Oral History
Orv Graham
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Oral history of Mr. Orv Graham, general manager of Radio Stations WSOY and Y103 FM. Interviewed by Betty Turnell at Mr. Graham's office on September 17, 1987.

This is Betty Turnell with oral history, sponsored by the Decatur Public Library. Our guest today is Mr. Orv Graham, general manager of radio stations WSOY and Y103 FM.

Q. Welcome to our series, Mr. Graham.

A. Thank you.

Q. It's hard to imagine a world without broadcasting, isn't it? But radio is comparatively recent, isn't it?

A. Comparatively so, I guess. It's a matter of your age. If you're 20 years old, radio has been around for a long time. Radio came to Decatur in the mid-twenties. As history goes, radio really is recent.

Q. Decatur entered the field early, didn't it?

A. As a matter of fact, Decatur has the third oldest radio station in the nation. As you know, KDKA in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was the first station on the air - commercial station, I should say. The second station - I don't know. I don't know who it was or where it was. The third station on the air, though, in this nation, was reported to be WDZ, which is a Decatur station. At that time it was not a Decatur station. It was located in Tuscola, Illinois. It signed on in 1924 or sometime around then. It was owned by a grain company. Every half hour they turned on their transmitter and broadcast the Chicago Board of Trade grain prices. That's all they did, a minute or two on the air, and then they would turn off their transmitter. In another half hour they would turn it back on and broadcast the grain prices again. They are known and recognized as the third oldest station in the nation, and the oldest station in Illinois. They are now in Decatur - WDZ. It's an AM station. In Decatur proper, however, this radio station went on the air under different ownership and different identification and different dial position in September of 1925. It went on the air as WJBL radio. It was owned by the William Gushard Company. It went on the air with a power of 500 watts. It was located in a studio atop what is now a building owned by K's Merchandise Mart at the corner of William and Water Streets. The building more recently was known as the Carson Pirie Scott building when they were downtown. So perhaps you can see the building in your mind. I am told that in 1925 they had two windmill type operations sitting on top of the building. A wire strung between the two served as the antenna. That was their transmitting antenna. That's the way it worked. We still have in our collection of

memorabilia here at Radio Park some of the old microphones and pictures from the original WJBL studios.

That was in 1925. William Gushard was the owner. In 1937, Decatur Newspapers, Incorporated, bought WJBL radio. Decatur Newspapers, Incorporated, included the Decatur Herald and Review and the members of the Lindsay Schaub family and the Lindsay Schaub organization. They bought 49%, I think, of what was then known as Commodore Broadcasting Company. They acquired 100% of it and eventually changed the call letters to WSOY. As I remember reading something about the history of the change in call letters, they were trying to decide what call letters might be available that would suit them best. They investigated call letters like WDEC, which obviously would have been for Decatur. For some reason that I don't know, that was turned down. They even considered WVLD - the Voice of Lake Decatur - at one time. As you know, call letters many times represent things - ownership or organizations. For example, WCFL in Chicago is the Chicago Federation of Labor. WLS in Chicago stands for "World's Largest Store". The station was owned by Sears Roebuck of Chicago. WBBM, another Chicago station, stood for the kind of music they broadcast - We Broadcast Better Music - WBBM. So the Voice of Lake Decatur - WVLD - might have been very appropriate, but it was turned down. At about the same time that the move to change call letters was taking place, Decatur was becoming known as the "Soybean Capital of the World". A decision was made to change the call letters to WSOY. That was back, I believe, in the late 30's.

An interesting thing about that time was this situation. A radio station in Bloomington was WJBC. Back in those days, this radio station, WJBL, was at 1200 KC on the dial. WJBC in Bloomington was also at 1200 on the dial.

Q. That's pretty close, isn't it?

A. It's impossible! The arrangement, made, I presume, by the owners of the two stations working with the Federal Communications Commission, was that WJBL would broadcast from Decatur for a while. Then they would sign off and WJBC in Bloomington would sign on and take that dial position for a while. They would switch back and forth. If you were listening to 1200 on the dial, for a while you would listen to WJBL and then switch to WJBC.

