

*Radio Free Memphis:  
The WLYX Story*

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This work is dedicated to everyone involved with radio at Rhodes from 1951 to today. Especially the volunteers at WLYX, you made it happen.

When I came to Rhodes in the fall of 2010, I was extremely disappointed to find that there was no college radio station. Well, that's not entirely true there was a small digital transmitter with a broadcast radius of about two blocks outside of campus. It could also be streamed online. I had a show that played cover versions and bootleg recordings that aired Friday nights around six. It was fun, but it wasn't what I knew college radio to be.

I grew up in the relatively rural town of Fayetteville, Arkansas. When I was growing up it was pretty hard to find a place that sold hardcore, new wave, or alternative records. Most of the live bands played in bars with a 21 and up policy. Luckily I had an uncle who had managed the University of Arkansas' radio station, KXUA, when he was in college and he showed me where I could find the music I wanted to hear.

Without KXUA, I never would have discovered artists like Guided by Voices, Bonnie Prince Billy, or Steve Lehman, music that I still love today. I probably never would have found hip-hop that I could get into without Eric Olsen's (DJ Eyo) show "The Concrete Schoolyard." DJs on the station also exposed me to folk music that I considered to be the stuff of museums and heritage festivals before I heard college aged students, whom I idolized, play it on the air. In short, the station gave me a place to explore and discover things I couldn't hear anywhere else.

So you can understand my disappointment when I came to college and found that I could get in our neighbor's ear, if they were even listening. I was even more frustrated when the station fell apart completely in 2011.

In 2012, a group of my peers got together to try and revive our defunct equipment and bring some form of radio back to the air. In the process, I became interested in the history of radio at Rhodes. Has it always been this way? Who started radio here? I started my search for answers the way most people do today, with a Google search.

What I found blew me away. A series of photos depicting Frank Zappa, Earle Scruggs among others claiming to have been taken at Southwestern; a recording of Alex Chilton singing a rendition of Dolly Parton's "I will always love you;" I couldn't believe what I was finding. There were also a series of blog posts mentioning a station that dated as far back as the 1970s, that we had even had a tower on campus, and some heated words toward a man named Daughdrill. The strangest part was, when I asked my friends and classmates about it, they had no idea what I was talking about. From that moment, I knew I had to know more.

The story of radio at Rhodes College, then called Southwestern at Memphis, begins on August 14, 1931. President Charles Diehl was contacted by WSM, one of the oldest Nashville based stations, best known for its broadcasts of the Grand Ole Opry in the early half of the twentieth century, and WNBR, a Memphis station, about the possibility of using land on the campus to locate a remote transmitter to relay broadcasts in Memphis. Although the partnership drew the support of Mayor Watkins Overton, the City Board of Adjustments would eventually deny WNBR the approval needed to establish a tower. However, the minutes of an Executive

Committee meeting at Southwestern only two years later on April 25 note that President Diehl had approved a plan to set up a broadcasting station on the campus.<sup>1</sup>

This is some of the last information involving the school's interest in radio until 1951, when Professor of Speech and Drama, Raymond Hill, and professor of Physics, J.S. McCartney sponsored a group of six students who converted a transmitter and surplus parts obtained from the War Assets Administration into a functioning radio station. The console and amplification system were all also constructed by these ambitious students.<sup>2</sup> Most of them were juniors from the class of 1952. John Price was station manager, Fred Pritchard served as consulting engineer along with Jimmy Marks, while Bill Rawlins and Toby Horn directed programming and public relations, respectively. Allen Jaconson was the only freshman involved and he is listed as serving as the station's publicity man. The station was almost completely managed and operated by the students although it was categorized as "purely educational, a laboratory, for any students who wanted "practical radio experience." It was housed in a building known as the "speech shack."<sup>3</sup>

This was the first time the call letters WLYX were used, although the frequency was different. Listeners tuned into 640 on Tuesday January 30, 1951 at 5pm for the stations first test broadcast. Subsequent broadcasts from the 40 watt station were planned over the two-mile

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<sup>1</sup> Executive Committee meeting minutes, January 25, 1951.

<sup>2</sup> The War Assets Administration was an agency established by Harry Truman following World War II to facilitate the sale of surplus military equipment. "Executive Order 9689 - Consolidation of Surplus Property Functions," The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=77986> (accessed July 29, 2013).

<sup>3</sup>"Station to Aid Radio Aspirants at Southwestern," *Commercial Appeal*, 1951.

broadcast radius. A mixture of plays, choral music, news commentaries as well as recorded and transcribed music was to fill out the programming.<sup>4</sup> The schedule would run weekdays from 5pm to 7pm. These hours were chosen because, as Professor Hill explains in a letter to President Rhodes, “little studying is done during this period.”<sup>5</sup>

The station struggled to air regularly until March of that year. Price and Pritchard report having little trouble finding announcers, but finding console operators and engineers proved to be more difficult<sup>6</sup>. By April the station was functioning and gained its own presence on campus, and even broadcast the student elections that took place that month—a move that undercut the efforts of student journalist Bob Starr, who had planned a full page, cover story on the event but was forced to scrap it after WLYX broke the story first.<sup>7</sup> In September, at the beginning of the 1951-1952 school year, positions were vacant and an article ran in the *Sou'wester* requesting new volunteers.<sup>8</sup>

Sometime between then and 1956 the station was abandoned. Regular programming on the same schedule ran that year, this time at 720 on the dial, but by the summer of 1957 it was off the air again. At this point, there was no transmitter tower, but instead broadcasts were emitted from “the hot side of an AC current.” This meant that broadcasts were restricted exclusively to

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<sup>4</sup> Paula Richardson, “Radio Station to Make Bow,” *Commercial Appeal*, January 21, 1951.

<sup>5</sup> Raymond Hill to Peyton Rhodes, January 23, 1951.

<sup>6</sup> “WLYX Hits Personal Snag in Operations,” *Sou'wester*, March 16, 1951.

<sup>7</sup> Bob Starr, “An Open Letter to the Student Body,” *Sou'wester*, April 27, 1951.

<sup>8</sup> “WLYX Engineering Set for Operation,” *Sou'wester*, September 27, 1951.

Southwestern's campus.<sup>9</sup> It would not be until 1972 that WLYX would be able to maintain any sort of stability.

The official story is that in 1971, President Bowden of Southwestern was approached by a committee of The National Ministries of the Memphis Presbytery that was interested in investing in a mass media outlet, instead of paying for regular advertisements. The Memphis Presbytery agreed to provide startup funds in the amount of 6,000 dollars as well as to provide funds annually to keep the station running in exchange for religious music and church service programs every Sunday. They partnered with George McClintock, an employee of the National Cotton Council who also became the station's manager and primary technician, to gather equipment and organize the station. Southwestern agreed to provide space and utilities, but very explicitly refused to pay for the station.<sup>10</sup>

However, there are other sources that credited McClintock with the origin of college radio in Memphis, his "brainchild." A *Sou'wester* article says that in September of 1971, "after being turned down by MSU, McClintock came to Southwestern with his proposal for an educational radio station."<sup>11</sup> It is most likely that McClintock had a big influence on getting both institutions, the Presbytery and Southwestern, interested in the prospect of radio technologies before either considered them independently.

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<sup>9</sup> "Campus Station WLYX Now Operating," *Sou'wester*, March 9, 1956.

<sup>10</sup> Southwestern Committee on Mass Media: Preliminary Report on Radio Station, February 7, 1972.

<sup>11</sup> "WLYX Makes Waves," *Sou'wester*, November 16, 1973.

It is important to understand the unique relationship Southwestern established with the radio station and the unique person that George McClintock was to get a good understanding of the kind of place WLYX was. The school viewed the radio station as something like an appendage. In some of the earliest administrative discussions about WLYX it is made quite clear that it “be self-sustaining with funds that have been contributed for that specific purpose and . . . not be of cost to the College from general college funds.<sup>12</sup>” The Presbytery provided funding, McClintock provided the man power and expertise, while the college housed and named the station. The success or failure of the station again depended on the interest of students and community members, who would have to volunteer and staff the station. It was these volunteers who became the blood and life force of WLYX.

Even McClintock himself was essentially a volunteer, until 1977. Over the course of those six years though he took a 10 watt, experimental station and turned it into a conglomerate of broadcasting services that included three radio stations, and a fully operational television studio; he also filed for licenses for shortwave and AM stations.<sup>13</sup> By 1973, WLYX alone was valued at 75,000 dollars.<sup>14</sup>

Wilson Northcross, another member of the Presbytery, helped McClintock to find equipment. Inherited equipment came from WREC and WCBC, Christian Brothers’ radio, as well as other radio stations around Memphis.<sup>15</sup> A lot of the technology became outdated as

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<sup>12</sup> Robert Patterson to Van Pritchard, December 11, 1972.

<sup>13</sup> Personal Interview with Robert Llewellyn, July 10, 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Meeting of WLYX Committee, November 7, 1973.

<sup>15</sup> Personal Interview with David Saks. July 17, 2013.

commercial radio stations upgraded to solid state transmitters to cut down on the high electrical and maintenance cost of tube transmitters. The tube technology may have contributed to the strong, clear signal that caught the attention of so many listeners.<sup>16</sup>

The station was housed on the fourth floor of Mallory Gym at Southwestern, with volunteers gaining access to the space by having a key dropped to them from the fourth story window.<sup>17</sup>

The young station maintained a broadcast radius of about 10 miles at 16 watts for the first three months and then in January applied for and was granted a 1000 watt increase from the FCC thereby expanding the stations reach to about 35 miles. When it debuted in October of 1972 it became the tenth FM-station in Memphis at 87.9 on the dial. The school's plans for the station's programming originally are listed as "high quality programming . . . classical music, broadcasting of athletic events, and discussion forums." The station was intended as a public relations medium to "present Memphians with an idea of what is going on here at Southwestern," although this seemed not to include rock, jazz, or any other popular music form.<sup>18</sup> In Memphis at the time, the market for progressive rock was maintained by FM 100 and there were almost no outlets for jazz on the radio. This began to change very quickly with the addition of WLYX to the airwaves. The informal nature of McClintock's operation and lack of oversight from the school allowed DJs to play what they wanted to.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Personal Interview with Joe Spake, June 20, 2013

<sup>18</sup> WLYX Committee Meeting Minutes, November 11, 1976.

