

A Historical Examination of Interactive Overnight Talk Radio from the Foundations

Established by Herb Jepko

by

Miles Romney

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved May 2016 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Donald Godfrey, Chair
Burton Silcock
Frances Matera
Philip Vandermeer

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2016

ABSTRACT

The call-in talk radio format is one of the key formats of national talk programming. It was first thought to have originated in the early 1970s, when satellite distributed signals made national programs economical and the advent of the 1-800 telephone number allowed for cheaper long distance phone calls. However, this research reveals that the nationwide call-in format originated in 1964 by Herb Jepko, an overnight talk radio host who broadcast his show, *Nitecap*, from rural Salt Lake City, Utah on one of the country's most powerful clear channel stations, KSL 1160-AM. At the time *Nitecap* was launched, most radio executives were skeptical that national call-in talk radio could be successful. Yet, Jepko demonstrated that millions of people, awake in the late and early morning hours, were interested in listening to radio programming as well as interacting with the host and other listeners. This research examines Jepko's innovation of national call-in talk radio and the factors that contributed to his success. He altered the traditional talk radio paradigm and changed the way industry leaders viewed both the overnight time slot and national call-in talk shows. His work set the foundation for the format and paved the way for its use today.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to two incredible people: first, my amazing wife who inspired me to keep going and refused to let me fail; and second, to my father whose unwavering support guided me through to the very end. They are the reason I succeeded.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my committee for all their hard work; in particular, my chairman Donald Godfrey who provided incredible mentorship along the way. I will be eternally grateful for his “red pen.” Additionally, this dissertation could not have been conceivable without the support of Joseph Buchman. His tremendous efforts to maintain and enlarge his personal collection on Herb Jepko made the project possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	Page
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Jepko Contributions to the Emergence of Overnight Call-in Talk Radio	5
Literature Review	8
Statement of the Problem	15
Methodology	16
The Primary Evidence	18
Summary	27
2 1931- 1954: THE EARLY YEARS	28
Birth and Family Health	29
Father Struggles Providing for Son	36
Jepko Enrolls in College	41
Entering the Army	43
Jepko Leaves the Army	48
3 1955 - 1963: EMBRACING RADIO	50
Work at KLEN	51
Returning to Arizona	53
Meeting the Night Owls	58
Moving to Utah	67

CHAPTER	Page
4 1963 -1968: COAST-TO-COAST	73
KSL (KZN) Early History	74
KSL Clear Channel.....	78
Jepko and KSL.....	82
Jepko’s Overnight Radio	94
Incendiary Growth of <i>Nitecap</i>	99
Arrival of the <i>Wick</i>	109
Continued Growth: 1966-1967.....	115
<i>Nitecap</i> Celebrates Two Years on Air.....	117
5 1968 - 1975: BUILDING AN EMPIRE	126
<i>Nitecap</i> Loses Airtime	127
<i>Nitecap</i> Radio Network	132
<i>Nitecap</i> Radio Network Unravels.....	143
Moving from NCRN.....	146
Nitecaps Abroad	151
A Rebirth of NCRN.....	157
<i>Nitecap</i> Growth Stalls.....	163
Patsy’s Role Increases	170
Optimism Abounds.....	171
6 1975 - 1983: ZENITH OF NITECAP	173
Mutual Broadcast System.....	173

CHAPTER	Page
<i>Nitecap</i> Partners with Mutual	176
<i>Nitecap</i> Expands	184
Trouble on the Horizon.....	186
Mutual Continues All-Night Radio	196
Nitecap Radio Network Revived.....	197
Loss of KSL’s Affiliation	200
<i>Nitecap</i> Post KSL	203
Life after <i>Nitecap</i>	205
7 1983 - 1995: THE PASSING OF A RADIO PIONEER	208
The Herb Jepko Show Fails.....	211
A Final <i>Nitecap</i>	216
Jepko’s Final Years.....	222
The Name of Herb Jepko.....	225
8 CONCLUSION: JEPKO FOUNDATIONS	233
Overnight Talk Radio	235
National Call-in Talk Radio	238
KSL-AM	241
Jepko’s Youth	243
Patsy’s Role	244
Why Has Jepko Been Forgotten?.....	246
Call for Future Research.....	249

CHAPTER	Page
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAHY	252
APPENDIX	
A JEPKO CHRONOLOGY	267
B MADSEN MEMO TO JEPKO	275
C FIRST ISSUE OF <i>WICK</i> MAGAZINE	277

Chapter 1

Introduction

At midnight on February 11, 1964, the broadcast studios of KSL-AM in Salt Lake City, Utah were unusually busy. This was out of the ordinary for a radio station that had never offered overnight programming. KSL was not the only station shutting down during the overnight hours; in fact, at the time, most radio stations across the United States did not offer 24-hour programming. In radio's early history, the overnight hours were perceived as "dead time."¹ Program executives reasoned that much of the daytime listening audience had gone to bed. Those still awake were thought to be smaller audience numbers with no interest in listening to the radio, especially talk radio and certainly, so they thought, not from religiously conservative Salt Lake City, where late night activity was nearly nonexistent.

A small contingency of broadcasters felt differently, including radio pioneer Herb Jepko. He perceived an active listening audience existed in the late hours, but there was a shortage of programming catering to them. He felt so strongly about it that he took an entrepreneurial gamble. He left his fulltime job as an afternoon disc jockey with KSL and signed with the station as an independent contractor.² It was a unique arrangement as executives worried about the viability of overnight programming and declined to pay him

¹ Alan R. Stephenson, David E. Reese, and Mary E. Beadle, *Broadcast Announcing Worktext: A Media Performance Guide* (Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2013), 205.

² Herb Jepko, interview by Tim Larson on July 3, 1986, The Herb Jepko Collection, Joseph Buchman Collection, Alpine: UT.

a salary to host the new show. The timeslot was unproven and they did not want to commit company resources to the program's development. However, they did agree to let him use the station's studio to broadcast the program, in exchange for the purchase of the overnight time block for a monthly fee. He alone was responsible for generating the advertising revenue, paying the salaries of his staff, and assuming all other production costs.

Despite the risk, Jepko was convinced he could make the overnight program viable and he had reason to be optimistic. KSL's 50,000 kw signal, the highest allowed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), a clear channel signal that at night could be picked up across the country, and at times around the world.³ This provided access to markets beyond the daytime intermountain west. If successful, the far-reaching signal would provide the unique opportunity to attract a large national following, and potentially generate significant revenue.

Jepko was driven to provide intimate programming for the late night, underserved audience. He envisioned his show as radio-based companionship for many who were insomniacs, socially isolated, seeking companionship, or working a late shift. He achieved this companionship by interacting with his audience via telephone. He

³ Pearl S. Jacobsen, "Utah's First Radio Station," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, Utah State Historical Society 32, no. 2 (1964):133; Heber Grant Wolsey, "The History of Radio Station KSL from 1922 to Television" (PhD diss., Michigan State University of Agriculture and Applied Science, Department of Speech, 1967), 10-11; George Harry Rogers, "The History of the Clear Channel and Super Power Controversy in the Management of the Standard Broadcast Allocation Plan" (PhD diss., University of Utah, 1972), 65-68.

encouraged listeners to call into the show and broadcast these conversations live on air. This was a new concept.

Jepko's callers could talk about any subject they desired, with few exceptions: no politics, no religion, and no controversial topics.⁴ His first night on the air, he took twenty phone calls.⁵ That was a surprising number for an inaugural show on a station with no prior overnight programming nor promotion. In between calls, Jepko played a mix of music and idle chat, a carryover from his previous stint as a daytime disc jockey. The next night he took more calls and within a few months was fielding hundreds of calls every week. The growing number of calls reflected an expanding listenership. Many who called that first week still loyally called into the show ten years later.⁶ By the middle of 1964, Jepko realized that with KSL's clear channel signal, his audience spanned much of the country, and by the end of the first year, listeners from 20 states were regularly calling - some waiting hours for their call to be taken live on air.⁷

⁴ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 24.

⁵ The Herb Jepko Show: The Nitecap Program, Americana Quarto Collection, 2, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University. Hereafter the Americana Collection.

⁶ Howard Pearson, "Herb Jepko Going into 10th year," *Deseret News*, April 20, 1973, B9.

⁷ Mitch Broder, "Small-Talk Show is Big Draw in Wee Hours," *New York Times*, February 23, 1975, 29; Also see, Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 2.

From 1964 to 1977, Jepko's popularity grew as his audience ballooned to nearly 10 million nightly listeners.⁸ They tuned in from locations around the world.⁹ He organized a nonprofit company to run his radio program and published a monthly magazine entitled the *Wick*. He organized radio rallies all over the country. He promoted annual social events for listeners and even arranged travel excursions to Hawaii and Europe.¹⁰ Jepko's program caught the eye of Mutual Broadcast System (Mutual), which signed him to their national network in 1975. *Broadcast Productions and Promotions* magazine described Jepko's program as "the country's only national midnight to dawn telephone call-in program, which is on in all time zones."¹¹ When Jepko's show left the airwaves in 1979 because of shifting trends in radio, the Associated Press reported that the "country's only nationwide, midnight-to-dawn telephone talk show" was taken off the air.¹²

⁸ John M. Crewdson, "Cut in All-Night Radio Show has Insomniacs Muttering in the Dark," *New York Times*, July 18, 1977, 14.

⁹ "Herbie's Mailbag," *Wick*, July-August, 1976, 10, The Herb Jepko Collection, Joseph Buchman Collection, Highland, UT.

¹⁰ James Brown, "Herb Jepko Main Street Mainstay: Everyman—Leader of Nitecaps," *Los Angeles Times*, May 25 1975, Q32.

¹¹ "Radio Programs" *Broadcast Programming and Production*, September-October, 1977, 34.

¹² Associated Press, "Nitecap Cancellation Announcement," *Panama City News-Herald*, November 20, 1977, 141.

Jepko's Contributions to the Emergence of Overnight Call-in Talk Radio

In 1964, overnight call-in radio scarcely existed. It was used by, and generally limited to, local stations. Interregional and national call-in talk radio had not yet been conceived. Radio executives had yet to be convinced that national call-in talk radio could be successful.¹³ Yet, Jepko demonstrated what most radio program directors failed to understand about their audience: that a group of people, awake in the late and early morning hours, were interested in listening as well as interacting with the host. Jepko's program altered the traditional talk radio paradigm and changed the way industry leaders viewed both the overnight time slot and national call-in talk shows. He accomplished this with KSL's clear channel signal broadcast beyond its immediate market.

The clear channel directive was the result of the U.S. government's attempt to eliminate "the interference and regulatory chaos that existed during the early days of radio broadcasting."¹⁴ In 1928, the Federal Radio Committee (later the FCC) implemented General Order 40, which licensed stations in three classifications: smaller rural signals that served local interests and often shared frequencies with stations across the country; regional stations that shared time and frequencies as necessary; and clear

¹³ "A Fond Farewell to the King," *R&R: Radio and Records*, May 27, 1994, 34.

¹⁴ Christopher H. Sterling, and John M. Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002), 142; Louise Benjamin, "Working It Out Together: Radio Policy from Hoover to the Radio Act of 1927," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 42, no. 2 (1998): 221-236; Robert W. McChesney, "The Battle for the US Airwaves, 1928-1935" *Journal of Communication* 40, no. 4 (1990): 29-57; Donald Godfrey, "Senator Dill and the 1927 Communications Act," *Journal of Broadcasting* 23, no. 4 (Fall, 1979): 477-489; Donald Godfrey & Louise Benjamin "Radio Legislation's Quest Backstage Negotiator: Wallace H. White, Jr.," *Journal of Radio Studies* 10, no.1 (June 2003): 93-103.

channels, the largest and most powerful stations, which were high-powered 50,000-watt AM signals that were allowed to operate at night. Among those stations assigned a clear channel status was KSL's 1160 AM. James Foust's work on clear channel regulation has been especially enlightening.¹⁵ His study clarifies how clear channel stations were intended to "provide wide-area rural service by using high power on a frequency that was clear of other stations at night."¹⁶ Clear channel designation meant that no other station in the country operated on the same frequency with the same power, and that allowed the signals to travel vast distances at night when the airwaves were free of competing signals. As a result, clear channel stations like KSL were able to provide the country's first nationwide distribution platform.

Jepko used the technological advancements in long distance phone calling to contribute to his success. Long distance phone calls were traditionally expensive and logistically complicated for most listeners, but they became more feasible in the late 1950s and 1960s when long-distance rates shrunk (especially during the late night hours) and direct distance dialing became possible.¹⁷ The new technology facilitated the growth of nationwide call-in programming and made possible Jepko's vision for an interactive relationship with national listeners. Jepko's success was also assisted by the creation of

¹⁵ James C. Foust, *Big Voices of the Air: The Battle Over Clear Channel Radio* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 2000), 14-35; James C. Foust, "Technology Versus Monopoly: The Clear Channel Group and the Clear Channel Debate 1934-1941," *Journal of Radio and Audio Media* 4, no.1 (1997): 218-229.

¹⁶ Foust, *Big Voices of the Air*, 14.

¹⁷ James Lande and Tracy Waldon, "Reference Book of Rates, Price Indices, and Household Expenditures for Telephone Service," Washington, D.C.: Industry Analysis Division, Common Carrier Bureau, FCC, 1997, 46.

his own independent network that carried his radio program into areas of the country where KSL's signal was susceptible to interference, and which resulted in intermittent coverage for the program's fans.

Jepko proved that overnight audiences were interested in talk radio programming; that geographical and cultural boundaries could coalesce around a nationwide community of listeners; and that listeners were highly motivated to call in and interrelate, despite long waits and the costs of long distance calls. His work established the foundation for talk radio's succeeding hosts such as Larry King, Art Bell, Bruce Williams, Ray Briem, and Rush Limbaugh. Their programs were founded upon Jepko's success and replicated elements of his format for their own use.¹⁸ Today, the nationwide call-in format based on Jepko's programming precedents, is one of the key formats of national talk programming. The format is prevalent in contemporary syndicated talk radio, including sports and news, where hosts rely on audience engagement to drive discourse. The nationwide call-in format has proven to be a valuable income producer for national broadcasters, because it allows hosts of such programs the ability to engage a geographically diverse listenership on a more intimate basis while promoting two-way communication between host and

¹⁸ Michael Keith, *Sounds in the Dark* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 2001), 96-99.

audience.¹⁹ The format currently reaches an estimated 50 million Americans.²⁰ The untold story of Jepko rests at the center of this success.

Literature Review

An extensive body of literature exists today concerning the history of talk radio. However, little has been written about the foundations established by Jepko. Eric Barnouw wrote the first definitive broadcast history.²¹ His three-volume work traced broadcasting from its roots into 1970. The breath of history covered was extensive. However, he provides little else on the development of talk radio and only briefly mentions the 1927 Radio Act and the Communication Act of 1934, which were instrumental in the establishment of clear channel radio. Christopher H. Sterling and John Michael Kittross' *Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting* extended Barnouw's work. Sterling and Kittross address more recent developments, including a brief outline of the origination of the talk radio genre.²² However, their examination only notes the

¹⁹Jeffrey Bierig and John Dimmick, "The Late Night Radio Talk Show as Interpersonal Communication," *Journalism Quarterly* 56, no. 1, (1979): 92-96; Jane Horowitz Bick, "The Development of Two-Way Talk Radio in America," (PhD diss., University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 1987), 94-98.

²⁰ Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, *The State of the News Media 2007: Radio Audience*, <http://stateofthemedial.org/2007/radio-intro/talk-radio>; Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, *The State of the News Media 2011: Data for All Talk Stations*, <http://stateofthemedial.org/2011/audio-essay/data-page>; Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, *The State of the News Media 2013, Audio: Digital Drives Listener Experience*, http://www.stateofthemedial.org/print-chapter/?print_id=13369.

²¹ Erik Barnouw, *A Tower in Babel to 1933* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966); Erik Barnouw, *The Golden Web, 1933-1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968); Erik Barnouw, *Image Empire from 1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

²² Sterling and Kittross, *Stay Tuned*, 124.

format's development and fails to include an analysis of its evolution. Jepko is absent; however, he does appear in other works by Sterling. His *The Biographical Encyclopedia of American Radio* identifies Jepko as "the first ever coast-to-coast coverage for a talk show" but little additional information is provided.²³ In his edited three-volume *Encyclopedia of Radio*, Sterling expands on talk radio programming, including brief essays on the creation of clear channel radio stations and the evolution of talk on radio airwaves. The work includes an article that acknowledges Jepko as a "U.S. Radio Talk Show Host."²⁴

Aside from Sterling, other works have examined the proliferation of talk radio.²⁵ However, only a few go beyond Sterling's writings on Jepko to identify him as a leading

²³ Joseph G. Buchman, "Jepko, Herb" in *The Biographical Encyclopedia of American Radio*, ed. Christopher H. Sterling, Cary O'Dell, and Michael C. Keith (New York: Routledge, 2011), 196-98.

²⁴ Joseph Buchman, *Jepko, Herb 1931-1995: U.S. Radio Talk Show*, in *The Museum of Broadcast Communications Encyclopedia of Radio*, ed. Christopher H. Sterling and Michael C. Keith (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004), 782-83.

²⁵ Wayne Munson, *All Talk: The Talkshow in Media Culture* (Philadelphia, Pa: Temple University Press, 1993), 26-52; Peter Fornatale, and Joshua E. Mills, *Radio in the Television Age* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1980), 83; David Hendy, *Radio in the Global Age* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2000) 155-168; Donald G. Godfrey, and Frederic A. Leigh, *Historical Dictionary of American Radio* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1998), 13-15; Jim Cox, *Radio After the Golden Age: The Evolution of American Broadcasting Since 1960* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, 2013), 116-138; Lawrence Wilson Lichty and Malachi C. Topping, *American Broadcasting: A Source Book on the History of Radio and Television* (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1975), 398; Douglas Gomery, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States* (MA: Blackwell Pub, 2008), 157; David Nyland, *Beer, Babes, and Balls: Masculinity and Sports Talk Radio* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 21-53; Ian Hutchby, *Confrontation Talk: Arguments, Asymmetries, and Power on Talk Radio* (Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1996), 1-20; Michael C. Keith, *Talking Radio: An Oral History of American Radio in the Television Age* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E., 2000), 77-87.

contributor to talk radio's development. These works include Michael C. Keith's oral history on all-night radio, *Sounds in the Dark: All-Night Radio in American Life*; Marc Fisher's *Something in the Air: Radio, Rock, and the Revolution that Shaped a Generation*; Jim Cox's work on American radio networks, *American Radio Networks: A History*, Donna Halper's book on influential broadcast personalities *Icons of Talk: The Media Mouths that Changed American History*; and Peter Laufer's *Inside Talk Radio*. These authors each identify Jepko as a person of significance by using terms such as "first," "father," and "pioneered" to describe his contribution to the format.²⁶ Keith's oral history research focuses on the late night genre, and contains an essay by Joseph Buchman that hailed Jepko as the innovator of nationwide call-in talk radio. The essay provides a basic sketch of Jepko's life and radio career, but it appears only in the appendix. Among Buchman's assertions is that in 1968 Jepko created the country's first talk radio network.²⁷ However, Buchman says nothing about how this first talk radio network developed. The claim warrants deeper examination. What was the impetus for the network's creation? What were the legal implications? Who belonged to the network? How did Jepko attract partners? What role did KSL play in its creation? This work provides a better understanding of talk radio history.

²⁶ Keith, *Sounds in the Dark*, 96-99, 216-220; Marc Fisher, *Something in the Air: Radio, Rock, and the Revolution that Shaped A Generation* (New York: Random House, 2007), 116-117; Jim Cox, *American Radio Networks: A History* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, 2009), 84; Donna L. Halper, *Icons of Talk: The Media Mouths that Changed America* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2009), 130-132; Peter Laufer, *Inside Talk Radio: America's Voice or Just Hot Air?* (Secaucus, N.J.: Carol Pub. Group, 1995): 97

²⁷ Keith, *Sounds in the Dark*, 215, 215-224, 220.

The Cox history on American radio networks examines the country's largest radio networks, including the Mutual Broadcast System. He suggests that Jepko's partnership with the network in 1975 signifies the arrival of the "first nationwide, all-night call-in series."²⁸ While Cox correctly identifies Jepko's importance, he attributes Jepko's initiation of the first national all-night call-in radio program to his connection with Mutual, a common misconception. In fact, Jepko was broadcasting to national audiences on KSL airwaves nearly ten years prior to his partnership with Mutual.²⁹ Halper's work reflects some of the most extensive writing on Jepko. However, it too, does not advance what is already known, it merely describes his accomplishments without considering the complexities of building a nationwide program.

Peter Laufer's *Inside Talk Radio: America's Voice or Just Hot Air* credits Jepko for his role in the format's innovation. Laufer also identifies an issue that has plagued Jepko's contributions for many years. Jepko has frequently been overshadowed by the accomplishments of Larry King, a popular overnight radio personality who followed Jepko at Mutual Broadcast System. King debuted his national radio program in 1978, a year after Jepko left Mutual.³⁰ King frequently claimed that it was his program that first initiated national call-in radio. He suggested that it was Mutual President C. Edward Little who first approached him about beginning a nationwide talk radio show. Laufer

²⁸ Cox, *American Radio Networks*, 84.

²⁹ Miles Romney, "The Voice in the Night Unheard by Scholars: Herb Jepko and the Genesis of National Talk Radio," *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 21, no. 2 (2014): 272-289.

³⁰ Laufer, *Inside Talk Radio*, 97.

reports that King told Little, “you’ve got to be kidding, because talk radio is so localized.” But Little assured King that the concept would work and King agreed to pilot the new program.³¹ Laufer disputes that this was the first time a nationwide talk show was broadcast. He writes “Herb Jepco [sp] was probably the first to host such a show, on KSL out of Salt Lake City.”³² Indicative of Jepko’s invisible legacy, Laufer fails to spell Jepko’s name correctly.

Other research likewise misidentifies King as the talk format’s innovator. Susan Douglas’ *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* notes the technological advancement of satellite-distributed programming as the genesis of the format, which coincided with King’s early dominance in talk radio.³³ Douglas reasons that nationwide talk radio began with the proliferation of satellite distributed radio signals. She acknowledges that prior to satellite distribution, network radio programs were transmitted via telephone lines at great expense.³⁴ The high cost of producing a networked radio program prevented most local stations from attempting such programming on their own, leaving only the larger networks with the financial means to distribute network

³¹ Laufer, *Inside Talk Radio*, 97.

³² Laufer, *Inside Talk Radio*, 98.

³³ Susan J. Douglas, *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination: From Amos 'n' Andy and Edward R. Murrow to Wolfman Jack and Howard Stern* (New York: Times Books, 1999), 289.

³⁴ Sterling and Keith, *Encyclopedia of Radio*, 783.

programming. As a result, Douglas indicated that national talk shows must have begun when cheaper satellite distribution technology became available.³⁵

A 1976 master's thesis by Craig Denton titled "Revamping the Wick Magazine" focuses on his methods for improving the aesthetics and distribution of the magazine, but provides little on the program's history.³⁶ Jepko is the focus of analysis in Jane Horowitz Bick's 1988 dissertation, "The Development of Two-Way Talk Radio In America," but in that work he is identified only as a pioneer in the format. She does not take into consideration his history, nor how the program pioneered the format.³⁷ Heber Grant Wolsey's *History of Radio Station KSL from 1922 to Television* examines the time period when Jepko was on KSL's airwaves but does not mention him directly.³⁸

In journal research there is only one article on Jepko. The *Journal of Radio and Audio Media* refutes Douglas' timeline and demonstrates that clear channel signals provided a platform for nationwide talk radio programming prior to the arrival of satellite-distributed signals.³⁹ While this study provides groundwork for the topic, its narrow scope does not address important elements of the Jepko narrative that are critical to understanding his significant accomplishments. These topics include the impetus for

³⁵ Douglas, *Listening In*, 289.

³⁶ Craig L. Denton, "Revamping the Wick Magazine" (Master's Thesis, University of Utah, 1976).

³⁷ Bick, "Two-Way Talk Radio," 94-98.

³⁸ Wolsey, "The History of Radio Station KSL from 1922 to Television," Michigan State University.

³⁹ Romney, "The Voice," 272-289.

creating a national program, his desire to create audience-driven radio programming, the tremendous lengths Jepko took to manage the large audience, and the legal and financial challenges of creating an independent network. Additionally, studies have overlooked how his personality, childhood, friendships, and radio background contributed to his success.⁴⁰ This article is the only acknowledgement of Jepko in leading academic media journals. A review of *Journalism History*, *American Journalism*, *Journalism Quarterly*, *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* and the *Journal of Radio and Audio Media* all reflects the need for more in-depth research on Jepko's life and work.

The journals, however, did yield works that studied late-night audiences, which provide some rationale for Jepko's success. Several studies examined the oversized role that overnight radio played in the lives of listeners and explain the loyalty that overnight audiences felt towards Jepko's program. Studies by Jeffery Bierig, John Dimmick, Harriet Tramer, and Leo W. Jeffres discovered that late-night listeners used call-in talk radio as a substitute for interpersonal communication and that listeners developed strong communal ties with the host and other fans.⁴¹ These studies help explain the loyalty Jepko's late night audience exhibited towards his program which contributed to the show's explosive growth.

