

President:	Caroline Moon
Vice President:	Rosa Snyder
Secretary:	Kay Baughman
Treasurer:	Anne Driscoll
Mmbrshp/Newsltr:	Pat Meiners
Trustees:	Donald Lanham Peggy Jester Bob Simon
Life Trustee:	LeRoy Pratt



POLK COUNTY *Historical*
SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER

☞ **NEXT MEETING**

DATE: Sunday, February 8, 2004
TIME: 1:00 p.m. (Optional buffet at noon)
PLACE: King Buffet, Southeast Corner of
 86th St. & Douglas Ave., Urbandale
PROGRAM: "Crimes & Disasters in Des Moines"
 by David Ross of Magical History Tours



The PCHS thanks Ray Dennis for presenting the January 11, 2004 program; and Pat Meiners for inviting him to share with us. The program transcript follows.

The History of Radio and Television
 Broadcasting in the Des Moines Area

(Abridged and Edited)

by Ray Dennis

<http://desmoinesbroadcasting.com/>

While setting up I will give you the background of this website and how it came to be. It takes a moment to get the laptop going. You may remember George Davison my website partner, who cannot be here today from KRNT news back in the 1970's and WHO prior to that. He's a lawyer in town and shows up on WHO once in a while doing weekend news work. George is the researcher and has done some wonderful work writing background things for the website. I work as the webmaster, seeing things get entered on it; with some writing, and putting it all together. We work as a team.

George and I are amateur radio operators. About one-and-a-half years ago we were asked to do a presentation for the Amateur Radio and Computer Society (ARCS), I believe is the correct name. We started gathering material about old-time broadcasting and decided we had enough to start a website. We got the domain name of desmoinesbroadcasting.com and in April 2002 put the first item, a picture of the old KRNT transmitter site up on the website. Next was a picture of Don Bell. From there we have put up hundreds and hundreds of pages; pictures, stories, memorabilia; and a lot of audio, some of which will be played today. We did

☞ **2004 MEETINGS:**

(Meetings are usually held on the 2nd Sunday.)

March 14 – The History of the Botanical Center,
 by Margaret Swanson

April 18, and May 16 (3rd Sundays due to Holidays),

No summer meetings in June, July or August;
 Sept. 12, October 10, November 14 & December 12

the presentation for the 'Ham' club and I have done this presentation one other time. What I will use is off of the website to get you acquainted with it and give you some background on the items. You can spend many hours on this website, so when you have time go to desmoinesbroadcasting.com and have some fun.

The computer is now on the screen. This is the main screen and when you go to the website, one of the first things to check to find out the latest things going on is under this microphone graphic. Click on 'additions' as I have and you will see what has been added during the last half of 2003. One item was added so far this year, so you can see we have been very busy. Then click on previous additions and you can see what has been added since the website started. On the homepage is an area called 'Personalities' with a lot of familiar faces. There is Don Bell, Doug MacKinnon, Dick Vance, Walt Reno, Dic Youngs, Captain Jack, Peter McLane, and Smokey Smith. We'll come back to this. Below that is the station timeline, and when you click on it you will see the history of radio and TV stations; when they went on the air, call letter and frequency changes and that type of information. There are also radio stations, where the radio icon flashes on the screen; TV stations; 'Around the Dial' has various sounds and recordings of disc jockeys and others that have been on the air; 'Audio Oddities' has bloopers, spoofs and pranks and other unusual things, we will listen to a few of those this afternoon; and 'Extras' could be about anything.

To test the sound system I will play our site theme song, called "Wonderful Town, Wonderful People" which was originally purchased by the owners of KIOA about 1961 and given to the Des Moines Chamber of Commerce which used it for many years as a Des Moines theme song. It mentions being a railroad center, which isn't the

case much anymore; the new Veterans Auditorium, which isn't new anymore; and other things now out-of-date. I am playing this through a radio from the computer and need to get the volume adjusted. I'll cut it short now, but listen to the rest on the website.



