WRKO...The Launch

By Mel Phillips

On March 13, 1967, WNAC , the flagship station of the Yankee Network gave way to one of the most exciting contemporary radio stations ever heard in New England and there are those that would argue, the entire United States.

The genesis of WRKO began in the spring of 1966 when General Manager **Perry S. Ury** dispatched Program Director **Bob Henabery** to research the feasibility of following in the footsteps of RKO General's successful sister stations in Los Angeles (KHJ) and San Francisco (KFRC). The results of that study indicated that we could be successful if we positioned the station correctly . There was room in Boston for such a station if it was positioned somewhere between WBZ's variety of contemporary music, heavy news and public affairs commitment and WMEX's more frenetic approach to Top 40.

Bob Henabery, WRKO's 1st P.D.

(L-R) Perry S. Ury, Bob Henabery, Curt G.

On June 21, 1966, WNAC Program Director, Bob Henabery, sent an internal memo to **Jerry Bess** of RKO Corporate following an in-person critique of KHJ Los Angeles. Bob highly praised the station and copied GM Perry S. Ury on the memo. Now it was up to Ury to sell Bess on the idea of changing the format in Boston.

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Bob Henabery's KHJ Critique — June 21, 1966

About nine months before the WNAC-WRKO format change, WRKO Vice President-General Manager Perry Ury, having heard of the great success of Los Angeles' 93/KHJ, sent then-WNAC Program Director Bob Henabery to Los Angeles to study RKO General sister station "Boss Radio KHJ." Henabery typed up a revue of the station which he delivered to Jerry Bess (second-in-charge of RKO General) upon his return to Boston. Following is the actual text from his 7-page memorandum.

June 21, 1966

TO: Jerry Bess

FROM: Bob Henabery

RE: Boss Radio KHJ

KHJ, "Boss Radio," is a tightly formatted, well-produced, skillfully-staffed and promoted, modern music station.

All categories of programming rate high, The personalities, their material, the music and service features, the station's distinctive sound, KHJ news and on-air promotion blend together in a fast-moving, non-stop, continuous flow.

Personalities and Material

The KHJ program day is divided into three-hour segments hosted by various "Boss Jocks".

All deejays have young voices and "dig" what they are doing on the air. Unlike some modern music stations staffed by older performers, the "Boss Jocks" are enthusiastically responsive to the goals of the station and react positively to everything happening there.

The two most distinctive on-air presentations are those of the drive-time personalities, Robert W. Morgan (AM) and The Real Don Steele (PM). Morgan and Steele seem to be the only men who have gimmicks of their own which are introduced into the overall format and which are exclusive to themselves. Morgan uses an up-dated dedication device in which the names of individuals are submitted to him without their knowledge and then read on the air.

EXAMPLE: "Mr. Cusato, science teacher at Encino High, are you listening on your birthday? ZAP! You're Morganized!"

The Real Don Steele is the most articulate of the "Boss Jocks" in respect to the argot of the youth. He delivers this language flawlessly at a furious and witty pace. Steele is the most intelligent and talented of the "Boss Jocks".

Music

The "Boss 30" is a tight music playlist which contains no untested, or speculative record. Everything played is a proven hit or a "goldie". The format is highly repetitious as far as frequency of play is concerned. The music is selected on the basis of popularity. Listener requests taken on the "Boss Line" are tabulated throughout the broadcast day by special operators on duty at the station. This list is then compared to record sales in Southern California for validation purposes.

16 records are played each hour of the day. We estimate that seven of the records are derived from the top ten. Six of the records from numbers 11-20. Three of the records are "goldies" valuable to balance tempo. The merit of such repetition consists in the audience anticipating that a hit tune will soon be played. Thus a listener will stay tuned to hear his favorite and will be rewarded in a few minutes when it is, indeed, played.

The high quality of the music is obvious. Records such as "Paperback Writer" by the Beatles, "Along Comes Mary", by The Association, "Band of Gold" by Mel Carter, out-distance so-called adult standard music not only by the enthusiasm and vitality of the performances but by obviously superior musicianship.

Service Features

Outside of news KHJ restricts service features to mention of the time after every record ("KHJ Big Kahuna Time 11:20, etc.") and weather twice an hour. No effort is made to present extended traffic features.

Distinctive Sound

KHJ's distinctive sound is tied together by jingles and catchphrases.

Short, fast jingles express the following phrases:

"KHJ Los Angeles"

"93 KHJ"

"93 KHJ plays more music"

"93 KHJ Golden"

"KHJ Weather"

"93 KHJ Sports"

"KHJ Boss Hitbound"

"The Big Kahuna 93 KHJ"

Catchphrases express the overall "Boss Radio" concept or the current KHJ promotion.

Concept

"KHJ the much-more-music station"

"KHJ the station that listens to you"

"Give me a call on the Boss Line. You say it and I'll play it"

"Frank Terry 93 KHJ"

"The Boss 30"

"The Boss Jocks"

"Turn us on any time"

"On the go"

"Now number 16 Boss 30"

"8 record on Boss 30"

"Boss hit #12"

"Two in a row on Boss Radio"

"Three in a row on Boss Radio"

Current Promotion

"KHJ Big Kahuna Time"

"The Big Kahuna 93 KHJ"

"KHJ graduation and congratulations"

"Win a cobra-powered custom surfin'-bird"

"When you hear the Big Kahuna's conch shell call the Boss Line"

News

KHJ presents "20-20 News." Five-minute reports are scheduled 20-25 and 40-45 from 6:00 - 9:00 AM. All other times of day the news is heard 40-45.

KHJ makes great use of mobile units to cover breaking local stories in Los Angeles. Three or four reporters are assigned to different stories in various parts of Los Angeles and spend their entire day with the story until it is wrapped up.

FORMAT - KHJ NEWS

RECORD

SOUNDER - TELEPRINTER BACKGROUND. This is Stan Smith KHJ 20-20 News at 20 minutes before ten.

FIRST STORY

This is KHJ 20-20 News.

COMMERCIAL

SECOND STORY - Mobile Unit #1 - Canyon Fire

THIRD STORY

FOURTH STORY - Mobile Unit #2 - Missing Camper

FIFTH STORY

SIXTH STORY - Mobile Unit #3 - Edward G. Robinson

SEVENTH STORY

EIGHTH STORY - Mobile Unit #4 - Murder

NINTH STORY

In the Hollywood File, these names

TENTH STORY

KHJ headlines by datelines.

ELEVENTH STORY - Saigon

TWELFTH STORY - Washington

THIRTEENTH STORY - New York

FOURTEENTH STORY - Paris

FIFTEENTH STORY - Memphis

JINGLE: "93 KHJ SPORTS"

5 SPORTS STORIES

This is KHJ, first in Los Angeles with 20-20 News.

COMMERCIAL

JINGLE: "KHJ WEATHER" Just ahead much-more-music on the Gary Mack Show.

WEATHER

This is Stan Smith, KHJ News Central. JINGLE: "93 KHJ"

RECORD

On-Air Promotion

KHJ's current promotion is The Big Kahuna. The Big Kahuna is an actual person -- an Hawaiian dressed in the costume of a Polynesian king -- The Big Kahuna -- speaking only Hawaiian, is escorted to various high schools and recreational areas by a KHJ personality. Tapes are then made for play-back on the air.

"This is Gary Mack at Encino Junior High. We're here today to introduce the Big Kahuna. BIG KAHUNA PEAKS IN HAWAIIAN. The Big Kahuna says to listen to the sound of the conch shell on KHJ to win your coconut for the big KHJ Luau June 22. BIG KAHUNA SPEAKS MORE HAWAIIAN. The Big Kahuna also says to always stay tuned to the much-more-music station in Los Angeles. KIDS THEN SING. 93 KHJ. THE BIG KAHUNA."

One of this type of spot is used every two hours during the KHJ program day. Every other hour a special record called The Big Kahuna is played.

All intros and outros on the station refer to The Big Kahuna.

KHJ ONE-HOUR FORMAT

INTRO: "Ladies and gentlemen you're listening to the Gary Mack Show from the much-more-music station!" JINGLE: KHJ LOS ANGELES

RECORD #1

60-second spot or two 30-second spots

JINGLE: GARY MACK 93 KHJ

RECORD #2

60-SECOND SPOT

JINGLE: KHJ WEATHER

WEATHER

10-SECOND SPOT

JINGLE: 93 KHJ

RECORD #3

60-SECOND SPOT OR TWO 30-SECOND SPOTS

JINGLE: 93 KHJ GOLDEN

RECORD #4

JINGLE 93 KHJ PLAYS MORE MUSIC

RECORD #5

JINGLE 93 KHJ PLAYS MORE MUSIC

RECORD #6

60-SECOND SPOT

60-SECOND PROMOTIONAL EITHER BIG KAHUNA ACTUALITY OR BIG KAHUNA RECORD

JINGLE: 93 KHJ

RECORD #7

60-SECOND SPOT OR TWO 30-SECOND SPOTS

JINGLE: GARY MACK 93 KHJ

RECORD #8

60-SECOND SPOT

JINGLE: KHJ WEATHER

WEATHER

10-SECOND SPOT

JINGLE: 93 KHJ

RECORD #9

MIDDLE BREAK: "Ladies and gentlemen you're listening to the Gary Mack Show from the much-more-music station." JINGLE: KHJ LOS ANGELES

RECORD #10

60-SECOND SPOT OR TWO 30-SECOND SPOTS

JINGLE: GARY MACK 93 KHJ

RECORD #11

60-SECOND SPOT OR TWO 30-SECOND SPOTS

JINGLE: KHJ GOLDEN

RECORD #12

DIRECT SEGUE TO NEWS PACKAGE. OUT OF NEWS DIRECT SEGUE TO

RECORD #13

60-SECOND SPOT OR TWO 30-SECOND SPOTS

JINGLE: GARY MACK 93 KHJ

RECORD #14

60-SECOND SPOT OR TWO 30-SECOND SPOTS

JINGLE: KHJ GOLDEN

RECORD #15

JINGLE: 93 KHJ PLAYS MORE MUSIC

RECORD #16

ETC.

In connection with the basic one-hour format it is important to point out that leeways are provided so that the jingles do not appear in exactly the same sequence every hour. Except for this variable, required in the selection of the various musical elements, there is little variation from hour to hour.

Note that at the top of each hour a brief intro separates the last record from the old hour to the first record of the new hour. This is also the case at the half hour.

Intros precede every record except following the news. Outros tag every record except at the end of each half hour and before the news. Intros and outros are shouted voice-over. Intros always billboard the music being played. Outros back-reference the music and mention the personality, the current station promotion and the time of day:

EXAMPLE: "Captain Beefheart's 'Diddy Wah Diddy' heart number 12, best on the Boss charts with the Real Don Steele on KHJ The Big Kahuna time of day 4:20. The conch shell wins a KHJ kahoonie-kahhoconut.

60-SECOND SPOT. DIRECT SEGUE TO JINGLE. DIRECT SEGUE TO RECORD.

You know her for she is. You've seen her around. The Troggs -- bigger than big -- wilder than wild -- the wild wonderful KHJ whirlwind world of 'Wild Thing'."

KHJ limits commercial levels to 12 one-minute spots an hour (two in news) plus two ten-second spots.

Although the entire KHJ operation is marked by a high level of professionalism, we think the station's success can be attributed to the following:

1) The imaginative promotional schemes developed at the station.

2) The general excellence of the "Boss Jocks".

3) The tight list of established hits and avoidance of "picks".

