

AM RADIO PROVES VIABLE MEDIUM IN UPPER VALLEY.

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Commercial radio in the U.S. came into its own just after World War I. Arguably the first trade-off was born in 1919 when an engineer for Westinghouse, Dr. Frank Conrad, broadcasting from his garage in Pittsburgh, PA, made a deal with a local retailer to supply him with phonograph records to fill air time. In return Conrad agreed to mention the name of the shop on the air. Westinghouse began their own broadcast operation as KDKA in 1920 and manufactured several hundred radio sets, placing some in stores, hotel lobbies and other public places around the city to insure an audience.

Much of the early radio was talk, and until the end of 1940, all commercial radio broadcasting in the country was by AM. Such stations transmit their signal by varying the strength of the radio waves (amplitude modulation) whereas FM stations, such as those that first came on line in 1941, transmit by varying the frequency of the waves (frequency modulation). This characteristic allows FM a greater range of sound, or what is known in the trade as *improved fidelity*.

Between 1950 and 1960, the number of radios in the United States rose from 50 million to 150 million. The development of transistor radios was partly responsible for the

increase, as was the popularity of car radios and the custom of keeping several radios in each household. In the 1960s, radios outsold TV sets two to one. More and more radio stations came on line to meet demand. By the end of 1987, there were 10,219 radio stations broadcasting in the U.S.; 4,903 were commercial AM stations.

There are 52 radio stations in New Hampshire, including five college stations. Vermont has 45 stations, three of them run by colleges. With the exception of a Claremont simulcast operation that began in 1948, AM stations dominated the air waves of the Upper Valley until the 1970s when three of the five local AMs added an FM signal to their operations. Today, all five Upper Valley AM stations, WTSV, WTSL, WDCR, WCNL and WNHV, operate in conjunction with an FM station. They share other characteristics as well; each broadcasts at 1,000 watts (except WCNL), each stresses news and information programming including network affiliation and syndicated programs, and each sees itself as a community oriented station. Despite the similarities, each also has carved its own niche in the listening public.

WCNL - 1010

WCNL is a station in transition. Es-

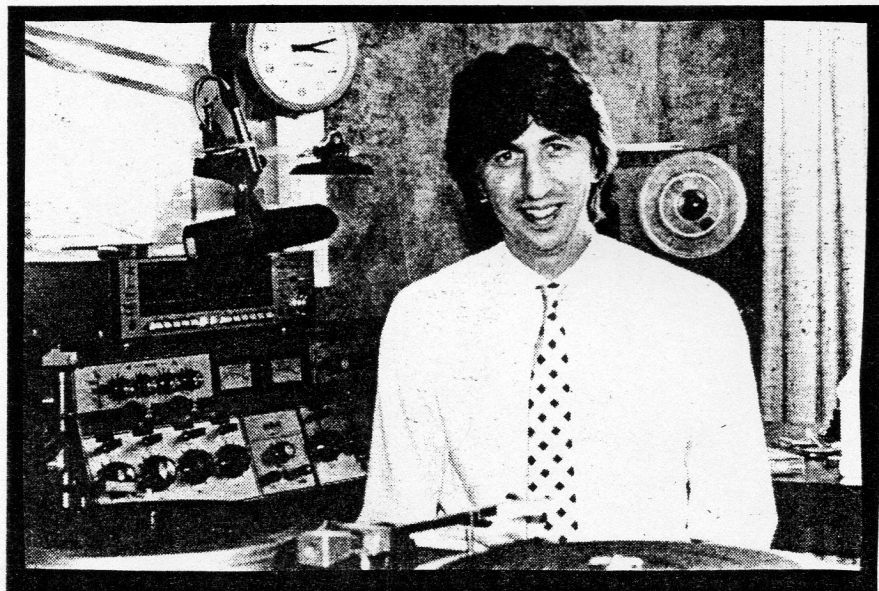
tablished in 1960 it has, like most other small rural radio stations, changed hands over the years. Recently Bruce and Susan Lyons, principal owners of RadioActive Group of Vermont, agreed to purchase WCNL and its simulcast FM (WCNL-FM) for \$750,000 from Sugar River Broadcasting, Inc. a division of The Lowe Group of Companies out of Boston. A sales agreement pending F.C.C. approval will transfer ownership of the AM station from the Lyons' company to Bob Vinikoor, owner of Satellite Video in West Lebanon and Koor Communications. Vinikoor will pay \$250,000 if the government approves the transaction.

Changes already are in the works according to the General Manager of WCNL and WCNL-FM, Greg Price. Last year, Sugar River Broadcasting, Inc. sought and was granted permission by the F.C.C. to increase power on the AM station. As a result, the AM will boost its signal from 250 watts to 6,500 watts.

"The station will have a city-grade signal over a much larger area," says Price. "The station will come in like a local station in markets like Springfield and Hanover. In the south it'll get down to Keene, and over in the east it'll get over to Concord. At the same time, we'll be switching frequency. We'll be moving from 1010 to 1020.

"The idea was that we'd be able to increase our market share by having an AM that could get ratings in a market like Hanover, or south down in Keene, plus have more of an impact in Springfield. It basically was to create another regional option for advertisers. Also, another factor was that if for some reason the company wanted to sell the properties, a 6,500 watt AM would fetch a higher price than a 250 watt AM." According to Price, the increased power will give the AM station the most powerful AM radio signal in the Twin States. Under F.C.C. guidelines Vinikoor, as new owner, would have to implement the change by September of this year.

According to Price, upon sale of the AM to Vinikoor, the Call letters would change to WNTK-AM. Price says the decision has not been made whether to continue the classic rock hits format which now characterizes WCNL.



Greg Price is the General Manager of WCNL-AM, which is currently undergoing changes of ownership and which will soon have the most powerful AM signal in the area at 6,500 watts. Prices' decision to stay with the AM station is an indication of his faith in AM radio.