



"Classical Showcase" with Scott Rowland sounds like old times to WNAD fans.

KGOU/FM 106

Carrying on a Tradition

"This is KGOU, Norman, FM 106, broadcasting National Public Radio from the University of Oklahoma."

The voice is that of (James L.) "David" Tucker. Along with more than 60 students and other volunteers, he's receiving professional broadcasting training. At the same time he's carrying on the tradition of

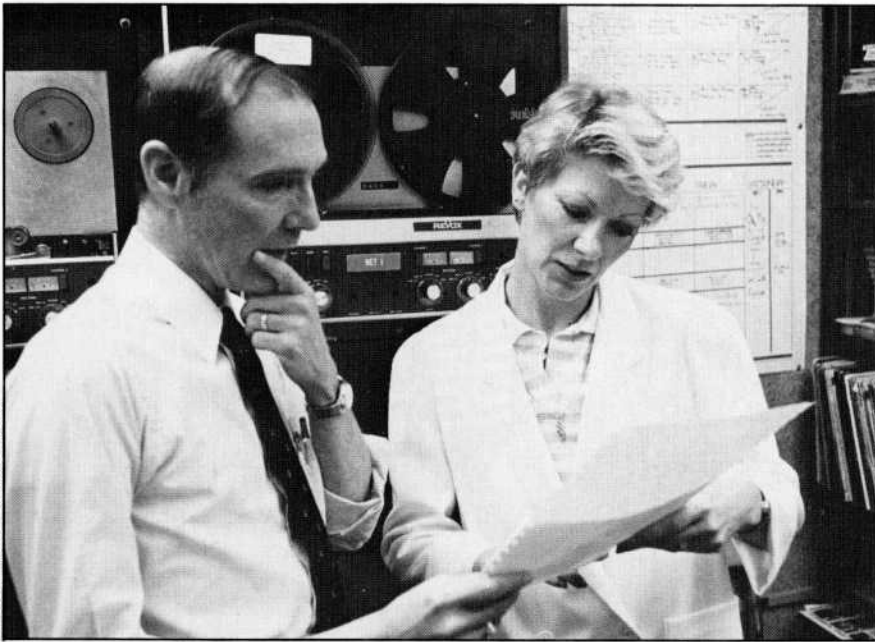
fine radio established by WNAD, the University of Oklahoma's first broadcasting facility and one of early-day radio's most renowned educational outlets.

At 6:00 a.m., five days a week, Tucker's voice opens "Morning Edi-

tion," a highly popular KGOU/NPR network news show. Tucker, a junior majoring in radio/TV/film, serves as the show's on-air host.

Steve Iatrou, production director, frequently also can be found around the studios in the early morning. He tapes NPR network feeds, such as "Playhouse" or "Jazz Alive," which come in early off different satellite

By JOYE R. SWAIN



Increasing outside financial support from listeners and businesses for public radio KGOU is the task facing Betty Hickman, here with Manager Bruce Hinson.

channels, for playback later in the day or week. A junior radio/TV/film major, Iatrou is torn between a Navy career or going into law.

The classical music director, Janet Gadeski-Fisher, a graduate student in music, hosts "Classical Showcase" Tuesdays and Thursdays. Behind the scenes she serves as custodian of the classical library making indices and keeping track of play lists to avoid frequent repetitions of the same selections. Teaching vocal music is her career choice.

None of these students is required to work at the station as part of classroom assignments. In fact, while most staff are drawn from the broadcast curriculum, students majoring in engineering, art, English, and even business are also present. Meteorology majors do the weather reports.

"These volunteers serve a necessary function," explains Bruce H. Hinson, associate professor of journalism and general manager of KGOU. "With only six full-time, paid professionals and seven part-time, student employees, it would be impossible to run the station without the 60 or so volunteers."

Students are not the only volunteers working at the station.

John F. Scamehorn, assistant professor of chemical engineering and

materials science, produces "Broadway Musical Tonight." He plays records from his own personal collection featuring "the best and some of the worst from the Broadway stage and the silver screen."

