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Features

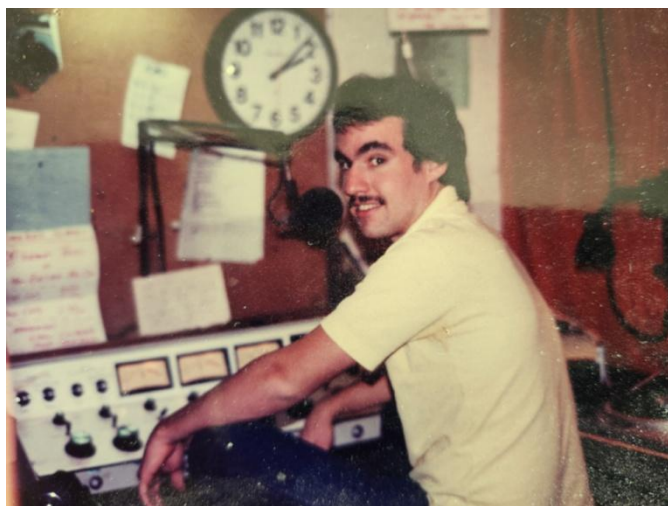
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Tracing the path from DJ to GM

By Jon Daigle '85

Greetings, all WFCS alumni! Over the years I've enjoyed reading the Radio Days newsletter. I was a member of the radio club from 1982-1985 and eventually became the general manager (GM). It's really interesting to see the evolution of WFCS over time and being part of the legacy of Central's radio station. I'd like to share some thoughts on my time at WFCS.

My roommate told me about the club and an "introduction to the radio station" meeting. Back then, the radio club was huge, with more than 150 members. The station broadcasted at 97.9 FM, but at the time we just called it 98 FM. This was before the age of digital tuning, so all FM stations just rounded up the frequency.



Jon Daigle at the board in 1983.

I was fascinated by studio broadcasting and radio in particular. It's still interesting to me that you can connect to people you don't even know through the medium of radio. While attending that first meeting, I was incredibly impressed by the professionalism of the E (executive) board. Everyone seemed so mature and had their acts together. Bob Mastronardi was GM at that time and always very professionally dressed. Sue Gifford was overseeing promotions and the program guide. Steve Zarrella and Brad Farley were also on the E board.

I joined the station right away. At that time we had to join a department and then make a demo tape to get approved for an air shift along with obtaining an FCC broadcast license. Bob ran the license class when I joined. We covered station ID requirements, the nature of AM and FM radio, how it worked and basic broadcast standards. Bob and Steve had high standards and we had to demonstrate that we could do good segues and music

intros and outros along with reading newswire copy. We learned to speak conversationally and not sound like we were announcing. It took me about three audition tape submissions to get approved.

Although the station broadcasted 24 hours a day throughout the year, it was hard to get radio shifts because of our large membership. I started with a really late night Wednesday shift, so late you could call it really early, 3 - 7 a.m. My first night on the air, Bob called me about 4 a.m. with some tips! I was shocked.



While WFCS broadcasted on 97.9 FM during the 1980s, the frequency was rounded up to 98 on the station's logo for easier promotion.

On many late-night shifts I'd often wondered if anyone was even listening, especially when the school was shut down for a holiday or the summer. To find out, I'd sometimes do a pizza giveaway or ask people to call in a request. To my amazement there was ALWAYS people listening.

After DJing about a year and working in promotions with Sue, I had the confidence to run for a position on the E board. I already served as business manager in 1983. Other E board members were Paul Stuke, Kathy Nolan, Chris Muller and Carmine Iannace. I was super fortunate and grateful to get elected and later having the privilege of serving as the WFCS general manager for 1984 and 1985.

I liked being on the air but didn't have the talent of Evan Kramer's "Evan in the Evening" show or several of our top DJs, some who went on to professional broadcasting. But there were other tasks where I contributed behind-the-scenes: setting budgets, allocating funds, working with the student senate and the administration along with managing radio club members. I learned many good lessons about working with people, achieving goals and getting things done; and that benefited me my entire working life.

I also made some renovations. Back then, WFCS had a nice studio A but an antiquated and small production studio B with equipment from the 1960s. There was also a record room, an office by the Central bookstore entrance and a storage closet. We converted the record room into a new studio A and installed a beautiful new Autogram mixing board with all new equipment. Carmine, our engineer, did a ton of work. Then we made the old studio A, the new studio B.

Social life grew from radio club connections

By Jon Daigle '85

I shared an off-campus house with four other radio station people: Paul Stuke, John Isch, Dawn Thompson and Paul Iguanti (aka Ig) along with a student senate finance person, Jeff Tomei. John Ostrowski, the student senate president, frequently visited the house where many late-night strategic radio station conversations took place. We made a lot of plans and decisions while enjoying a beer, which I tried not to replicate during my working years!

In addition to Elmer's, there was a dive bar in the Belvedere Plaza called the Dean's Office where we'd often have WFCS breakout meetings. Belvedere Plaza, which also contained Enzo's Pizza and a package store, was located where Dunkin' Donuts now resides. One night a fire broke out at the bar and the whole plaza was destroyed.

