

WCCO

1924-1949



*For 25 years  
Good Neighbor  
to the Northwest*

THE CBS STATION IN  
MINNEAPOLIS  
AND ST. PAUL

*During the past 25 years it has been the privilege of WCCO to serve the Northwest.*

*The traditionally progressive spirit of this area has made our privilege an interesting and challenging responsibility.*

*We are deeply indebted to you, our loyal listeners, for whatever improvements we have made in programs and in broadcasting facilities.*

*We pledge you our sincere efforts to serve in the years to come as a "Good Neighbor to the Northwest."*

*Merle S. Jones*

*General Manager, WCCO*

## THE EARLY DAYS

“This is WCCO, Minneapolis and St. Paul.”

These words, first sent out over the Northwest air in 1924, have become a familiar part of the everyday life of the people of Minnesota and the surrounding states.

There's hardly a citizen of the Northwest who hasn't heard many hundreds of times that familiar phrase during the 25 years since October 1, 1924.

The story behind that phrase is as rich and colorful as the history of the Northwest. It's the story of WCCO's first quarter century of service to an industrious and progressive people, the story of a great radio station's first 25 years as *Good Neighbor to the Northwest*.

Radio's come a long way since that early era when all the neighbors gathered around the gooseneck speaker to hear a program that consisted more of the whistles and growls of static than of music or talk. You remember those early days when interruptions were sometimes more frequent than programs.



**OSCAR DANIELSON AND HIS FAMOUS SCANDINAVIAN ORCHESTRA**

Every early-day radio bug in the Northwest can recall the Scandinavian music played by Oscar Danielson and his orchestra, and those early announcers who had such a casual way of interrupting Donaldson's music, "Due to mechanical difficulties, WCCO is now leaving the air for two or three hours. Please stand by."

Broadcasting was difficult in those days. But it wasn't long before WCCO had established itself as the place to look for news, information, and entertainment. Kilocycles, transmitters and microphones played their part, but it was people who really made WCCO live. No recounting of WCCO's early days would be complete without giving credit to such personalities as Eddie Dunstedter, whose mastery of the piano and organ delighted audiences of the 1920's and 1930's; to Jerry Harrington, whose Irish tenor voice found thousands of enthusiastic listeners among WCCO's predominantly Scandinavian audience; to Al Smeby and



his St. Paul livestock reports; to Dr. William A. O'Brien, whose friendly health talks were a real service to Northwest people; to announcers Carl Burkland, Paul Johnson, Al Sheehan, Al Chance, Ken Titus and many more; to Mildred Simons, who read the market reports; to Tina and Tim, one of radio's first comedy programs; to a young fellow named Cedric Adams who was playing bit parts in dramatic programs; to such pioneer network stars as Frank Crumit and Julia Sanderson, Henry Burbig, Norman Brokenshire, Paul Whiteman, and scores more.

WCCO dates its history to 1924. But its origin really goes back two more years — to 1922. The real pioneers of radio listening remember in that year hearing a heavy voice on the air announcing, "This is WLAG, the Call of the North." WLAG was a short-

**CEDRIC ADAMS**





**DARRAGH ALDRICH**

lived pioneer in the American broadcasting industry and the first radio station in the Northwest. It served its listeners of the crystal set era from 1922 to June, 1924.

