



# Curtis, Radio Station KFRO Celebrate 40th Anniversary

LONGVIEW, TEXAS

BY TRISH BROWN

James R. Curtis says he's microphone-shy, but he's been in the radio business since 1923. This month he's celebrating the 40th anniversary of KFRO radio, which Curtis has owned and operated since the station first broadcast in 1935.

According to Curtis, KFRO-AM is the only regional station in Longview, one which broadcasts at night and to a large East Texas area.

"Our goal is to provide extensive news coverage of the East Texas area, and transmit our signal across the same area," Curtis said.

In 1934, Curtis decided Longview needed a radio station. At that time, Longview residents only received weak transmission from distant stations.

During several public depositions, Longview residents expressed a desire and need for a Longview radio station, according to Curtis. There was no radio reception at night for Longview residents, and what came during the day was weak, he added.

After necessary legal and governmental reports were written, Curtis left by train for Washington, D.C. to file a request with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for a Longview radio station. According to Curtis, he had only \$80 in his pocket when he left for Washington.

Curtis' first petition for the station was denied; however, with the help of Congressman Morgan Sanders, the license for KFRO was granted in October,

1934. The station was assigned a frequency of 1370 KHz. and 100 watt power, Curtis remembered.

February 1935 was the first full month of broadcasting for KFRO, and at this time, the station had power to broadcast daytime only, Curtis said.

The first major addition to the station came in 1936 when Curtis added a 185 ft. tower to his station, and in January 1937, the station offices were moved to the sixth floor of the Glover-Crim Building. At this time, the station also received permission from FCC to increase its power to 250 watts, Curtis noted.

"We still did not have radio service at night, and people were beginning to ask for it. They deserved better coverage," Curtis asserted.

Therefore, in 1939 KFRO applied for and was granted full-time operational power of 1000 watts and in July 1940 Curtis broadcast regionally at night for the first time.

According to Curtis, the station soon became the most powerful between Dallas, Shreveport and Houston. KFRO became a Mutual Broadcasting System affiliate in 1943, and in the same year became an affiliate of the Texas State Network, Curtis remembered.

"It was also in 1943 KFRO became an affiliate of the blue network which was later to become, and still is ABC," Curtis said.

KFRO radio moved into the Curtis Building, from where it now operates, in 1947.

According to Curtis, one of the reasons for KFRO's success through the years has been the cooperation the station has enjoyed with other news media in Longview.

"I think Carl Estes was one of the most motivating factors for Longview, and he left a challenge for all of us to build a better East Texas and Longview," Curtis said.

He added the cooperation between KFRO and the newspaper has benefited the community.

"I hope KFRO can cover the East Texas Area as the newspaper does, and work to fulfill radio obligations to all people of the area," Curtis remarked.

Curtis has been president of KFRO since 1935, and now his son, James R. Curtis Jr. served as vice president in charge of production. Elizabeth Curtis Hodges and Mrs. De Rue Curtis are vice presidents in charge of publicity.

Treasurer for KFRO is Mrs.

Ilene Shirley, Mrs. Mary Helen Bair is program director, Mrs. Lovina Green is copy production manager and women's director.

Other KFRO employes are Lamar George, chief engineer; Mrs. Joan Hansons, log manager; Mrs. Karen Lunsford, assistant to the president; Leilani Kimmel, sales representative; T. R. Putman, commercial manager; Robert D. Scott, chief air salesman; Michael Dean Harrison, news editor; Ken Barnett (Carlton) and Bobby Gambill, announcers.

According to Curtis, KFRO has been the primary sports station for Longview since 1935 and sports announcers are Chuck Bair, Robert Graham, J. T. "Red" Russell and Mike Messener. Curtis added KFRO will carry Ranger baseball games this year.

Curtis is a member of several civic and business organizations. He also serves as a member of the TCU Board of Trustees, and was a graduate of ICU in 1928. He also attended SMU, Cumberland University, Samford University and Rutgers University Graduate School of Banking.

His two hobbies are ham radio operation and entrepreneurship, both of which he insists keeps him young.



FEBRUARY, 1975



WAYNE HEINEN. FEB. 16, 1976.

1020 PIKE DR.  
COLORADO SPRINGS. CO. 80904

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CORRECT  
REPORT ON RECEPTION OF  
KFRO. JAN. 14, 1976. FROM  
1:38AM TO. 1:53AM.

YES, WE STARTED 24 HOURS  
OPERATION JAN. 1, 1976.

THANKS + HOPE U HEAR  
US OFTEN.

*James R. Curtis* - KSCP; EXWSIF,  
EXWSAQC

KFRO-1370  
CURTIS BLDG. BX792  
LONGVIEW, TX. 75601