⁴⁰ Romney, "The Voice," 272-289.

⁴¹ Bierig and Dimmick, "Late Night Radio Talk," 200-210; Harriet Tramer and Leo W. Jeffres, "Talk Radio—Forum and companion," *Journal of Electronic Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 27, no. 3 (1983): 297-300; John Crittenden, "Democratic Functions of the Open Mike Radio Forum," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (1971): 200-210; Joseph Turow, "Talk Show Radio as Interpersonal Communication," *Journal of Broadcasting And Electronic Media* 18, no. 2 (1974): 171-180.

These works represent the totality of scholarship on and related to Jepko. They do little to advance his history or explain his role as an innovator in the radio medium. What is missing in current research is an examination of the Jepko story. Microhistories and biographies offer explorations of complex ideas, such as Jepko's involvement in nationwide talk radio. Similar works have already been written on lesser known, but influential radio personalities and provide a valuable contribution to radio history.⁴² Likewise, Jepko, who contributed to a transformative radio format, is in need of further research.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this dissertation is to document the radio career of Herb Jepko and establish his role in innovating nationwide call-in talk radio. The story of Jepko is the account of the first pioneer who established the foundations of the format. This research relies on original primary evidence obtained from previously unexamined sources. It explores the genesis of Jepko's radio program and how his arrival at KSL, and the subsequent creation of his independent radio network, founded the nationwide call-in talk radio format. It explains how Jepko successfully maintained and engaged a nationwide audience in an era when coast-to-coast talk radio was nonexistent. It reveals Jepko's personal background and how his youth, specifically events in his childhood and early work in radio, shaped his vision. The dissertation concludes with an examination of

⁴²Donald Bain, *Long John Nebel: Radio Talk King, Master Salesman, and Magnificent Charlatan* (New York: Macmillan, 1974); Barry Gray, *My Night People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975); Susan Ware, *It's One O'clock and Here is Mary Margaret McBride: A Radio Biography* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).

Jepko's legacy, his contributions to talk radio programming, and his contributions to talk radio.

Methodology

The methodological approach used in this research is based in the works of Jill Lepore and Asa Briggs. Lepore offers a theoretical approach for the study of Jepko in her article *Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography*.⁴³ Her concept of microhistory allows for the study of smaller, centralized research topics that are connected to broader events of historical significance. She explains that the research and narratives in microhistories examine key events in a subject's life.⁴⁴ She suggests that subjects of microhistories are often people whose lives might not be "extraordinary" by definition, but "whose incompletely documented lives point historians towards a single question shrouded in mystery."⁴⁵ She suggests that microhistorical works can focus on a single individual but are not limited to writing exclusively about the subject's life; rather, they can have "nonbiographical goals in mind" and allow the study to focus on critical questions about a topic.⁴⁶ Thus, the research broadens the understanding of the individual and the whole of his/her contributions to society.

Lepore's conceptualization of microhistory provides an ideal platform for the study of Jepko. His life itself was unremarkable, but his professional work set the

⁴³ Jill Lepore, "Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography," *Journal of American History*, (2001): 129-144.

⁴⁴ Lepore, "Historians Who Love," 132.

⁴⁵ Lepore, "Historians Who Love," 133.

⁴⁶ Lepore, "Historians Who Love," 132.

foundations for future talk radio programming. This research examines the breadth of Jepko's life, from his birth to his untimely death. The work examines Jepko's life, and events that transpired in it, as a means of examining the historical development of nationwide call-in talk radio.

Asa Briggs' methodology extends Lepore's perspectives. His ideas expressed in, *Social History of Human Experience* provide the methodological framework.⁴⁷ Briggs, an English broadcast social historian, suggests that methodology begins by immersion into the evidence of the topic and the time period. He notes that this evidence can be found through the examination of artifacts germane to the period of study. These artifacts can be many things, but are typically documents, oral histories, and published literature. The immersion process provides an understanding of social and cultural complexities and how these influences affected the subject's actions. Briggs quotes George M. Trevelyan, another English historian, who suggests the efforts of the historian are to "reconstruct the whole fabric" and, by utilizing Lepore's concept of microhistory, assess how the evidence affects the larger historical framework.⁴⁸ This provides "glimpses" into the personalities under examination.⁴⁹

Guided by the methodological foundations of Lepore and Briggs, this study is crafted chronologically. It relies upon a number of original sources housed in the archival special collections at the University of Utah, Brigham Young University, George

⁴⁷ Asa Briggs, "Social History and Human Experience," The Grace A. Tanner Lecture Series in Human Values (Cedar City: Southern Utah University, 1984).

⁴⁸ Briggs, "Social History," 5.

⁴⁹ Briggs, "Social History," 5.

Washington University, and Arizona State University. State archives including the Utah Historical Society, the Texas State Historical Association, and the Pennsylvania State Archives also provided valuable evidence. The National Archives in Washington, D.C. contributed information about the clear channel regulation, and the creation of KSL. Jepko's personal documents, held in the private collection of Joseph Buchman at his home in Alpine, Utah, were of significant value and have not been accessed in research until now. Four oral histories were discovered in archival documents and examined to better understand the influences guiding Jepko's achievements in radio and the challenges he overcame to secure his success.

Lepore's notion of microhistorical analysis provides the theoretical approach for the study of lesser known figures such as Herb Jepko. Briggs provides the scaffolding to research the primary data, their analysis, and the organization of the evidence. The results of this research add clarification as to Jepko's role in the history of radio and the foundations of nationwide call-in talk radio.

The Primary Evidence

Securing the original evidence for this project was paramount. LaPore and Briggs are clear in assembling scaffolding that consists of primary source materials, which are considered the "building blocks of historical research."⁵⁰ The most significant primary sources relating to Jepko are held in the private collection of Joseph Buchman.⁵¹

Buchman once worked at WXVW radio, a 250-watt radio station in Jeffersonville,

⁵⁰ Donald Godfrey, *Methods of Historical Analysis in Electronic Media* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 25.

⁵¹ The Herb Jepko Collection, Joseph Buchman Collection, Alpine, UT.

Indiana, where he ran the switchboard for Jepko's *The Nitecap Radio Network* from midnight to 6 a.m. This spurred a lifelong interest in Jepko. Years later, when Buchman relocated to the Salt Lake City area, he befriended Jepko's widow, Patsy, and acquired from her Jepko's personal collection. The Buchman Collection includes transcriptions of key meetings between Jepko and KSL management, published features on the show from period newspapers, and dozens of photos. A complete collection of the *Wick* magazine constitutes the bulk of the collection. The *Wick* was a publication Jepko mailed to subscribers and is significant because the magazine served as the pulse of the show and contains information regarding the program's growth and finances. The *Wick* was introduced in June 1965 and ran for the duration of the program into late 1979. It served as a resource for Jepko's fans and each edition contains regular editorials written by Jepko that he titled an "Open Letter to Our Readers." He also penned longer essays and they appear sporadically throughout the publication. These published writings reflect his personal views and counsel related to the program, the show's listeners, and life events that intersected these two groups. The editorials act essentially as an ongoing journal for the show and provide insight into Jepko's thinking.

Jepko's oral history is contained in The Buchman Collection. It was conducted and transcribed by Tim Larson, University of Utah, a broadcast historian and Professor of Communication. This is the only oral history conducted with Jepko himself. The history delves into his early history, including his childhood, but focuses primarily on his arrival at KSL. Jepko discusses the negotiations with KSL to secure the overnight show, his relationship with management, the growth of the program, and the fallout with Mutual Broadcasting System. More importantly, the Larson interview reflects on his reasons for

innovating nationwide call-in talk radio, his keen relationship with his listeners, his legacy, and his feelings over what he considered to be personal betrayals that occurred in the latter years of his career.⁵²

The Buchman Collection includes audio and visual elements, including recordings of the show and a lengthy TV news story that profiled Jepko in the late 1970s. This provides one of the only surviving visual recordings of Jepko hosting his program and supplies a glimpse into his congenial interaction with his audience.⁵³ He talks about his desire to put the caller at ease and how he tried to bring out their personalities on the air. He expresses a surprisingly bold opinion against controversial talk radio formats and explains his reasons for his program's non-confrontational approach. The collection also contains a 2004 radio interview between Buchman and nationally syndicated radio host Rollye James. She recalls conversations she had with Jepko about his nationwide success, the operation of his business, and his non-confrontational approach to talk radio. James also recalls her role in helping Jepko secure his syndication agreement with Mutual.⁵⁴ Buchman corresponded with longtime radio personality Art Bell, and this correspondence reveals how Bell was influenced by Jepko and later incorporated parts of Jepko's show into his own.

⁵² Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986.

⁵³ Judy Hallet and Craig Werth (Producers), "EXTRA" [Television broadcast] Salt Lake City: KUTV, (n.d.), digital copy located in Joseph Buchman Collection, Alpine, UT.

⁵⁴ Rollye James and Joseph Buchman, *The Rollye James Show*, February 10, 2004, audio recording, Joseph Buchman Collection, Alpine, UT.

Special Collections at the University of Utah provided two collections instrumental in the development of the Jepko research. First, the Tim Larson Papers provides an extensive collection on the history of Utah broadcasting and other Western radio stations dating from 1850-2012.⁵⁵ It contains an extensive history on KSL, including an early record of the station and how it secured the coveted clear channel designation. It includes executive committee minutes from KSL Board of Directors meetings during the time that Jepko was at the station. The minutes are a measurement of how station management viewed Jepko and how it shifted over time. The collection contains financial records regarding KSL's operation and Jepko's independent contract. Additionally, there are station newsletters and license renewal applications from the time that Jepko was in a partnership with the station. The second resource is the Everett L. Cooley Oral History Project (1983-2011) which includes the oral history transcripts of Utah's influential broadcasters.⁵⁶ The project preserves the history of Jepko in the oral histories with several former KSL executives, including one who later went to work for Jepko. Of particular significance is that of former KSL Radio program director Marshall Small.⁵⁷ Small hired Jepko as host of the noonday program, the KSL "Crossroads Show," prior to his nationwide program. He eventually left his post with KSL, shortly

⁵⁵ Tim Larson Papers, 1850-2012, Special Collections, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT. Hereafter Tim Larson Papers.

⁵⁶ Everett L. Cooley Oral History Project, Special Collections, Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah.

⁵⁷ Marshall Small, Oral History by Tim Larson, 1988, no. 175, transcript, Everett L. Cooley Oral History Project, University of Utah Special Collections and Archives, J. Marriott Willard Library, Salt Lake City, UT, 62-65.

after Jepko's departure, to become Jepko's general sales manager, an arrangement that lasted about a year. Small details Jepko's partnership with KSL and how that relationship affected Jepko both personally and professionally. He offers a rare glimpse into the business operations of the program, notably the fiscal side of the business and perspectives on Patsy Jepko's role as the office manager.⁵⁸ These insights are critical to understanding how the radio program operated away from the microphone. The Cooley project contains a comprehensive oral history of Arch Madsen, longtime president and CEO of Bonneville Communications (parent company of KSL) and Jepko's friend.⁵⁹ By Jepko's own account, Madsen played a significant role in Jepko's success. Madsen's history reflects the culture of KSL, which is owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It explains the unique work environment the church-owned station presented for its employees and contractors who were not members of the faith. This included Jepko, who was not a church member.

The Americana Quarto Collection, in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah, contains early promotional documents which Jepko provided to listeners and prospective advertising clients.⁶⁰ These explained the program's reliance on KSL's signal for distribution, details about the show's first night

⁵⁸ Small, oral history by Larson, 1988, 63.

⁵⁹ Arch Madsen, interview by Tim Larson, 1986-1988, no. 313, transcript, Everett L. Cooley Oral History Project, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶⁰ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection.

on the station's airwaves, its meteoric rise in popularity, the impact the show had on the Jepko family, and early correspondence between Jepko and his fans.

The Special Collections Research Center at The George Washington University contains documents and audiotapes about Mutual Broadcast System. These offer a history of the network during the timeframe of Jepko's affiliation with it. Programming documents and recordings of shows from Jepko's immediate successors are housed in the collection. These establish Mutual's commitment to the national overnight format despite Jepko's personal struggles with the network.

Within the files of the Utah State Historical Society is an extensive photograph collection of Jepko's traveling radio shows or "rallies," as he called them.⁶¹ The photos are part of the Eugene Jelesnik Photography Collection. Jelesnik's photographs captured visual detail of the rallies, including the variety of celebrities and musical guests who attended the events.

The Federal Radio Commission (FRC) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) reports, transcripts of congressional hearings, and license renewals were available from the National Archive and provide insight into the creation of the clear channel regulation and how KSL tried to meet the FCC's requirements for its rural listeners.⁶²

⁶¹ The Eugene Jelesnik Photograph Collection, 1914-1999, box 62, folders 12-21 and box 63, folders 1-11, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, UT. Hereafter Utah State Historical Society.

⁶² National Archive, accessible at <http://www.archives.gov>.

A search of several digital newspaper archives yielded a wealth of information on Jepko. The Utah Digital Newspaper Collection contains digitized copies of Utah newspapers such as the *Desert News*, the *Salt Lake Tribune*, the *Standard-Examiner* (Ogden), and the *Daily Herald* (Provo).⁶³ This database is indexed and quickly searchable. Jepko was featured in numerous published reports. These articles corroborated evidence pulled from original documents and, in some cases, added clarification on specific topics. Google and Newspapers.com maintain a vast digital collection of U.S. newspapers that are accessible online.⁶⁴ A search of these archives revealed that Jepko was frequently featured in newspapers across the country. Several national newspapers including *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, and the Associated Press Wire Service published stories on Jepko.⁶⁵ These reports examined the program's origin in small-town America and its novelty as the only nationwide call-in talk radio show. One article in the *Washington Post* examines the difficulty that Jepko faced in later years maintaining his audience. And the *New York Times* lambasted Mutual executives for editorial decisions in regards to the program.⁶⁶

⁶³ Utah Digital Newspapers, accessible at <http://digitalnewspapers.org>.

⁶⁴ Google Newspaper Archive, accessible at <https://news.google.com/newspapers?hl=en>; Newspapers Archive, accessible at <https://www.newspapers.com>.

⁶⁵ Broder, "Small-Talk Show," *New York Times*, 29; Crewdson, "Cut in All-Night Radio Show has Insomniacs Muttering in the Dark," *New York Times*, 14; Brown, "Main Street Mainstay," *Los Angeles Times*, Q32; John Carmody, "Broadcast Notes," *Washington Post*, February 27, 1977, D10; Elaine Jarvik, "The 'Small Talk' Show of Midnight Radio," *Deseret News*, August 22, 1979, 1-2C.

⁶⁶ Carmody, "Broadcast Notes," *Washington Post*, D10; Broder, "Small-Talk Show," *New York Times*, 29.

A longtime radio personality, David Gleeson, digitized and indexed full issues of broadcasting trade magazines, which are accessible on the website AmericanRadioHistory.com.⁶⁷ The collection includes *Broadcast* magazine, *Radio and Records*, *Broadcast Programming and Production*, and *Broadcasting Telecasting: Yearbook-Marketbook*. These industry publications contain period-specific material on Jepko and reveal much about his work history prior to his arrival at KSL. They included sales information about his program and articles profiling both Jepko and his radio show. Several magazine features discovered in the archive focused on Mutual and its decisions to both sign Jepko and also drop him from the network.

The author conducted 15 oral histories with Jepko's family members, associates, business partners, and friends. These known associates were difficult to locate as the show ended nearly 40 years ago and many who knew him have passed away. However, several surviving associates were located and interviewed.

Interviews with Jepko's daughter, Kitty Korttnap, and family friend Joseph Buchman, expanded upon his personality and details of his family life, including his relationship with his wife Patsy and his children. They provided information into Jepko's childhood; specifically, his difficult upbringing, his abandonment by both his birth and adoptive mothers, and the severe illness of his father. These events molded Jepko's personality and contributed to his fierce dedication to the show's distinct culture. Frank Glindmeier, a childhood friend of Jepko, recalled their experiences in high school and Jepko's leadership of several clubs and organizations. Interviews with Kirk Stirland and

⁶⁷American Radio History archive, accessible at <http://americanradiohistory.com/index.htm>.

Craig Denton, both former employees of Jepko, proved especially critical to understanding the extensive business operation that managed much of the supplemental parts of his business. This included the sales staff, the editorial staff behind the *Wick*, and the extensive planning of rallies and tours. Interviews were conducted with individuals who worked for radio programs that were part of Jepko's independent radio network. Danny Kramer worked at KSL as program director during Jepko's final years on the station's airwaves. Kramer's insight into the changing dynamics of KSL radio in the late 1970s was informative and helped frame Jepko's struggles with the station towards the end of his show's run. Hugh Barr worked as the general manager of Louisville radio station WHAS in the mid-1970s and was responsible for the station's decision to join Jepko's independent radio network. His knowledge was helpful in explaining how the independent network operated, including how Jepko pitched the program to potential partners, and then once those partnerships were consummated, how he managed those relationships.

Several former associates of Jepko, including Craig Wirth, a longtime broadcaster and friend of the Jepko family and Tim Larson, who conducted the Jepko oral history in 1986, revealed more about Jepko's state of mind in the final years of his life, including battling severe health problems brought on by years of drinking alcohol and the loss of his loved ones. Interviews were conducted with seasoned newspaper reporters Lynn Arave and Donna Halper who covered Jepko's rise to national stardom.

An online fan forum dedicated to Jepko's show was also consulted as a way to better understand Jepko's impact from his audience's perspective. The messages posted

in the forum by fans of the show provided evidence of his ability to connect with a vast and diverse audience.⁶⁸

Summary

This study draws upon evidence harvested from a number of primary sources, including the Buchman Collection, university and state archives, and oral histories. The evidence acquired from these sources was organized in accordance to Briggs and Lepore's methodological framework and provides the foundation of this dissertation. This work is a microhistory of Herb Jepko, an influential figure in talk radio history. The ensuing chapters develop, detail and analyze that evidence. They explain his participation in the innovation of nationwide call-in talk radio, a belief held by a few radio historians that until this publication was a notion that lacked sufficient evidence. This research fills the gap left by radio historians and explores the salient, yet overlooked, events that were instrumental in defining Jepko's legacy and his enterprising vision for a strong nationwide community of loyal, participatory listeners connected through the radio medium. It provides another building block the growing body of radio scholarship.

⁶⁸ www.facebook.com/herb.jepko.

Chapter 2

1931 – 1954: The Early Years

Herb Jepko faced a number of events in his childhood that later shaped how he viewed his role as a talk radio host. These experiences underscore Jepko's strong desire to connect with listeners who felt lonely and abandoned by family and society. In his childhood he felt the sting of abandonment by his loved ones and the pain of having no friends. Jepko confronted these emotions and he struggled to process them. As a result, he sympathized with those who experienced similar emotions. He was inspired to build the country's first nationwide call-in talk radio show that could give people a connection to a nationwide community.¹ He often expressed that he felt like a guardian or shepherd over listeners' personal difficulties. Metaphorically, he viewed himself as a counselor and his radio program served as remedy for these emotions. Jepko's sympathy towards this group of people was the motivating factor in the creation of his nationwide radio show and it is important to understand how the traumatic events of his youth directly contributed to his empathy and the development of his radio future.

This research begins with the life of his adoptive father Metro Jepko, as it was he who caused much of the pain and sorrow young Jepko experienced. This chapter examines the basic foundations of Jepko's adolescence, including his troubled childhood, formative high school years, and his service in the armed forces, where his interest in radio began.

¹ Broder, "Small-Talk Show," *New York Times*, 29.

Birth and Family Health

Jepko was born on March 20, 1931 in Hayden, Colorado to Mary Irene Parke and was given the name William Parke. Jepko's birth father is listed on the birth certificate as unknown and Mary, a single mother, elected to give up the baby for adoption. He was adopted as an infant by Nellie Callahan and Metro Jepko of Chino Valley, Arizona, a small community north of Prescott, Arizona and only a few miles from the popular tourist town of Sedona.² The couple welcomed the child into their home and renamed the boy Herbert Jepko. As he grew, he preferred Herb and went by that for much of his adult life. The couple raised the child together for the first few years of his life; however, Metro and Nellie's marriage did not last. Nellie left and Herb was raised by his adoptive father. Unfortunately, Metro was in poor health when he was awarded custody of the child and he did not have the benefit of extended family nearby to help. As a result, he was forced to give up guardianship of young Jepko until the boy was in his early teenage years. Metro's youth spent in hard labor and fighting conflicts in the American Southwest and in Europe had taken a toll on him. He spent much of his early twenties in the military and he garnered citations and medals for his service. Yet, those medals had come at a significant cost. He struggled with old war wounds that affected his life and the life of his son.

² Herb Jepko Birth Certificate, March 20, 1931, Arizona Department of Health Services, digital copy of the certificate is accessible online at <http://genealogy.az.gov/search>.

Metro was born and raised in Mt. Carmel, Pennsylvania, a small city 88 miles northwest of Philadelphia.³ His family was poor and as soon as he was old enough he went to work in the region's coal mines. At age 19, fed up with a life spent working underground in cramped spaces, he left his native city to find different employment. He found it in McKees Rock, Pennsylvania where he worked for an automotive manufacturer.⁴ In 1916, he enlisted in the 107th Field Artillery Regiment of the Pennsylvania National Guard and was deployed to the Southwest to protect American lives and property along the Mexican-American border.⁵ Metro did not experience combat in this first assignment. The 107th was mostly used in a supporting role, doing odd jobs and menial labor for the army. Metro described his experience as cleaning "Texas out of cactus for 50 cents a day."⁶ He was awarded a service medal by the U.S. government for his participation in the campaign.⁷

³ Jepko, Metro United States World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918, FHL microfilm 1,852,249, index and images in Allegheny County no 2, Pennsylvania, United States, National Archives and Records Administration. Hereafter referred to as Metro World War I Draft Card.

⁴ "Meet Pop Jepko," *Wick*, December, 1970, 3.

⁵ War Department Annual Report, 1916, entry 66, 13, 23, 189 – 191, Records of the Adjutant General's Office 1780's – 1917, National Archives and Records Administration; also Metro Jepko, Mexican Border Campaign Veterans Card File, 1916, Pennsylvania State Archives. Hereafter Mexican Border Veterans Card, Pennsylvania State Archives.

⁶ "Meet Pop Jepko," *Wick*, December, 1970, 3.

⁷ Jepko, Mexican Border Veterans Card, Pennsylvania State Archives.

Following Metro's first six-month deployment, he was back in Pennsylvania looking for work. He was unemployed for a short time before his Pennsylvania regiment was deployed a second time, this time across the Atlantic to an unfamiliar world. In April 1917, the U.S. declared war on Germany and entered World War I. The government initiated a draft to create an effective army and called up the National Guard. Guard units already had limited training, thus they were among the troops shipped to France. Metro's regiment was among the first units to arrive on European soil.⁸ He underwent new training as an engineer, but was schooled in the operation of the Lewis Machine Gun, which had gained fame for its reputation as an effective killing machine. The gun could fire 500-600 rounds a minute, but was large and bulky; although, unlike other machine guns of the era, was still light and mobile enough that a single soldier could operate it.⁹ He learned the weapon well and became a certified instructor. Later, he taught other soldiers how to use it.¹⁰

⁸ Metro Jepko, World War I Selective Service System Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918, M1509, 4,582 rolls, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

⁹ For more on the Lewis Machine Gun, see William McCleave Easterly, *The Belgian Rattlesnake: The Lewis Automatic Machine Gun :A Social and Technical Biography of the Gun and Its Inventors* (Cobourg, Ont., Canada: Collector Grade Publications, 1998), 542.

¹⁰ "Meet Pop Jepko," *Wick*, December, 1970, 3.

Once on the front lines, the regiment's primary responsibility was to provide 75 mm machine gun fire in support of the 2nd Brigade of the 28th Infantry Division.¹¹ The regiment saw heavy fighting and Metro, for the first time, witnessed death. Three members of his unit were wounded and one eventually passed away from his injuries.¹² Metro survived these initial battles unscathed, however, he would not be so lucky in the future. He never forgot the day he was wounded because it was his birthday, November 1, 1918 in the early morning hours.¹³ A few days later, on November 5, 1918, *The New York Tribune* officially reported him as wounded in action.¹⁴

Metro never described the extent of his injuries in any of his writings, but his military records state that he suffered three gunshot wounds to the left side of his face and shrapnel to his left arm.¹⁵ The injuries were significant enough to send him to a military hospital in England, where he spent the remainder of the war.¹⁶ He was eventually awarded a Purple Heart. Like thousands of other wounded soldiers, he was unable to

¹¹ American Battle Monuments Commission, "1st Division, Summary of Operations in the World War," United States Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1944, 1. Hereafter American Battle Monuments Commission, "Summary of Operations."

¹² American Battle Monuments, "Summary of Operations," Government Printing Office, 17.

¹³ "Meet Pop Jepko," *Wick*, December, 1970, 3.

¹⁴ "The Casualty List," *New York Tribune*, November 5, 1918, 9.

