state officials and would probably be a factor contributing to Major Powell's 1956 retirement.

Although the station's financial balance may occasionally have been unsteady, evidence indicates that, after becoming a fully commercial operation in 1939, WRUF never again had to rely on tax dollars for its support. The station was supported entirely by money it had earned through advertising sales. Though WRUF continued as a state-owned station, it was no longer state-supported; in the forties WRUF became self-sufficient at last.

Program Offerings

WRUF's programming in the 1940s and early 1950s

represented a change from the kind of program service offered during the 1930s. A wider variety of programs could be offered the audience and some new ideas resulted in shows that remained on the air for several decades.

By this time, WRUF had built up a large library of recorded music and many of the programs consisted of music, with chatter from the announcer. In the early forties, WRUF began an early morning program called "The Clockwatcher," in which the standard music and chatter format was varied by announcements of the time every five minutes as a guide for listeners beginning their day's activities. The station would continue the program through the early 1970s.

Live Local Entertainment

Although music and other program material had, by the 1940s become increasingly available on disc recordings, live programs remained popular at least in the early years of the decade. A publicity brochure printed for WRUF in 1942 urged listeners to tune in not only for live musical programs but for locally-produced dramas as well.

Among the musical offerings broadcast live on WRUF were programs by "Shorty" Shedd's Jubilee Hillbillies, evidently the same group referred to by writer J. Sam Fouts. It is likely that the group called itself the Dixie Lily Hillbillies when their broadcasts were sponsored by that company.

Another seemingly popular live musical show was the weekly "Hayloft Hop." WRUF carried the program live by remote pickup from Gainesville's American Legion Hall, and described it this way:

> There's some mighty high doin's at the Gainesville American Legion Hall come Saturday night; it's the WRUF "Hayloft Hop."
>
> It starts out at 7:00 o'clock when the Jubilee Hillbillies take the platform with "Farmer Dan" Valentine as their announcer for a full hour variety show. Guest artists are invariably on hand, and amateur and novelty contests feature many of the affairs.[18]

"Evening Serenade" and "Evening Reverie" were also among WRUF's live local musical offerings in the early forties. Both featured vocal and instrumental tunes by artists from the Gainesville area, some from the station's own staff.

WRUF apparently produced dramatic programs regularly. The publicity brochure mentions the University of Florida Radio Guild as a favorite group of performers drawn from the speech and drama classes. In addition, a local children's dramatic group frequently performed, directed by Mrs. Gertrude McGill.

WRUF's dramatic productions during the forties and early fifties gave both actors and broadcasters a chance to simulate the activities of a big-time network studio. Once, recalled Ray Dantzler, voice instructor John DeBruyn produced a special arrangement of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" in the WRUF studios.[19]

Otis Boggs, on the WRUF staff since 1939, recalled some elaborate efforts in radio dramas, in which dialogue was mixed with sound effects created in the studio by the use of a variety of devices. Boggs remembered that one of them was a large wooden box on wheels containing a door and a window which could be opened or closed depending on the requirements of the script. In addition, Boggs said:

> They did have a library later on, with sound on records that they would use. Then, they built a two-turntable box that they'd wheel into the studio...the sound effects man [would] have on earphones, listening to the director, and he'd have a script in front of him and he'd work right in [the studio] on the sound...it had to be synchronized just right, you know.[20]

Network Entertainment

WRUF's affiliation with the Mutual Broadcasting System late in 1941 meant the station's listeners had access to a much wider variety of programs. Always popular in the forties and early fifties was the music of the big bands, broadcast over the Mutual network. Benny Goodman, Guy Lombardo, Harry James, Ray Noble, Tommy Dorsey and Glenn Miller were among the bandleading stars whose groups entertained WRUF's listeners.

WRUF, through the Mutual network, could also offer north-central Floridians an array of drama and adventure programs that included, "The Shadow," "The Johnson Family" and "The Lone Ranger."

Information Programs

WRUF offered its listeners an expanded variety of informational programs in the 1940s; this was due partly to its affiliation with the Mutual network and partly to its own local efforts.

Although WRUF would not have a news department of its own until the late sixties, there were news programs on the air in the forties and fifties, from a variety of sources.

By 1942, WRUF could boast:

> On each half-hour and at each hour...WRUF broadcasts all the news available--from the city, state, nation or world. For WRUF is served by the finest news organizations extant: The United Press sends stories of happenings from every corner of the earth, by direct cables from foreign scenes and the 176,000 miles of leased wires from all points of the nation; the alert and experienced staff of the Mutual Broadcasting System adds its short-wave broadcasts of eye-witnesses direct from international "hot-beds" and contributes the comments of the nation's keenest news analysts to help WRUF's listeners weigh the effects and influences of these great events. Locally, neighborhood news...is made available to the WRUF area through the cooperative service of the Gainesville Sun, edited by Bobby Beard.[21]

The United Press teletype had been placed upstairs in a small room next to the talk studio that would be used for the news broadcasts.

Through the forties, WRUF also carried daily reports of police and sheriff's department activities, a practice which had begun in the early thirties. These reports included full descriptions of fugitives from justice.

Through the period 1940-1956, the "Florida Farm Hour" was still an important part of WRUF's information programming. J. Francis Cooper, the Agricultural Extension Editor since 1925, still had responsibility for producing the program. William G. Mitchell, who worked with him on the farm hour from 1952 through 1956, reported that Cooper

> ...was a real personality.... He did the "Farm Question Box" [as part of the farm hour]...and was known throughout North Central Florida for the answers he gave to listeners' questions. He never failed to have a backlog of questions to answer, and used to answer the ones he couldn't cover on the air by mail."[22]

Mitchell also reported that, while he was on the extension staff, it was not always necessary to go to the WRUF studio for a farm hour program. A weather report segment of the broadcast could be done via the telephone line from the extension service offices elsewhere on the campus, where Mitchell would "read [the] temperature, barometric pressure, and relative humidity from instruments outside our window..."[23] To add variety to farm hour programs of that period, Mitchell reported, "our office secretary read women's news each day, and we conducted field interviews as well as having various staff members do 'talks'."[24]

For homemakers, Mary Lee Taylor offered hints from the Pet Milk kitchen on the "Pet Milky Way" over the Mutual network. WRUF carried this program as a regular feature during the forties.

Sports Programs

Throughout the period 1940-56, sports programming remained an important part of WRUF's service to its listeners. From the Mutual network, WRUF had access to sports news reports from commentators like Bill Stern, plus live coverage of important sporting events from other parts of the nation.

Local sports coverage, usually provided by Otis Boggs, continued to be featured. Boggs became the principal sports reporter for WRUF and did play-by-play accounts of a wide variety of events.

It was in 1947, Boggs reported, that the Florida Gator Football Network was established. Major Powell, in cooperation with station WMBR in Jacksonville and WDAE in Tampa, formed a network of about ten stations to carry that year's games, "and they sold the games to the Coca-Cola Company."[25]

"Since then," Boggs continued, "the network has gone to a deal where each station gets its own sponsors...but at that time Coca-Cola had it and later on Chevrolet had it, state-wide."[26]

After several years of operation the football network was transferred to the control of the University of Florida Athletic Association, a non-profit corporation which operates the University's athletic program. Since that time, WRUF and its staff have served as a production agency for the football network broadcasts, with the Association paying a fee for the

service. The only exception was the 1955 season, when WGGG produced the game broadcasts.

Robert W. "Bob" Leach, who joined the WRUF staff in 1947 and has spent most of his career at the station, serves as the producer of each season's football broadcasts. He explained that the Athletic Association now conducts all the business affairs for the network. Each year, Leach said, the Association invites Florida radio stations to bid against others in their locality for the right to carry the games. Stations which carried the games the previous year are allowed to renew their contract without bidding, at a ten percent increase in the service charge.

The successful bidders, Leach explained, would expect to make a profit from the game broadcasts by selling advertising time to businesses in their own areas.[27]

Working as a team with play-by-play announcer Otis Boggs for most of the years the network has been in operation has been E. D. "Ted" Covington, who worked at WRUF as a student announcer during 1940-42 and again in 1946-47 following his wartime military service. Covington did the color commentary for many of the games before the establishment of the network and, although he has occasionally missed a season, has continued as Boggs' principal partner in the stadium announcing booth.