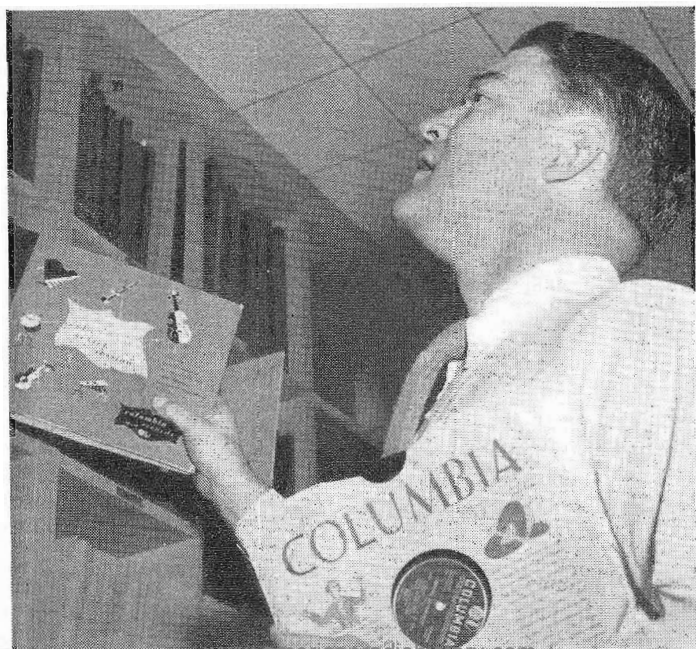
WLAG was inactive from June, 1924, until early fall, but on October 1 its facilities became the foundation on which a really great radio station was built. On that date, the Washburn-Crosby Company, a firm long established in the Northwest's great flour milling industry, used WLAG's equipment as the nucleus around which to build a station of its own. The initials of Washburn-Crosby Company formed the station's call letters, WCCO. In those early years, you remember, the announcers used that identification familiar

throughout the whole area, “WCCO, the Gold Medal Station.”

The Washburn-Crosby Company had two partners in WCCO’s infancy — the St. Paul Association of Commerce and the Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association. In 1926 the two civic groups dropped out and for three years WCCO was the exclusive property of the milling firm. In 1929 a tiny network which was just beginning to expand its lines into the midwest bought a one-third interest in WCCO. You know that network now as CBS, the Columbia Broadcasting System.

With that step, WCCO became a key station in the expanding Columbia network. It marked a sharp change though for the already growing band of Northwest listeners. They’d been accustomed to hearing WCCO programs from the National Broadcasting

**CLELLAN CARD**







**BOB DE HAVEN**

Company. As a matter of fact, WCCO had been one of the first handful of stations to band together in an experiment to see whether network broadcasting might be possible.

There's a statement in an early WCCO prospectus which tells how network broadcasting first came to the Northwest. It says in 1925 WCCO joined facilities set up by WEAJ in New York "to establish a single circuit network which will interconnect eighteen of the important cities of the United States."

### HOW WCCO HAS GROWN

In 1931, the Columbia Broadcasting System assumed complete ownership and operation of WCCO. Under the successive managements of Henry A. Bellows, Earl



Gammons, A. E. Joscelyn and Merle S. Jones the station has been staffed by men and women who live in and are a part of the Northwest, and to whom the problems and welfare of the Northwest are real and personal.

And just as important through its 25 years, WCCO has been as much a part of the Northwest as the 10,000 lakes of Minnesota, the iron mines on the Mesabi range, or the dairy lands of Wisconsin. There's hardly a citizen who hasn't at sometime or another depended on WCCO for the latest weather report, condition of highways, or changes in the grain market.

WCCO's powerful signal regularly spreads out over parts of six states, but that marks quite a change from the late 1920's. The station's original power was 500 watts. At that time the broadcast signal scarcely covered the metropolitan area of the Twin Cities.

**SALLY FOSTER**





**GEORGE GRIM**

One of the great days in WCCO's early history occurred on March 4, 1925. On that date, the station made arrangements to carry the inaugural address of President Calvin Coolidge. Also on that date, the station was using for the first time its shiny new transmitter at Anoka. But the occasion wasn't a complete success. Thousands of owners of battery sets scattered throughout the Northwest heard the broadcast distinctly, but crystal set owners in the Twin Cities couldn't pick up the signal at all. Moving 18 miles to Anoka had placed the transmitter completely out of their range.

