

IMAGES ACROSS THE PRAIRIE:

THE BIRTH OF WKY-TV

By

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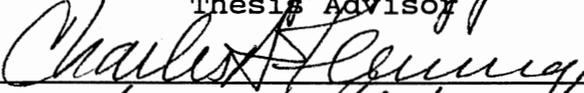
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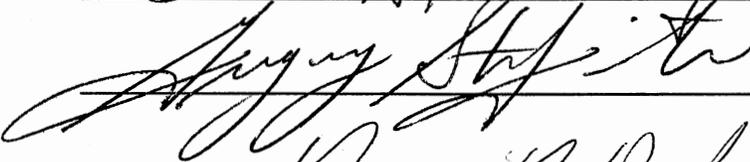
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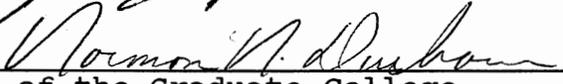
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this thesis is to chronicle the events leading to the creation of WKY Television in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Officially, WKY-TV was licensed in April 1948 and began regular programming on June 6, 1949.¹ However, the events that led to the creation of the station began with the formation of its parent organization, the Oklahoma Publishing Company (OPUBCO).

If the Oklahoma Publishing Company was responsible for the creation of WKY Television, then Edward King (E. K.) Gaylord was responsible for OPUBCO. Mr. Gaylord was chief officer of OPUBCO from 1903 until his death in 1974.² His influence on OPUBCO and the television station is examined.

The objectives of this thesis include:

- 1) Examination of the effect of Edward King Gaylord on OPUBCO operations before WKY-TV;
- 2) Examination of the effect of E. K. Gaylord on WKY-TV; and
- 3) Creation of a secondary resource of information.

WKY Television was the first television station on the air in Oklahoma, and was among the 108 stations authorized before the FCC freeze in 1948. In addition, WKY-TV was one of the first stations in the state and in the country with color programming, weather radar, remote microwave broadcasting, and stereo sound for television.³ The history of the station, along with other OPUBCO operations, serves as a secondary resource for the investigation of: early U.S. television stations, multi-media communication organizations, broadcasting in Oklahoma, newspapers in Oklahoma, and related fields.

Methodology and Limitations

The thesis is a narrative of selected events in the history of WKY Television. Events were selected based on individual impact on the creation of the station and subsequent operation of WKY-TV. Primarily, newspaper articles in OPUBCO publications (Daily Oklahoman and Oklahoma Times) were consulted, along with speeches by Mr. Gaylord and station material. Selected Federal Communications Commission (FCC) public announcements, magazine articles, original manuscripts, audio-visual works, recorded interviews, and limited personal interviews were used. In addition, newspapers published in Oklahoma and areas bordering the state in Texas and Arkansas were consulted, however the selection of papers published during the scope of this study and available were very limited. In many cases,

articles published in non-OPUBCO newspapers were Associated Press wire copy originated by the Daily Oklahoman. Lastly, general reference books on the history of mass communication were consulted for background information.

All studies have limitations. Personal interviews were restricted due to time and financial resources. Other resources such as personal journals, government records, and information depositories were not consulted due to time and financial limitations.

Thesis Outline

The scope of this thesis ranges from the arrival of Mr. Edward King Gaylord in Oklahoma Territory in 1903⁴ to the present time. Oklahoma Publishing Company activities were divided into three areas: newspapers, WKY Radio, and WKY Television. OPUBCO newspaper activities were examined between 1903 and the early 1930s. WKY Radio's history was chronicled between the creation of experimental radio station 5XT in 1920⁵ and the station in 1948. This included the purchase of WKY Radio by OPUBCO in 1928.⁶ WKY Television activities were studied between 1939 and the present (1990). This included early demonstrations of television by OPUBCO in 1939⁷ and 1944⁸, with special emphasis on events dealing with WKY-TV between 1948 and 1949.

Endnotes

¹"Station History, n.d." TMs [photocopy], p. 1, KFOR-TV, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

²"KTVY (WKY) Celebrates 40th Birthday," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 11 June 1989, 17.

³"Station History," 1.

⁴Quotations, (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Publishing Company, 1973), 18.

⁵"How WKY Grew to Be Leading State Station," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E18.

⁶Ibid.

⁷"Television Apparatus Installed For First Shows Today," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 13 November 1939, 15.

⁸"Television Caravan Ready," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 10 November 1944, 1.

CHAPTER II

BEGINNING OF AN EMPIRE

Newspapers and OPUBCO

To understand the birth of WKY-TV, one must first examine the history of the Oklahoma Publishing Company and its founder, Edward King Gaylord. WKY Television is simply one of the many facets of an empire that began years before the word "television" was in popular use.

In 1902, Mr. Gaylord was employed as the business manager at his brother's morning newspaper in St. Joseph, Missouri, the St. Joseph Gazette.¹ Edward and his older brother, Lewis, had been involved in newspapers in Colorado before working together at the Gazette. However, E. K. Gaylord was not satisfied. At the age of twenty-nine, he wanted to be his own boss.²

By 1903, E. K. Gaylord was established in Oklahoma City.³ How he came to Oklahoma Territory is disputed. According to Mr. Gaylord, he was in St. Louis for a few days rest around Christmas in 1902 and read an interview in the St. Louis Republic with Chicago Mayor Carter Harrison.⁴ Mr. Harrison had been in Texas and had traveled through Oklahoma Territory. Mr. Harrison remarked that if he were a young man, he would go there (Oklahoma Territory) to

start his career.⁵ Later that night, Mr. Gaylord went to the theater and sat next to a traveling man. The traveling man's route included Oklahoma Territory.⁶ In the opinion of this individual, Oklahoma City was far bigger and better than Guthrie. "It had more railroads, and had a live bunch of young men in business who were wide-awake and progressive."⁷ The next day, E. K. Gaylord made arrangements to leave for Oklahoma City.⁸

Walter Harrison, long-time associate of both Gaylord brothers, stated the events leading to Edward's move to Oklahoma occurred differently.⁹ According to Harrison, Gaylord had gone to St. Louis one weekend to rest, and lounging in the Union Station he spotted a great publisher, Victor Lawson. Lawson was owner and editor of the highly successful penny newspaper, the Chicago Daily News. According to Harrison, Mr. Lawson was the admiration of his generation of newspaper men. Young Gaylord asked Lawson where he would go to get a start in the newspaper business if he had a small amount of cash to invest, and Lawson said "Oklahoma City - Period." Mr. Gaylord made arrangements to leave for Oklahoma City the next week.¹⁰

E. K. Gaylord arrived in Oklahoma City in early January 1903.¹¹ There were two newspapers published in Oklahoma City at the time: the Times-Journal, an evening paper, and the Daily Oklahoman, a morning paper.¹² Before going to either newspaper, he went into a bank and interviewed the cashier. Gaylord told the cashier he wanted to buy an

interest in a paper and asked which one would be better. The cashier said, "it wouldn't make a damn bit of difference which one he bought, for neither one was worth a whoop in hell."¹³

Edward went first to the offices of the Times-Journal. He thought that after working on a morning newspaper for so long (St. Joseph Gazette), he would rather work on an evening paper. However, the owner was not interested in selling an interest or employing a business manager.¹⁴

Mr. Gaylord then went to the morning Daily Oklahoman.¹⁵ His first impressions were very strong. "The offices were the dirtiest plant I ever saw. Cobwebs hung down from the ceiling and dirt was on the floor." Edward recalled years later, "It was the most magnificent opportunity I had ever seen because there was so much room for improvement."¹⁶

The Daily Oklahoman was owned by Roy Stafford. According to Gaylord, Mr. Stafford was very agreeable and admitted he was in debt. He was interested in selling an interest in the paper and gaining a business manager with experience on larger newspapers. They exchanged business references and agreed to meet together after two weeks.^{17,18}

After the two weeks had expired, Roy Stafford and E. K. Gaylord met and agreed to incorporate the Oklahoma Publishing Company (OPUBCO).¹⁹ OPUBCO would later purchase the Daily Oklahoman. To accomplish this, Gaylord sent for

two young men from St. Joseph, Missouri: Ray M. Dickinson and Roy McClintock.²⁰ The three men had known each other in Colorado prior to working on the St. Joseph Gazette.²¹ Contributing \$5,000 each, they bought 45% of Stafford's Daily Oklahoman. Stafford became president and editor, Gaylord was secretary, treasurer, and business manager, Ray Dickinson became advertising manager, and Roy McClintock, managing editor.²²

When OPUBCO was formed, the Daily Oklahoman's plant consisted of a flat bed press that produced an eight page paper at about 800 copies an hour.²³ The entire floor space was 25 feet by 60 feet.²⁴ A large percentage of floor space was occupied by a job press, with the newspaper staff sharing the remaining room.²⁵ The staff for the newspaper and job shop numbered less than 20.²⁶ The newspaper had no telegraph news wire service, but received a pony service or news dispatches at intervals from the Western Union office.²⁷

Mr. Gaylord began his duties as business manager on January 27, 1903.^{28,29} His first actions were to update and renovate the operation.³⁰ After cleaning the plant as thoroughly as possible, he sold the job printing equipment to gain more room and rented office space for himself in the adjoining building. Gaylord arranged for a full night news wire service with a telegraph operator and made a contract for a new building with two stories and a basement at the corner of California and Robinson. He also purchased

more linotypes and a perfecting press with a color deck. The entire operation moved into the new building in October 1903.³¹

A few weeks after E. K. Gaylord's arrival, Oklahoma City entertained a cattleman's convention. A company of cavalry soldiers from Ft. Sill headed a parade through the business district. During the parade, a drunken bystander shot and killed a soldier. In the words of Mr. Gaylord, it was "a murder that disgraced the city."³² Gaylord stayed at the plant throughout the night to see that every angle of the story was printed.³³ No mention of the murder appeared in the next morning's edition.³⁴ He went to the office and was told Mr. Stafford had killed the article. The president of the Chamber of Commerce had asked Stafford not to publish the story as it would hurt the town. Gaylord said the story would be in the Guthrie, Kansas City, and Dallas papers and everyone in the town would wonder why the Daily Oklahoman had suppressed it.³⁵ In response, Mr. Gaylord decided to publish an extra edition of the Daily Oklahoman, the first extra edition of any newspaper in Oklahoma.^{36,37}

Shortly after OPUBCO had moved into its new building at California and Robinson, Gaylord arrived at the office early as was usual. A member of the staff rushed out to warn him that the assistant chief of police was there with a gun in his hand threatening to kill somebody.³⁸ That morning, a story in the paper stated the assistant chief of

police was the payoff man and collected money from all of the gamblers.³⁹ According to one of Mr. Gaylord's speeches, he entered the reporter's room, and as he entered the police officer demanded to know if Gaylord had written the story. Mr. Gaylord said he wasn't a reporter and didn't write the story, but as manager of the newspaper, he was responsible for it. He told the officer to take off the uniform before he came around with a gun in his hand. According to Mr. Gaylord, "The assistant chief wilted. He fumbled trying to get his gun back in the holster and slunk out of the room."⁴⁰ They never heard from him after that.⁴¹

When Gaylord took over as business manager, tension was increasing between Russia and Japan. In February 1904, indications were that war could result on Sunday.⁴² All news plants in the Southwest were dark on Sunday.⁴³ Mr. Gaylord was very concerned that war might occur and he would not have a paper out until Tuesday morning.⁴⁴ Gaylord had put the company into debt for new linotypes and new presses, plus a daily wire service. He arranged for a Sunday wire with the Associated Press, and a skeleton crew was assembled. A Sunday edition of the Daily Oklahoman was published with a full account of the hostilities between Russia and Japan.^{45,46}

Mr. Gaylord decided to print as many copies as possible, and sent boys with 2,500 copies to Wichita and 1,500 copies to Guthrie. He sent copies to Kansas City and Dal-

las, and doubled or tripled the regular orders of all of their news dealers throughout Oklahoma without asking permission. Papers were sold out everywhere as the Daily Oklahoman had made a sensational scoop which brought new subscribers from all over the state.⁴⁷

A few years after the event Mr. Gaylord met Victor Murdock, then publisher of the Wichita Eagle. Mr. Murdock said he was walking from his home down to his office and he found boys all over the street yelling "Daily Oklahoman, Daily Oklahoman." At the time, he couldn't understand why boys were selling an Oklahoma City newspaper in Wichita.⁴⁸

In 1906, Scripps Howard established the Oklahoma News, an evening paper in Oklahoma City.⁴⁹ In Gaylord's opinion, it competed directly with the Times-Journal without too much effect on the Daily Oklahoman.⁵⁰