During several seasons in the early 1950s, Covington was

replaced by R. C. "Bob" Smith, another former WRUF student trainee who, after serving in the military, returned to a full-time staff position at the station.

Specialty Programs for Diverse Interests

A variety of interests were served by specialized WRUF programs in the forties and early fifties. Children, for example, were invited to tune in for their favorite stories on "Musical Fairy Tales," an afternoon program hosted by Bob Smith and other staff announcers.[28]

A series of programs especially for the women of north-central Florida was "When Ladies Meet," described in the 1942 publicity brochure as "a recent addition to the informative programs on WRUF. Conducted by youthful, enthusiastic Marian Rogers, the feature is a Saturday morning review of women's affairs and hints on how to spend spare time in the home."[29]

Spiritual guidance was also offered in regular programs featuring local clergymen. In addition, the station carried religious programs from the Mutual network.

It is not clear when programming was begun especially for the black audience. Those who remember the programs of the thirties have said that black singing groups were occasionally featured along with white groups in the same broadcasts. In addition, touring black choirs would sometimes

perform at the WRUF studios or at the University Auditorium so their music could be broadcast throughout the area.

By the early 1940s, times had been set aside for programs appealing to the black audience. A male quintet called the Invincible Singers offered a program of spiritual songs each Sunday morning and a male quartet known as the Flying Squad Jubilee Singers presented their own vocal music on Tuesday evenings, noted the 1942 publicity brochure.[30]

A program known as "The Negro Hour" made its appearance during the early forties and was apparently heard regularly for several years. J. Sam Fouts, who had been promoted to Program Director in 1942, was responsible for the production of the program. He explained that the program originated following a conversation with Chester Cook, the Superintendent of Alachua County's black schools.

> Chester and I got to gabbing one day and I said, "Hey, Chester, could you get together a program...I want announcers, directors--I want you to do the entire staffing--and we'll just label it 'The Negro Hour'." He saw this as an opportunity to put their best foot forward....
>
> We got together and whipped up a program... and I said, "Now, I am not going to censor this in the slightest, except that if you start [trying to prove] that Abraham Lincoln was actually an octoroon then you and I are going to have trouble. The thrust of this program is to show the black people in their very best light, [so] if you have live performers, get the best ones there are; if you play records, get... Duke Ellington and other performers...."
>
> I'll never forget the first Sunday we were to go on the air, the Major [Powell] said, "Well,

you'd better get a shotgun, because you're going to have to defend yourself before this day is over."

[Major Powell's prediction] didn't bother me in the slightest, so it was Laddie Routen who put them on the air--[he] and I were the only two white people in the station, and here descended all our black brethern to put on their show.... We went on the air and nothing happened, except we got some phone calls complimenting us and they would label themselves, saying "I'm white and I like the program very much."

The program attracted excellent attention in the black community; Chester found us all sorts of wonderful people. We had a young black composer from Juilliard, and some from Curtis who came down, playing stringed instruments [or] the piano [in] their own compositions. We had one of the chief librarians from the New York city library come down--she was black--- and she did some book reviews of [books by] black people. We had the Bethune-Cookman Choir and...a lot of other people coming over to the show.

I had done this rather late in my [Program Director] career and was getting ready to get out of school, and it was still going on when I left [on March 1, 1943]. But I only had about six months with it, I guess...and I understand that it died...because I don't guess anybody really understood what it was all about.[31]

The WRUF Programming Philosophy

During the late 1940s it became apparent that the efforts, over more than a decade, to become a financially sound commercial station had influenced the principles formulated to guide programming decisions. WRUF, during its first year on the air, broadcast numerous programs for instructional purposes or for the cultural enrichment of the audience. Such programs, it was soon found, did not

capture sufficient interest among north-central Floridians.

During the 1930s, the ratio of educational to entertainment programs continued to decrease, until WRUF was predominently entertainment-oriented by the end of the decade.

This does not mean that WRUF entirely neglected programs that would bring educational or cultural benefit to its listeners, as indicated in a 1950 report on station operations which gave an indication of the station's programming philosophy.

By 1950, a University committee had been formed to evaluate the role of WRUF in the total operation of the University. The report referred to was obviously intended to place the WRUF point of view before the committee. It was written in four parts: a brief history of the station, previously quoted in this study; a brief account of station programming; a description of operational matters; and a short summary of all the parts. Although no author is listed, several informants have stated that the report was Major Powell's work. Therefore, the views expressed on station programming reflect Powell's personal ideas.

The programming segment of the report began with some general comments about program decision-making:

> Radio programming is a hard, thankless job for several reasons. No matter what you

> put on, there are going to be complaints. That all goes back to the basic makeup of the American people. How many different types of cars, of makes of clothes, of types of cigarettes, of types of foods, of forms of entertainment, are there? As you know, there are many, and many are successful because of the wide variety of tastes that go to make up any given community or group of persons in America. Consequently, the same obviously applies to radio programming.... Are you going to program so that every segment of your audience, no matter how small, will have their little spot in the day, or are you going to program to serve the most people, the broadcast fare they want? The first of the above two ideas is the most idealistic, but certainly the most impractical.[32]

Although WRUF had been forced to become an entirely commercial operation when the state government discontinued financial support of it, there were apparently still influential people who wanted it to broadcast primarily educational programs. To them, the report replied:

> The reasons for our commercial operation were previously written in this report. There is one thing that must be kept in mind: the operation of a radio station is big business, and it is impossible to compete in as competitive a field as radio successfully with a half-and-half operation. You are either a commercial enterprise or you are a 100% educational, sustaining operation. We are commercial, and if we wish to keep listeners, we'll have to stay that way. It is completely idealistic to believe that an educational station will rate [the loyalty of] the majority of its potential audience...[33]

Regarding the tastes of American radio listeners, Powell wrote:

> They want to get away from their troubles; basically, they aren't interested in knowledge. They want to hear some fellow get up in front of a microphone and make stupid remarks that make

> them laugh, or they want to hear some clever detective break down three doors and catch a half-dozen murderers, single-handed. Hooper ratings and Neilson ratings, have proven time and time again, that top quality high IQ shows never have dominated the taste of the American radio listener. It's a shame, but true; it would be a greater shame to try and force something down their throats that they do not want. You can't do it. It's all too simple a process to change stations.[34]

Regarding the production of educational and cultural programs, the report indicated:

> WRUF is way above other stations in a similar commercial operation, in the number of educational programs that it makes available to the listeners from time to time.... We have always made it a policy to cooperate with every department on the University of Florida campus, whenever it has been humanly possible to do so, and no one can name any case to the contrary.[35]

The report went on to name programs done for the departments of music, speech, chemistry, the University Library, the Agricultural Extension Service and other components of the University.

It appears that the WRUF management at that time felt the need to balance the station's financial welfare against the programming constraints imposed by WRUF's role as a University station. Certain educational and cultural programs may have been necessary to please those elements within the University that saw the station's entertainment policy as being inconsistent with the proper image of a growing university. At the same time, however, WRUF needed to retain the entertainment programs which attracted large

audiences; those were the programs that made advertisers continue buying broadcast time.

As a final comment to the evaluation committee, Powell wrote:

> The committee interested in this report frankly leaves me with mixed emotions. An investigation is welcome because it will bring out the handicaps under which we are forced to operate. We are the University station, but some University officials will call us and say they are offering a University program to our competitors, though the officials in question know little about radio station operation. We are the University station, but the Board of Control wants us to make our own way, while the University says "Money isn't the most important thing in our operation." An investigation is welcome because it is bound to improve our situation when all the facts are brought to light.[36]

On April 4, 1950, the WRUF Survey Committee made its report. The committee, composed of Chairman Frank Goodwin, A. A. Beecher, Fred H. Pumphrey, G. M. Turner, Joe E. Sherman, D. B. Dusenbury and W. M. Wise gave some indication of the difficulty of their deliberations, with the comment:

> At times the Committee has felt the problem of making suggestions which were at one time sound educationally, economically and culturally was impossible. At one time in the study, the Committee favored complete separation of Station WRUF from the University; thus, solving our problem by default.[37]

The committee determined that WRUF's AM facility could not serve either as a state radio station or as an adequate educational facility. The committee noted that WRUF provided the area its only national network reception and stimulated

local commerce through advertising; a change in such an operation, thought the committee, would be detrimental to the public interest.