David Less, owner of Memphis International Records and Southwestern alum of the class of 1974, was one of the first disc jockeys at the station as well as the first music director. Less had a Saturday night jazz show, one of only two in the city at the time. The show featured artists like Chick Corea, Anthony Braxton, Ornette Coleman, Eric Dolphy, and John Coltrane. For many of these artists it was the first time they ever received air time in Memphis.<sup>19</sup>

Less helped to build the fledgling music library at WLYX. When he was not attending classes, Less worked at Poplar Tunes, a legendary record store and hangout in Memphis. This connection gave Less access to promotional releases as well as ear to the ground as to who was coming through town.

Bob Kelly and Pete Pizzorelli were music promoters who operated through Poplar Tunes. They respected Less' musical knowledge and would often contact him in order to find out which records were selling well in order to supply the demands of the fans. It was these friendships that would allow Less to secure an interview with experimental rock guru Frank Zappa. Less remembers the day well.

I set up the Frank Zappa interview and arranged for him to come to the station, and when I got there some guy, George [McClintock] introduced me . . . the new station something-or-other . . . said I am going to do the interview with Zappa.<sup>20</sup>

Less' response was immediate, "I said no . . . no, no, no." But Less was left without a choice, the new volunteer's status outranked his own and he was forced to share the interview. "One of these jerks sitting here," Less said as he indicated to an excellent photo documenting the event (see

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<sup>19</sup> Personal Interview with David Less, June 14, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

figure 1), taken by fellow WLYX volunteer Joe Spake, “I think it’s the guy next to me, kept pushing the microphone back and forth, he wanted to ask a question then I wanted to ask a question . . . it was a real issue with me. I look pissed off because I really was pissed off. But, other than that literally never did I ever have a problem with anybody there.”<sup>21</sup>



Figure 1. Joe Spake—all rights reserved.

Sometimes hosting artists at the station could become more of a chore than a pleasure. In order to stay on the good side of the record promoters, radio DJs like Less would have to provide them with promotional services of their own. In 1975, Less received a call late one night from a promoter with Bell Records about an artist named Barry Manilow on his first tour who would be

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid

in town the next day. The promoter asked if Less could arrange an interview and he agreed to do it.

The next day Manilow landed at Memphis International with his manager, his band and even his backup singers. They had no transportation to the station. The promoter had forgotten about the interview. Manilow and company managed to secure cabs to the station and Ron Olson, another DJ who got his start at WLYX and is now one of the longest running DJs at FM 100, conducted the interview (see Figure 2). After the interview was over, however, the singer and his entourage became stranded at the college. They asked for directions and discovered that the hotel they were staying at was about 2 miles away. They had packed up and started making their way by foot before Less and Olson could stop them and offer them a ride.



Figure 2. Joe Spake—all rights reserved.

WLYX was ground zero in Memphis for many emerging artists who would come to dominate the commercial rock scene in the 1970s. In a telling blog post for the Memphis Daily News, Bill Dries, who became an integral part of the station's news program after he started volunteering in 1976, recalls a *mélange* of artists who traveled up the stairs of the tower. John Prine, Supertramp, and Black Sabbath are some of the more notable visitors. Running late to catch an interview along with the rest of the band, Bill Ward, the drummer for Black Sabbath “fell down the stairs on his way up. For a few very anxious seconds in which his hosts wondered if they had killed the drummer for Black Sabbath, Ward didn't move but then dusted himself off and caught up with the rest.”<sup>22</sup> Earl Scruggs, Janis Ian, Willis Alan Ramsey, and Sid Selvedge are also documented guests among many other unreported artists.<sup>23</sup>

Though musicians frequented WLYX, the station made a name for itself as a freeform, album station. Disc Jockeys would feature a particular artist such as the Beatles or The Mothers of Invention, and play entire records by that artist, one side and then the other. There were “no commercials, of course, the less talk the more music; seemed to be a good formula for success at WLYX.”<sup>24</sup> DJs could play really whatever they pleased, in any manner that struck their fancy.

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<sup>22</sup> “On New Photos of Old Times,” Bill Dries, Memphis Daily News Blog <http://blog.memphisdailynews.com/?p=3327> (accessed July 29, 2013).

<sup>23</sup> Personal Interview with Joe Spake, June 20, 2013.

<sup>24</sup> Personal Interview with David Saks, July 17, 2013.

David Saks, maintained an early interest in radio communication through Boy Scouts and “sneaking into Navy Reserve Morse Code Electronic classes.”<sup>25</sup> By the age of fourteen, Saks was sending and receiving Morse code at approximately 35 words per minute. He currently DJs at WUMR at University of Memphis. In 1972, Saks remembers assisted DJ Ron Michaels of FM 100 pulling records for him in addition to volunteering time at WLYX. One day, Michaels gifted him a new record a promoter had sent him.

“You need to take this over to Southwestern station . . . they might like this, but I can’t play this, I don’t think anybody is going to like this guy.” When Saks asked who was on the album, Michaels responded, “Well, he calls himself Billy Joel . . . you’ll be the first guy in town to play a Billy Joel record.” The album was Cold Spring Harbor. Listeners called in with exclamatory praises and urgent inquiries, “Who is this guy?” Saks remembers one caller asking, “He’s better than Paul McCartney.” All he could reply with was “well, he calls himself Billy Joel.”<sup>26</sup>

WLYX was not only a place where musicians from other parts of the country broke ground in Memphis; it was also a foyer for local players and fans with an inclination for the weird. After 1975 when Stax records were forced to close its doors, most of the people associated with the professional music industry fled to cities like Nashville where work was still available. People who stayed either couldn’t make money playing or were seen as boarding on

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<sup>25</sup> David Saks used be dropped off at the naval base by his parents along with fellow scout, Rubel Bucham. The naval instructors seem not to have minded the boy’s presence. Personal Interview with David Saks, July 17, 2013.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

insanity, as would happen with local hero Alex Chilton.<sup>27</sup> It was around this time that Ross Johnson, drummer for the legendary band Tav Falco's Panther Burns, began helping WLYX DJs Michael Jay Vale and Tim Farr with their record selections. Vale's rockabilly show, Farr's punk rock show and a high pitched, sultry voiced female DJ known simply as "Sybil" peaked Johnson's curiosity in the station which he was able to receive clearly as far out as his home in East Memphis.

Farr's show in particular caught Johnson's attention because, as he explains,

Back in seventy-five there were only a handful of things offered through fanzines and CREEM magazine . . . you would mail-order, so if you heard someone play this on the radio station you knew there was some sort of shared culture . . . I called him . . . went up and we became friends for thirty- six or thirty-seven years until he died.

Radio connected people in a very intimate and immediate way.

[WLYX] became a place for me to meet like minded people . . . that was the origins of some sort of shared punk rock thing here . . . that where I made a lot of friends who ended up eventually playing The Well which became the Antenna<sup>28</sup>.

WLYX was the only place in town where you could hear artists like Jonathan Richman and the Dictators on the radio as well as emerging electronic acts from Germany like Neu.

The Antenna Club at 1588 Madison Avenue was the only venue in Memphis to host punk, new wave, and alternative bands for the better part of the fifteen years it was open. It also began playing music videos on TV sets which were all over the wall a year before MTV came

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<sup>27</sup> Alex Chilton experienced early success with his bands the Box Tops and Big Star, but after they fell apart he began playing in punk bands like the Panther Burns and became more involved with drugs. Many regarded this as a downward turn in his musical career. *Antenna*, DVD, Chris McCoy, 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Personal Interview with Ross Johnson, July 21, 2013.

out.<sup>29</sup> The club attracted everyone from R.E.M and Green Day to Mission of Burma and G.G. Allen. It also gave artists like Tav Falco, Milford and the Modifiers, and the Oblivians a place to perform.<sup>30</sup> Without WLYX though, it very well may have never happened, or at the very least, it would have looked quite different without it.

Alex Chilton utilized WLYX as a launching pad for different stages in his career. One of the first times Chilton played “post Box Tops was over at the Gym, he played with Lesa Aldridge and Karen Hampton " in a band known as Dan Green and the Scurvy Girls. In 1975, Chilton and band mate Jody Stephens along with Lesa Aldrige visited WLYX which would be “the last place Big Star played a radio broadcast . . . a real luded out affair.”<sup>31</sup> The recording from this session still exists in various forms on the internet but includes rare covers of songs like Dolly Parton’s “I Will Always Love You” and “Death-cab for Cutie” by the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band. These strange, highly creative, sometimes tragic recordings offer a window into the direction Chilton would take with later work on albums like *Like Flies on Sherbert*.

Joe Spake hosted a show that highlighted records by Memphis musicians.<sup>32</sup> Les Birchfeild and Don McGregor inherited Spake’s Monday night slot and started a program called “Sittin’ In,” which hosted roots artists like Furry Lewis, Ed Finney, James Williams,” and “The Amazing Rhythm Aces, who played their “first live show ever” there.<sup>33</sup> Jim Dickinson and Willis

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<sup>29</sup> *Antenna*, DVD, Chris McCoy, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Ross Johnson, Additional *Antenna* Footage, Chris McCoy 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Personal Interview with Joe Spake, June 20, 2013.

<sup>33</sup> “WLYX Radio Rhodes/Southwestern at Memphis,” Don McGregor, Facebook, July 9, 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/WLYXMemphis> (accessed July 29, 2013).