4) An enlightened commercial policy of 12:20 commercial minutes per hour compared to NAB's 18 providing for "much more music."

BH:b

cc: Perry Ury

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The programming staff at WRKO pledged to be the exciting, new top 40 station that would turn Boston radio on its ear with exclusive releases, great disc jockeys, promotions and presentation and we delivered on that pledge.

I was fortunate enough to play a part in the success of WRKO-FM ("ARKO, your friendly robot"), the first Boston rocker in the fall of 1966. In March we moved the format over to AM and in the summer of 1967, I was named Program Director of WRKO-AM...

"ARKO"

It was March 2nd and the launch of WRKO as a Top 40 station was just 11 days away. Bob Henabery & Perry Ury were in the process of putting an on-air staff together with some input from not only me, but even sales people. **Bill Wayland** recommended **J.J. Jeffrey** who he knew from his previous work as **Melvin X. Melvin** at WMEX. J.J. was working in the Florida panhandle and would become our afternoon drive disc jockey - one of the best in the history of WRKO. Some of the rest of the on-air staff was either hired or about to be.

There was **Al Gates** in Cleveland, **Dick Burch**, who would only make it for one overnight show before WRKO went on strike, **John Rode** (who I worked with in Tampa), **Joel Cash** was on the air in Connecticut, **Arnie Ginsburg**, who would come over from WMEX and **Chuck "Chuckles" Knapp**, who was working in Fargo, ND. That was the nucleus of our first on-air staff. The biggest job was still ahead - promoting what we were about to do on March 13. **Harvey Mednick** (promotion director) had his work cut out for him.

J.J. Jeffrey

Al Gates

John Rode

Joel Cash

Arnie Ginsburg

Million Dollar Morning Bill

Chuck Knapp

In September 1966, Billboard Magazine published Radio Response Ratings for Boston, showing there was room for another Top 40 radio station in the market. I was hired in late August to produce that station - WRKO-FM. The automated station was so successful that word had leaked that WNAC was about to change format as early as January 25, 1967, following a Boston Globe story about WRKO-FM.

Paul Kelley Jr. sent an internal memo to the Blair Radio sales team mentioning a conversation he had with a salesman from WNAC indicating a format change to contemporary music taking place no later than April 1. On January 31, the Bennington Vermont Banner writes an article titled "End of the Yankee Network." On February 7, **Eleanor Roberts** of the Boston Traveler chronicles the demise of WNAC and mentions the rumor of a new "rock 'n' roll" format for the newly assigned WRKO call letters.

In a Billboard magazine interview on February 25 , GM Perry S. Ury states that a format change to "Hot 100" (Billboard terminology) will take place in mid-March and announces the new call letters as WRKO. Perry adds: "FM and AM will simulcast from 6am to 6pm with separate programming from 6pm to 6am." He also indicates that oldies will be played on FM...

By March 6, 1967, members of the radio trade press let the world in on what was no longer a secret. Boston was getting a new Top 40 station. WRKO was about to launch the following week. Eleanor Roberts, music and radio/TV critic of the Boston Traveler (which will soon be absorbed into the Boston Herald) mentions that the Now Crowd will debut on March 13. The new WRKO jock lineup is now listed in all local newspapers. Billboard magazine's "Vox Jox" reports that Arnie Ginsburg has joined WRKO to do 6pm to 9pm. They also mention that Al Gates is already at the station. As the disc jockeys rehearse their shows, the management team is ready for the launch...

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September 10, 1966 Radio Response Ratings

Billboard Magazine

Transcribed, as the original chart is difficult to read for most folks. Note the absence of WNAC, AM or FM. That's why the format changes began on October! Disclaimer: "The Radio Response Ratings of stations and individual air personalities have been determined by survey of local and national record promotion personnel, distributors and record manufacturers. Not a popularity poll, eh ratings are strictly on the comparative ability of the stations and air personalities to influence their listeners to purchase the singles and albums played on the air. The ratings likewise point up the importance of music of all types in building audiences and creating the framework conducive to influencing the listener to purchase other products and services advertised on radio stations."

Top Stations

Rank — Call Letters — % of total points

Pop Singles

1 WBZ AM & FM 60%

2 WMEX 40%

Pop LPs

1 WHDH AM & FM 67%

2 WXHR AM & FM 22&

3 WBOS AM & FM 11%

R&B

1 WILD 100%

Jazz

1 WHDH (Norm Nathan) 100%

Country

1 WHIL-FM 60%

2 WBZ (Saturday PM) 40%

Conservative

1 WEZE 100%

Comedy

1 WBZ 38%

2 WHDH 35%

3 WMEX 27%

Folk

1 WBZ (Ron Landry) 100%

Classical

1 WCRB AM & FM 73%

2 WBCN-FM 20%

3 WXHR AM & FM 7%

Top Disk Jockeys

Rank — Disk Jockeys — Call Letters — % of total points

Pop Singles

1 Arnie Ginsburg WMEX 60%

2 Bruce Bradley WBZ 33%

3 Dave Maynard WBZ 10%

4 Others (Jay Dunn, WBZ, Larry Justice, WMEX, Ron Landry, WBZ)

Music Director, Program Director, or Librarian

Ernest Compagna, Music Director, WMEX

Al Heacock, Program Director, WBZ

Ed Logue, Music Director, WBZ

Mel Miller, Program Director, WMEX

Top Jockeys (Pop Singles) By Time Slot

Morning: Larry Justice, WMEX

Mid-Morning: Dave Maynard, WBZ

Early Afternoon: Jay Dunn, WBZ

Traffic Man: Ron Landry, WBZ

Early Evening: Arnie Ginsburg, WMEX

Late Evening: Bruce Bradley and Dick Summer, WBZ

Top TV Bandstand Show

Note: No TV Bandstand Show in Boston area)

POP LPs

1	Jess Cain	WHDH	60%
2	Norm Nathan	WHDH	20%
3	Alan Dary	WHDH	12%
4	Bob Clayton	WHDH	8%

Program Director, Music Director, or Librarian

Ken Wilson, Music Director WHDH 100%

R&B

1 Jimmy Byrd WILD 100%

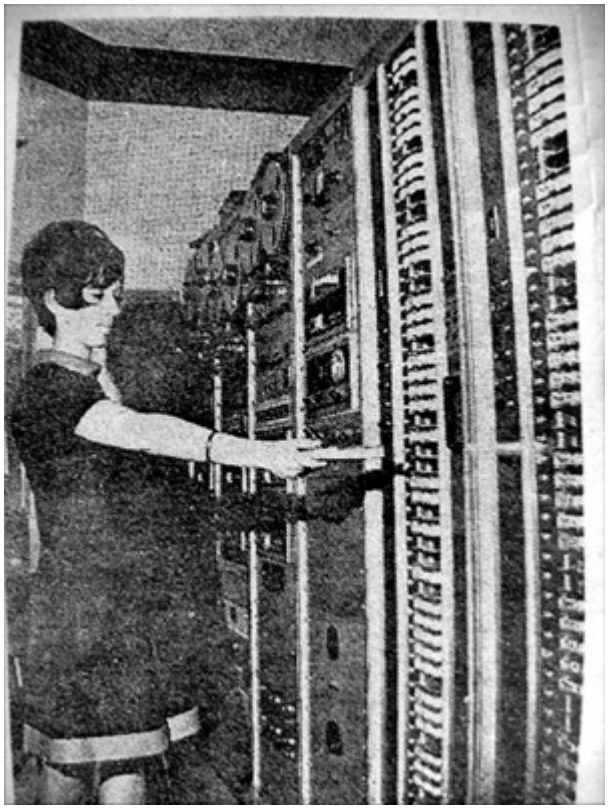
2 WHDH 35%

3 WMEX 27%

Country

1 Ron Landry WBZ 60%

2 Bob Ness WHIL-FM 40%



Spending Generation Topples Beethoven

Alexander Auerbach, Financial Reporter (c) 1967, The Boston Globe

Photo caption: Shy-but-friendly-Arko, the robot, who runs WRKO-FM on a steady diet of taped rock and roll, is fed a another tape cartridge by Aline Maloney.(Photo, taken by Paul Connell.)

Roll over, Beethoven; man’s inhumanity to man, is taking over FM radio.

Since Edwin H. Armstrong made the first FM (frequency modulation) broadcast in 1933, FM has been devoted almost exclusively to classical music and serious commentary. The short transmission range and relatively expensive receivers didn’t lend the medium to commercial exploitation.

But the scene’s changing, baby. The big beat is moving in, coast to coast. Advertisers, attracted by the young, spending audience, are making FM rock profitable.

A Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ruling that jointly-owned AM and FM stations must provide separate programming for most of the day has encouraged this. And inexpensive FM transistor portable radios have broken the price barrier, opening up the teenage market.

The switch to rock programming is purely commercial. Almost half of the population is now under 25 years old, and most of them dig the sound.

Here in Boston, the harbinger of change is WRKO-FM, 98.5 on the dial, formerly WNAC-FM. Perry S. Ury, vice president and general manager, explains: "Last Spring we decided to go FM rock. We surveyed the dial and found 15 signals, all with the same programming - two or three classical, 12 light Montovani stuff. So we decided to try the Top 40."

Although no other Boston FM station is planning to follow Ury into hard rock programming, some are moving to lighter music. WXHR-FM (96.9) soon will be carrying what one station executive calls "consistently adult popular stereo music."

This means, he said “Tijuana Brass, Streisand, Brubeck and Broadway,” but not the Rolling Stones.

A quick telephone check of other stations revealed the same type of move. All credited the FCC with their planned changes, not WRKO.

Ury, a dynamic, friendly, cigar-waving type, couldn’t care less. He has the Top 40 and "Arko, the shy but friendly robot,” as the station’s 12-foot long broadcasting machine is called.

The $30,000 gadget is entirely automated, and plays tape cartridges rather than records. The highly-promoted name is of course drawn from the station's call-letters.

Ury denies that Arko is an economy move, but admits that a fleet of "entertainers" (the phase "disc jockey" is out) could run a pop music station $100,000 a year or more in salaries. When WNAC (680) becomes WRKO-AM, it will have DJ's playing the tapes.

The FM station is "by no means into the black," Ury says, but he admits, he's surprised at how well it is doing. It is more than halfway toward the breakeven point, which he expects to pass in a year.

There is a scattering of advertisers interrupting the music, along with a few promotions ("Only Arko plays seven in a row") and public service announcements, but absolutely no news.

Everything - music, ads, announcements, promotions- is on tapes, all selected, played and changed automatically. Even the log required by the FCC is kept automatically. "It's the radio station of the 1980's," Ury says.

But it's a 1967 market, and Arko goes after it carefully, spending a good deal of cash checking local and national record sales and telephone requests to keep up with rapidly shifting preferences.

"Boston is the fastest-moving Top 40 market in the country," Ury says.

And they're not all screaming 15-year-olds with radios clamped to their ears. More than half the station's mail is from area colleges.

Although the station reaches 160,000 listeners, Ury estimates, stores report the FM market is booming. Lechmere Sales now devotes most of its radio display space to FM, and unhesitatingly credits Arko with a jump in sales.

The shy-but-friendly robot is a hip marketer, too. Farewell, Eroica, hail rock.

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January 31, 1967 End of the Yankee Network

Bennington (Vermont) Banner

BOSTON (UPI) "Technical reasons" will force the 40-year-old Yankee Network, a regional broadcasting group, to make its final broadcasts on Feb. 26. While declining to elaborate on the reasons for the decision, Perry Ury, manager of the network's base station in Boston, WNAC, said "no one else has rushed forward to take over the group," Ury said Monday that notices of cancellation had been sent to the group's 30 stations which cover New England from Connecticut to Maine.