The committee did suggest that, though WRUF remain commercial, it add more educational programs to its schedule. In addition, the committee urged that the requirement that WRUF-FM be financially self-supporting be dropped and that "On FM, educational programs should have priority over commercial programs to exactly the same degree that commercial programs take precedence on AM."[38]

The committee also urged that a qualified person be hired as Educational Radio Director to oversee all educational programming. No information has been found to indicate that such a person was ever hired in such a position.

It seemed certain that, in a community of so many diverse interests and tastes, no unanimity would be possible regarding appropriate programming for the University's station.

Major Powell's Influence on WRUF

Because Major Garland W. Powell remained as the chief executive of WRUF for 27 years, it is important to assess his influence on the development of the station. Powell was in charge from its first year of operation and guided WRUF through some of the most trying, yet exciting years in its history. As will be explained, there is evidence that Powell's retirement was not entirely of his own choice, as

the station's financial losses grew through the 1950s.

Some observers, mostly former employees, imply that Powell's greatest value to WRUF was as an ambassador of good will. Through his frequent travel around Florida and other eastern states, plus his wide circle of acquaintances and professional memberships, Powell was evidently continually working to build the image of the station. It is known that his travels, especially to northern cities, frequently resulted in important advertising contracts, without which WRUF may have been in desperate straits.

Further, several of those interviewed, including Red Barber, Alvin Flanagan, Sam Fouts and others indicated that Powell was especially adept at the sort of behind-the-scenes political maneuvering that was, in all likelihood, necessary to help WRUF survive the 1930s.

Some former WRUF staff members, while professing great admiration for Powell, nonetheless maintain that he had no great knowledge of the practical skills of broadcasting. Informants said that, as Director, Powell was likely to give most of his attention to writing numerous letters or traveling about making friends for WRUF. Day-to-day station operations were often left in the hands of assistant directors like Russell McCaughan, Alvin Flanagan and, later, Ray Dantzler.

Flanagan, who worked at WRUF from 1938 to 1942, explained that it was McCaughan, not Powell, who heard his audition for a job at the station. McCaughan, Flanagan added, "was the person who was really responsible for the actual running of the station" during most of the 1930s.[39]

Red Barber indicated that Powell was not an especially proficient announcer and was reluctant to do any on-the-air work.[40]

Although Powell, through the years, gave evidence of being intensely proud of ex-WRUF staffers who made good elsewhere in commercial broadcasting, he apparently did little to help them improve their broadcasting skills while they were at WRUF. Flanagan noted:

> The station manager, Major Powell, seldom if ever offered a suggestion as far as your announcing or writing was concerned. It was left to the announcers themselves; they were extremely critical of one another...it was all done in a very good-natured way, but nevertheless it had a serious undertone to it. And the criticism that was offered by one student to another was really what made the students proud of their work...[41]

Sam Fouts, who replaced Flanagan as Program Director, seemed to agree, saying of the Major, "his secret was to leave everybody alone to do their own thing."[42] The Major was, however, an avid WRUF listener while away from the studios; announcers who made mistakes on the air could expect a telephone call from Powell almost immediately.

Whatever the Major's role in the development of young broadcasting talent, he did at least institute the program by which young people could learn the profession while earning some money for their college expenses. As the list of ex-WRUF staffers achieving distinction with networks or large metropolitan stations grew through the years, Powell apparently capitalized on this as an added justification for keeping the station in operation. This may have been a crucial factor in winning the continued support of legislators and educators.

Powell, though perhaps not exceptionally skilled as a broadcaster himself, seems to have known what was needed to keep WRUF on the air through many of its difficult times. It was during his directorship that some of the basic practices and policies which still guide WRUF's operation were firmly established.

Late in 1955, WRUF's studio facilities were moved to more spacious and modern quarters under the west stands of Florida Field stadium. This would be the last significant change for the station during Garland Powell's tenure as Director.

Powell retired on October 31, 1956 after more than 27 years as the station's chief executive. Kenneth F. Small, an experienced advertising man and broadcaster from Jacksonville, assumed the directorship.

Powell, in failing health due to cancer, lived less than three years following his retirement. He passed away on August 30, 1959, a few weeks after his 67th birthday. On Sunday, September 6, the Major's friends at WRUF produced a special program, a tribute to his contributions to the station.

Notes

1. WRUF staff roster--1938 calendar year; from station files.
2. "WRUF" publicity brochure, printed for mass distribution. (Peoria, Ill.: National Radio Personalities Publishers, 1942).
3. Ibid.
4. Employee card file at station WRUF.
5. "Radio Station WRUF, Part I," unpublished manuscript from WRUF station files (author not listed, but reported to have been written about 1950 by Station Director Garland W. Powell), p. 23.
6. Letter from Garland W. Powell to Dr. John J. Tigert, September 2, 1941.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. "Radio Station WRUF, Part I," unpublished manuscript, p. 24.
10. Letter from Garland W. Powell to Dr. John J. Tigert, November 19, 1941.
11. Ibid., April 7, 1944.
12. Report by E. R. Dantzler to Dr. J. Hillis Miller, April 22, 1953.

13. Letter from Garland W. Powell to Dr. John J. Tigert, November 3, 1944.

14. Recorded comments by J. Sam Fouts of Richmond, Virginia, in response to written questions from the author; received in September, 1974.

15. "Radio Station WRUF, Part I," unpublished manuscript, p. 29.

16. Ibid.

17. "U. of F. Radio Station Hikes Ad Rates To Fight Deficit," St. Petersburg Times, October 3, 1957, p. 18-B.

18. "WRUF" publicity brochure.

19. Personal interview with E. R. "Ray" Dantzler, Gainesville, Florida, June 26, 1974.

20. Personal interview with Otis Boggs, Gainesville, Florida, October 8, 1974.

21. "WRUF" publicity brochure.

22. Letter from William G. Mitchell to the author, October 30, 1974.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Personal interview with Otis Boggs, Gainesville, Florida, October 8, 1974.

26. Ibid.

27. Personal interview with Robert W. Leach, Gainesville, Florida, October 15, 1974.

28. "Smith of WRUF gets call to Air Force," Gainesville Sun, May 24, 1953.

29. "WRUF" publicity brochure.

30. Ibid.

31. Recorded comments by J. Sam Fouts of Richmond, Virginia, in response to written questions from the author; received in September, 1974.

32. "Radio Station WRUF, Part II," unpublished manuscript from WRUF station files, p. 2.

33. Ibid., p. 4.

34. Ibid., p. 6

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., p. 16.

37. Report of the WRUF Survey Committee, April 4, 1950.

38. Ibid.

39. Recorded comments by Alvin Flanagan of Denver, Colorado, in response to written questions from the author; received in October, 1974.

40. Personal interview with Walter L. "Red" Barber, Tallahassee, Florida, October 17, 1974.

41. Recorded comments by Alvin Flanagan of Denver, Colorado, in response to written questions from the author; received in October, 1974.

42. Recorded comments by J. Sam Fouts of Richmond, Virginia, in response to written questions from the author; received in September, 1974.

CHAPTER V
PHYSICAL AND TECHNICAL FACILITIES, 1940-1974

By the early 1940s, WRUF's physical plant and technical facilities had not greatly changed from the way they had been a decade earlier, at least in outward appearance or size. What modernization there had been during the thirties was in the acquisition of more advanced microphones and other equipment, along with the remodeling of certain spaces in the studio building.

As the forties began, the transmitter was still the same Western Electric apparatus installed in 1928 after purchase and removal from the St. Petersburg church. Because the transmitter operated on direct current, generators located in a space behind the transmitter room supplied the needed power. The generators themselves were run by alternating current supplied by the local utilities company.

Duane McConnell, who served as WRUF's Chief Engineer from 1943 to 1949, said the daily activities at the station included maintenance of the generators as well as the transmitter itself. In those days, McConnell added, the station would interrupt its program and go off the air during severe storms, then ground the antenna as a precaution

against lightning.

Wartime Operating Conditions

During the war years, with many of WRUF's male staff members away in military service, women were employed increasingly at the station. In addition to the women hired as announcers some were hired for technical duties, reported McConnell.