Alan Ramsey were also interviewed on that show which began broadcasting out of the studio but eventually moved to “The Thirsty Elephant on Southern Ave and ran . . . through phone lines back to the station.”<sup>34</sup>

Local music returned the love to WLYX time and time again. In 1979, DJs Wes Maddox and George Fant put on the “First Annual Soybean Harvest Jam” at the Shelby County Penal Farm, now Shelby Farms, during one of the many financial crises experienced by the station. The two volunteers received special permission from the county authorities to hold to festival. They charged 2 dollars for admissions and also had beer and food vendors. When the call went out for bands to provide their time to fill out the lineup, Memphis acts like The Randy Band, Companion, Sarah and the Eyes, Rainbow’s End, among several others responded with haste. Even established, national acts such as Charlie Daniels called in to support the cause.<sup>35</sup>

The event was held on 20th and 21st of October. Penny Edmondson, assistant music director at the time, told the *Commercial Appeal* that she estimated between 800 and 1000 people attended each day. Over 4000 dollars was raised for the station, a quarter of its annual budget.<sup>36</sup> Several years earlier in 1974 and 1975, similar events were held at Fargason Field on Southwestern campus. Estimated attendance for those events was around 2000 people. WLYX

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> “Soybean Harvest Jam to break fast from starting gate,” *Commercial Appeal*, October 22, 1979.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

was responsible for any damage to the track or football field but nothing suggests that there was ever a problem.<sup>37</sup>

Other fundraising events were held on campus or at local clubs and bars. Throughout 1981, weekly concerts were put on at the Pogo Club by a group known as Friends of WLYX.<sup>38</sup>

WLYX wasn't just about rock n roll. It helped to put Southwestern on the map nationally and in the hearts of locals with its dedication to news, classical music, and niche genres such as bluegrass. In the summer of 1978, Memphis experienced a devastating series of police and firefighters strikes in response to new public employee contracts, which were attended by "attended by vandalism and numerous acts of arson."<sup>39</sup> News director Elvin Sledge and understudy Bill Dries received a letter from Jeff Sprang, Director of News for the American FM Radio Network, recognizing their reporting in addition to their "good actuality material . . . the heart of broadcast news."<sup>40</sup> Actuality material is live or uncut recordings that relay information as it happens in real time to listeners. Sledge's and Dries' reporting was syndicated all over the country.

As early March 9, 1973, WLYX contracted equipment from United Press International under leadership of Rhy Schoels to have a national and international news service broadcast.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Tom Kepple To Marshall P Jones

<sup>38</sup> WLYX Staff, "Listeners Stunned by Shutdown" Commercial Appeal, June 1982.

<sup>39</sup> "The Memphis Police and Firefighters Strike of 1978: A Case Study," Labor Law Journal, Herbert Northrup and J. Daniel Morgan, January 1981, 40

<sup>40</sup> Jeff Sprang to Elvin Sledge, August 16, 1978.

<sup>41</sup> "WLYX to Offer News Program," *Sou'wester*, March 9, 1973.

Although it was not the only station in the news business by a long shot, WLYX served as a conductor by which goings on in Memphis could be brought to the attention of the rest of the world and vice versa. Southwestern became the institutional face of that conductor and WLYX its ability to speak and listen.

While the core audience of the station was most likely made up of college aged and high school aged students, programming was also geared toward older audiences. Larry Adams 71' was the director of classical music from the earliest days until August 17, 1976 when he resigned to work at WPLN, Nashville Public Radio. His show "Classics by Request" was very popular. In his resignation letter he thanked WLYX "for getting my start in radio . . . indeed, I owe my future work to the station."<sup>42</sup> Adams reported listeners responding to the station in "Millington, Cordova, Germantown, and as far away as Jackson, TN" within 1973.<sup>43</sup> Southwestern President Jim Daughdrill went as far as to call Adams "Memphis' premiere 'Classical announcer.'"<sup>44</sup>

WLYX was a reputed source for bluegrass, world music, as well as diverse forms of jazz. The Shelby County Farm and Poultry Show, one of if not the longest running show, started airing in 1979.<sup>45</sup> In 1973, Dan Evans was sought out following a "Mass Media Committee's March 4 proposal that Southwestern hire an African-American to integrate and disseminate "black culture" from the college's radio. For at least the remainder of that year, Evans, the "electronic sorcerer in residence," hosted a twice-weekly program called Kaleidoscope, which spotlighted

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<sup>42</sup> Larry Adams to George McClintock, August 26, 1976.

<sup>43</sup> Larry Adams to Southwestern Faculty, October 10, 1973.

<sup>44</sup> James Daughdrill to Larry Adams, August 24, 1976.

<sup>45</sup> "WLYX's Two Saturday Shows Sample the Offbeat", *Sou'wester*, March 22, 1985.

artists like B.B. King, Billie Holiday, Nancy Wilson, and Isaac Hayes. He also hosted another program known as “The Jazz Lab.”<sup>46</sup> While the Communication Committee’s proposal was problematic, it at least showed some conscientious effort on the part of the college to embrace diverse communities outside of Southwestern itself.

Professors were given the opportunity to host original programs. “Cinema 89,” by Bernice Williams, “Gutenberg Galaxy,” by Richard Wood, and “Cooking with Priscilla,” by Priscilla Apperson, were all faculty produced programs as early as 1973.<sup>47</sup> Even President Jim Daughdrill proposed his own program, entitled “Man Talk.”<sup>48</sup> The program was based on his book of the same name and intended to provide prayers along with interviews" for young businessmen. In 1974, when Nancy and James Vest produced a series on public affairs, they implored McClintock to include more “jazz, bluegrass, and classical” as well as less “‘R & R’ programming,” presumably meaning rock n roll. Later, the Foreign Language department hosted a series of shows presenting US news from non-native perspectives.<sup>49</sup> Adams and President Daughdrill himself, frequently wrote to faculty and staff to encourage their involvement with the station, but there seems to have been relatively little response from them.<sup>50</sup> These sorts of programs were probably even less popular with the listening audience, for as McClintock noted

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<sup>46</sup> “Evans DJ’s The Jazz Lab,” *Sou’wester*, January 26, 1973.

<sup>47</sup> Larry Adams to The Members of Southwestern Faculty, October 1973.

<sup>48</sup> James Daughdrill to George McClintock, November 26, 1973.

<sup>49</sup> Personal Interview With Robert Llewellyn, July 10, 2013.

<sup>50</sup> Larry Adams to Members of Southwestern Faculty, 1973; James Daughdrill to Memebers of the Faculty and Administration, November 27, 1973.

in a 1973 station Committee meeting, WLYX had already made a name for itself as “as a station with a message to young people.”<sup>51</sup>

The Memphis Presbytery had similar trouble making use of its investment. In November of 1974, a Communications Cabinet was formed to “act as a liaison between the Presbytery and WLYX.” The committee was also designed to help different congregations make use of WLYX. On January 16, 1975, President Daughdrill wrote Germantown, First, and Second Presbyterian Churches to invite them to “any group in your church interested in producing or recording a program for broadcast.”<sup>52</sup> This coincides with the Memphis Presbytery increasing its annual gift from 6,000 dollars to 16,000 dollars.<sup>53</sup> Still, most WLYX listeners did not come to the station for evangelical reasons.

Administrators found themselves frustrated by WLYX's perplexing success and popularity, despite recurring problems. The station had originally been founded with the aim of programming that adhered to a “level of cultural excellence in the various scientific, social, artistic, and humanistic areas that the college itself is interested in.”<sup>54</sup> Instead, the formatting was mostly Jazz and Classical in the daytime with rock n roll in the evenings and on Saturdays. Sundays would still be reserved for religious programming. Ross Johnson observed though that most anyone coming in after nine was probably high or drunk. This and the general antipathy

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<sup>51</sup> Meeting of WLYX Committee, November 7, 1973.

<sup>52</sup> James Daughdrill to Denton McLellan, David Freeman, and Henry Russell, January 16, 1975.

<sup>53</sup> Charles Harvey to WLYX, February 4, 1975.

<sup>54</sup> Southwestern Committee on Mass Media: Preliminary Report on Radio Station, January 7, 1975.

towards institutional control may have contributed to the frequent violation of FCC regulations against cursing and inappropriate subject matter.

Quaalude, a prescription sedative similar to barbiturates, was rampant in Memphis at the time.<sup>55</sup> Southwestern also had a reputation as a party school. David Saks recalls seeing marijuana plants four-feet high growing from planters outside Voorhies dormitory.<sup>56</sup> The drug culture, the free formatting of WLYX, and erratic behavior of some of the volunteers probably became convoluted in the eyes of administration at Southwestern. What future station manager, Karen Luvaas, would comment on years later as “a drug-image.”<sup>57</sup>

The school took advantage of expansions to the electronic media made by McClintock in order to balance out the youthful energies which pervaded WLYX. On June 10, 1974 Southwestern acquired Subsidiary Communications Authorization to license a subcarrier on WLYX. A subcarrier, also called an SCA, is “a separate audio or data channel that is carried along with the main audio signal over a broadcast station.”<sup>58</sup> WLYX’s sub carrier was used to develop the Radio Readers service, for visually impaired and illiterate community members. Since the data is transmitted as a subsidiary signal, Southwestern acquired a grant to acquire 150

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<sup>55</sup> Personal Interview with Ross Johnson, July 21, 2013.

<sup>56</sup> Personal Interview with David Saks, July 17, 2013.

<sup>57</sup> “‘WKRP’ chief tours WLYX,” *Commercial Appeal*, November 23, 1987.