Trade sources outside Boston Indicated some Yankee stations declined to carry all its programs, leaving the network without adequate coverage for some key programs, largely news.

The network's "coverage brochure" lists network member stations as WBRK, Pittsfleld; WHMP, Northampton; WHAI, Greenfield; WARE, Ware; WMAS, Springfield; WAAB, Worcester; WSAR, Fall River and WOCB, West Yarmouth, Mass., WTOR, Torrington, WNLC, New London and WCCC, Hartford, all In Connecticut, WEAN, Providence and WERI, Westerly, both In Rhode Island.

Other Yankee Network stations are listed as: WSYB, Rutland, WDEB, Waterbury, and WKVT, Brattleboro, all In Vermont; WTSL, Hanover, WTSV, Claremont; WKNE, Keene, WKXL, Concord, WGIR, Manchester and WHEB, Portsmouth, all In New Hampshire.

Maine affiliates are reported as WAGM, Presque Isle, WABI Bangor, WFAU, Augusta, WCOU, Lewiston, WPOR, Portland and WIDE, Blddeford.

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February 7, 1967: WNAC Staff Terminated

TV Editor, Eleanor Roberts, of the Boston Traveler

WRKO's granddaddy of a radio headache caused by fans screaming over the loss of Gus Saunders, Roy Leonard and Jim Dixon, Mary Sparks, Fred Gale and Palmer Payne, may be compounded by the possibility of an engineer's strike affecting both WNAC radio and TV.

The engineers, members of IBEW, are in a deadlock at the moment but will meet tomorrow night for further negotiations. They've invited all the staff members whose show will soon be off the air to listen in on their problems.

Most of the radio on-the-air personalities affected will accept WNAC's offer of a "booth" job, doing commercial breaks on TV until they find other jobs. In the majority of cases, it means working at half their former salary. "With six children and a wife to support there's not much choice," Roy Leonard

pointed out.

For Mary Sparks and Fred Gale, there is no such interim job and both will leave the station on February 17. "I've had my bags mentally packed for weeks," Mary said, "I saw it coming. But I'm philosophical about it. I've had three lucrative, interesting offers in other fields already and I'm not planning to leave Boston."

No date has been set for the cancellation of the other shows though it is expected to be within the month.

Perry Ury, director of WNAC Radio, has the job of importing new dee-jays for a station that will, it seems now, go rock 'n' roll no matter what other title they hide it under. We hear they've already approached a couple of dee-jays from WMEX.

As for the station's "magnanimous gesture" in offering "booth" jobs to the boys, some of them don't think it's all that altruistic. "Fire us and there's severance pay to consider," one man, who for obvious reasons, prefers to remain anonymous, said. "Put us in a 'booth' and if we get another job elsewhere they save money."

"It's the cleanest sweep in 23 years even to the request to change the call letters to WRKO," Gus Saunders, who has been with the station since 1944, remarked. "It's ironic, because my Boston Kitchen show was one of their biggest moneymakers. We were No. 1 with the women in the ratings, had a waiting list of sponsors and when our cookbook was published, sold 15,000 copies at $1 each in three weeks. But that's show-biz, as they say."

Gus, like the others, will make the switch to TV but it's a far cry from having your own show to being relegated to "booth" work. Loyal fans are rallying to the aid of their favorites, even contacting sponsors, threatening to boycott their products if they continue to advertise on the station. But such gestures seldom accomplish anything.

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February 25, 1967: WNAC Heaves Talk and Old Call Letters

Billboard Magazine

WNAC, the 50,000-watt RKO General station here that switched to a Talk format in September, 1965, is going back to music and the format will be Hot 100 with new call letters. General Manager Perry Ury said the change would take place in mid-March. Robert Henabery, is being retained as Program Director, but otherwise the station is bringing in a whole new slate of deejays from many of the major

markets, including Cleveland and St. Louis.

The new station will be going against tough competition WMEX and WBZ. However, prompted by the success of KHJ, another RKO General station in Los Angeles, that has shot to the top of the ratings battle. WNAC is expected to follow the same type of format as KHJ, meaning a tight playlist.

However, the station has been building toward a rock format for some while in the guise of its FM facility WRKO-FM and the new call letters of the AM side will reflect this WRKO. In addition, Ury said that Mel Phillips of WRKO-FM will be "one of the driving forces" of the AM station.

"We believe in the future of contemporary pop music," said Ury. "

Rock 'n roll is just not that far out today. Years ago, rock 'n roll set on one side of the scale. Today, however, the only difference between a station like WMCA in New York and WNEW is the pacing."

The new WRKO would not be a "music jukebox," said Ury, because he deplored the trend.

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In addition to Henabery and Ury, the staff consisted of Promotion Director Harvey Mednick, News Director **Roger Allan** and Director of Engineering, **George Capalbo**. Harvey, who would become a brilliant promotion guy would eventually leave us for flagship station KHJ and then RKO corporate. George and I started on the same day in August 1966 and met on a plane headed for Harris Electronics to order the automation for WRKO-FM. George would work his way up to corporate, like Harvey. Roger was already an award winning News Director and a carry-over from WNAC.

Sales was headed by **Bud Simmen** who had a strong staff that had to learn how to sell a new format. **Bill Wayland** and **Dick Woodies** would become two of the sales stars who would make the grade and survive. And I programmed WRKO-FM and was defacto Music & Production Director for both the FM & AM until **Paul Power** was hired. After 8 years of disc jockeying, I was now a programmer - or so I thought. I did not expect to be doing morning drive shortly after WRKO was launched but I was in for a big surprise...

(L-R) Bobby Mitchell, Doug Aiken & Paul Power taping The History of Rock & Roll

WRKO New Director Roger Allan & Twiggy

Bob Henabery's critique of KHJ and Perry Ury's follow up with RKO General Corporate clinched the Top 40 format change for WRKO-AM. But without the successful launch of WRKO-FM in October 1966, it's possible that KHJ notwithstanding, corporate wouldn't have approved the format change for AM. In terms of importance of the two, I would give a majority of the share to the success of WRKO-FM...

The AM was about to follow in the footsteps of our FM. The music would be similar and the only major difference between the two would be, WRKO-AM would not be automated...

WRKO-FM's music was pure Top 40, if it was a hit, we played it, in many cases before WBZ & WMEX. Our music sheet, the "Certified 35" for the week ending January 5, 1967 showed a top 5 of "Snoopy Vs. The Red Baron", "Standing In The Shadows Of Love", "Bend It", "Nashville Cats" & "I'm A Believer." All hits of the day - but we weren't afraid to play local acts and questionable (at the time) songs like "Let's Spend The Night Together" either...

The "Certified 35" was determined each week using as our disclaimer said, "An accurate compilation of actual local record sales, national record sales and telephone requests." It was about as accurate as you could get back in 1967. We printed up copies and stacked the retail outlets with them...

"R-K O"

WRKO-FM 98.5

"Your Automated ALL Music Station"
9AM—12 Midnight

Boston's Certified 35

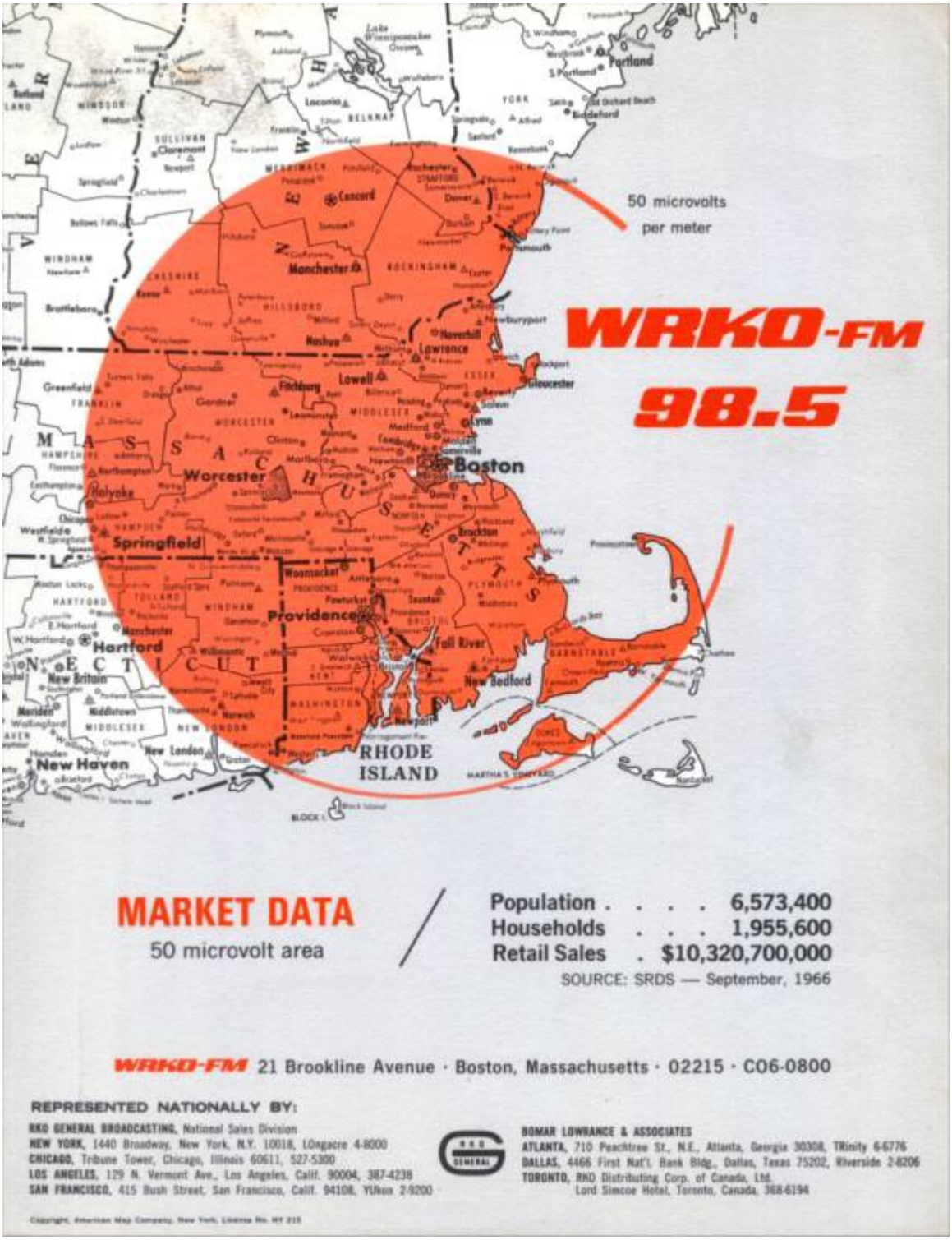
WEEK ENDING JANUARY 5, 1967

FM TOP 10

TW			LW
1	SNOOPY VS. THE RED BARON	ROYAL GUARDSMEN	1
2	STANDING IN THE SHADOWS OF LOVE	FOUR TOPS	5
3	BEND IT	DAVE DEE	2
4	NASHVILLE CATS	LOVIN' SPOONFUL	7
5	I'M A BELIEVER/STEPPIN' STONE	MONKEES	3
6	GOOD THING	PAUL REVERE	27
7	TELL IT LIKE IT IS	AARON NEVILLE	34
8	KIND OF A DRAG	BUCKINGHAMS	--
9	BABY WHAT I MEAN	DRIFTERS	17
10	I HAD TOO MUCH TO DREAM	ELECTRIC PRUNES	8
11	WORDS OF LOVE	MAMAS & PAPAS	6
12	COMING HOME SOLDIER	BOBBY VINTON	4
13	GEORGY GIRL	SEEKERS	9
14	A PLACE IN THE SUN	STEVIE WONDER	11
15	GIMME SOME LOVIN'	DAVIS/JORDAN	--
16	I'VE PASSED THIS WAY BEFORE	JIMMY RUFFIN	22
17	TELL IT TO THE RAIN	FOUR SEASONS	14
18	PUSHIN' TOO HARD	SEEDS	23
19	EAST WEST	HERMAN'S HERMITS	12
20	HARD LOVIN' LOSER	JUDY COLLINS	29
21	LYING AND TRYING	SHILLINGS	--
22	GALLANT MEN	SEN. DIRKSEN	18
23	GREEN, GREEN GRASS OF HOME	TOM JONES	24
24	WACK WACK	YOUNG HOLT TRIO	25
25	THAT'S LIFE	FRANK SINATRA	10
26	COLOR MY WORLD	PETULA CLARK	26
27	LOOK WHAT YOU'VE DONE	POZO SECO SINGERS	28
28	I WANNA BE FREE/THEME	MONKEES	16
29	MELLOW YELLOW	DONOVAN	13
30	STAND BY ME	SPYDER TURNER	--
31	KNIGHT IN RUSTY ARMOUR	PETER & GORDON	--
32	WILD THING	SEN. BOBBY	--
33	HOW DO YOU CATCH A GIRL	SAM THE SHAM	35
34	BAD MISUNDERSTANDING	CRITTERS	30
35	DEADEND STREET	KINKS	--