*(singing) Wonderful town, Wonderful people,
Places to go, Things to see, Des Moines, Iowa
that's my wonderful town. Beautiful homes,
schools and churches, entertainment, places to
shop, Des Moines, Iowa that's my wonderful town.
Des Moines, a center of transportation, business
and banking and industry; Des Moines a center of
communication, the home of Drake University. ...*

Showing now is the timeline from the middle of the page. 1922 is the first record we have of any kind of broadcasting facility in Des Moines. It was a station with the call letters of WGF, anyone remember it? I didn't think so. It was on the air a couple of years. Everyone at that time was on the same frequency. It was of course AM, 833 on the dial. It didn't matter if they would have been different frequencies because the radios at the time weren't very selective so you would probably have heard them all of once anyway, even on different frequencies. So the stations shared time because they would interfere with each other if on the air at the same time. There was a lot of time sharing going on then.

With me is a radio to pass around that might have been typical at about 1922. The insides aren't all here, so it isn't operational. It was a two-tube radio, with headphones. The earliest radios were crystal sets that didn't require any power, they just used the power off the radio station and you could listen by putting a long wire on it and stringing it out to a tree of something. You could hear the local stations. I have others from the 1920's that were much larger, but didn't want to try to carry one in today; this is just a small one. My oldest working radio is from 1928, it has a speaker setting on top of it with a rounded top and also a horn speaker meant to be used with it, but that speaker does not work. It is still an interesting item to look at.

So, in 1922 the first station, and another one WOI in Ames that is still around went on the air. WOI was also on 833; but later went up the dial to about 1240, then to 640 where they are now; we don't know the exact date of going to 640. One thing done back then was portable, temporary radio stations to demonstrate radios to sell. Somebody would travel with one of the manufacturers' radios; Radiola was a big company at the time that later became RCA; there were many, many names for radios back then; and the station may only be on for a few months. Then, the call letters would be turned back in. A few of those on the timeline, WHX, WBAC, and WEAL we don't know much about. WHO was the first station in the Des Moines area itself to go on the air; at 570, not 1040. That is when stations started spreading out on the

dial, in 1924. Bankers Life was the owner and operator, and they were in the Liberty Building downtown, the towers right on top of the building. George and I are going to try to get permission from the Liberty Building to see if there is anything there; some evidence that there had been towers mounted on top of that building at one time, or any evidence of WHO being there. There was some moving around the dial, WHO later was on 1000. A big shift came in 1941 when most stations changed dial positions; for instance KRNT moved from 1320 to 1350; WHO from 1000 to 1040 and KSO moved up the dial.

The histories of KSO and KRNT are intertwined. Originally, Cowles, who owned the Register and Tribune, put KSO on the air in 1932, bringing it from Clarinda. In 1935 they changed the call letters to KRNT; and brought another station in from Cedar Rapids, KWCR which changed it's call letters to the old KSO call letters and was on 1430, so whose history is whose is complicated because there is a call letter change and moving around. So, KRNT's history is really KSO's and vice versa. They owned both stations until the late 1940's when they were required to sell one and KSO was sold to Murphy Publications. KSO had quite a number of owners from that point on. Those were pretty much the broadcasting stations here in Des Moines until after World War II.

After the WWII many new stations came on the air, the first being KCBC on 1390, which is now gone. The dial position of 1390 between KRNT and KSO was chosen. One of the former owners of KCBC told us they could have had 940 which KIOA ended up on, and there was a lot more power on 940. They thought people tuning between KRNT and KSO would have a better chance of hearing them if they were between two popular stations, so they went with the lower power of 1390. KIOA came on the air in 1949 on 940. FM stations came on the air; in 1948 KRNT-FM came on. Early FM was mainly simulcasting the AM, the same programs but clearer transmission. It wasn't very popular because the receivers were expensive and they didn't work very well, and most of the first bunch of FM stations on the air went off the air in the 1950's, including KCBC-FM. WHO-FM did stay on, KRNT-FM was gone. The last of the after-the-war AM stations on the air was 1150 - KWDM which in 1959 changed call letters to KWKY. That was pretty much the end of the activity on AM as far as new stations. The second wave of FM stations started coming back on the air in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's, and FM is now very popular. The first new FM to come on the air in the early 1960's was KDMI at 97.3, the old KSO-FM frequency. Since that time many have come on. Let's move on to some other items now, there is a lot to see in that timeline.