There was also a pub in the student center that served alcohol (lower drinking age in the early 80s) and occasionally WFCS would broadcast from the pub.

We made a lot of plans and decisions while enjoying a beer...

Some noteworthy happenings during my time at WFCS: Huey Lewis and the News played at Welte Hall and did an interview at WFCS; Joe Piscopo performed; Jimmy Carter gave a lecture and Central became a university.

The radio club experience was meaningful for far more than learning how to run a radio station. Many of my friendships began there along with a large part of my social life. We had a common goal and strong camaraderie with many good times and laughs. For me, it couldn't have been better! Please feel free to keep in touch with me at idaigle2008@yahoo.com.

Jon Daigle '85 (left) with WFCS staff Kathy Nolan '87 and Carmine Iannace '88 traveling through Washington, D.C. during the 1984 IBS convention.



Jon Daigle is retired from a career in commercial real estate and lives in St. Louis with his wife, Trish, and his son, Mike, a student at Carthage College in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Two-coast radio career leads to growing business

Radio club and CCSU alumnus Lamont Bransford Young '93, is still spinning vinyl with about 14,500 choices. It's a lifetime's collection of record albums. That collection along with his years of broadcasting experience are now the tools he applies to operate his DJ school, Fingersnaps Media Arts in San Francisco.

The former WFCS general manager started the school in 2004 in a spare room in his home and in 2019 moved the business to a commercial space with a picture window studio in the city's Mission District.

Growing up in Waterbury, he was a fan of WBLS in New York, a mostly disco station at the time. "I would sleep while the radio was on and I would hear the music in the middle of the night and wake up and just listen to be inspired by it," he said.

"When I joined WFCS in 1989, Chris Craft was



Lamont hosted a jazz show on WFCS in 1990.



Lamont Bransford Young '93 (standing, left) with the latest graduates of his Fingersnaps DJ school proudly displaying their DJ controllers.

the general manager and I began hosting a jazz show, themed as the "Jazzy Sound of Dance Music."

"I would dig through the station's record stacks and choose artists such as Alice Coltrane, John

Coltrane, and Sammy Davis Jr. and mix the vintage sounds with electronic and disco music such as 808 State, Mr. Fingers and Chic. The final program I hosted on WFCS was "The Saturday Morning Riff," from 9 a.m. to noon."



Now on community radio KPOO 89.5 FM, San Francisco, hosting the "Fingersnaps Salon," Tuesdays from 8 p.m. to midnight PST.

Lamont was GM when the station abruptly switched from 97.9 to 107.7, the current frequency. "Station management wasn't informed until a few weeks before it happened," he said. "We wanted to fight it, but the university already moved ahead with the FCC." A country station in Enfield took the 97.9 frequency and WFCS was moved up the dial without much opportunity to promote the change.

As The Recorder reported it, "anyone who tried to listen to WFCS at 97.9 on the morning of July 12, 1990, was instead greeted by the sounds of Barbara Mandrell and Kenny Rogers. For General Manager Lamont Young, it wasn't music to his ears."

After graduating with a degree in mass media and writing, Lamont worked at WATR 1320, Waterbury; WWYZ 92.5, Waterbury; KMEL 106, San Francisco; and KIOI 101.3, San Francisco.

Flashback to 1958

From radio club to CCSU president

Dr. Richard Judd graduated from Teachers College of Connecticut in 1959 and was the first and only graduate to become president of Central Connecticut State University, serving from 1996 – 2004. Before that he served in a variety of leadership roles: student center director (1964 – 1970); dean of student affairs (1970 – 1980); executive dean for institutional advancement and university affairs (1980 – 1992); and vice president for university affairs (1992 – 1996). While not as well known, Dr. Judd was also a member of the radio club while a student at TCC.

"This goes back to 1958, when I joined WTCC. There was no classical music being played, and as a fan, I thought there should be. First, I did some research and talked with Dr. Etzel Wilhoit, professor of music and conductor of the New Britain Symphony Orchestra. I talked to others and they encouraged me to go on the air.

"I brought this proposal to the station managers, and they said OK and so on Sundays around 4 p.m., a one-hour show with classical music was born. As you may know, if you lived about a mile from campus you could listen to WTCC. I was not WQXR in New York City, but Wilhoit called and said, the show was great." – Dr. Richard Judd



1984 Conference brought about a new music format

Founded in 1940 to service low-power AM carrier current college radio stations, the Intercollegiate Broadcasting System (IBS) now has over one thousand education-affiliated broadcast and webcast members. The organization holds networking events that bring together not only college media but members of the music industry as well. From March 2 - 4 of 1984, at least a dozen WFCS staff attended the IBS conference at the Hilton Capitol Hill Hotel in Washington, D.C.

