

HISTORY OF CARTER CO. BROADCASTING, INC.—WGOH/ WUGO FIFTY YEARS OF MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The decade of the fifties was drawing to an end when Grayson join the list of small towns in Kentucky getting their own radio station. Dr. H.E. Shufflebarger became president of the corporation that put WGOH on the air, June 1, 1959 from studios near the tower on U S 60 west of town. The called letters stood for Grayson-Olive Hill and the station occupied 1370 on the AM band, with 5000 watts as a regional station.

Most stations were on the AM band at that time, and many like WGOH could operate on during daylight hours because of nighttime interference to other stations. In the late 1970s the station was granted a pre-sunrise and post-sunset authority to begin the day at 6 AM year-round and go to two hours past sunset on a reduced power of 500 watts. The early programming of the station was a variety to please all, including bluegrass and country in the mornings, rock in the afternoons, with gospel segments in the morning and afternoon. Dick Martin, who later became mayor of Ashland, was the first manager, while Charlie Esposito and Bill Stewart were in the opening lineup of announcers. Stewart was later killed in the Central American jungle while a CBS correspondent. Country star, Tom T. Hall, had a short stint as deejay in the 60s. WGOH featured live music shows in addition to the music on records. Ricky Skaggs and Keith Whitley first teamed up at the GO radio studios. Paul Mullins, who later formed a popular bluegrass band was an early disc jockey, and Carmel Stevens hosted the bluegrass shows for over 25 years. Salem Missionary Baptist is the longest running church program, and Dr. Robert C. Webb's Game Club of the Air, was heard weekly for over 25 years. Faye Bush began her career running the office from day one and was there until her death over 40 years later.

In 1967, nighttime radio service came to the area, as WGOH -FM signed on simulcasting the AM programming at 102.3 with 3000 watts. The first live local ballgames were broadcast in the spring of 1967. WGOH-FM became an affiliate of the Reds Radio network and University of Kentucky games. Three years later, the station joined the UPI network for news before switching to CBS in 1983. WGOH 102.3 became the sports-active station carrying live play-by-play of East Carter, West Carter football, basketball and baseball along with some Kentucky Christian and Morehead State games. GO radio would later have the privilege of following West girls and East boys and girls all the way to the state tournament appearances.

In the late seventies, the station began expanding the facilities on Radio Hill, in anticipation of changing FM over to a separate station. On January 2, 1979 the FM became WUGO and began music programming on its own with lite rock entertainment on a complex automation system with no live announcers. The call letters again representing Grayson and Olive Hill with the shortened name of U-102. WGOH -AM continued to program country, gospel and bluegrass. In the early '90s. WUGO received permission to up the power to 4800 watts go to stereo broadcasting. Then the station went to 24-hour programming. A system of stand-by power to better serve the community in

an emergency was installed. In 1996, the automation of WUGO was switched to computer- controlled with music via satellite. Two years later, computer systems were used to program the music on WGOH. All newscasts were broadcast live on both stations and the same time periods. GO radio is one of the longest-running Associated Press news members in the state, and became a member of the Kentucky News Network in 1994. In 1994, GO radio spearheaded the Sesquicentennial celebration of the city handing out Grayson Lieutenant awards to all citizens born in Grayson.

When Grayson was wired for cable TV in the early eighties, GO radio took charge of the Local Community channel in 1982 creating local television for the area with computer-generated messages, advertising, news and a live public affairs show *County Conversations* as well as taped news on *Focus on Grayson* and other local sports and news taped programs. The Local TV started out on channel 16 but has been at several spots on the cable dial and now occupies channel 14. The audio of U-102 FM is heard on the television, 24 hours a day.

Tragedy struck the company in 1994, when a March ice storm caused the 325-foot tower to come crashing to the ground. Nobody was injured but the station was crippled for a week, then went on with temporary antennae while a new tower was constructed.