¹⁵ Metro Jepko, Veteran's Compensation Application, February 6, 1931, World War I Veterans Service and Compensation File, 1934-1948, RG 19, Series 19.91, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

¹⁶ "Casualty List," *New York Tribune*, 9.

leave the effects of the war on the battlefield and suffered from his war injuries the rest of his life. He was in constant pain and at times it was so severe that it rendered him incapacitated. His condition affected his family life, especially his ability to care for his son.¹⁷

Metro returned to Pennsylvania and underwent several additional surgeries. His doctors, concerned about his long-term health, concluded that a drier climate would be better for his recovery and transferred him to a hospital near Prescott, Arizona.¹⁸ Metro wrote that his doctors “decided to send me to Fort Whipple, Arizona to the U. S. Public Health Service Hospital [now part of the Northern Arizona VA Healthcare System] where I spent two years in a plaster cast and braces.”¹⁹ This suggests that Metro’s injuries also included respiratory problems, perhaps the result of poison gas, since doctors at the time believed that living in a dry climate would aid or even cure respiratory ailments.²⁰ Metro was discharged after he achieved a measure of recovery, but decided to stay in the area rather than return to Pennsylvania. “When I began to regain my health, I bought a few acres of land in Miller Valley, Arizona, which is now a part of Prescott,

¹⁷ *Wick*, June, 1969, 2.

¹⁸ “Meet Pop Jepko,” *Wick*, December 1970, 3.

¹⁹ “Meet Pop Jepko,” *Wick*, December 1970, 3.

²⁰ Isaac Williams Brewer, "Shall the Tubercular Patient Be Treated in the Home Climate or Sent to Some Region with a More Equitable Climate, Where More Hours Can Be Spent in the Open Air with Less Discomfort?" *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* 159, no. 25 (1908): 823-825.

Arizona, I raised chickens, rabbits, and had an orchard.”²¹ He found work in the office of Veterans Affairs. The *Prescott Evening Courier* reports that in 1934 Metro was soliciting participation from area veterans for an upcoming parade.²² He also served for a time as a commander of the local Forty and Eight, a club within the American Legion.²³

Metro met and married Nellie Callahan. Little is known about their courtship or when they were married, although, records indicate that he was not married during the war, which suggests that he most likely met her after his arrival in Arizona.²⁴ The marriage occurred sometime after his release from the hospital. The first known record of their union is a 1928 Prescott City Directory that lists the couple as married and living in Miller Valley. His occupation was listed as machinist.²⁵ The couple either could not have children or, for other unknown reasons, decided upon adoption. Whatever the couple’s motivation, they adopted Jepko shortly after his birth. The marriage did not last and while there exists no record of the divorce, it ended sometime before 1940.²⁶ Neither

²¹ “Meet Pop Jepko,” *Wick*, December 1970, 3.

²² “Parade Hour is Moved Up to 10,” *Prescott Evening Courier*, November 9, 1934, 1.

²³ “Meet Pop Jepko,” *Wick*, December 1970, 3.

²⁴ Metro Jepko, Mexican Border Veterans Card, Pennsylvania State Archives.

²⁵ Metro Jepko, U.S. City Directories (1822-1995), [Database online] Provo, Utah.

²⁶ The 1940 U.S. Census reports Metro Jepko as divorced. Sixteenth Census of the United States, roll T627 and 4,643, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., 1940. Hereafter referred to as Sixteenth Census, National Archives and Records Administration.

Metro nor Jepko spoke much about her or her motives for ending the marriage. *The Daily Courier*, a Prescott newspaper, suggests that Jepko was four years old when Nellie left.²⁷

Jepko avoided talking about his early life when he became a national talk radio host. Many associates, friends, and journalists were unaware that he was adopted and that he was raised by a single father.²⁸ Frank Glindmeier, one of Jepko's teenage friends, met Metro on several occasions, but was unaware that he was Jepko's adoptive father.²⁹ Jepko seldom spoke about his birth and the lack of female companionship in his youth. Neither his birth nor adoptive mother played a prominent role in his life but their absence did. In a rare moment of reflection, he wrote "as one who lost his mother at a very early age, going through life without a mother can be full of uncertainty." He lamented that his early years were devoid of this motherly "tenderness" and "warmth."³⁰ Jepko's non-traditional upbringing was painful, certainly atypical of the "nuclear family" concept, which was the ideal for the American family at the time. Jepko clearly missed a female presence in his youth, it affected him deeply, inflicting considerable emotional distress as a result.

²⁷ Donna L. Halper, "Herb Jepko: Beloved Talk Show Host's Prescott Connection," *The Daily Courier*, October 3, 2009, accessible at <http://dcourier.com/main.asp?subsectionID=1&articleID=73083&SectionID=1>.

²⁸ Joseph Buchman, oral history by the author, July 23, 2015; also, Frank Glindmeier, oral history by the author, March 17 2015, transcript in possession of the author.

²⁹ Glindmeier, oral history, March 17, 2015.

³⁰ *Wick*, July, 1969, 2.

Father Struggles Providing for Son

Once Nellie left the marriage, Metro attempted to raise his young son alone, despite his own medical problems. He did not have other children, nor did he remarry nor adopt. Because of the lingering effects of World War I injuries, he struggled to adequately care for Herb. Jepko recalls being raised in near poverty: the home was small, it did not have a telephone, and his father was often unable to pay basic bills because his injuries limited his ability to find steady work.³¹ One night, a young Jepko recalls awaking at 2 a.m. to his father suffering from a “flare-up.”³² The pain was so significant that Jepko thought Metro was dying. Jepko remembers his father pleading for him to go to the neighbor’s house and call a doctor. The boy woke the neighbor and begged to use the phone. The neighbor obliged, but the doctor refused to come. He was upset because Jepko was calling at such an early hour and, more importantly, the family was behind in paying their medical bills. The doctor told Jepko he would not attend to his father’s needs until he was properly compensated. Dejected, Jepko returned home and broke the news to his father. Metro was left without medical care.

Fortunately, Metro survived the incident and admitted himself into the Veterans Administration hospital.³³ He stayed in the hospital for the next three years. Alone, without extended family to help care for his young child, and with Jepko’s adoptive

³¹ Jarvik, “Small Talk Show,” *Deseret News*, 1C.

³² Jarvik, “Small Talk Show,” *Deseret News*, 1C.

³³ Jarvik, “Small Talk Show,” *Deseret News*, 1C.

mother out of the picture, Metro made a critical and difficult decision about the welfare of his child. He placed Herb into the state foster care system.³⁴

Jepko's separation from his father devastated him. He became anxious and depressed. He suffered from bouts of extreme loneliness and isolation.³⁵ His life was unstable and constantly changing. Over the next eight years, he moved among five different families.³⁶ The moves made making friends difficult, and the friendships he did create, ended because he was shuffled from home to home. He told a reporter, "I moved too much to have many friends. I created my own world . . . I used to talk to myself because I had no one else to talk with."³⁷ These years triggered insecurities that he carried for his entire life.

Jepko's emotional struggles support what research has discovered about youth in foster care. Children in these situations often display a tendency towards social isolation even if the child demonstrates capable social skills prior to their placement in the system.³⁸ Research indicates that depression and loneliness are frequent forms of maladjustment demonstrated by a child, and that children in these situations need

³⁴ Joseph Buchman, "The Nightcap Radio Movement: 1964-1990," 3, 2002, accessible online at <http://josephbuchman.com/Voices%20in%20the%20Dark.pdf>.

³⁵ Jarvik, "Small Talk Show," *Deseret News*, 1C.

³⁶ Jarvik, "Small Talk Show," *Deseret News*, 1C.

³⁷ Jarvik, "Small Talk Show," *Deseret News*, 1C.

³⁸ Anna S. Lau, Alan J. Litrownik, Rae R. Newton, and John Landsverk, "Going Home: The Complex Effects of Reunification on Internalizing Problems Among Children in Foster Care," *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 31, no. 4 (2003): 345-358.

increased social support to combat these debilitating emotions.³⁹ It is not surprising that Jepko felt a sense of loneliness during his years in foster care and it helps explain his empathy for those who were experiencing similar emotions. Years later, he stated that he was motivated to pursue radio because the airwaves provided him the opportunity to provide friendship and an aural-based community for this group of people. “The show’s purpose,” he told a reporter from the *New York Times*, “is to combat loneliness, to bring company to the listener, whether a widow in Minot, North Dakota, or a traveling salesman trying to get home from a week on the road down in Jacksonville, Florida.”⁴⁰

After eight years in foster care, the now teenage Jepko and his father reunited. They moved from Prescott to the larger Phoenix metropolitan area where there were more employment opportunities. Metro eventually found work in Glendale at an aviation training school.⁴¹ More importantly, Metro’s health stabilized. Their life finally settled down. Metro rented a home on North 10th Street in Phoenix, which provided needed security and permanence for the family.⁴² The difficulties the two faced only strengthened their relationship. Jepko wrote:

I remember when my Dad was going through the difficult period of raising me all by himself: without a mother to help guide, to help fill in the tender moments, all

³⁹ Maurice Anderson and L. Oriana Linares, "The Role of Cultural Dissimilarity Factors on Child Adjustment Following Foster Placement," *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34, no. 4 (2012): 597-601; Also, R. Ptacek, H. Kuzelova, and L. Celedova. "Social and Emotional Loneliness in Children in Foster and Institutional Care," *European Psychiatry*, 26 (2011): 338.

⁴⁰ Broder, "Small-Talk Show," *New York Times*, 29.

⁴¹ "Meet Pop Jepko," *Wick*, December 1970, 3.

⁴² Metro Jepko, Sixteenth Census, National Archives and Records Administration.

the important jobs that a mother has and loves so much because she is a mother. I remember Dad did fill in, and did fill in beautifully. We two together have conquered the difficult days of school, homework, and like things that come up when you are a young boy. When you don't have a mother to go to, you go to Dad twice as much as you would normally.⁴³

Metro worked as an accountant for the Glendale aviation school, but when World War II broke out in 1941, he quit and found work in the civil service supervising the warehouse section at Williams Air Force Base. A November 1943 publication of *Thunderbird*, a monthly magazine published by Southwest Airways, lauded Metro's service to the organization by awarding him a service pin.⁴⁴ A later edition of the magazine noted that conditions in the office improved once Metro began smoking his Christmas tobacco.⁴⁵ Metro remained with the civil service until he retired in 1961.⁴⁶ The steady employment and his father's better health improved the quality of life for young Jepko.⁴⁷

Jepko enrolled in North Phoenix High School in 1946.⁴⁸ His father's military experience likely influenced Jepko to join the school's Military Department and in his

⁴³ Wick, June, 1969, 2.

⁴⁴ "Service Pin List Growing," *Thunderbird*, November 1943, 11, box TB, folder, 31, Thunderbird School of Global Management Archives, Arizona State University Libraries.

⁴⁵ "Gossip," *Thunderbird*, January 1944, 22, box TB, folder 31, Thunderbird School of Global Management Archives, Arizona State University Libraries.

⁴⁶ "Meet Pop Jepko," *Wick*, December 1970, 3.

⁴⁷ Metro Jepko, Sixteenth Census, National Archives and Records Administration.

⁴⁸ Glindmeier, oral history by author, March 17, 2015.

senior year he was elected Cadet Colonel of the organization. He proved to be a capable leader and organizer. On one occasion, he organized an Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) training competition between his school and rival Union High. The event was meticulously planned and executed, drawing praise from his peers and administrators.⁴⁹ The school's 1949 yearbook reported that under Jepko's leadership the Military Department "brought new fame and glory on themselves."⁵⁰ He was active in other areas of school as well. A description adjacent to his senior photo, where he dressed in full military attire, stated that he participated in mixed chorus, was elected ROTC Club President, and served as a Homeroom Officer.⁵¹ Jepko was fully engaged in the social opportunities available to him and interacted well with his peers. Friends recall that he was cordial with his classmates, popular with both sexes, and professional in his responsibilities with the ROTC, and other clubs with which he was involved.⁵² "I can't imagine anybody not liking the guy...just a nice gentleman, a nice guy. Very open and personable and a good guy to have as a friend," recalls Glindmeier, a high school acquaintance.⁵³

⁴⁹ Glindmeier, oral history by author, March 17, 2015.

⁵⁰ "Military Training Today," *North Phoenix High School Yearbook*, 1949, 122.

⁵¹ High school photos, *North Phoenix High School Yearbook*, 1949, 58.

⁵² Glindmeier, oral history by author, March 17, 2015.

⁵³ Glindmeier, oral history by author, March 17, 2015.

Jepko did not let his difficult past keep him from excelling both in school and in social situations in his late teenage years. He graduated from North Phoenix High School on June 2, 1949 and was looking forward to a college degree and eventually medical school.⁵⁴ His interest in medicine dates back to the traumatic incident in his youth when his father was on the verge of death. “I decided that morning that I wanted to be a doctor,” he told the *Deseret News*.⁵⁵ On this point, he later wrote, “All my life I’ve wanted to help people. As a young man, I studied medicine until a lack of finances compelled me to drop out of school.”⁵⁶

Jepko Enrolls in College

In 1949, Jepko enrolled in nearby Phoenix College to pursue his dream of becoming a doctor.⁵⁷ The college was small, but close to home, and more affordable for Jepko than some of the more expensive state universities. He took courses that were required for admittance into medical school as well as classes in theater and drama. He enjoyed the performing arts classes so much that he enrolled as a drama minor.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ “North High Seniors to Graduate Tonight,” *The Phoenix Gazette*, June 2, 1949, (no page number listed).

⁵⁵ Jarvik, “Small Talk Show,” *Deseret News*, 1C.

⁵⁶ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 16.

⁵⁷ Jarvik, “The ‘Small Talk Show, 1C; also “He Helps Them Get Through the Night,” *The Des Moines Register*, March 11, 1973, p. 3-TV.

⁵⁸ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 1.

Despite this interest in the arts, he harbored no real interest in a career in theatre or broadcasting. His focus was on medical school. As his college experience progressed, however, he was hampered with financial problems. Jepko had little money and neither did his father. He could expect no help paying his tuition. But he had other concerns as well. He had met a young girl named Billie Joy Smith and in a whirlwind of emotion, decided to marry her and begin a family. The reality of caring and providing for his new family exacerbated his financial situation and he was forced to drop out of school.⁵⁹ A Phoenix city directory indicates Herb and Billie Joy's home address as 2336 N. 10th Street.⁶⁰ In a rare reflection on this period of his life, he reported that he quit school "to get married, get a job, and start a family."⁶¹ Little is known about Betty, how they fell in love or the date they were married. Jepko's acknowledgement of this marriage is important because it is one of the few accounts of this union. The two divorced after 10 years and subsequent relationships played a bigger role in his life.⁶² Jepko avoided talking about this relationship to his peers and his radio audience. In fact, many of his associates and listeners were unaware of this first marriage. Betty is significant in Jepko's life because she provided him with three children, Kitty Lou, Karla Ann, and Randy.⁶³

⁵⁹ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 1.

⁶⁰ Phoenix City Directories, (1952), [database online], Ancestry.com. Provo, UT.

⁶¹ Jarvik, "Small Talk Show," 1C.

⁶² Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

⁶³ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 1.

In early 1951, Jepko was working to provide for Betty and their growing family. He found employment at KRIZ 1230-AM, a small radio station in Phoenix that debuted only a few months earlier. The station operated on 250 watts of power and played mostly contemporary music.⁶⁴ This job was his introduction to broadcasting, but he was not heavily involved in the station's operation. He characterized his work as more janitorial: "emptying waste paper baskets and all that sort of thing."⁶⁵ He was ambitious and by April 1951 he was promoted to the commercial sales department.⁶⁶ He remained at KRIZ until the following year when he was drafted into the armed forces. He noted that despite the experience at KRIZ, he still harbored no serious thoughts of a broadcasting career, "I didn't pay a lot of attention to [broadcasting] until I got in the Army."⁶⁷

Entering the Army

In the late summer and fall of 1950, the United States found itself in a major conflict in North Korea.⁶⁸ More than 75,000 soldiers from the North Korean's Peoples Army had crossed the 38th parallel, which divided Soviet-backed North Korea and Western-backed South Korea. In response, the U.S. government sent troops the region in support of its South Korean ally. Needing soldiers to fight the war, the U.S. government

⁶⁴ "KRIZ Opening: Sept. 1 Set for Debut," *Broadcasting*, July 17, 1950, 38.

⁶⁵ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 1.

⁶⁶ "Front News," *Broadcasting*, April 9, 1951, 46.

⁶⁷ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 1.

⁶⁸ Press Release, June 30, 1950, Harry S. Truman Administration File, Elsey Papers, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.

reinstated the draft. Young men between the ages of 18 and 25 were eligible to be drafted into the military.⁶⁹ In 1952, Jepko was among those pressed into active service. He transitioned from civilian life to the military easily. He was the son of a decorated veteran and he had been active in military organizations in high school. Furthermore, he lived in Phoenix where the presence of numerous military installations played a significant role in the area's transition from a small Western community to a growing metropolis.⁷⁰ He spoke of his time in the military with warm memories and he credited his service for introducing him to broadcasting.⁷¹ But at the time, it was still not his intention to use the military as a stepping-stone to a career; rather, he was exposed to radio out of chance.

Jepko uprooted the family and moved to Fort Hood, Texas where he was assigned to the 1st Armored Division, Third Corp.⁷² His first assignment was to the division's Public Information Office (PIO).⁷³ He does not disclose how he came to participate in this niche within the armed forces. His recollection of the events suggests that he might have been randomly given the assignment. He notes that not long after enlistment "I

⁶⁹ For more on the Korean War, see Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History*, (New York: Modern Library, 2010).

⁷⁰ Philip R. VanderMeer, *Desert Visions and the Making of Phoenix, 1860-2008*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010), 94.

⁷¹ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 1.

⁷² Metros Randall Jepko, Texas Birth Index, 1903-1997, Texas Department of State Health Services.

⁷³ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 1.

suddenly found myself doing radio and TV shows.”⁷⁴ His prior work at KRIZ likely precipitated his appointment as a military information officer. After several months in the position, his interest in the medium began to grow.

As a member of the Third Corps PIO, his responsibilities differed from other soldiers in his division. He was tasked with gathering and disseminating information. It was a hybrid role that landed somewhere between journalism and public relations. A PIO staffer was tasked with gathering and distributing information to traditional news outlets across the world. The PIO also produced news that was shared within the Army’s in-house news networks. The position was created during World War II, when President Franklin Roosevelt created the Office of War Information.⁷⁵ Roosevelt, believing that the American public needed to be more informed about the war effort, created the office with the charge to provide better information to the public and within the military ranks. After World War II, the Office of War Information dissolved and was replaced by the Public Information Office.

Some of the soldiers assigned to the post had prior experience as journalists or writers and the Army utilized these skills. Wylie Cypher, a soldier who served as a PIO in the Korean War, wrote that his three years as an editor of his high school newspaper helped him secure his assignment to his Division's PIO. He recalls that his responsibilities were essentially to “report stories about the troops over here and to record

⁷⁴ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 1.

⁷⁵ Franklin D. Roosevelt: Executive Order No. 9182 Establishing the Office of War Information, June 13, 1942, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. Hereafter referred to as Roosevelt Order 9182.

interviews for local stations in the States.”⁷⁶ He was responsible for writing articles for the Division’s weekly newspaper.⁷⁷ The position had its perks: the work typically kept PIO staffers off the front lines and away from most life-threatening situations. It kept them from having to do the menial jobs that most soldiers hated. Jepko’s assignment to the PIO meant that he was away from enemy fire. He was not involved in any armed conflict during his service; in fact, he was never assigned to Korea. He spent his entire service at Fort Hood.

Jepko’s service in the military focused primarily on producing two historical feature-length films about the First Armored Division.⁷⁸ The division was created in 1940 after military leaders realized the need for new ways to engage the enemy. Trench warfare in the First World War was brutal and the military realized that armored vehicles and tanks would play a vital part in modernizing the Army. This vision of an armored division was prescient and it saw extensive action in World War II.⁷⁹ The Army sought to capitalize on the division’s short but extensive history by creating a series of documentaries that celebrated their accomplishments. Producing propaganda material was common practice in the military. The Armed Forces routinely produced their own

⁷⁶ Rolf Margenau, *Public Information: Coming of age during the Korean War*, 1st ed., (Frogworks Publishing, 2011), 6.

⁷⁷ Margenau, *Public Information*, 6.

⁷⁸ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 1-2.

⁷⁹ For more information on the division, see First Armored Division Association, *1st Armored Division, WWII & Beyond: The History, The Stories, The People* (Nashville: Turner Publishing Co., 2005), 10.

films, documentaries, and audiovisual training materials. The films were often educational, such as the film the Army produced during World War II to educate the public about the purpose of the Asian American internment camps.⁸⁰ Jepko's involvement with the division's historical documentaries was primarily as a scriptwriter. He would pass along his scripts to other officers who handled the more technical jobs, such as editing and sound production.

In-between working on the documentaries, Jepko found time to produce and act in at least one televised variety show entitled "Invitation to Music." The PIO was allowed to produce entertainment for the division's troops and he reveled in these types of opportunities. He produced "Invitation to Music" exclusively and it highlighted the talents of soldiers assigned to the division, including a soloist who sang the "the Riff Song," the Division Dance Band which played "All The Things You Are," a tap-dancing routine set to the musical number "I Wish I Were In Love Again," and Jepko who performed the Gene Kelly number, "Dig, Dig, Dig, For Your Dinner."⁸¹ The program was broadcast several times over Fort Hood's armed service network and it was later broadcast on the nearby central Texas television station KCEN-TV, which had just recently secured a license from the FCC.⁸²

⁸⁰ *Japanese Relocation*, Office of War Information, Bureau of Motion Pictures, record group 208, Records of the Office of War Information, National Archives at College Park, 1943.

⁸¹ "Division Music Show Appears on TV," *The Armored Sentinel*, August 5, 1954, 3.

⁸² "Division Music Show," *The Armored Sentinel*, 3.

Jepko was successful both as a scriptwriter and producer. The Army took notice and he was advanced to the rank of Chief of Radio and Television Operations.⁸³ The position allowed him more flexibility in the types of content he produced and provided increased on-air opportunities. He began producing and hosting weekly news and entertainment content for the base radio station.

Jepko Leaves the Army

Jepko's military experience was a turning point in his life. His earlier passion for the medical field was replaced with the prospect of a career in broadcasting. He took pleasure in writing scripts and producing variety shows. Mostly, he enjoyed the theater of radio. He had a deep baritone voice that carried well over the airwaves. He delighted in the production and delivery of radio content. He was not as interested in the journalism side of the medium, although he was asked to produce news during his service. Journalism required hard-hitting questions, controversial issues, and at times, strong opinions. The topics that journalists covered could be heartbreaking and tragic. They could also have negative undertones. This did not suit Jepko's congenial personality. He preferred the entertainment side of broadcasting. He identified with content that entertained and inspired and he wanted to focus on its production. His preferences for this type of content were, at least in part, influenced by his lonely childhood.

The Army provided the aspiring broadcaster an opportunity to explore broadcasting in a way that would have been difficult in commercial radio. Traditional

⁸³ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 1-2.

workplace procedures in broadcasting often required those entering the profession to spend time as an apprentice or to perform menial jobs until opportunities became available. For some, it took years, and college degrees, before breakthroughs occurred. In the Army, Jepko was given opportunities immediately and he learned on the job. He participated in the production of films, television shows, and radio programming.⁸⁴ In 1955, several years after he was first drafted into the military, his service requirement came to a close with the opportunity to reenlist. He declined. Jepko was ambitious and he realized that life as an Army broadcaster would afford him limited opportunities. Instead, he turned his sights towards commercial radio broadcasting. He began searching for employment and it did not take long for him to land his first post-Army job.

⁸⁴ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 1-2; also “Division Music Show,” *The Armored Sentinel*, 3.

Chapter 3

1955 – 1963: Embracing Radio

Jepko discovered his passion for broadcasting in the Army and after his discharge in 1955, he began looking for work in commercial radio. He was 23 years old with a wife and three children when he embarked on a professional journey that over the next decade would take him across the Western United States and propel him towards becoming a national figure. The life of a radio personality in the 1950s and 1960s was often nomadic. The aspiring radio personality moved often between different radio markets, and served in a variety of station capacities, as they pursued a radio career.

The years that straddled the 1950s and '60s was a significant slice of Jepko's life. During this time, he was introduced to overnight talk radio and that experience altered the course of his life. He discovered the immense loyalty late night audiences projected towards a radio show and the financial resources that were willing to expend to be part of a radio community. These discoveries sparked a desire to try his hand at hosting his own show. During this period he also acquired experience with the business operations of commercial radio as he would spend much of his time in executive capacities. The managerial knowledge he gained in these roles proved invaluable to him years later when he launched his own radio network, called the Nitecap Radio Network.

Jepko's personal life changed during this time. His marriage to Billy Joy collapsed, but he met a woman named Patsy Little Brown who again captured his heart. This relationship played a vital role in his success as the host of a nationwide talk radio program.