Q. Did that plan work?

A. Apparently it did. I've heard of many other instances, none I can think of now specifically, but a shared frequency was not unusual in those days.

Later WJBL, which was to become WSOY, was able to change frequencies by working some arrangement with a Terre Haute, Indiana, station, WBOW, I believe. They swapped frequencies, and WJBL was able to move to 1340 on the dial. WJBC in Bloomington moved to

another dial position, I don't know which position, but as a result of those changes approved by the FCC, both stations were able to go on the air full time with no more shared frequency. That occurred back in the late 30's.

Q. Very good! Well, you told of some people responsible for early radio here. Were there any others?

A. Specifically, let me mention Merrill Lindsay. Merrill Lindsay was a member of the Lindsay Schaub family, Decatur Newspapers, Inc., which bought the radio station. He was the station manager here and then general manager for a long, long time.

He, I believe, is viewed by most people who know broadcasting in Decatur and who know business and communications in Decatur, as the real father of broadcasting in Decatur. Even though radio had been on the air for ten or twelve years before he and his family became involved, I think Merrill Lindsay is the fellow who really made it move forward. With Merrill Lindsay's leadership, the call letters were changed to WSOY from WJBL. The frequency was changed so that the radio station could be on the air all the time; the power was increased. Originally, this radio station was at 500 watts; then it became 1000 watts daytime, 250 watts at night, and then eventually 1000 watts 24 hours a day.

Under Merrill Lindsay's leadership as well, WSOY FM went on the air. Under his leadership, Radio Park was established, with these studios built and occupied in early 1948, almost 40 years ago. At that time, it was the most modern radio broadcasting facility in the entire state, including Chicago.

Radio made a great deal of progress in Decatur as a result of the knowledge, the efforts, and the dedication of Merrill Lindsay. That is one name you just can't overlook when you think of communications in Decatur.

Q. Good! What about programming? Are there any programs you remember, especially from the past?

A. Specifically, I'm talking about WSOY now. Years ago, programs were mostly national, the national networks, such as the Columbia Broadcasting System, the National Broadcasting Company, the Mutual Broadcasting System, the American Broadcasting Company. You don't hear the names any more, you hear CBS, NBC, ABC, the MBS.

The very early programs, before the networks, used a lot of local talent, local musicians, a lot of local musicians. There was not very much information. It was mostly music and entertainment performed locally.

Then came the networks, and the Arthur Godfreys and the Ma Perkins. All of the radio soap operas filled the air waves. In Decatur we became

CBS back in 1943. The network would give a chain break about 28 1/2 minutes past the hour and at 58 1/2 minutes past the hour. The local stations would then originate a commercial and maybe a weather broadcast and a station identification.

Most of the rest of the broadcast day would be taken up by network programming. There would be breaks for local programming of news and information, but programming would be mostly national, as television programs are today.

Then, back in the late 50's, programming began to change when television came along. Radio changed to a great deal of local production, with very few network programs outside of newscasts and sportscasts and special events.

I don't think you can look at the history of American radio or Decatur radio without thinking of Lum and Abner, and Ma Perkins and the great radio comedies and dramas - the Jack Benny Show and others of that sort. They were all right here on this station for many, many years.

Q. And we sometimes hear re-broadcasts of those programs today?

A. It's kind of fun, too, isn't it?

Q. Nostalgia!

Well, we know that programs have changed a great deal since those days, as you say. What about equipment?

A. Oh, equipment has changed dramatically. Before I started in radio, I had a recorder - a home recorder. It was not a tape recorder.

Q. What was it?

A. It was a wire recorder. The wire was a magnetic recording surface similar to your tape recording. You recorded on a spool of wire, which would run from one spool to the other just as the tape does on an open reel tape machine, and that wire would become loose and get entangled, and it was a terrible mess.