<sup>58</sup> “Broadcast Radio Subcarriers or Subsidiary Communications Authorization,” Federal Communications Commission, <http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/broadcast-radio-subcarriers-or-subsidiary-communications-authority-sca> (accessed July 29, 2013).

special receivers to distribute them to eligible individuals and organizations.<sup>59</sup> A constant concern was the effectiveness of reaching listeners. Each receiver cost 85 dollars in 1976. That's about 350 dollars today.<sup>60</sup> A profile of the program in the *Commercial Appeal* stated that "yes, people are listening," citing the location of one of the transmitters which broadcasted on some days inside the Raymond Skinner Handicap Center. It was determined later, under the leadership of Dean Robert Llewellyn, that in fact very few people, if any, were able to take advantage of the service due to the high cost of SCA receivers.<sup>61</sup>

A second FM station was applied for and granted sometime in the middle of 1974 to help legitimate the radio program. This station would come to be known as WSWM, or "Welcome Southwestern at Memphis!"<sup>62</sup> The station was oriented more towards adult audiences and featured "classical . . . jazz, contemporary . . . and bluegrass" music<sup>63</sup>. In November of 1976, it received a power increase from 10 to 100 watts, allowing it to reach a slightly larger audience. It never grew much larger than this at Southwestern, WLYX always remained the school's flagship station, but WSWM did have a very big impact on the radio Memphis still enjoys today.

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<sup>59</sup> "Radio Readers Have Feeling Efforts Are Being Heard," *Commercial Appeal*, October 17, 1976.

<sup>60</sup> CPI Inflation Calculator, Bureau of Labor Statistics, [http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm) (accessed July 29, 2013).

<sup>61</sup> Personal Interview with Robert Llewellyn, July 10, 2013.

<sup>62</sup> James Daughdrill to Denis Meadows, July 29, 1975.

<sup>63</sup> "Station gets OK for power boost," *Sou'wester*, November, 1976.

While the application was processing through the FCC for WSWM, then called WSWT, another non-commercial radio station had begun the appeal for licensing<sup>64</sup>. This group called itself WEVL, or “WeVolunteer.” In August of 1974, Dennis Baston contacted Dean Robert Patterson about the frequency 90.3 MHz, for which WSWM originally applied, would have caused too much interference with WEVL’s application for 89.9 MHz. Both organizations agreed it was better to seek “compromise” rather “than in pursuing legal action.”<sup>65</sup> By August 26, Southwestern had adjusted its application to 91.7 MHz, thereby creating enough space for WEVL on the dial.

Most listeners of non-commercial radio in Memphis today will recognize the frequency 91.7 as that of WUMR, University of Memphis Radio. In 1975, President Billy Jones of Memphis State approached President Daughdrill “requesting that Southwestern permit Memphis State to apply for a certain FM frequency by waving certain levels of interference . . . with WLYX.”<sup>66</sup> McClintock advised Dean Patterson and President Daughdrill against such again as it would be a violation of FCC regulation.

In 1977, Southwestern did enter into negotiations with Memphis State and by 1979 the license was transferred. The equipment sold for 35,000 dollars.<sup>67</sup> WSWM may have had minimal impact at Southwestern, but its influence on non-profit radio is enormous. It is hard to imagine

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<sup>64</sup> George McClintock to James Daughdrill, November 6, 1974.

<sup>65</sup> Robert Patterson to James Daughdrill, August 22, 1974.

<sup>66</sup> Robert Patterson to James Daughdrill, July 16, 1975.

<sup>67</sup> Robert Mason to Robert LLewellyn, August 30, 1979.

the city or even the Mid-south without WEVL, which is one of the few volunteer stations in the country not affiliated with an institution, and WUMR, the only all jazz station in Memphis.

In reality, programming and public image were a relatively small part of the administration's problems with WLYX compared with some of the internal issues that plagued the station. The larger issue seemed to be the basic lack of student involvement at the station. In 1975, Dean Patterson could only report 25 "Southwesterners," including faculty, staff, students, and alumni, at the station out of a full staff of about 60.<sup>68</sup> By 1979, a "460 percent increase" in student involvement only meant that 23 students were actually scheduled to DJ during that next semester<sup>69</sup>. The majority of volunteers came from Memphis State University, the Elkins Institute, or the Memphis community at large.<sup>70</sup>

One explanation for the lack of students at WLYX was its location on the fourth floor of the gym. Many students and faculty were aware of the station, but many did not know where to find it. In 1982, WLYX would be relocated to the student center in order to increase visibility.<sup>71</sup> Another explanation was the academic relevance of the station and its connection to the curriculum. The Southwestern Drama department included Communications in the 1970s, but there were no professors qualified or interested in instructing courses in broadcasting. There was also the matter of a 'vocational' discipline like radio existing in a liberal arts program.

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<sup>68</sup> Patterson to Southwestern Faculty and Staff, February 27, 1975.

<sup>69</sup> Allen Cook to Robert Llewellyn, January 25, 1980.

<sup>70</sup> "WLYX Makes Waves," *Sou'wester*, Nov 16, 1973.

<sup>71</sup> "WLYX to Broadcast Once More," *Press Scimitar*, September 2, 1982.

Students were not the only resource in short supply. Community volunteers threatened to quit frequently. In 1973, Larry Adams complained about receiving little respect from the administration. After repeatedly requesting funds for basic supplies like additional classical records to expand the small music library and toilet paper, which there was often none of, Adams was told by administrators Lloyd Templeton and Fred Neal, who sat on the WLYX committee, that he was to make due and, that no funds existed for additional records. When Adams was unable to produce the same number of classical programs because he had run out of new material, his superiors accused him of black mail. This hurt Adams deeply. He viewed his service at the station as an alumni donation. He explains in an intense letter to President Daughdrill following the incident, “it is difficult for me to match the sums of money given by a Burrow or a Haliburton, therefore I chose to devote my time and talent to help publicize Southwestern’s ideal of excellence.” When Adams threatened to leave the station, Daughdrill promptly responded and invited Adams to sit in on a Committee meeting to address his concerns to the rest of the administration. Efforts were made at reconciliation<sup>72</sup>.

Elvin Sledge reported being harassed by the head of campus safety, Mr. McGowin. On August 31, 1976, after entering the gymnasium from the unlocked back door and making it all the way to the staircase up to the WLYX studio, Sledge was accosted by Mr. McGowin and asked to leave. When Sledge asked why Mr. McGowin responded, “because I said so” and threatened to call the police. In a letter to President Daughdrill following the incident, he made a point of noting that any police report mentioning Southwestern may have attracted the attention

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<sup>72</sup> Larry Adams to James Daughdrill, November 4, 1973.

of the media, with which, as news director Sledge says, he was well connected. It is also worth noting that Sledge was among the few African American working at WLYX.<sup>73</sup>

No one seems to have gotten more of a rise out of students, community members, faculty, and administrators than George McClintock. He would put workers in odd situations and often act out of impulse. David Saks remembers when he helped McClintock gather together equipment for the yet-to-be WLYX in 1971. He and McClintock went to pick up equipment from Christian Brothers College and stored it in the transmitter shack at Southwestern. “McClintock had forgotten the padlock to put on that building, so he asked me if I would sleep on a cot out there . . . I actually slept in the building the first night we had the equipment out there to make sure everything was safe.” Saks seems not to have minded the experience, even today, but it speaks to the kind of person McClintock was. “In two words . . . a nutcase.”

Once, Saks had the state chess champion as a guest on one of his shows.

“He brought a chess set, he showed me some of the opening positions . . . and we were talking about it on the air . . . McClintock burst into the control room and started screaming 'what are you doing with this chess set.’” McClintock then proceeded to kick the chess set off the control board, sending the pieces flying across the room. The show was still on air.<sup>74</sup>

In 1973, student Mark Collins put forth his own theory on the lack of student interest. McClintock had “openly stated to . . . others he wanted to fire” Collins, while assuring him that “he didn’t want to lose” him. “There are enough of us who love the work and the school who

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<sup>73</sup> Elvin Sledge to Robert Patterson, September 1, 1976.

<sup>74</sup> Personal Interview with David Saks, July 17, 2013.

would gladly devote our energies to building the station,” he writes in a letter to Fred Neal before disclosing his resignation. Evidently there were not enough willing to put up with McClintock.<sup>75</sup>

Volunteer David Sacks (not to be confused with David Saks), agreed with Collins’ assessment of the student involvement problem a year later. He wrote to Llyod Templeton about irresponsible volunteers, the lack of community service, poor station maintenance, and also said that McClintock absolutely forbade any volunteers contact the administration. Templeton wrote Professor Ruffin of the drama department and also of the WLYX committee, “this is not the first time we’ve . . . heard these complaints.”<sup>76</sup>

Ross Johnson saw McClintock in an opposite, yet still negative light. “It’s my belief that George McClintock was hired by the administration to get rid of all the hippie dope smokers.” McClintock would frequently reprimand Johnson’s friends whenever they let him on the air; “Ross Johnson does not have the license to operate . . .”<sup>77</sup> It seems more than anything that McClintock simply wanted autonomy, to be the one in control of things at WLYX.

Roy Twaddle, who was involved with maintaining the grounds at Southwestern, frequently butted heads with McClintock whenever the de facto station head engineer was seeking to expand the radio’s infrastructure. In 1975, around the time McClintock made his most ambitious campaign to build up the station’s facilities, he made plans to install a 3-phase circuit from the gym transformer to the block-house where the transmitter was stored. Mr. Twaddle however, had been told, or thought, that McClintock was only going to install a 1-phase circuit.

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<sup>75</sup> Mark Collins to Fred Neal, September 27, 1974.

<sup>76</sup> Lloyd Templeton to James Daughdrill, December 5, 1974.

<sup>77</sup> Personal Interview with Ross Johnson, July 21, 2013.

When he found out otherwise, he wrote Smith to inform him of the potential impediments it may have caused in the school's future.

This presents future buildings, does not operate within the school's master electrical plan and may exceed monetary restraints . . . WLYX seems to be taking on larger proportions than (the admins) first realized . . . the situation seems to be symptomatic of the College's relationship with WLYX, and particularly with Mr. McClintock.<sup>78</sup>

Twaddle would have to refer to the city authority, Memphis, Gas, Light, and Water to stop McClintock from crossing electrical cables with the guy wires from the stations new tower<sup>79</sup>. It seems McClintock never viewed himself as an underling of the college. He had found a place to work in radio where he could make the most of Southwestern's physical resources and the Presbytery's financial contribution.