On the survey, we used a sell line of "WRKO-FM 98.5 Your Automated All Music Station 9AM - 12Midnight." Those were our original operating hours. On-air we had sonovox voicers which were used as the voice of "R-KO, Your Friendly Robot." "Ahko" became so popular, New Englanders would claim him, her or-it as their own. The voicers would proclaim "Only R-KO plays 4 in a row" and other sell lines. We had several voicers that we would pepper each hour with. My favorite was "Arkomatic", which meant absolutely nothing and was probably invented at one of the brainstorming sessions between Bob Henabery and I, which would often be enhanced with a brew or glass of wine at "Mother's", housed in the Kenmore Hotel, the original site of the station. At one point the hotel went through a management change to the St. George Hotel, before it changed back to its original name...

George Capalbo, our Engineering chief, provided state-of-the-art automation for "R-KO" and we had a signal that reached parts of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, including Cape Cod and Martha's Vineyard and all of Rhode Island.



Our visit to Harris, Inc. in the summer of 1966 would yield dividends. Thanks to George Capalbo's expertise, we came back with state-of-the-art automation. We named him/her/it: "ARKO" after the first part of our corporate name, RKO-General. We fed "ARKO" the music on three 10" reel play-back machines. The third machine was used as a spare, in the programming rack were "ARKO's" brains, which were used to program the automation and then the "sandwich" machine. The latter was stacked with regulation size cartridges that were recorded in the production studio. They were the promos and spots we would run - although we were light on commercials in the beginning.

The "sandwich" machine ran from top to bottom sucking in the programmed cart and then spitting it out once played. On occasion it would spit out a cart too far and the cart would be crushed when the machine searched for the next scheduled cart. This wasn't anyone's favorite machine. George wired the equipment for dead-air with a loud alarm that had technicians running down the hallway when "ARKO" muted out...

Most of the time the equipment ran well and regular maintenance (head cleaning, re-cueing, etc.) saw to that. In addition to a new automation system, we had a great signal which covered 5 states. WRKO-FM's reach was better than our AM...

The summer of 1967 was known as "The Summer Of Love." TSOL started with a Be-In, celebrated in San Francisco in the early part of the year and spread nationwide. Inflation was only 2.7% and the average cost of a new house would set you back $14,250. Average yearly income was $7,300. Gas was 33 cents a gallon for the average car that cost $2,750. The price of a movie ticket was a mere $1.75, even for the James Bond film, "Casino Royale", which WRKO would make famous. More on that later...

The first Super Bowl was played in 1967 but it wasn't even called the Super Bowl. Green Bay beat Kansas City, 35-10 in the NFL Championship Game. Music gave us the Doors, Aretha's "Respect" and The Beatles "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band." Elvis Presley and Priscilla Beaulieu got married, Clint Eastwood gave us "A Fistful Of Dollars", Off-Broadway gave us "Hair" and NASA introduced the Apollo 7 crew. Monterrey produced a Pop Festival and TV gave us "The Monkees"...

Locally, The Summer of Love would end in The Impossible Dream as the Red Sox stole our hearts with thrilling victories, making it all the way to the World Series. But that wasn't the only big story in Boston. On March 13, 1967, a new radio station surfaced that would change listening habits with its rapid rise to the top of the ratings...

It was unseasonably warm in Boston on Monday, March 13th. On Sunday it had reached 44 and was almost springlike. Monday was expected to be similar. But there was so much excitement in the air at 21 Brookline Avenue, that none of us knew or cared what the weather was. We were about to launch a new station out of a tired, upper-demo, middle-of-the road property that had an hourly news commitment of a quarter of an hour...

In the early morning hours of March 13, 1967, WNAC was replaced by WRKO, "Now Radio In Boston." The original on-air lineup featured Al Gates & his sidekick, "Feathers" (6am-9am). "Feathers" was the duck voiced by Al for funny two-voicers. Al was joined by the news/sports team of **Palmer Payne** & sports great, **Curt Gowdy**. Al was followed by John Rode from 9am-12noon. The noon day hour (12pm-3pm) featured Joel Cash and then it was time for afternoon drive heavy - J.J. Jeffrey. Six to 9pm was hosted by the iconic Boston disc jockey, Arnie "Woo-Woo" Ginsburg. Arnie had already become a legend for his pioneering work at

cross-town rival WMEX. Chuck "Chuckles" Knapp handled 9pm to midnight. The all-night disc jockey was Dick Burch, who would have a short career lasting all of one day. The WRKO lineup featured on the marquee of the Kenmore Hotel didn't list Burch, but listed the other members of the "Now Crowd". All but J.J. Jeffrey and Arnie Ginsburg were newcomers to Boston...

The WRKO sales staff was now selling an entirely different format than they had before but they were ready to hit the streets with a new rate card...

Al Gates was our original morning man. Al was working at WIXY in Cleveland when he was hired. "Feathers" migrated from Lake Erie, where he nested. He found Boston Harbor more to his liking. One listen to Al, told you all you needed to know. He was the ultimate professional and personality. He filled his show with one-liners, self-made sound effects and delivered it all in a rapid tempo. News, weather & sports, was well handled with veteran newscaster Palmer Payne & Curt Gowdy. We had helicopter traffic reports too. If you ever had to fight Boston traffic, you know how valuable that was...

Of all of our disc jockeys, Gates read the best live commercials. He would make a career of doing voice work when his disc jockey days ended. WRKO had a promotion featuring fake dollar bills that we gave away by the thousands - why not? it didn't cost us anything. The bill had a picture of Al, Feathers, Palmer Payne & Curt Gowdy on it and was inscribed "For A Million Dollar Morning", 6-9am and signed by Al...

NOW

... here's Al Gates!

You're never alone when you start off the day listening to "Gatesy." Outside of the two of you, Gates brings a host of characters before the microphone each morning. Led by his sidekick "Feathers", this mirth-filled mob will explode the AM for you.

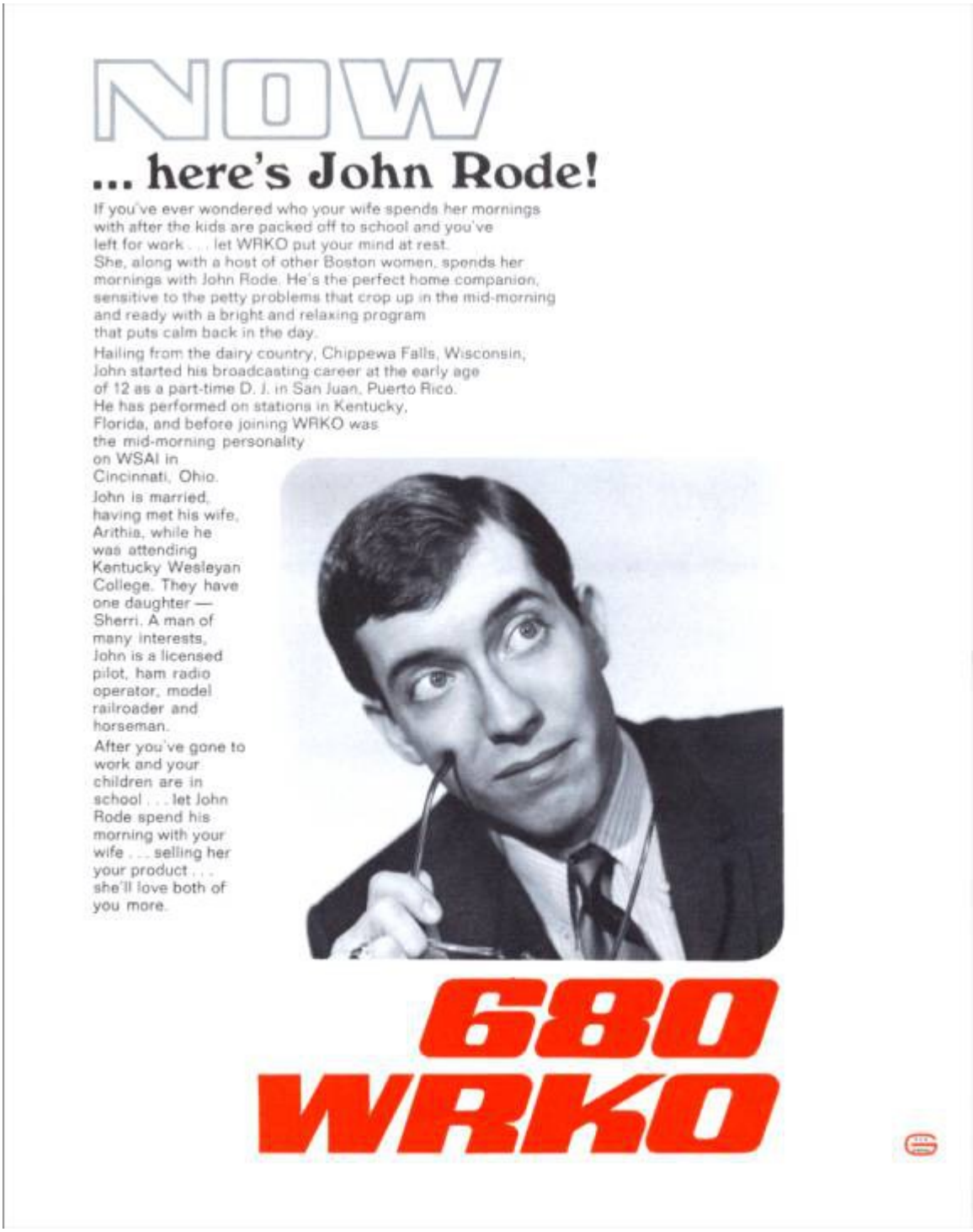
"Gatesy" has a long and varied history from which to draw his insights, which prove to be as penetrating as they are amusing. He was born in Hamburg, New York, attended Annapolis for two years and graduated from Ithaca College in upstate New York. A photo-journalist for NATO, he traveled the world on various assignments. Al is married and has three daughters. And, as if that isn't enough, he also used to be a commercial artist.