Equipment was extremely heavy. A home recorder - a portable recorder - probably weighed fifty pounds. It was awkward and did not have good quality. Microphones back then didn't have good quality.

Q. They were very large, weren't they?

A. Large and heavy. They had those very heavy transformers. They weighed a ton. Radio stations back in the forties recorded on wire recorders, or even disc recorders. A lot of radio stations, including this one, made recordings on a disc. A commercial was recorded on a disc, just like today's 45 RPM record. Discs were called "E.T.'s" - electrical transcriptions.

Q. They were done locally?

A. They were made right in the station, in a studio. An announcer would sit in the studio, and an engineer, the operator, would sit in the control room. The operator would put the record "cutter", if you will - for lack of a better word. (It's the device that cuts the groove in the record as it records the sound of the audio into the disc.) The operator would place the cutter on the disc and cue the announcer. The announcer would read the message. If he goofed, as announcers are prone to do (I can say that because I've been one). If he goofed, they started over and started over and started over, so they may have recorded on that disc several tracks of the commercial before they ever got it right.

Q. And sometimes that thread or chip they cut away would become fouled around the cutting head?

A. That's absolutely right! It would just mess up the whole process, so they would start over. And you couldn't reuse those discs. You use your tape over and over again. You just run it across a tape eraser and use the tape again. The discs you couldn't use again. You used them once! So they ran through a lot of recording discs. We still have some of those old E.T.'s around the building. They were big 16 inch discs - big, huge discs. They played - I started to say at 33 1/3 RPM - but now I'm not certain about that.

Other changes in equipment you notice today as you walk through a radio station. You see digital equipment, cassette recorders. The change from recording techniques using wire or discs went to reels of tape with a reel-to-reel tape machine (still common and widely used today) and eventually to cartridge tape machines. This has a loop of tape 40 seconds long without any ending. It is enclosed in a case they call a cartridge (from that it gets its name). They slip this cartridge of tape in a machine and press a "record" button. That button implants a tone, not heard on the air, on that tape at the point where the tape is located when you put the cartridge in the machine. When you hit the "record" button to start the machine, you record a 30 second commercial on this 40 second piece of tape. When the tape cycles back around to the place where that inaudible tone is located, the tape automatically stops and is ready to play again.

Q. Engineers have transformed the industry, haven't they?

A. Tremendously! Tremendously! The convenience of the equipment, the quality of the equipment, and even the cost have improved. The equipment, not just that which we've been talking about, such as tape recorders in a broadcast studio, but also through the entire audio processing line, the engineers have made equipment sound better to the ear when the message finally comes out of the radio at your home or in your ear. The transmitters and the antenna, all that equipment, the engineers have made dramatic improvement.

Q. It's a thrilling story. We've talking about equipment, but studios have changed too, haven't they?

A. Yes, yes. When you walked through this building, you see the changes. This was built as a radio studio. Most stations today are located in buildings that were designed for some other purpose - an office building or a store building that seemed to have the right space and be the right size for a radio station.

This station was built with each studio being a separate building within a building with a separate foundation and walls within the walls for soundproofing purposes. Nowadays, they don't go to all that trouble. That doesn't mean they don't get good quality but because of changes in equipment it isn't necessary. Radio stations these days may have one or two studios. You'll see offices and offices and offices, but only one or two studios in many radio stations. Here we still have three control rooms and three studios in addition to the control rooms.

Q. And you need them all?

A. We need more! But the equipment within the studios has improved as well. The microphones are of much better quality, and the remote starts for equipment are an improvement. A tape recording, for instance, with a commercial would be located in one room. An announcer in another studio could play that commercial located in the other studio. Backtiming clocks, ear phones, all are conveniences.

Q. Didn't there used to be a lot of drapery, velvet, and other absorbent material, used in studios?

A. Yes. Absorbing material is the proper term. Sound, audio, has a way of bouncing off a hard surface or wall and bouncing again off the other wall. By the time it finally gets into the microphone it has bounced around quite a bit and the audio quality often has a follow sound, or as the engineers call it, a "hard" sound. They softened it with draperies, but now acoustical tile performs that job in most studios.