The same year, 1925, found the station expanding its studio facilities; from its original quarters in the Oak Grove Hotel in Minneapolis, it moved to new and larger studios in the Nicollet Hotel. In 1939, further expansion became necessary and WCCO moved its studios to the present location in the WCCO Build-

ing at 625 Second Avenue South in Minneapolis. Here, spacious, modern studios accommodate the thousands of guests who visit the station each month. Some programs, particularly the popular two-hour block of broadcasts known as the *WCCO Saturday Night Radio Party*, play to a capacity studio audience of 700 in the WCCO Playhouse on the fourth floor of the building. The same *Radio Party* broadcasts during the summer months from Excelsior Amusement Park, where audiences of 3,000 watch the programs on the shores of beautiful Lake Minnetonka.

The people who staff the radio station are the real heart of WCCO, but physical facilities make it possible for these people to give the best service to the residents of the Northwest. A mobile short-wave transmitter, literally a broadcasting station on wheels, makes it possible to cover events far from the main studio. Recording devices attached to a telephone

**LARRY HAEG**







**BURT HANSON**

enable a WCCO newsmen to present his listeners recorded conversations with the actual voices in the news. Portable tape recorders are regularly sent to farms, schools and public meetings over the entire WCCO area, and the finest technical equipment in the studios themselves makes the highest quality programs available to WCCO listeners.

All of this is a key part of WCCO's policy to give the best service that modern technical know-how can supply.

### THE PEOPLE YOU HEAR

More important than anything else to a radio station are the people who comprise its staff. WCCO is for-



tunate in having on its roster as outstanding an array of talent as any station in the nation.

**Cedric Adams**, colorful broadcaster and *Minneapolis Star* and *Tribune* columnist, has been a WCCO personality since 1931. His twice-daily news broadcasts attract more listeners than any other local news in a metropolitan area. Adams is famous for such community projects as his 1949 "Flight of Dollars," which raised \$175,000 to combat infantile paralysis. In the past 12 months he has made personal appearances in 109 communities.

**Darragh Aldrich**, who has been a favorite with WCCO's women listeners for nine years, entered radio after having achieved prominence as an author and playwright.

**Clellan Card** deserted a career as a bond salesman to become one of the Northwest's favorite radio comics. He is best known for his Swedish dialect recitations and "birdie with the yellow bill" act.

**Bob De Haven**, one of radio's favorite masters of ceremonies, is a big (239 pounds), genial entertainer who made his professional start in radio in Milwaukee 18 years ago. His has been a familiar WCCO voice since 1943.

**Sally Foster**, a relative newcomer to WCCO, has established herself as one of the Northwest's most popular vocalists. Like Bob De Haven, Sally got her radio start in Milwaukee. She has been a radio songstress in Chicago and St. Louis. She is the wife of WCCO announcer Earl Steele.

**Ramona Gerhard** is a name that means good music. A native of Watertown, South Dakota, organist-pianist Ramona is a graduate of MacPhail School of Music in Minneapolis, has studied in Europe, and has been heard several times as soloist with the Minneapolis Symphony orchestra.

**George Grim** started young, has been in radio for more than twenty years. He transmits to his listeners some of his own youthful spirit and enthusiasm. This newsman has traveled far and wide for the *Minneapolis Tribune*, is on intimate terms with the news centers of Asia and Europe.

**Larry Haeg**, who has been WCCO's Farm Service Director since 1941, is more than an agricultural theorist, owns and operates his own 140-acre farm in Hennepin County. Haeg has been elected seven times to the Minnesota house of representatives, where he is an active member of the agriculture committee. He is chairman of the agriculture committee of the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce.

**Halsey Hall** is famous for his encyclopedic memory of sports events. He has been nicknamed "Holy Cow" Hall because of his use of that expression when describing an exciting moment in a sports contest. Halsey's sports-casting career is as old as Northwest radio, for he broadcast the Twin Cities' first sports review over WLAG back in the crystal set days.

**Burt Hanson**, the Northwest's most popular young tenor, has been featured on WCCO for more than five years. Burt didn't care for music till his junior high school music teacher told him he could sing, gave him the lead in an operetta.