McClintock was really the only true authority on radio in any of the decision making process. President Daughdrill and Dean Patterson were forced to refer to his superior knowledge when approached by Memphis State in 1975. The Memphis Presbytery essentially ensured him with responsibility for the thousands of dollars they invested over the first eight years of the stations lifespan. It was largely McClintock who called the shots at WLYX.

This is not to say that McClintock's legacy should be viewed as a bad thing for the station or that he was a malicious person. He was largely the one who defended the station's freeform programming. He is noted as saying in a WLYX committee meeting, "one way to draw large audiences is to let the individual disc jockey do what he wants to do. They are the audience."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Susan Smith to Betty Ruffin, January 9, 1975.

<sup>79</sup> Marshall Jones to George McClintock, April 23, 1975.

<sup>80</sup> Meeting of WLYX Committee, November 12, 1973.

Under his leadership, WLYX took large portions of the audience that had followed FM-100, the seminal rock station in Memphis up to that point. WREC also suffered audience loss during these early years.

Without McClintock, the now infamous radio tower that presided near what are now the soccer fields would have never been constructed. There would have been no physical structure tying radio to the campus, thus making it an easier program to terminate. The 35,000 dollars acquired from the sale of WSWM was reinvested in WLYX, helping to keep the station afloat with a 3500 annual interest for several years after 1980. That would have been impossible without McClintock's earnest and preemptive approach to applying for FCC licenses. Despite these massive contributions, however, as early as 1975 McClintock was being intentionally removed from conversations. Edwin Stock, a representative from the Memphis Presbytery felt that "it would not be wise for George McClintock to present" when he and President Daughdrill met to discuss the 1976-1977 budget proposal, which McClintock had written to the amount of 22,100 dollars.<sup>81</sup>

About three months before he would retire his post as administrator over WLYX, Dean Patterson offered George McClintock the first paid position at the station as Manager. He would receive 900 dollars a month in addition to "social security; life insurance while traveling on college business; and workmen's compensation."<sup>82</sup> McClintock was to be a full time employee of

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<sup>81</sup> Edwin Stock to James Daughdrill, November 12, 1975.

<sup>82</sup> Robert Patterson to George McClintock , April 4, 1977.

the Southwestern radio station. Patterson's farewell gift from McClintock was a WLYX license plate.<sup>83</sup>

For unknown reasons, McClintock did not stay in his new position long. On August 20, 1978, he sent a memo to the WLYX staff informing them that Diane Hellerman was the new station manager.<sup>84</sup> It appears likely that McClintock is the one who made the appointment. The school would ask him to work on payroll once again that December as Chief Engineer, this time for 75 dollars a month despite "expanding other professional obligations."<sup>85</sup> No records indicate that McClintock ever accepted the job.

In August 1979, Dean Llewellyn wrote to President Daughdrill to inform him that "a general manager who was unsympathetic with the missions and goals of the college" had been replaced by a professional from the television industry, Allen Cook.<sup>86</sup> He describes WLYX as a non-asset for the college up until 1978. Plans detailed for the future of WLYX included a greater emphasis on broadcasting sports coverage, to function as a laboratory for the Communications Arts Department, to publicize college events of public interest, to be used as a marketing tool, and the "yet untapped potential of radio . . . as an extracurricular activity for students." Southwestern was beginning to strengthen its ties to the station under the leadership of Dean Llewellyn. It was beginning to become an educational radio station.

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<sup>83</sup> Robert Patterson to George McClintock, June 10, 1977.

<sup>84</sup> George McClintock to all WLYX Staff, August 20, 1973.

<sup>85</sup> Robert Llewellyn to George McClintock, December 13, 1978.

<sup>86</sup> Robert Llewellyn to James Daughdrill, August 2, 1979.

Cook seems to have done a good job following through on these stipulations. Basketball, Baseball, and Football home games were regularly aired throughout 1980.<sup>87</sup> Lectures were broadcast as well. The new station manager even taught courses in broadcasting, directed internships, and hired work-study employees.<sup>88</sup>

In May of 1980 the tides would turn again for WLYX. The Memphis Presbytery began reconsidering its investment in the station due to the lack of responsibility taken for the station by Southwestern.<sup>89</sup> Other than this, there was little information as to why the Presbytery changed its mind so suddenly. When the station almost ran out of funds that spring, volunteers began an aggressive campaign that raised 3000 dollars in addition to grants from P.O.E.T.S Music Hall, which was enough for expenses for the remainder of the school year.<sup>90</sup>

The scarcity of funds caused Southwestern to withdraw a FCC application for a 37,500 watt increase. The application had been in contention with another station's request for a power increase for nearly five years. When President Daughdrill wrote to withdraw the school's application on June 4, 1980, the FCC was able to proceed with WEVL's application.<sup>91</sup>

The Presbytery announced on Wednesday January 21, 1981 that it would reduce its funding by half.<sup>92</sup> This left Southwestern operating on the 3,500 dollars provided from the

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<sup>87</sup> "Lynx turn back Christian Brothers College 71-65," *Sou'wester*, February 1, 1980; "WLYX to Broadcast Games," *Sou'wester*, March 7, 1980; "Lynx Open CAC Bid With Non-Conference Game," *Sou'wester*, September 12, 1980.

<sup>88</sup> "WLYX Faces Funds Drouth," *Sou'wester*, May 23 1980

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> "WLYX Future to Rest on Presbytery Grant," *Sou'wester*, September 26, 1980.

<sup>91</sup> James Daughdrill to Chief of Broadcast Facilities, June 4, 1980.

<sup>92</sup> "WLYX Loses Funds," *Sou'wester*, January 23 1981.

interest on the sale of WSWM. At this time, it cost WLYX \*\*\*\*\* dollars in 1980 to carry out basic operations, buy new records, pay the general manager and work-study students. In a letter appealing to the administration for more financial responsibility for the station, the WLYX staff called the situation “its worst financial crisis since its inception.”<sup>93</sup>

The crisis struck a chord with students on campus. In a poll conducted through the *Sou'wester*, 54 percent of students thought the station vital to the school, while 33 percent had no opinion and only 16 percent said it had no place at the institution.<sup>94</sup>

Over the summer of 1981, Dean Llewellyn closed the station pending an evaluation report to propose different ways of funding WLYX's existence on campus. (More info from report). An endowment goal of 500,000 dollars was set that year to serve the Communication Arts Department to include the operating expenses of WLYX and achieved in April of 1982.<sup>95</sup> The station now had its academic home.

After the evaluation, Allen Cook was replaced by recent graduate Jeff Cowell 81'. Students like Richard Banks were invited, or in his words “planted,” by the school at WLYX to boost the ratio of Southwestern volunteers to community volunteers. “They had figured it was time for the college to assert more control over the station. They placed me and a bunch of the guys there who were volunteers at the time really didn't appreciate it.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> “Staff Pleads WLYX Case,” *Sou'wester*, January 30, 1981.

<sup>94</sup> “90% of Students Surveyed Want Man Alternative,” *Sou'wester*, February 13, 1981.

<sup>95</sup> “Master Plan Goals,” Board of Trustees, April 24, 1981;” Minutes of Board of Trustee Meeting, April 22-23, 1982.

<sup>96</sup> Personal Interview with Richard Banks, July 15, 2013.

A second shutdown was ordered by Dean Llewellyn, this time mid broadcast, on May 30 of 1982 to again assess the station's staffing, formatting, broadcast schedules, financial backing, and physical security.<sup>97</sup> The day before, WLYX broadcast at 3000 watts and was the second largest non-profit station in Memphis next to WKNO, the NPR affiliate.<sup>98</sup> Volunteers and listeners alike were shocked by the abrupt halt of programming.

In response, a meeting of former staff and fans of the station met at the Pogo club the following night. Allen Cook and former Program Director Doug Dalhausser were in attendance. They formed a group which called themselves Friends of Alternative Radio Inc. (F.O.A.R.). Dean Llewellyn asked the group to send in ideas of alternatives to the restructuring of the station by the school, which would result in the programming decisions lying solely in the hands of the management at the station.

William Robilo, F.O.A.R's attorney responded with three proposals. The first was an initial offer of 300,000 dollars to buy the studio equipment and obtain a transfer of WLYX's frequency. The group also suggested a time-sharing relationship that would allow Southwestern to broadcast from 6am to 6pm and F.O.A.R to broadcast from 6pm to 6am. The last offer was to return to the pre-existing relationship at WLYX with an advisory board made up of volunteers and school officials overseeing operations at the station.<sup>99</sup>

When the school failed to respond to the new organization, F.O.A.R filed a petition with the FCC to deny WLYX's license renewal. One student's name was on the petition. Philip Jones

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<sup>97</sup> "Special Announcement from Dean Llewellyn," May 30 1982.

<sup>98</sup> "WLYX Staff, Listeners Stunned by Shutdown" *Commercial Appeal*, June 1982.

<sup>99</sup> "WLYX Staff Offers Radio Alternatives," *Press Scimitar*, July 11, 1982.

was subsequently banned from station facilities until he agreed to sign an agreement stating that he no longer stood the ideals of F.O.A.R.<sup>100</sup> Alumni and students reacted to the sanctions by questioning if their alma mater still upheld values of “liberal rationalization” or had even been reduced to black mail.<sup>101</sup>

When the station returned to the air at 5:30 pm on September 24, 1982, F.O.A.R. filed a request with the FCC to deny WLYX’s license renewal. They also criticized Cowell’s decision to consolidate different positions like program director, music director, and record purchaser into the station manager position, as well as his inexperience in radio at public meetings.<sup>102</sup>

Jeff Cowell, hardly a year out of undergrad, would bear the brunt of the chaos and criticism caused by the station restructuring. He also had to deal with staff who were sore at administrators for these changes. “Frankly,” says Richard Banks of Cowell’s tenure, “I was an asshole to him.”<sup>103</sup> Although his time at the station was short, one of the most endearing stories in the history of WLYX happened while Cowell was station manager.