Let's look at WHO. I won't read the history here, but at the very top of our history you see on old postcard picture of what the studios looked like when they were on 520 meters, the old 570-kilohertz frequency. There

were two ways of determining the position on the dial. One was the wavelength, which was in meters; there is a formula having to do with the speed of light used to convert from frequency to meters. A lot of older stations used meters. Here you can see the history, a picture of Palmer's WOC Building from 1939. Palmer Broadcasting bought WHO in the 1930's. George did a very fine job of writing this history that can be read on the website.

I had the privilege of visiting the WHO transmitter site in 1991. These pictures on the screen now of the exterior were taken a little later than that, but this is the building out by Mitchellville. The exterior in this picture needs painted. It was built in the 1930's, like a fort, very substantial. The walls are double-bricked and there is a copper screen between the two layers of brick to keep the radiation from the radio energy from interfering in and out of the building from the transmitting equipment. It all goes out to the tower and doesn't interfere with -- other things. There are living quarters, the chief engineer lived in that building. No one lives there now. This picture is of the base of the tower, the tallest AM tower in the country. It is a special type of antenna, a Franklin antenna. In most of the AM broadcasting towers the whole tower is the antenna and the power is fed in at the bottom. This one is fed part way up the tower and it feeds some of the top of the tower and some of the bottom. It is more effective than standard towers. Here is a picture shot from further up the antenna, and here is an old TV antenna shown by the cursor, the old WHO-TV which isn't used anymore. Their antenna is now out by Alleman. The towers send out the signals. Network programming is received by several means. It used to come in by telephone lines, but now they use satellite dishes more than anything else for the CBS, ABC and other networks.

During a tour arranged by Van Harden in 1991, I got to be inside the building. The pictures and story of that trip will be seen next. This is the old 1950, 50,000 watt, WHO radio transmitter than you probably listened to for many, many years. It is not operational right now, *although it could be*. There is no way to hook it up to the antenna right now. They have two other transmitters to use. See through the glass in this picture the two huge vacuum tubes. They are very big, and heavy. There is a little crane, like a forklift to pull the tubes out of the socket. The engineers are shown here adjusting something. The console is in this photo, I used to sit at that console and monitor the transmitter. No one is out there now; it is all remotely controlled from the downtown studios. The newer, 1970's transmitter is in this photo. It was on the air in 1991, but is the back up now and on the air once a week. On Thursday mornings, about 9:00 you will hear a little pause, click, and it goes back on again. In the afternoon you will hear that again. They switch to this back-up transmitter to work on the main one. The old channel 13 transmitter, the front of which is shown now is not around anymore. It is huge. I was

inside it walking around and it is about as large as this room. That has all been taken out now because they use the one at Alleman.

For some older history, here is something very old from WHO. Of course everyone knows Dutch Reagan was on WHO back in the 1930's. But, this was another Dutch, Uncle Dutch who had a childrens program back in the 1920's. Here is a letter to one of his fans. Somebody in Highland Park had this letter. One of the big programs in early WHO history was the Barn Dance Frolic back when Bankers Life owned the station. One of the prerequisites to being on the staff at Bankers Life was you had to sing, play an instrument, act or announce. It got started back then and Palmer carried it on. It was on the air until the 1950's and for a while on WHO-TV. There was a recreation of the show done in 1982 when WHO moved into their new studios on Grand Avenue. I will play part of that and you can listen to more from the website.