On the air, "Gatesy" is an amusing, human individual with a sharp wit and glib manner. He also has the knack of bringing out the bright side of any situation, which is indispensible on a morning show. His sincere, personal involvement with each commercial he presents is a delight to sponsors.

680 WRKO

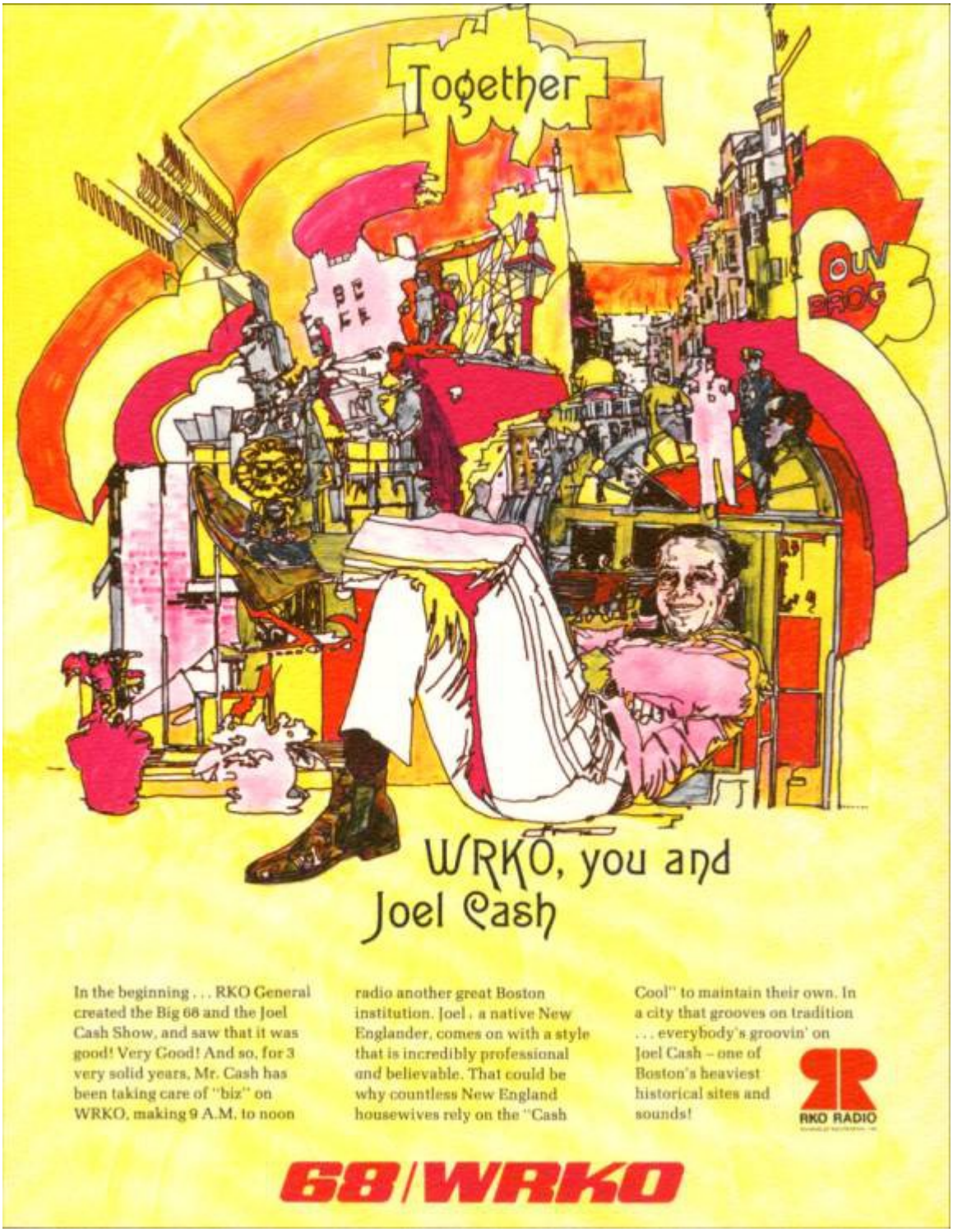
Bob Henabery asked for and received my input on all the prospective disc jockeys we hired for the launch, which I thought was generous of him. It would also help me when I replaced Bob as PD in just a few months. I didn't know Al Gates when I heard his aircheck but I thought he would be an entertaining morning man for us. John Rode (Road-ie), who would follow Al from 9am to Noon was another story. John is someone I knew and worked with...

John and I were both disc jockeys at Big WALT in Tampa in 1966, so I knew how good he was. John's looks belied his voice. His height was average but he was reed-thin. He wore Coke-bottle glasses for his bad myopia. John was never seen without his glasses because if he took them off he would never find them. If John were in a "Mr. Magoo" cartoon, he would be following Magoo. His voice was powerful and resonant. Rode had the kind of voice that everyone in the 60s didn't have but wished they did.



Like John Rode, Joel Cash (12N-3pm) had a great radio voice. Joel must have gone to the same Resonance Broadcasting Academy Rode attended. Joel was also smooth. He didn't make many mistakes on the air and like Al Gates, Joel could really sell a live spot. Joel had so much confidence, he came off arrogant to some people at WRKO but I always chalked that up to his being so sure of himself and his ability rather than arrogance. Joel was good and he knew it...

Although big of voice, Joel was short in stature. We were about the same height - 5' 6" to 5' 7" on tip toes. Joel was always neatly dressed with his jet black hair shining and neatly combed. He also had a quick smile as opposed to Rode, who never smiled. Joel was the biggest sports fan of all of our disc jockeys. He knew the Boston teams, players and daily game results. He was also a good ballplayer...



J.J. Jeffrey (3pm - 6pm) wasn't the life of the party, he was the party. Still is. J.J. was made for afternoon drive. With a boundless supply of positive energy and a raspy delivery, J.J. made each show an adventure. J.J. was one of those disc jockeys that could turn a phrase into a trademark. From his imaginary "Villa in Dorchester" he would exhort his female companions to "shake their money maker" and "put their business in the street." It sounds sexist and gross but made perfect sense coming from "Triple J." J.J. knew how to make it work without somehow offending anyone...

J.J. was totally uninhibited on the air and everyone's friend off the air. J.J., a native of Massachusetts, was born in Newton, a western suburb of Boston but eventually would make his home in Maine after attending college in that state. J.J. was known as Melvin X. Melvin when he worked at WMEX in the early 60s...

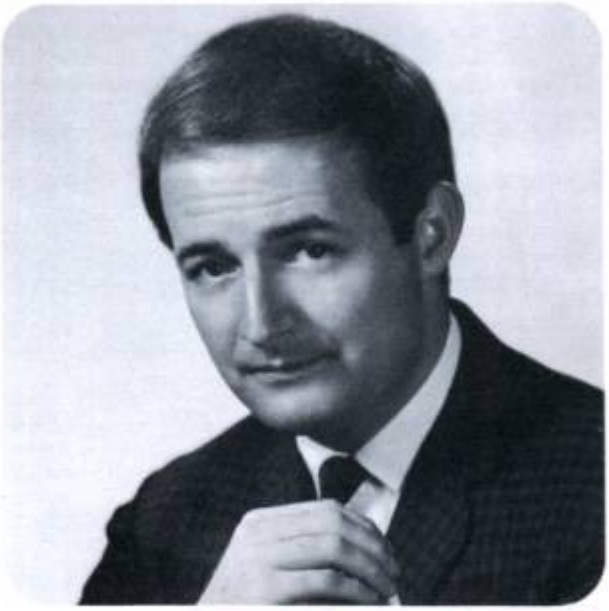
NOW

... here's J. J. Jeffrey!

Wild . . . inventive . . . uninhibited . . . exuberant . . . berserk . . . these are some of the exciting adjectives used to describe "The Now Crowd's" J. J. Jeffrey. But, what else would you expect from a guy whose initials are J. J. J.? Around Boston, listeners have come to expect a dynamic, vibrant afternoon program filled with the amusing overflow of J. J.'s fertile imagination . . . and they have been getting just that . . . with amazing results.

J. J. is a native of Massachusetts, hailing from Newton. He went north to college attending the University of Maine and while there began his radio career in Portland. From Portland he made his talented way to stations in North Carolina, Mass. and Florida before joining WRKO. An avid hobbyist, J. J. spends his time with bicycles, bowling, billiards, sportscars, cameras, records and, being single, girls.

J. J. Jeffrey's afternoon show on WRKO has been described as "one of the great moments of American radio," unfortunately the description is J. J.'s. However, an increasing number of listeners and clients are flocking to J. J.'s side and making this statement more fact than fiction. You should, too. Why live a lie?



680 WRKO

By the time Arnie ("Woo-Woo") Ginsburg arrived to do 6pm - 9pm he was already a radio star. Arnie started his career as a radio engineer at WORL and would become an iconic air personality while at WBOS and WMEX in his native Massachusetts. Arnie picked up the "Woo-Woo" handle when he hosted his "Night Train" show. It was on that show that Ginsburg used a train whistle, among other bells and whistles that he would entertain his audiences with...

NOW

... here's Arnie Ginsburg!

A Boston radio institution, Arnie has spent over twenty years in our profession and never left the Hub. Arnie's interest in radio started while he was still in high school; he had his first class engineer's ticket before his driver's license . . . quite a switch for a teen-ager! Throughout the score of years he's spent in radio, Arnie has worked as an engineer, designed and constructed transmitting equipment, and owned a station in Maine. On the other side of the microphone, Arnie ran a "Night Train" show and used the term "WOO-WOO" for the sound trains make . . . this has stuck. All Boston knows and recognizes instantly who "WOO-WOO" is.

A native Bostonian, Arnie comes from a musical family from which he no doubt inherited his major interest, Pop music. He is also a fan of the Red Sox and the Celtics, and has kept his electronic training up-to-date.

For over a dozen years Arnie "WOO-WOO" Ginsburg has been a top rated, believeable, air personality in Boston . . . he's the kind of guy WRKO is proud to have working for them — and all of the long-term sponsors who have bought into his program are also. Why don't you couple your product to "WOO-WOO's" long train of success?

680 WRKO

Arnie's on-air career at WRKO was short-lived, not long after he started it by a technician strike and a long-forgotten personal contract signed at WMEX stopped him from continuing his show following settlement of the strike. Arnie would continue to work as a salesman at WRKO.

***

April 21, 1967 WMEX is Victor in Ginsburg Suit

(newspaper source and reporter unknown)

Arnold (Arnie) Ginsburg, favorite rock-and-roll disc jockey among teenagers, was ruled off the air Thursday (April 20) by Suffolk County Superior Court Judge John M. Noonan. The court gave Ginsburg the choice of working for station WMEX or not working for any other radio station within 18 miles of the State House for a year.

Acting on a suit brought by WMEX, the court held that Ginsburg is bound by a contract with WMEX. Ginsburg left WMEX recently and began work with station WNAC, which changed its name to WRKO and its format to rock and roll and similar programs.

WMEX charged that, under its contract, Ginsburg was barred from working for another Boston area station for 18 months after leaving WMEX.

***

Chuck "Chuckles" Knapp (9pm-12Mid) was one of our most exciting disc jockies on-air and was well suited for nighttime, appealing to teens and 18-24's. Chuck would punctuate his shows with his famous "this is your leader" trademark shouts in between the music and maintain a frantic tempo throughout his 3 hours on the air, night-in and night-out. He was consistently fast and good at the same time...