Jim McNulty attended Southwestern at Memphis and graduated in 1950 with a major in Piano. When McNulty was five years old he got into a fight which left him with an eye infection. Eventually both eyes would have to be removed. After working as a typist and teaching at a school for the blind for several years, McNulty began to lose his hearing.<sup>104</sup> At the age of fifty-nine, McNulty began volunteering time at WLYX after being turned town as a volunteer by

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<sup>100</sup> “Box 724,” *Sou’wester*, September 24, 1982.

<sup>101</sup> “Box 724”; “A Few More Questions,” *Sou’wester* October 1, 1982.

<sup>102</sup> “WLYX Reopens Doors Despite Turmoil,” *Souwester*, September 24, 1982.

<sup>103</sup> Personal Interview with Richard Banks, July 15, 2013.

<sup>104</sup> “Blind, Deaf DeeJay Finds Home at WLYX,” *Sou’wester*, October 15, 1982.

WTTL. Ironically, WTTL was the Memphis Public Library's own SCA station for the blind. This would also be the station which would acquire the license for 89.3 from Rhodes several years.

McNulty had a love for classical music, for which he preferred the term "serious music".

<sup>105</sup> In addition to his classical show, McNulty would bring books of his in braille and do readings on air. Station manager Jeff Cowell taught himself braille and used a teletype to train McNulty in studio operations. Over time, the studio was outfitted with braille and McNulty learned to cue records by feeling vibrations in the speakers with his hands. He could also thread tape and place the stylus on records. Though there was normally someone present while he was in the studio, this was only to stay in accordance with FCC regulations regarding blind DJs, McNulty could operate the studio entirely on his own.

I watched him many times. He would feel with his hands, he knew when to turn the knobs . . . he did a weekly show for several years . . . he was there religiously. Considering that he was blind and deaf, he did a remarkable job on the radio. He knew what he wanted to play and had a beautiful bass voice and articulated. . . The only way that what Jim did would have worked was because Jeff Cowell spent a lot of time with him and gave him the opportunity.<sup>106</sup>

By the summer of 1983, however, Cowell left WLYX and was replaced by Karen Luvaas as station manager. Luvaas previously worked in the schools Public Affairs office and was asked to fill the role because of her television experience at station WVPT-TV in Harrisonburg, Virginia.<sup>107</sup> Luvaas would switch the formatting of WLYX from freeform, album based rock to

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<sup>105</sup> "Ex Music Instructor Has Serious Feeling about DeeJay Trade," *Commercial Appeal*, October 8, 1982.

<sup>106</sup> Personal Interview with Karen Luvaas, June 28, 2013.

<sup>107</sup> Email from Karen Luvaas to Skyler Gambert, July 25, 2013.

block programming. She would also bring a new emphasis to classical music and traditional music that would reconcile the old and young listening audiences of WLYX.

“I wanted to reach a really wide audience,” Luvaas says of the changes. Monday through Friday featured jazz from 8am to 3pm, classical from 3pm to 8pm, rock from 8 pm 10pm, and classical again from 10pm to midnight, with the exception of Friday evenings which featured extended rock music until midnight. Weekends were bluegrass, European folk music and rock on Saturdays as well as religious programming, classical, jazz on Sunday.<sup>108</sup>

In the beginning it was very difficult to define what was appropriate rock because I wanted the students to play music they appreciated, but I remember having some pretty questionable stuff being played on the air.<sup>109</sup>

Students still would often violate FCC regulations of obscenity and profanity. Sometimes DJs would offend unintentionally due to culture clash with some of the listening audience. One DJ, who introduced symphonies with phrases like “a sick-pack of Mozart,” once received a distraught call from an elderly woman after he relayed a story about how he was hit on by another man while hitchhiking. Luvaas was often perplexed by the extraneous dialogue’s connection to the music being played.<sup>110</sup>

Sometimes maintain control of the station was less light-hearted, as DJ Richard Banks recalls:

We had a huge row because the then station manager decided that she was going to undertake with some of the student-tel an effort to make unplayable songs with what she deemed lewd content . . . and took razor blades to these album platters. It felt like we were being censored.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> WLYX-FM 89.3 Program Schedule, *Sou’wester*, February 25 1988.

<sup>109</sup> Personal Interview with Karen Luvaas, June 28, 2013.

<sup>110</sup> Personal Interview with Karen Luvaas, June 28, 2013.

<sup>111</sup> Personal Interview with Richard Banks, July 15, 2013.

In response, Luvaas said

We had to be very aware of language issues with the FCC . . . unfortunately despite the training and the encouragement there were some on air personalities who did care about that and I had to care about it. I do remember that happening, I don't remember scratching and I may well have, but if I did it was something that simply could not go out over the air. You have to remember we were under a pretty constant threat of being pulled from the air by Rhodes . . . and it wouldn't take much for them to just shut us down.<sup>112</sup>

This pressure was spoken and unspoken. There was the weight of the past, the previous shutdowns and the station's former image. Luvaas regularly met with Dean Llewellyn and would receive offhand comments from faculty and staff who listened to the station simply walking across campus. Luvaas remembers the head of campus security going as far as telling her directly that a woman had no business running a radio station and that the college did not need a station.

<sup>113</sup> The station manager was the focal point of student's issues with the administration and the administration's issues with the station. Despite these difficulties, Luvaas led WLYX through some of its most popular years.

With a Bachelor of Arts in music and her connections to the Germantown Symphony, in which she played, Luvaas felt an urge to increase the amount of classical programming at WLYX that was in line with administrative ideas about how the station ought to reflect the college's image. Classical music was scheduled in the afternoons to balance out the talk radio which WKNO, the primary source for classical radio in Memphis, aired during that time. Luvaas

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<sup>112</sup> Personal Interview with Karen Luvaas, July 19, 2013.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

developed a positive working relationship with WKNO music director Charles Billings to generate about 18 hours of classical on air a day in the city.<sup>114</sup>

Memphis Symphony players Duane Dugger and Russel DeVuyst hosted regular programs. This resulted in WLYX obtaining permission from the Symphony by majority vote to air rarely heard recordings of their performances which the station had trouble receiving in the past.<sup>115</sup> Students Leigh Williams 86' and Carole Glover 86' hosted a show for academic credit called "Instrumentally Speaking" which featured members of the Symphony as well as other classical musicians around town to interview them about the finer points of their particular instrumental trade.<sup>116</sup> "Vocal Chords" was a similar show for classically trained singers in the area.<sup>117</sup>

One of the most interesting shows to ever air on WLYX was "Faith County," a radio sitcom written by Mark Landon Smith 86' and produced by an ensemble of students to include Catherine Winterburn, Becca Sweet, Randy Sermon, Tim Bullard, Brian Mott, and many others. The show was centered in the small community of Mineola, "somewhere in the middle of the south." The show placed vibrant characters like couple Mildred and Harry Hayworth, tractor-pull, TV-dinner enthusiasts, and placed them in ordinary situations like a game of monopoly or parent-teacher conferences to hysterical results. The inspiration for the show came from a series of informal improvisations between students. The original intention was to produce

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<sup>114</sup> "Radio Audiences Often in the Mood for Classical," *Commercial Appeal*, December 10, 1986.

<sup>115</sup> "Players will let symphony take a bow on radio shows," *Commercial Appeal*, October 11, 1987.

<sup>116</sup> "No Alternative," *Commercial Appeal*, June 6, 1986.

<sup>117</sup> "Vocal Chords- a 'trilling' experience," *Sou'wester* October, 1986.

“Faith County” on film, but because of their young age, the actors lacked a believable resemblance to their creations. WLYX became the place where “Faith County” came to life. The show was so popular in fact that it was featured in a “Dateline Memphis” special on Rhodes. This attracted the attention of WHBQ, a commercial radio station, and they arranged for a “Faith County Christmas Special” which aired on Christmas Eve.

Smith would write approximately 30 pages each night before the show aired. The cast would have to record the show after midnight when equipment was no longer being used to broadcast. The show had a permanent time slot airing at 7:30-8pm, every Tuesday. The show ran from 1984 to 1986, produced about 50 episodes, and developed a cast of over players. Students did all of the writing, casting, directing, production, and post-production. Smith would go on to publish a one act play of “Faith County” and a sequel after he graduated from Rhodes.<sup>118</sup>

Although it had formally relinquished its title as “The Alternative,” WLYX still was the only place in Memphis to hear new alternative music. Richard Banks used his connection at the Antenna club to promote the venue and to secure interviews with local artists like Calculated X and up-and-coming national acts like The Bongos. Bands that played the pub on Southwestern’s campus would regularly make their way upstairs to perform interviews following their shows.<sup>119</sup> In later years, WLYX became a place to hear artists like Echo and the Bunnymen, R.E.M, and Sinead O Conner as well as Mission of Burma and Husker Dü.<sup>120</sup> Neighborhood Texture Jam

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<sup>118</sup> Personal Interview with Mark Landon Smith, July 18, 2013.

<sup>119</sup> Personal Interview with Richard Banks, July 15 , 2013.