According to Mr. Gaylord, the Daily Oklahoman's chief competitor was the Guthrie morning paper, the Oklahoma State Capitol.⁵¹ The Guthrie paper claimed a circulation of 21,000, while the Daily Oklahoman had a circulation at the time of about 7,000 or 8,000 readers. An investigation by Mr. Gaylord and OPUBCO determined the State Capitol's circulation could not be over 6,000 copies.^{52,53}

E. K. Gaylord wrote a long letter to Printer's Ink and presented figures indicating the Guthrie paper was fraudulent in claiming 21,000 circulation. Printer's Ink published the letter covering three or four pages.⁵⁴ Mr. Gaylord said, "It was libelous as could be if not true."⁵⁵

Shortly after the letter was published, Mr. Wells, a representative from the Darcy Advertising Agency in St. Louis was sent to look at the Daily Oklahoman's books and observe the press run. Mr. Gaylord told him he was welcome to see anything, talk with any carriers or employees, and have free access to any information. Mr. Wells stayed three or four days and gave the Daily Oklahoman a clean bill of health.^{56,57}

The representative from the Darcy Agency then went to Guthrie and was refused a chance to confirm their circulation. According to the proprietor, he was not going to let a little "one-horse" agency in St. Louis make an examination. Mr. Wells stayed and timed the State Capitol's press run through the plant's windows. He also counted the number of mail sacks and talked with their carrier boys. He was convinced they had no more than 6,000 circulation. Mr. Wells reported this to advertising agencies, advertisers, and Printer's Ink. Soon, many advertisers demanded refunds from the State Capitol. A year after the letter in Printer's Ink and the examination by the Darcy Agency, the paper folded.⁵⁸

In Mr. Gaylord's opinion, the exposure of fraudulent circulation claims of the Guthrie paper by OPUBCO was one of the factors which lead to the organization of the Audit Bureau of Circulation.⁵⁹ The Oklahoma Publishing Company was a charter member and E. K. Gaylord was elected as one

of four newspaper publishers on the Bureau's 38 member board of directors.⁶⁰

In October 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt closed all the banks in the country, and the Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce issued script to be used in lieu of money. Mr. Gaylord believed the banks would re-open. The Daily Oklahoman advertised annual subscriptions to the paper of \$2.95, and that checks would be accepted on any bank in Oklahoma. They received thousands of checks from across the state. Many people thought they would never receive their money from the banks, but at least would have a year's subscription to the paper. Gradually, restrictions were withdrawn, the checks were honored, and the Daily Oklahoman's circulation increased dramatically.⁶¹

In January 1909, the Oklahoma Publishing Company began construction of a new building at the corner of 4th and Broadway. Two weeks after construction began, the facility at California and Robinson was destroyed. At 11:00 A.M., there was a loud explosion of gas in the basement and a fire started immediately. The fire burned the floor of the copy room and all five linotypes fell into the basement.⁶² While the fire was still burning, Mr. Gaylord made arrangements to print eight pages of the Daily Oklahoman in the Times' plant.^{63,64} It was several weeks before the linotypes and other machinery were replaced. The new equipment was installed at 4th and Broadway, and the building was completed on October 1, 1909.⁶⁵ In an editorial after the

fire, Mr. Gaylord stated, "A newspaper does not consist of presses and machinery. That trained organization of men and boys is what makes the Daily Oklahoman, and they are unharmed and undaunted."⁶⁶

In 1910, two brothers began to print a free newspaper, the Free Pointer, in Oklahoma City. According to E. K. Gaylord, the new paper only injured the Times and the News. The Free Pointer derived all income from advertising and contained little news. Mr. Gaylord and OPUBCO decided to launch a free newspaper to compete with the Free Pointer called the Free Press.⁶⁷ Mr. Gaylord said, "It carried as much or more news as the Times or the News, and it was subscription free." After 10 or 11 months, the Free Pointer folded and was sold to the Times.⁶⁸ Although the Free Press was profitable by this time, OPUBCO suspended its publication.⁶⁹

The Oklahoma Publishing Company was also printing a weekly edition of the Daily Oklahoman called the Weekly Oklahoman. In 1911, this was converted to a farm magazine, re-named the Farmer-Stockman, and was published bi-weekly.⁷⁰

By 1915, the Times was losing money and suspended publication.⁷¹ The Oklahoma Publishing Company purchased the newspaper at a sheriff's sale for \$30,000. This was for the Times' circulation list of 10,000 subscribers; the other property was liquidated to pay other debts.⁷²

According to OPUBCO staff member Walter Harrison, "A staff

was selected from inside OPUBCO, and pressure was placed on the afternoon paper to bring it into parity in circulation and prestige with the parent Daily Oklahoman."⁷³ With the purchase of the Times' circulation list, OPUBCO produced an evening paper in addition to the morning Daily Oklahoman.

Roy Stafford continued to hold a majority of OPUBCO stock, however he experienced financial difficulty in the summer of 1918. According to Walter Harrison, Mr. Stafford was free with company resources and issued a number of personal IOU's.⁷⁴ When he could not meet all of his obligations with cash, it was necessary for him to sell some stock. Roy Stafford received over \$300,000 for his stock, and E. K. Gaylord was elected president, editor, and publisher of the Oklahoma Publishing Company.⁷⁵

Early in 1930, the railroad had eliminated many passenger trains, delaying or destroying OPUBCO's means of delivering newspapers throughout the state.⁷⁶ Mr. Gaylord said the circulation department was forced to purchase or lease trucks. This new business proved too great for the circulation department, so OPUBCO incorporated Mistletoe Express.⁷⁷

Also in the early 1930s, the Associated Press news service was developing a method to transmit photographs by telegraph (wire photos).⁷⁸ The Oklahoma Publishing Company was one of 14 charter members.⁷⁹ The Daily Oklahoman became the only Oklahoma newspaper with wire photos.⁸⁰

By the late 1920s and early 1930s, most of the country was experiencing the Great Depression. The Oklahoma Publishing Company owned two major newspapers, a farm magazine, and a trucking firm.⁸¹ The next acquisition was to be radio.

WKY Radio

The station that was to become known as WKY went on the air in 1920 as station 5XT. The station was owned and operated by two electricians: Dick Richards and Earl Hull. According to stories in the Daily Oklahoman, 5XT was the first station on the air West of the Mississippi River and the third station on the air in the United States.⁸²

The 20-watt transmitter, control room, and studio were all housed in a garage behind Richard's house in Westwood, an area south of Exchange Avenue in Oklahoma City. The transmitter employed a spark gap to generate the radio signal. All connections were exposed, and the transmitter's frequency was known to drift widely. The equipment broke often, and many times a broadcast was interrupted as Richards or Hull had to repair the transmitter before resuming the program.⁸³

The station operated one hour in the morning, one in the afternoon, and another hour in the evening.⁸⁴ All programs were local. Richards, Hull, or someone else interested in radio would broadcast from the transmitter site. Material broadcast would depend on the operator. Disk

records were broadcast using a hand cranked gramophone and the station owned one microphone.^{85,86}

Station 5XT was known as an experimental station, and it was against the law to sell broadcasting time or advertising.⁸⁷ Station owners were expected to operate their transmitters in addition to other jobs. Many sold receiving sets and other equipment for money, while others approached radio as a hobby.⁸⁸ By 1922, the federal government began to assign call letters to commercial stations. Experimental station 5XT became commercial station WKY.⁸⁹

All of the early programs originated in the studio, however during an experimental broadcast in 1922, Hull strung wires from the transmitter to the Oklahoma City First Christian Church. Alma Gluck, an opera star, was to give a concert. Without her knowledge or the knowledge of the audience at the church, she became the first notable person broadcast originally from an Oklahoma station.⁹⁰

Walter Harrison was employed at the Daily Oklahoman and was interested in radio.⁹¹ According to Harrison, Richards and Hull rarely had enough money to spend on the station. Although E. K. Gaylord had warned him not to invest any OPUBCO funds, Harrison would sometimes divert funds from the State Correspondent's cash account to purchase needed tubes and other parts.⁹²

In 1923, the owners of WKY Radio received some help from their Masonic brothers. Once the new Masonic Temple

building was completed, the studio and transmitter were moved to a top room.⁹³ Around 1925, Richards and Hull were in danger of losing their radio license. They solicited operating funds from radio receiver distributors in the Oklahoma City area. From late 1925 to 1928, WKY operated on funds from this group, headed by Harrison Smith.^{94,95} About the same time radio distributors agreed to support WKY Radio, the station increased its transmitting power to 250 watts.⁹⁶ The power increase expanded WKY's listening audience.

The studio and transmitter were relocated in 1926. The studio was placed in the basement of the Huckins Hotel. As a result of the move, the station had easy access to the hotel's banquet halls and dance floors. WKY became a popular source of orchestra dance music. The transmitter was moved to Stockyards City, an area in Oklahoma City.⁹⁷

Walter Harrison repeatedly urged Mr. Gaylord to purchase WKY Radio for the Oklahoma Publishing Company. According to Harrison, Mr. Gaylord believed radio still had problems and much money would be lost on a radio operation.⁹⁸ In Mr. Gaylord's words, "The station will lose money, because no one has receivers."⁹⁹

Throughout 1927, the radio receiver distributors repeated attempts to sell WKY Radio to OPUBCO and Mr. Gaylord.¹⁰⁰ Mr. Edgar Bell, also of OPUBCO, supported Walter Harrison's attempts to secure the station for the company.¹⁰¹ In July 1928, Harrison Smith called Walter Harri-

son and offered the station to OPUBCO for \$5,000. According to Mr. Smith, he was going to give the station to Scripps-Howard if the Oklahoma Publishing Company refused to buy.¹⁰² Scripps-Howard owned the Oklahoma News and competed directly with Mr. Gaylord and OPUBCO.¹⁰³

On July 28, Walter Harrison and Edgar Bell sent a telegram to E. K. Gaylord in London. According to the wire, natural gas had been discovered within the Oklahoma City city limits, and if OPUBCO didn't purchase WKY Radio for \$5,000 immediately, the station would be sold to Scripps-Howard.^{104,105} Mr. Gaylord agreed to purchase WKY Radio and wired Mr. Bell to prepare the paperwork immediately. According to Mr. Gaylord, he still believed a radio operation would lose money, however the discovery of oil in Oklahoma City would improve the economy so that OPUBCO would be able to afford any losses from a radio operation.¹⁰⁶ OPUBCO officially purchased WKY Radio on August 1.¹⁰⁷

The station went off the air on October 14 to prepare for a new studio at Plaza Court and a new 1000 watt transmitter on West 39th Street.¹⁰⁸ A search was made in OPUBCO for a new general manager.¹⁰⁹ The search of the editorial staff resulted in the appointment of Herbert C. Henderson. Due to personal problems, Henderson was fired before the new WKY officially opened.^{110,111}

Although the formal opening broadcast was scheduled for November 11, on November 4 Harrison and Bell broadcast

the defeat of Al Smith by Herbert Hoover.¹¹² Harrison and Bell managed to produce a program for the grand opening on November 11, and immediately began to search for a new general manager.¹¹³ They heard of an individual in Lincoln, Nebraska by the name of Gayle V. "Gloomy Gus" Grubb. In Lincoln, he managed a station and broadcast three or four programs a day with different character voices, all performed by "Gloomy Gus." Mr. Grubb was hired as general manager and remained with WKY Radio until 1945.¹¹⁴

After moving to the new studios in Plaza Court, WKY Radio became a NBC affiliate.¹¹⁵ The Oklahoma radio audience received network programs on December 21. On December 23, a permanent coast-to-coast network connected NBC affiliate stations from New York City to Los Angeles and San Francisco. Although two years old, NBC was still experimenting with programs. One program offered on December 21 was "Great Moments in History." Another program was simply titled "16 Singers."¹¹⁶

True to E. K. Gaylord's prediction, WKY Radio lost \$60,000 during its first year in operation.¹¹⁷ However, the station was earning a steady profit by its third year under OPUBCO. According to Walter Harrison, "During the lean years of the Great Depression, profits from the broadcast operation were healthy, while profits from other OPUBCO enterprises were scant."¹¹⁸

During a tornado in Bethany on November 19, 1930, the news department was on the scene with reports of the dam-

age. WKY sponsored a relief fund campaign for those involved in the disaster. This timely coverage was repeated during other major events across Oklahoma.¹¹⁹

On April 13, 1936, WKY Radio studios were located on the fifth floor of the Skirvin Towers hotel. Ballroom dance music was a favorite program source, and many live shows with audiences originated from the Skirvin Towers studios.¹²⁰