Chuck, who hailed from Minnesota came to us from North Dakota where he hosted a daily radio show. He was one of those "baby D.J.'s" whose interest in radio started at the age of 14. At 17 he started his professional career and about 50 years later is still hosting a radio show in his native state. I'll be sharing his thoughts with you when we get into our "Where Are They Now" segments...

NOW

... here's Chuck Knapp!

Corny as it must sound, here's the boy next door . . . the nice kid you'd want your daughter to go steady with. Each evening more and more teen-age gals are doing just that, listening steady to Chuck Knapp.

Although he's still in his early twenties, Chuck's interest in radio dates back to when he was 14. He worked his first professional job at 17 playing Sunday morning religious programs in Minnesota. A native of that state, Chuck was raised there and spent two years in college before devoting all his time to radio, working in North Dakota and Florida prior to coming to Boston.

He is an avid sports fan, and being single, also an avid girl fan.

Here's a young man who is on his way in our very demanding profession. All of the many young folk who listen to him are going right along . . . sponsors are too . . . and everyone is benefitting. Here's a case of where being caught Knapping is a good thing.

680 WRKO

Dick Burch (Overnights) had the shortest career of any of the original members of the Now Crowd - one night. No sooner had we launched WRKO, we were hit with a technician strike. AFTRA honored the picket lines and Dick Burch, who couldn't afford to wait out the strike, found a job elsewhere...

The technician strike was unfortunate for both sides but it should be mentioned here that prior to and following the strike, we had some of the best technicians in radio. I'll single out a few who learned a new format quickly and formed a strong bond with our on-air staff. Since we had a union shop, none of our success could have been enjoyed without technicians who ran a tight board and maintained all of our equipment. Chief among them were: **Harry Weinstein**, **Sid Gaynor**, **Chet Kelly**, **Tom Murphy**, **Jimmy Robinson** and **Gordon Brown**. Thanks to George Capalbo for supplying us with a team of good, young technicians...

The original members of the Now Crowd scattered wide and far and almost all of them had successful careers in radio after they left WRKO. Most are still working. Where are they now? We'll start with Al Gates. To no one's surprise because of his ability to read commercials as good or better than anyone else on our staff, Al has made a living as as one of the top voice-over announcers in the country. Al makes the New York Metropolitan area home. At last word, John Rode owns a book store outside of Toronto, Canada and is no longer on the air following successful on-air jobs in Canada. Joel Cash is living in South Florida and owns a business unrelated to radio...

J.J. Jeffrey is now living in Brunswick, Maine and owns a couple of radio stations in the Portland market. J.J. does on-air work occasionally. Arnie Ginsburg is retired and also lives in Maine. Chuck Knapp is doing a morning show 5 days a week for a suburban Country station just outside Minneapolis. Chuck remarried two years ago and says "life is very good." We'll share more of Chuck's conversation in an upcoming chapter. Dick Burch, our one-night overnight wonder has relocated in California...

The length of the IBEW strike at WRKO is in dispute, owing to the fact that AFTRA held a vote to honor picket lines set up by the technicians after the techs walked out. My best recollection is that the strike lasted 10 weeks. Being part of management I was allowed to cross the picket lines. Our GM Perry S. Ury remembers events leading to the strike: "For me it was a day of pride and vindication for the decision to change the format and put the "Boston Rocker" on the air. My most vivid memory was an extremely nasty call from Mr. McCurdy, the head of the engineer's union (IBEW). The threat to 'ruin WRKO and General Tire' for making the format move was very real at the time." ...

Chuck Knapp recalls the AFTRA vote which would recommend not crossing the picket lines already set up by IBEW: "I remember the first AFTRA vote was to cross the picket lines and then a second vote was taken after some impassioned pleas from TV booth announcers. Two people switched their votes and we stayed out for 6 weeks while they tried to work things out. What a mess that was. We were all new, most from out of town and had no money." ...

No one seems to remember the actual date the strike started but it was days after the new format was launched. I was standing behind Arnie Ginsburg who was preparing to start his show at 6pm. I and a few other people were in-studio in case AFTRA voted to honor the IBEW strike. Arnie got a phone call from the shop stewart shortly before the start of his show. Disappointed that he would not be doing his show and that his union had voted to not cross

the picket lines, Arnie left for home. He did not know that he would never return to the air on WRKO because of a non-compete contract he had signed while at WMEX...

Using management people and some college students that would major in WRKO radio for the next few weeks, we segued music back-to-back. In the morning I would be doing morning drive. Perry, Bob Henabery, Harvey Mednick and other management personnel would be doing the news. It had only been a few months since I did my last show in Tampa at WALT and I had done morning drive at WKDA Nashville before that. I knew the requirements of a good morning man - a positive energy with lots of time checks, weather conditions, sports, local town and city mentions. I was ready to resume my disc jockey career. All I needed now was sleep and an early wake-up...

When I left Tampa for Boston in the summer of '66, I thought my disc jockey days were behind me forever. Although I liked being a jock, I had gotten tired of saying the same things and playing the same music every day, 6 days a week. Goodbye jockdom, hello programming. I wasn't expecting to go back on the air but when the technicians walked out, followed by the on-air staff in March, 1967, guess who was the next morning drive guy for the next few weeks? You're looking at him...

Since I had last jocked at Big WALT in Tampa less than a year earlier, I was prepared and wasn't a bit nervous. My only fear was that everyone would turn off the radio at the same time when they didn't hear Al Gates & Feathers. A two-voice promo ran on the air (voiced by Harvey Mednick and I) for the infamous 4am premiere of the James Bond movie, "Casino Royale." This was the promotion that made headlines and was Harvey's ticket to fame. Thousands of fans would show up at the theater for the premiere and riots broke out. The out-of-control event not only made the front page of the Boston Globe, it was also front page news in the New York Times....

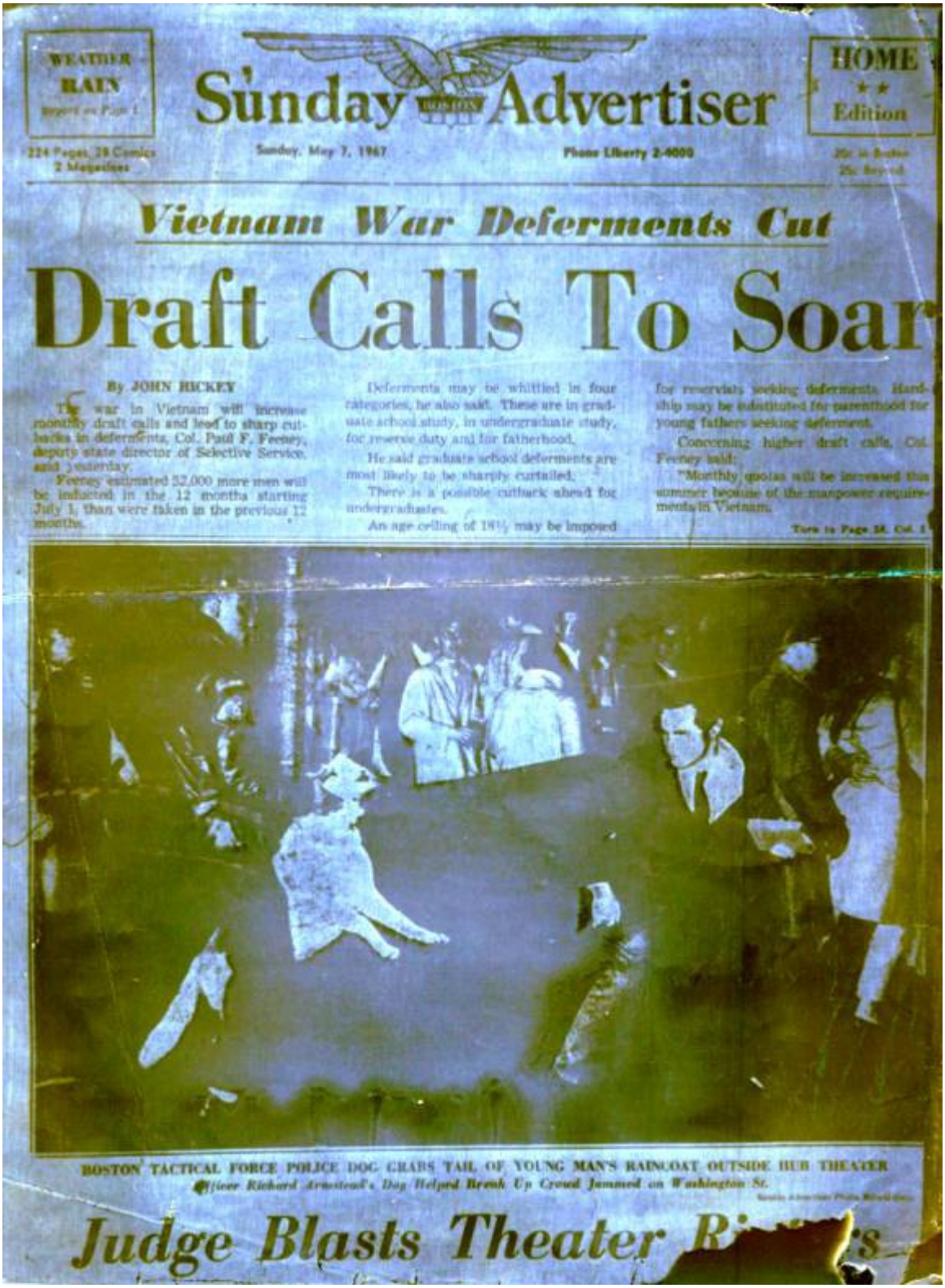
While I was used to running my own board, WRKO had technicians for that. While they were on strike we used some of the brightest college kids in the area. Running my board was **Bob Schuman**, now known as **Charley Roberts**. With over 100 colleges and universities in the Boston metro, there was an ample supply of talented students to choose from. Many would make radio a career. I continued to do the morning show, mostly with Bob for several weeks on a Monday-Friday schedule. While I was the only live disc jockey on the air, we segued music the rest of the day and night.

Celebrating WRKO's Third Anniversary in March, 1970

(L-R) Paul Power, Joel Cash, Perry Ury, Dale Dorman, Mel Phillips, Bill ("Johnny Williams") Todd, Jerry Butler & Frank ("Bobby Mitchell") Kingston Smith

The strike not only made local news, it was also picked up by the national trade magazines. The April 25th edition of Variety noted that "an IBEW strike had started at WRKO with jocks, refusing to cross picket lines." Billboard and other publications also noted the strike.

On May 6th, at the height of the strike, we hit Boston right between the eyes with a promotion that would make headlines. Although it could have stopped our two-month-old Top 40 era dead in its tracks, some tap dancing to RKO corporate by Perry Ury, eased the pain of the riot that broke out at the Sack Savoy Theater in downtown Boston. "Wear a trenchcoat and dark glasses at 4 am and see 'Casino Royale' for free." About 20,000 insomniacs did. The next morning we were on the front page of the Boston Globe and New York Times. Harvey Mednick's dream promotion became a nightmare, or so we thought. We weren't proud of what we created but all of New England felt the impact of WRKO's reach and we knew we had arrived as a major radio force. The 1967 Casino Royale premiere was chronicled on the SONY Collector Edition DVD released a couple of years ago...