**E. W. Ziebarth**, a pioneer in radio education and head of the University of Minnesota department of speech, is consultant in education to the Columbia Broadcasting System. One of WCCO's news analysts, he recently visited Europe for a close-up view of that continent's problems.

The cooperation of many people makes WCCO the Northwest's leading radio station and *Good Neighbor to the Northwest*. Writers, producers, technicians, stenographers, maintenance men — all these play a vital role in bringing you your favorite radio entertainment. This book would fall short of its goal if we failed to salute them all:

John Aarthun	Lawrence Fisk	Richard Link
Cedric Adams	Sally Foster	Albert Loehlein
Darragh Aldrich	Della French	Jack Lucas
Rollie Altmeyer	Geraldine Fuller	Jean McIntyre
Ivan Anderson	Ernest Garven	Robert McKinsey
Ralph Backlund	Hal Garven	Marilyn Meyers
Esther Baldwin	John Gebhart	Marlee Michaelson
Robert Bass	Ramona Gerhard	Sigfried Mickelson
Ovid Bastien	George Grim	Tony Moe
Vincent Bastien	Tony Grise	Ralph Moffatt
James Beloungy	Mary Guldin	Edward Murphy
John Bowles	Larry Haeg	Jerome Nelson
Lawrence Brakke	Halsey Hall	Phyllis Nelson
Mischa Bregman	Burt Hanson	Vivian Nelson
Ruth Brinley	Alfred Harding	Sally Nissen
Philo Brown	James Hayes	Martha Olson
Frank Butler	Fred Herrmann	Wallace Olson
Clellan Card	Rolf Hertsgaard	James Paul
Doris Campbell	Richard Hill	Russell Person
George Collier	Merle Jones	Harry Peterson
Marv Conn	Marian Kate	Henry Peterson
Roger Cowell	Harbert Kimberly	Edward Plehal
George Culbertson	Joyce Lamont	Thomas Plehal
Robert DeHaven	Harry Larson	Cecelia Rapp
Irene Doherty	Ralph Lautzenheiser	Dorothy Retrum
Mary Doherty	Babe LeVoor	Frank Roberts
Alvar Elbing	Philip Lewis	Israel St. Anthony

Charles Sarjeant	Jack Stanley	Edwin Viehman
Ben Saxton	Earl Steele	Robert Wallinder
William Schockweiler	Wilfred Stevens	Mat Walz
William Shepherd	Kermit Sueker	Carl Ward
Barbara Smith	Robert Sutton	Irving Wickner
Lewis Smith	Ruth Swanson	Eugene Wilkey
Lyall Smith	Lyman Swendson	George Wilson
Katherine Spahn	Ethel Terhaar	Robert Woodbury
Kenneth Spears	John Trent	E. W. Ziebarth
	June Utecht	

## HOW GOOD A NEIGHBOR IS WCCO?

*Good Neighbor to the Northwest* is more than a slogan — it's the measure for day to day performance.

For outstanding work the station has won twelve awards in four types of public service broadcasting in the past year: combating juvenile delinquency, promoting racial understanding, advancing the understanding of classical music and outstanding broadcasting of the news.

While the winning of twelve awards by one station in a single year is unique in American broadcasting, WCCO personalities have gone much farther in establishing close ties with the people of the Northwest. Cedric Adams, Bob De Haven, George Grim, Halsey Hall, Clellan Card, E. W. Ziebarth, Larry Haeg and the Red River Valley Gang are household favorites because of their hundreds of personal appearances in virtually every community in the entire WCCO coverage area. Since the 1948 Minnesota State Fair, when Cedric Adams broadcast his news before a combined audience of 50,000 persons over a ten-day period, the rotund Northwest favorite has made 109 personal appearances. In fact, all WCCO personalities have appeared 504 times in twelve months. These radio favorites have made WCCO the *Good Neighbor to the Northwest*.



-- Autographs --

**THIS IS**

**WCCO**

**THE COLUMBIA**

**BROADCASTING**



**SYSTEM**