A new radio station was constructed in Oklahoma City in 1936. The Reverend Hale V. Davis of the Exchange Avenue church secured a permit for KF XR. After the station began full time operations, OPUBCO attempted to gain control of KF XR. The Federal Communications Commission refused to approve the deal. According to FCC law, a company cannot own and operate two radio stations in the same broadcasting area.¹²¹

Agriculture has always been an important part of Oklahoma's economy, and on August 8, 1944, WKY Radio inaugurated a farm department outside of the regular news department. Edd Lemons was chosen as department head. As a former state secretary of the Future Farmers of America (FFA), Lemons was known among state farmers and ranchers. The other half of the department was Sandy Saunders. Saunders was an ex-forman and alternate ranger for the United States Department of Agriculture forest service. Programming consisted of reports from the studio and in the field, interviews with FFA and 4-H members, discussions on farm financ-

ing and the problems of farm women, and other programs of special interest to farmers and ranchers. One project of the farm department was the Farm Youth Scholarship contest, awarding scholarships to Oklahoma A&M College to Oklahoma youth interested in agriculture and home economics.^{122,123}

In 1947, Kenneth Johnson arrived at WKY Radio with an idea for a program to highlight the accomplishments of the Black community. "Creed, Color and Co-operation" became one of the first radio programs specifically targeted to Black audiences.¹²⁴ The program received praise from many sources.¹²⁵ The National Conference of Christians and Jews cited it as an outstanding example of work in the race relations field¹²⁶, and Billboard magazine awarded the program second place in the nation as a public service program.¹²⁷

In June 1947, WKY Radio added Frequency Modulation (FM) broadcasts to the regular AM broadcast program. Many listeners were confused with FM broadcasts, and some did not realize FM programs could not be received on an AM receiver.¹²⁸

In response to the Woodward tornado of 1947, WKY Radio constructed a self-contained mobile AM-FM production studio and transmission truck.¹²⁹ Unveiled at the 1947 Oklahoma City State Fair, the 29 passenger bus was converted according to carefully detailed plans from the WKY engineering department. All equipment was shock-mounted, so that broadcasts could be made while the bus was in motion. In

addition to the transmitters and control equipment, the bus was outfitted with a sound studio large enough for nine people. Two turntables were equipped with recorders to produce wax transcriptions of programs to be broadcast later. In addition to the radio equipment, the cruiser had a Bell telephone transmitter, Bell highway telephone, gasoline electric generator, and a platform on top of the bus for unobstructed reporting. The mobile transmitter and studio was one of the first mobile productions units of its kind in the United States.¹³⁰

By 1948, E. K. Gaylord and OPUBCO had transformed WKY Radio from a make-shift experimental station in 1920 into a "leading Oklahoma station."¹³¹ WKY was recognized for outstanding public service programming in agriculture (separate farm department)¹³² and race relations ("Creed, Color and Co-operation").¹³³ The station owned one of the best equipped mobile AM-FM production studios in the industry¹³⁴, and broadcast programs over AM and FM frequencies across the state.¹³⁵ Initially a profit loss to OPUBCO¹³⁶, WKY Radio became a profitable member of the Oklahoma Publishing Company organization.¹³⁷ With enterprises in newspapers, magazines, and radio, OPUBCO was about to enter the last major communications medium available: television.

Endnotes

¹Hone, Hazel S. "Biographical Sketches: Edward King Gaylord, 1939" TMs, p. 1, E. K. Gaylord Vertical File, Oklahoma Historical Society Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

²Walter Munford Harrison, Out of My Waste Basket (Oklahoma City: Privately printed, 1949), 26.

³Ibid.

⁴E. K. Gaylord, speech delivered for Newcomen Society, March 1971, Oklahoma City, cLL 204.1, tape recording, Living Legends Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

⁵E. K. Gaylord, speech delivered for unknown organization, 1970, location unknown, cLL 171, tape recording, Living Legends Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

⁶E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

⁷Quotations (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Publishing Company, 1973), 18.

⁸E. K. Gaylord, unknown speech.

⁹Walter Munford Harrison, Me And My Big Mouth (Oklahoma City: Britton Printing Company, 1954), 26.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Harrison, Waste Basket, 26.

¹²"Newspapers And Radio, 1937" TMs, p. 3, Newspaper/Radio Vertical File, Oklahoma Historical Society Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

¹³E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

¹⁴E. K. Gaylord, unknown speech.

¹⁵E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

¹⁶Quotations, 2.

¹⁷E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

¹⁸In the meantime, E. K. had heard about a possibility in Ft. Worth. He made the trip, but didn't like Ft. Worth; it was too near Dallas. He thought Oklahoma City would eventually become a better town (Quotations, 3).

¹⁹E. K. Gaylord, unknown speech.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Harrison, Big Mouth, 52.

²²Harrison, Waste Basket, 26.

²³E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

²⁴E. K. Gaylord, unknown speech.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸E. K. Gaylord, unknown speech.

²⁹The charter for the Oklahoma Publishing Company was not issued from Guthrie until February 6, 1903 (Ibid).

³⁰Harrison, Waste Basket, 27.

³¹Ibid.

³²E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

³³Ibid.

³⁴E. K. Gaylord, unknown speech.

³⁵E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

³⁶E. K. Gaylord, unknown speech.

³⁷That morning, another murder occurred in the alley adjoining the newspaper's offices, and by noon, the staff had printed an extra with the story of two murders instead of one (E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech).

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹E. K. Gaylord, unknown speech.

⁴⁰It was fortunate he left the paper without incident. Unknown to the officer and Mr. Gaylord, the assistant chief was standing by an open doorway, and in the next room the foreman of the composing room was on one side and the foreman of the stair type room was on the other. Each had a steel bar twenty-three inches long and an inch square which was called a shooting stick in the composing room. If the assistant chief had raised his gun, he would have been killed (Ibid).

⁴¹E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

⁴²Harrison, Big Mouth, 56.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

⁴⁶Dispatches were received throughout the day. There was a story that Japan had attacked the Russian fleet. The telegraph editor made out a seven column head (headline) of the war and sent it to the composing room. Dispatches then began to come in that there was a great fire on the Baltimore docks. The editor then set up a one column head on the fire. Over the course of the day, more complete information was received about the fire than the Sino-Russian War. According to Mr. Gaylord, the Baltimore Fire story was the best handled fire story he ever saw, because the reporters gave the names and owners of every building that burned and the amount of insurance on them. When the Daily Oklahoman finally went to press, it had a four column head on the Baltimore fire and a three column head on the Sino-Russian War (E. K. Gaylord, unknown speech).

⁴⁷E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

⁴⁸E. K. Gaylord, unknown speech.

⁴⁹"Newspapers And Radio," 3.

⁵⁰E. K. Gaylord, unknown speech.

⁵¹E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Mr. Gaylord contacted a friend in the Post Office Department in Washington and obtained the weight of all Second Class mail sent through the Guthrie post office. There were fourteen publications posted weekly or monthly in Guthrie, and figures showed that if all the Second Class mail was for the State Capitol, it would not have over 6,000 or 7,000 circulation (Ibid).

⁵⁴E. K. Gaylord, unknown speech.

⁵⁵E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

⁵⁶E. K. Gaylord, unknown speech.

⁵⁷In fact, Mr. Wells figured the circulation of the Daily Oklahoman was six copies more than Mr. Gaylord had sworn to at the time (Ibid).

⁵⁸E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰E. K. Gaylord, unknown speech.

⁶¹E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

⁶²E. K. Gaylord, unknown speech.

⁶³Quotations, 2.

⁶⁴By 1908, the Times-Journal had been renamed the Times ("Newspapers And Radio, 3).

⁶⁵Harrison, Big Mouth, 59.

⁶⁶Quotations, 13.

⁶⁷E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

⁶⁸"Newspapers And Radio," 3.

⁶⁹E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

⁷⁰"Newspapers And Radio," 3.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

⁷³Harrison, Waste Basket, 28.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶For example, Lawton had received a morning and evening train, but as a substitute, one train left Oklahoma City at 10:00 A.M. This was too late for the Daily Oklahoman and too early for the Times (E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech).

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸In 1934, Mr. Gaylord was paged in a Dallas hotel by the New York manager of the Associated Press (AP). He was told AP could give Oklahoma City service on the continental wire through Kansas City. When asked the cost, E. K. was told the service would cost approximately \$50,000 including the telegraph operator and supplies. Mr. Gaylord immediately agreed (Quotations, 14).

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Some months later, the publisher of the Tulsa World asked Gaylord how he could afford to spend \$50,000 for wire photos. Mr. Gaylord replied that the question was how could he afford to do without them (E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech).

⁸¹Harrison, Big Mouth, 163.

⁸²"WKY Makes History With 25-Year Broadcasting Record: Local Station A State Pioneer," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E18.

⁸³"From Feeble, Makeshift Programs in 1920 to Latest Radio Operation Is WKY Story," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 7 November 1948, E3.

⁸⁴"Radio Development In Oklahoma, 1936" TMs, p. 1, Newspaper/Radio Vertical File, Oklahoma Historical Society Library, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

⁸⁵"WKY Makes History".

⁸⁶By 1930, radios occupied a respected place in the living room, much as television receivers do today. However, in the 1920s, radio receivers were cumbersome affairs. Wet batteries connected with bare wires occupied a shelf next to the actual receiver. The set was usually a clutter of tubes, knobs, and exposed connections, with a "morning glory" horn for a speaker. Generally, there was also a set of earphones in case the radio signal was too weak to drive the speaker. Many radio listeners could not afford battery powered sets, and relied on crystal sets to pick up neighboring stations (Harrison, Big Mouth, 161).

⁸⁷"Radio Development," 1.

- 88 "From Feeble Programs".
- 89 "Radio Development," 2.
- 90 Ibid.
- 91 Harrison, Big Mouth, 162.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 "From Feeble Programs".
- 94 Harrison, Big Mouth, 162.
- 95 Harrison Smith had the territory for Atwater Kent, maker of a popular compact radio receiver (Ibid).
- 96 "Radio Development," 2.
- 97 "How WKY Grew to Be Leading State Station," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E18.
- 98 Harrison, Big Mouth, 162.
- 99 E. K. Gaylord, unknown speech.
- 100 Harrison, Big Mouth, 162.
- 101 Ibid.
- 102 Ibid.
- 103 "Newspapers And Radio," 3.
- 104 Harrison, Big Mouth, 162.
- 105 The discovery of natural gas was important. An oil well that strikes natural gas usually strikes oil soon after.
- 106 "From Feeble Programs".
- 107 "How WKY Grew".
- 108 Ibid.
- 109 Harrison, Big Mouth, 163.
- 110 Ibid., 164.

¹¹¹According to Walter Harrison, Herbert Henderson was a meek and pious man, and could talk about music and the fine arts readily. Mr. Henderson was music and church editor at OPUBCO at the time. As the new General Manager, Henderson had been given two weeks to organize an outstanding opening broadcast. A week before the program, Henderson could not be contacted. A general search was organized. Henderson called Harrison, but Henderson's voice was somewhat fuzzy. Walter Harrison traced the call to the pastor's study of the First Lutheran Church. Harrison rushed to the church to discover Henderson locked in the study reeking of whiskey fumes. WKY Radio's first manager under OPUBCO was fired before the opening broadcast (Ibid).

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Ibid, 165.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵In 1926, the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) was formed in New York City. On September 16, an ad in the New York Times announced "The purpose of that company will be to provide the best programs available for broadcasting in the United States." The first program was on November 15, 1926, from the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City. In a few short years, the NBC Red and NBC Blue radio networks became the most powerful broadcasting networks in the country ("National Network Adds to City's Fun," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 7 November 1948, E6).

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷"State Promised Years Ago That 'WKY Will Be Ready'," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E21.

¹¹⁸Harrison, Big Mouth, 165.

¹¹⁹"How WKY Grew".

¹²⁰"From Feeble Programs".

¹²¹"Radio Development," 3.

¹²²"State Farms Get Attention From WKY Team," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 7 November 1948, E9.

¹²³During the typical year, the two members of the farm department traveled 42,000 miles, made over 300 personal appearances, scheduled approximately 150 remote broadcasts, and received 4,500 pieces of mail (Ibid).

¹²⁴"Negro Wins Radio Praise," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 7 November 1948, E20.

125 "Awards Won For Service Program," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 7 November 1948, E4.

126 "Negro Wins".

127 Ibid.

128 "FM to Return to WKY Radio," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 29 April 1949, 23.

129 "Broadcasting Station on Wheels," Radio & Television News, May 1949, 53.

130 "Mobile Studio Ranges State For Station WKY," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 7 November 1948, E23.

