

Black Radio Station Began In 1950

by Lucile H. Douthit

On October 28, 1950, something unique happened in Winston-Salem: the first all-Negro-Program Radio Station WAAA began operation in the Atlantic Building (where the Phillips Building now stands on Church Street). Two of the first persons hired were Bruce "Sugar Throat" Miller and Lucile Hartman Douthit. Larry Williams followed a few days later along with four others: Togo West, Sr., sports director; Bernard Baker, program director; Velma Friende, secretary-traffic director and Leroy Johnson, Gospel singer.

Bruce came with previous radio experience in his native Greensboro, and Larry had worked for a station in Asheville, N.C., his native home, and Bernard Baker had worked for several stations in Durham while attending college there and was employed by WTOB for two years prior to joining WAAA. I had not been so fortunate. All through high school and college, I was interested in reading and speech, but the idea of becoming a radio announcer was far beyond my expectations. My main duty at first was to create a program for women -- especially housewives. I began with a one-hour show from 10-11 a.m. (Housewives' House Party). The owners and staff members were very cooperative in helping me get started with sponsors: clothing stores, drug stores, dairies, laundries, etc. Later, we did some broadcasts directly from business establishments such

as Camel City Laundry, Read's Drug Store and others. We did some also from homes. The ladies just loved that!

Shortly after Bernard Baker joined the staff, I learned to operate the controls and could do my show independently. It was so much better because a smoother program could be done; however, I still had help when there were studio guests, which were many and varied. One of my most exciting experiences was an interview with Joe Louis in 1952 (Aug. 14th) when he was here to do an exhibition bout with Joe McFadden. He stated that he'd never been interviewed before by a woman! There were many other exciting "firsts" during my stay at the station. People were so very kind with letters, telephone calls, and comments in person, that I was asked to devote more time at the station. I then began "Story Time" for children at 1:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Some of my "children" are now parents but tell me they still listen to WAAA and some are on radio and television themselves. A few letters from some of them are carefully preserved in my book of memories. Finally, I began a Sunday School class for children; thus requiring me to go to the station some part of each day in the week. It required some moving, but knowing I was making others happy was the greatest reward.

WAAA also gave high school students opportunity to get radio experience by featuring student announcers from Atkins and Carver High. One who stands out in my memory is Spencer McCurry,

who now resides in Los Angeles, Calif. One talent-time-winner was Robert L. Hunt, who is at present, choir director at St. Paul United Methodist Church and band director at Parkland Senior High School.

The late Mrs. Ruth Robinson Thompson, who previously sang over another local station, came to WAAA and was at once a favorite with the listening audience. Other singers heard regularly were the Sensational Southlanders, who usually sang with Leroy Johnson and the Royal Sons.

In late 1952, I left WAAA, but many fine ladies have carried on admirably. Among them are Mrs. Velma Hopkins, Mrs. Esther Fountain and Mrs. Lillian Martin, wife of the popular Al Martin, to name a few.

Many outstanding males have been in the radio business since the way was opened by WAAA in 1950. Oscar "Daddy-Oh" Alexander, Robert "Bob Cat" Roundtree, Fred Allen, Bill "Brother Bill" Langford, and Doug Douglas, who is with a Baltimore, Md. radio station the last I heard from him. Of the original seven mentioned earlier, none is a staff member at present. Bruce Miller is in Colorado, Larry, Bernard and Leroy haven't kept in touch with me. Togo West Sr. is deceased, and Velma Friende is now in the teaching profession. Yours truly, Lucile H. Douthit, is now a full-time housewife except some volunteer work and has been doing a 15-minute program each Sunday morning since 1962 for a local funeral home.



Mrs. Lucile H. Douthit and Bruce "Sugar Throat" Miller were among the first to be hired by radio station WAAA when it began in 1950.

I feel that WAAA opened the way for Black people in Winston-Salem and vicinity. Many young people have been given opportunities which were rare when we began almost 26 years ago. Many now, or have been employed by radio and TV stations locally and otherwise. Among them are John Blount, now with WBTV in Charlotte,

Jane Harrington and Billy Rich of WXII TV in Winston-Salem, Sandra Hughes of WFMY Channel 2 in Greensboro and Elaine Gray, presently employed at WAAA.