*Welcome to the Iowa Barn Dance Frolic.
(country music plays) It will be a hot time in the
old town tonight.*

The Frolic was live every Saturday night and listened to all over the country. The original was from the Shrine Auditorium, State Fairgrounds, several places. We have a lot of pictures on the website from WHO; personalities from the 1970's, Jim Zabel (much younger), Cal Stout here in the upper corner, Joe Lombardo in the lower corner, Jack Ward. There are many picture about things such as Captain Jack, Tom Reed and things from that era, doing a remote broadcast, Betty Baker, Bill Austin playing the piano, Jack Shelly checking the wire services, Clay Rusk, we can just go on and on. When somebody picks a signal up from a long way off and writes to stations, many stations will send a Reception Confirmation or QSL card to the listener. This is from December 8, 1963; I don't know where they picked-up WHO, but this was sent out to someone.

Let's go on to the website information about KRNT. As said, the KRNT and KSO histories are intermixed so some things said about KRNT were really about KSO. This ad is from the time before KRNT came along and it was just KSO. They had gone on the air in 1932 and were increasing power and changing their frequency in 1935 about the time they put the KRNT call letters on. This picture is from the studios at the Register and Tribune Building, a program with some youth. An interesting old transmitting site left about 1942 when KRNT and KSO relocated out to SE 22nd Street and Park Avenue is in this picture. This was near North, or what is now called Morningstar Field, the airport out north along I-35/80. This building is still there, the towers are gone. There were five towers here at one time. We walked the ground, and four of the tower bases are still there. The building is a house today. The

transmitters were upstairs with workshops in the basement. It is south of the big power lines out there, a dead-end street, NW 52nd Court I believe. Here are pictures of the newer KRNT and KSO facilities out on SE 22nd. This picture is from 1942. It was a nice building with KSO on one side and KRNT on the other. If you look closely, you can see the call letters and the towers in the background. This aerial photo shows digging the trenches to put the coaxial cable in that ran to the towers. There were these three towers for KRNT which are out there now; and a fourth, now gone that was KSO. That tower was moved out to 3900 NE Broadway where the old KSO transmitter is now. There have been a lot of changes.

One of the old voices, this during the Korean War era was Gordon Gammack.

 Here is Des Moines Tribune Columnist Gordon Gammack ... Good evening everybody, here are the headlines in this evening's news: Truman's statement that Russian has no atomic bomb kicks up a fuss; A key Republican Congressman wants to rush through an income tax reduction; It's going to be harder to get draft deferments; The Chinese Reds predict that the Allies will try new invasions in Korea ...

Some of that news sounds like it might be today, doesn't it? A popular shows in the late 1940's and early 1950's was with a young man from, I think, Iowa Falls, Bill Riley. One of the first things Bill did; he did a lot of things and was very busy and probably the busiest guy KRNT ever had; was something with Bob Hassett, the Traffic Safety Director for the Des Moines Police Department. It was the "Hey, Bob" show for the kids, a live broadcast from a theater downtown. "Hey, Bob" was a dummy that went back and forth between Des Moines and Omaha.


Whoever had the safest year got to keep the dummy; or maybe it was the other way around, the most unsafe year. Eventually Des Moines kept it. They used it as an icon for the kids and would ask, "What do you say when you see a traffic violation?" The response should be to say

"Hey, Bob" for Bob Hassett the Safety Director. There are pictures of Bill Riley and the "Hey, Bob" dummy, and Bob Hassett the founder of the show. Poco The Clown was on there. One group member stated that she came down from Rockwell City to see the show, but didn't realize he was so ugly. Like the Barn Dance Frolic it moved around a little bit, between the Paramount Theater and KRNT Radio Theater. In this 1950 photo there are 4,000 kids at the KRNT Theater. Shown here




"HEY, BOB" DUMMY

is a puppet owned by Bob's son Jerry. It was to be sold as a toy, but it looked too good for "Hey, Bob" so this prototype never got into production. The Iowa State Museum has the original "Hey, Bob" puppet.