131 "How WKY Grew".

132 "Awards Won".

133 Ibid.

134 "Mobile Studio".

135 "FM to Return".

136 E. K. Gaylord, unknown speech.

137 Harrison, Big Mouth, 165.

CHAPTER III

WKY TELEVISION

Oklahoma Television Before WKY-TV

Oklahoman had a chance to see television in the state before WKY-TV first aired a test pattern on April 21, 1949. In fact, the Oklahoma Publishing Company was responsible for two specific introductions of Oklahoma to the possibilities of television programming.

Beginning on Monday, November 13, 1939, and lasting through the following Saturday, the Oklahoma Publishing Company sponsored Oklahoma City's first "Television Show."¹ The show demonstrated a television camera and receivers build by RCA.^{2,3} During a portion of the demonstrations, local WKY personalities performed on the stage of the Oklahoma City Municipal Auditorium.⁴ The audio was broadcast as normal over WKY Radio while the television signal was sent to receiving sets scattered throughout the auditorium.⁵

Shows were scheduled from 2:30PM to 5:30PM and from 8:00PM to 10:30PM each day.⁶ Most shows were free and open to the public⁷, with two notable exceptions. On Monday afternoon, the demonstration concentrated on the technical aspects of television. Engineers from the two major state

colleges (University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma A&M College), radio experts, and students were invited.⁸ The Monday night performance was restricted to civic and business leaders, and was by invitation only.^{9,10}

Over 50,000 spectators crowded into the Municipal Auditorium to watch the performances during the week through Friday, and almost the same number attended the two Saturday performances.¹¹ A number of those attending did not stay for a complete show; office workers and others would stay for a few minutes and leave.¹² However, most of those attending the evening shows stayed for the entire program.¹³

The program content offered during the week was varied. The performers included local and national talent.¹⁴ NBC contributed Don McNeill and Jack Baker ("Breakfast Club"), and singer Nancy Martin of the "Club Matinee" program.¹⁵ Youth groups were presented, and a number of department stores presented fashion shows featuring local talent.¹⁶

Television was also brought to Oklahoma during the war years. WKY Radio and OPUBCO sponsored the Sixth War Bond Drive Television Tour.¹⁷ The tour traveled to 19 cities in 23 days, from November 11 to December 2, 1944.¹⁸ One of the stars of the tour was Roberta Hollywood. At 18 years old, she was a prominent television performer in New York City. The other star was former Royal Canadian Northwest Mounted policeman Sydney R. Montague.¹⁹ In addition to

Miss Hollywood and Mr. Montague, the tour featured WKY Radio personalities, such as Wiley and Gene.²⁰

Anyone that purchased a war bond during the drive could see the show.²¹ Receivers were placed throughout the audience so that they could watch the action on stage.²² In each of the 19 tour cities, a local Television Queen was selected and awarded a \$25 war bond.²³ After the award was presented, audience members could go onto the stage and become part of the televised show.^{24,25}

By 1948, the Federal Communications Commission was encouraging individuals and companies to apply for television station permits.²⁶ Although the lack of viewers would result in a loss for a new station, Mr. Gaylord believed potential profit was there. When OPUBCO purchased WKY Radio, it operated at a loss, however the station became a profitable operation after two years. Gaylord believed the same thing would happen to a television station.²⁷ OPUBCO was about to add television to its list of activities.

Technology

After the war, the Federal Communications Commission was eager to issue licenses for television operations. A number of stations were operating, and by 1948, the FCC followed a policy of maximum coverage of the United States with television.²⁸

In early 1948, the Oklahoma Publishing Company decided to invest in television. Mr. Gaylord believed the station

would be a good investment in the long run for OPUBCO.²⁹ A license application was submitted to the FCC on April 16.³⁰ The WKY Radiophone Company operated WKY Radio³¹ and applied for a construction permit for a new commercial television station on Channel 4. The application was in the name of E. K. Gaylord, as President of the WKY Radiophone Co.³²

Mr. Gaylord expected the application process to take many months. However, he stated the license came back "almost by return mail;"³³ actually, the license was granted on June 2. The FCC granted a construction permit to the WKY Radiophone Company of Oklahoma City for a commercial television station.³⁴ The estimated cost of the operation was \$192,400.³⁵

WKY Television was the first construction permit issued to an Oklahoma station, but its lead was short. Another construction permit was issued for an Oklahoma television station on June 2.³⁶ George E. Cameron Jr., a Tulsa oilman, was issued a license in the name of Cameron Television Productions, Inc. for Channel 6 with an estimated cost of \$201,800.³⁷ This station was assigned the call letters KOTV-TV.³⁸

Competition with other Oklahoma television stations was effectively eliminated by the FCC on September 30, 1948. Over 240 construction permits had been issued for new television stations without regard to operational problems.³⁹ As a result, the FCC decided to freeze all television applications until the system could be corrected. All

stations broadcasting or under construction would be permitted to exist. During the four years the freeze was in effect, 108 stations were completed and broadcasting.⁴⁰

WKY Television was ready to begin operation. Under the construction permit, E. K. Gaylord was president, P. A. Sugg was general manager, Leo Howard was commercial manager, Paul Brawner the programming chief, and H. J. Lovell chief engineer.⁴¹ As part of the WKY Radiophone Company, the television station operated in conjunction with the radio station.⁴² WKY Radio was located in the Skirvin Towers hotel and the television studios were in the Oklahoma City Municipal Auditorium.

The control room and studios of WKY Television were located in the Oklahoma City Municipal Auditorium (presently named Civic Center Music Hall). Cameras⁴³, lighting equipment, and sets were placed on the stage, while the control room occupied half of the theater's balcony. The transmitter and tower were located north of the city.^{44,45}

The radio station had been equipped with a mobile production studio and transmitter since 1947.⁴⁶ This unit proved valuable to the news department for on-the-spot stories, and to the public relations department for station visibility.⁴⁷ Based on the success of the radio unit, Mr. Gaylord purchased a remote production truck for WKY-TV.⁴⁸ The 29 passenger bus was custom built, with all electronic equipment installed by WKY-TV engineers. The unit could employ up to three cameras, with one camera stationed on a

special camera platform on the buss's roof. A 155 square inch television receiver was built into the side of the bus, so by-standers could see the picture sent back to the studio for broadcast.⁴⁹

The mobile unit was one link in the broadcast system used by WKY-TV.⁵⁰ The mobile unit technically could be placed anywhere, however most remotes were from the Cole-sium in Oklahoma City or Owen Field football stadium on the University of Oklahoma campus in Norman.⁵¹ All of the various site were linked by microwaves and telephone land lines.^{52,53}

Three events almost prevented WKY-TV from broadcasting on time. On November 17, 1948, a fire swept through the Municipal Auditorium's Little Theater, the site of the television studio.⁵⁴ The Tuesday afternoon fire resulted in \$150,000 in damage to the television equipment and studio remodeling.⁵⁵ According to General Manager P. A. Sugg, the insurance claims were settled and equipment replaced "in record time."⁵⁶ Most of the control equipment was replaced, along with special sound proofing in the auditorium.

During the final months of preparation, the WKY broadcasting tower and AM-FM antennas had to be modified. In order to add a television antenna, crews had to install 1,800 feet of three inch coaxial cable and replace the cable for the FM antenna.⁵⁷ As the television antenna was hoisted up, the entire assembly was 600 feet into the air

when the it dropped eight feet. Chief Engineer Jack Lovell was immediately concerned the \$25,000 antenna would be ruined, however it only suffered minor dents.⁵⁸

During test pattern broadcasts in April 1949, lightning struck the television antenna and tower. The bolt struck a power junction box in the early morning hours on April 27. The damage was minor, and tests were conducted at half power for three days while the problem was corrected.⁵⁹

WKY-TV was technically ready to begin broadcasting approximately one year after the construction permit was granted.⁶⁰ The Little Theater fire required the replacement of most of the control room equipment⁶¹, and still the facilities were completed with time to spare before the official opening broadcast on June 6, 1949.⁶²

Programming

When the construction permit for WKY-TV was granted, General Manager P. A. Sugg announced programming plans included football, baseball, and other sports shows. Major news events made up the remaining program areas.⁶³ In April, Mr. Sugg stated most programming would be through films.⁶⁴ He contacted the University of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma A&M College for educational films and features on agriculture.⁶⁵

News presented a special problem to early television reporters.⁶⁶ According to Bruce Palmer, News Director for

WKY Radio and WKY-TV, most of the news reports at the time were non-visual. Up to 70 percent of news fell into the non-visual category, such as (then) Governor Turner signing a bill. Mr. Palmer believed television news would concentrate on the remaining 30 percent of stories, as "action" news. Still pictures were common, along with a series of pictures in a film strip.^{67,68}

Bruce Palmer believed the restrictions placed on television news would result in broadcasts dealing with a limited number of events over any given period of time.⁶⁹ The one exception was weather reports. According to Mr. Palmer, a large weather map with patterns outlined in black lines and shaded areas reproduced well on a television screen.^{70,71}

The sports world was unsure of the effect of television on crowds. Some areas, such as football, reported ticket sales shortfalls due to televised games, while other areas reported an increase in live audiences.^{72,73} Locally, wrestling and roller derby produced by promoter Red Andrews were very popular.⁷⁴ In the spring of 1949, the station signed a three year contract with the University of Oklahoma to televise sporting events, such as football from Owen Field.⁷⁵

On April 22, 1949, General Manager P. A. Sugg announced WKY-TV had signed programming contracts with the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) and the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS).⁷⁶ An agreement with the National

Broadcasting Company (NBC) had been established through the radio station.⁷⁷ It was common for television stations at the time to sign with more than one network.⁷⁸

In addition to network talent, performers came from WKY Radio and OPUBCO newspapers. Basil Lowery was an artist in OPUBCO, and with Larry Cotton, transformed "The Adventures of Gismo Goodkin" from a WKY radio show into a television format.⁷⁹ The Gismo Goodkin show became the first regularly scheduled program on WKY-TV.⁸⁰ Wiley and Gene had a popular program on WKY Radio, and were equally popular on WKY-TV. They produced programs for television and radio for some time before moving exclusively to television.⁸¹ R. G. Miller was a veteran columnist in two OPUBCO newspapers, the Daily Oklahoman and the Oklahoma Times. His program, the "Smoking Room," outlined recreational spots across the state with pictures.⁸²

During the first week of programming, other shows were introduced. In addition to Wiley and Gene, Gismo Goodkin, and R. G. Miller, teenagers were promised their own show. Classical music, popular music, and hillbilly music were all televised featuring live groups. Pre-recorded programs included cartoons and Hopalong Cassidy for an hour each Sunday.⁸³

All of these areas came together during the year between the construction permit granted by the FCC and the first broadcast on June 6. While television had been

demonstrated in the state earlier, the first television broadcasts occurred in April during equipment tests.

Test Pattern

The first television signal broadcast in Oklahoma occurred at 12:37PM on April 21, 1949. The video and sound broadcast ended at 5:00PM the same day.⁸⁴ Most of the station staff did not believe anyone would see the test pattern outside of the station. However, two minutes after General Manager P. A. Sugg began the test, he received a telephone call from Watonga. A viewer had picked up the signal and wanted to know if it really was WKY-TV. According to Mr. Sugg, "Within a matter of minutes, the station switchboard was jammed with calls from viewers across the state."⁸⁵ Mr. Sugg then requested over the audio portion of the signal for viewers to send telegrams to the station instead of telephone calls. Calls and telegrams were received that day from cities across the state, such as Pawnee, Ada, and Ardmore.⁸⁶ A photo was sent to the Daily Oklahoman of a Tulsa television dealer watching the test pattern from his shop⁸⁷ and one telegram was received from a viewer in Denning, Arkansas, approximately 218 air miles from the station's transmitter on Britton Road.⁸⁸

During the remainder of the week, reports were received from a number of sites across the state, and in Arkansas and Texas.^{89,90} Viewers reported the signal from Holdenville, Frederick, Cordell, and Perry.⁹¹

Regularly scheduled programming of the test pattern was established on April 25. The test pattern was broadcast between 1:00PM and 4:00PM Monday through Saturday.^{92,93} This allowed the equipment to be monitored under broadcast conditions, and would allow viewers across the state to adjust newly purchased receivers.^{94,95}

Reports were received from viewers daily. Many viewers believed the reception area of WKY-TV was larger than originally publicized. Mr. Sugg warned consumers that many viewers on the fringes of the pattern were radio technicians and may have employed special amplifiers and boosters. Despite this warning, sales of television receivers rose quickly. A two-man crew could install and adjust four receivers a day, and many worked overtime to prepare for the opening broadcast.⁹⁶

On April 27, it was announced the opening broadcast would occur June 6.⁹⁷ This announcement was less than a week after formal testing began. Mr. Sugg stated the test pattern would remain on the air until the actual broadcast in June, however special broadcast tests would occur two weeks before the opening program.⁹⁸ According to the General Manager, the special tests allowed technicians, staff, and performers to become more familiar with television techniques.^{99,100}

Test broadcasts occurred until Friday, June 3.¹⁰¹ Then staff and crew began last-minute preparations for the opening broadcast on Monday night.

