



WRCS, WQDK offices, tower

Offices and transmitter for WRCS-AM and WQDK-FM are located about two miles south of Ahoskie on N.C. 42. WRCS

came on the air April 15, 1948, and covered an area from Virginia Beach, Va., to Rocky Mount.

WRCS covers Roanoke-Chowan area with music, farm news, local sports

By Don Upchurch
 Manager, WRCS and WQDK-FM
 On April 24, 1948, 970 kilohertz on the AM broadcast band was usually crystal clear. There may have been an occasional crackle of distant lightning or the ripping sound of electrical discharges from the spark plugs of a passing 1947 Chevrolet attacking the radio's speaker.

About two miles south of Ahoskie on N.C. 42 stood a gleaming white building with red trim. In the back 303 feet of steel stood straight up in the sky, 18 cables holding it in position.

Nearby the soft drone of an air-conditioning unit could be heard, thus making this structure unique in another way, as the first totally air-conditioned building in the Roanoke-Chowan area.

Inside, engineers "Tince" Barnes and John Sherwood poured over the latest test measurements of the audio lines, line voltage and schematics of a Raytheon 1,000-watt transmitter, ready to sign on the Roanoke-Chowan's first radio sta-

tion. It was to be the only radio station south of Norfolk, west of Elizabeth City, north of Greenville and east of Rocky Mount. Its WRCS call letters would reflect the service area — Wonderful Roanoke-Chowan Section.

Favorite programming included Ahoskie High School football replays with Sammy Doughtie and a women's show with Elva Creech in the early years.

On the air

Then on April 15, 1948, the big day, upon the order of P.G. "Phil" Sewell, general manager of the new operation, WRCS went on the air with a signal which could be heard as far away as Wake Forest and Virginia Beach, Va.

WRCS — known by its corporate name across the state, Roanoke-Chowan Broadcasting Co. — was the result of the planning of

Ahoskie's town fathers: W.H. Basnight, Joseph Burden, Noah Garrett, Charles H. Jenkins, Alex Lipsitz and Lyman Wilkins Sr. These wise businessmen realized their desire to bring Ahoskie into one of the country's most fascinating forms of communications.

With 1,000 watts of energy being fed to the 300-foot tower, those interested enough to have their radios tuned to 970 khz heard the sound of a baby's cry, signifying the birth of a new radio station. The baby, identified as Reed Raynor of Ahoskie, was encouraged to catch his cue by a slight pinch on the behind.

Since going on the air, WRCS has maintained its daytime schedule, operating from 6 a.m. until lo-

cal sunset.

Hurricane struck

Over the years WRCS has not been off the air more than approximately 20 days all totaled. One time, which locals can remember in the mid-1950's, came when Hurricane Hazel, with its high winds, actually blew the tower off its mounts, causing it to fall within the tower field behind the station.

Over the years WRCS has supplied a continuous flow of information to the area with tobacco market reports, news and sports. Favorite programming included Ahoskie High School football replays on Saturday mornings with Sammy Doughtie at the microphone and women's shows in the early years with Elva Creech. A partial list of air personality from the early years includes Burt Durmond, Johnny Palmer, Bill Harris, Joe Bradley, Laverne Watson, Ray McClees, Ken Adams and Ed Cobb.

The WRCS building, in the shape of a rectangular donut, re-

(See WRCS, Page 17A)

Local branch offers degree from Shaw U.

A group of citizens concerned about extending educational opportunities beyond the main Raleigh campus of Shaw University met in early August, 1983, at the Tomahawk Restaurant in Ahoskie.

The group consisted of ministers from the West Roanoke Missionary Baptist Association, alumni, a public school counselor and the main campus.

Those attending the meeting were Dimple M. Newsome, Hollis and Earleen Creech, Mildred M. Simons, Emma Johnson, the Rev. John Law, the Rev. Dr. Chester A. Hart, Mrs. Virginia M. Hart, the Rev. S.B. Lewis, the Rev. A.M. Williams, the Rev. James R. Wiggins, Mrs. Jean W. Giddings, Mrs. Elouise P. Newsome and the Rev. James A. Felton.

From the main campus were Dr. McLewis Clayton, Dr. Robert Powell, Dr. Joan Barrett and James Mitchell.

On the same day and evening, Superintendent George Norris and the Hertford County Board of Education gave the group permission to salvage the abandoned back hall at Robert L. Vann School.

Later in August, the first four-year school in the area offering a bachelor's degree was opened with a student body of 33.

In 1984, Carl Lee, Thomas Earley, Claude Odom and Ray Williams were the first graduates.

The Shaw University Center for Alternative Programs of Education (CAPE) was founded to provide educational opportunities for individuals who are unable to earn a college degree in the traditional way.

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