<sup>120</sup> “Radio Rhodes,” *Sou’wester*, February 25, 1988; “Our Year in Lists,” Memphis Flyer, January 8, 2009, <http://www.memphisflyer.com/memphis/our-year-in-lists/Content?oid=1439307> (accessed July 29, 2013).

would record one of the last interviews at the station before the end of WLYX. Steve McGhee, one of the owners of the Antenna, says he called President Daughdrill after the station left the air:

Well look, you don't realize what you're doing because that's an outlet that this city really needs. You're shutting us down . . . they were playing the music we wanted to hear. We were starved for music back then.<sup>121</sup>

By September 1988, the station was up for evaluation again. Several factors lead to this appraisal. Recent hikes in tuition caused unease in the student body. The increasing cost of maintaining WLYX may have been seen as a contributing factor by the administration. The media department at Rhodes, of which WLYX was an intended laboratory, was also up for evaluation. Again, the station's academic relevance was a major concern. The east wing of the student center, where the station was located, was valuable space on campus and the college had been in short supply. It was decided that Luvaas and Dean Llewellyn would prepare a viability report which the administrative cabinet would review and then use to advise President Daughdrill on the future of WLYX.<sup>122</sup>

In this report, Luvaas and Dean Llewellyn emphasize the importance of the diverse programming offered by the station. The station was the only place where listeners could hear John Coltrane in the morning, Vivaldi in the afternoon, and Camper van Beethoven in the evening. WSMS at Memphis State only played jazz and WKNO only classical. WLYX was the only place you could hear it all. As of March of 1985, WLYX became the first radio station in

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<sup>121</sup> Interview with Neighborhood Texture Jam, Additional *Antenna* Footage, Chris McCoy, 2012.

<sup>122</sup> "Radio Rhodes to be evaluated By College," *Sou'wester*, September 22, 1988.

Memphis to use a CD player, which was obtained on loan from Opus 2, a music store sympathetic to the station.<sup>123</sup>

They also note that since 1983, 122 different Rhodes students and 45 community members had become involved at WLYX. 35 of those students completed practicum courses through WLYX with at least 6 going on to careers in broadcasting. At that time, WLYX was 1 of approximately 100 colleges its size operating an FM radio station. The non-salary budget for the station was 9,781 dollars and 38,343 dollars including salary and benefits for the general manager. It was estimated in the report that donations to the station would equal 9,900 dollars.<sup>124</sup>

After growing tired of the strenuous temporal demands of the General Manager position and lack of progress made towards stabilizing WLYX, Karen Luvaas made the personal decision in 1989 to resign from her position to work at St. Bonaventure Indian School in New Mexico. Her resignation coincided with the decision of the administration that continued cost of operating WLYX did not justify its existence within the academic mission of the college.<sup>125</sup> The school was granted permission by the FCC to silence the station through November 30, 1989.

Listener response to the schools evaluation and eventual silencing began as early as 1988 when Memphis Magazine ran an article on the situation in which Luvaas urged listeners to write in support of WLYX. Many of these letters are available through the Rhodes College Archives. A recent donation by Luvaas added over 300 more to the collection. Concerned community

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<sup>123</sup> Karen Luvaas to Tom Ritchey, July 8, 1985.

<sup>124</sup> Report on Operations, WLYX-FM, 21 October 1988.

<sup>125</sup> Robert Llewellyn to Dan Campbell, 19 June 1989.

members and students also wrote editorials to the *Sou'wester* and other newspapers.<sup>126</sup> One letter to the *Commercial Appeal*, written by Rob Cosgrove, admonishing the administration offers insight into the general tone of the written protest:

For years WLYX has served the community by presenting valuable programming that has often heralded major advancements in styles of popular music and cultural entertainment. . . . Rhodes College would do well to keep WLYX on the air, lest it acquire an image of having a propensity toward rash, spontaneous actions based on the whims of its administrators—and worse, an apathy toward this city and its popular culture.<sup>127</sup>

Another article in the *Memphis Flyer* pointed out that while the administration cited operating costs as its primary motivation for the school's decision to silence the station, a 40,000 dollar portrait of President Daughdrill had also been commissioned that year.<sup>128</sup> When asked about expenses, Daughdrill responded that the amount had not come from the school but private donations made to the Board of Trustees and paid for the cost of two portraits, not one.<sup>129</sup>

Other individuals responded to the actions of the administration more viscerally. Jim Shettles had listened to the station for 17 years and volunteered there in 1977. He set up camp on the corner of University and North Parkway with his cat and supplies to hold an 89 hour vigil for the return of WLYX.<sup>130</sup>

On July 30, 1989, WLYX aired its final broadcast. Programming was scheduled until midnight, but operations were cut short when a bolt of lightning struck the transmitter at 7:45pm,

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<sup>126</sup> Letters to the Editor, *Sou'wester*, September 21, 1989.

<sup>127</sup> "A blow to city's popular culture," *Commercial Appeal*, July 30 1989.

<sup>128</sup> "Rumor Mill: Varsity Drag," *Memphis Flyer*, July 20, 1989.

<sup>129</sup> Gerry Goffinat to James Daughdrill, August 14, 1989.

<sup>130</sup> "WLYX fan begins vigil to help keep station on the air," *Commercial Appeal*, July 29, 1989.

terminating the station's signal. Duke Ellington's "Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue" was playing.<sup>131</sup>

Although the FCC had granted WLYX a license renewal in July of 1989, rights to the frequency were revoked that August. Of the 15 FM stations in Memphis only 5 were available to educational channels. WTTL, the library's closed frequency service for the blind whose most popular program was a daily reading of the obituary section in the *Commercial Appeal*, immediately requested the channel. Rhodes intended to hold onto the license and so the FCC opened a 90 day public comment as to who should get the license. Plans were made for a hearing in Washington within the next two years.<sup>132</sup>

In an effort to keep WLYX on the air that November, Rhodes began to develop a collaborative license transfer to WKNO. The arrangement would have resulted in three times as much broadcast material from NPR, which normally went unused. A new program advisory board would be developed made up of Rhodes and WKNO members.<sup>133</sup>

On January 6, 1990 President Daughdrill signed an agreement to solidify this partnership. In the agreement, the station would move to a new home at 900 Getwell Road and the Mid-south Communications Foundation would provide for its financial security. Rhodes would remain an underwritten partner for up to five years. An announcement is included which would have aired regularly saying. "Today's broadcast schedule on WLYX-FM is made possible in part by Rhodes College, serving the Mid-south." Basketball, baseball, and football games as well as college

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<sup>131</sup> "Lightning hands WLYX an unexpected sign-off," *Commercial Appeal*, July 31, 1989.

<sup>132</sup> "Radio frequency spark battle," *Commercial Appeal*, August 31, 1989.

<sup>133</sup> Joint Effort is What Rhodes Sees for Future of WLYX, Helen Norman, November 16.

lectures would be broadcast to the best of the Foundations technical and financial ability for that period. Rhodes' students would be given internship opportunities indefinitely.<sup>134</sup>

Although the agreement had been signed, the Library's challenge application for the license had not been resolved. In a letter asking for advice in the contention, Dean Llewellyn, reports that the partnership with WKNO could not be completed legally until the college was able to obtain the license. The library was to maintain a steadfast position in relation to their application.

Frankly, as I see it, they have everything to gain and they have nothing to lose by simply waiting. If the College does not reactivate the station and the license is not reissued, then they are first in line for a competitive bid for a license.

The situation persisted for several months. In May, students returned home and WLYX was still off the air. That June, WLYX received its final blow:

Clifton Holes, an employee of Roy Holmes Construction Co., was operating a piece of earth-moving equipment in the vicinity of WLYX-FM tower about 10:45 AM on Monday, June 4. He either struck one of the guy wires or the vibration from the equipment caused a turnbuckle on the guy wire to snap. The tower broke off about six feet above the ground. The top portion (about 190 feet) of the tower dropped down and was resting on the ground . . . WLYX-FM is off the air until further notice. . . . As I understand it, no decision has yet been made as to whether or not the tower will be re-erected. I'm sure the uncertain status of WLYX will be a factor in the decision . . .<sup>135</sup>

That July Rhodes had resolved to give up the fight to retain its license for 89.3 Mhz. An article in the *Commercial Appeal* reports Dean Llewellyn saying the FCC would most likely deny the request in the knowledge that the license was going to be transferred to WKNO. It is unclear what happened to the equipment from the station. Dean Llewellyn believes it was probably

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<sup>134</sup> Agreement for Assignment of License of WLYX-FM, 1989.

<sup>135</sup> Norman to Nourse, June 13, 1990.

returned to Wilson Northcross, the Presbytery affiliate who had helped to secure donations since 1971.<sup>136</sup> Others believe it was sold.

When David Saks heard the news that WLYX would not be returning to the air he reacted immediately:

I was just angry, angry. I didn't walk, I ran to Doctor Daughdrill's office, he was in the middle of a meeting and I demanded to see him. His secretary was sitting there she said David you have to wait. I said I'm not waiting. I went right through the door. There were five or six people in there and Doctor Daughdrill stood up and said David, I can't talk to you. I said you know what I'm here about . . . you've got to keep this radio station. He said, David there's nothing I can do. They've already made the decision to sell the station. That's it. I think I left there in tears.<sup>137</sup>

In October the record collection of WLYX was offered up for sale in the Rhea Lounge. Proceeds from the sale went to Linquisters, Habitat for Humanity, and a local soup kitchen.<sup>138</sup> Students who moved the records out of the station marked them in blue sharpie with the words "stolen from WLYX."<sup>139</sup> Community members as well as students took part in the sale. A large portion of the collection was bought up by Sherman Willmott, who had also hosted a show on the station, and used to convert his "New Age-friendly relaxation center" into a record store. Shangri-La Records is still a staple source of vinyl records in the Midtown Memphis music

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<sup>136</sup> Personal Interview with Robert Llewellyn, July 10, 2013.

<sup>137</sup> Personal Interview with David Saks, July 17, 2013.

<sup>138</sup> Email from Shandley to @FACSTAFF, October 3, 1990.