> ...we had two or three girl engineers at the time [between 1943 and the war's end] and they didn't know much about engineering...so any time they had trouble, the Chief [McConnell] had to come and fix it.[1]

McConnell emphasized that, in radio, the term "engineer" is often used to describe a person who operates a transmitter or audio control board, even if the person lacks the training to maintain or repair such equipment. Apparently the hastily recruited female "engineers" were not experts in their field. Regarding the station's technical staff, McConnell noted:

> At that time all of them had to have First Class Licenses [from the Federal Communications Commission]. These girls had gone to a school down in Ocala and gotten First Class Licenses, but they knew very little about radio.[2]

By 1942, WRUF was still using a transmitter considered totally obsolete, according to station records. Purchased second-hand, the transmitter had been in service for WRUF for almost 14 years by the time the United States entered the war. A station report noted:

> It was difficult to find replacements because certain tubes used in the transmitter were no longer available and, at one time, WRUF had to call Portland, Oregon, in order to obtain certain tubes and have them sent by air express so that it could remain on the air. In 1942, the station went before the War Allocation Board to obtain permission to purchase a new panel for the transmitter and it was difficult to persuade them that this model transmitter was still on the air.[3]

It was also during the war that the WRUF management tried to get permission for full-time broadcasting. The station was still required to sign off at a time corresponding to the sunset in Denver, to protect station KOA. As the report indicated,

> ...in 1942, application was made for operation at 5,000 watts until sunset Denver and 100 watts thereafter. Only two stations in the entire country were granted this type of license by the Federal Communications Commission and WRUF was one of them. This special authority was granted in 1943 in order that the radio station could furnish entertaining programs to the Alachua Air Base and where the air force maintained a training center.[4]

A New Transmitter and Antenna Site

The report also described the post-war effort to get a new transmitter and locate it outside the city:

> There was no possibility of obtaining money from the state for this purpose so profits from the operation of the station were allowed to accumulate and in 1945 the Board of Control approved the plan for a new application, which stipulated that the transmitter be moved and asked for full time at 5,000 watts, employing the use of a directional antenna at night.[5]
> .....
> The application of WRUF was finally granted by the FCC in 1948 and then the problem was to

> obtain a site that the Civil Aeronautics Authority would approve [insuring that the transmitting towers would not be hazardous to aircraft]. After this site was finally obtained, and a building constructed, the transmitter was installed.... This was done without one cent of state money being appropriated and paid for entirely from money earned by WRUF, the total cost being over $140,000.[6]

The new location for the transmitter and towers was a tract of land approximately seven miles west of the campus and just south of the Newberry Road. The new transmitter was housed in a war surplus Quonset hut. Chief Engineer McConnell remembered:

> We installed a ten kilowatt RCA transmitter because the Major had hoped to get an increase in power--which he never did--but we operated it as 5,000 [watts]. Of course, that's a 60-acre piece of land with four towers in it--three 260-footers and one 408 if I remember correctly, with the FM on the top of the 408-footer.
>
> The directional [AM antenna] had a lobe [transmission pattern] to the east-northeast and one to the south-southwest, the same pattern [WRUF has] now.[7]

McConnell recalled he did not like the idea of using a Quonset hut to shelter the expensive new transmitter.

> A metal building never has been the nicest and the most permanent--we wanted to build a block building. The Major said a Quonset was cheaper and more practical under the conditions, but by the time we finished...I think we had as much money in it as we would have had in a block building.[8]

The metal Quonset hut built in 1948 was still in use as of 1974, in the same location and for the same purpose.

Along with the effort to get a new AM transmitter, Major Powell was also trying to arrange for frequency modulation [FM] broadcasting which, radio engineers point out, is especially suited to the Florida climate. Propagation of FM signals is said to be particularly good in this part of the southeast.[9]

In August, 1947, the Board of Control granted Powell permission to apply to the Federal Communications Commission for an FM broadcasting license. The Board of Control apparently intended that the FM station be, like its standard broadcast counterpart, a commercial operation.[10]

After the Federal Communications Commission granted the new FM license, an additional control room was built in the WRUF studio building and the transmitting equipment was installed west of town in the Quonset hut. FM broadcasting officially began on July 1, 1949 with a ceremony in which the new AM transmitter was also dedicated to the service of the public.[11]

Studios Move to Stadium

In the early fifties the WRUF studio building, by then a quarter-century old, began to seem inadequate for the needs of the growing operation. With both AM and FM broadcasting, the building had become crowded. In addition, remembered continuity writer Jim Camp:

> The [old building] leaked a little, and it had no air conditioning--well, they had air conditioning in the studio but they had it hooked up so that when the mike went on, the air conditioning went off, because you could hear it.[12]

Camp said he recalled having to climb an exterior stairway to his small office on the building's second floor. The continuity office and the Assistant Manager's office were, said Camp, both on the second floor. The record library had been moved to the ground floor into space made available when the old transmitter was removed.

By 1955 the School of Journalism and Communications was occupying new quarters under the west stands of Florida Field stadium, where floors and walls had been built to create four stories of classroom and office space. The school was to use the lower three floors, and it was decided that the WRUF studios would be moved to the fourth floor. In late 1955 the move was made, as Camp recalled:

> The actual physical moving was practically done overnight--I mean, we broadcast from the old studio one day and the next day we signed on [at the new one]. Of course the setup was all there and the engineer...[had] worked on it for months.[13]

The new studio facilities stretched down half the length of the stadium, with a string of offices side by side, connected by a long narrow hallway. It took the staff a few days to get accustomed to the new arrangement, recalled Camp, commenting "...the first two or three days, we felt like we needed roller skates."[14]

Although the physical layout of office and studio space was unusual due to its location in the narrow stadium, the station still had more space than in the old building.

Modernization Through the Sixties

No major technical problems were encountered until 1962 when an unusual dual crisis struck WRUF. As Director Kenneth Small related:

> We went through a very traumatic experience when...our Chief Engineer [Bert McNamara] died suddenly of a heart attack; at the same time, our old FM [transmitter] went out completely. We had the double job of trying to locate a Chief Engineer who would work for the kind of salary that was being offered at that time and also trying to get our FM back on the air before we lost our license.[15]

Small reported that McNamara and his family had lived in the Quonset hut at the transmitter site and had even kept a cow on the premises. "He died," said Small, "on Easter Sunday; he'd been carrying heavy equipment up to a sunrise service [at] Florida Field, and had a heart attack."[16]

A new FM transmitter from the Collins Radio Corporation and related equipment was bought and installed at a cost of more than $60,000. Small recalled that, although the station had broken even financially in the previous year halting its economic downturn begun in the fifties, there was not enough money in WRUF's account for the equipment. The station borrowed funds from the University book store to make up the difference and paid it back over the next three years.[17]

With the new transmitter, WRUF-FM also changed frequencies, from the original 104.1 megacycles [mc] to 103.7 mc. The station also applied to the Federal Communications Commission for authorization to increase transmitting power.

In 1966, with FCC approval, WRUF-FM increased its power from the original 3 kilowatts to 27 kilowatts. In addition, the station added the capability of stereophonic broadcasting.

It should be noted that the FM facility's license places it in a position unusual for stations affiliated with educational institutions. As Director Small has written:

> When FM broadcasting became practical...certain parts of the spectrum were specifically set aside for low-power educational stations. Most college stations, operating non-commercially, occupy these frequencies. However, WRUF-FM, from the start was licensed to a commercial frequency. Today, at 103.7 mc, it has an unlimited license authorizing maximum power; although now using only 27,000 watts, it could go as high as 100,000.[18]

In 1968 the Federal Communications Commission granted permission to WRUF to install a new AM transmitter and maintain the old one as a standby unit. The installation was completed early in 1969.

Since that time, most of the changes have been made not at the transmitter site but at the studios. A trend in radio since the late 1940s has been toward the operation of the audio control consoles by the announcers themselves, rather than the engineers. In WRUF's stadium facilities, therefore, small control rooms were built where the announcers

could sit at control consoles, reading their scripted announcements into the microphone and manipulating the various controls for turntables and tape recorders.

There were separate AM and FM control rooms, both of which had access to an adjacent large studio for live programs. As live in-studio broadcasting became more infrequent, the large studio was seldom used and by the early seventies had become principally a storage facility.

In addition, office space was remodeled in the late sixties to provide a secluded studio-office for the small news department established in 1966. A few steps down the hall from the control rooms, the newsroom gave the reporters a relatively quiet atmosphere for the recording of live or telephoned reports.