WEATHER
RAIN
Report on Page 1

224 Pages, 28 Comics
2 Magazines

Sunday Boston Advertiser

Sunday, May 7, 1967

Phone Liberty 2-4000

HOME
★★
Edition

20c in Boston
25c Beyond

Vietnam War Deferments Cut

Draft Calls To Soar

By JOHN RICKEY

The war in Vietnam will increase monthly draft calls and lead to sharp cutbacks in deferments, Col. Paul F. Feeney, deputy state director of Selective Service, said yesterday.

Feeney estimated 52,000 more men will be inducted in the 12 months starting July 1, than were taken in the previous 12 months.

Deferments may be whittled in four categories, he also said. These are in graduate school study, in undergraduate study, for reserve duty and for fatherhood.

He said graduate school deferments are most likely to be sharply curtailed.

There is a possible cutback ahead for undergraduates.

An age ceiling of 18½ may be imposed for reservists seeking deferments. Hardship may be substituted for parenthood for young fathers seeking deferment.

Concerning higher draft calls, Col. Feeney said:

"Monthly quotas will be increased this summer because of the manpower requirements in Vietnam.

Turn to Page 18, Col. 1

BOSTON TACTICAL FORCE POLICE DOG GRABS TAIL OF YOUNG MAN'S RAINCOAT OUTSIDE HUB THEATER
Officer Richard Armstead's Dog Helped Break Up Crowd Jammed on Washington St.

Judge Blasts Theater R

The strike continued into May, 1967 and there is a John Rode aircheck recorded May 28th that indicated the strike had ended sometime that month. All the members of the original Now Crowd came back on the air with the exception of Arnie Ginsburg and Dick Burch. Chuck Knapp would have his shift extended to cover some of Arnie's hours and worked 7 days a week until we had a complete staff again. We segued music overnight until Jon Powers came

aboard in June. Despite the strike, the impact we made in Boston and throughout New England was immediate and lasting. In an August edition of Billboard Magazine, **Claude Hall** reported that we had climbed to number one in the June-July Hooper Ratings.

***

WRKO's First Hooper Ratings June to July, 1967

This June-July, 1967 survey is the first Hooper rating book since the WNAC-WRKO format change.

HOOPER NOTES:

WHIL, WILD, WJDA, and WRYT are daytime stations.

During the June interviewing period, The "Mideast Crisis" was occurring. (that could account for WEEI's top-heavy rating)

WHDH carried the Boston Red Sox. This likely was responsible for the high weekend ratings.

HOOPER *RADIO* AUDIENCE INDEX

IN - HOME AUDIENCE ONLY

CITY: BOSTON, MASS. MONTHS: JUNE - JULY, 1967

SHARE OF *RADIO* AUDIENCE

TIME	HOMES USING RADIO	WBCS	WBZ	WCOP	WCRB	WEEI	WEEX	WHDH	WHIL	WILD	WJDA	WMEX	WNAC	WNAC-FM	WRYT			OTHER AM & FM	SAMPLE SIZE
MONDAY THRU FRIDAY 7:00 A.M.-12:00 NOON	14.6	0.9	12.3	4.1	0.7	21.5	5.5	18.1	0.2	4.1	3.4	8.2	10.2	1.0	2.7			7.3	5,620
MONDAY THRU FRIDAY 12:00 NOON-6:00 P.M.	9.0	0.9	7.9	5.0	1.6	26.2	6.3	10.4	0.9	3.2	2.7	9.7	15.4	1.4	1.6			6.9	6,830
SUNDAY DAYTIME 10:00 A.M.-6:00 P.M.	11.0	3.3	11.3	1.3	1.0	18.2	6.0	23.5	0.7	1.3	1.0	11.3	12.3	††	0.7			8.4	3,559
SATURDAY DAYTIME 10:00 A.M.-6:00 P.M.	12.1	2.1	9.8	3.0	0.6	16.9	2.1	19.8	2.1	1.5	1.5	10.7	20.1	1.5	0.3			8.4	3,699
SUNDAY THRU SATURDAY 6:00 P.M.-11:00 P.M.	9.3	0.5	7.8	4.7	0.9	23.5	5.1	19.7	2.6†	0.7†	1.1†	11.3	15.1	0.7	1.5†			7.4	7,646
TOTAL RATED TIME PERIODS **	10.8	1.1	9.7	4.2	1.0	22.5	5.3	17.3	1.0†	2.7†	2.4†	9.9	13.9	1.0	1.8†			7.3	27,354

** Every rated hour given equal weight. For this reason this Total Index is not an arithmetic average od the Day-Part Indexes.
† The above measurements for Radio Stations WHIL, WILD, WJDA and WRYT are adjusted for broadcast time.
†† Less than 0.1
NOTE: The Mideast crisis was occurring during the June interviewing period.

"Homes Using Radio" is the percentage of homes interviewed which are listening to the radio. Where listening to a second program over a second radio set is reported in a home, that fact is reflected in the individual station "Shares." "Share of Radio Audience" represents the proportion of the total radio audience listening to a particular station.

Where an FM station duplicates its corresponding AM station's program schedule in its entirety, the FM station mentions are combined with the AM station's mentions.

The Code of Practice governing the use of "RADIO HOOPERATINGS" applies to this "RADIO AUDIENCE INDEX."

1967 ©C. E. Hooper, Inc.

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In 1967, more than 400,000 students were attending colleges and universities in the Boston metro area and WRKO would become the breeding ground for many future radio careers. Most of those we hired to answer the request line and as board operators came from Northeastern University, Boston University and Emerson College. The students that cut their radio teeth at WRKO included a future radio station owner (**Dick Booth**), a future radio consultant, historian and author (**Donna Halper**) and several future disc jockeys (**Bob Raines**, **Ron Brindle**, **Dave Thompson**, Bob (Charley Roberts) Schuman, **Ron Hurst** & **Don Azars**). **Rich Stadlen** and **Gil Shaw** also made radio their careers. In all there must have been a dozen new hires in 1967 that would make their mark in radio...

Chuck Knapp and J.J. Jeffrey were two original members of the Now Crowd back on March 13, 1967 when WRKO was launched. Chuck remembers following Arnie Ginsburg on the air at 9pm each night: "Arnie always introed me as the guy from Fergus Falls, Minnesota and then did his traditional Arnie chuckle. I loved following him on the air." And what does Chuck remember most about 1967? "I saw the World Series that year, was introduced to **Ted Williams** by Curt Gowdy, met **Bobby Orr** and watched him play, saw **Bill Russell** in the bar at the station building on Brookline Avenue and so much more. Since Arnie never returned to the air I got to work 7 days a week for the next 7 months until we hired **Gary Martin** and I moved up to 6pm-9pm." Chuck also remembers racing at New England Dragway with J.J., $8 World Series tickets and giving away Sgt. Pepper artwork to a contest winner...

J.J. Jeffrey sends best personal regards from his "Villa in Dorchester." J.J. remembers "Light My Fire", The Red Sox! '67 erupts with WRKO! A gathering of radio people who took Boston and New England and said "Pay Attention." They did! The D.J.'s couldn't wait to get to "work" everyday to play the latest Beatle songs and other hits. Fabulous people to work with: 'Smitch' (**Bobby Mitchell**), **Dale (Dorman**), 'Joe' Cash (**Joel Cash**), Chuck (Knapp), Gary (Martin), **Jon (Powers**), **Shadoe (Stevens**), **Ernie (Anastos**), Roger (Allan), Paul (Power), (**Dan) Tucker**, Harry the W (Weinstein), Sid (Gaynor), Gordie (Brown), Chet (Kelly), **Frank (Santos**), (Bill) Wayland, **Mike (Horn**) & "Woodies" (**Dick Woodies**). Loved the promotions! 'Casino Royale,' Candy Apple Red Mustang, Top 500, Black Box & the Christmas Wish. And the names of the D.J.'s on the marquee at 21 Brookline Avenue. What a kick to 'Shepard' over the Drake format. The **Johnny Mann** jingles! The engineers who made the Big 68 sound like an FM. Thank you management team, Perry (Ury), Mel (Phillips), Bob Henabery and Harvey (Mednick) for "smoothing the way for us to rise to the top in New England. J.J. Jeffrey (3pm-6pm) on the Big 68 ('says proudly')"...

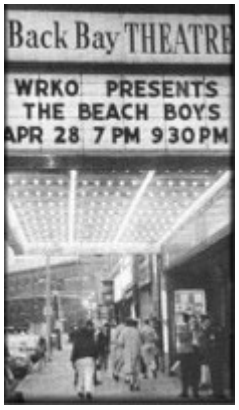
In sports, a team manager or coach is as good as his or her team. In radio, a station is only as good as its general manager and WRKO had one of the best in Perry S. Ury. Perry's personality and will to win filtered down through all of us. I can honestly say I never worked for a better GM. While some general managers believe in a hands-on approach, Perry knew how to delegate responsibility to his department managers.

Perry summed up his feelings about WRKO's success by saying this: "My memories of the transition from talk to our version of the Drake format was really historical. You guys in

programming and promotion did such a professional job of tailoring the station musically and promotionally to Boston. I think the strike of the engineers helped even more. We proved that the music was the thing and that we could survive the strike if we gave our listeners what they wanted. At any rate, thankfully the jocks came back early and we of average talent (me) - could go back to desk jockeying rather than newscasting, although I will admit it was a real charge to go back to my roots in broadcasting. My best to all who made broadcasting in the late sixties so exciting at WRKO - Boston"...

Harvey Mednick, Promotions Director of WRKO remembers his time in Boston: "WRKO was a true team effort and the unique mix of people and personalities contributed greatly to its success. In all the years that followed, at all the stations with which I was involved, there's never been a more diverse, yet united group than you, Bob (Henabery), Perry (Ury), Paul (Power), George (Capalbo), Bud (Simmen) and me, all committed to one simple mission: to create the most entertaining and innovative radio station Boston, and the industry has ever known. And with an unmatched singularity of purpose, an incredible amount of talent and a lot of hard work, we did it!". Some of Harvey Mednicks promotions:

The WRKO Black Box



WRKO Presents The Beach Boys

WRKO Boat Cruise

WRKO Canobie Lake Park Promotion

WRKO Fashion Happening

Paul Power, Music & Prod. Dir WRKO: "This was the greatest radio journey of my life, handling the music, production and assisting in programming this sitting 50,000 watt "Rig" (quoting J.J. Jeffrey here), taking it from worst to first in just a few months. As a 10-year old kid bitten by the radio bug and listening to the radio greats from 1955 on, and also growing up less than a mile from where WRKO would move in '68 (short commute), I will forever feel honored and indebted to Mel, Perry and all my other friends who helped me realize this dream!"...

The late Roger Allan was our News Director when WRKO was launched. Roger was there at the old Yankee Network and remained for our format changeover and over 20 years beyond. Roger added these comments shortly before his passing in 2008 at the age of 79: "How can I ever forget the day we kicked Boston in the ass? The Now Generation hit Boston big. It's a 'happening.' There was the Globe, the Herald and the WRKO top 40 sheets . We had the newest of the new broadcast styles with 20/20 News which won innumerable news awards from UPI, AP & RTNDA thanks to people like John ("the barrrrometric pressure") Masters & Bob Stevens, Bill Rossi and Bob Cusack. The George Capalbo studios had the nation's best equipment. What a time for all of us."...

