Towers On The Prairie -

The Music and News Era

Carl Mann



The History of Omaha Radio--An Inside Look at the Evolution of Broadcasting

Volume TWO 1945 - 1979

These were the FUN years of radio. Omaha is centric as it's the very place where Music and News radio was born. It was a game-changer, turning radio stations from purveyors of network shows into personal companions. The colorfully-told story continues by following competing stations seeking their niches ranging from country and progressive rock to news-talk and soul. Along the way, you'll meet the creative pioneers tackling the challenges of changing technology, television, the new FM band, increasing regulations, shifting economic conditions, and listener tastes. The misfortunes are told as well, such as a stunning fall from a wealthy radio empire in the most severe FCC punishment in radio history. Take this journey and learn in plain language how DJs, jingles, and top tunes reinvented radio into what it is today..



The research into detail of every aspect is amazing...clearly presenting the facts in a sensitive and professional manner

--Deane Johnson, former PD KOIL and KOMA.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carl Mann's career in broadcasting started in engineering with an FCC First-Class Radiophone License then entering announcing and rock DJ work that included stints at KOMA Oklahoma City and KOIL in his hometown of Omaha. Carl also worked in radio and television news at Omaha's WOW Radio and at KPTM Fox 42 television. His credits include Music Director and Operations Manager at KOIL and Program Director at KCRG and KQCR in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE – THE POST WAR YEARS

FEDERAL REGULATIONS TIGHTEN FURTHER	1
THE BOOM YEARS BEGIN	2
WOW 590 Omaha	2
KOWH 660 Omaha	7
KFAB 780 Lincoln	12
KOIL 1290 Omaha	20
KBON 1490 Omaha	24
KSWI 1560 Council Bluffs	28
FM- A NEW BROADCASTING BAND	31
KOAD 92.5, moved to 92.9, Omaha	32
KSWI FM 107.9, 96.1, KFMX, Council Bluffs	35
KFAB 97.9 Lincoln	36
KBON FM 98.7 Omaha	37
THE FM EXODUS	38
THE ENTRY OF TELEVISION	39
RADIO PERSONALITIES ARE THRUST INTO TELEVISION	42
SIDEBARS AND FOOTNOTES	45
THE STANDINGS, 1949	45
KOIL's 50-THOUSAND WATT PLAN	45
JOHNNY CARSON AND MERRILL WORKHOVEN	46
FM PIONEERING IN OMAHA	46
THE FREMONT STATIONS	46
KORN 1370 (later KLIN 1400 Lincoln) KORN, KHUB 1340	46
CHAPTER TWO - NETWORKS OUT, DJ's IN	
THE GOLDEN AGE FADES	49
THE TELEVISION BOOM	50
RADIO NETWORKS FADE TO LOCAL PROGRAMMING	52
THE DAWNING OF DJ'S	53
OMAHA'S RADIO DIAL 1950s	54
590 WOW OMAHA	54
660 KOWH OMAHA	59
1110 KFAB OMAHA	75
1290 KOIL OMAHA	80
1420 KOOO OMAHA	90
1490 KBON OMAHA	93
1560 KSWI COUNCIL BLUFFS	98