In 1973 WRUF purchased the newswire services of the Associated Press, replacing that of United Press International. The clattering teletype machine is located in a closet just outside the newsroom door.

A small studio next-door to the AM control room was remodeled in the late sixties and now serves as an announcing booth for news programs and as a setting for interviews and round-table discussion programs.

The "Guard Room"

Since the move to the stadium studios, a room has been,

until recently, available for use as living quarters by the student announcers. Known as the "guard room," it was furnished with bunk beds, a chest of drawers, desk and other odd bits of furniture. There was a connecting bathroom with a shower stall.

There had been a room in the old station building which was used occasionally as sleeping quarters, located off the transmitter room. It had been used during the forties by Sam Fouts and other student staff members.[19] The term "guard room" was evidently not applied to it then. Bob Smith, who joined the staff in 1952, recalled, however, that the name was in common usage before the WRUF studios were moved to the stadium. Use of the room was usually based on seniority among the student announcers; sometimes the announcers who worked the early morning or late night shifts had first claim on the room. Over the years, many student announcers including the author resided there for varying lengths of time.

Although the room was available rent-free to deserving student announcers, the arrangement did include some restrictions and responsibilities. Occupants of the room were forbidden to use intoxicants or to entertain members of the opposite sex on the premises. In addition, those who lived in the room were usually the first ones called in emergencies, especially when another announcer did not appear for his scheduled on-the-air shift.

Use of the room as announcer's quarters was ended late in 1972 because, said then Assistant Director Bob Leach, such an arrangment was no longer needed. The room is now used for storage.

Notes

1. Personal interview with Duane McConnell, Lakeland, Florida, August 20, 1974.
2. Ibid.
3. "Radio Station WRUF, Part I," unpublished manuscript from WRUF station files (author not listed, but reported to have been written about 1950 by Station Director Garland W. Powell), p. 24.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 25.
6. Ibid., p. 26.
7. Personal interview with Duane McConnell, Lakeland, Florida, August 20, 1974.
8. Ibid.
9. Personal interview with E. A. Slimak, Gainesville, Florida, October 21, 1974.
10. "Radio Station WRUF, Part I," unpublished manuscript, p. 27.
11. Ibid., p. 28.
12. Personal interview with Jim Camp, Gainesville, Florida, October 2, 1974.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.

15. Personal interview with Kenneth F. Small, Gainesville, Florida, November 13, 1974.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Kenneth F. Small, "Summary History of WRUF (and WRUF-FM)," brief highlights of station history compiled in 1970; from WRUF station files.

19. Recorded comments by J. Sam Fouts of Richmond, Virginia, in response to written questions from the author; received in September, 1974.

CHAPTER VI
STRENGTHENING THE STUDENT TRAINING CONCEPT, 1956-1974

In 1956, WRUF faced another financial crisis, almost as serious as the one the station faced in 1940 after state funds were cut off. Although WRUF still had some reserves, accumulated in past years of solid profits, the station had lost money consistently through the mid-fifties. Increasing deficits were noted in fiscal years 1954-55, 1955-56 and 1956-57.

Although, at the start of this period, the most pressing task was to bring WRUF back to a sound financial position, other important developments lay ahead. The period 1956-74, the era of Kenneth F. Small as Director, would see further advances in technical capabilities and programming innovations to meet the challenges of other radio stations and the new medium, television.

In addition and perhaps most importantly, this was to be a time for strengthening a concept developed many years earlier: that of using WRUF as a training facility for young broadcasting professionals. In this regard, Kenneth Small would add to the work begun in 1930 by Garland Powell.

It was on October 31, 1956 that Major Garland Powell retired. Although the Major, then 64 years old, would die within three years from cancer, his health may not have been the most important factor in his departure from WRUF. As Small remembered:

> The Major's health was poor...but this was not the primary reason for his retirement. His retirement was really almost forced, largely because the [Board of Control] felt there had to be a change in the administration and management of the station, looking toward the turnaround of the station financially, if possible.[1]

The Board of Control conducted a search for a new director for WRUF, and Small explained the circumstances in which he accepted the position.

> I had been...in the advertising agency business for some years...and I went with WPDQ [radio in Jacksonville] as Assistant General Manager in charge of sales. I went with [the owners, who were applying for a television station license] with the understanding that, if we were successful, I would be an executive with the...television-radio combination which it would have been.... [After the owners' application for TV channel 12 had been turned down], I began seeking other pastures.
>
> While I was seeking other pastures, I was approached by the then Chairman of the Board of Control, Ken Guernsey...he came to me and asked me if I would be interested in coming to the University of Florida as Director of WRUF...he asked me to come over and talk to the then acting President [of the University], Dr. John Allen. I did, and I liked the idea...after some months of consideration, I decided to start a new life, so to speak.[2]

The Immediate Problem: Advertising

As this period began, the entire radio industry was

undergoing revolutionary changes. The new medium of television had a strong appeal to the nighttime audiences which had formerly belonged only to radio. Related to this development, many of the drama programs which had been the mainstays of network radio either moved to television or disappeared completely due to declining audience interest.

In the 1950s, these trends resulted in huge chunks of air time for local stations to fill, either with locally-produced dramas if they could afford them, or with the more inexpensive recorded music. Most stations chose to carry more recorded music and many people who had been announcers for a variety of programs found themselves in a new role--disc jockey. To complicate matters further, popular music itself was changing and a phenomenon known as "rock and roll" would force many station managers to make unaccustomed decisions about the sort of music they would play.

These forces were at work when Kenneth Small began his tenure as Director. His most immediate task was to halt the station's economic downturn brought on by declining advertising revenues. Small commented regarding the situation he faced at the start:

> ...what had happened was that television had begun to overwhelm radio and I think that... managers of an earlier period were finding it difficult to make the changes that had to be made, particularly in such things as [advertising] rate structures.

> When I came in, I found that the rate structure was really based upon radio of the 1940s. For instance, class A [the most expensive] time was still at night. You couldn't possibly sell class A time...for higher rates at night; it didn't make sense [and] had to be reversed.[3]

Prior to 1948, WRUF had been without local competition but the addition of rival stations had taken its toll. First WGGG in 1948, then WDVH in 1955 had entered the local market. Elsewhere in north-central Florida local stations were springing up in small cities, thus diluting WRUF's previously strong regional impact.

Small recalled being alarmed at the extent of the station's losses, especially the deficit occurring during the first four months of fiscal year 1956-57 before he joined the staff at the end of October.

> A radio station, particularly one which carries a lot of football and so forth, makes its heaviest money in...September through December. After that, it hopes it's made enough fat to live on until the following year, almost. I may exaggerate some, but [those are] the big money-making months, and it was quite a shocker after I got over here, to find out that the station had lost money during those periods.
>
> First of all, I had to make what I considered more sense of the pricing structure, in relation to the competition. I went to a single rate... we didn't have classes of time.[4]

In larger cities, such as Jacksonville, radio stations could often capitalize on the so-called "drive times" with higher advertising rates. These were the morning and late afternoon high traffic hours in which large numbers of radio-playing motorists would swell the listening audience.

But, in the Gainesville of the mid-fifties, the "drive time" device would not work. The city and the University were much smaller then and large agencies which placed most of the national advertising still considered the entire region a rural area.

A high priority item, therefore, was to convince national and regional advertisers that WRUF was a good place to buy time. Small traveled to New York, Chicago and Atlanta to see advertising agencies and station representation firms.

Small indicated that he was not satisfied with the way the Burns-Smith Company, a New York firm of media representatives, had been working on WRUF's behalf. "Reps never rate high," Small commented, "unless they bring a lot of business to you...I had the feeling that Burns-Smith was too closely associated with an old philosophy. I had had experience with other reps and I was a little appalled at what I thought [were] poor selling practices."[5] The station, however, had to wait until the end of a four-year contract with Burns-Smith before another representative could be retained.