 What do you yell when you see a traffic violation? **"HEY, BOB"** (kids yelling loudly) ... It's the "Hey, Bob" show with Bill Riley. (Piano music and children singing "I, Love ...") ... Hello everyone, This is Bill speaking, bringing the Fifth meeting of the "Hey, Bob" Safety Club of Iowa to order here in the Paramount Theater in Des Moines. We have over 1,000 "Hey, Bob" members as always. "Hey, Bob" club time is brought to you by New Utica, "Hey, Bob" club headquarters is located on fourth floor, New Utica. More about our club later, but first a great big hello to Old MuttonHead, Stupid Himself, "Hey, Bob". How are you Dopey? Huh? (Laughing) Say, I have a joke for you today, are you ready? I'm never ready for those corny jokes of yours "Hey, Bob" but I can't get out of it today so OK what's the joke? OK here it is. What is the hardest thing in the world to deal with? You don't know? No, let's have it Bob. (Laughing) An old deck of cards. Get it? An old deck of cards.

I could have been in that audience, I did go down there. There are a lot of items bringing things more and more up-to-date. Because he's a big personality nowadays, I want to show you Mike Pace. He wasn't always doing the Lottery. This is Mike Pace in 1973 on KRNT. We seem to have a bad link to that and will move on. Try it later for yourself. He didn't sound much different than he does now, but playing music instead of giving away millions of dollars.


Let's move on to KIOA. We have a little notice on the webpage, this property protected by Chicken-Man. This is a 1964 KIOA Goodguy promo that they put on telling who was on KIOA at that time.

 "(singing) KIOA Home of the Goodguys." ... Good Morning this is sleepy Sandy Shore inviting you to join me on the Yawn Patrol every morning from 6 to 9. Recordially Yours Peter McLane with my gal Call Kay each morning from 9 to noon. Phil Thomas inviting you to keep keeping up with the music each day from noon to 3. Wow, meet the leader Hal Moore here each day from 3 to 6. I'm Stu Adams here inviting you to keep watching your radio for my program 6 till 9 each evening. The musical man marathon each evening 9 to 1 a.m., Jim Michaels hoping you'll try me. (singing) The Goodguys are on 940."


One of the very interesting things on this site, which is one-half hour long so we can't do it this afternoon, is an interview with Peter McLane who was the Program

Director of KIOA during the 1960's and 1970's, it's heyday when the station really did well. I also did one earlier with Dick Vance about KSO and they are both on the site. As I say, the interviews are long, but very interesting to hear how they did it. Peter's secret was hiring local Iowa people. Everybody he hired was from Iowa. He didn't bring people in from out-of-state. He would hear someone on a small, local station in some other market in Iowa and bring them in to KIOA. He got involved in the rest of the state doing record hops and public appearances throughout the state. KIOA had wide coverage. That was their secret. There is a picture and story of Dic Youngs also.


Somebody earlier today was talking about the old radio station transcription discs; how radio stations stored things temporarily before they had tape recordings, or now digital computers. They actually cut phonograph records in the station for temporary use to play commercials or station jingles, anything like that. Sometimes they even delayed programs that way. That "Hey, Bob" show was on an old ET. The old ET's lasted; they are still around and can be played, so we are able to preserve some things. Someone found some old KIOA ET's in their attic. These labels being shown from the webpage include a Don MacKinnon promo, Tom Looney, Frosty Mitchell, some of the jingles, and I actually have these recordings on the site. One I will play is of Frosty Mitchell, if I'm not mistaken he is Bob Ray's brother-in-law. He went on after leaving KIOA to own some stations and in some other businesses. Of course he was also associated with the Athletic Association here in Iowa. This is the Frosty Mitchell jingle from 1958.

 *"(singing) Let's all listen to the family man, Who? Frosty the Showman ... Can you hear him calling just around the bend. Who? Frosty the Showman ... and now for the show ..."*

Everybody on the radio had their own jingle. The news was a lot more dramatic, particularly on the Top-40 type radio like KIOA was. This is what a news intro sounded like back then.