Which leads us to George Capalbo. George was our Director of Engineering but he also did our station filings: "I vividly recall filing the change of call letters with the FCC to make it legal. I was working long and exhausting hours to prepare for the big changeover. I have fond memories of the management and staff all pulling in the same direction and the elation we still experience at the success of the legendary WRKO." Gordon Brown, was one of the younger technicians who would become a disc jockey favorite: "I was promoted from Production Supervisor to Engineer as management wanted younger guys spinning the rock for the new jocks. I was matched with Chuck "Chuckles" Knapp on the 9-midnight shift. Chuck and Gordy became a solid team for several years...

Bill Wayland was one of our best salesmen. Bill went from selling a N/T MOR format to a Top 40 without missing a beat. Bill was at the Sack Savoy Theater the night of May 6, 1967 when all hell broke loose at the 4am showing of "Casino Royale": "I remember standing on Washington Street at 3am watching the police arrive. Memories. But I knew way before the ratings came out that WRKO was a hit. I walked the Irish Riviera from Dorchester to Southie on Carson Beach, on a warm day and all I heard was WRKO and the Red Sox on WHDH. We were there."

That, to the best my memory bank can process information stored 45 years ago, is the way I remember events leading to and including the launch of WRKO. The history of the station is still being written. Top 40 ruled from March 13, 1967 to 1981 when WRKO changed to its present news/talk/sports format.

When I was hired to program WRKO-FM, I was told I was hired for "what was between my ears", not for my voice. What? They didn't like my aircheck? Programming "ARKO" was easy. I

knew the music and ARKO didn't talk back. The great Curt Gowdy once summed up his success to me as "being in the right place at the right time." That may be true but we all know what he did with the opportunity he was given. There's probably some wisdom in Curt's statement for all of us who ever had the privilege to work at WRKO...

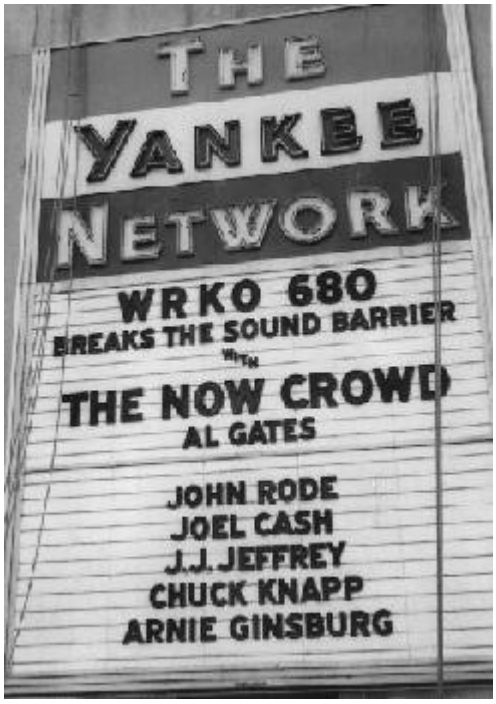
My own memories of 1967 are filled with once-in-a-lifetime events. Two months after we launched WRKO, **Robert Dean Phillips** was born in Needham's Glover Memorial Hospital on May 31, making his Dad, a happy man. The next month WRKO would become the number one music station in Boston, beating WBZ and WMEX. I was officially named program director of WRKO-AM that summer - the "Summer of Love", which would give way to "The Impossible Dream" for the Red Sox who went from next to last in the standings in 1966 to the World Series in 1967. What a year!!!

This history of "WRKO...The Launch" was written for those of us lucky enough to have worked in the early stages of a great radio station and for all the terrific radio people who followed us, including the legion of listeners who chose a career in radio because of what they heard on NOW Radio...

- The End of The Beginning -

(Many thanks to **Shel Swartz**, webmaster of the WRKO.org website for all the airchecks, photos, profiles, news articles, station memos & maps he provided. Access to his website can be made by clicking http://www.wrko.org/index.html, to **Donna Halper** for all the hours of research she did at the Boston Public Library to verify dates and events, and to everyone who offered quotes, information, advice and support. I'd also like to thank **Gordon Brown** for filling in some missing pieces)...

That's me with RKO/Drake National Music Dir. Betty Breneman



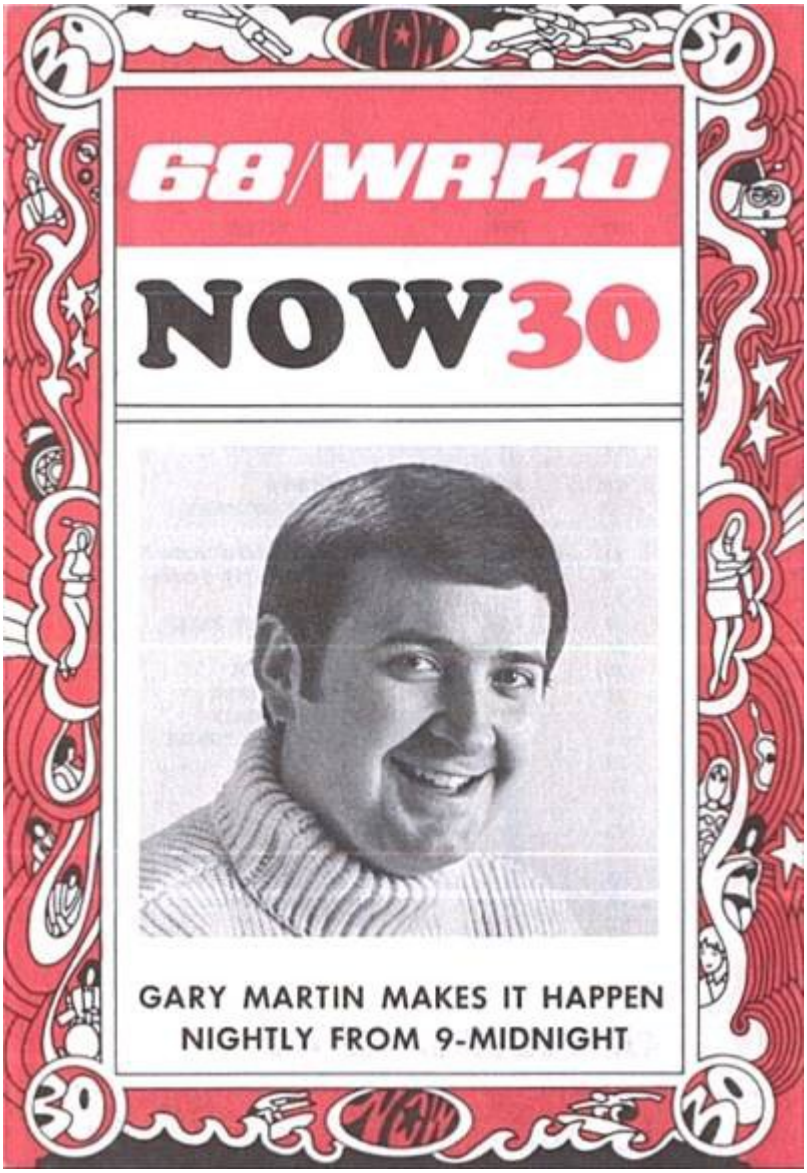
A Sign of Change

This is how the sign outside the RKO General studios and office building at 21 Brookline Avenue in Boston appeared at the time of the format change in 1967. It was probably as popular as the Cities Service sign outside of Fenway Park that could be seen from almost anywhere within the park.

Note the "Yankee Network." That was a network of about 33 New England radio stations to which the former WNAC-AM provided New England-area news as entire newscasts, opening sounder and all.

The Yankee Network was disbanded at the time of the format change. While many of its anchors continued on into WRKO, some moved elsewhere after a short time at the Big 68. For example, Roger Skibines went to be on the air at WOR, New York.

Palmer Payne (also a WNAC-TV anchor) moved on to WINS and then to WCBS (NewsRadio 88), New York. Later on, Palmer became involved in politics in his home state of Maine. At one time, he was a Selectman for the town of Boothbay Harbor.



The WRKO Now 30 which would become The Big 30

Bobby Mitchell in front of the RKO Building

I have updated "WRKO...The Launch" annually since I originally wrote it a few years ago. Since my last update I've launched The WRKO Alumni Association on Facebook. It can be accessed here: https://www.facebook.com/portwashdad?ref=ts&fref=ts#!/WrkoAlumniAssociation

In addition I'd like to thank Peter Quentin George for finding this article on WRKO-FM, written by then Harvard student Robert P. Marshall Jr. in the Crimson newspaper:

Cybernetics

The Vagabond

By ROBERT P. MARSHALL JR...,

November 09, 1966

0 COMMENTS EMAIL PRINT

He's physically not very big. A six-footer can look him straight in the flashback reels. But his voice carries 18 rock 'n' roll records an hour to FM radios within 100 miles of Kenmore Square. The human beings at WRKO-FM (98.5) call their one-piece radio station "the shy but friendly robot," which is catchy but far from accurate as a description. He gets about so quickly that already, only five weeks after arriving in Boston, he receives several hundred calls a night. And when it comes to friendliness, he's as cold as Petula Clark. He's an automated hard rock station that foregoes disc jockeys, news, weather, and time reports and keeps ads at a minimum.

The original impetus came from a Federal Communications Commission ruling that required AM -FM stations in cities with over 100,000 population to split their programming at least 50 per cent of the time. Boston's WNAC, which had been simulcasting its all talk-information format over WNAC-AM and WRKO-FM, had to come up with something new by January 1.

A survey of the FM bands revealed nothing for the younger audience. A rock 'n' roll format would take advantage of this gap and yet not complete with WNAC's AM outlet.

Breaking in against WBZ and WMEX, Boston's rock stations, WRKO had to offer something radically different -- and that something is 18 uninterrupted songs an hour. This is where the friendly robot comes in.

The "certified top 35," 12 "extras," the ads and promotion pieces are all on separate tape cartridges in the robot, a 12-foot long product of Automatic Tape Control, Bloomington, Illinois. The five-second identification spots are on the ends of those cartridges. There are three hour-long reels, two of flashbacks, one of instrumental fillers, that proceed from number to number when called on.

The monster is fed instructions every five hours, then it's completely on its own. Mel Phillips, the program director, determines the playlist each week, largely on the phone calls taken from 4 to 10 p.m. by "Roberta, the human helper" -- who in real life is a human named Roberta.

Phillips, who was a disc jockey in Tampa, Florida, until two months ago, claims that "all music" is a more sophisticated sound than the screaming and babbling that mark other Boston stations. The extremely favorable response of Boston's large college audience seems to bear this out -- Harvard has contributed as much mail as any group to the young station. WNAC general manager Perry Ury says, "We've removed the major irritant that radio listeners object to: the jockeys.'

WRKO-FM sounds like an ideal station, but alas, its system too, has flaws. Each song's impact is weakened by its propinquity to the next. Disc jockey chatter, for all its inanity, is a background that sets up each song. A more significant quibble is WRKO's small playlist. It sticks with already established hits, devoting almost half its air time to the Top 10, which often for instance this week is a collection of the songs one least wants to hear.

If only the robot could overcome his commercial instincts and use his numerical advantage as WOR (New York's new FM rocker) does, by playing more new songs and hits in other areas.

As it acquires fore flashback reels (it now has 16), WRKO could provide special goldie segments, to satisfy the buffs who still bemoan the departure of WORL's Ken Carter. And expansion of WRKO-FM into a 24-hour rock station would be a final service (presently, the nine hours after midnight are filled with mush music and talk shows). This would enable the hub's serious devotees to escape Dick Summer, Boston's biggest "drab-gabber," who currently has a popular music monopoly in the prime listening hours after midnight.

Mel Phillips

WRKO-FM Program Director (1966-1967)

WRKO-AM Program Director (1967-1972)

March, 2013