The objective was to have the station break even financially from local advertising, with national advertising providing the profit margin that would ease WRUF's difficulties and help it grow. Even with an increase in national

revenue, it was to be five years before the station would break even over an entire fiscal year's operation. The first months in which the station showed a profit after Small became Director were October and November, 1957, in which WRUF cleared $1,869.00 and $2,562.00, respectively.[6]

The profit during those months was probably due, at least in part, to the increase in local advertising rates effective the previous July. The station had been, recalled former Assistant Manager Pierre Bejano, selling local advertising time at rates below that of its competitors WGGG and WDVH.[7] By November 1, 1957, the station had also increased its prices for national advertising time.[8]

WRUF Changes Network Affiliation

In line with efforts to increase the station's revenues, Small decided that WRUF could not afford to continue its affiliation with the Mutual Broadcasting System. He recalled:

> Mutual had been itself going through a series of reorganizations. I had visited Mutual in New York and of all the ratty, run-down offices...they were poor and they showed it--the programming was terrible, the news operation was demoralized.
>
> They were trying to operate on the basis, almost, of a trade-out; if you'd carry their news at the hour, you'd have news at the half-hour that you could sell locally. But it was costing us money...$225.00 a month for their so-called service charge, which was a line charge.
>
> We weren't getting anything out of it; the payments [from Mutual to WRUF] were nothing,

> practically. It had paid some money at one time, but no more. Mutual was gone as far as I was concerned.[9]

By mid-1957, Small was trying to interest the National Broadcasting Company in adding WRUF to its radio network.

> I went to NBC about the [1957] World Series, because they had a policy of putting those on independent stations...and I began to ask if... they'd be interested, and we could work out an affiliation deal.... They were not very interested at that time, but a year later I think we had the World Series again and they began to be interested.... I finally went up there and we worked out an arrangement and I signed a contract.[10]

WRUF joined the NBC radio network on July 1, 1958,[11] and for more than four months was affiliated with two national networks at the same time. The station's contract with the Mutual Broadcasting System did not expire until November 17, 1958.[12]

WRUF began reaping the benefits of its new affiliation immediately, said Small. "The NBC contract was so much more favorable than Mutual's.... There was no service charge, there were no line charges."[13] The arrangement with the network was basically one in which the station would be paid for carrying commercially-sponsored network programs. WRUF was not required to pay service or line charges if it would accept 600 commercial minutes of programming from NBC each month. WRUF was to be paid for any network program time it carried in excess of that figure. Aside from the fact that it brought in a modest monthly income, the deal with NBC immediately cut WRUF's operating expenses by

$225.00 per month, the amount they had been paying Mutual as a service charge.

Although WRUF would continue to rely on non-network advertising for most of its revenue, the affiliation with NBC had beneficial economic effects by increasing the station's prestige and attracting more listeners, especially to the news programs. As of this writing, WRUF is still a part of the NBC radio network.

Local Programming

By the late fifties, with more stations turning to recorded music as a primary source of program material, few stations could safely try to remain all things to all listeners. Managers had to decide what kind of music they would play, depending on the kind of audience they wanted to reach.

In 1957, while there were still a few drama and adventure programs available for radio, WRUF experimented with different styles of entertainment each night of the week, while staying with an easy-listening music format during the daytime. One night, Small said, there might be all mystery programs; the next night there might be all sports or westerns. On weekends, dance music was the evening program fare. The experiment was not a notable success and was abandoned after a short trial, Small recalled.

The advent of rock and roll as a popular musical form created problems, Small remembered.

> We did not go into rock and roll; we had everything except rock at that time. We were steering clear of it--whether that was a mistake at the time, I don't know. It would have been such a violent change in the image of the station that I'm not sure I could have weathered the storm from the faculty and the rest of the townspeople.[14]

WRUF maintained what was known in the radio industry as a "middle of the road" musical style, a bright, lively sound using both currently popular and old favorite tunes yet stopping short of rock and roll. This format was to continue on the AM facility throughout the directorship of Kenneth Small, which ended June 30, 1974. WRUF-FM featured music in a more serious vein. In 1957, three hours of FM program time each evening, Monday through Friday, were allotted to Radio Center in the School of Journalism and Communications. Since then feature programs on various forms of serious music, scripted and announced by students under faculty supervision, have been regularly broadcast in the evenings.

To the familiar array of network and local entertainment programs was added a new dimension in the 1960s--local news coverage. In 1966, Jim Finch, an experienced Gainesville area news reporter, was added to the WRUF staff as its first News Director. Small had been comtemplating the addition of a local news department as an increasingly necessary aspect of WRUF's service to its listeners. At that time, every other Gainesville radio station had at least one local news reporter.

Since then, Finch and a small team of student reporters have covered events in the Gainesville area in competition with the privately owned stations. Finch and his assistants find themselves in a unique situation among the area's reporters. Employees of the University, they must frequently report their employer's activities, even when the news results in unfavorable publicity. Despite the seeming conflict, Finch maintains that:

> I don't feel that there's anything in particular that we have to shy away from. We do shy away from a lot of things because this is a personal preference on my...side, in that I don't believe in sensationalism, whatsoever.... For example, we never cover a suicide if we can possibly help it.... And as far as a murder victim or an accident victim [is concerned], I try to impress upon [the reporters] that when a person's dead, he's dead. It doesn't make any difference how many pieces they're lying in or how badly decomposed they are, or anything like that, which some members of the media dwell on quite a bit.[15]

The state ownership and campus location apparently give WRUF no advantage over competing stations in the coverage of University activities. Of University officials, Finch commented:

> They certainly don't give us any favoritism, I can tell you that. If anything, they're like the hometown official [who] bends over backward to keep from being called a "homer"--they aid the other team a little bit.[16]

Finch stressed that his own philosophy of news reporting demands that thorough, accurate reporting be emphasized, rather than being first on the air with a bulletin. This is especially important, said Finch, because young reporters

are trained at WRUF and "I've always told the kids I'd rather be last and right than first and wrong."[17]

In addition to its local news coverage, WRUF has, through the early seventies, produced its' own weekly phone-in forum called "Dialogue" as a public affairs feature. Produced and hosted by students, the program has examined a wide variety of controversial issues.

In sports programming, WRUF has continued to carry all of the University's football games and has increased its coverage of basketball. Now, in an arrangement similar to the football network, Otis Boggs and Bob Leach broadcast all of the Gator team's basketball contests. Through the sixties and early seventies, occasional home baseball games have been broadcast, principally as opportunities for student announcers to sharpen their skill at play-by-play commentary.

In addition to live coverage of athletic events, WRUF has continued to carry regular local reports of sporting news each weekday in the early morning, at noon and in the late afternoon. Also, NBC sports features are carried daily.

In agricultural programming, this period was to see the gradual decline of what had formerly been one of WRUF's most important programs--the "Florida Farm Hour." Bob Smith, a WRUF staff member during the 1950s who later joined

the University's Agricultural Extension Service, recalled that the Farm Hour in the early sixties

> ...was being done from over in Rolfs Hall, where they had [an] amplifier and a microphone... the specialists would write their own scripts [and] read their own scripts live on the air. Everything was done from over in Rolfs Hall....
>
> Then I got them to tape their stuff in advance and cut out all the mistakes that I could. And then, I would take the tapes...over to WRUF, and [in addition to the tapes] would fill in with...weather forecasts and market reports.[18]

By the sixties the "Florida Farm Hour" was no longer truly an hour-length program. Smith remembered that, even in the mid-fifties, it had run only from noon to 12:30 and was followed by a country and western band that played for another half-hour. By the early sixties, Smith reported, the program with its tape-recorded inserts and live supplementary material was down to 20 minutes in length. The program was unsponsored and interest seemed to be waning. Director Kenneth Small remarked that failure to have the program sponsored was partly due to the reluctance of some extension service officials who, Small said, feared that use of commercial messages might imply official University endorsement of the sponsors' products or services.[19]

In 1963, Smith recalled, "I convinced everybody that there really wasn't a market for that kind of a program and so Ken Small and Marshall Watkins, who was then head of the extension service agreed."[20]

Although WRUF would continue carrying brief livestock and crop market reports, weather forecasts and short recorded features from the extension service, the "Florida Farm Hour" would be no more. It was WRUF's longest-running program, spanning nearly three-and-a-half decades.

Administrative Changes

When Kenneth Small assumed the directorship in 1956, he reported directly to the President of the University as had Major Powell before him. This arrangement continued through most of the sixties. As the University's administration grew more complex, however, the Director of WRUF no longer had direct access to the University President but dealt instead with the Executive Vice President or another administrator closely associated with the President.

By 1969, University President Stephen C. O'Connell had decided that a more appropriate administrative arrangement would be for WRUF to become a unit of the College of Journalism and Communications. Since the two had occupied the same building for more than a decade, there had already been considerable informal cooperation. In a July 24, 1969 memorandum, O'Connell announced his decision that:

> As an interim arrangement prior to the incorporation of Radio Station WRUF into the College of Journalism and Communications, the Director of WRUF will report to the Dean of the College of Journalism and Communications.