First Regular Programming Day

Although test patterns and practice programs had been broadcast throughout April and May, WKY-TV officially went on the air on June 6, 1949, with a special broadcast. The program originated from the Little Theater at the Oklahoma City Municipal Auditorium.¹⁰²

Mr. E. K. Gaylord, President of WKY-TV and the Oklahoma Publishing Company, was televised as he pushed a button and started the show. He praised the work of the television station's staff, and bragged about the operation. He stated "No finer television studio existed in America, and no taller transmission tower existed except for the NBC tower atop the Empire State Building in New York City."¹⁰³

After Mr. Gaylord, Oklahoma Governor Turner commented on the accomplishment of WKY-TV. According to the governor, Oklahoma had beaten 25 other states in receiving television service.^{104,105}

Dr. John Abernathy gave the invocation over the air.¹⁰⁶ Rabbi Israel Chodos, Father John Walde, and Dr. H. G. Bennet of Oklahoma A&M College also commented on television.^{107,108}

The bulk of Monday night's program consisted of an introduction to programming on WKY-TV.¹⁰⁹ Films of the European invasion during World War Two were shown, along with special appearances by puppet Gismo Goodkin, artist Basil Lowery, Larry Cotton, and Wiley and Gene.¹¹⁰

Jody Worth interviewed guest star Eric Rhodes, and "Smoking Room" host R. G. Miller and sports editor Hal Middlesworth interviewed wrestling promoter "Red" Andrews. The barbershop quartet Southern Serenaders was also featured. Teenagers Carolyn Rexroat and Boots Talioferro, and musicians Ken Wright and Conley Graves all gave introductions of their television shows.¹¹¹

Television dealers in Oklahoma were very busy on Monday as last-minute purchases of television required installation. Some were installing receivers up to the beginning of WKY's program, despite P. A. Sugg's warning of delays that would result if viewers didn't purchase their sets early. One wholesale distributor of Philco brand sets had run out of two models during the Monday rush. Some dealers sold two and three times as many sets on Monday than during the previous week. The heaviest sales were for moderately priced sets, however as inventories disappeared, all models sold equally well.^{112,113}

That night, a new phrase was introduced to Oklahoma: the television party. As WKY-TV began regular programming, activity across the state stopped as television sets were turned on. Some businesses purchased television receivers for the use of their customers. In one Oklahoma City bar, the bartender had to be called twice; he was preoccupied watching Gismo Goodkin, the puppet. One bar patron stated he watched the television more and drank less, however other bar patrons disagreed.^{114,115}

Tommy Weiss offered television to the customers in his Lauder-Mart coin-operated laundry.¹¹⁶ He did encounter one unforeseen problem. He stated the shop was filled with kids watching the television, but none were children of customers.¹¹⁷ The Warr-Caston Lumber Company had sent out invitations to customers to watch television at the lumber yard. Special seating was set up in the yard, however the area was filled quickly with television viewers.¹¹⁸

Many private citizens sponsored television parties at their homes. One family put the kids to bed, so the adults could enjoy the show, while another family turned the set over to the children completely.¹¹⁹ One mother was delighted at her children's interest in television; it solved her babysitting problems.¹²⁰

Industry Innovator

During the history of the station, WKY-TV continued to improve service to Oklahoma. After the special programming Monday night, the WKY-TV schedule was from 7:00PM to 9:45PM every night Sunday through Friday.¹²¹ Reports from cities receiving reception continued to come to the station, and technicians covered the state taking measurements of the television signal's strength.¹²²

On February 11, 1950, the station added Saturday programming to the schedule. In June, the schedule was expanded to 40 hours each week, and in October, WKY was

broadcasting 63 hours per week. The next year (1951), morning programming was added.¹²³

In 1951, all WKY broadcasting operations were consolidated and relocated to Britton Road.¹²⁴ Previously, the television studio was in the Oklahoma City Municipal Auditorium and the radio studios were in the Skirvin Towers hotel. The tower and transmitters for WKY AM, FM, and TV were already located on Britton Road.^{125,126}

Until 1952, all programming on WKY-TV was either live or on film. On July 1, the coaxial connection was completed between St. Louis and Oklahoma City, linking WKY-TV with New York City and NBC. Live programming from New York was then broadcast over WKY without a film delay. As a result of the cable connection, programming on WKY-TV was increased to 111 hours each week.¹²⁷

In 1954, WKY began color programming.¹²⁸ On April 8, "Sooner Shindig" became the first live color program originated from a network affiliate's studio in the United States. "Cook's Book" became the first program series regularly broadcast in color from the WKY studios and first in the state on April 26.¹²⁹ NBC began network color programming on May 1, and WKY-TV provided color feeds of the Anadarko Indian Festival to NBC network programs "Today" and "Home." This was the first time a local station's facilities provided color programming to a network.¹³⁰

Mr. Gaylord supported the WKY-TV news department.¹³¹ To aid the news department, WKY-TV purchased a video tape

recorder in 1958.^{132,133} Using the recorder, the station produced the "Stars and Stripes Show" for NBC. This became the first network program produced by a local station.¹³⁴

E. K. Gaylord was concerned with accurate weather forecasting.¹³⁵ WKY-TV installed weather radar in 1958, making it the first Oklahoma station with the device.¹³⁶ At the time the National Weather Service stated tornados could not be predicted with any degree of accuracy. WKY-TV weather expert Wally McCann perfected a method to predict and spot tornados using weather radar, despite claims by the National Weather Service to the contrary.¹³⁷

By 1958, NBC was the only network with an extensive regular schedule of color programming. This would last until 1965, when prime time programming on all three networks was in color.¹³⁸ Based on network color programming, the WKY news department switched to color film.¹³⁹ According to Bruce Hinson, news reporters were well aquatinted with the use of black and white film to cover television news, and the use of color film was simply an extension of this practice.¹⁴⁰

WKY-TV became the only Oklahoma television station ever to win an Emmy award from the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences (ATAS).¹⁴¹ "Through The Looking Glass Darkly" was a documentary on the history of Blacks in Oklahoma and was produced by Bob Dotson.^{142,143}

Beginning in 1976, WKY-TV ended its association with the Gaylord family and OPUBCO.¹⁴⁴ E. K. Gaylord died in

1974, and his son E. L. Gaylord became President of OPUBCO.¹⁴⁵ On January 5, 1976, the station was sold to the Evening News Association (ENA) of Detroit, Michigan.¹⁴⁶ The call letters were changed to KTVY-TV.¹⁴⁷ In 1986, the station was briefly transferred to Gannett.¹⁴⁸ Gannett could not purchase KTVY permanently, as they already owned KOCO-TV in Oklahoma City. The station was sold to Knight-Ridder, Inc.¹⁴⁹ Starting in 1989, Knight-Ridder decided to sell all of their television stations.¹⁵⁰ KTVY was sold to Palmer Communications, Inc. and incorporated as KTVY, Inc. The call letters were changed to KFOR-TV and remain so to date.

Endnotes

¹"Television Shows to Begin Monday," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 12 November 1939, A1.

²Photo of experimental television receivers at Oklahoma City Municipal Auditorium, B&W print, 13 November 1939, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

³The show consisted of one iconoscope camera and six receivers. The camera and some of the support equipment were the same models of equipment displayed at the World's Fair six months earlier. The picture tubes in the receivers were mounted vertically and the images reflected off mirrors to allow for viewing. The stage was littered with lighting equipment, and a glassed-in control booth was located to the left of the stage ("Television Apparatus Installed For First Shows Today," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 13 November 1939, 15).

⁴"Television Shows".

⁵Ibid.

⁶"Flash! Chicago Television Queen Signed For City Show," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 12 November 1939, D5.

⁷"Mirrors, Buttons And Wires Create Modern Miracle," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 13 November 1939, 1.

⁸"Television Apparatus".

⁹"Interest in Television's Magic Twice Fills Auditorium," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 14 November 1939, 1.

¹⁰The newspaper and advertisements at the time stated all shows were open to the general public, but this open invitation did not apply to Blacks. "Negros" or "Colored" as they were referred to at the time, were invited to a special showing on Thursday from 5:30PM to 6:45PM. The segregation of audiences was strictly enforced ("Flash!").

¹¹"Two Shows Today To Close Exhibition Of Television Magic," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 18 November 1939, 1.

¹²"Television Apparatus".

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴"Now You See!," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 12 November 1939, D4.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶"Television Attracts".

¹⁷"Television Star Is in State For WKY Caravan," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 10 November 1944, 18.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹"Television Caravan Ready," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 10 November 1944, 1.

²⁰"Television Star".

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵The regular performers were joined by a dog when the tour came to Stillwater. A dog wandered onto the stage during the show, and so became one of the first television animal stars in Oklahoma.

²⁶E. K. Gaylord, speech delivered for unknown organization, 1970, location unknown, cLL 171, tape recording, Living Legends Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹E. K. Gaylord, speech delivered for Newcomen Society, March 1971, Oklahoma City, cLL 204.1, tape recording, Living Legends Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

³⁰"Actions of the FCC," Broadcasting, 26 April 1948, 48.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³E. K. Gaylord, unknown speech.

³⁴It operated on Channel 4 at 66-72 megacycles (megahertz) with a visual power of 12.1 kilowatts and an aural (audio) power of 6.2 kilowatts. The antenna was authorized at 940 feet ("FCC Actions," Broadcasting, 7 June 1948, 79).

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶"Television Permit Granted," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 4 June 1948, 19.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Many of the problems encountered during the birth of radio also occurred with television. Stations with the same channel allocation were experiencing interference, as their transmitters were too close to each other. Some areas received television coverage from two or more stations, while a majority of the country could not receive a single station (Frank J. Kahn, ed., Documents of American Broadcasting, 3d ed., (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1978), 232).

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Broadcasting Yearbook (Washington, D.C.: Broadcasting Publications, 1949), 64.

⁴²"How WKY Grew to Be Leading State Station." Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E18.

⁴³OPUBCO purchased five cameras equipped with image orthicon tubes. Although the actual black and white tube was 15 inches long and 3 inches wide, it was considered small at the time. Iconoscope tubes required a huge amount of light on the subject, and broadcasts outside of the studio did not allow for enough light. With the image orthicon tubes, WKY planned to cover many remote events including football games at the University of Oklahoma. A spare image tube was purchased in addition to the five cameras ("Camera's Heart Is Super-Tube Costing \$1,200," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E12).

⁴⁴"How WKY Grew".

⁴⁵The control room consisted of an audio control console and two tiers of video controls. One engineer would monitor the picture quality on the air and the other would monitor the technical quality of the three camera's images on the stage. On the second tier, two of the three camera's images were displayed on monitors and the technical director decided which of the two images would go out on the air. The program director was also located on the second tier, and had a microphone to contact the stage manager. The stage manager was responsible for giving cues to the performers and the camera operators ("This Controls The Television System," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E34).

⁴⁶"National Magazine Looks at WKY Mobile Studio," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 29 April 1949, 23.

⁴⁷"Mobile Studio Ranges State For Station WKY," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 7 November 1948, E23.

⁴⁸"News is Gathered By Mobile Studio," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E22.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰"The Atmosphere Over Oklahoma City," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E21.

⁵¹"News is Gathered".

⁵²"Atmosphere".

⁵³For studio programs, the video signal was sent by microwave to the Britton Road transmitter. Audio was sent over telephone lines. For remote broadcasts, a parabolic dish antenna would relay the video signal to another microwave antenna located at the top of the Apco Tower building in downtown Oklahoma City. The microwaves would then be sent to the Municipal Auditorium studio and relayed to the transmitter. Audio signals would be sent directly to the studio over telephone land lines, and then to the transmitter (Ibid).

⁵⁴"Up In Smoke," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 17 November 1948, 3.

⁵⁵With brick walls on three sides of the fire, most of the smoke and heat was directed at the auditorium seating and television control room. Investigators determined the blaze was a result of a cigarette or electrical short ("Little Theater's Loss is \$150,000," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 17 November 1948, 1).