Work at KLEN

After Jepko was discharged from the Army, he remained near Fort Hood where he had been stationed the previous two years. He found work nearby at KLEN 1050-AM in Killeen, Texas.¹ Killen is two and a half hours south of Dallas and home to Fort Hood, one of the largest Army bases in the country. The city's economy and population fluctuated depending on the number of soldiers stationed at the base. During World War II, the base housed as many as 90,000 troops but those numbers tapered off at the conclusion of the war and hovered around 11,000 for the next several decades, including during Jepko's military service.² Despite the unpredictable population, the area experienced steady growth and during the mid-1950s it saw a proliferation of media entities looking to take advantage of its growth. Among those was KLEN 1050-AM, a new radio station looking for middle management to oversee its daily programming operation.³

Jepko was offered the position of station program director and took the job with little hesitation. KLEN's programming focused on its large military listenership and Jepko's successful broadcasting experience in the Army made for an easy transition. While the position was not on-air talent, it provided steady income for his family of five. He was primarily responsible for the day-to-day operations of the station. The

¹ "Texas Radio Stations," *Broadcasting Telecasting: 1956 Yearbook-Marketbook Issue*, 1956, 304.

² Frederick L. Briuer, "FORT HOOD," *Handbook of Texas*, June 12, 2010, Texas State Historical Association.

³ "Texas Radio Stations," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, 304.

opportunity provided him with executive experience and introduced him to the challenges of managing a radio station. KLEN's signal was not a powerful one; it was only licensed to operate on 250 kilowatts of power - a far cry from the 1,000 and even 5,000 kilowatts of other area stations.⁴ KLEN's daily programming schedule was community-based and even included six hours of Spanish programming a week, meeting the needs of the Hispanic audience within the area.⁵

The station relied primarily on music and variety shows to fill the hours of programming. Because of the station's proximity to Fort Hood, military programming was also an important consideration in the schedule.⁶ The station offered the play-by-play broadcasts of Fort Hood's semi-professional football team called the Tankers. The base's daily newspaper, the *Armored Sentinel*, previewed a 1955 game called the "Shrimp Bowl" between the Hood Tankers and the Navy's Athletic Fleet Eleven, and reminded listeners to catch the play-by-play broadcast on KLEN.⁷ The station broadcast live events such as military parades.⁸ In his role as program director, Jepko directed these broadcasts. The station's programming was limited to daytime and early evening

⁴ "Texas Radio Stations," *Broadcasting Telecasting 1956*, 304.

⁵ "Stations with Spanish Programming and Total Weekly Hours," *Broadcasting Telecasting: 1956 Yearbook-Marketbook Issue*, 1956, 418.

⁶ "Ft. Hood Out to Maintain Army's Jinx Over Navy," *The Armored Sentinel*, December 15, 1955, 6.

⁷ "Maintain Army's Jinx," *The Armored Sentinel*, 6.

⁸ "Farewell Review Honors Gen. Biddle," *The Armored Sentinel*, March 20, 1959, 1.

hours. KLEN's license was a daytime license meaning that it went off the air in the evening to reduce interference from the more powerful clear channel stations.⁹

After several years at KLEN, Jepko returned to Arizona where he and his wife both had family. His father Metro was still living and working at Thunderbird Airfield in Glendale. These familial tugs, along with the prospects of improved employment and career advancement potential, were strong enough to pull him from his job in Texas and lead him West.

Returning to Arizona

It was 1957 when Jepko began a new job at KVNA 690-AM, in Flagstaff, Arizona.¹⁰ His return to the West would become a permanent decision, rejecting future offers to move East.¹¹ Jepko was hired as KVNA's assistant general manager. The move was a promotion for Jepko. The new position allowed him to work closely with the station's general manager.¹² He oversaw the programming at his new station, as he had done previously at KLEN, but also helped lead other station operations, including sales and promotion. His employment at the station provided additional benefits: the signal strength was stronger and covered a wider geographical area (KVNA was licensed to

⁹ "Texas Radio Stations," *Broadcasting Telecasting*, 1956, 304.

¹⁰ "Arizona: Directory of AM and FM Stations" *Broadcasting Telecasting: 1957 Yearbook-Marketbook Issue*, 1957, 54.

¹¹ Jarvik, "Small Talk Show," *Deseret News*, 1C.

¹² "Directory of AM and FM Stations," *Broadcasting Telecasting 1957*, 54.

broadcast at 1,000 kw during the day and 500 kw at night). This meant the station had a greater coverage area in the region and generated larger advertising dollars.¹³

Flagstaff felt like a homecoming for the 26-year-old Jepko. The flat plains of Texas were a stark difference to his mountainous new home in Northern Arizona. The city sits at nearly 7,000 feet of elevation and is surrounded by the largest continuous Ponderosa Pine forest in the continental United States.¹⁴ The weather was cooler in the winter and the area receives several feet of snow each year. It is also a short 30-minute drive north from Prescott, where was born and raised and where his father still had close associates. For a period of time, it appeared that Jepko intended to put down deep roots. He quickly became engaged in community events and participated on civic councils. In June 1957, he was welcomed as a new member of the Kiwanis Club.¹⁵ A month later, he participated in a campaign helping the local Boy Scouts raise nearly \$5,000 towards its operational budget for the year.¹⁶ After only a few months at the station, Jepko received even better news: he was promoted from assistant general manager to general manager.¹⁷

¹³ "Directory of AM and FM Stations," *Broadcasting Telecasting 1957*, 54.

¹⁴Robert A. Bell, Patrick V. Athey, and Milton R. Sommerfeld, "Distribution of Endolithic Algae on the Colorado Plateau of Northern Arizona," *The Southwestern Naturalist* (1988): 315-322.

¹⁵ "Telephones Discussed at Kiwanis Club," *Arizona Daily Sun*, April 16, 1957, 3.

¹⁶ "Boy Scout Campaign Has Raised 4,558 to Date," *Arizona Daily Sun*, May 23, 1957, 3.

¹⁷ "Directory of AM and FM Stations," *Broadcasting Telecasting 1957*, 54.

This move gave him responsibility for the entire station and a visible standing within the community.

Despite the promotion, and the station's proximity to his birth city, Jepko did not stay long in Flagstaff. Within the year, he was on the move again and he would move nearly every year to new markets and stations, for the next five years. Speaking of this time period, he simply notes that he "moved around a little bit."¹⁸ He gives no indication for his reasons for such rapid moves between stations and cities, but it was common practice in the radio profession.¹⁹ He had an ambitious personality and he was unafraid to take risks. He was constantly looking for better opportunities and he became restless if a job did not challenge him. There was no evidence that personnel conflicts were a factor in his transient career. Jepko was described as an easygoing personality. His colleagues described him as warm, congenial, and professional. Hugh Barr, a former associate said, "He was a very, very nice, laid-back guy who had big ears and allowed people to talk."²⁰ Other associates described him as a "genuine" personality and that he did not "have a mean bone in his body."²¹ Jepko's transience was a result of his desire to take advantage of the numerous professional opportunities available to him and the prospect of higher

¹⁸Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 2.

¹⁹ Hugh Barr, oral history by author, April 24, 2015.

²⁰ Barr, oral history by author, April 24, 2015.

²¹ Kirk Stirland, in interview by author, April 8, 2015; also, Danny Kramer, interview by the author, October 1, 2015.

wages. This required him to move frequently between jobs as he improved his professional and economic status.

In 1958, he resigned as KVNA's general manager and accepted a similar position at the newly licensed KDJI 1270-AM in Holbrook, Arizona.²² Records indicate that the station had received its license just three years prior to Jepko's arrival and was operating on 1,000 kw of power.²³ The move to KDJI was a curious move on Jepko's part. The city of Holbrook was an hour and a half east of Flagstaff in a rural part of the state.²⁴ Professionally, the move to KDJI was not a move up, in terms of notoriety or market size. On the contrary, it could be considered as a step down. The station certainly could not offer him significantly more money to lure him away from KVNA, but what Jepko found in KDJI was something that was unavailable to him at his previous employers: the opportunity to own a radio station.

After he had accepted his new appointment at KDJI, Jepko leased a small, 250-kw station in Clifton, Arizona called KHCD 1450-AM.²⁵ This station was in the remote southeastern part of the state and was owned by Chester Darwin under his company,

²² "Arizona: Directory of AM and FM Stations" *Broadcasting Telecasting: 1958 Yearbook-Marketbook Issue*, 1958, A-239.

²³ KDJI: Arizona, United States AM Radio Stations, *The Radio Annual and Television Year Book*, 1964, 142; also see "KDJI Broadcast Station License Record," November 4 1955, Federal Communications Commission Station History Cards, Washington D.C.

²⁴ Decennial Census Population of Arizona, 1860- 2000, 4, COM 12.2: D 32, U.S Bureau of Census Figures, Arizona State University, Achieves and Public Records, Tempe, Arizona.

²⁵ "Directory of AM and FM Stations," *Broadcasting Telecasting: 1958*, A-239.

Darwin Broadcasting Corporation. Jepko entered into the agreement to lease KCHD from Darwin that year. The contract allowed Jepko to “assume control and operation” of the station for an annual payment of \$2,000, with an option to renew the lease in 1959.²⁶ Jepko apparently had worked out a deal with KDJI ownership that allowed him to lease KHCD while still at KDJI. He was now managing both stations with the possibility of revenue sharing between the two parties.

However, the agreement did not last. The FCC flagged the agreement with Jepko for running afoul of Section 310 (b) of its broadcast regulations, which prohibits the “unauthorized disposal of a broadcast station.”²⁷ The FCC strictly prohibited the leasing of stations and their signals to parties not on the license agreement. Whether Jepko knew he was violating FCC rules or not is unclear. He had nearly four years of managerial experience and it is likely that he was at least familiar with the FCC’s position on the matter. It may have simply been an eager oversight by Jepko as he sought to advance his career. In the end, the FCC terminated Darwin’s radio license and Darwin spent the remainder of the year appealing the decision in an effort to retain it. Darwin failed and the FCC officially canceled the license and revoked the call letters in February 1959.²⁸ Jepko evaded serious repercussions from either the FCC or from the ownership of KDJI. He remained with KDJI as general manager through the winter of 1959. By the spring,

²⁶ “Show Cause Issued to KHCD,” *Broadcasting*, July 28, 1958, 88.

²⁷ “Federal Foreign Ownership Rules and Policies for Common Carrier, Aeronautical En Route and Aeronautical Fixed Radio Station Licensees,” Section 310 (b), accessible online at FCC.org. also “Show Cause Issued,” *Broadcasting*, 88.

²⁸ “Actions on Motions,” *Broadcasting*, February 2, 1959, 74.

however, Jepko was restless once again and he made a decision that would change his life forever.

Meeting the Night Owls

In May 1959, Jepko moved his family from rural Arizona to the city of Los Angeles, California. He took a job as a director of promotions and advertising at the 50,00 kw clear channel powerhouse KFI 640-AM.²⁹ It was a significant career move from the smaller rural stations of Texas and Arizona. Shortly after his arrival, he met a young waitress named Patsy Little Brown at a Santa Barbara diner.³⁰ Jepko was immediately struck by her looks and charm. Patsy felt the same way. Both believed it was love at first sight. Jepko was still married with children but his marriage to Billie Joy was falling apart. Patsy was already a mother of two young girls, Kelly Lynn and Tina Louise, and was leaving a difficult marriage of her own.³¹

Over several months their feelings for each other intensified and they secretly dated. At this writing, Jepko nor Patsy ever talked publicly about this time of their lives, and there was little detail available about their courtship. Between 1959 and 1960, the two divorced their spouses and began a new life together. Altogether, the combined household numbered seven: Jepko and Patsy, with children Kitty Lou, Karla Ann, Randy (from Jepko's first marriage) and Tina Louise, and Kelly Lynn (from Patsy's marriage).³²

²⁹ "Fates and Fortunes," *Broadcasting*, May 11, 1959, 90.

³⁰ Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

³¹ Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

³² Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 1.

The arrival of Patsy in Jepko's life had implications that extended well beyond her role as mother and spouse. Jepko credits Patsy with helping him create the idea for his soon-to-be national overnight show writing, "there would be no show without her."³³ Patsy's parents wrote that it was both Herb and Patsy together that decided to start the show.³⁴ They called it "Herb and Patsy's vision" and referred to both as the "founders."³⁵ A newspaper referred to Patsy as "Jepko's cheerfully inaudible broadcasting buddy."³⁶ She became an important figure in the program's development and eventually would take control of the finances and manage the office, no small task considering the size and workload of the future organization.³⁷ She also made public appearances with Jepko at conventions and sat in on newspaper and radio interviews. The two were inseparable as partners both in marriage and in business.

Jepko's move to Los Angeles was important professionally. KFI was the largest, and most powerful, station for which he had worked, it was also one of the most well-known stations in the country. The station had a rich and long history. It was first granted a license by the FCC in March 1922 and, shortly thereafter, it secured the coveted

³³ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 1.

³⁴ Karl Little and Helen Little, "Reminiscing," *Wick*, February 1970, 6.

³⁵ Little and Little, "Reminiscing," 6.

³⁶ Brown, "Main Street Mainstay," *Los Angeles Times*, Q32.

³⁷ Stirland, oral history by author, April 8, 2015.

clear channel designation.³⁸ The station was an important medium for the people in Southern California. It kept citizens informed during World War II and carried President Roosevelt's Fireside Chats during the Great Depression and the War to the Western United States.³⁹ The station served as an important distributor of entertainment and news programming and was relied upon by area farmers for its daily weather reports.⁴⁰ Jepko must have been amazed by the size of its operation and the influence the new station wielded. At his previous employments, the station's signal strengths operated between 250 kw and 1,000 kw and catered specifically to local audiences. KFI's signal, on the other hand, operated on a much larger 50,000 kw and the signal's reach extended beyond Los Angeles throughout most of the Western States and even to some islands in the Pacific.⁴¹

At the time of Jepko's arrival, KFI had been in operation for nearly 40 years, but it was struggling to maintain its relevance in the market, a difficulty most radio stations across the country faced in the 1950s as a result of the emergence of television, which siphoned a large part of the station's traditional audience. In an effort to attract new

³⁸ KFI Broadcasting Station License Record, March, 31, 1922, Station History Cards, Consolidated Database System, Federal Communications Commission, Washington D.C., accessible online at https://licensing.fcc.gov/cgi-bin/prod/cdbs/forms/prod/getimportletter_exh.cgi?import_letter_id=37800. Hereafter KFI Station License.

³⁹ "Fireworks at FCC Hearing," *The Billboard*, June 1, 1946, 14.

⁴⁰ "Your Radio Dial," *The Daily Sun*, February 11, 1958, B6; also, Barry Mishkind, "High Powered History: Earle C. Anthony Drives KFI to Fame," *The Broadcaster's Desktop Resource*, April, 2012.

⁴¹ KFI Station License.

listeners, stations began experimenting with different formats and Western radio stations, in particular, were at the forefront of this experimentation. This “giant wave of change” led to a renewed sense of optimism for the medium.⁴² Hugh Barr, a longtime radio executive, described the atmosphere in Los Angeles at the time as an exciting and innovative place for broadcasters.⁴³ One of the bold moves stations made was to convert to a fulltime talk format. KABC, another Los Angeles station, was among the first in the country to do so.⁴⁴ Other radio stations soon followed the lead of these innovators.

KFI experimented with the talk format although it did not switch to an all-talk format as its competitor, KABC, had done. KFI first entered talk programming in 1949 when it began broadcasting an experimental late night talk program called “graveyard programming,” from dusk until dawn.⁴⁵ In 1952, KFI executives hired “a good-looking, fun-loving but serious-minded chap” by the name of Ben Hunter to host the overnight program.⁴⁶ He renamed the show “*The Other Side of the Day*,” but then later changed it to *Nite Owl*. Hunter started out playing a smattering of music mixed with talk.

⁴² Barr, oral history by author, April 24, 2015.

⁴³ Barr, oral history by author, April 24, 2015.

⁴⁴ Michael C. Keith, *The Radio Station: Broadcast, Satellite & Internet*, (Amsterdam: Elsevier/Focal, 2007), 97; also, Munson, “*All Talk*,” 37.

⁴⁵ Shari Okamoto, “A Freewheeling Talkfest: Night Owl McCoy Perches at Kiev,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 1, 1989, (no page number listed). The article is accessible online through the *Los Angeles Times* digital archive.

⁴⁶ Juile Armin, “Night Owls Flock Together,” *Independent Press-Telegram*, September 18, 1955, 28.

Occasionally, he brought in a studio guest. He quickly realized that “my radio friends wanted me to talk with them” and “listeners started calling in to speak to me personally when a record was playing. I believed that piping these conversations over the air would be successful.”⁴⁷ Technology was limited in the mid-1950s and it was logistically difficult for a deejay to take a phone call live, so Hunter developed a device he called “the beeper” that allowed the conversations to be recorded and then played over the air.⁴⁸ This was done despite opposition from station executives who felt callers were too unpredictable and that broadcasting phone calls on air would reduce the quality of the program.⁴⁹ Hunter ignored their protests and for two months played the calls on the air before management became cognizant of what he was doing. By then the “public’s enthusiastic acceptance of the challenging entertainment commanded its continuance.”⁵⁰ Eventually station executives backed down and allowed the calls to air.

As Hunter’s show evolved, the “time spent spinning platters [records] decreased while the time spent spinning reminiscences increased” and by Jepko’s arrival at KFI in 1959, the show had become a predominantly call-in format.⁵¹ The show had moved beyond the experimental phase and was one of the station’s staple programs. Jepko’s exposure to KFI’s overnight programming opened his eyes to the possibility of late night

⁴⁷ Leonard, “Don’t Blame Ben,” *Independent Press-Telegram*, 23.

⁴⁸ Glenne Grimm, “Editor’s Mailbag: Night Owls,” *Eugene Register-Guard*, February 26, 1959, 10A.

⁴⁹ Leonard, “Don’t Blame Ben,” *Independent Press-Telegram*, 23.

⁵⁰ Leonard, “Don’t Blame Ben,” *Independent Press-Telegram*, 23.

⁵¹ Leonard, “Don’t Blame Ben,” *Independent Press-Telegram*, 23.

radio broadcasting, something with which he had no prior experience. The stations where he had worked previously were smaller and only broadcast during the day. At KFI, the station had full reign of the late night airwaves. Jepko identified with Hunter's overnight show and paid close attention to how Hunter hosted the program. In particular, Jepko noted the tone of the show. It was pleasant and inviting. Guests were encouraged to call in and talk about anything they wanted. They "discusse[d] anything and everything. From health to politics, from celebrities to education--anything that relate[d] to people."⁵² Glenne Grimm, a listener from Oregon, said that a favorite topic of callers was the paranormal, "the most popular subjects with night owls are flying saucers, the Abominable Snowman, and lost cities, like Mu of Atlantis, Angkor Vat and Angkor Tom."⁵³ Despite the wide range of topics available for discussion, KFI maintained a tight grip on which conversations were broadcast. Ron McCoy, who worked with Jepko at KFI and took over for Hunter as host of the show after he left, recalled:

You could only talk about general stuff. We couldn't talk about racism, sex, violence, religion - all those things. Joey Adams, a comedian, once appeared on the show and. . . a listener called in and asked, 'Do you think actors should go into politics?' Adams said, 'Why not? Most politicians are clowns anyways.' After that I was banned from having visitors on the show for two months. KFI thought I was incompetent and that I and couldn't handle my guests. I knew what I was in for when I took the job. If you accept the money, you have to accept the policies.⁵⁴

⁵² Okamoto, "A Freewheeling Talkfest," *Los Angeles Times*.

⁵³ Grimm, "Editor's Mailbag: Night Owls," *Eugene Register-Guard*, 10A.

⁵⁴ Okamoto, "A Freewheeling Talkfest," *Los Angeles Times*.

There were unique challenges with producing talk radio programming. The overnight call-in format was new and there was limited industry-wide understanding of the audience. Audience measurement tools were primitive and it was difficult to ascertain the popularity of programming.⁵⁵ Hunter wondered if people really were listening. Did the format need to change? Did it rely too heavily upon callers? Should he play more music? One night, he determined to find out. He took a portable recorder onto the street and asked the first person he encountered, a milkman out on delivery. The man was a listener and assured Hunter that others were listening as well. Hunter reported that he “went back to the studio a happier man.”⁵⁶ Later that night, he followed up by asking his listeners to call in and tell him what “they were doing that they should be awake from midnight to dawn.”⁵⁷ He discovered people were tuning in for a number of reasons, “some work the swing shift. Others were telephone operators, postal employees, and all-night workers in garages, restaurants, and emergency services. Some are insomniacs. Many are invalids.”⁵⁸ Hunter’s crude attempt at audience research suggested that overnight audiences were diverse, but that they shared a common interest in listening to the radio, despite the late hour.

Hunter made another important discovery, which in time would significantly influence Jepko. Hunter discovered that a large portion of the listeners were not satisfied

⁵⁵ Jarvik, “Small Talk Show,” *Deseret News*, 1C.

⁵⁶ Armin, “Night Owls Flock Together,” *Independent Press-Telegram*, 28.

⁵⁷ Armin, “Night Owls Flock Together,” *Independent Press-Telegram*, 28.

⁵⁸ Opal Gunnell, “A Night Owl, Flies to Coast, Honolulu,” *The Evening Courier*, June 25, 1956, 3.

with connecting only through the radio. They also yearned for additional gateways onto the show and especially sought interpersonal relationships with other listeners. This led some listeners to organize into clubs and they eventually began arranging gatherings where they could meet and listen to the program.⁵⁹ In time, these clubs became known as “Roosts” (going along with the *Nite Owl* theme). They also met during the day or other times when the show was not broadcast.⁶⁰ Often, the groups would discuss politics, weather, books, and other topics. One announcement published in a local paper reminded local “Roost” members that the group met every second Saturday of the month at 1:30 p.m. at a member’s home.⁶¹ They even organized service projects, helping charities such as “‘The City of Hope,’ a children’s orthopedic hospital in Oregon, and the Sister’s School on the island of Eua Tonga.”⁶² The communities that emerged from these group meetings were vibrant and provided important opportunities to socialize. In one instance, a member of a “Roost” suffered a heart attack and could not reach a phone book to look for a number to a hospital. However, he could reach an invitation to a “Roost” social to be held later in the week. He called the organizer’s number that was listed on the invitation and the organizer was able to call the police and get an ambulance to the man’s home, saving his life.⁶³

⁵⁹ Grimm, “Night Owls,” *Eugene Register-Guard*, 10A.

⁶⁰ Grimm, “Night Owls,” *Eugene Register-Guard*, 10A.

⁶¹ Grimm, “Night Owls,” *Eugene Register-Guard*, 10A.

⁶² Grimm, “Night Owls,” *Eugene Register-Guard*, 10A.

⁶³ Armin, “Night Owls Flock Together,” *Independent Press-Telegram*, 28.

Hunter recognized that these chapters presented a way for him to better track his audience so he required that “Roost” members register with the show by sending in a letter. By 1955, the estimated number of registered members reached 15,000, spread among 30 “Roosts.”⁶⁴ Hunter channeled his listener’s passion for gatherings by organizing large weekend conventions where his listeners were invited to assemble. The first of these meetings occurred in 1954 and 8,000 people attended. The next year, 30,000 fans gathered “by bus, auto, trailer, even motored wheelchairs and planes” at Big Bear resort in Southern California for a “weekend of fun and good fellowship.”⁶⁵ In 1956, Hunter was approached by one of the show’s sponsors, Hawaiian Airlines, to offer a *Night Owl* themed trip to the Hawaiian Islands. Hunter, along with a group of listeners, were flown to the island of Oahu where they were hosted by the Reef Hotel on Waikiki Beach and provided tours of the island’s scenic sites. A report of the trip that appeared in an Arizona newspaper notes that travelers toured pineapple fields, took rides on glass-bottom boats, and were treated to authentic Hawaiian luaus.⁶⁶

Aside from in-person meetings and conventions, Hunter, with the help of listeners, published an occasional periodical called *The Limb*, which contained details about the program, a schedule of upcoming events, and assorted writings sent in by “Roost” members.⁶⁷ His strategy to connect with his audience outside the radio program

⁶⁴ Grimm, “Night Owls,” 10A; also Armin, “Night Owls Flock Together,” *Eugene Register-Guard*, 28.

⁶⁵ Armin, “Night Owls Flock Together,” *Independent Press-Telegram*, 28.

⁶⁶ Gunnell, “As Night Owl, Flies,” *The Evening Courier*, 3.

⁶⁷ Armin, “Night Owls Flock Together,” *Independent Press-Telegram*, 28.

strengthened the core listenership of the show and provided a solid base to which advertisers could direct their promotions.

When Jepko arrived at KFI in 1959 and worked with Hunter, the *Nite Owl* was at its zenith in popularity and it was an attractive platform for the station and advertisers. Hunter's program was a small local show and the listeners hailed primarily from California and a few in Oregon. Jepko's brief exposure to the program left an indelible impression, especially the loyalty and passion that listeners exhibited towards the show, and the lengths that both host and audience undertook to participate in show-sponsored events. It marked a turning point in his life. He was instantly drawn to the benign tones and the strong sense of community among listeners. If a future opportunity to host an overnight show presented itself, he resolved to take it.