 *News - Latitude 36 degrees, 50 minutes north; Longitude 3 degrees, zero minutes east; reading (fog horn sound) Algiers (ticker-tape and beeping sounds) from every point on earth news is spinned with electronic accuracy; News - Latitude 41 degrees, 32 minutes north; Longitude 93 degrees, 32 minutes west; the KIOA news center in Des Moines (ticker-tape and beeping sounds)*

and on the half-hour:

 *News - Latitude 52 degrees, 30 minutes north; Longitude 13 degrees, 25 minutes east; reading (fog horn sound) ... KIOA presents headline news*

on the half-hour, a wrap-up of developments around the world and across the nation, news that will not wait.

One of the big reasons KIOA did so well was great promotions. One of the promotions back in the 1950's was hiding gold bricks around town as shown here. When you turned them in you got prizes. This was number 80; I don't know what the prize was. They were bricks glazed gold and with a gold sticker on the front. The two big local stations in that era would have been KRNT and KIOA. KIOA was more for younger people, KRNT had the big news department and, of course, the CBS network. WHO was more reaching out into the state, not as big of a local factor back in the 1950's and 1960's as some of the other stations. Now WHO has pulled it in more and they are doing very well with the Des Moines audience. But, WHO is a 50,000-watt clear channel station. So they were trying to reach way out. From an advertising standpoint now it is more lucrative to concentrate on Des Moines so it is more locally oriented, but they still reach out.


Let's look at the personalities. In the early days of radio it was all comedy, drama, news, that type of entertainment. Back in about the 1940's the disc jockey came along. The first one anybody remembers here in Des Moines is Don Bell brought in from Ohio, Columbus I believe.

DON BELL


(Photo from website)

They say he had been a host for a Quiz Kid Show, but I haven't verified that. Also, and this does seem to make sense, they say he wrote the Roto-Rooter jingle, and that company is from Des Moines. Don also had a singing jingle for his show, which I'll play. This will be very familiar if you listened back then.




 *(music and singing) Don Bell, Don Bell has a happy show for you with Handy Sam he's going to share his mike and give you all the songs you love*

Don had a sidekick he actually did the dialect for, Sam, or Handy Sam as is said in the song. That wouldn't really go over very well nowadays, but Sam was a black man. A lot of people, black and white thought Sam was a real person and did not realize it was just Don. Here's Don and Sam giving the weather.

 *Don - Scattered showers, clearing and colder tomorrow, the high today near 60, low tonight in the mid 30's. Sam-45 right now, why are you putting those ear plugs in? Don-Well you know I'm dieting Sam, trying to lose weight and this guy always makes me so hungry I'm not going to*

listen to him. Sam-Well everybody else better listen to him, it's rude to turn your head away.

Just briefly let's look at Walt Reno. Walt died about a year-and-a-half ago. He was really big in radio and TV here. This picture is of Walt in 1988. He died very unexpectedly after surgery. He did fine from the surgery but got a blood clot that killed him later at home. His family has been very helpful and we have quite a tribute to him on the site. This photo is of a young Walt by a projector at the TV station back in the 1950's. Just a tiny bit of Walt Reno here from KSO in 1971.

 *Right on, and KSO rocks it. Good Morning, it's 7:05 on the Walt Reno program.*

Regarding Cowboy Whitey, I think Walt was Cowboy Whitey. I can't think of what cartoon character he was, but he did the voice for one that is on now on TV. His son is very creative and writing a lot of cartoons on TV. He was very creative and worked up until the day he died. I believe he was 76 when he died. He went to Las Vegas from Des Moines. We show some of the ads ran for Walt when he was here. One thing on the website, if you get a chance to see it, is a memorial montage played at his funeral with pictures of Walt and his life. This picture might have been Cowboy Whitey. There are some from TV, a young shot and older shot. He and Dick Vance, who was Program Director of KSO for many years, were very good friends. They swam together, both competing in swimming matches. Dick was very touched when Walt died and left a very nice memorial on the site to him.