The full-time staff has remained almost unchanged for over four decades, and represents the state's most experienced staff. General Manager Francis Nash has been with the station since 1966 starting as an announcer with the on-air handle of K J, Ken Jackson, doing air shifts and the play by play sports,. Jim Phillips, who began his career as writer and editor of the Grayson newspaper in the 1950s, has been reporting local radio news since 1979. Engineer Bill Craig continues his work that began in 1968 and has been an active amateur (ham) operator. Jeff Roe has been operations manager for over 36 years, while doubling as West Carter basketball scorekeeper/manager those same years. Tom Gemeinhart, statistician, joined the sports team starting in 1971 to this day. Tim Carper, a teacher who had been active in youth sports, joined as sports director in 2000. Sales manager Mic Marshall started his career at GO radio, moved on and then returned in 2007. Mike Phillips, music director, began as an announcer in 1985 and Melodie Carter has been at the station since 1986.

Over the years, Carter Co. Broadcasting has prided itself in hiring local high school and college students and others to serve part-time as night and weekend announcers. Many of these, have gone on to be successful in fields of communication, lawyers, doctors, ministers, teachers and business owners. Current part-time staff includes Kerry Simpson Willie Grills, Lisa Adkins, and Aaron Shufflebarger.

GO radio has built a solid reputation over the years for community service, local news and information. The station has received many Associated Press news awards, Kentucky Station of the Year honors and has won the coveted NAB National *Crystal Radio Award* four times- 1999, 2003, 2005 and 2008. The Crystal is given each year to the ten top stations in public service and programming in the nation. Crystal winners are honored at the National Association of Broadcasters convention Las Vegas and in

Washington, D.C. at the Service to America Summit. GO radio is the smallest market to win a Crystal and only four stations (Indianapolis, Philadelphia, Bemidji, Mn.) have won four or more awards. GO radio has been nominated for the Crystal an unprecedented ten times since 1990. Forty stations make up the finalists from which ten are chosen. GO radio, over the years, has been recognized for its service with plagues from over 30 local and state organizations, two *Marconi award* nominations and staff members have been recognized with local and state honors from various groups including the Ky. Broadcasters Association. Jim Phillips received the Meritorious Service state award for coverage of the 1978 train derailment, and Best News Coverage state award for work in reporting the 1993 East Carter school shooting deaths. Francis Nash has received the KBA's two top honors, the Kentucky Mike and the Al Temple Award for service to broadcasting. WGOH-WUGO has been featured in a popular radio broadcasting college textbook as a clear example of small-town local radio service.

Each year the station conducts a sock drive, senior salutes, Christmas book drive, Christmas parties for kids, county clean up, benefit radio auctions, fund-raising events and more. The station carries over 150 minutes of news daily and airs locally produced public service announcements, bulletin board, church news. The County Conversations program on radio and TV features local guests weekly. GO radio carries a wide variety of informational programs and donates thousands to dollars in sponsorship of many local programs and events. Some other projects have included shop-at-home campaigns, yearly school calendars, building a veterans gazebo and painting projects in town. In 2007, Nash wrote and the station published a *Historical Views of Carter County* history book and gave away over 2200 copies free. The station donated proceeds of another book he produced, *The Hop Brown-Lady Comets Story*, published in 2003 to the scholarship fund of the legendary coach who died of cancer that year, after 25 years coaching the West Carter girls. Coach Brown and East Carter coach, Charles Baker were on the coaches radio shows for 25 years.

Through the years, the idea of "good neighbor of the air" has been the key factor in directing programming with live broadcasts of all the big events, as well as offering everything from lost and found to trading post on GO radio.

The website, wgohwugo.com, was launched in 2002 and the streaming of U-102 audio was added in 2007, so listening occurs all over of the world. Complete area news and pictures are available on the Internet as the site has become a popular place to begin surfing the web and getting local news, school information and more.

The concept of radio as a "sound" citizen has kept the operation of Carter County's radio stations stable and popular. As other small town stations faltered, consolidated or were bought out by conglomerates beginning in the mid-1990s, GO radio remains one of only a three stations in Kentucky still locally-owned by the same people who built it, 50 years ago. WGOH-WUGO has captured the majority of the listeners in the county, and is particularly strong in surveys of age 25 and older. The radio signal reaches into 30 counties in three states. Over 92% of the population is reached each week by radio.

In late 2009, on the 50th anniversary of WGOH, the station was working on exciting improvements to the station, that will be announced shortly.