Q. It's better and easier. Well, that tells us of the advances we have made in that field. What about government supervision?

A. Oh, it's there.

Q. Still there?

A. Yes. It always has been. The Federal Communication Commission is the regulating body of broadcast - all broadcasts - not must commercial radio, but all broadcasts, from citizens' band radio to ham operators, television, etc.

Q. Is it really necessary?

A. Yes, it probably is. The most necessary part is the technical regulation, I believe - strictly my opinion. If there were no regulations, every radio station in the world, if it wanted, could be on the same dial position we're on.

Q. And we've had instances in the past, haven't we, with the frustration that occurs when there is interference?

A. Yes. There have been some very recent examples of such frustration caused by government. I'll give you an example. Are you familiar with the term "Radio Marti - Cuban Interference"? A Cuban radio station was broadcasting on a frequency occupied by American radio stations. There was a radio station in the neighboring state of Iowa that suffered interference from this Cuban broadcasting station. They did it in order to jam the radio broadcast of the American station. Without government regulation, all stations could broadcast on the same frequency or with unregulated power they could interfere with one another. Yes, from a technical standpoint most of all, government regulation is important.

Q. It has to be international, doesn't it?

A. And it is. It is international. An example of that - the history of radio in Decatur includes WDZ moving from Tuscola to Decatur, going on the air in Decatur some time in the forties as a daytime only station - 1050 on the dial. They could sign on at sunrise, and when the sun went down, they had to sign off. This was because of an international treaty - a treaty that the American government had with the Mexican government. There are many of those treaties around the world. This particular treaty protected the Mexican stations which were on the air at 1050 AM on the dial, as was WDZ. It protected the Mexican stations from being jammed by an American station at that dial position. You know, in a broad sense, the AM radio frequency signals travel farther at night. So if WDZ were on the air at 1000 watts in daytime, their signal might travel 60 or 70 miles. At nighttime, it might travel 1000 miles or even further, depending upon atmospheric conditions. If a radio station in Mexico on the same frequency was enjoying a good clear signal, the listeners in Mexico could hear that just fine. Then along comes WDZ in Decatur, Illinois, at the same frequency, and suddenly there is nothing but interference, static. So this Mexican treaty protected the Mexican radio stations from American stations at 1050 on the dial.

Q. You don't have any quarrel, then, with government supervision in a technical sense?

A. Absolutely none.

Q. Is there any government interference with programming?

A. No, not really. There have been incidents that a lot of broadcasters referred to as "interference", and a lot of people referred to as being

"government interference in programming". This station has never called it that, and my own belief is not that it's interference. It might be troublesome at times. We are licensed to serve the public need. Perhaps you would say that's interference. You might say, "Now, wait a minutes. I want to serve my own needs."

Q. But the people own the air waves, don't they?

A. True. But can you be licensed to serve your own needs or do you have to serve the people's needs? And who defines the people's needs? The answer to that in this circumstance is that radio stations are required by regulation, by FCC, to determine through what is now called "ascertainment" what the community needs are. We do that by an ongoing process of interviewing and studying the local community, by talking to community leaders. We know from the mayor's comments when the mayor tells us what he thinks Decatur's needs are. We know from the school superintendent and other community leaders what the greatest needs in Decatur are at any given time. Then we must address those needs at some time in our programming.

Q. When it is time to renew your license, do you have to advertise to the public so they can tell you what their needs are?

A. Yes.

Q. So that gives you a clue to the way the people regard your station?

A. Potentially, it would, but it doesn't happen that way.

Q. Because it may be that people appreciate and enjoy and are satisfied.

A. Or it may be they aren't dissatisfied! I don't remember when one of those announcements has stirred a response.

Q. Well, all of this isn't free. Somebody has to pay. What about financial support?

A. Radio is looked on by the listener - the one who consumed the product or service - as an entertainment and information source. From the management and ownership standpoint, thought, it is looked on additionally as a potential source of profit. That simply means that we're in it to make money. The profit motive has built the American system. Yes, we are a profit-making organization. It's designed that way, it was intended that way, and it continues to be that way. The only source for revenue is the selling of advertising.