I'll start wrapping up here. I could easily go on for six hours. Doug MacKinnon is still around, living in Beaverdale. Don, Doug's brother became one of the most famous DJ's in the entire country. He went on to the West Coast and was tragically killed in an auto accident in the 1960's. Doug was actually in the business first, and Don would go down to the radio station and play with the equipment when Doug was an engineer. Doug would work on it and Don would play with it and he learned to shoot video that way. I called Doug one time while he was working at Braniff Airlines. He said Don got a job on radio at KWDM. But, he got fired because Don liked to fool around and say things like instead of correctly pronouncing cuisine he would say kwe-zee-nee, etc. and the owners of KWDM didn't like that. That was part of his personality. He went with KIOA when they went with the Rock 'N Roll Top-40 format in 1957. He went to Omaha, then right to the West Coast and became very, very big. Doug, his brother remained here, leaving a couple times for other markets. Doug is probably the funniest guy in the world as far as I'm concerned. I fill in for Dic Youngs on the original Saturday Night Oldies Show once in a while and back a couple of years ago when Dic was very ill I carried the show for several months, with guests. One

night with Doug MacKinnon and his really funny, crazy carrying on is on the website. Doug has been a big contributor to the website, giving us several items.

Briefly, let's look at the TV stations. The reason Felix the Cat goes back and forth on the screen here is because in the 1920's when they were experimenting with television, they used a picture of Felix the Cat to put on the original TV cameras so I thought it was appropriate. We've got some WHO-TV pictures with a section of Floppy with some audio, and there is more to come on that. The WHO "Who We Are" jingle. A picture here is of the last night at 1100 Walnut, when they moved to the new studios after they shut the set down after the news. We've got KCCI, originally KRNT-TV and this from the 1960 presidential election news staff. Russ Van Dyke, when he had hair, red hair. Russ had a birthmark, and all of those years he was on TV they kept a camera angle so you didn't see it. On the clear glass weather map he put the temperatures on, it looked like he was left-handed, but he wasn't. The map was reversed, he was seeing it the right way on the other side of the map and they reversed the TV picture. I think the Iowa State Historical Society has the map. A little bit from WOI-TV, is the 1985 news team. A classic is that WOI-TV was originally on channel four in 1949. This is the test pattern for channel four. Here is a "Magic Window" photo and an ad for George Wiley from 1985. They didn't used to come on the air until 6:00 p.m. Another interesting thing in the TV section is the cable rates from the early 1970's; for \$8.00 monthly. There is an article about why there isn't a channel one on your TV. Originally there was; the frequency was very low and susceptible to interference. As the frequencies get higher, you don't get as much of what they call 'skip' or interference from other areas. Certain times of the year stations interfered with each other a lot. So, they did away with it. The HAM radio operators got part of it; what is now the six-meter band; and they use it for police and public safety.

About call letter meanings and naming stations. There is a link near the bottom, with some call letter origins, one of the history sites. The History of American Broadcasting and Three-Letter Roll Call webpages have some of that history. In Des Moines, KRNT was for Register and Tribune; KSO used the slogan Keep Serving Others; KIOA was for Iowa; KWDM was Keep Watching/With Des Moines; KWKY was 'Quickie'; there are various opinions about WHO. There is one about WHO that seems to stand up though. It was hard to tell what station you had when you tuned in the radio dial during the early days. Radio dials did not look they do today, some went from zero to 100, others had the frequency on it, some had wavelengths, some had nothing but you put a mark by your favorite station. So people would say "Who is it?" WHO had a slogan of "Who is it? WHO" so that is the one that seems to stand up. Some say it stands for "With Hands Only" because Palmer Chiropractic owned the station; but they didn't

own it when it went on the air, Bankers Life did, so that doesn't hold up. They may have used "With Hands Only" after they bought the station because it works. I think Palmer bought it from Bankers Life in about 1935, and owned it until not too many years ago when a very large company, Clear Channel Communications bought it.