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷"Wires, Tubes and Headaches Keep Engineer Lovell Busy," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E26.

⁵⁸"Expert Faces Weary Routine," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E26.

⁵⁹"Lightning Hits TV Antenna," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 28 April 1949, 2.

⁶⁰"WKY-TV Day? It'll Be June 6!," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 27 April 1949, 1.

⁶¹"Little Theater".

⁶²"WKY-TV Day".

⁶³"Permit Granted for Television," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 3 June 1948, 20.

⁶⁴Film Editor Keith Mathers viewed hundreds of hours of filmed programs before the June 6 broadcast. Most television programming was produced in New York City, and all recorded programs were on 16mm film. Videotape for television did not exist, and programs were either originally shot on film or a kinescope recording was made. A special camera would be pointed at a television receiver during the show, and a film of the picture tube's image resulted. The film was then sent to stations for playback.

⁶⁵"Varied Subjects Spark TV Film," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 30 April 1949, 2.

⁶⁶Bruce Palmer, "News Reports On TV Raising New Problems," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E6.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸The most desirable form was movie film, however the use of motion picture film was limited. A number of stations attempted to use movie film in the form of news reels, common in movie theaters before the main feature. This entailed shooting stories, editing the film, and distributing the film to a number of stations. When finally broadcast, the stories would be anywhere from 24 hours to one week late (Ibid).

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹A weather expert outlining the movement while on camera was a good television subject, as it used action and motion in the controlled studio environment.

⁷²Hal Middlesworth, "Sport World Still Undecided on TV," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E35.

⁷³Football and baseball owners forced television contractors to operate on a very small margin. In one case, the television producer announced the loss of one game due to the weather would result in a complete financial loss for the season. Cable lines connecting major cities were still limited, so most games were only broadcast locally. With lines connecting cities such as New York City and Chicago, revenues increased with the larger audiences.

Some sports owed television for a second life. Boxing, wrestling, and roller derby became very popular after television introduced hundreds of new fans to the sports. Wrestling matches were a staple of prime time network programming, and even Arturo Toscanini, the symphony conductor, became hooked on boxing after viewing televised matches.

In 1949, the consensus among sports team owners was that television might be limited to large events, such as the Kentucky Derby. Television would not hurt ticket sales and would only increase the popularity of the event. Without a method to increase the television viewing audience, television producers were not able to gain substantial profits from team sports such as baseball and football. As technology improved and coast to coast broadcasts became possible, television revenues for professional and college teams began to climb to today's multi-million dollar marks (Ibid).

⁷⁴"Wrestling On TV," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 3 June 1949, 1.

⁷⁵"News is Gathered".

⁷⁶"WKY Takes On Two More TV Contracts," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 23 April 1949, 1.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Lawrence Wilson Lichty and Malachi C. Topping, American Broadcasting: A Source Book on the History of Radio and Television (New York: Hastings House, 1975), 159.

⁷⁹"Basil Draws 'Em," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E33.

⁸⁰Photo of Gismo Goodkin Show (l-r. Basil Lawery, Gismo, Larry Cotton), B&W print, (1949?), Archives and Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

⁸¹"Wiley and [Jean]," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E35.

82"Smoke," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E21.

83"Programs Set to Please All Type Listeners," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E21.

84"TV Test Yields Surprise on Air," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 22 April 1949, 1.

85Ibid.

86Ibid.

87"TV Test Pattern," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 23 April 1949, 14.

88"Oklahoma Video Program Reaches Denning, Ark.," Fort Smith (Arkansas) Southwest American, 22 April 1949, 3.

89"The TV Map," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E16.

90On Friday, April 23, a man in the Ft. Worth Hale hotel received the test pattern broadcast in the early morning hours ("WKY Takes Contracts").

91Ibid.

92"TV Pattern Goes On Air Daily Monday," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 24 April 1949, 1.

93Mr. Sugg and Chief Engineer Lovell believed set-up and adjustment of the audio and video signal would take ten days, however after three days the station began a regular broadcast of the test pattern (Ibid).

94Ibid.

95Some viewers complained the picture quality was not clear. As the test pattern was made up of many fine lines, Mr. Sugg stated most receivers would not be able to pick up all of the fine detail of the picture. He reassured viewers, stating normal picture quality would be much better than the test pattern (Ibid).

96"WKY Television Is Flashing Along Week Ahead of Schedule," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 25 April 1949, 1.

97"WKY-TV Day".

98Ibid.

99Ibid.

¹⁰⁰One of the special test broadcasts involved wrestling at the Oklahoma City Coliseum. On May 27, two hours of wrestling sponsored by Red Andrews was televised by the station using its remote production truck. The test was repeated the following Friday between 8:30PM and 10:30PM. After the first broadcast in May, technicians discovered the television cameras had to be placed closer to the ring. Other operational problems were also encountered and solved ("Wrestling").

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Bill Van Dyke, "Stars Parade as WKY Video Gets Under Way," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 7 June 1949, 1.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵As head of the state government, Governor Turner wondered how television might affect politics. He believed television would bring public servants closer to homes of citizens (Ibid).

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Rabbi Chodos stated television would make the world smaller, and thus men and women would grow bigger, loftier, and nobler. Father Walde said the new wonder could do profound good for mankind and the families of the nation. Dr. H. G. Bennett saw unlimited possibilities for television as an educational tool. According to Dr. Bennett, television could bring demonstrations, lectures, and instruction into the homes of viewers, in addition to entertainment (Ibid).

¹⁰⁹Ibid.

¹¹⁰"Radio And TV," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 6 June 1949, 20.

¹¹¹Bill Van Dyke.

¹¹²"City Television Market Takes on Heat," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 7 June 1949, 8.

113 Stores such as John A. Brown and Wards carried luxury models such as the RCA Victor Eye Witness television receiver. At \$341.00 retail, the receiver was equipped with a 52 square inch picture tube and came with a walnut or mahogany cabinet ("John A. Brown Advertisement," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 24 April 1949, 6A; "Wards Advertisement," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 28 April 1949, 5).

114 Imogene Patrick, "Oklahoma Goes to a Television Party," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 7 June 1949, 1.

115 According to a Daily Oklahoman article, two soldiers in the same bar had waited for six hours for the show to begin, and were drinking the entire time (Ibid).

116 photo of television viewers at Tommy Weiss Laundermart, Oklahoma City, B&W print, 6 June 1949, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

117 Imogene Patrick.

118 photo of television viewers at Warr-Caston Lumber Company, Oklahoma City, B&W print, 6 June 1949, Archives and Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

119 Imogene Patrick.

120 Ibid.

121 "Radio And TV".

122 During the summer of 1949, Dr. Bruce Hinson of the University of Oklahoma was a 12 year old boy in Enid. One day, a man drove up to the house. He had noticed the television antenna and was curious as to the Hinson's reaction to WKY-TV. The man was General Manager P. A. Sugg. He traveled around the state that summer interviewing families with television receivers. After college, Dr. Hinson joined the WKY news staff before receiving a teaching position at OU (Bruce Hinson, professor at University of Oklahoma, interview by author, 18 May 1989, Norman, Oklahoma).

123 "Illustrious History of KTVY, Channel 4, n.d." Advertiser Information Sheet, KFOR-TV, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

124 "Station History, n.d." TMs [photocopy], p. 1, KFOR-TV, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

125 "How WKY Grew".

¹²⁶The operation remains on Britton Road today. ("KTVY (WKY) Celebrates 40th Birthday," Oklahoma City TV News in Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 11 June 1989, 17).

¹²⁷"Illustrious History".

¹²⁸In 1949, E. K. Gaylord had ordered color television equipment from RCA. At the time, no standard for color broadcasting existed in the United States, and color equipment was still in the RCA Labs (Bruce Hinson). The FCC was examining color standards and originally approved a standard by CBS. This format was not compatible with existing black and white transmitters or receivers, and CBS experienced very low sales of equipment to broadcasters. RCA complained in court and to the National Testing and Standards Committee (NTSC). The FCC stated it would consider a new standard if first approved by the NTSC. The NTSC approved a system substantially the same as the RCA system, and on December 17, 1953, the FCC approved the NTSC standard for use in the United States (Lichty, 77).

¹²⁹"Station History," 1.

¹³⁰"Illustrious History".

¹³¹Bruce Hinson.

¹³²"Station History," 1.

¹³³Before 1956, the only method of recording a program was to shoot it originally on film or produce a kinescope recording. Film shooting of live programs was rare, and kinescope films were grainy, dim, and only as good as the receiver's picture tube. In 1956, Ampex demonstrated a practical videotape recorder at the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) annual convention. RCA had demonstrated the first videotape machine at the 1954 NAB Convention. The RCA machine recorded a video image, but the recorder operated at a tape speed of 360 inches per second (1200 feet per minute). Most programs were 30 minutes or one hour, so this early machine was not popular (Eugene S. Foster, Understanding Broadcasting, 2d ed. (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1982), 32).

¹³⁴"Station History," 1.

¹³⁵Bruce Hinson.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸Lichty, 77.

- 139 Bruce Hinson.
- 140 Ibid.
- 141 "Illustrious History".
- 142 Bruce Hinson.
- 143 Bob Dotson is currently working for NBC (Bruce Hinson).
- 144 "Station History," 2.
- 145 Ibid.
- 146 Ibid.
- 147 "Illustrious History".
- 148 Ibid.
- 149 Ibid.
- 150 Bruce Hinson.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Summary

Edward King Gaylord arrived in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Territory in January 1903.¹ He immediately purchased a minority interest in the morning newspaper, the Daily Oklahoman, and formed the Oklahoma Publishing Company (OPUBCO).² From this beginning, E. K. Gaylord built a communications organization involving print and electronic media.

Over the course of time, Mr. Gaylord purchased other newspapers and started a freight express service when the railroads could no longer deliver his papers. He also developed an agricultural magazine from one of the newspapers.³ After oil was discovered in the Oklahoma City city limits in 1928, he bought WKY Radio,⁴ although the station had been in existence since 1920 as 5XT.⁵

When the FCC explored an open policy for television licenses,⁶ Mr. Gaylord and the WKY Radiophone Company applied for and received a construction permit for a commercial television station for Channel 4 in Oklahoma City.⁷ Although he knew the station would lose money in the beginning,⁸ television was the last communications media not

owned by OPUBCO. WKY Television was built and on the air approximately one year after the construction permit was received.⁹

WKY Television borrowed personnel and production methods from the radio station before WKY-TV's first broadcast. A remote television production truck was purchased, so events such as OU football could be broadcast by the station outside of the studio.¹⁰ When WKY-TV officially went on the air on June 6, 1949,¹¹ E. K. Gaylord was the first speaker. He re-dedicated his support to television and WKY-TV.¹²

Since that first year, WKY-TV has continued to improve its quality of service in Oklahoma. WKY-TV pioneered many color television innovations, becoming the first color station in the state and the first network affiliate to provide color programming to the network.¹³ While ABC and CBS only provided a portion of their prime time programs in color, NBC and WKY-TV was increasing its color programming.¹⁴ The same year all three networks broadcast prime time programs in color (1965),¹⁵ the WKY-TV news department switched to color film.¹⁶

WKY Television was one of the first local stations to purchase a videotape recorder in 1958, and provided videotaped programming to NBC for national distribution.¹⁷ In 1958, WKY-TV inaugurated television radar coverage for weather reports.¹⁸ Through Wally McCann, the station began to predict and spot tornados with radar, an accomplishment

the National Weather Service believed was impossible.¹⁹ In recent years, KTVY-TV became the only Oklahoma station to win an Emmy Award for "Through the Looking Glass Darkly," and became the first Oklahoma station to broadcast programming in stereo sound.²⁰

Conclusions and Observations

WKY-TV was an extension to an established communications empire, the Oklahoma Publishing Company. As OPUBCO was a major influence on the creation of WKY-TV, Mr. Edward King Gaylord was a major influence on the creation of the Oklahoma Publishing Company. From Mr. Gaylord's arrival in Oklahoma Territory and subsequent incorporation of OPUBCO in 1903²¹ to his death as President of OPUBCO in 1974²², he established a pattern of behavior for himself and the organization. Mr. Gaylord believed in taking advantage of sound financial opportunities. During the 1904 Baltimore fire and outbreak of the Sino-Russian War, his investment of time and personnel increased the Daily Oklahoman's circulation dramatically.²³ In the early 1930s, Gaylord invested \$50,000 in Associated Press wire photos;²⁴ this also increased the circulation of OPUBCO newspapers.