Moving to Utah

Despite Jepko's fascination with Hunter's show, his stay at KFI was brief. In 1960, a year after he began working at the station, Hunter left the overnight show he had anchored for 10 years to host a Saturday night television show on a local station.⁶⁸ Jepko also left KFI that same year to take a job as general manager at another radio station in Oxnard, California.⁶⁹

If the previous seven years were defined by constant moves among different cities and employers, the next year of Jepko's life would be much of the same, only more so. From late 1960 through the winter of 1961, Jepko hopped through three stations and an

⁶⁸ Leonard, "Don't Blame Ben," *Independent Press-Telegram*, 23.

⁶⁹ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 2.

advertising agency. He left KFI in 1960 to manage a station in Oxnard, California. Within a few months, he left radio to take a position as a marketing director at an advertising agency in San Francisco.⁷⁰ Almost immediately, he realized that he did not enjoy working in advertising, and searched again for another job in radio. In 1961, he found work at a newly licensed independent station in Ogden, Utah, called KANN 1250 AM.⁷¹ The station had recently acquired a license from the FCC and it was looking to fill out its staff. Jepko was one of the station's first hires. His reasons for accepting the job were twofold: it got him away from advertising and back into radio, but more importantly, his new wife Patsy was raised in the state and still had family in the area.⁷² Patsy had just given birth in April 1961 to the couple's first child together, a boy they named Herb Jr.⁷³ The growing household now numbered eight and she wanted to be closer to home where she and her large family could be around extended family and where she could receive help tending the household.

Jepko began working at KANN in the fall of 1961 as the new station's general sales manager. He was tasked with building the station's first sales team and to make the

⁷⁰ Jepko does not provide the names of the three radio stations nor the advertising agency he worked for in 1960 -61. Additionally, no record of his employment at these organizations was found at the time of this writing; also Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 2.

⁷¹ "Announcing the Birth of a New Radio Station," Ogden *Standard-Examiner*, November 8, 1961, 11A.

⁷² Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 2; also Penny Furniss, "Karl and Helen Little," *Wick*, May, 1968, 6-7.

⁷³ Herb Jepko, "The Jepko Family and a Message from Herb," *Wick*, Issue 1, Vol. 1 (no month listed), 1965, 13.

station profitable. In September, the station posted ads in the help wanted sections of the *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, notifying readers that they were “expanding their present sales force,” and “looking for a competent local man with experience in media sales.”⁷⁴ Those interested were asked to contact Jepko or the station owner. In addition to his sales responsibilities, Jepko was hired to be the afternoon radio host. A promotion for the station ran in the *Standard-Examiner* and announced that starting on September 25 at 2:45 p.m., listeners could tune into 1250 AM and participate in “the birth of a new radio station” whose purpose was to “entertain with hometown radio for adult listening.”⁷⁵ The advertisement also unveiled the station’s hokey new nickname “KANN KANN - Be YOUR station. Just dial awhile & smile.”⁷⁶

Jepko hosted the inaugural show and then resumed his spot as host of the afternoon drive time slot from 3 p.m. to 5:15 p.m.⁷⁷ The station played a mixture of music, news, and commentary and his afternoon show followed the station’s programming interests. The dual role allowed Jepko the opportunity to get back on-air as a personality, something he had not done with regularity since his time in the military. The job also marked an important shift for Jepko as he began a transition from radio executive to radio talent. From 1961 forward, Jepko sought only on-air positions.

⁷⁴ “Radio Station KANN,” *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, September 12, 1961, 4B.

⁷⁵ “Birth of a New Radio Station,” *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, 11A.

⁷⁶ “Birth of a New Radio Station,” *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, 11A.

⁷⁷ “Birth of a New Radio Station,” *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, 11A.

Jepko was at KANN only a few months when he received a phone call from Norm LaVaux, an executive of Columbia Pictures, which owned Salt Lake City's popular top-40 station, KCPX 1320-AM.⁷⁸ LaVaux wanted Jepko to work for the station and offered him a position similar to what he was doing at KANN with only a slight difference. LaVaux promised Jepko that could host his own show, but instead of sales manager, he would work as the station's production director, a capacity he served in at KFI.⁷⁹ Jepko accepted the offer and moved the family from Ogden to Salt Lake City to be closer to KCPX's studios. By December 1961, he was hosting his own daily show on the station from 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.⁸⁰ He remained in the evening time slot for six months, until May 1962, when his show was moved to the mid-morning time slot, airing from 10 am to 2:30 pm, although his broadcast window would fluctuate depending on "special programming" needs.⁸¹ At KCPX, he met and befriended a number of the other hosts, including Bill Curtis and Rex Walgreen. Both of these men hosted radio programs at KCPX, where Walgreen, in particular, was well known for "interviews with folks from the movie, radio, television and music worlds" and his "daily farm and news show in the mornings for TV Channel 4."⁸² The trio immediately developed a friendship that

⁷⁸ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 2.

⁷⁹ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 2.

⁸⁰ "Radio Log," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 25, 1961, B7.

⁸¹ "Radio Programs," *Ogden Standard-Examiner*, May 15, 1962, 4B.

⁸² "Rex Wallgren," *Herb's Good News: The Visual Side of the Herb Jepko Show*, Vol. 1, Issue 1, April 1983, 13.

deepened over the next year and continued to grow even after they ceased working at the station. Jepko enjoyed their work so much that, years later when he had his own overnight show on KSL, he asked both of them to periodically fill in for him when he was unable to broadcast his show. Eventually, Walgreen joined Jepko's staff as a full-time employee in 1971 and stayed with the program until 1976.⁸³ While Curtis never joined Jepko's business to the extent that Walgreen did, he did have a major role in Herb's show. He wrote that for a period of time he was asked to fill-in for Jepko at least one night a week "to give Herb a well-earned rest."⁸⁴

In December 1962, Jepko hit the year mark with KCPX. It was his longest tenured employment in four years. In the eight years since he left the Army, Jepko had worked in four states at eight different radio stations. He served in a number of different capacities, including positions both on and off the air and, importantly, he acquired significant knowledge and experience on the managerial side of the broadcasting business. This variety of knowledge and experience made him unique in the industry. Most individuals in broadcasting were either talent or not. Jepko was one of the rare radio personalities who felt just as comfortable running a radio station as he was hosting one of its programs. In the coming years, he would rely heavily on the knowledge and experience he had obtained and the skills he had developed as he built his own successful radio empire.

⁸³ "Rex Wallgren," *Herb's Good News*, 13.

⁸⁴ "Meet Bill Curtis," *Wick*, September, 1970, 3.

As winter thawed in Utah and the spring flowers began to emerge in 1963, Jepko found himself, once again, courted by a bigger and more influential radio station. Despite the friendships he had made at KCPX, the offer that came early that year was an offer he could not pass up. Jepko was on the move again.

Chapter 4

1963-1968: Coast-to-Coast

During the next five years, 1963-1968, Jepko's stature and influence grew. He transformed from a local disc jockey in rural mountain America to the host of the country's first national call-in talk show. His nomadic lifestyle finally settled down and through a mixture of luck, foresight, and at significant personal risk, he successfully broadcast a program that changed how the industry perceived national call-in talk radio. He became the voice in the night to hundreds of thousands of Americans. His emergence on the national stage began when one of the country's clear channel stations sought his services.

In 1963, Marshall Small, a program director at KSL 1160-AM, contacted Jepko to see if he was interested in working at the station. KSL was a 50,000-kw clear channel station broadcasting from downtown Salt Lake City, Utah, one of the most prominent stations in the Western United States. Jepko knew of KSL and its extensive history. Nearly everyone who lived in the Intermountain West had tuned into KSL at some point. Jepko had formed friendships with some of their staff. Small asked if Jepko was interested in hosting the noonday show, *Crossroads*.¹ John Barlow, the program's previous host, had been reassigned to the morning shift, which left a vacancy in the afternoon. KSL executives targeted Jepko as Barlow's replacement because of his solid

¹ Small, oral history by Larson, 1988, 62; also Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 2.

work at KCPX and the friendships he had within KSL. Small recalls that “[Jepko] and I had been good friends” and when KSL was looking to fill the vacancy Small was able to use his influence to get him the job offer.² Jepko was pleased and for good reason. Foremost, it validated his work that a station like KSL would seek him out. Second, KSL was one of the most recognized radio stations in the Western United States, and *Crossroads* one of the station’s flagship programs. The job offered more money and would certainly increase his stature in the community. He realized that if he took the job, his career would take a giant leap forward.

KSL (KZN) Early History

KSL’s prominence in the Intermountain region dates back to radio’s infancy. Elias Woodruff, an employee of the *Deseret News*, traveled to Chicago in April 1922 and wrote back to colleagues about the emerging technology.

The whole town is radio crazy. Every paper has radio bulletins in the windows. Every delivery wagon shrieks ‘Keep posted on radio. Read the radio department of the Chicago Daily News.’ Hearst’s paper splashes it all over, and every few blocks radio stores offer radio sets for sale.³

After reading Woodruff’s reports, the newspaper’s senior management realized the mass distribution potential of the medium and became determined to be the first organization in the state to own a fully functioning radio transmitter. They planned to install it on the top of their downtown building. Most reliable transmitters were expensive and the one they preferred, which was built by the American Telegraph and

² Small, oral history by Larson, 1988, 62.

³ Jacobsen, “Utah’s First Radio Station,” Utah State Historical Society, 133.

Telephone Company (AT&T), cost \$25,000 [\$350,000] to buy and install.⁴ The idea was presented to the newspaper's senior leadership at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but it was rejected. The cost of the transmitter was too steep but executives were allowed to move planning forward if they could find a more economical option.⁵ After some investigation, it was decided that under the direction of Elias Woodruff and Nathan O. Fuller, the newspaper would build their own transmitter, which reduced the cost significantly.⁶ They cobbled together enough parts to build a 250-watt transmitter and, in 1922, successfully installed it on top of the *Deseret News* Building. They built a modest broadcast studio on top as well from which they would produce the station's programming. The studio consisted of a "room for entertainers, an operating room, and a generator room" with "heavy draperies to soundproof the studio as much as possible."⁷ The paper applied for a license with the Federal Radio Commission (FRC) and was assigned the call letters KZN, which later changed to KSL. The *Deseret News* published several reports about the station's anticipated inauguration and "many people caught radio fever" and purchased radio sets to tune into the event.⁸

⁴ Dollar equivalent based on United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, accessible at http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

⁵ Jacobson, "Utah's First Radio Station," Utah State Historical Society, 133.

⁶ Letter from Elias Woodruff to Nathan O. Fullmer, in Wolsey, "The History of Radio Station KSL from 1922 to Television," Michigan State University.

⁷ Jacobson, "Utah's First Radio Station," Utah State Historical Society, 135.

⁸ Jack Cannon, "Greetings Sent Through Space," *Deseret News*, April 6, 1922, 1; also Jacobson, "Utah's First Radio Station," Utah State Historical Society, 133; also, Wolsey, "The History of Radio Station KSL from 1922 to Television," Michigan State University; also, Michael D. Murray and Donald G. Godfrey, *Television in America: Local Station History Across the Nation* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1997), 339-342.

On May 6, 1922, radio technician H. Carter Wilson, spoke the first words on the station, “Greetings! The *Deseret News* sends its greetings to all of you far and wide.”⁹ Later that evening, at 8:00 p.m., Heber J. Grant, President of the LDS church, dedicated the station and proclaimed a personal witness of faith in God.¹⁰ Following Grant, Salt Lake City Mayor C. Clarence Nelson shared some remarks about the recent difficult winter and then congratulated *Deseret News* employees for their “enterprise and liberality.”¹¹ Marveling at the technology’s capabilities, Grant’s wife, Augusta, proclaimed into the microphone that this was “one of the most wonderful experiences of our lives” and that radio technology “is one of the most wonderful inventions of this or any other age.”¹² The next day, KZN began broadcasting at 3 p.m. with a news bulletin and concluded with a musical performance at 8:45 p.m.¹³ For the first several months, KZN’s programming schedule was limited to the mid afternoon hours, but in time, the programming window would extend into the morning hours.

As word spread about the new station, the number of people who tuned in increased. Listeners from all over the country wrote to the *Deseret News* congratulating the paper on the success of the station. Letters arrived from listeners in 18 different states

⁹ Cannon, “Greetings Sent Through Space,” *Deseret News*, 1.

¹⁰ “Speeches Sent Broadcast by Deseret News Radio,” *Deseret News*, May 8, 1922, 1.

¹¹ “Speeches Sent,” *Deseret News*, 1.

¹² “Speeches Sent,” *Deseret News*, 1.

¹³ “Broadcasting Schedule for Monday,” *Deseret News*, 6 May 1922, 1.

and the territory of Hawaii. A listener on the West Coast declared KZN, “probably the most wonderful station in the West. Its signal came in throughout the entire Pacific slope with almost the same strength as a local station.”¹⁴ In September, six months after the inaugural address, the *Oakland Tribune* ran the headline “Salt Lake City Radio Station Plainly Heard: Weather Conditions Make Possible Broadcasting Record of 600 Miles.”¹⁵ The newspaper highlighted KZN’s signal as an example of the far-reaching capability of the medium, marveling that the signal had passed “over the Ruby and Washoe and Sierra Nevada mountains” before it reached listeners in the coastal city.¹⁶ A listener in California wrote to the *San Francisco Chronicle* incredulous that he could pick up the signal so far away from the source and wondered if it was some type of prank: “do you think I actually heard them or could somebody be playing a joke?” he implored.¹⁷ The station quickly became an important part of the Intermountain community. By 1923, Warren G. Harding’s presidential address was broadcast live from the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City over KZN to much fanfare.¹⁸ In the following years, KZN’s programming expanded to include variety shows, concerts, speeches, and news reports. At times the station broadcast from remote sites, including the Hotel Utah, Saltair Resort,

¹⁴ Jacobson, “Utah’s First Radio Station,” Utah State Historical Society, 140.

¹⁵ “Salt Lake City Radio Station Plainly Heard,” *Oakland Tribune*, September 15, 1922, 32.

¹⁶ “Salt Lake City Radio Station Plainly Heard,” *Oakland Tribune*, 32.

¹⁷ “Radio Editor, Chronicle,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 27, 1922, 8.

¹⁸ Jacobson, “Utah’s First Radio Station,” Utah State Historical Society, 141.

the Odeon Dance Hall, and the privately owned McKune School of Music.¹⁹ The station expanded its programming into the late evening. In June 1925, executives negotiated a swap with an Alaskan radio station for the call letters KSL to better reflect the city in which the signal originated. The station increased its broadcast power to 1,000 kw.²⁰ Seven years later, in 1932, KSL again expanded its reach by acquiring a 50,000 kw transmitter and the FRC designated KSL one of the first clear channel stations.²¹ The new designation buoyed the fortunes of the station. It signed with CBS as an affiliate and moved the transmitter and studio to the Union Pacific Building in downtown Salt Lake City.²²

KSL Clear Channel

KSL's designation as a clear channel signal was a critical moment in its history. As one of the few stations given that FRC assignment, the station had the license to operate at a power frequency much stronger than its competitors and the authority to operate alone on the 1160-AM frequency. The stronger clear channel stations held a monopoly on their frequency assignments and the nighttime airwaves. This directive was partially based on the commission's concern that rural listeners were unable to

¹⁹ "History of Bonneville International Corporation," Tim Larson Papers, Accn. 990, box 24, folders 2 and 4, University of Utah Special Collections and Archives, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, UT. Hereafter Tim Larson Papers.

²⁰ Jacobson, "Utah's First Radio Station," Utah State Historical Society, 142.

²¹ "History of Bonneville International Corporation," Tim Larson Papers, 38.

²² "KSL and You Handbook," Tim Larson Papers, Accn. 990, box 28, folder 6, 6, University of Utah Special Collections and Archives, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, UT. Hereafter Tim Larson Papers.

adequately tune into nighttime radio programming because of interference caused by competing signals.²³ To address the problem, a “clear channel” classification was created, which allowed designated stations to operate on 50,000 kw and “exclusive use of the channel at night.”²⁴ The commission believed the clear channel designation provided listeners who were not “within the service range of other stations” adequate programming who otherwise could not be “served economically by any other means than clear channel stations.”²⁵ Forty stations were given the initial clear channel designation, including KSL.²⁶

To the delight of clear channel stations, the increased power and ownership of the night airwaves meant that these super stations became the most popular stations in their region. Unsurprisingly, the directive drew the ire of non-designated stations that felt the clear channel classification was an unfair advantage. Over the next several decades, a number of congressional hearings were held on the issue. Critics of the regulation routinely appealed to the Federal Communications Committee (the FRC was renamed the FCC in 1934) to limit the power of the clear channel stations. By the 1960s, the FCC had

²³ Sterling and Kittross, *Stay Tuned*, 170 – 172.

²⁴ Sterling and Kittross, *Stay Tuned*, 170 – 172; also George Harry Rogers "The History of the Clear Channel and Super Power Controversy in the Management of the Standard Broadcast Allocation Plan," Tim Larson Papers, Accn. 990, box 25, folder 2, 40, University of Utah Special Collections and Archives, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, UT. Hereafter Tim Larson Papers.

²⁵ Rogers, “The History of Clear Channel,” Tim Larson Papers, 39; also Sterling and Kittross, “*Stay Tuned*,” 144.

²⁶ Rogers, “The History of Clear Channel,” Tim Larson Papers, 110.

reduced the number of clear channel stations from 40 to 25, which still included both KFI and KSL.²⁷

Empowered by its clear channel status, KSL became a leader among the urban listeners of Salt Lake Valley, as well as with rural farming communities. Former Utah Commissioner of Agriculture, Vernal A. Bergeson, wrote to KSL that in his travels throughout the state the “livestock people” often expressed their appreciation for the station’s efforts to provide them agriculture news.²⁸ Speaking in front of the FCC at a license renewal hearing in Washington D.C., Lennox Murdoch, former KSL Station Relations Director and Farm Director, testified:

KSL was a favorite station with rural families. Such programs as the *Utah Buckaroos*, *The Sage Brush Philosopher*, *The Happy Valley Quartet*, *The Songs of Harry Clarke* and other programs interspersed with comments of interest to farmers and ranchers, including market, livestock and weather reports brought hundreds of letters of appreciation from listeners scattered throughout the Rocky Mountain Region and likewise from more distant points.²⁹

KSL’s 50,000 kw had unique advantages. It broadcast a powerful signal to the region’s listenership. It was tuned in just as well in the Salt Lake metropolitan area as it was in the rural parts of the state. The signal was boosted by its mountaintop location and its proximity to the Great Salt Lake. The lake’s high concentration of salt acted a

²⁷ Rogers, “The History of Clear Channel,” Tim Larson Papers, 189.

²⁸ Letter from Vernal A. Bergeson to KSL, March 7, 1945, Tim Larson Papers, Accn. 990, box 30, folder 1, 167, University of Utah Special Collections and Archives, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, UT. Hereafter Tim Larson Papers.

²⁹ Federal Communications Commission, *Statement of Lennox Murdoch in the Matter of Clear Channel Broadcasting in the Standard Broadcast Band*, Doc. 6741, Washington D.C.; also see “Cline Reviews Activities,” *Broadcasting*, May 13, 1946, 94-95.

natural booster for the signal, doubling the strength of the signal to an estimated 100,000 kw of power.³⁰ As a result, KSL's 1160-AM frequency was one of the farthest reaching of all radio signals in the country. KSL was heard on the Pacific Coast and by as many as 27 Western and Mid-Western states. Its reach was so extensive that it rated as one of the top stations in three Western states: Utah, Idaho, and Nevada. It also counted parts of Arizona, Wyoming, and Colorado in its immediate footprint.³¹ Technical testing demonstrated that at night the signal reached all of the U.S. on 20 to 30 percent of evenings, and that it maintained a regular listenership that extended to Mexico, Canada, Europe, and the Pacific Islands.³²

The large audience was a boost to KSL financially, helping it secure advertising revenue.³³ The sales team accepted advertising from Utah's six Western neighbors. The station proclaimed that it was the "only single advertising medium totally reaching the vast and rich Mountain America market of 84 counties" and touted an annual buying

³⁰ "High Power Transmitter of KSL Goes on the Air," *Broadcasting*, November 1, 1932, 9.

³¹ Advertisement for KSL, *Broadcasting*, October 26, 1964, 32.

³² KSL Newsletters, September 1967, vol. 1, no. 5, Tim Larson papers, Accn. 990, box 25, folder 7, University of Utah Special Collections and Archives, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, UT. Hereafter Tim Larson Papers; also Tammy Tanaka, "Herb Jepko Wakes up A Million People," *Deseret News*, August 4, 1966, A19.

³³ "Forecast of Net Earnings Before Reserve for Federal Income Tax 1954- 1963," memorandum to President Clarke, Tim Larson Papers, Accn. 990, box 29, folder 1, University of Utah Special Collections and Archives, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, UT. Hereafter Tim Larson Papers.

income of over \$2.5 million.³⁴ The radio station used these profits to enter television in 1949, and created a division of the company called KSL-TV. The television station experimented with the new medium by broadcasting live events as well as a nightly newscast but it lagged behind radio in revenue potential.³⁵ By the mid-1950s, that changed. More residents bought television sets, and soon KSL-TV surpassed radio in revenue and importance. Television replaced radio as the country's primary form of media consumption and KSL became KSL-AM-FM-TV better reflecting its holdings. In 1961, the station hired Arch L. Madsen as the lead executive and under his management the company would expand to markets beyond the Intermountain West. KSL was on the verge of becoming a global media company.

Jepko and KSL

Jepko was excited by this growth and the strength of the station's signal. He was an ambitious man and wanted to be apart of what KSL offered. When the station extended the chance to host one of the region's most recognized radio programs, he jumped at the offer. By March 1963, Jepko started working in the station's impressive downtown Salt Lake City studios. The station published a full-page advertisement in the *Improvement Era*, a monthly magazine published by KSL's owners, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), promoting his arrival to KSL.³⁶ The advertisement

³⁴ Advertisement for KSL, *Broadcasting*, 32.

³⁵ "The First Radio Station in Utah," in History of Bonneville International Corporation, Tim Larson papers, Accn. 990, box 24, folder 2, 44 & 50, University of Utah Special Collections and Archives, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, UT. Hereafter Tim Larson Papers.

³⁶ "Meet the New Host of Crossroads," *The Improvement Era*, March 1963, Vol. 66, 191.

called him a “well known and liked radio personality” who was a broadcast “veteran of thirteen years” and “has experience in almost all phases of broadcasting.”³⁷ *Crossroads* aired each weekday from 1 to 5:30 p.m. and contained a mix of talk, news, and music. He was allowed some limited control over the music selection he played and his tastes were advertised as “particularly enjoyable.”³⁸ As host of *Crossroads*, he had a vast and diverse daily audience.

In April, a month after his arrival at the station, KSL management suddenly decided to shuffle its talent line up around and moved Jepko to the morning shift.³⁹ He was caught off guard at this unexpected change. He was happy hosting *Crossroads*. On several occasions, he recounted that the opportunity to host the show was a major factor in his decision to join the station. The program carried considerable cultural meaning in the region and he liked having his name associated with it. However, his disappointment was tempered by what the new morning show provided: to be the headliner of his own radio program.⁴⁰

To make room for Jepko’s new morning show, KSL executives dropped the previously scheduled programs, *First Call* and *Second Call*, and a 15-minute news break hosted by John Barlow that occurred between the two shows. KSL replaced them with

³⁷ “Meet the New Host of Crossroads,” *The Improvement Era*, 191.

³⁸ “Meet the New Host of Crossroads,” *The Improvement Era*, 191.

³⁹ “Meet the New Host of Crossroads,” *The Improvement Era*, 191.

⁴⁰ “Look Who’s Coming to Town on May 1st on KSL Radio,” advertisement in *The Salt Lake Tribune*, March 12, 1963, 19.

The Herb Jepko Show with Bob and Ray. The new show was scheduled to run each weekday morning for an hour and 15 minutes, starting at 7:15.⁴¹ KSL promoted the new show with a full-page advertisement in *The Salt Lake Tribune* on March 12 using the headline “Look Who’s Coming to Town on May 1st on KSL Radio.” The advertisement ran pictures of the three men, proclaiming, “Here’s how they really look!”⁴² The show was designed to be a light-hearted approach to morning radio. It was an assortment of news, weather, traffic reports, music, sports scores, and interviews presented with a touch of humor. KSL promoted the show as “radio’s most fabulous funnymen with their humorous outlook on life.”⁴³ The new show began on the scheduled date and listeners responded favorably. It ran for the duration of the summer and into the fall of 1963. After six months as host, Jepko had grown tired of the funnyman routine. He disliked the pressure he felt to constantly be funny and did not connect well with the gimmicky format. He described the show as “lacking in challenge” and he began to consider other options.⁴⁴ He easily became bored and grew restless if he did not find his work personally challenging. The emotions that drove his adolescent interest in the medical profession began to resurface and pull harder on him.

Jepko wanted to make a difference in the lives of people and he realized that radio provided an opportunity to exert this influence. He wanted to help people and to be a

⁴¹ “Look Who’s Coming to Town on May 1st on KSL Radio,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 19.

⁴² “Look Who’s Coming to Town on May 1st on KSL Radio,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 19.