Stations may choose their own call letters within guidelines and subject to availability, but frequencies work differently for AM and FM. For AM, there are no new AM stations now, they had to have an engineer find a frequency that wouldn't cause interference to others and make application to the FCC for that frequency. There were several, such as 940 was available before KIOA went on the air. KCBC considered it, but decided not to for dial position. Also, they wanted to squeeze more stations in so a lot of the stations had to go to directional-type signals where it wasn't a round pattern around a city, but they had to go certain directions to protect other stations and not interfere with them. Some stations going on the air since the 1940's are directional, in fact all the Des Moines stations are after that time. Some of the smaller stations had to go off the air after sundown. Des Moines never had a daytime station like that, but Ames and Newton did. After World War II when many stations came on the air they ran out of frequencies that would work and found that stations go further at night. They could squeeze a few more stations in by letting them only operate during the daytime. A lot of them were the smaller towns; although I worked in Indianapolis and there were five day-timers out of nine AM stations. One of the most renowned ones here in Iowa is KWMT in Fort Dodge on 540. The lower the frequency, the better range the station has. It takes one-fifth the amount of power at 540 to go the same distance as twice the frequency. So at 5,000 watts KWMT covers six states, unbelievable. They are on what is called a Canadian Clear Channel. Canada has clear channels like we do here. WHO is a clear channel in our country. KWMT could not operate in the nighttime. In more recent years they have eased up a bit on that and they run at very low power during the night so they are on at night. For clear channel stations, they tried to do one per state, but in some of the major metro areas they had more. Right now, sad to say, there really is no such thing as a clear channel anymore. Even the clear channels they had, like WHO, they have allowed stations like in Florida and Arizona to go on the air with directional antennas aimed away from Des Moines so it is called clear channel and is as clear as they come, but they really don't exist anymore. It is sad, but they are able to put more stations on the air that way.

There was a "Fairness Doctrine" followed up until the 1980's that made it difficult to get very controversial. With anything put on, you had to run something else of the opposite, which made it cumbersome. Now that there are more stations and outlets, with cable, etc. they did away with it. So you can have somebody like Rush

Limbaugh who is one way and somebody else another way, but they don't have to run another program for the same amount of time that goes the other way. So, it became a lot more controversial. Even back in the days of the "Fairness Doctrine" there was a little controversy on talk radio. We had Russ Levine here in town. Russ was anything but uncontroversial. Bill Riley had a companionship type of call-in program, but it was not controversial with talk of birthdays, etc. One of the first things I did in radio was filling in a couple of times running the equipment for Russ Levine for his talk show on KIOA back in 1962. The other thing I was doing at that time was on station KNDR-FM which came on the air when the second-wave hit. It was a classical music station that ran some jazz at night. Their transmitter was located with KDMI on the East Side. KDMI signed off at 11:00 p.m. and they signed off at 1:00 a.m. so I drove out there every night and sat at the transmitter and baby-sat and read meters for two hours. That was my first taste of radio.

George Davison is working on a book for WHO's 80th Anniversary in April. Professor Jeffrey L. Stein in the Communications Arts Department of Wartburg College is writing a book about top-40 radio in Iowa, and he has interviewed several people in town, including Peter McLane. His book is due out fairly soon. I don't know if the rest of the website will ever be in book form, but it is a good idea. We were afraid much of this would get away from us, so we did this to preserve what we can. I have a very large plastic container full of materials gathered for this website and have enjoyed sharing it with you.

OR 100 YEARS AGO IN DES MOINES OR

THE DES MOINES DAILY NEWS

The Only Des Moines Newspaper Having Staff War Correspondents

2/1/1904

W. B. KEFFER BREAKS A RIB

W. B. Keffer, secretary of the gas company, and one of the city park commissioners, fell Sunday and broke one of his ribs on the left side. He was en route to Waveland park to look after the elk. He stepped in a gutter and slipped on the ice, and in falling his side struck a hard bank of earth. He did not realize the severity of the injury until this morning, when he called Dr. E. D. Riley. Mr. Keffer says he hopes to be able to get to his office in a few days.

2/2/1904

SCHOOL TEACHER ALLEGED TO HAVE ATTEMPTED SWINDLE

J. H. Campbell, secretary of the People's Fraternal Reserve Insurance company of this city, stated today that Warren T. Coolidge, who is alleged to be promoting a gigantic insurance swindle, had a policy of \$2,000 in the local company. Coolidge lived at Ontario, where he was engaged in