Rochelle Owens, a New York playwright and poet who recently moved to Norman, hosts "The Writer's Mind." Her interviews with local literary figures are a service to the community, but they also give her a chance to get acquainted. Mike Hammonds, novelist and teacher, produces and hosts a two-hour program of music by contemporary composers. His "20th Century Survey" draws from classical and film score compositions.

"We take being 'public' radio very seriously," says Hinson. "We try to be responsive to what the people want and take advantage of public resources. When we find interested volunteers, like John or Rochelle or Mike, we put them to work."

Student and community involvement has been a part of radio at OU from its very beginning. The first broadcasting unit was constructed in 1921 under the guidance of Maurice L. Prescott, an engineering student. It was located in his home.

In September 1922, the Oklahoma Radio Engineering Company assisted

in purchasing equipment, so that the original WNAD could go into operation. Power: 50 watts. It was the fifth radio station west of the Mississippi River. The equipment was located in Prescott's basement; the studio was in his parlor. The first programs consisted mainly of phonograph records and play-by-play accounts of athletic events.

The next year the installation became a part of the electrical engineering laboratory, and by September work was under way on the construction of a 100-watt station.

New equipment, acquired in 1926, boosted the station's power to 500 watts. Clyde Farrar directed installation and maintenance. Early-day student and faculty volunteers who helped with programming included Ted Beaird, Homer Heck, Walter Emery, Fisher Muldrow and Carl Albert.

John Dunn recalls his arrival at the station in the early 1940s. "We always said the call letters meant 'We Never Are Dull,' but that's just our version. Dr. George Lynn Cross was dean of the Graduate College. We were working out a program for radio instruction. When he became acting president, I became WNAD's acting director.

"We broadcast officially only from sunup to sundown. The only time we were on the air after dark was after World War II. The field house couldn't hold all the students, so when Bruce Drake and his 'Boy Scats' basketball team played, we broadcast the games.

"We were supposed to get the consent of the FCC (Federal Communications Commission) to operate evenings. The chairman was an Oklahoma man and a personal friend. He rammed it through for me."

At that time the transmitter was in the old engineering building. The antenna went from the Union tower to the old power plant smokestack west of Jenkins Avenue.

In planning a new south wing, the Union's board of governors told Dunn he could design studios and offices to be located around Meacham Auditorium. "We ended up with the best studios and offices of any educational radio operation in the United States,"



Meteorology student Tom Miller checks the wire service for last minute weather information for "Oklahoma Newswatch."



Radio-TV-film major Janet Evans verifies a "Newswatch" story with a local source before her 5 p.m. broadcast.

he says. The station began broadcasting at 640 kilocycles from a new 1000-watt transmitter located northwest of town.

In 1949, the station added FM capacity to its original AM.

"WNAD was known for its music programs, its interviews with people of significance in the community and its news coverage," Dunn recalls.

Although Dunn became head of the Oklahoma Educational Television Authority about 1951, he remained as general manager of WNAD until 1954, when he was replaced by Hugh Mix and later by Glen Pool.

The '50s was the Golden Age for WNAD, with such people as Bonnie Hammett, Gaylon Stacy, Jack Ogle, Don Hatch, Mima Candless, Gloria Larson, Bill Boren and Jack Ging getting their start at the studio. Engineers Gene Welch, Gene Morris and Remy Perot watched over the transmitter.

Jess Burkett, Alice Spann and Glen Pool produced radio dramas, usually based on a historical event, for the prestigious "School of the Air." These

were locally written, produced and broadcast. Only two other states had similar programs at the time.

Then WNAD fell victim to budget cuts and in 1962 went commercial. Don Webb came in as general manager. Jerry Hargis and Gene Dillehay followed, struggling to keep the operation going, but in 1972, while Bill Boren was general manager, WNAD was sold.