⁴³ “Look Who’s Coming to Town on May 1st on KSL Radio,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 19.

⁴⁴ Nancy Ineichen, “Lucky Seven Let’s Go For Eight!” *Wick*, February, 1971, 7.

comfort to those who were lonely or who felt abandoned. He was not getting that fulfillment from his KSL morning program. He began looking for an opportunity that would allow him to connect on a deeper level with his audience. He was surprised that KSL had not extended programming to 24 hours a day.⁴⁵ The station's strong, uncontested nighttime signal could easily reach audiences across the country. He believed that not using this block of time was a "terrible waste" and the station could "be reaching so many people at night."⁴⁶ Published radio schedules from 1963 show that KSL concluded programming on most evenings at midnight with either a news report or an hour of jazz music provided by Wes Bowen.⁴⁷ The station did not resume programming until 5:30 the next morning. Nearly five and half hours went without programming. Unlike stations such as KFI, in Los Angeles, where 24-hour programming was implemented in the early 1950s, KSL chose not to provide this service. The late night format was still novel and used mostly by stations in urban areas where 24-hour shift work was more common. Although, KSL's competitor, KALL 910-AM, had recently begun offering hourly news from 1:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. each weekday.⁴⁸ KSL's listening audience was predominantly conservative. LDS church leaders counseled

⁴⁵ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 4.

⁴⁶ Broder, "Small-Talk Show," *New York Times*, 29.

⁴⁷ "Radio Log," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, April 2, 1963, 20.

⁴⁸ "Radio Log," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 20.

members to retire early, and this likely played a part in KSL's reluctance to offer 24-hour programming.⁴⁹

Jepko viewed the absence of 24-hour programming as an opportunity to host his own overnight show and implement the late night format he witnessed Ben Hunter successfully execute at KFI. He considered the possibility of pitching the show to KSL management, but there was much to consider. How would management embrace the idea? Would listeners embrace him as host? And could an overnight radio show be viable in a market that was so conservative and comparatively rural? He believed that even if Utah listeners did not fully embrace the program, the far-reaching nighttime signal could attract support outside the station's traditional coverage area. That was an advantage he would have over Hunter's *Night Owl* show. Jepko believed that KFI "didn't have the reach" to go as far east because it "was located geographically further west" and "its signal further east was not as strong at KSL's."⁵⁰ The plan to implement a version of Hunter's program hinged on KSL's stronger West and East Coast presence.

Jepko had to consider his standing within the organization. He had been working at the station for less than a year and management had allocated considerable resources to the new morning show. He was unsure how they would feel about a pitch to host a different show. His proposal could make him appear uncommitted, a view he wanted to avoid. KSL's lack of interest in 24-hour programming was a significant challenge to be

⁴⁹ Ezra Taft Benson, "Do Not Despair," *Ensign*, November, 1974, 66; Roylle James and Joseph Buchman, *The Rollye James Show*, February 10, 2004, audio recording, Joseph Buchman Collection, Alpine, UT.

⁵⁰ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 5.

overcome. Change was slow at the station and a move to 24-hour programming would need to be approved, not just by KSL's management, but also the organization's senior leadership. The station's governing body, known as the executive committee, consisted of top church and broadcast leaders. The group met once a month. Jepko realized that it was likely that KSL management would ask him to present his ideas to the committee during one of these monthly sessions. He would need their approval for the show to move forward, but any number of hurdles could derail the process. Some of the challenges were directly linked to the church's religious interests. If LDS leadership felt overnight radio contradicted church counsel about staying up late, the proposal would fail. Jepko knew that getting an endorsement would be a difficult task.⁵¹ While these challenges seemed formidable, they were not insurmountable. Before he approached station management about the overnight show idea, he wanted some assurance that audiences were interested in a talk driven format at that late hour. He recorded some comments in the KSL studio and asked the station's evening engineer to play the outtakes in between musical selections to gauge the audience's response. He received immediate positive feedback from listeners who "enjoyed hearing a voice in the night hours."⁵² Enthused by the good news, he moved forward.

In the late fall of 1963, Jepko told his wife and family about the plan. He explained that the radio show would require him to be away from home at night and asleep for much of the day. Patsy noted that this would be a significant change for the

⁵¹ Brown, "Main Street Mainstay," *Los Angeles Times*, Q32.

⁵² Ineichen, "Lucky Seven," 7.

family, “we were the type of people who went to bed at 10:00 every night and got up at 6:00 or 7:00 a.m.”⁵³ After some deliberation, the family “gave their approval and encouragement.”⁵⁴ Jepko next decided to approach his superiors with the concept. If he won their approval, the proposal would advance to the executive committee. In his pitch, he presented the show as something different from almost anything that was on the air. First, it would be an overnight show starting at midnight and ending at 5:30 a.m. when the station’s daytime programming began. Second, it would be predominantly an all talk show that relied heavily on telephone calls from the audience. He did not want to play music; rather the show would feature regular “conversation” for the full five and a half hours. Third, the callers would drive the nightly discussion. Jepko explained that most local talk radio audiences reacted to the topics presented by the host. However, he wanted to flip this concept, and allow the audience to drive the discussions. He would simply react to the topics presented by the callers. He described the show as “a platform for people who had something to say about anything they wanted to talk about.”⁵⁵ He referenced KFI’s successful *Night Owl* radio show as an example of how his show would operate.⁵⁶ His proposal noted that Hunter made a similar type show work with a smaller geographic area. KSL’s signal could reach much farther and the audience could potentially be much larger. “There [was] no set format for the show, with the exception

⁵³ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 11.

⁵⁴ Ineichen, “Lucky Seven,” 7.

⁵⁵ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 7.

⁵⁶ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 3.

that very, very, rarely is any music included. It [was] strictly a 'talk' show."⁵⁷ Because he had never hosted such a program, Jepko admitted that the concept was fluid.

The uniqueness of Jepko's proposal, as well as the overnight time period, made KSL executives uneasy. Jepko recalled that they were initially dubious about the viability of such a program and did not greet the proposition "with much enthusiasm."⁵⁸

The big question KSL had when we started was: Are people really going to spend their money to call you in the middle of the night and talk to you about whatever they have called me about? And I assured them that they would because I, again, had experience with KFI.⁵⁹

KSL management had other concerns. The Intermountain Region was more rural than other parts of the country and offered less reason, whether employment, entertainment, or otherwise, for its residents to be up at that hour. If Utah audiences did not support the program, would the show gain enough traction in areas outside the station's footprint to make it succeed? And if audiences outside the market mostly tuned into the show, was that a reasonable expenditure of resources?

Jepko and KSL executives knew the recent availability of direct long distance calling made it possible to call directly from listeners' homes, but rates were expensive.⁶⁰ Would they be willing to spend the money to call a radio program long distance? Would audiences from different states and regions care about issues that did not affect them?

⁵⁷ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 2.

⁵⁸ Broder, "Small-Talk Show," *New York Times*, 29.

⁵⁹ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 5.

⁶⁰ Lande and Waldon, "Reference Book of Rates," 46.

KSL was uncertain this would be the case. Jepko argued that KSL's location made little difference; rather, it was the content that was most important. "It didn't really make any difference where we did the program, because it wasn't where it was coming from, it was what was happening on the program," he said.⁶¹ In the end, KSL management was lukewarm on the idea, but did not reject it outright. Their competitors were already experimenting with 24-hour programming and they worried about falling behind.⁶² They could see that radio was heading towards all-night programming, especially for clear channel stations. As Jepko suspected, any major programming decisions had to be presented in front of the station's executive committee for approval. They told him to be ready to present the idea at the next available meeting. If the committee agreed to the concept, then he would be allowed to proceed with the show.

The committee met in late fall 1963.⁶³ Records from similar committee meetings suggest that representatives from both KSL and the LDS church were likely in attendance the night Jepko presented his ideas.⁶⁴ Fortunately, Jepko had at least one ally on the committee. He had a strong supporter in KSL President Arch L. Madsen, who joined the

⁶¹ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 8.

⁶² "Radio Log," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 20.

⁶³ Executive Committee meeting minutes are unavailable for the time period under examination. See footnote #60 for more on KSL's Executive Committee minutes

⁶⁴ KSL Incorporated Executive Committee Minutes, Tim Larson Papers, Accn. 990, box 25, folder 1, University of Utah Special Collections and Archives, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah. Hereafter Tim Larson Papers.

station a few years earlier.⁶⁵ Madsen was a bold thinker who was not afraid of making risky decisions. He was a strong advocate for expanding the station's programming into the late night/overnight timeframe. He believed it was a necessary step towards making KSL radio more competitive with other clear channel stations. Madsen had a mission for KSL AM, which now included an FM TV station and he envisioned them as pillars in a much larger multimedia Bonneville International Corporation (BIC) organization. In fact, as Jepko was pitching his overnight show, Madsen was working with the executive committee to purchase KIRO-AM-FM-TV, in Seattle, Washington, and the acquisition required a sizeable financial commitment from the church.⁶⁶ Madsen's aggressive vision aligned with Jepko's desire to host an overnight program. A friendship quickly formed between the two men. Jepko called Madsen "probably my best friend" at KSL and he "helped to guide me through - because of his knowledge and experience and so forth - guided me through some difficult times and was always there to help with advice and counsel."⁶⁷ No doubt Madsen's influence on the committee worked in Jepko's favor. No immediate decision was made after Jepko presented his ideas to the executive committee. The committee wanted more time to examine the concept before committing to it. Jepko noted that the deliberation took a considerable amount of time and that there were a few

⁶⁵ "Arch Madsen: Broadcast Pioneer," Tim Larson Papers, Accn. 990, box 24, folder 2, 8, University of Utah Special Collections and Archives, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah. Hereafter Tim Larson Papers.

⁶⁶ Arch Madsen oral history interview by Larson, 1988, box 38, folder 6, 220-221, Everett L. Cooley Oral History Project, University of Utah Special Collections and Archives, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁶⁷ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 23.

more exchanges between the two parties but after “several months of talking about the pros and cons, they gave me a green light.”⁶⁸

Jepko was ecstatic about the approval. However, it was not all good news. He was told that while the executive committee agreed to the show, KSL management had rejected parts of his proposal. The “green light” was conditional upon several changes. Jepko had proposed that KSL develop the show and that he would serve as host, as a fulltime employee. The station would retain the rights and assume all costs of the operation, including payroll and production. Hunter’s *Night Owl* show had operated under a similar contract. When he left KFI, the station kept the show, its name, its timeslot, and simply changed hosts. KSL’s *Crossroads*, which Jepko had hosted six months prior, also operated the same way. When Jepko left for the morning show, they kept the name, timeslot, and simply replaced him. KSL proposed a different model for the overnight show. They countered, suggesting that Jepko retain the full rights to the show and branding, but that he purchase from the station the 12 a.m. to 5:30 a.m. programming block for a monthly sum. He could use the station’s facilities, but would be responsible for all the costs associated with the program, including future payroll.⁶⁹ He was entirely responsible for generating the advertising revenue, which meant that he could keep all the profits raised from advertisers as long as he met the monthly payments to the station.⁷⁰ KSL’s counteroffer basically required Jepko become an independent

⁶⁸ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 4.

⁶⁹ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 22.

⁷⁰ Barr, oral history by author, April 24, 2015.

contractor and forfeit his fulltime position, although he was allowed to draw a salary for the first six weeks. The risk of this arrangement was significantly greater than a standard employee contract, but so were the rewards. If he was successful in securing advertisers for the show, he could make more money than he would otherwise as a traditional employee. The station's financial records show that the station was averaging about \$70,000 [\$500,000] in advertising sales each month.⁷¹ If Jepko could bring in even a fraction of those sales, it would be a financial windfall.

KSL had used a similar agreement on at least one other occasion.⁷² Years earlier, Earl J. Glade Jr., a former employee and past president, worked out a comparable arrangement.⁷³ Glade was paid \$125 [\$1,230] a week in salary, which he used to purchase blocks of programming that were typically undersold by the station. He was allowed to sell advertising for those blocks and keep the profits. Madsen expanded on the arrangement in an oral history interview:

[Glade] took times of the day when there was supposed to be little if any audience--from 9:30 till noon and from 1:30 till 4 or 5 in the afternoon. Well, he bought this time from the corporation for a nominal sum...he was supposed to get all the income produced during those hours. In return he had to bear the payroll for the station, practically all of it.⁷⁴

⁷¹ "Sales Estimates for KSL KSL-AM Radio," 1967, Tim Larson Papers, Accn. 990, box 28, folder 8, University of Utah Special Collections and Archives, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, UT. Hereafter Tim Larson Papers.

⁷² Madsen, oral history by Larson, 1988, 8.

⁷³ Madsen, oral history by Larson, 1988, 220.

⁷⁴ Madsen, oral history by Larson, 1988, 220.

The agreement was amicable for both parties and it endured for over ten years. Jepko may have known of the partnership and its success and it might have given him confidence that he could succeed under similar terms.⁷⁵ After KSL laid out the new terms for the show, he did not take long to agree to the offer.

Jepko was given a six week trial period to test the format. If the show was successful, then the station would extend the terms of the agreement for the full year.⁷⁶ Both parties determined that the program's success would be determined based on the amount of letters the station received from listeners and the number of phone calls the program received each night. KSL leadership was still dubious that an over night call-in talk show would work in the Intermountain West. Jepko recalled, "nobody ever thought it would last past six weeks."⁷⁷ But he was optimistic. He had seen how committed listeners were to Hunter's show and he was confident that he could replicate the results. He believed his new show would be "one of a kind" and that it would stand out from the other limited late night programming options. Furthermore, KSL's strong nighttime reach provided him a large pool of listeners. The two parties agreed and the new program debuted in early February.

Unlike his previous two shows at KSL, the overnight show received little fanfare. There were no full-page ads in the *Deseret News* or the *Salt Lake Tribune*. There were no

⁷⁵ Madsen, oral history by Larson, 1988, 220.

⁷⁶ Joseph Lundstrom, "Midnight to Dawn Belongs to Herb Jepko," *Deseret News*, March 1, 1975, W7.

⁷⁷ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 24.

other promotions. The show would have to survive with limited support from the station. “We did it from scratch with nothing.” Jepko asserts. He borrowed \$600 [\$4,500] from an associate to make the first payment to the station and to pay the salary of the overnight engineer.⁷⁸ The loan kept the show afloat during the trial stage. Jepko initially called the show, *The Other Side of the Day*, in homage of Hunter’s late night program, which had gone by that name before it was changed to *Night Owls*. Jepko eventually dropped the name too and called his show *Nitecap with Herb Jepko*, often going by just *Nitecap* after a contest he held with listeners.⁷⁹

Jepko’s Overnight Radio

At midnight on February 11, 1964, the KSL broadcast studios at 145 Social Hall Avenue remained fully operational for the first time in the station’s 42-year history. Jepko was apprehensive about the launch, in part, because it relied so heavily on callers. If listeners did not call in, the show would fall flat, and KSL would likely cancel the contract. As a precaution, he brought in music records that could be played in between phone calls to help fill the time.⁸⁰ When the clock struck midnight, he opened the show by saying, “Hello, this is Herb Jepko in Salt Lake City.”⁸¹ After a brief introduction, he invited listeners to call in and he waited to receive the first call. But the phone line remained silent. His fears were realized. Dejected, he reached for the records and played

⁷⁸ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 26.

⁷⁹ “Ten Years of Brotherhood,” *Wick*, January-February, 1974, 4.

⁸⁰ Jarvik, “Small Talk Show,” *Deseret News*, 1C.

⁸¹ “Back to the Roots,” *Wick*, January-February, 1976, 4.

music while he waited for his first call. The studio operator said that it was about 10 to 12 minutes into the show before he got his first phone call. After three hours on the air, Jepko had received less than 10 phone calls.⁸² The calls came in at irregular times and he was forced to play more music than anticipated. He recalled “the first night we received less than 20 telephone calls and spent most of the time spinning records.”⁸³ It was not all bad news. Jepko was encouraged that he was at least taking *some* phone calls instead of *no* calls. He hoped that as word spread more people would participate. The second night went better and in each successive night afterwards more listeners called in. By the end of the first week, Jepko was no longer playing music and the station’s only telephone line was busy from midnight to 6 a.m.⁸⁴ Within two weeks, he was “getting all the calls he could handle.”⁸⁵

Listeners responded favorably to the idea of caller-driven programming and the show survived the six-week trial. By the end of March, *Nitecap* was an official part of KSL’s programming schedule. It took about six months for the show to really take off.⁸⁶ Audience ratings were rudimentary at the time and stations relied on feedback from listeners to determine programming popularity. Letters were pouring into the KSL offices each day and Jepko struggled to manage the correspondence. He turned to his

⁸² “Meet Jack,” *Wick*, September-October, 1973, 46.

⁸³ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 2.

⁸⁴ Jarvik, “Small Talk Show,” *Deseret News*, 1C.

⁸⁵ Jarvik, “Small Talk Show,” *Deseret News*, 1C.

⁸⁶ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 24.

wife Patsy for help was “pressed into service when the mail became too much for one man to handle.”⁸⁷ Patsy too had a hard time managing the correspondence.

At first I went to the station with Herb two or three nights a week to read and answer mail. Then I started taking mail home to read. At first we put a desk in a bedroom; then we added a filing cabinet and some tables. Now, it’s an office with a bed in it!⁸⁸

By the summer of 1964, it was obvious that show was a success. Letters of support were arriving at a steady rate and Jepko was taking close to 50 calls each night. KSL executives were happy with the arrangement and the two parties maintained “a good relationship.”⁸⁹ During the early months of the show, KSL management allowed him to keep his KSL salary as the show got off the ground. Once it became clear that the show was successful, KSL management asked him to comply with the initial arrangement. He resigned from his salaried position and “became an independent contractor.”⁹⁰ After he left the station’s payroll, his relationship with management immediately changed, “I was no longer an employee, suddenly I was a client and we paid them for the air time that we had.”⁹¹ The transition to independent contractor resulted in a “sizable reduction” in the amount of money he was making.⁹² With Jepko no longer drawing a monthly salary, the

⁸⁷ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 10.

⁸⁸ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 11.

⁸⁹ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 23.

⁹⁰ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 22-23.

⁹¹ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 22-23.

⁹² Ineichen, “Lucky Seven,” 7.

pressure to generate advertising revenue accelerated as his livelihood was now tied directly to the advertising he sold. He could not rely on help from the station's sales staff for support. He had to sell it himself or hire his own staff. He could not afford to hire a sales team so in the interim, he functioned as both host and salesperson. These dual roles lead to an "increase in working hours."⁹³ He developed a routine that helped him fulfill the responsibilities. Each morning, after the show concluded, Jepko returned home, showered, changed clothes, and then picked up the phone and began making sales calls.⁹⁴ There was no formula for selling advertising to late night audiences and Jepko had to learn on the fly. Initially, he faced considerable challenges finding advertisers who were unconvinced that there was a listening audience at that hour, and that those who did tune in would be interested in their products. "I had plenty of doors slammed in my face," he said of his early sales calls.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, he continued to bring in as much advertising as possible and raising six children on the meager earnings created a stressful home life.⁹⁶ At home, while he made sales calls, Patsy tended to the growing stack of mail and to the household and their children. During this difficult time, she remembered that "our lawn isn't cut and the garden is full of weeds, and we have hot dogs more often, but I think it is a closer bond for the entire family. I think they will benefit from this experience and

⁹³ Ineichen, "Lucky Seven," 7.

⁹⁴ Lundstrom, "Midnight to Dawn Belongs to Herb Jepko," *Deseret News*, W7.

⁹⁵ Lundstrom, "Midnight to Dawn Belongs to Herb Jepko," *Deseret News*, W7.

⁹⁶ James and Buchman, *The Rollye James Show*, February 10, 2004, Joseph Buchman Collection.

have a better chance for understanding others.”⁹⁷ The family eventually adjusted and Jepko made small gains in generating advertising sales. Patsy said that the first order she can remember was for a venison cookbook. She recalled sitting at her kitchen table, fulfilling orders for the book as she listened to her husband on the radio.⁹⁸ He followed this routine for most of 1964, sleeping only a few hours a day and catching up on sleep on the weekends. The money was enough to keep the business afloat and to meet his financial obligations with the station.

Incendiary Growth of Nitecap

By the spring of 1965, *Nitecap* was a year old and growing at a rapid pace. As Jepko predicted, his listening audience reached points outside KSL’s Intermountain footprint. KSL’s clear channel signal carried the show to listeners thousands of miles outside the Mountain West. To both his and KSL’s amazement, the show was getting phone calls from people not just in the United States but from various parts of the world. He took out an advertisement in *The Salt Lake Tribune* publicizing his growing show. The ad proclaims, “I talk to hundreds of people every week - from every state in the Union - how about you?”⁹⁹ The caption was followed by a call for listeners to tune into the program on KSL each weeknight. “We had great reach,” Jepko recalled. “We covered most of Canada and we covered a lot of South America, we covered a lot of

⁹⁷ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 16.

⁹⁸ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 16.

⁹⁹ “Hello! I’m Herb Jepko,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, June 23, 1964, 18.

Europe. We'd get calls from places like Italy, London, Berlin, Hawaii, Wake Island, Guam, Midway, Samoa, and Alaska."¹⁰⁰ Esko Nykanen from Sodankyla, Finland, wrote in from a remote city in Northern Finland to let *Nitecap* listeners know she was picking up the program on KSL's signal and could listen "quite regularly in winter."¹⁰¹ Jepko relayed that a longtime friend, Jake Garn, an Navy pilot who flew the P3 Orion airplane "from the mainland over to Vietnam. . . used to listen to us as he would fly" over the Pacific.¹⁰² The program once received a letter from a member of the Peace Corps stationed in Fiji, some 7,000 miles away who wrote that he was picking up the program. It "seems to be one of the strongest" of any station the letter read, and he asked Jepko to "give out a big yell" to those stationed abroad.¹⁰³

As listeners discovered the late night talk show, eager callers flooded the phone line. Jepko fielded an average of 50 calls a night and the topic of those calls varied depending upon the caller. Sometimes these early calls involved controversial topics and, at first, he allowed all topics to be discussed. Over time, however, "it became less and less popular to argue and more basic things became popular."¹⁰⁴ Soon, Jepko banned controversial talk altogether. He admitted that it was not in his personality to be

¹⁰⁰ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 4.

¹⁰¹ *Wick*, July-August, 1976, 39.

¹⁰² Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 9; also for more on Garn see Allan Kent Powell, *Utah History Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994).

¹⁰³ "From the Mailbag," *Wick*, October, 1969, 20.

¹⁰⁴ Steve Gunn, "No Religion or Politics Please," *The Evening Independent*, July 27, 1977, 1B.

controversial and he sought to provide a forum where callers felt at home. Furthermore, he “didn’t feel any smarter or even as smart as the caller, so how was I to debate with somebody who felt very strongly religiously or politically about this particular philosophy.”¹⁰⁵ He became so committed to his “no controversy” policy that the show became well-known for it. The program stood in contrast to talk radio programs such one hosted by Los Angeles based radio host Joe Pyne – nicknamed “Killer Joe” – for his penchant for telling listeners to “go gargle with razor blades.”¹⁰⁶

Nitecap’s tone resonated well with most listeners. One Nitecapper, as fans sometimes called themselves, believed that Jepko had “brought back the higher quality of human beings getting along with other human beings.”¹⁰⁷ Many listeners sent in letters expressing similar sentiments. The steady stream of correspondence continued to climb and the sheer volume overwhelmed both Jepko and his wife. They were receiving about 6,000 letters a week.¹⁰⁸ It became impossible for the two to keep up with the correspondence. The burden became so great that Patsy became ill from overwork and exhaustion.¹⁰⁹

You know, when you talk about a thousand, two thousand letters a day, that’s a lot of mail. And it became obvious to us right away that there’s no way we could answer all these letters...we didn’t have the economic position where we could reply to each letter that came in and answer their specific question. And the

¹⁰⁵ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 6.

¹⁰⁶ “Killer Joe,” *Time*, July 29, 1966, 30.

¹⁰⁷ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 4.

¹⁰⁸ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 10.

¹⁰⁹ *Wick*, June, 1965, 13.

people were anxious as they heard each other's communication on the air, they were anxious to not only communicate with me but with them because a person would call in from Lincoln, Nebraska and somebody in Santa Monica, California would say, 'Boy, I know exactly what they mean. That sounds so interesting and I wish there were some way I could get in touch with them.'¹¹⁰

Jepko and Patsy realized that something needed to be done to better provide for the needs of the growing *Nitecap* audience. The radio show had become an important part of listeners lives and in the thousands of letters that arrived at their home, fans implored for more ways to connect with him and fellow listeners. Jepko searched for a solution. He recalled that Hunter's *Night Owl* show had faced a similar problem, albeit on a much smaller scale. *Night Owl* fans had pressured Hunter to organize gatherings where the community could gather and socialize beyond the limitations of the radio waves. Hunter obliged by organizing large annual gatherings where his audience could interact with each other personally. These events were attended by thousands of Hunter's listeners.¹¹¹ However, the gatherings occurred only once a year and for some of Hunter's listeners that was insufficient. He realized that his audience wanted more opportunities to meet, even if these gatherings occurred on a much smaller scale. Hunter had organized smaller chapters of listeners, based on geography, and encouraged them to meet on a monthly or quarterly basis.¹¹² Finally, for a limited time, he published a magazine called

¹¹⁰ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 4.