Q. Has advertising changed much over these years?

A. Style has changed - style. That's about the only thing that has changed. The basics of advertising really haven't changed. The basic of advertising is to make your potential customer aware that you and your product exist and that you have a benefit for them. Those things

haven't changed - just the style in which you present them. That's changed.

Q. Fine! We have talked about network affiliations. Is that still a big help to local broadcasting?

A. Yes, in the sense that it gives us much better access to national and international news and sports.

Without a network affiliation, it would be very difficult for the local radio stations to cover the inauguration of a President of the United States. It would be very difficult to cover any news event more than 50 miles away from the local station - very difficult.

Q. And expensive?

A. Oh, yes! But with national affiliation, we have the ability to do that.

Q. But you can't plug into the network all day long and satisfy your needs of your community, could you?

A. That's correct. But the networks don't give us programming all day long either, that is networks such as CBS and NBC. There are other networks that do, and some radio stations that use them - music networks. But at this station, we provide much of our programming locally.

Q. What about changes in programming? Are there programs that stand out in your mind as making a change in broadcasting?

A. That's a good question! Radio programming changes we described earlier - from locally produced programs to network programming very much as television is today. And then it changed back to local programming. Then television came along. Most folks thought radio was dead, and radio did suffer a good deal.

But the "golden days" of radio really are today because more people listen to radio for longer periods of time than ever in history. There are more radio stations - both AM and FM than ever before. Radio has grown dramatically even since television.

So the programming had to change to account for that. Dropping the network programs such as the soap operas, the information shows, and entertainment shows like Arthur Godfrey and Art Linkletter's "Houseparty" - dropping those meant providing locally produced programs, such as music shows. We changed music formats to appeal to various age or sex demographics. Radio at one time was basically all aimed at the family.

And now, with the size of the audience available and the number of stations, instead of aiming at the family, radio stations are able to aim at a certain part of the population. Some radio stations appeal only to

18 to 24 year olds. Some are teen oriented. Other stations are searching for those who are 35+ years old. They do that by offering programs that appeal to that particular age or sex demographics. There are some stations in the major markets that say, "My target is women 18 to 34." They'll take all the listeners they can get, but their target audience would be a very narrow demographic. So programming changed to meet those needs.

As more radio stations go on the air, each station has to specialize a bit more to attract a particular audience. I can localize that. In Decatur for many years, we had two radio stations - WSOY and WDZ. We actually had three stations including WSOY-FM, but it carried the same programs as WSOY-AM. So those two stations were in effect "joined". They were in effect one station. They were two different signals, one FM and one AM, but the same programs. Later the two stations "separated" and offered different programs. Today, from the standpoint of the casual listener, those two stations are not the same at all. WSOY and WSOY-FM are in fact WSOY and Y103.

WDZ still exists, but WSOY remains basically an adult oriented station with information, a great deal of news, CBS radio, a lot of local news, local personalities.

WSOY-FM, known to the public as Y103, is a stereo rock station, going after a different age group. The WSOY-FM station - Y103 - is aimed at the 18 to 34 year old. Many adults think it's a teen station, but it is not. In the ratings book it shows up very strong among the 18 to 34's.

WSOY-AM is aimed at the 25+ person. So it's a good example to show how radio stations have changed their programming to try to carve out a niche in the marketplace.