KGOU came into existence in June 1970, as a FM station broadcasting

**KGOU was born in 1970,
as WNAD fell victim to
budget cuts and failure
as a commercial venture.**

music to the campus dormitories. After the sale of WNAD, the University still needed a broadcast outlet to the community and a training facility for students. KGOU took over that function, serving as a commercial station as well as a training ground. But by that time, radio, both throughout

the nation and at the University, was in a decline. This led to confusion as to where KGOU stood in relation to the University.

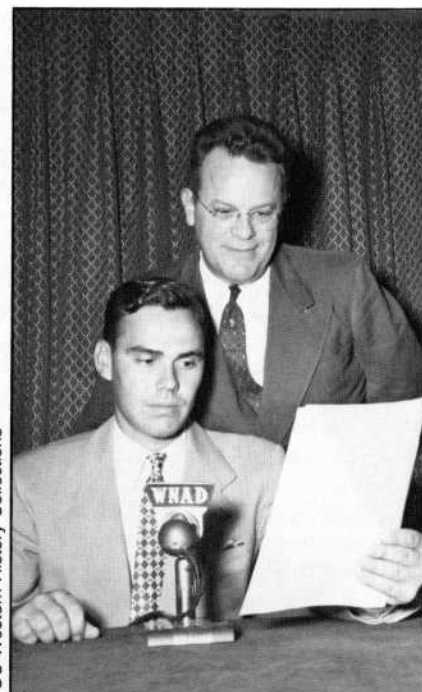
Although the station had lived through the challenge of television and growing listener apathy, possibly its greatest threat went almost unrecognized: Commercial radio had undermined the goals and purposes of a university station. From an educational standpoint, KGOU reached perhaps its lowest point in 1981, when programming featured 13 hours of classical music on Sundays and 150 hours of rock during the week.

Then a country-wide resurgence of interest in radio changed the picture. OU President William S. Banowsky became concerned as to whether the station as it was being run was fulfilling its function as a university educational outlet. In July of 1981, a committee was formed under the leadership of the late Elden Rawlings, director of the H. H. Herbert School of Journalism and Mass Communications, to examine KGOU.

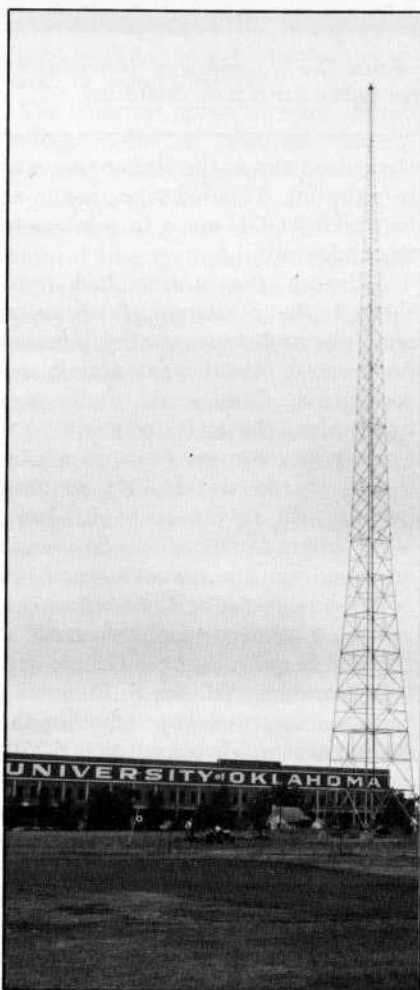
The committee concluded that the



Students at the University's Laboratory School participate in a health program featured on WNAD's highly acclaimed "School of the Air" on May 31, 1948.



Jack Payne, left, checks with WNAD Radio's veteran manager John Dunn.



station was not doing its job and established three goals: offer educational opportunities, provide a good image for the University and render a unique community service.

However, a considerable number of students rallied around the rock image. In September and October of 1981, the controversy reached its peak with support rallies at the Duck Pond and plans to picket a reception for state broadcasters at the journalism school.

But the committee members prevailed and now KGOU follows the blueprint they drew up. At 10:30 p.m., December 31, 1982, KGOU officially became a non-commercial station and a member of the National Public Radio Network.

