



WCCI celebrates 40th anniversary on November 7, 2011

Radio station WCCI-100.1 FM signed on the air for the very first time at noon on Sunday, November 7, 1971, with co-owner and general manager Dennis Voy being the first voice heard that fall afternoon. WCCI's first station manager, Randy Smith, co-hosted the well-known "Trading Post", did color commentary on sports broadcasts and handled some sales. Nineteen-year-old Dennis Bowman was introduced as the first staff member of the new radio station and helped acquire a record library. Other staff members included News Director Gerald Nielson, staff engineer Les (O'Brien) Askelson, and sales manager Joe Hibbard. WCCI, your local area sports leader, tipped off its first sporting event broadcast at the Leaf River-Shannon basketball game on November 19, 1971. An early morning farming show was hosted by Nathaniel "Bud" Miles. Jan Sonnenberg was hired to be the first traffic director and Shirley Peterson to be the bookkeeper. Evening and weekend announcers included Carl Mutters and Dennis Whitmer.

The studios were designed and installed by Media Technical Group of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Robert Burns was the engineer on the project and continued to serve the station until 1978. A Gates transmitter, manufactured in Quincy, was used until 1988 when it was replaced by a Harris model. Voy sold WCCI to a new group of investors known as Carroll County Communications, Inc. On September 1, 1976, which included Cindy (Scott) Sprecher, Edward Bock, Grayston Campell and the late William Heiwig.

Scott became general manager, and Tom Cox was the news director at that time. Among the other staff members were Dick Dasenbrock, Gary Raudabaugh, Jeff Janssen, Mark Schoening, Val Williams and Kay Nesbitt. The next six years saw a number of news directors and sales people come and go. Ann Murphy was added to the staff in June 1978, as operations manager and the late Robert Neuschwanger joined the stockholders that same year. Dee Zemke joined the sales team in October, 1981, & Janice LeComte rejoined the sales force in 1982.

Mark Schoening returned to WCCI for the third time in March, 1982 as news and sports director. On that same date Maeline Ernst was employed as a news stringer and in September 1984, became hostess of "Collector's Corner".

In August 1982, the board of directors hired John "Beaver" Miller as sales manager. He served in that capacity until January 1, 1983, when he became General Manager and a Stockholder. Murphy was named Station Manager on September 1st, 1983, and Janssen, who had returned as a full-time employee, was named operations manager. The station has steadily upgraded equipment since Miller's arrival, and on May 25, 1984, began broadcasting its signal in stereo. Debbie McFadden and Beaver Miller were on the air when the switch was thrown to usher in this new era in Northwestern Illinois broadcasting. Ronnie Milsap's recording of "Stranger in My House", was the first music aired in stereo on the station.

The stockholders of Carroll County Communications, Inc. bought the shares held by Robert and Cindy (Scott) Sprecher Neuschanger on November 29th, 1984, and on December 2, 1986, the stock held by Heiwig and Campbell was purchased by the corporation. Edward Bock and Beaver Miller became the principal Shareholders. Officers of Carroll County Communications in 1991 were John "Beaver" Miller, president; Vickie Miller and Margaret Bock, vice-presidents, Edward Bock, secretary-treasurer, and Ann Murphy, assistant secretary-treasurer.

A new tower was erected in the fall of 1990 and the transmitting power was too increased to 25,000 watts from the original 3,000 watts in November of 1990. This power upgrade increased the land covered by the signal fourfold. The frequency was also changed to 100.3 MHz, from the original 100.1. Around that same time, in their continuing effort to upgrade the equipment at WCCI, the stockholders purchased a computerized assisted programming system (CAPS), which at the time was state-of-the art. WCCI joined the Drake-Chenault/Jones Satellite New Hit Country Music Network when the CAPS computer was in place and this enabled WCCI to broadcast 24 hours a day, without the necessity of a disc jockey in the studio.

The past 20 years has seen as many exciting things happen as in the first 20. WCCI has done numerous radiothons for school foundations, fire departments and other non profit groups, helping to raise over a half million dollars in the various efforts. WCCI added Scotts Studio equipment and software in July of 1999 which enabled the radio station to initiate all programming locally in a real time manner. In the fall of 2004 WCCI added Audio TX software which enabled all digital programming from the studio to the transmitter which increased quality for the listeners. With the internet being a main stay WCCI provides listeners with a live stream along with the availability of downloads of popular daily programs like news and trading post.

WCCI has continued to keep the emphasis on local programming which the foundation was built on 40 years ago, but at the same time providing a big city sound. In the last few years WCCI has added a backup power station at the transmitter site to permit uninterrupted broadcasting in the event of loss of power from the utility company. In 2008 in conjunction with JCWIFI WCCI designed and operate a complex network connecting the studio to the tower site with outstanding audio quality. The next big change in the industry that WCCI will be in the forefront on is the new HD radio signal which provides an all digital signal to the listener. The listener will get cd quality which is much better than satellite feeds and it is free. WCCI expects to complete this addition in the next 5 years. WCCI will be broadcasting in analog as it does today plus on the HD band. Over the next 10 years the new HD delivery will be the benchmark for all audio.

WCCI is still owned by Carroll County Communications which purchased the radio station in 1976, making it one of the oldest locally owned radio stations in the area. Vice President Margaret Bock passed away on January 1, 1998. The current board consists of John "Beaver" Miller President, Pam Bock and Vickie Miller Vice Presidents, Edward Bock Secretary-Treasurer, Ann Murphy Assistant Secretary-Treasurer. Other Stockholders include Dee Miller, Milo Miller and Mark Schoening.

Current staff for the 40th anniversary and years of service is as follows, Beaver Miller General Manager 29 years, Ann Murphy Comptroller 33 years, Brian Reusch Station Manager 18 years, Mark Schoening News Director 29 years, Leslie Smith Program Director 23 years, Dee Miller Sales Manager 30 years, Johnna Richardson Traffic Director 4 years and Don Swanson Sales 8 years.

Beaver Miller comments "As you can see our staff is a part of the community, we live, work and raise our families with you our listeners. We believe the way of big business gobbling up little companies is not necessarily the best thing for the communities we serve, we will continue to offer you a professional product and still keep that local flare you have come to depend on".