Q. So instead of having a family grouped around a receiver in the living room, we have individuals listening?

A. That's an excellent point. There was a time when radio was consumed as a family unit. Now it is not. Radio is consumed by the individual. That is one of radio's great strengths because a radio personality or a radio commercial or a radio program can be aimed directly at an individual. If an announcer says, as you often hear on the radio, "Hey, all of you out there listening to us today", my personal opinion is that radio announcer is making a mistake. You do not listen as a group, you listen as an individual. A radio announcer should say, "You're having a nice day today." Right? Directly to the individual. That's one of radio's great strengths. The listener is an individual. You have the ability to talk directly to him - person to person.

It's like that great poster of Uncle Sam "I want you". From no matter where you stand around that poster, he's pointing directly to you. That's what radio is like. It goes directly to the individual.

Q. When programs could go out of the station to a remote location, it made a big difference, didn't it?

A. For a long time radio enjoyed that as an exclusive. There was no ability on the part of any other medium to do a remote broadcast until very recent years. For that reason, radio was the first to bring you the man on the moon. You first heard the man on the moon by radio - strictly audio - into your ears. There was no live picture from there. The only pictures that came back were pictures taken at the time and brought back. Television saw them afterwards.

Remote broadcasting began back in the forties. It was done in a fashion similar to the way we do it today but with much more cumbersome equipment and with much less audio quality. It required large, large pieces of equipment - amplifiers and so forth - carried out to a remote location. You did need power - AC - back in the early days of remote broadcasting. There were very few battery-powered transmitters or amplifiers. So you had to have power - a place where power was available.

Q. Did you have to have telephone lines?

A. The remote broadcasters of those times required telephone lines or remote transmitters - some of each.

With the telephone lines, you would know where you were going to do the remote broadcast - the president would be at the airport a week from Friday, for example. You would call the telephone company and order a special "broadcast loop". This special line would be installed at the airport. You would go out and plug your equipment into that. The signal would go from the microphone to the amplifier, down a wire to the telephone terminal, into the telephone company and eventually out to the control board at the radio station and on the air - almost instantaneously.

You know, there is less of that done now. We still use a lot of telephone lines for broadcast purposes, but now there is much less of that done, partially because technology has made other lower cost avenues available. At the same time that was happening, the cost of telephone lines was increasing. And quality is improving through a non-line broadcast.

So with a remote transmitter, we broadcast through a mobile news unit on a separate frequency back to the control board, where it is processed and sent to the transmitter, and then the listener hears it. If you can broadcast through a transmitter, not using a telephone line, you usually get better quality and also usually save money on the technical costs. Networks, for instance, were distributed by telephone line. That's where it gets its name - "network". A wire was strung from New York to Philadelphia to Pittsburgh to Columbus to Indianapolis and to Decatur, etc. The distribution system, the network of wires all across the country, distributed this CBS radio network, all by

telephone wire. The networks now distribute by satellite. It goes from the network in New York or Los Angeles, wherever it originates, in an uplink from an earth station up to a satellite and then is received at all the receiving stations. Telephone lines are no longer routinely used for network broadcasts.

Q. Remote broadcasting made play-by-play sports broadcasting possible, didn't it?

A. It sure did! I guess that was one of the major changes in radio programming - the ability to do an on-the-spot remote broadcast from a special event, like a very exciting baseball game - the world series - or in Decatur, high school basketball - "The Running Reds from Kintner Gymnasium!" or "The University of Illinois Basketball!". As a matter of fact, WJBL broadcast its first University of Illinois basketball game in 1938. The U of I played I.U. at Bloomington, Indiana. Listeners in Decatur back in 1938 - 49 years ago - heard that broadcast. In that same year on December 17, 1938, the first remote high school basketball game with Decatur High School playing at Effingham was broadcast, and I'll bet it was Merrill Lindsay who did the play-by-play of the game. He was good at play-by-play sports. Super!

Q. Did you ever have to broadcast any disasters or emergencies?

A. One of the radio's great strengths is the ability to be on-the-spot quickly, to reach the individual at times when another medium cannot, and radio has been the primary source of information during emergency circumstances or situations.