Mr. Gaylord was also interested in providing the best service possible to Oklahoma through OPUBCO. This resulted in a commitment to overcome all obstacles. When he became general manager of the Daily Oklahoman, one of his first actions was to improve its operation.²⁵ When the printing

plant was destroyed by fire in 1909, Gaylord arranged for the newspaper to be printed using a competitor's presses until the equipment could be replaced.²⁶ He made these arrangements while the fire was still burning.²⁷

This pattern of taking advantage of opportunities, providing service, and overcoming obstacles is repeated through WKY Radio. Although Mr. Gaylord was advised to purchase WKY Radio as early as 1925,²⁸ he refused.²⁹ According to Mr. Gaylord, WKY did not have a sufficient audience to make the station profitable.³⁰ In 1928, an oil discovery in Oklahoma City boosted profits from OPUBCO operations. This cash surplus allowed Mr. Gaylord to purchase WKY Radio, and absorb the expected profit loss.³¹ Continuing the pattern established by OPUBCO's print activities, WKY Radio was transformed from a primitive station into a profitable member of OPUBCO within two years.³²

The FCC encouraged individuals and organizations to apply for television licenses,³³ however Mr. Gaylord did not apply for a construction permit until 1948.³⁴ He believed the state needed a television station (service to Oklahoma)³⁵ but would not accept the financial burden of developing WKY Television until the other OPUBCO activities could offset the station's profit loss (sound financial opportunities).³⁶ Since the first broadcast of WKY-TV in June 1949,³⁷ the station has continued to improve its service to the state. The introduction of color programming,

weather radar, and remote microwave broadcasting all fit the pattern established by E. K. Gaylord in 1903.³⁸

Recommendations for Further Study

This study only attempts to examine selected events in the history of WKY-TV and the Oklahoma Publishing Company. Due to various limitations, a number of information sources were not included. Individuals connected with OPUBCO, WKY Radio, and WKY-TV during the period examined were not interviewed extensively. As National Broadcasting Company (NBC) affiliates, NBC headquarters in New York should possess information about WKY Radio and WKY Television.³⁹

WKY-TV is now KFOR-TV, and while information has been obtained from the station, addition information in the form of financial records, personnel records, filmed programs, and government documents was not made available for inclusion in this study. Finally, other information sources such as personal journals or letters, additional Federal Communications Commission (FCC) records, and broadcast history depositories (i.e. Museum of Broadcasting, New York) should be examined.

The scope of this study included primary emphasis on the history of WKY-TV during the years 1948 and 1949. The history of OPUBCO before 1948 and WKY-TV after 1949 were not examined in detail. The Oklahoma Publishing Company's activities outside the established scope of this study should be examined. This includes newspaper activity after

the early 1930s and WKY Radio after 1948. In addition, events that fall within the stated scope of this study should be re-examined.

Endnotes

¹Quotations (Oklahoma City: Oklahoma Publishing Company, 1973), 18.

²"Survival of the Fittest," Time, 3 May 1968, 53.

³Ibid.

⁴Walter Munford Harrison, Me And My Big Mouth (Oklahoma City: Britton Printing Company, 1954), 163.

⁵"Early WKY," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 7 November 1948, E26.

⁶E. K. Gaylord, speech delivered for Newcomen Society, March 1971, Oklahoma City, cLL 204.1, tape recording, Living Legends Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

⁷"Actions of the FCC," Broadcasting, 26 April 1948, 48.

⁸E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.

⁹"WKY-TV Day? It'll Be June 6," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 27 April 1959, 1.

¹⁰"News Is Gathered by Mobile Studio," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 5 June 1949, E22.

¹¹"Station History, n.d." TMs [photocopy], p. 1, KFOR-TV, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

¹²Bill Van Dyke. "Stars Parade as WKY Video Gets Under Way," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 3 June 1949, 1.

¹³"Station History," 1.

¹⁴Lawrence Wilson Lichty and Malachi C. Topping. American Broadcasting: A Source Book on the History of Radio and Television (New York: Hastings House, 1975), 79.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Bruce Hinson, professor at University of Oklahoma, interview by author, 18 May 1989, Norman, Oklahoma.

- 17 "Station History," 1.
- 18 "Illustrious History of KTVY, Channel 4, n.d." Advertiser Information Sheet, KFOR-TV, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
- 19 Bruce Hinson.
- 20 "Station History," 1.
- 21 E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.
- 22 "Station History," 1.
- 23 E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 E. K. Gaylord, speech delivered for unknown organization, 1970, location unknown, cLL 171, tape recording, Living Legends Collection, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Harrison, Big Mouth, 162.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid.
- 31 E. K. Gaylord, Newcomen speech.
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- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 "Station History," 1.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 "National Network Adds to City's Fun," Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, 7 November 1948, E6.

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- Photo of E. K. Gaylord during first regular broadcast of WKY-TV at Oklahoma City Municipal Auditorium. B&W print. 6 June 1949. Archives and Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
- Photo of experimental television camera and lighting equipment at Oklahoma City Municipal Auditorium. B&W print. 13-18 November 1939. Archives and Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
- Photo of experimental television camera and lighting equipment for 6th War Bond Drive Tour. B&W print. 11 November - 2 December 1944. Archives and Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
- Photo of experimental television receivers at Oklahoma City Municipal Auditorium. B&W print. 13 November 1939. Archives and Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
- Photo of Gismo Goodkin Show (l-r. Basil Lawery, Gismo, Larry Cotton). B&W print. (1949?). Archives and Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
- Photo of microwave remote television truck. B&W print. (1949?). Archives and Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
- Photo of microwave remote television truck at University of Oklahoma-Norman Football Stadium. B&W print. (1949?). Archives and Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
- Photo of television viewers at Tommy Weiss Laundry-Mart, Oklahoma City. B&W print. 6 June 1949. Archives and Manuscripts Division, Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

IMPORTANT DATES IN OPUBCO HISTORY

IMPORTANT DATES IN OPUBCO HISTORY

- 1903 - Edward King Gaylord arrives in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Territory. Meets Roy Stafford of the Daily Oklahoman (January).
- E. K. Gaylord assumes duties as Business Manager of the Daily Oklahoman, and renovates operation (27 January).
- The Oklahoma Publishing Company (OPUBCO) is formally incorporated, with Roy Stafford as president and editor, E. K. Gaylord as secretary, treasurer, and business manager, Ray Dickinson as advertising manager, and Roy McClintock as managing editor (6 February).
- Gaylord publishes extra edition of the Daily Oklahoman as a result of two murders. First extra edition of newspaper published in Oklahoma Territory (February-March).
- OPUBCO purchases new equipment and moves into a two-story building at California and Robinson (October).
- 1904 - War declared between Japan and Russia. Dock fire in Baltimore devastates portion of city. Daily Oklahoman prints accounts of both events and scoops all newspapers between Dallas and Kansas City (February).
- 1906 - Scripps Howard establishes the Oklahoma News, an evening newspaper in Oklahoma City.
- Gaylord disputes circulation claims of Guthrie State Capitol. Investigation substantiates Gaylord's claims, and incident one of factors leading to creation of Audit Bureau of Circulation.
- 1907 - President Roosevelt declares bank holiday and Daily Oklahoman announces will accept checks for yearly subscription. Banks re-open, checks honored, and circulation increases dramatically (October).
- 1909 - OPUBCO begins construction of new building at 4th and Broadway. Fire destroys presses at old location, and Daily Oklahoman printed at Times (previously Times-Journal) plant briefly (January).

- OPUBCO relocates to new building at 4th and Broadway (1 October).
- 1910 - Free newspaper, the Free Pointer steals advertising from Oklahoma City newspapers. OPUBCO launches own free newspaper, the Free Press. Free Pointer folds and is sold to the Times, and OPUBCO suspends publication of Free Press.
- 1911 - Weekly edition of Daily Oklahoman converted to bi-weekly farm magazine, the Farmer-Stockman.
- 1915 - Times suspends publication. OPUBCO purchases subscription list and institutes evening newspaper, the Oklahoma Times.
- 1918 - Stafford experiences financial difficulty and is forced to sell controlling interest in OPUBCO. Gaylord is elected president, editor, and publisher (June-July).
- 1920 - Experimental radio station 5XT created in Oklahoma City by two electricians: Dick Richards and Earl Hull. Becomes first station on air West of Mississippi River and third station on air in United States.
- 1922 - Opera star Alma Gluck broadcast from Oklahoma City First Christian Church by 5XT and becomes first notable person broadcast by Oklahoma radio station.
- Radio station 5XT assigned radio call letters WKY.
- 1923 - WKY Radio moves to top of Shrine Temple building.
- 1925 - In danger of losing license, WKY Radio is supported by radio receiver dealers in Oklahoma City. Financial support continues through 1928.
- WKY Radio increases power from 20 watts to 250 watts.
- 1926 - WKY Radio studios moved to basement of Huchins Hotel and transmitter relocated to Stockyards City (in Oklahoma City).
- National Broadcasting Company formed in New York City (14 September).
- 1928 - Natural gas struck in Oklahoma City city limits and E.K. Gaylord notified of opportunity to purchase WKY Radio (28 July).

OPUBCO officially purchases WKY Radio (1 August).
WKY Radio goes off the air to prepare for new
studio and transmitter (14 October).

WKY Radio broadcasts presidential election results
under OPUBCO ownership (4 November).

Formal opening broadcast from new studio at Plaza
Court. 1000 watt transmitter on West 39th Street
(11 November).

WKY Radio affiliates with the National Broadcast-
ing Company (NBC) (21 December).

- 1930 - Reduction of daily railroad service forces OPUBCO
to deliver newspapers by truck. Mistletoe Express
freight service incorporated.

WKY Radio on scene of tornado at Bethany, Okla-
homa. Station sponsors relief fund campaign (19
November).

- 1934 - OPUBCO becomes one of fourteen charter members of
Associated Press Wire Photo service.

- 1936 - OPUBCO attempts to purchase second radio station
in Oklahoma City, KFXR. Federal Communications
Commission blocks purchase.

WKY Radio begins broadcasting from new studio in
Skirvin Tower hotel (13 April).

- 1939 - RCA demonstrates television at New York World's
Fair (30 April).

Experimental RCA television cameras and receivers
demonstrated to public at Oklahoma City Municipal
Auditorium (13-18 November).

- 1944 - WKY Radio inaugurates farm department outside of
regular news department (8 August).

WKY Radio sponsors tour of experimental RCA tele-
vision equipment to 19 Oklahoma cities as part of
6th War Bond Drive (11 November-2 December).

- 1947 - "Creed, Color and Co-operation" on WKY Radio
becomes one of first radio programs specifically
targeted to Black audiences.

"The Adventures of Gismo Goodkin" begins on WKY
Radio, will become first regularly scheduled pro-
gram on WKY-TV (1 February).

WKY Radio begins Frequency Modulation (FM) transmission in addition to AM broadcasts (June).

Self-contained mobile AM-FM production studio and transmission truck unveiled at Oklahoma City State Fair by WKY Radio (September).

- 1948 - License application submitted to Federal Communications Commission for WKY Television on Channel 4 (16 April).

License (construction permit) granted to WKY Radiophone Company for television station on Channel 4 (2 June).

License (construction permit) granted to Cameron Television Productions, Inc. for television station on Channel 6 in Tulsa. Will become KOTV-TV (2 June).

Federal Communication Commission freezes all television licenses not already granted. Two Oklahoma pre-freeze stations (WKY and KOTV) enjoy monopoly until 1 July 1952 (30 September).

Fire in Oklahoma City Municipal Auditorium, site of WKY-TV studios, destroys \$150,000 worth of television equipment and remodeling (16 November).

- 1949 - E. K. Gaylord orders color cameras from RCA. Color cameras still in experimental stage at RCA Labs.

WKY Radio halts FM broadcasts to install television antenna on broadcasting tower. FM broadcasts resume on April 29 (13 March).

First test pattern broadcast by WKY Television at 12:37 PM (21 April).

WKY Television signs programming contracts with the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) and the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), in addition to existing contract with NBC (23 April). Wrestling matches broadcast for first time by WKY-TV from Oklahoma City Coliseum (27 May).

Microwave remote television production truck joins AM-FM radio production truck for remote broadcasts over WKY-TV (5 June).

First regular broadcast transmitted from Oklahoma City Municipal Auditorium studios by WKY-TV (6 June).

WKY-TV programming schedule comprised of 7:00 PM to 9:45 PM Sunday through Friday (7 June).

- 1950 - Saturday programming added to WKY-TV line-up (11 February).

WKY Radio and Television studios relocated to Britton Road. Transmitters and tower for WKY and WKY-TV previously located on Britton Road.

WKY-TV programming schedule expanded to approximately 40 hours per week (June).