> Radio Station WRUF will continue to operate commercially and on an auxiliary budget. Within the limitations which these conditions impose, the primary objective of the Station will be to provide educational opportunities and training for the students of the College of Journalism and Communications.[21]

The intent of the President seemed clear. However, Small said that, though he began reporting to the college dean, WRUF did not become fully incorporated into the College of Journalism and Communications during his tenure as Director. One problem, he noted, was that University officials could not find an acceptable way to combine the radio station's budget with that of the college. Small explained: "...ours, right from the beginning, has been an auxiliary budget; it had nothing to do with the [Education and General budget of the University].[22]

Although WRUF earned its own way as an auxiliary unit of the University and deposited its profits in its separate account, the station was not totally free in financial matters. Small explained that when an expenditure was necessary the staff had to apply for the release of funds from the account, submitting the necessary forms in the same manner as any other University unit.

Although inability to combine the two budgets was to continue as a hindrance to a complete merger, Small maintained that he had long been in agreement with the idea of bringing the radio station and the college closer together. Through

the station's continued employment of the college's broadcasting students, said Small, "even though there was no formal connection, informally it acted, really, as a practical training ground for majors of broadcasting."[23]

With a courtesy appointment from the college as an Assistant Professor of Broadcasting, Small taught an undergraduate seminar for eight years. "One of my big points when I left," Small declared, "was saying to [Dean John Paul Jones] ...can't it finally be worked out that some kind of credit be given [to students who work at WRUF]...in addition to money, or aside from money? Some students would rather have the three hours credit than...$2.00 an hour."[24] Other journalism and broadcasting students have earned academic credit for internships at newspapers and other broadcasting stations; the practice continues as of this writing.

The question of whether academic credit was given for work at WRUF arose in an inquiry conducted in 1973 by the United States Internal Revenue service [IRS]. WRUF had enjoyed a position as a tax-exempt organization because of its association with the State of Florida and the University. Because the station did operate commercially and had been making annual profits, IRS agent Charles R. Baumann had some questions about its business affairs. In an October 30, 1973 letter to University Business Manager Richard J. Schiffli,

Baumann asked how many students from the Journalism College were working at WRUF and whether any academic credit was given for work there. Baumann also wanted to know how much of WRUF's air time was available for commercial sponsorship and how much was devoted to educational programs.

Small recalled that the inquiry included not only WRUF but

> ...the Athletic Association and [other units], as to whether these divisions of the University were hiding under the umbrella of the University and actually were profit-making organizations and therefore should pay tax. I know that I supplied Baumann with as much information as he asked for [and] answered a whole bunch of questions...there was a meeting over in Tigert Hall on this--quite a number of meetings--and when I left it was still unresolved; I don't know what the situation is.[25]

Small, while Director of WRUF, also served as Executive Director of the Florida Association of Broadcasters. This made possible closer relations between the association and the college, one aspect of which was the annual cooperation in an event known as Broadcasting Day, in which professionals would gather on campus for seminars and informal gatherings with students and faculty.

The University Image and Station Policy

Although WRUF has been for more than three decades financially independent of the University, its location on the campus has meant that the image of the University,

especially in faraway towns and rural areas, has very likely been influenced by what citizens have heard on WRUF. Concern for what the public might think of the station and, by extension, the University is probably what made WRUF officials refrain from programming rock and roll music when it began to emerge in the late 1950s.

Also in the late fifties, nationwide reaction against what were called smutty lyrics in many rock and roll tunes led WRUF to place a large advertisement in the Gainesville Sun, "About the Music You Won't Hear on WRUF."[26] The advertisement noted that

> Wearing the tag of something new, something different, undisguised smut has been creeping into the lyrics of the recorded tunes we are asked to introduce to you on WRUF.... WRUF intends to do its part in bringing it to an end, even at the expense of additional time and effort in screening out and refusing to broadcast such offending tunes.[27]

The censoring of one tune caused a mild local sensation in December, 1959. A song by The Kingston Trio called "The Unfortunate Miss Bailey" actually got on the air but, during its second playing, was faded out and banned as being in questionable taste.[28]

WRUF's location on the University campus and its employment of students on the staff has led University people to form a variety of opinions regarding the station's proper role. Many of these opinions are apparently based

on the erroneous assumption that the station is supported by tax money. Small commented:

> The difficulty any director of a station which is University-owned but is supposed to be self-supporting from the marketplace--there aren't very many such stations in the first place--[is that] most of the faculty has come...from places that have had subsidized radio stations; they are accustomed to being able to get a Beethoven symphony at eight o'clock in the morning...and certainly no commercials. They were almost scandalized, and I got plenty of letters or calls to that effect.
>
> They couldn't understand [WRUF's] function and I could understand that and I sympathized with them, but I tried to explain to them the terms under which we had to operate.... I had to point out to them that since 1939, the station had never received a penny of state money or any other kind of subsidy.[29]

Those who thought the station was state-supported in addition to being state-owned, were often the ones who demanded more educational or cultural programs. On the other hand there were, said Small, those who thought a station like WRUF, the most powerful in the area, ought to earn far more money than it did.

> It isn't the same as a five thousand watt station, independent. This is a university station training students, required to maintain a certain image...and with certain restrictions, such as you [formerly] had to carry the farm hour but have no ads in it; you can't carry beer and wine [advertisements] and there were a few others.... It was like saying "We'll tie one hand behind your back; now, you ought to go out and do as well as a station with both hands out in front.
>
> .....
>
> The problem [was] that you were being judged by people on one standard and by others on another. There were the people who said "A station

> like that ought to make more money" and the only answer to that is yes, a station like that could make more money if that was its purpose; it would operate differently and then it could be judged only on the basis of the bottom line.
>
> Other people would judge you on the basis of subsidized stations they'd heard elsewhere and they would say..."I came from New York and the program is nowhere near as good as on WQXR."
>
> We were right in the middle; it depended on which side you wanted to take a crack at.[30]

Most university-affiliated radio stations, explained Small, tend to operate at either end of a wide spectrum; either they are run as commercial money-makers whose only obligation to the university is to generate profits for it, or they are wholly subsidized and operated for educational and promotional purposes. WRUF, said Small, seems to fall somewhere in between. "I don't know of any [other university stations] that are really, strictly comparable.... There may be, but I did a little study on this, and I've never found one.... There are darned few that even pretend to do the kind of a job that WRUF has done."[31]

Through the years, there have been occasional pleas from student groups to make WRUF more "student-oriented"[32] in its programming. Such requests probably arise from the assumption that, since the station is located on campus, its primary obligation is to serve the campus. Early in Small's career at WRUF, he sought to explain the station's obligation, saying in a 1959 newspaper story, "We cannot slant our programs

for the students, because they form a small percentage of our listening audience."[33] WRUF's total listenership, said Small, included "a highly sophisticated faculty, townsfolk, country folk, as well as students..."[34] Small had also explained that WRUF's signal reached outside Alachua County to 18 others, implying a responsibility to serve residents there. Even so, occasional student complaints have been heard through the years, although no one seems to have been able to provide a clear definition of what student-oriented programming really means.

Although the financial difficulties with which WRUF began the period 1956-74 caused concern among state officials, the greatest value of WRUF has never been as a revenue-producer. Through the years, the station became known first as the purveyor of information and entertainment to an area of the state not previously served by radio. In addition, the policy of helping students to get practical experience in broadcasting has become a familiar station trademark throughout the southeast.

It has become the student training aspect of the station that, more than any other single feature, has been strengthened during the directorship of Kenneth F. Small. In addition to increasing the variety of learning opportunities, due partly to the addition of a news department and expanded use of the FM facility, WRUF came to maintain a closer liaison than ever before with the College of Journalism and Communications.

This arrangement has served to affirm that the student training function will continue to be the primary purpose for the station's operation.