"We feel this is much more representative of what KGOU should be than its previous format," comments Hinson. "Today, it's more educational. The old format trained DJ's, but that takes only a week. Now, students are more involved in handling community events, news, a variety of types of broadcasting."

In 1941 WNAD's 500-watt transmitter and tower was located by the football stadium on the University campus.

Not that the change came easily. "When we went non-commercial, we had to reprogram our people. We had almost a 100 percent turnover. We lost the people who were only interested in rock-and-roll."

The new approach actually was a return to the principles which guided WNAD. So it's no accident that when Bruce Hinson talks about present-day KGOU, he mentions classical music, interviews with outstanding faculty members and notable Normanites, and news — the same three areas of emphasis John Dunn pointed to with pride as constituting the bulk of early-day WNAD programming.

"We offer programs a commercial station couldn't touch because they wouldn't pay a profit," Hinson elaborates. "We appeal to a specialized audience. That's one thing public radio should do, and we're trying to do it. It means we feature music—predominantly classical—during the day, for instance. We also offer six and one-half hours of news and public affairs each day. That's probably four times as much as any other station in this market."

Further, KGOU is now beginning to win back the audience lost during the period when rock-and-roll dominated its programming. "One of the

most consistent reactions from listeners has been, 'Gee, now it's more like WNAD used to be!' " says Hinson. "People who have been in this area for a long time really had a spot in their hearts for that type of product. It's the kind of broadcasting we're trying to give them. And while KGOU's facility isn't state-of-the-art, it's of professional quality — not just a laboratory toy.

"The station has earned the respect of commercial broadcasters throughout the area for the training and preparation it provides students. People who have worked here are looked at favorably when they apply for jobs in broadcasting."

But why do so many people volunteer?

"It's a labor of love. They could make more money waiting tables, but they're fascinated by the glamor of the radio business. They also realize it's good professional training and gives them an extra line in their resumes to recommend them to employers for any position that involves appearing before the public, public speaking, or a need for personal self-confidence.

"If we've got a weakness, it's lack of public awareness. People simply don't know we're here or, if they do, they don't know what we do.

"The issue's primarily money. Other stations spend on billboards and advertising. We only have word-of-mouth. So, while we're gaining audience, it takes time.

"Our ultimate goal is to become more independent financially. Right now OU pays approximately 75 percent of our costs, and we get the other 25 percent from listener response and donations from commercial sponsors. We'd like to reverse those figures to where OU pays 25 percent and listener/sponsor underwriting pays 75 percent. But that will take at least five years."

Or maybe not. Throughout the United States young people are rediscovering radio. Radio dramas, which were almost totally preempted by television through the '60s and '70s, today are making a comeback. Thus, through National Public Radio, KGOU's offerings span a range from adaptations of "Star Wars" to Steven

OU Western History Collections



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WNAD had come a long way in its first 10 years when the top photograph was taken of the "broadcasting office and operating room" in 1932. In the bottom photo the cast of the radio drama "The Phantom Masque" broadcasts in 1936.

Barlay's espionage thriller, "The Price of Silence." Recent music features have included the American Music Festival, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, and a tribute to the Robert Shaw Chorale. There's a locally written and produced comedy/satire series called "Fair Game." "Oklahoma News-watch" takes the air twice-a-day, five days a week.

Yet KGOU remains essentially a student operation. There are only five full-time employees in addition to General Manager Hinson: Jeff Luchsinger, operations manager; George

Ryan, news director; Betty Hickman, manager of sponsor relations; Catherine Tischler, traffic director; and David White, chief engineer.

It all adds up to 162 hours a week (KGOU is off the air from midnight to 6:00 a.m. Sunday) of quality programming, with features to suit almost every taste and level of discrimination. And while KGOU is providing its audience with fine listening, it's also preparing OU students for the future.

KGOU is a phoenix risen from the ashes of WNAD, determined to be a radio facility OU can be proud of. ☺