Take something like the tragedy of a tornado. A tornado comes through and hits a village or a section of Decatur, as has happened a time or two. It tears down buildings, and the storm has also associated with it enough wind that it will cause power to be out. Your television is powered by AC electricity. Very few people have battery-powered television receivers. Most of us have television sets that don't operate if the power is out. But you do have radio. Radio stations, many of them, have their own generators. This station has two of them. When power goes out, we can still broadcast. Television stations do not have generators. So the television station cannot broadcast, but the radio station can. You in your home cannot receive television anyway if it were on the air, but you can receive radio on your transistor receiver or your car radio. So radio then has the responsibility and the opportunity to serve a great need in times of emergency or disaster, and has done so, many times. This radio station has been on the air many times when no other broadcast medium was available.

The most memorable time in my 25 years or so in Decatur radio was an ice storm Easter weekend in 1978. It was Good Friday. A light rain was falling. The temperature was hovering right at the freezing point. Before long, the power lines snapped and the entire community lost power. Illinois Power, as I recall, had four main transmission lines serving Decatur from outside sources in the four different directions.

One of those main lines would go down so a part of Decatur would be out of power, and then a few hours later another would go down. Before long, the entire community was without power. The radio stations that did not have generators were off the air. Our stations were the only ones, I believe, in a forty mile radius, that were on the air for a great part of that weekend. It was several days before some people in the community had power restored. Much of the community had power by Easter Sunday or the day after. Some people in the rural areas didn't get power back for as long as two weeks later.

So we were the only source of information for a large number of people. In a circumstance like that, we forego all of the routine business we usually do. We routinely have a commercial at a certain time. No, we don't do that. We routinely have a music program that includes this or that kind of music at a certain time. No, no, no. We stop all of our regular broadcasting and go completely to information broadcasting.

The responsibility that I mentioned earlier about serving the public need is far greater and more important than regulations dictate. A good radio station is not at all bothered by that regulation that I discussed earlier.

Q. You have to do it anyway?

A. You have to do it! You want to serve the public! That's your real responsibility. This radio station has taken that seriously for a long time. We interrupt all commercial programming - all of our regular programming - and offer information. We try to gather needed information and provide that information. "When is the power going to come back on?" "How can I keep the meat in my freezer from thawing?" "What do I do? Any steps I can take?" "How do I keep warm?" "Where do I go to keep warm if my house is so cold?" "Where do I take my pet?" "I have two little youngsters, and it's 35 degrees in this house. What can I do?"

All of those needs have to be addressed by someone, and this radio station, in a circumstance like that, is the one who can serve.

There comes a snow emergency in the winter time. You are snowed in. The whole community is snowed in. This has happened many times over the years. There is a lady in a farm community fifteen miles out who is about to go into delivery. She can't get to the hospital. You have to get the lady to a doctor or the obstetrician to the lady. When other sources can't find a way to get them together through the normal routine, this radio station has served the need, found someone with a snowmobile, got the doctor, and got the two together. This radio station has served that kind of need. It has served as a catalyst at times of emergency.

Q. And people appreciate that service.

A. I think so. Little things like school closings sound little now as we talk about it on a sunny day in the summer time, but in the winter time when there are several thousand school students who can't know if their schools will be open because of last night's snowfall, it's a big thing. So we supply that information.

Q. So you certainly have showed us that radio is a great source of information as well as entertainment. It's local and builds the neighborhood, doesn't it?

A. Radio has an opportunity to pull a community together. It has an equal opportunity to tear it apart. But it has the opportunity to pull the community together, to build a spirit because of the power of the medium. I hope we do it as an industry. I think we do.

Q. I think so, too. You can see that this will be the future of radio, too. Do you think there will be changes or will it be more of the same?

A. There are a lot of changes that are taking place. One item of history I failed to stress is the place of FM in the medium. There was a time when FM, here and in most communities, was a step-sister to AM. AM had the dominant audience, and FM was on the air but programmed in the most inexpensive way in a lot of places, either broadcasting the same programs as its sister AM station or in many markets broadcasting albums of beautiful music placed on the turn table. When one album had finished, another followed. That was the most inexpensive way to program. The reason you had to do it inexpensively is that you had very little revenue because you had fewer listeners.