Notes

1. Personal interview with Kenneth F. Small, Gainesville, Florida, November 13, 1974.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. "State-Owned Radio Station Shows First Profit In Year," Tampa Tribune, December 18, 1957, p. 14-A.
7. Recorded comments of Pierre Bejano, in response to written questions from the author; received from Orlando, Florida, August, 1974.
8. "U. of F. Radio Station Hikes Ad Rates To Fight Deficit," St. Petersburg Times, October 3, 1957, p. 18-B.
9. Personal interview with Kenneth F. Small, Gainesville, Florida, November 13, 1974.
10. Ibid.
11. "WRUF Affiliates With NBC," Broadcasting, June 16, 1958, p. 82.
12. "State-Owned University Radio Station May Drop Network To Cut Its Losses," Tampa Morning Tribune, September 4, 1957, p. 10.

13. Personal interview with Kenneth F. Small, Gainesville, Florida, November 13, 1974.

14. Ibid.

15. Personal interview with Jim Finch, Gainesville, Florida, October 4, 1974.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Personal interview with R. C. Smith, Jr., Gainesville, Florida, September 25, 1974.

19. Personal interview with Kenneth F. Small, Gainesville, Florida, November 13, 1974.

20. Personal interview with R. C. Smith, Jr., Gainesville, Florida, September 25, 1974.

21. Memorandum from President Stephen C. O'Connell to Members of the University of Florida Administrative Council, July 24, 1969.

22. Personal interview with Kenneth F. Small, Gainesville, Florida, November 13, 1974.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Advertisement appearing in the Gainesville Sun, February 19, 1958.

27. Ibid.

28. "'Unfortunate Miss Bailey' Squelched by Radio Censor," Florida Alligator, December 4, 1959.

29. Personal interview with Kenneth F. Small, Gainesville, Florida, November 13, 1974.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. "Referendum Terms Unclear To WRUF," Florida Alligator, October 13, 1970, p. 4.

33. "WRUF Not for Students Says Station Director," Florida Alligator, December 11, 1959.

34. Ibid.

CONCLUSIONS AND RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

It is hoped that this research will serve as a basic explanation of some of the circumstances surrounding the establishment and development of WRUF. Through the years there have been many forces at work, helping to shape the pattern of the station's growth. In an overview such as this, it has been impossible, within the scope of the present project, to examine in minute detail each tiny episode in the station's evolution. It is hoped that future researchers may be sufficiently interested in the WRUF story to undertake further research into various aspects of station affairs.

Following such an overview, especially as it represents the first attempt at compiling the history of WRUF, it seems wise to interpret the findings with caution. Several conclusions, however, are indicated.

The original project, that of establishing a "super-power" publicity voice for the State of Florida was certainly undertaken without adequate advance study. No evidence has been found to suggest that technical studies, analyses of economic factors or any other preliminary investigations were done to determine the station's chances for success. As has

been explained, radio engineers of the late 1920s knew that soil conductivity could affect signal propagation. They also knew that AM signals travel best at night on the lower frequencies. With these factors in mind, it is difficult to understand why state officials would put on the air a radio station using a high frequency like 1480 kc, allowed to operate in daytime only and located in one of the poorest areas in the nation for AM signal propagation, then continue to make enthusiastic predictions that WRUF would become the "Voice of Florida" to the rest of the nation.

The idea for building the station came near the end of the famous land boom, when many people still hoped that Florida would grow rapidly in economic strength. The middle and late twenties were years in which many different publicity schemes were tried, to lure new residents and business interests into the state. It is known that most of the encouragement for the radio station idea came from businessmen. Their influence in the legislature must have been powerful indeed, to get a $100,000 appropriation for a publicity medium that, a year after its dedication would prove totally unsuited to its stated purpose.

It is fortunate that there was some other use to which the station could be put after its publicity value faded. The legislature seemed not to know what to do with WRUF; they were unable or unwilling to adequately fund it, yet would not

dispose of it to private interests. It was left to the University, then, to begin engaging in commercial broadcasting, a field in which no one on the campus, Major Powell included, had any experience.

Through the years, the direction taken by WRUF seems to have been determined largely by forces beyond its control. The hasty decision to erect a station, the finding that it could not do its intended job, the great depression and its economic blow to the state, the forced commercialism; they all had profound effects on WRUF before 1940.

Moreover, it seems no firm concensus was ever arrived at by responsible officials regarding what the station's role was to be after the nationwide publicity effort collapsed. No indication has been found that WRUF's service role was ever sharply defined, until President O'Connell's 1969 declaration that its primary function was to be the training of broadcasting students. After the publicity effort failed, north-central Floridians got their own local radio service by default, for they had not really been the primary target audience. The failure to make the station's intended role clear to the public has very likely contributed to the misunderstandings which still occur.

For the sake of station survival, it is fortunate that the training of students has continued at WRUF. It may now be the station's only justification for continued existence.

If students were no longer trained there, it is questionable whether the University or the State of Florida could continue to justify WRUF's commercial competition with private business. Major Powell once explained that one cannot train a commercial broadcaster in a non-commercial operation; the problems are not the same and cannot be simulated. Perhaps because of the training aspect, the station's commercialism will continue to be tolerated by WRUF's privately-owned competitors.

Because this study was an overview of the subject, there are a multitude of possibilities for further research.

The area of station programming alone is a fertile field for investigation. Some aspects worthy of further research might be: program development during the first year of operation; the public image of the University as a determinant of programming policy; production of live dramatic programs; and programming in specialized subject areas such as news, agriculture and sports. Programs for distinct audiences, such as for blacks and for women, might also be explored.

Although the move to establish a radio station was certainly inspired at least in part by the mid-twenties boom-time atmosphere, the extent of the relationship between the land boom and the station-building effort has not yet been explored. It is known that there were many other

state and commercial publicity schemes in operation at that time, including use of posters, films and newspaper advertising. Alachua County, for example, had its own publicity film available for showing to interested groups outside the state. It may be that the effort to build a radio station was part of a larger pattern of public relations activity on Florida's behalf.

Another potential research area is in the effort made by WGGG radio in the late forties and early fifties to have WRUF prohibited from accepting local advertising. Although not treated in detail in the present study, the argument over local advertising continued over several years and apparently left bitter feelings among those involved.

Because the 1969 O'Connell memorandum clearly indicated that WRUF's primary mission is to serve as a student training facility, future research might well be directed toward determining how well the station is performing that mission. Analysis of training activities, both before and after the memorandum, could deal with such factors as number of students employed, kinds of jobs available for students, involvement of WRUF's professional staff in the training function and other related areas.

Another potential area for investigation would be the post-graduation professional activities of WRUF's former student staff members. Those who are responsible for

planning and implementing training programs might benefit from such data as what types of communications media employ such graduates, what types of duties the graduates perform and what effect, if any, the WRUF experience has had on career development.

A final suggestion for further research would be the compilation of a biography of Major Garland W. Powell. As Director of WRUF for 27 years, Powell was a genuine pioneer broadcaster and, according to those who knew him, a colorful personality. Powell was a man of diverse interests outside of broadcasting and remained active in civic affairs throughout his life. A biographical study of Powell might be helpful not only to understand the man, but also to better evaluate his influence on the development of WRUF.

This is by no means a complete list of possibilities for further research. Readers of this study of WRUF will certainly discover areas which can be explained in more detail, and it is hoped that this research will serve as a stimulus to other investigations of this unusual communications medium. An overview cannot possibly give the entire story of WRUF; there is still much more to be told.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

Edward Lane Burrows was born July 7, 1942 in Teaneck, New Jersey. After moving to Fort Pierce, Florida with his parents in 1955, he attended the public schools and began work in broadcasting in 1960 at a local radio station. Since that time he has been active in radio, television and related communications activities.

Following graduation from the Indian River Junior College in Fort Pierce and study at the University of Florida in Gainesville, he entered active duty with the U. S. Army in 1966. From 1967 to 1970 he served with the White House Communications Agency, The White House, Washington D. C., where he assisted in technical arrangements for domestic and overseas public appearances by Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard M. Nixon.

He has been married since 1971 to the former Linda M. Stark.

In August, 1971, he received the degree Bachelor of Science in Broadcasting from the University of Florida, where he is presently a candidate for the degree Master of Arts in Journalism and Communications.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Communications.

Kenneth A. Christiansen, Chairman
Professor of Journalism and
Communications

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Communications.

R. Hunt Davis, Jr.
Assistant Professor of History

This thesis was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the College of Journalism and Communications and to the Graduate Council, and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Journalism and Communications.

December, 1974

Dean, College of Journalism and
Communications

Dean, Graduate School