¹¹¹ Armin, "Night Owls Flock Together," *Independent Press-Telegram*, 28.

¹¹² Grimm, "Editor's Mailbag: Night Owls," *Eugene Register-Guard*, 10A.

The Limb in which he included stories from his listeners as well as information about the show and upcoming events.¹¹³

Jepko decided to implement a similar three-tiered strategy within the *Nitecap* community: he would organize large *Nitecap* gatherings; encourage the creation of smaller regional clubs, and publish a show-sponsored magazine. Implementing this strategy would require considerable planning and oversight and he could not do it alone. He needed a governing organization to manage these assets. He created the non-profit Nitecap International Association (NIA), which managed the business interests of the show. The association was responsible for organizing events and social gatherings outside the radio medium for the benefit of the greater *Nitecap* community.¹¹⁴ Jepko hired a small staff to run the association, which included a salesperson to bring in advertising dollars. He was elected the organization's first president.¹¹⁵ He audaciously included the term "international" in the title of the organization. This was presumptuous for a radio show that was only a year old and originating from a small community in the rural Western United States. But Jepko included the term as a courtesy to those who were listening outside the United States and whose participation he wanted to maintain and hopefully increase. Listeners were encouraged to join the association, which was

¹¹³ Armin, "Night Owls Flock Together," *Independent Press-Telegram*, 28; also Leonard, "Don't Blame Ben," *Independent Press-Telegram*, 23.

¹¹⁴ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 5.

¹¹⁵ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 5.

free of charge. They simply needed to mail in a letter stating their desire to join the NIA and in return received a card “duly certifying” him or her as a member.

Under the direction of the NIA, Jepko organized smaller, local chapters called “Nitestands,” in keeping with the show’s “nite” theme. The first Nitestand was organized on April 28, 1964 in Salt Lake City, Utah.¹¹⁶ To be recognized as an official Nitestand chapter, organizers had to apply to NIA headquarters in Salt Lake City for a charter and approval took anywhere from six weeks to three months.¹¹⁷ Each chapter was required to have at least six active members and the minutes of the meetings had to be forwarded to NIA headquarters in Salt Lake City each month. Nitestand’s were responsible for raising their own funds that could be spent on travel or smaller social activities. A popular way to raise funds was through “bakery sales and quilt sales.”¹¹⁸

Jepko wanted the NIA and its members to be a force for promoting good in the world. The NIA’s constitution stated that its purpose was to promote “friendship and goodwill among persons of all faiths and races residing in the same communities.”¹¹⁹ He told a group of NIA members, “we need to build this organization block upon block upon block” and that by sustained growth, “we can become the largest organization in the world to promote good will, friendship and brotherhood.”¹²⁰ He asked that each

¹¹⁶ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 11.

¹¹⁷ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 11.

¹¹⁸ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 11.

¹¹⁹ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 5.

¹²⁰ Dale Van Atta, “Nitecaps with Herb ‘n Friends,” *Deseret News*, June 25, 1976, 1B.

individual Nitestand engage in humanitarian works.¹²¹ On multiple occasions, both over the air and in front of Nitestand groups, he emphasized that the purpose was to “meet regularly and undertake charitable projects.”¹²² He reinforced these ideas with the zeal of a preacher and, powered by his evangelism, the groups quickly fell in line. Newspapers reported on the service projects provided by regional Nitestands. Grants Pass, Oregon’s *Daily Independent* reported that a local Nitestand helped “put into operation” the Mariola Nursing Home and then held monthly birthday parties for patients whose birthdays occurred during the month.¹²³ In Ogden, Utah, members spent time reading stories to patients at the Weber Memorial Hospital and members of the Salt Lake Nitestand arranged transportation for those in need to a nearby center for the blind.¹²⁴ The association adopted as its international symbol an artistic representation of a “little man in a nightshirt and ‘nitecap’” carrying a candle.¹²⁵ The symbol was called the “Herbie” and it graced the association's letterhead and other official materials. The NIA even had an official song: “The Nitecap Song,” written by Della Dame Edmunds of Salt Lake. The association even had two other songs that were adopted, “The Nitecap Lullaby” and “The

¹²¹ James Bapis, “Radio Amateur Has A Big Audience,” *The Daily Independent*, September 1, 1965, 11B.

¹²² Edward Bennett, “Who is Herb Jepko: And Why Is He Keeping So Many People Up?” *The Courier- Journal*, (n.d.), Joseph Buchman Collection, Alpine, UT. Hereafter Joseph Buchman Collection.

¹²³ Bapis, “Radio Amateur Has A Big Audience,” *The Daily Independent*, 11B.

¹²⁴ Bapis, “Radio Amateur Has A Big Audience,” *The Daily Independent*, 11B.

¹²⁵ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 6.

Ballad of Herb Jepko,” both written by Don Ray of Alamogordo, New Mexico.¹²⁶ All three songs were recorded and made available for purchase through the association.

Once Jepko organized the NIA, and laid the groundwork for the creation of Nitestand chapters, he turned his attention to planning events where fans could interact with him personally and with each other. He saw these gatherings as a way of maintaining and promoting a higher level of listener engagement. He planned the first *Nitecap* convention for July 1965, in Salt Lake City.¹²⁷ The announcement was met with enthusiasm from most listeners. However, a small undercurrent was disappointed at the prospect of traveling to gather with NIA members. These fans “clamored to meet Herb Jepko in person” but could not afford the travel costs or were in poor health.¹²⁸ So, Jepko decided that if fans could not come to him that he would go to them. He organized traveling shows and called them *Nitecap* “rallies.” These smaller functions served a similar purpose as the national conventions by providing opportunities for fans to meet face-to-face. He planned four of these rallies for the spring of 1965. The first was held on March 6, in Las Vegas, Nevada. The second occurred months later on May 7, at Grants Pass, Oregon. Seven days later, he traveled to Desert Hot Springs, California and concluded the tour with an event in his birth state of Arizona on May 21st in Phoenix.¹²⁹ The rallies were so popular that they became a permanent part of his schedule.

¹²⁶ “Eugene Jelesnik Photograph Collection” Utah State Historical Society, box 62, folder 12.

¹²⁷ “Nitecaps Set Three-Day Convention,” *The Daily Herald*, July 29, 1965, 4.

¹²⁸ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 12.

¹²⁹ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 12.

The NIA rallies were usually a single night event, typically held at a convention center or ballroom, and included a live broadcast of the program. The broadcast was usually preceded by a banquet or ceremony where Jepko chatted with fans and community leaders. Dinner, or some other type of refreshment, was often included. Fans brought cameras and recorders to capture the moment.¹³⁰ Jepko liked to stack the rally broadcasts with live interviews. Guests typically included local community leaders and prominent citizens interspersed with musical acts.¹³¹ Eugene Jelesnik, a Salt Lake City resident and well known “impresario and violinist” helped Jepko coordinate a rally in Las Vegas.¹³² Jelesnik was an amateur photographer whose extensive collection of photographs are housed at the Utah State Historical Society. He brought along a camera and documented the rally.¹³³ The photos provide a rare glimpse into the events. Jepko was always front and center. Jepko is shown standing outside the Blue Room at the Tropicana Resort in Las Vegas, pointing to his name glowing on the marquee sign that hung above the room’s entrance. He was happy and eager to meet his fans. Hundreds of fans filed into the large banquet room eager for the night's events. Jepko mingled with the audience and posed for photos. He looked at ease in front of large audiences. At the conclusion of the greetings, he approached a makeshift stage, offered a few words to the

¹³⁰ Brown, “Main Street Mainstay,” *Los Angeles Times*, Q32.

¹³¹ “A Radio Special,” *Deseret News*, February 23, 1967, B3.

¹³² “Radio Special,” *Deseret News*, B3.

¹³³ “Jelesnik Photograph Collection,” Utah Historical Society, boxes 62/63, folders 12-21/1-11.

audience and a late dinner was served. After the meal, the live broadcast of the show began. Attendees sat at dinner tables facing the set. The tables were arranged so that each person had an optimal viewing experience.¹³⁴ The stage was simple, just three chairs, three microphones, and a coffee table with ashtrays for the smokers, which included Jepko. There was a couch, just off set a few feet, where guests to be interviewed waited until it was their turn to join Jepko. Jelensik's photos capture the variety of guests that participated in the broadcast and most appeared to be musicians, actors, entertainers, or other dignitaries. Jepko was attentive to each person as they recounted some story or experience. As the show approached the end of the broadcast, a group of Polynesian dancers and singers performed a cultural musical arrangement, perhaps in conjunction with the Tropicana Resort theme. Jepko interviewed the group at the conclusion of their performance.

Jepko's rallies served dual roles. They provided him with an opportunity to meet his audience and they generated profits. The NIA frequently brokered deals with the hosting city's Chamber of Commerce and other local businesses. These deals typically included sponsorships on the show, premium spots during commercial breaks, a reduced rental fee of the venue, and cheaper hotel rooms for rally attendees. The *Desert Sentinel* in Desert Springs, California investigated the economic impact of one *Nitecap* rally that was hosted in their city and reported "that [attendees] will be spending a considerable

¹³⁴ "Jelensik Photograph Collection," Utah Historical Society, boxes 62/63, folders 12-21/1-11.

amount of money with motels, hotels, restaurants, and many more businesses...¹³⁵ The paper reported that civic leaders felt that the nearly \$3,000 [\$21,000] they were spending in “promotion funds” was worth the cost because of the “valuable publicity” the city received from hosting the event.¹³⁶

Arrival of the *Wick*

Upon his return from the May 21st 1965 rally in Phoenix, Arizona Jepko focused on implementing the final component in his three-tiered development strategy: the publication of an NIA sponsored magazine. In June, he mailed subscribers the first edition of the *Wick* magazine.¹³⁷ In keeping with the “Nite” theme, the title referred to the wick of a candle. The publication was to act as a NIA bulletin board. Jepko wrote monthly editorials that outlined new policies, highlighted important NIA events or other topics that he deemed important to his *Nitecap* community. The *Wick* contained information about upcoming rallies and meeting times for Nitestands.

On the front cover of the introductory June 1965 issue was a photo of Jepko dressed in a suit and tie. For many fans this was their first visual reference.¹³⁸ Most knew him only by the sound of his voice. The issue contained a letter written by Carl Rampton, the Governor of Utah, promoting the first NIA national convention to be held

¹³⁵ “Economic Value of Rally is Cited,” *Desert Sentinel*, October 18, 1967, 1.

¹³⁶ “Economic Value of Rally is Cited,” *Desert Sentinel*, 1.

¹³⁷ The June 1965 edition of the *Wick* magazine was the first issue. *Wick*, June, 1965.

¹³⁸ Front Cover of the *Wick*, June, 1965.

that year in July in Salt Lake City.¹³⁹ It contained a column written by Jepko that focused on increasing support for an upcoming NIA event, and included an update on the growing number of approved Nitestands. Thomas A. Little, the magazine's editor, and Patsy's brother, announced to readers that they were "about to embark upon a new experience in reading and viewing."¹⁴⁰ Little explained that the magazine would serve as a voice for *Nitecap* members and he proclaimed the magazine "your publication." He asked that subscribers "make your wants as to content known to us" and asked that readers submit content for publication. Jepko explained, "we basically ran material they submitted to us - their poems, their stories, their recipes on cooking - because this was their communicative device."¹⁴¹ The magazine's commitment to participant-generated content was demonstrated in the first issue, which included a recipe for Peppermint Rocky Road Bars, submitted by Ethel Heiple of Auburn, California; a poem entitled "Herbs" by J.F. Yerik of Spokane, Washington; and a short story "Along the Trail with the Old Man of the Mountain," written by Ed Welch of Salt Lake City.¹⁴² The publication featured excerpts of letters written to Jepko, pen pal addresses, short stories, histories, and recipes. It included a monthly editorial that Jepko wrote himself.

A lot of people would think it's a house organ, but it was really a communicative device whereby all the people listening could communicate with all the other

¹³⁹ "NIA Convention," *Wick*, June, 1965, 4.

¹⁴⁰ "Letter from the Publisher," *Wick*, June, 1965, 1.

¹⁴¹ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 10.

¹⁴² Ed Welch, "Along the Trail with the Old Man of the Mountain," *Wick*, June, 1965, 8; also Ethel Heiple, "Recipe Column," Peppermint Rock Road Bars, *Wick*, June, 1965, 9; also J.F. Yerik, "Poems" *Wick*, June, 1965.

people listening if they wanted. And we had to charge something for it because we didn't have that sort of finances where we could do it ourselves.¹⁴³

For an annual fee of \$4 [\$30], subscribers received a monthly issue, in later years, as the magazine got more expensive to produce, it switched to bi-monthly issues. The annual fees subsidized the publication, but they were meager. Jepko made most of the money on advertising space sold in the magazine. The first issue showcased advertisements for the Travelers Safety Club, which promoted their “exclusive club group insurance.”¹⁴⁴ It contained advertisements for the Belvedere Apartment Hotel in Salt Lake City, a type of pepper spray called Rebuff, and a promotion for Eugene Jelesnik’s musical album titled “JFK March.”¹⁴⁵ The magazine served as an in-house sales vehicle for *Nitecap* branded products such as stationery, pins, and decal stickers, all of which could be purchased for less than \$4 [\$30].¹⁴⁶ The magazine “was basically brand extension,” said Kirk Stirland, a former editor of the magazine. “It was a way to further that community. It was a print version of the radio show.”¹⁴⁷ The *Wick* became the pulse of the *Nitecap* community for many years, and fans saw it as a lifeline for show-related content.

¹⁴³ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 10.

¹⁴⁴ Advertisement for Travelers Safety Club, “*Wick*, June 1965, 15.

¹⁴⁵ Advertisement for Belvedere Apartment Hotel, *Wick*, June, 1965, 14; also Advertisement for Eugene Jelesnik’s J.F.K. March, *Wick*, June, 1965, 14; also Advertisement for Rebuff Pepper Spray, *Wick*, June, 1965, 6.

¹⁴⁶ *Wick*, June, 1965, 15.

¹⁴⁷ Stirland, oral history by author, April 8 2015

The second issue of the *Wick*, published in July 1965, focused primarily on the upcoming national NIA convention scheduled for later in the month.¹⁴⁸ Jepko's editorial reinforced the importance of this first convention. The event marked "the culmination of almost two years of what we choose to call purposeful work. The many friendships that have been made as a result of just being a *Nitecap* will be further strengthened by at last having the opportunity of meeting one another face to face."¹⁴⁹ He also wrote that "this convention will give all of us an opportunity to shake hands and get much better acquainted and to explore the future service aims of the NIA."¹⁵⁰ The gathering was promoted as "three days of *Nitecap* activities that you will enjoy and remember forever."¹⁵¹ The convention was held in Salt Lake City on July 30-August 1, 1965 and billed a smashing success. The convention drew 2,500 listeners, and was universally enjoyed by Nitecapers.¹⁵² It began with a 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. Friday registration. The cost of attendance was \$2.50 [\$15] per person at the Hotel Utah in Downtown Salt Lake City, which was followed by lunch with the host at noon. Later that evening the group assembled for a live midnight broadcast of the show. On Saturday afternoon, attendees took a tour of Salt Lake City with the "highlight of the convention" occurring that

¹⁴⁸ "Convention '65!" *Wick*, July, 1965, 7.

¹⁴⁹ "Convention Time Is Here," *Wick*, July, 1965, 13.

¹⁵⁰ "Convention Time Is Here," 13.

¹⁵¹ "Convention '65!" 7.

¹⁵² Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 10.

evening.¹⁵³ This highlight was a “big show” that included “a wonderful meal, special guests, [and] great entertainment.” Della Dame Edmunds, of Salt Lake City was announced as the winner of the NIA song contest that asked fans to write and produce an original song about the show. She was awarded a prize of \$25 [\$200]. On the last day, August 1st, the convention concluded by attending a live performance of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir from Temple Square.¹⁵⁴ In the September issue of the *Wick*, Jepko reflected on the time they enjoyed during the three-day event. His only regret “was that some of you could not be there with us” and in a pitch for next year’s convention wrote “but we’ll see you next year.”¹⁵⁵ The magazine dedicated two full pages and 12 images to its convention recap. The photos reflected the attendees enjoying the festivities. The spread was clearly intended to reinforce the convention as a must-attend event. The recaps, which occurred after each rally or convention, may have had some effect, as future attendance figures show that the number of *Nitecap* fans who attended the conventions grew steadily for the next several years.

In October, Jepko and Patsy traveled to San Francisco for an impromptu banquet sponsored by a local Nitestand. Jepko met with NIA members from Northern California and Oregon from 7:00 p.m. to almost midnight.¹⁵⁶ His remarks stressed the NIA’s purpose was to be a service organization, rather than just a social gathering.

¹⁵³ “Convention ‘65!” 7.

¹⁵⁴ “Convention ‘65!” 7.

¹⁵⁵ “Hello, Nitecaps,” *Wick*, September, 1965, 9.

¹⁵⁶ “Hello, Nitecaps,” 9.

Remember that Nitecaps International Association is basically a service organization, dedicated to service to those less fortunate than ourselves. This week, or better still, today, let's light another candle in the world of darkness for someone in need. It only takes a little of your time and doesn't cost you a penny.¹⁵⁷

In the final months of 1965, Jepko experimented with new ways to engage the audience and increase revenue. He introduced a classified section in the *Wick*. For 20 cents [\$1.50] per word, subscribers could create their own advertisements. Six advertisements debuted in this first classified section, including one for enrollment in a "Wig Styling School" and another for a homemade candy cookbook. The section included a "Wanted" classified section where a lonely shut-in placed an ad looking for pen pals, complete with an address where letters could be sent to initiate the exchange. This initial request ballooned into more requests from others, and eventually a "Pen Pal" section was formed. Over time it became an important part of the magazine.¹⁵⁸

Nitecap ended 1965 on a strong note. Jepko hosted a number of well-known celebrities including Tex Williams, a famous Western music recording artist, whose song "Smoke, Smoke, Smoke (that cigarette)" topped the Billboard Charts in 1947 for six weeks.¹⁵⁹ Later that morning, film director LeRoy Prinz and actor Ray Bolger, the actor best known for his role as the Scarecrow in the 1939 classic *The Wizard of Oz*, stopped

¹⁵⁷ "Hello, Nitecaps!" 9.

¹⁵⁸ "Classified," *Wick*, December, 1965, 14.

¹⁵⁹ "Gala Night at the Station," *Wick*, December, 1965, 12.

by the studio for live interviews.¹⁶⁰ Hollywood elites, looking for avenues to promote their shows, appeared on the program because of its growing national audience.

Continued Growth: 1966-1967

In 1966, *Nitecap* built on the success of the previous year. Jepko did not want to lose the momentum in the program's second year and he remained aggressive. He planned more rallies for the spring and summer months, including the first rally hosted east of the Rocky Mountains. He announced that a Nitestand in Minnesota was organized, which he hailed as the first group chartered east of the Rocky Mountains and Canada.¹⁶¹ This was an important benchmark for the program. A Nitestand in Minnesota suggested that the show was gaining traction with midwestern audiences. Jepko hoped that it would be a catalyst for many more Nitestands to form in that part of the country.

The program benefited from new direct-distance calling technology that allowed fans to place long distance phone calls from their home with relative ease. Before direct-distance dialing it would have been difficult to place a long distance phone call from a home in Minnesota to a live radio program hundreds of miles away in Salt Lake City. The Telecommunications History Group describes the tedious and time-consuming process of placing a long distance phone call before direct-distance dialing:

The operator would connect to a special long distance office through a special line, where an operator would connect your call to the long distance office of the city you were trying to reach. The operator in that city would connect you with the exchange for the person you were trying to reach, and, finally, an operator would connect your ever-extending line to your friend on the other end. Your initial operator on your end might do all the legwork while you waited or went off

¹⁶⁰ "Gala Night," 12.

¹⁶¹ *Wick*, December, 1965, 12.

to do something else; she would ring you when your call was ready to be completed.¹⁶²

The cumbersome logistics of long distance calling prevented the existence of national call-in talk radio before *Nitecap*. Advancements in the 1950s and 1960s to transistors, vacuum tubes, long distance cables, and satellite technology allowed direct-distance phone calls to become a reality for Americans. The first direct long distance phone call was made on November 11, 1951 when the Mayor of Englewood, New Jersey, M. Leslie Denning, placed a call to Frank Osborne, Mayor of Alameda, California.¹⁶³ Thirteen years later when Jepko began his national talk show, direct-distance dialing was widely available and *Nitecap* listeners used it extensively. The service became the lifeblood of his growing national presence. The cost to use the service was expensive. A 1997 FCC report that examined the history of phone company practices disclosed that the average rate for a long distance phone call in the 1960s was \$1.75 [\$10] per minute.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, prior to 1975, long distance carriers billed customers at a minimum call length of three minutes, even if the call lasted only a few seconds.¹⁶⁵ Fortunately, late night rates were universally lower than the daytime fare. New York Telephone advertised their deeply discounted late night and weekend rates and encouraged long

¹⁶² *Wick*, December, 1965, 12.

¹⁶³ “1951: First Direct Dial Long-Distance Call,” *AT&T Technology Timeline* (n.d.), accessed at <http://www.corp.att.com/atlabs/reputation/timeline/51trans.html>.

¹⁶⁴ Lande and Waldon, "Reference Book of Rates," 46.

¹⁶⁵ Lande and Waldon, "Reference Book of Rates," 46.

distance callers to take advantage.¹⁶⁶ AT&T offered discounts for long distance phone calls placed after business hours.¹⁶⁷ The late night hours provided an economical option for people looking to place long distance calls, and fortunately for Jepko, his listeners took advantage.

Nitecap Celebrates Two Years on Air

On February 11th, 1966, the show commemorated two years on air and to celebrate, the NIA threw an elaborate party. Nearly 2,000 listeners packed a ballroom at the Hotel Utah to pay homage to the show and its position as the leader in overnight radio programming.¹⁶⁸ A number of civic leaders from the Salt Lake area, including editors from the *Deseret News* and other radio personalities, attended the celebration. Several musical acts performed for the group, including the Salt Lake Symphonic Choir and the Swanee Singers. Local entertainer Jerry Winters performed a musical.¹⁶⁹ Jepko broadcast that evening's show from the ballroom and those who attended the celebration were invited to stay. He arranged for several celebrities to call in including Broadway actress Gretchen Wyler, actor Hugh O'Brian, and performer Beverly Allison.¹⁷⁰ The

¹⁶⁶ New York Telephone, [Advertisement for Long-Distance Calling] *New York Magazine*, June 27, 1977, A-33.

¹⁶⁷ "New York Telephone," A-33.

¹⁶⁸ "Nitecaps Celebrate Second Anniversary," *Wick*, March, 1966, 5-7.

¹⁶⁹ "Nitecaps Celebrate Second Anniversary," 4.

¹⁷⁰ "Nitecaps Celebrate Second Anniversary," 4.

number of guests and celebrities who participated in the two-year anniversary of the program reinforced the show's popularity.

The *Nitecap* overnight talk radio show was becoming a national phenomenon. The *Wick* estimated 300,000 worldwide listeners tuned in each night.¹⁷¹ Ratings systems were unreliable in the mid-1960s so radio executives and advertisers had to rely on less stringent ways to determine a show's popularity. One way was for the program to offer inexpensive trinkets or postcards and ask listeners to send in a letter requesting the item. Radio executives would then guesstimate the size of the total audience based how many trinkets or cards were requested. KSL determined the *Nitecap* nightly by the number of Nitecap trinkets sold and how many NIA membership cards were requested.¹⁷²

Jepko revealed that a second Midwestern Nitestand was chartered in Kansas, joining Minnesota as the two groups operating east of the Rocky Mountains.¹⁷³ Newspapers across the country took note of the show's national audience. A paper in El Paso, Texas reported that a local pastor's voice was "beamed all over the nation" when he appeared on the show.¹⁷⁴ In Minnesota, *The Daily Journal* published a story about a politician who clamored to be a guest on Jepko's "national after-midnight" program so that he could share his agenda with a national audience.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ "Home of Colorful Radio," *Wick*, June, 1966, 29.

¹⁷² For more on this ratings strategy see Jim Cox, *Sold on Radio: Advertisers in the Golden Age of Broadcasting*, (Jefferson, NC: Mcfarland and Co., 2008), 43.

¹⁷³ *Wick*, March, 1966, 15.

¹⁷⁴ "Pastor Guest on Jepko Ruidoso Show," *El Paso Herald-Post*, June 23, 1966, C-1.

¹⁷⁵ "As Ever, Sadie," *The Daily Journal*, October 22, 1966, 4.