Then FM became very strong. It has much better technical quality than AM has had. It became very strong, and in most markets in the country these days FM has more listeners than AM.

So that was true here. We changed our FM station. We changed our programming. We developed a much better audience for FM than we had ever had before, but another thing happened. Another FM station comes into the market. Here comes WDZQ, an FM station with country and western music. They signed on in about 1978. Here comes another one, WXFM, which is really licensed to Mt. Zion, but it's a Mt. Zion-Decatur station, to all intents and purposes a Decatur area station. The FCC has opened the window for another FM station, which could conceivably come to Decatur within the next three or four years. There might be an additional radio station here.

So that is one of the changes that has taken place in the radio, including radio in Decatur - more signals, more local stations. Technological changes include AM stereo. Many radio stations across the country are now broadcasting in stereo on the AM - not possible five years ago. There are some who think that's going to be the salvation of AM radio. They think AM radio is on the way out because of the technological superiority of the FM signal, and along comes the ability to broadcast in

stereo on AM, and they think "Oh, that's going to bring AM back to life."

Personally, I don't think so. Radio stations may broadcast in stereo, but you don't have a stereo receiver in your car. Then that stereo signal means nothing to you. That's the case with most people. So I don't think that's going to be a major change, but it's talked a lot in the industry these days. The quality will improve, though.

And the quality of programming will improve in the future. The quality of local involvement by radio stations in local programming will improve as competition gets tougher and tougher and tougher. Radio stations will have to do a better job!

Q. They will, too! You talked about the field of radio. What about you, yourself, Mr. Graham? How did you happen to get into this area of work?

A. My interest started in a high school speech class.

Q. Where did you go to high school?

A. In Rushville, Indiana. I was in a high school speech class. George Pond was our speech teacher. There was a radio station in the town of Connorsville, Indiana, about 20 miles east of us. He made arrangements with that radio station that our high school speech club would produce a radio program on their station at 2 o'clock in the afternoon once a month or so. So we would rehearse a radio play or a radio comedy for several days in our classroom. Then we would go over and we'd be on the air! Our high school would turn on the PA system so the radio station could be heard throughout the building. That's where my interest started.

Then I went on to school in Portland, Oregon, and started in radio in 1961 in a radio station in Hillsdale, Michigan - WCSR in Hillsdale, Michigan. Then I came here, and I've been here ever since.

Q. Good! You have given us a good idea of your philosophy of broadcasting. The public is your main concern, right?

A. Well, yes. If you do not serve the public, they're not going to listen to you. Some people apologize to me, saying, "I never listen to your station." I say, "Don't apologize. If we're not serving you, if were not giving you want you want, you shouldn't listen to us." It doesn't offend me at all. Of course, we all know we can't please everyone. Nobody can. But a radio station that serves a need is going to be listened to. We have the ability to influence. Because we can influence, we have the ability to sell commercials, advertising, which then gives us the ability to have a staff of people. It's the free enterprise system. The more people we have on the staff, doing a better job, the better job we'll do. It's the domino theory, the old life cycle. We just keep on doing better. It all starts with giving the customer what they

want. That's my philosophy in programming and in business. If you give the customer something that will benefit him and something he wants, he will take it. He'll take it from you - you're not selling it to him. He takes it from you. If he needs it and wants it, he'll take it, whether he's a listener to a broadcast station or a buyer of commercial advertising.

Q. Well, I'm sure the people of Decatur appreciate what you and others broadcasting in this area have done for them. As we said in the beginning, it's difficult to conceive of life today without broadcasting. We do appreciate your efforts.

A. It's fun remembering. Thank you for including me.

Q. We appreciate very much your sharing these experiences with us, Mr. Graham. Thank you.

This is Betty Turnell speaking for the Decatur Public Library.