WKY-TV programming schedule averages 63 hours per week (October).

- 1951 - WKY-TV adds morning programming to schedule.

- 1952 - Coaxial cable connection completed between Oklahoma City and St. Louis. Live NBC programs from New York now seen on WKY-TV (1 July).

With cable connection, programming schedule expanded to 111 hours per week.

- 1953 - National Testing Standards Committee (NTSC) announces RCA color standard. FCC approves NTSC guidelines (17 December).

- 1954 - WKY-TV "Sooner Shindig" becomes first live color program originated from a network affiliate's studio in United States (8 April).

"Cook's Book" becomes first program series regularly broadcast in color from WKY studios and first in state (26 April).

Regularly scheduled network color programming initiated (1 May).

WKY-TV provides color feeds of Anadarko Indian Festival to NBC network programs "Today" and "Home." First time a local station's facilities provide color programming to a network (September).

- 1956 - Ampex demonstrates practical videotape recorder at National Association of Broadcasters convention.

- 1958 - NBC only network with extensive regular schedule of color programs. Remains leader until 1965.

WKY-TV inaugurates television radar coverage for weather reports.

First video tape recorder (2" VTR) purchased by WKY-TV. Station produces "Stars and Stripes Show" for NBC and becomes the first network program produced by a local station (July).

- 1959 - WKY-TV originates Presidential visit coverage to NBC, ABC, and CBS. Becomes first Oklahoma station to feed program to all three networks at once.
- 1965 - WKY-TV news department switches to color film. All three networks broadcast entire prime time schedule in color.
- 1974 - WKY-TV becomes only Oklahoma television station to win Emmy Award, for "Through The Looking Glass Darkly."
- 1976 - WKY-TV sold to the Evening News Association of Detroit, Michigan. Call letters changed to KTVY-TV (5 January).
- 1985 - KTVY-TV becomes first Oklahoma station to broadcast in stereo sound (6 June).
- 1986 - KTVY-TV briefly transferred to Gannett, and sold to Knight-Ridder, Inc. (19 February).
- 1990 - KTVY-TV sold to Palmer Communications, Inc. and incorporated as KTVY, Inc. Call letters changed to KFOR-TV.

APPENDIX B

PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF WKY-TV

PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF WKY-TV

Each of the following photographs represent important events and applications of technology by WKY Television. These photographs are copyrighted by the Archives and Manuscripts Division of the Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. They are used by permission.

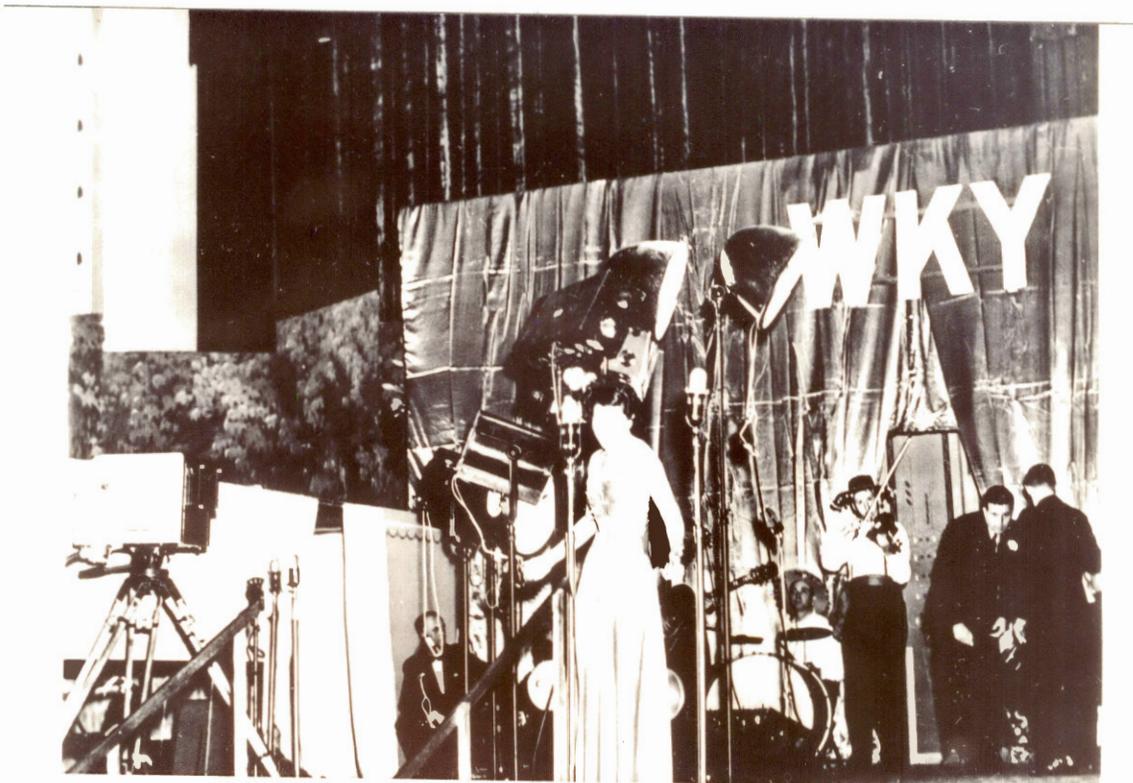


Figure 1. Experimental television camera and lighting equipment during the Television Show at the Oklahoma City Municipal Auditorium. 13-18 November 1939. The show was sponsored by the Oklahoma Publishing Company and equipment provided by the Radio Corporation of America (RCA).



Figure 2. Experimental RCA television camera and lighting equipment during 6th War Bond Drive - WKY Television Tour. 11 November-2 December 1944. Purchasers of war bonds could attend closed-circuit television productions in 19 Oklahoma towns.



Figure 3. Edward King Gaylord, President of WKY Television, speaking during first regular broadcast of WKY-TV at the Oklahoma City Municipal Auditorium. 6 June 1949.

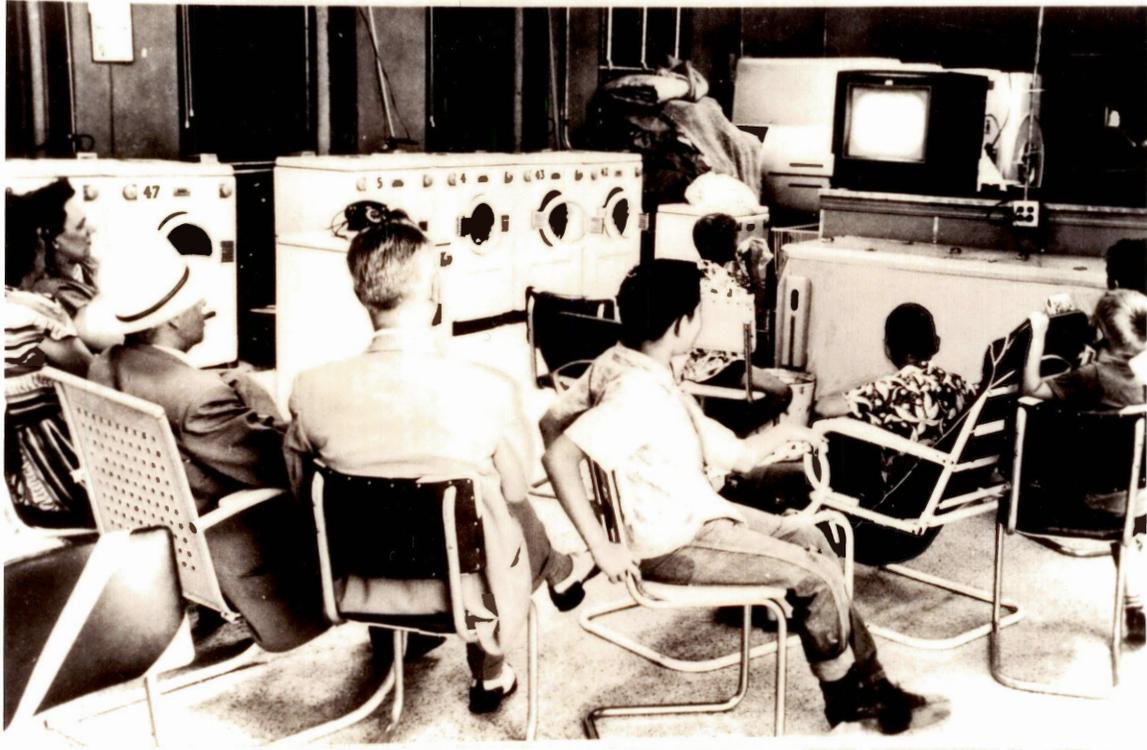


Figure 4. Television viewers watching first regular WKY-TV broadcast at Tommy Weiss Launder-Mart in Oklahoma City. 6 June 1949. Owner installed a television screen for the premier broadcast only for all patrons.



Figure 5. Television viewers watching first regular WKY-TV broadcast at Warr-Caston Lumber Company in Oklahoma City. 6 June 1949. Owners sent invitations to regular customers and prepared special seating in lumber yard. Receiver is in store window.



Figure 6. Gismo Goodkin Show, first regularly scheduled WKY-TV program. Circa 1949. Seated at table (l-r) Basil Lawery, Gismo, Larry Cotton.



Figure 7. Microwave remote television production truck. Circa 1949. Notice 155 sq. inch television receiver built into side of production truck. Camera and microwave transmission dish on truck's roof.



Figure 8. Microwave remote television production truck at University of Oklahoma Football Stadium. Circa 1949. Cables running from truck up side of stadium connect to microwave transmission dish on top of stadium's press box.

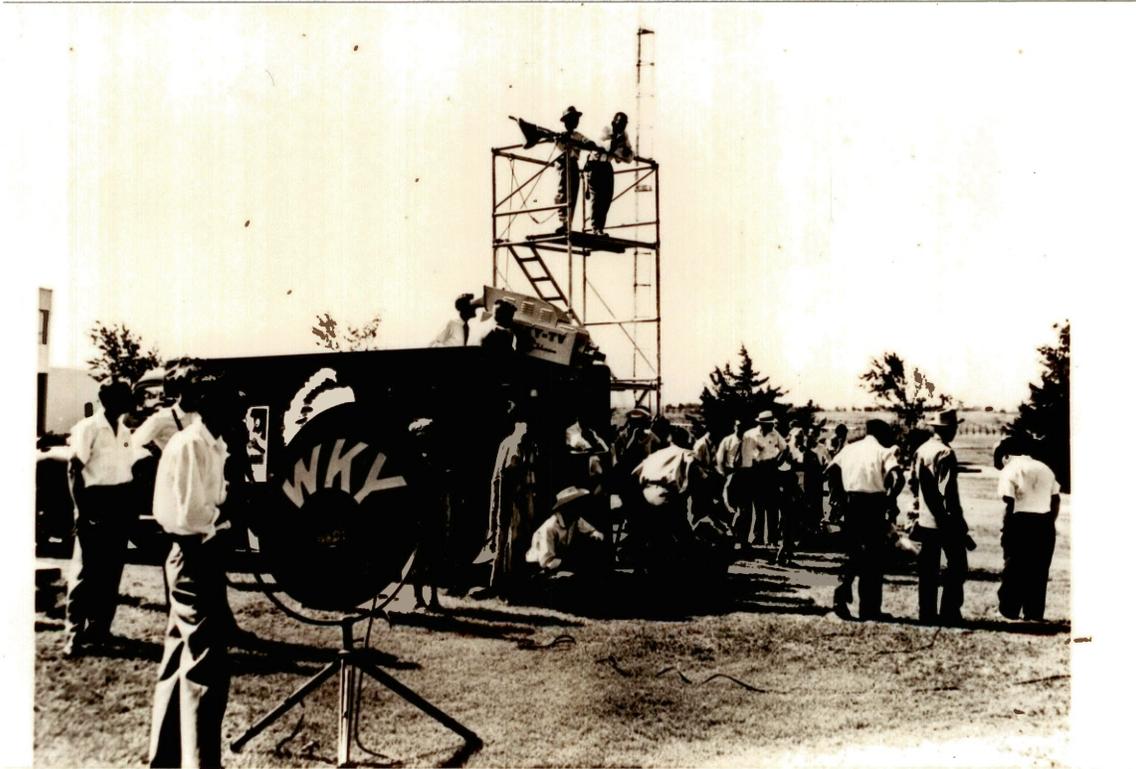


Figure 9. Color microwave remote television production truck at Anadarko, Oklahoma Indian Exposition. September 1954. The program was fed to the NBC network programs "Today" and "Home." This was the first time a local station's facilities fed a color program to any network.

VITA²

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