By Brad Farley '84

I remember that Washington, D.C. trip well as it was my first big college weekend trip. Randy Borovsky, the "Cosmic Muffin," drove us and pulled an all-nighter driving. My highlight of the trip was meeting R.E.M., the whole band, including Michael Stipe, and they literally were pitching me as WFCS music director to play their new album at the station. I got an autographed picture from R.E.M. I told them I liked the album and would give them some heavy airplay.



Taking a break from the IBS conference, the WFCS gang visits the National Zoo. From left: Striped shirt?; Craig Larsen '84; Brad Farley '84; Eric Lindstrom; Melissa Malzone; Marge Bergen (top); Carmine Iannace '88; Mike Gioscia '88; Noreen Warren '84; Kathy Nolan '87; Chris "Mr. Charlie" Moller '88; Paul Stuke '86.

I secured so many new labels for new wave and punk music for the station, pushing WFCS's format from the 60s and 70s AOR (album oriented rock) to more new wave. In 1983 WFCS was 50% new wave 25% rock, 10% metal and 15% everything else. I did a four-hour Sunday punk show from noon to 4 p.m. called "Hard Core to Four." Can't believe I had a red coat!

Brad Farley, 64, is principal at a large contract interiors firm. He and his wife moved to midtown New York City in 1989 and spend weekends in their Pennsylvania farmhouse. Brad says he enjoys playing drums to the WFCS playlist songs from the 1980s.

...But the trend had already begun

"When I joined the station in 1980 there was minimal record service supplied by the major record labels; no Warner Brothers or CBS, the top two labels at the time. They weren't forthcoming until I started reporting regular playlists to the College Media Journal and reaching out to the labels, directly begging them to send albums to a 10-watt radio station!

"There was also a recent separation of power that occurred at the station. The old executive board members were now gone and the station's programming was adapting to the times and leaning away from our deep cuts and classic rock and toward punk and new wave," - **Evan Kramer, WFCS music director, 1981 - 1983**

2025 marked 38th alumni radio club homecoming and shows

Radio club alumni enjoyed an early 2025 homecoming, Sept 26 – 27, in summer-like weather. The Friday evening reunions were held on the green in front of the student center with music for the first time provided by WFCS DJs. Saturday morning's homecoming at the radio station welcomed back 22 alumni from the early 1970s to the most recent grads for coffee, conversation and camaraderie. WFCS's Saturday morning alumni gathering is homecoming's first event, beginning about 8:30 a.m. as alumni shows kicked off and the station facility begins to fill.

Stories and anecdotes from years past captured at least for a few hours the magic of those years when you dropped by the station several times per day to meet and mingle or do a show. Each year it's gratifying to renew the radio club's social ties that shaped life at Central and forged lasting memories and life-long friendships.

Special thanks go to WFCS General Manager Hilberto Depena for assisting with the homecoming, the WFCS staff who donated their air time and to Kristen Gordon, director of alumni relations, for promoting and supporting the event. And finally, a note of thanks to everyone who stopped by – you produced a fun and successful get together.

2025 homecoming, radio club alumni



From left: Michael “Meesh” Coatta, '17; Fernando Rosa '75; Perry Carpinella '73; Hilberto Depena '27; Tom Larson '75; Robb Warner '78; Steve Strinie '86; Tony Augeri '73; “Bungalow” Bill Walsh, former community volunteer; Dianne Zareski '74; Guy Esposito '86; Bill Pearse '75; Paul Koscak '73; Melissa Evans '85; Vicki Minervino '19; Steve Mead '76; Dick Wiszniak '73; Art Passaro '72 (standing).

Mark your calendar: Homecoming 2026 is set for Oct. 9 – 10

WFCS set the tone at Friday evening's homecoming



Gigging Friday night's homecoming reunions are WFCS DJs Aaron Scott (right) and station General Manager Hilberto Depena. From Herb Alpert's "Rise" to the Zombie's "Time of the Season" the duo delivered the music that mattered.



Flames from the fire pits set the ambiance and marked the entrance to Friday night's food, fun and festivities on the lawn in front of the student center.

Of Note



Vicki Minervino '19 returns to the airwaves during homecoming joined by Michael "Meesh" Coatta '17 (left) and Darren Palumbo '14.



Dropping in on an alumni show, from left: Tom Larson '73; Steve Meade '76; and Hilberto Depena '27.

Final Note



Songs can be memory signposts. Here's to 1984:

- Talking in Your Sleep -- The Romantics
- Time After Time -- Cyndi Lauper
- Stuck on You -- Lionel Richie
- Owner of a Lonely Heart -- Yes
- Jump -- Van Halen
- Against All Odds -- Phil Collins
- Foot Loose -- Kenny Loggins
- What's Love Got to do With it -- Tina Turner
- Rock You Like a Hurricane -- Scorpions
- Drive -- The Cars
- Say it isn't so -- Hall & Oates
- Oh Sherrie -- Steve Perry

What happens in Vegas doesn't always stay in Vegas. While strolling through a Las Vegas casino corridor WFCS alumna Elaine Miner '84 and husband, Bruce '82 (left), met up with rocker Alice Cooper. "I'm 78 and doing pretty good," remarked the music icon who once sung he was "Eighteen."