

The WRAU-TV Story



GENERAL MANAGER ON CAMERA—Every weekday, Bob Rice, Vice President and General Manager of WRAU-TV, goes on the air with brief editorials on local, national, or world affairs. Station executives feel that such community participation plays a large part in WRAU-TV's success.

When the latest Nielsen rating reports that your station is Number One in its market from seven a. m. to one a. m.—for the first time in almost 20 years of operation—that's mighty welcome news!

Such news is more welcome when it follows a long history of struggle and change—with five different owners and three different call letters. Such news is especially welcome to the present owner, who acquired the station with the express purpose of making it Number One.

That's a capsule version of the success story of WRAU-TV, the ABC-TV affiliate on Channel 19 in the all-UHF Peoria, Illinois market. WRAU-TV zoomed to the top this winter after a broad development program over

the past two years, and Gates television equipment has been a major factor in the achievement.

Forward Acquisition

The roots of WRAU-TV's present success go back many years, but the main thrust came in early 1971 with its acquisition by Forward Communications, Inc. Based in Wausau, Wisconsin (WSAU-AM-TV, WIFC-FM), Forward also owns three other television stations (WMTV, Madison, Wisconsin; KCAU-TV, Sioux City, Iowa; WTRF, Wheeling, West Virginia), two AM's (WKAU, Kaukauna, Wisconsin; KVGB, Great Bend, Kansas) and two FM's (WVLE-FM, Kaukauna; WTRF-FM, Wheeling).

Forward lost no time in getting its

new property off and running. The group, under perceptive, energetic Richard D. Dudley, President, mapped a multi-faceted campaign with station personnel, under Robert R. Rice, Vice-President and General Manager.

Plan for Success

First, the station's facilities had to be brought together at one site. The sales, traffic and administrative offices were in downtown Peoria; the studio and transmitting site were several miles away on a hilltop in suburban Creve Coeur. Today, the Creve Coeur facility has been expanded into a modern, functional 8,000 square foot building with the transmitter building and antenna only 300 feet behind it.

Second, news programming was to be strengthened—in both quality and quantity. Today, the station's total audience for the 5:30-6 p. m. and 10-10:30 p. m. news leads the market, and WRAU-TV presents five newscasters on camera in each time slot, (Shown on a promotional billboard in the cover photo. Left to right are: Rollie Keith, Jane Fisher, Lorn Brown, Clark Smith, and Barry Judge.).

Third, participation in community activities was to become a hallmark of the station. Now Bob Rice, Vice-President and General Manager, personally editorializes on the air each day (editorializing is a Forward requirement for all its station managers), and community programming and activity have grown dramatically. The station even invites any viewers who disagree with Mr. Rice's views to drop in and video tape their own