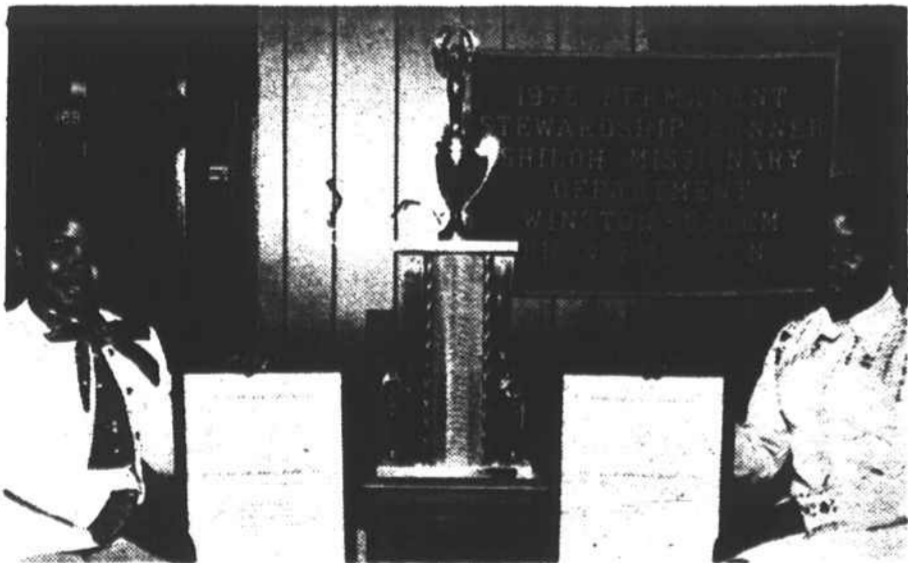
In this Bicentennial Year, I feel that we have made much progress in the area of communication by having been given the opportunity by the people who had the will and the nerve to venture into an all-Negro-Program Station.

Those of us who were allowed to make our mistakes, learned by doing and are far richer in memories and experiences for it. We thank God, the former owners, and our public for the great way we were redived; and we wish for all who have followed us success in their endeavors. A BICENTENNIAL SALUTE TO ALL OF YOU!

Arthritis Sufferers: WAKE UP WITHOUT ALL THAT STIFFNESS!

New formula for arthritis minor pain is so strong you can take it less often and still wake up in the morning without all the pain's stiffness. Yet so gentle you can take this tablet on an empty stomach. It's called *Arthritis Pain Formula*. Get hours of relief. Ask for *Arthritis Pain Formula*, by the makers of *Anacin* analgesic tablets.

Shiloh Baptist Church



Dr. J. Ray Butler



Faith is the root of all good works and every great venture begins with and takes its first forward step in faith. More than 80 years ago, the Rev. George W. Holland and a small group of faithful and diligent persons showed the seed that in time produced Shiloh Baptist Church. During its formulative years, Shiloh encountered many hardships, but under the dedicated leadership of nine men of God,

She kept the faith and eventually became one of the largest, most beautiful and most renowned churches in our state and nation.

From its inception, Shiloh seemed blessed by Divine Providence. In August, 1928, the union of Rev. R.M. Pitts and Shiloh Baptist Church brought about a spiritual relationship that was to flourish for almost 41 years. Rev. Pitts' continued faith and

untiring work made him a legend in his own time and enabled him in 1933 to build much of what is our church today. In 1948, he spearheaded the addition of the educational annex and the purchase of neighboring property. After many years of service, he departed this life on July 25, 1969.

On July 5th, 1970, Dr. J. Ray Butler, of Wilmington, N.C. assumed full time duties

as our ninth pastor. The tremendous growth and development experienced under his providential leadership have been recognized across this vast country of ours and beyond. Since the 1970 year, the membership of Shiloh has grown from 778 members to a membership of more than 1300. With greater emphasis on the spirit of tithing, the income has grown from \$35,000.00 in 1969 to a

projected budget income of \$260,000.00 in 1976.

The magnitude of Pastor Butler's accomplishments since being called to Shiloh in March, 1970, is difficult to assess. Some must not go unnoticed, however, as they stand evident of one show with God's divine guidance and companionship has given spiritually and abundantly of himself to the church and to the community.