<sup>139</sup> Personal Interview with David Less, June 14, 2013.

scene.<sup>140</sup> It is unlikely that all of the records were bought up, but an email announcing the end of their availability seems to suggest they may have been thrown away or destroyed:

You are invited to . . . browse through the remains of the WLYX record collection. You may have whatever records you want. After today, the collection will be no more.<sup>141</sup>

On April 17, 1991 members of city council and local journalists sat in on the inaugural broadcast of WYPL, “Your Public Library,” formerly WTTL. Going from a subcarrier to an FM frequency allowed the Library to go from being able to reach about 7000 blind or illiterate people to approximately 380,000. “For a lot of blind people,” said WYPL director Steve Terry commenting on the event, “this is going to be the first time anyone has ever read the newspaper to them.”<sup>142</sup>

Many volunteers, students, and community members believe that the timing of the tower’s fall was too convenient. The accident occurred over a holiday break, like the 1982 shutdown before it, when no students were on campus. Chris McCoy graduated from Rhodes in 1993 and feels that the end of WLYX was part of a larger project by the administration to change campus culture:

The fall semester of 1989 was kind of like the end of old Rhodes . . . the school that had been Southwestern . . . They were building the parking lot, we used to call the air strip, which is now by the Bryan Campus student center . . . the tower had been next to the music building . . . they said they had accidentally torn it down, that was the story President Daughdrill’s office put out. Everybody was like, well look it was fifty yards

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<sup>140</sup> “Music Issue,” Memphis Flyer, May 1, 2008  
<http://www.memphisflyer.com/memphis/music-issue/Content?oid=1144038> (accessed June 30, 2013).

<sup>141</sup> Email from Margaret Handwerker to @FACSTAFF, October 22, 1990.

<sup>142</sup> “Rhodes set to give up permit,” *Commercial Appeal*, July 7, 1990; “Celebrities to inaugurate library’s FM radio station,” *Commercial Appeal*, April 17, 1991.

away from there. . . He always hated LYX. . . [Rhodes] always had a real left wing reputation and Daughdrill was determined to wipe that out.<sup>143</sup>

Many people who support this theory of the station's demise point to Daughdrill's conservative reputation during his time at Rhodes. They point to the establishment of the fence around campus which happened during his tenure.<sup>144</sup> He had also been reputed as being unsupportive of the gay and lesbian culture at Rhodes.<sup>145</sup>

Others, such as Dean Llewellyn, were more sympathetic to the college's president. He believed that it was not Daughdrill who disliked the station but was in fact the opinion of other administrators that the station may have been an unnecessary expense. He also believes that the tower fell due to genuine human error.<sup>146</sup>

When asked who is responsible for the end of WLYX, David Saks replied:

Me, I want to blame myself, because I think I really should have raised more hell about it. Of course, I'm joking but all of us . . . there was not enough interest. I think the apathetic disposition of so many at the time really led to its demise.<sup>147</sup>

He believes that no one person can be held at fault, that instead the loss of the station was the result of a collective failure on the part of anyone who found the station of value. Memphis has a history of successful community organization in the face of institutional decision making.

Perhaps the victorious strategies of AFSCME and the sanitation workers in 1968 or the Citizens

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<sup>143</sup> Personal Interview with Chris McCoy, July 20, 2013.

<sup>144</sup> Personal Interview with Chris McCoy, July 20, 2013.

<sup>145</sup> "I Was Kicked Out of Rhodes for Being Gay," Monte Abbot, July 17, 2013.

<sup>146</sup> Personal Interview with Robert Llewellyn, July 10, 2013.

<sup>147</sup> Personal Interview with David Saks, July 17, 2013.

to Preserve Overton Park in 1971 could have been applied to saving the station, perhaps not.<sup>148</sup> Either way, the demise of WLYX provides a valuable lesson in looking towards the future of college radio in Memphis.

Regardless of who or what was responsible, the loss for the city and for the college has been immense. Today, of the many universities and colleges in Memphis, only the University of Memphis operates a radio station. WUMR is unique in that it is an all jazz station. Although it provides an invaluable resource to the city as the only jazz station, it does not allow for program variety. WEVL, on the other hand, allows for a great deal of it. It is, however, primarily a community station and many students who maintain a busy schedule are unable to put in the volunteer hours to gain airtime. They also might not have transportation to WEVL facilities.

WLYX was reputed as a place to hear new music. Students bring diverse backgrounds from all over the country to Memphis and share what they hear is happening in music and art. Many new artists today have trouble attracting large crowds in the city. As a result, venues like the Antenna Club and the Hi Tone find it hard to stay open. For many newer acts Memphis is considered a C-level market.<sup>149</sup> It was not always so:

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<sup>148</sup> In 1968, approximately 1300 black sanitation workers went on strike following the deaths of Echol Cole and Robert Walker. The strike ended three months later following the death of Martin Luther King Jr. in a settlement with the city which included wage increases and union recognition. "Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike," Martin Luther King Jr. and the Global Freedom Struggle, [http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc\\_memphis\\_sanitation\\_workers\\_strike\\_1968/](http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_memphis_sanitation_workers_strike_1968/) (accessed June 30, 2013). In 1971, the Supreme Court decided in the case of *Citizens to Preserve Overton Park v. Volpe* that interstate 40 had to be constructed around Overton rather than through it; both provide examples of relatively successful grassroots organization in Memphis. "Citizens to Preserve Overton Park, INC., et al., v. John A. Volpe, Secretary, Department of Transportation, et al.," Legal Information Institute, Cornell University, <http://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/401/402> (accessed June 30, 2013).

<sup>149</sup> "Music Venue the Hi-Tone is Closing," *Commercial Appeal*, December 11, 2012.

That's how LYX served the city . . . that's why Black Flag was packed when they played the Antenna, because they'd been played on WLYX. We Don't have that anymore. . . WEVL has a different mission than just breaking new music, that is what LYX was really good at. . . yeah, you can find stuff out about stuff on the internet and hear it but it's no substitute for radio play because people still don't come out. Grimes played here, nobody came. St. Vincent was here and nobody came. There's a lot of those.<sup>150</sup>

College radio broke artists like REM, Nirvana, and Pearl Jam in the 1990s and brought them into the mainstream. It also helped to establish a punk scene in Memphis which still produces artists like the Oblivians, Jay Reatard, and the Magic Kids who bring national attention and esteemed repute to the city. The cultural and economic loss due to the lack of college radio is unquantifiable.

At Rhodes, a similar cultural loss had taken place. Karen Luvaas remembers WLYX as a place for students to express themselves might not find it easy in the prevalent campus culture:

Students I had the radio station tended to be more of the offbeat students on campus. Well that made them a really interesting group and that was the thing I liked the most was the kind of person it attracted was more of the free spirits, the independent thinkers, and remarkably creative students and I think it was a loss when they kind of lost that voice. The impression I had that what Rhodes wanted was they wanted a very homogeneous, sterile representation in the community. What they thought their entire image should be, but my thought was you have this whole pretty big pocket of students here who come from all over the country . . . and what about them? That's the main reason I was really sorry to see it die.<sup>151</sup>

Richard Banks similarly imagines the radio station as a magnet for potential students interested in music, broadcasting, and journalism.<sup>152</sup> It is possible that a student deciding between Rhodes and another college with a radio station may weigh that factor heavily in making up their minds about where to attend school. Rhodes also has approximately 11 percent of students transfer after

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<sup>150</sup> Personal Interview with Chris McCoy, July 20, 2013.

<sup>151</sup> Personal Interview with Karen Luvaas, June 28, 2013.

<sup>152</sup> Personal Interview with Richard Banks, July 15, 2013.

their freshman year and more students who decide to leave after that.<sup>153</sup> Though this is not a particularly high transfer rate and many other factors are at play, what if some of those students could have found their place on Rhodes in radio? Could there be another David Less or Richard Banks who decide to go to another school? Who does this cause to leave Memphis and potentially find employment in another city?

The greatest tragedy of the loss of WLYX is the connection it formed between Rhodes and Memphis. Community members and students worked side by side to make the station function. Lifelong friendships were formed. Joe Spake, Elvin Sledge, Bill Dries, and another former DJ, Tim Curry reunited in 2008, over 30 years after they had volunteered at WLYX.

The college was also connected with the community at large in a way in never was before and hasn't been since. People like Steve McGee of the Antenna Club relied on WLYX for their music, which was in scarce supply before the internet allowed easy access to information. People got their fill of classical music, bluegrass, folk music, and news oftentimes from the station based at Rhodes. Today, the college is known primarily as a service school. Not a bad reputation at all, but oftentimes a problematic one.

Students must go home at night, soup kitchens must close their doors, and charitable work can be perceived as coming from the top down. Radio is something that can be accessed 24/7/365 and seeks to share that which makes us dance, laugh, and cry. Radio humanizes an institution like Rhodes. It is also important to consider individuals who might not have access to

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<sup>153</sup> "Rhodes College," US News Rankings, <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rhodes-college-3519/academics> (accessed July 29, 2013).

the internet or may be illiterate. Radio is an affordable, accessible way for almost anyone to establish a relationship with the school. WLYX made Rhodes a part of Memphis.

The Rhodes Vision states:

Rhodes College aspires to graduate students with a life-long passion for learning, a compassion for others, and the ability to translate academic study and personal concern into effective leadership and action in their communities and the world.<sup>154</sup>

In this light, radio could function as a vital part of Rhodes. Radio requires that students commit to developing unique, original programming, often on a weekly basis. This means researching and organizing playlists as well as artist backgrounds, script writing, and developing skills in editing and production. This is work students must take on individually. Educational radio requires volunteers who take accountability for their own actions and place the individual in control of their own product. It also means that students can access hundreds, if not thousands of people city wide and many more all over the world through online streaming. Radio would vastly expand the leadership, service, and academic opportunities Rhodes College.

For these reasons, I plan to continue researching the history of WLYX through a fellowship with the Mike Curb Institute at Rhodes. Another part of this fellowship will include a mission to advocate for the return of college radio with a wide variety of programming to Memphis on the FM band. This may take the form of a station at Rhodes or as a conglomeration of colleges and other organizations to provide opportunities in radio to college students and community members all over the city.

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<sup>154</sup> “Rhodes Vision,” Rhodes Board of Trustees, January 17, 2003, <http://www.rhodes.edu/about/8327.asp> (accessed July 29, 2013).

In the fall semester of 2013, radio will return to Rhodes in the form of an online station. Many students have already signed up for shows and many more have expressed interest in the project. Rhodes is at the beginning of a journey to get its voice back.