SIDEBARS and FOOTNOTES--

	THE TODD STORZ "WAITRESS AND JUKEBOX" MYTH	100
	HOW THE LABEL "TOP 40" WAS BORN	100
	THE STORZ STATIONS EMPIRE	101
	THE OTHER PIONEER- GORDON MCLENDON	102
	FROM TUBES TO TRANSISTORS	103
	TRANSMITTER OPERATIONS GO REMOTE CONTROL	104
	THE OVERNIGHT SHIFT	105
	EDUCATIONAL STATIONS RETURN	106
	ROCK AND ROLL ROOTS IN OMAHA	108
	MUSIC PLAYLISTS 1952	109
CF	HAPTER THREE - MUSIC AND NEWS	
	THE NETWORKS TURN TO NEWS AND FEATURES	111
	590 WOW Omaha- STAYS OLD-SCHOOL	113
	660 KMEO, KOWH, KOZN- AFTER THE HEADY TOP 40 YEARS	116
	1110 KFAB- ESTABLISHES A FIRM FOOTING	120
	1290 KOIL- THE GLORY YEARS	123
	1420 KOOO- MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE RANCH	139
	1490 KBON- TALK RADIO COMES TO OMAHA	141
	1560 KSWI, KRCB- STRUGGLES ON	146
	FM RETURNS- AND SOON GOES STEREO	149
	94.3, later 94.1 KQAL, KOWH FM Omaha	151
	96.1 KCOM, KOIL FM, KICN, return to KOIL FM Omaha	155
	99.9 KFAB FM Omaha	157
	92.3 WOW FM Omaha	159
	98.7 KSWI FM Council Bluffs- Construction Permit Only	159
	98.5 KRCB FM Council Bluffs	159
	101.7 KGBI Omaha- Grace Bible Institute	160
	SIDEBARS and FOOTNOTES	
	THE PAYOLA SCANDAL	161
	KOIL'S LEGENDARY PLAYERS OF THE 1960s	162
	PERSONALITY SHOW PREP	163
	THE STEVE BROWN LEGACY	164
	THE TRANSMITTER OPERATOR	165
	SWANCO BROADCASTING AND THE SWANSON FAMILY	168
	THE CROWN POINT TOWER FARM	169

CHAPTER FOUR - FM CLAWS ITS WAY UP

THE 1970S— A FAST-MOVING DECADE	171
1290 KOIL- GOES DARK	172
590 WOW- OVERTAKES AN EMBATTLED KOIL	188
1110 KFAB- BECOMES THE HERITAGE LEADER	194
THE SMALLER STATIONS STRUGGLE	198
660 KOZN, KOWH, KCRO- FROM COUNTRY TO CHRISTIAN	198
1420 KOOO, KESY- ANATOMY OF A NOSEDIVE	201
1490 KBON, KLNG, KYNN- NEWSTALK SELLS OUT TO COUNTRY	204
1560 KRCB, KQXV, KLNG- FLAILING AROUND FOR A NICHE	209
TOP 40 FRAGMENTS AS FM STRUGGLES UPWARD	214
91.5 KIOS- OMAHA'S FIRST NON-COMM EDUCATIONAL FM	215
92.3 WOW FM, KFMX, KEZO- A FAILED FM RUN AT TOP 40	217
94.1 KOWH FM, KYNN FM- FROM BLACK TO REDNECK	220
96.1 KOIL FM, KEFM- BEAUTIFUL MUSIC FADES OUT	224
98.5 KRCB FM, KQKQ- PROGRESSIVE ROCK FINDS A NICHE	227
99.9 KFAB FM, KGOR- AUTOMATED TOP 40 MAKES INROADS	229
100.7 KGBI- STRONG SUPPORT FOR CHRISTIAN RADIO	230
NEW FMs FILL THE DIAL	231
90.7 KVNO- University of Nebraska Omaha- FINE ARTS	231
91.9 KDCV- Blair- Dana College- A LOW POWER CLASS D STATION	233
104.5 KOOO FM, KESY- FROM TWANG TO STRINGS	233
CIDED ADO LEGOTRIOTES	
SIDEBARS and FOOTNOTES	
WHO TURNED BURDEN IN TO THE FCC?	236
THE 1970s LEGENDS OF KOIL-	
PAYOLA- DID IT EVER GO AWAY?	240
1975 OMAHA RADIO BLIZZARD AND TORNADO COVERAGE	241
FOUR CHANNELS FM—QUADROPHONIC STEREO	244
1000 KOTD- THE PLATTSMOUTH STATION	245
1340 KHUB- THE FREMONT STATION- PART TWO	246
105.5 KHUB FM- FREMONT'S NEW FM STATION	247
THE LUSTER FADES	248
ABBREVIATIONS GUIDE AND GLOSSARY	250
INDEX	252