The NIA hosted the second convention in Salt Lake City, August 1966, but the venue changed to the newly renovated Valley Music Hall, which was proclaimed in the *Wick* as “the finest theater of its kind in the world.”¹⁷⁶ The three-day event was promoted as an opportunity to “meet all your many Nitecap friends from around the country” and the schedule included lunches, dinners, banquets, excursions, NIA meetings, and a live broadcast/evening gala from the music hall.¹⁷⁷ The cost of the second convention doubled in price to \$5.00 [\$37] per attendee; however, that did not stop 3,600 *Nitecap* fans from attending the event.¹⁷⁸

In the fall, Jepko made several changes to the NIA to improve management of the growing audience. He announced two additions, including Frankie Nolan and Louis S. Leatham.¹⁷⁹ *Nitecap* fans were well familiar with Nolan as he frequently helped out with the live events and wrote a monthly column in the *Wick*. He was a regular participant on the radio broadcast, who acted as sidekick of sorts to Jepko. The other addition, Leatham, was named the NIA’s Honorary Trustee.¹⁸⁰ At the time of his appointment, he was serving as the Executive Vice President of the Beehive Bank in Salt Lake City. His banking experience was a boon to the association as he helped alleviate the pressure of managing the financial side of the business. Changes were also made to the *Wick*. The

¹⁷⁶ “Preview: Convention 1966,” *Wick*, May, 1966, 4.

¹⁷⁷ “Preview: Convention 1966,” *Wick*, May, 1966, 4-5.

¹⁷⁸ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 14; *Wick*, May, 1966, 5.

¹⁷⁹ *Wick*, April, 1966, 3.

¹⁸⁰ *Wick*, January, 1966, 2.

magazine added three full-time staff members, including an executive editor, editor, and art director.¹⁸¹ It expanded its page count from 15 to 30 pages and added more space for advertising. The new staff made advertising a priority. Full-page ads promoting KSL, leather craft kits, and Love Life Beauty Products appeared in the magazine.¹⁸² A special insert in the May edition of the magazine promoted Fulton's new Color Camera with a built-in flash, "Now you can take color pictures even in pitch dark without flashbulbs!"¹⁸³ The front and back covers of several editions were covered with advertisements for Nitecap-sponsored products. The magazine was made available for the blind and could be obtained at the Utah State Library.¹⁸⁴

In 1967, Jepko continued with his growth strategy. He unveiled an NIA sponsored program called the "Nitecap Book Club." The club required a paid membership and members had to "agree to buy six (6) more books within the next 12 months."¹⁸⁵ The books were sold at a markup to club members and generated additional income for the show, but the margins were slim. He held rallies in California, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon and South Dakota, the first east of the Rockies.¹⁸⁶ He hosted the

¹⁸¹ "Meet the Gang!" *Wick*, April, 1966, 4.

¹⁸² "Home of Colorful Radio," *Wick*, June, 1966, 17; also Advertisement for Love Life Beauty Products, *Wick*, June, 1966, 30.

¹⁸³ Advertisement for Fulton Color Camera, *Wick*, May, 1966.

¹⁸⁴ *Wick*, May, 1966, 3.

¹⁸⁵ "Introducing the Nitecap Book Club," *Wick*, November, 1967, 15.

¹⁸⁶ "Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 12.

first international rally in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, over a thousand miles from Salt Lake City, on July 17th.¹⁸⁷ Nearly 700 Canadians packed into the Riviera Motor Hotel for “pleasant conversations and exciting, unexpected happenings.”¹⁸⁸ The rally reinforced the program’s international presence, and Jepko claimed that it made history. The overnight show from the rally was simulcast on both KSL and Edmonton’s 50,000 kw station, CFRN 1260-AM. Jepko described this in the *Wick* as the first U.S. radio talk show to ever be broadcast simultaneously from two different countries.¹⁸⁹

A month later, the third Nitecap convention was held on August 3-6th at the new Sheraton Hotel in downtown Portland, Oregon.¹⁹⁰ It was the first time the convention was held outside Salt Lake City. Jepko promised that attendees would be “entertained by the ‘stars’” and that they too would be “treated like celebrities.”¹⁹¹ The *Wick* reported that 4,500 Nitecappers from “Tennessee to California – from Texas to Canada, converged upon Portland, Oregon by car, train, bus and plane.”¹⁹² The convention required significant planning and coordination but the event was well attended. Jepko spent the

¹⁸⁷ Herb Jepko, “Our First Canadian Rally,” *Wick*, September, 1967, 8-9.

¹⁸⁸ Jepko, “Our First Canadian Rally,” 9.

¹⁸⁹ Jepko, “Our First Canadian Rally,” 8; Jepko is mistaken here. There are a number of instances where a show or event was simulcast from both the United States and Canada. For evidence of one occasion see Douglas Gomery, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 107.

¹⁹⁰ “Come to the Third Annual NIA Convention,” *Wick*, May, 1967, 8.

¹⁹¹ “What is an NIA Convention?” *Wick*, July, 1967, 4.

¹⁹² “1967 Convention Nitecap Style,” *Wick*, October, 1967, 20; also, Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 14.

remainder of the year taking a break from travels. He focused more on the nightly show and attending to the growing business.

The growing popularity of the show was a healthy sign, but it came with growing pains. Jepko admonished callers for “abusing their calling privileges” and he publicly rebuked them.¹⁹³ His frustration was a result of callers not obeying specific rules about which lines to call. He had KSL install three additional phone lines to accommodate the increasing volume of nightly calls. He assigned a phone number to four geographic areas: West, Midwest, East, Utah; and a fifth line called Newcomer, which was for those who had not called the show before. He asked callers to call in on their designated lines. However, because of the volume of calls originating from Utah and other regions in the West, many dialing in from other areas were unable to get through. A woman reported that she had waited on hold for three and half hours one night.¹⁹⁴ On another occasion, a female caller exclaimed after her call was taken, “Well, Herb, I’ve been trying to get in for 4 months!”¹⁹⁵ The long waiting period was not just a matter of patience, it was expensive for those calling long-distance. “I’m worried about their phone bills!” Patsy remarked incredulously when she was asked about it.¹⁹⁶ The logjam became so problematic that the telephone company notified Jepko that on a given night, there were

¹⁹³ “Notice: Instructions for Calling into The Nitecap Show,” *Wick*, January, 1966, 2.

¹⁹⁴ “Letters to the editor,” *Wick*, December, 1966, 10.

¹⁹⁵ Broder, “Small-Talk Show,” *New York Times*, 29.

¹⁹⁶ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 10.

as many as 50 calls backed up and waiting to get through.¹⁹⁷ To circumvent the long waits, callers would often call on a line assigned to a different geographical area from the one they were calling from. This irked Jepko. He had to forcefully remind callers to follow proper protocols.¹⁹⁸ He wanted to take calls that originated from more diverse places, and the designated phone lines allowed him to get these callers on more frequently. Those that broke this rule undermined his efforts. When callers did get through some rambled for long periods of time, so Jepko implemented a five-minute call limit. He set a timer and once the call exceeded the allotted five minutes a bell would ring, affectionately called “Tinkerbell,” which signified that it was time for the conversation to wrap and to move on to the next caller.¹⁹⁹

Nitecap's popularity drew criticism even among loyal fans. A small contingent of dissenting voices was critical of his handling of the show and the NIA. Jepko realized that trying to please all of his listeners was an impossible task. A writer, who chose not use their full name, expressed a number of complaints that she and fellow listeners had with the program: too many guests, too many dignitaries, too much live music, too many calls from “pet” callers, too little engaging callers, and too many commercials. She appealed to Jepko to “go back to running the show the way he started it.”²⁰⁰ Other

¹⁹⁷ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 2.

¹⁹⁸ “Notice,” *Wick*, January, 1966, 2.

¹⁹⁹ Bennett, “Who is Herb Jepko,” Joseph Buchman Collection; “Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 3.

²⁰⁰ “Letters to the Editor,” *Wick*, September, 1966, 7.

listeners had issues with the *Wick* content. It contained typos, lacked good content and at least one critic thought it was too childish.²⁰¹ Some wanted more photos of actual *Nitecap* people, not just dignitaries. J. Arthur of Tooele, Utah acknowledged these difficulties when he wrote to Jepko, “your job, Herb, is somewhat like a mother’s. It is a pretty difficult task trying to please everyone. Like a little piece of elastic, you have to stretch in all ways and make the best of it.”²⁰² Jepko faced an even greater problem with the *Wick*. The additional page count increased the cost of publication, and the minimal subscription fee of \$4 was insufficient to offset the cost of its production. This resulted in a financial crisis for the magazine. The money it produced was inadequate to sustain the publication. In front of thousands of NIA attendees, he “informed the people present that the circulation of the *Wick* was not sufficient to continue to produce a quality publication and that their cooperation was needed urgently.”²⁰³ His plea rallied those in attendance and soon thereafter “things began to happen.”²⁰⁴ New subscriptions were ordered. Many were gifted to friends or colleagues; others were purchased for the waiting rooms of doctor and dentist offices.²⁰⁵ The increased subscriptions helped meet the immediate needs of the magazine, but its long-term finances became a constant issue for Jepko.

²⁰¹ “Letters to the Editor,” *Wick*, October, 1966, 3.

²⁰² “We Get Letters,” *Wick*, June, 1968, 15.

²⁰³ “Letter from the Publisher,” *Wick*, October, 1966, 1.

²⁰⁴ “Letter to the Publisher,” 1.

²⁰⁵ “Letter to the Publisher,” 1.

Overall, Jepko was pleased with the first three years of the show. His listenership was burgeoning. Membership in the NIA was growing, the rallies and conventions were well attended. Looming on the horizon, however, was a shifting media landscape that concerned the host and threatened the viability of the show. Jepko was well aware that the program was overly dependent on KSL's signal. And if the station's management decided to cancel his contract, he would lose everything he'd built. To protect his interests, he had to find a way to create independence.

Chapter 5

1968-1975: Building an Empire

Four years after *Nitecap* began, the radio show was nearing a million nightly listeners.¹ As many as 50 callers a night from locations around the world called in to share their lives with an international radio audience. It was remarkable that Jepko, the host of this band of insomniacs and shut-ins, recalled the names of many callers. He frequently identified people by the sound of their voice.² His name had become familiar to American audiences. He was described as a national celebrity and many who worked in radio were awestruck by him.³ Fans lined up outside the local studios in the early morning hours to steal a glimpse or seek an autograph as he exited the station. “He was a rock star,” said Danny Kramer, who worked at KSL.⁴

The show’s popularity provided it a measure of security from cancellation, which was a constant threat in the transient nature of radio programming. Radio executives often canceled or shuffled programs with little explanation or rationale. Jepko knew the volatile nature of radio and was keenly aware that whatever security he enjoyed at KSL

¹ “Insomniac Oriented Broadcast Will Publicize San Bernardino,” *The San Bernardino County Star*, November 4, 1968, B-1.

² James and Buchman, *The Rollye James Show*, digital recording, February 10, 2004, Joseph Buchman.

³ Bruce Christensen, email with the author, January 19, 2016, transcript in the possession of the author; Danny Kramer, interview by Miles Romney, October 1, 2015, digital recording of the interview in possession of the author.

⁴ Danny Kramer, oral history by author, October 1, 2015.

could be gone in an instant. It was late 1967 when KSL unexpectedly decided to reduce the number of hours it was selling to him. This caught him somewhat by surprise. He became insecure and he set out to reduce his dependence on the station. He set in motion a plan for his own network, which if successful, could provide security and an opportunity to boost his nightly audience to greater heights.

Nitecap Loses Airtime

By the winter of 1968, the *Nitecap* program was no longer broadcasting from midnight to 6:00 a.m. KSL management reduced Jepko's overnight timeslot to better serve its rural listeners who relied on the station for weather and farm reports.⁵ Station executives added a half-hour of farm and weather in the morning from 5:30 a.m. to 6:00 a.m., which cut *Nitecap* by a half-hour.⁶ Jepko grew even more alarmed when a short time later they cut an additional half-hour. The show now ended at 5:00 a.m. instead of 6:00 a.m.⁷ He lost a full hour of programming and this cut into his advertising revenue. Each hour contained up to eighteen 60-second commercial breaks and without that advertising space, his potential revenue decreased substantially.⁸ The cutbacks signified

⁵ "Agricultural Program Policies," in Heber Grant Wolsey, "The History of Radio Station KSL from 1922 to Television" (PhD diss., Michigan State University of Agriculture and Applied Science, Department of Speech, 1967), 289; also Rogers, "The History of Clear Channel," Tim Larson Papers, 39; Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 11.

⁶ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 11.

⁷ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 11.

⁸ Jepko lost as much as 18 minutes of commercial airtime. In the 1960s, the National Association of Broadcasters code recommend a limit of 18 minutes of commercials per hour. See "The Television Code of the National Association of Broadcasters," March, 1959; also Christopher H. Sterling and Cary O'Dell, and Michael C. Keith "The Concise Encyclopedia of American Radio," (New York: Routledge, 2010), 171.

that his show was at the mercy of KSL. Jepko said that, “at that particular point I began to feel . . . maybe one day KSL would feel they wouldn’t need me, that they would want to change...so in order to continue on, we would need another source or outlet.”⁹

Searching for a new outlet, Jepko ironically found inspiration in the leadership of the very organization that was causing him consternation. Arch Madsen was in the process of reforming KSL and growing LDS media holdings into a global media organization. With the approval of corporate LDS leadership, Madsen created the Bonneville International Corporation (BIC) with KSL-AM-FM-TV at the centerpiece.¹⁰ The BIC was launched in June 1963 and Madsen was appointed as its first president and chief executive officer. His agenda included the aggressive acquisition of stations as they became available across the country. In 1964, Madsen acquired WRUL, an international shortwave station in New York City, and then KIRO 710-AM-FM-TV, a joint radio and television station in Seattle, Washington.¹¹ BIC paid \$7.2 million [\$56 million] for KIRO, a hefty sum for the church-run media organization.¹² He justified the expansion with the rationale that by owning and operating media entities the LDS church could “serve the public interest of the communities in which they are licensed, and exert a

⁹ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 11.

¹⁰ “History of Bonneville International,” Tim Larson Papers, 2.

¹¹ “Radio, TV Merger by the Church,” *Deseret News*, September 5, 1964, B3.

¹² Madsen oral history interview by Larson, 1988, 152.

positive influence in the broadcasting community.”¹³ The goals of BIC aligned with Jepko’s for his own *Nitecap* program: provide enlightened programming, promote community service, develop station personnel, and earn a reasonable profit.¹⁴ Speaking to the body of the church during a nationwide broadcast Madsen said, “God in His wisdom has given us television and radio to assist Him in His great purposes.”¹⁵ Madsen envisioned BIC as becoming a worldwide leader in mass communication and BIC continued to purchase stations throughout the 1960s. WRFM 105.1-FM in New York was acquired in 1966; followed by KMBR-FM and KMBZ 980-AM in Kansas City, Missouri in 1967; KBIG 104.3-FM and KBRT-AM in Los Angeles, California in 1968, and a controlling stake in WCLR 101.9-FM in Chicago, Illinois in 1970.¹⁶ Under Madsen’s leadership, BIC grew beyond station ownership to include a Washington News Bureau and a consulting firm. It bought a book and record album company that produced full-length motion pictures, a music syndication service, a national advertising firm, and a

¹³ History of Bonneville International,” Tim Larson Papers, 2.

¹⁴ Arch Madsen, “New Horizons in Effective Communications,” address delivered before the Brigham Young University Student Body, February 20, 1963 (Provo, Utah: BYU University Department of Extension Publications, 1963), 6.

¹⁵ Arch L. Madsen, Conference Report, October, 1966, 91-97, accessed at <http://scriptures.byu.edu/gettalk.php?ID=1474>.

¹⁶ “An Outline History of the Broadcasting in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” box 2, folder11, Donald G. Godfrey Papers, 1924-2013, University of Utah Special Collections and Archives, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, UT; Fred Esplin, “The Church as Broadcaster,” *Dialogue*, 1977, 42; Madsen, oral history interview by Larson, 1988, 152-154. During between 1964 and 1977, the church also invested and divested of stock in KID-FM, Idaho Falls, KBOI-FM, Boise, and its shortwave station WNYW, New York City.

data systems center.¹⁷ At one point, 20 different enterprises operated under the BIC umbrella. The corporation had a presence in the country's biggest media markets including Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, Seattle, San Francisco, and Dallas.¹⁸ BIC's total assets were valued at \$50 million [\$380 million] but some argued that that figure only represented their book value and that the true market value of the corporation was significantly more.¹⁹

Madsen aggressively fought for his vision to expand the corporation's holdings and Jepko, who saw him as a friend and mentor, was heavily influenced by Madsen's zeal. Jepko witnessed the organization evolve from a single station into a major conglomerate, and it affected the way he thought about his own company and how it could grow with BIC. He became fixated on making *Nitecap* the most popular nationwide radio program in the country and he began generating ideas about how to make it happen. He knew that any plan he contrived would need to include a way to reduce his program's dependency on KSL. *Nitecap* was beholden to the whims of station management, and to a certain extent, handicapped by the limitations of KSL. While the signal was immensely powerful at night, and extended to areas far beyond the Intermountain West, there were pockets of the country that could not reliably pick up the signal. Nighttime atmospheric conditions often affected the quality of the signal as it boomed across the country. A number of *Nitecap* listeners wrote to Jepko complaining

¹⁷ "History of Bonneville International," Tim Larson Papers, 4.

¹⁸ "History of Bonneville International," Tim Larson Papers, 5.

¹⁹ Esplin, "The Church as Broadcaster," *Dialogue*, 28-29.

that the signal was suffering from interference, which caused them to be unable to reliably tune into the program each night.²⁰ “Listeners from Oklahoma, Arizona and Texas wrote about interference from other stations and static cause by ever changing atmospheric conductions. KSL’s early clear channel status was advantageous, but as *Nitcap*’s popularity grew, the limits of the clear channel frequencies were becoming a challenge.”²¹ Jepko and his team at the NIA needed to find a solution to this problem. If the challenge was to become the largest radio show in the country, it would need to provide reliable and consistent coverage to listeners.

By January 1968, Jepko had a resolution. It was daring and unconventional. And it would certainly test his abilities as a businessman. He decided to create his own independent radio network, called the Nitecap Radio Network (NCRN). By operating his own network, Jepko could limit his show’s reliance on KSL and listeners could dial in local affiliates. Radio networks were common in 1968, but were expensive to maintain and logistically complex.²² Most were owned and operated by the corporate commercial radio broadcasters like NBC, CBS, and ABC. A fourth network, Mutual Broadcasting System, operated outside the traditional broadcasting power structure, but was just as big,

²⁰ “Herbie’s Mailbag,” *Wick*, January, 1968, 15.

²¹ Allie Chaffin, “Letters to the Editor,” *Wick*, June, 1968, 15; Geo Irrine, “Letters to the Editor,” *Wick*, July, 1969, 22; “Letters to the Editor,” *Wick*, October, 1969, 21.

²² Sterling and Kittross, “*Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting*,” 172-175; also, Cox, *Say Goodnight Gracie: The Last Years of Network Radio*, 151-181; Cox, *American Radio Network*, 3-16.

and at various points in its history, was the largest radio network in the country.²³ The network system was designed to distribute content to stations that signed an agreement with the network. Individual stations became known as network affiliates. Radio networks produced programming that was broadcast live by the affiliates or in some cases, aired on a delayed basis.²⁴ The networks made money by providing programming to affiliated stations and sharing commercial time. The program was free to the local stations with the networks taking the majority of commercial airtime. Commercial airtime was sold to advertisers using time/revenue sharing agreements. By the late 1960s, most local radio stations were affiliated with one of the four major networks, CBS, NBC, ABC, and Mutual Broadcasting System. Network agreements did not prevent affiliates from developing and broadcasting their own original content, as was the case with KSL's airing of *Nitecap*.

The idea of creating an independent radio network was unfathomable to most local radio executives. The logistics and management would be expensive and time consuming. Most local radio programming executives focused their efforts on their regional audiences and had little desire or need to create an extended network. But Jepko was operating under a different premise. He was an independent voice and not employed, in the traditional sense, by a singular radio station. His show already had a

²³ Sterling and Kittross, "*Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting*," 356; also Cox, *American Radio Network*, 178; also see 127-128 for figures on the major networks.

²⁴ For more on the history network radio see Jim Cox, *Say Goodnight, Gracie: The Last Years of Network Radio*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2002), 17.

large regional and national following and he wanted to build on that growth. He saw the creation of an independent network as the best way to accomplish his goals.

Unfortunately, Jepko's prior industry experience had taught him nothing about undertaking such a unique challenge. In fact, there was not another radio executive in the country who had expertise in creating an independent nationwide network from rural America. Jepko was in uncharted territory, but would soon lay the foundations for talk radio of the future.

Nitecap Radio Network

The NCRN operated similarly to the national network model, albeit on a much smaller scale. Jepko recruited and signed stations to broadcast his overnight show. NCRN stations could still be affiliated with one of the other major national networks during the day, but broadcast *Nitecap* at night under the NCRN agreement. He saw the network as an improved way to distribute his talk radio show on a national level. To join the NCRN, stations agreed to sell Jepko the overnight time period, from midnight to 6:00 a.m. for a monthly fee. He retained full editorial control and NCRN kept all the revenue sold during the time period. It was the same basic agreement he had originally with KSL. The traditional national networks did not offer any overnight programming, and aside from a smattering of small, regional all-night shows, Jepko faced little competition for the overnight time slot. The night belonged to *Nitecap*.

The plan initially necessitated that he use KSL as the NCRN flagship station. *Nitecap* was to be transmitted to NCRN affiliates via telephone lines. He approached KSL management for their approval and explained that as the NCRN's flagship station, the KSL name and brand would be heavily promoted. They cautiously agreed as long as

certain conditions were met. The station had been under scrutiny by FCC Chairman Nicholas Johnson who protested the proliferation of media empires that were assimilating at the time. BIC's rapid expansion into other markets had drawn his ire.²⁵ KSL was warned to tread lightly and make sure that the NCRN would not exacerbate the tension. KSL's conditions were presented to Jepko in a series of meetings that occurred between December 1967 and January 1968. General Manager Joe Kjar and Program Director Dan Klause, represented KSL at the meetings.²⁶ First, Kjar's chief concern was that the network not negatively impact the daily operation of KSL or conflict with the station's core values. Second, KSL prohibited advertisements for wine or liquors to be broadcast over their air.²⁷ Jepko knew this and was already in compliance; however, Kjar warned that affiliates might pressure the network to broadcast such advertisements.²⁸ Third, he wanted affiliates to send in their operational logs to KSL to assure compliance. The logs did not have to be from every night, and could be randomly selected, but they did need to come from the overnight hours when *Nitecap* was broadcast. This also confirmed that the advertising KSL bought from Jepko was actually broadcast by the affiliates.²⁹ This

²⁵ Nicholas Johnson, "The Media Barons and the Public Interest: An FCC Commissioner's Warning," *The Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1968, 43-51; See "Wharton-Hale vs KSL," in Donald G. Godfrey Papers, box 2, file 12-13, University of Utah Special Collections and Archives, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

²⁶ "Transcript of the December 1967 KSL Management Meeting," 1-35, Joseph Buchman Collection, Alpine, UT.

²⁷ "KSL Commercial Standards," in Wolsey, "The History of Radio Station KSL from 1922 to Television," 298-299, Michigan State University.

²⁸ "Transcript of the December 1967 KSL Management Meeting," 2, Joseph Buchman Collection.

²⁹ "Transcript of the December 1967 KSL Management Meeting," 3, Joseph Buchman Collection.

offered a protection for Jepko as well. With KSL monitoring the logs, they could ensure that the affiliates were treating the *Nitecap* show fairly and meeting contractual obligations.³⁰ KSL asked that before Jepko signed a new affiliate that it be cleared by KSL station executives. They were concerned about possible legal issues that could arise by broadcasting a show between union and non-union markets. KSL was a non-union market and if a network in a union market signed with the NCRN these issues would have to be addressed and the affiliated station be properly compensated according to the union's specifications. Fourth, KSL required that programming originating from an affiliate must be transmitted to KSL on either the same quality of broadcast line or one of superior quality.³¹ Finally, Kjar recommended that Jepko refrain from signing affiliates to a 52-week term; instead, he advised a shorter length – between 30 days and 6 months. Kjar warned that the young network “could really get hooked” by the longer contracts. Poor performing affiliates could become a financial drain on the NCRN's resources.³² Kjar recommended writing the contract to provide an “escape [clause] so that if “there was a “financial debacle . . . you can get out of it.”³³

³⁰ “Transcript of the December 1967 KSL Management Meeting,” 4, Joseph Buchman Collection.

³¹ “Transcript of the December 1967 KSL Management Meeting,” 13, Joseph Buchman Collection.

³² “Transcript of the December 1967 KSL Management Meeting,” 7, Joseph Buchman Collection.

³³ “Transcript of the December 1967 KSL Management Meeting,” 6, Joseph Buchman Collection.

Personally, Kjar was concerned about how Jepko could handle the increased load of broadcasting the show in different time zones. A tape delay was not possible. The time difference meant that Jepko had to broadcast for several more hours each night to meet his agreements with affiliates. Kjar questioned Jepko and his NIA staff, asking if they were prepared for the added responsibility and workload. His long overnight shows had already become hard on Jepko's health. How would he respond to longer shifts? Kjar had one other piece of unsolicited advice. He suggested that the organization no longer host rallies at Las Vegas casinos. He believed that Las Vegas' reputation could only hurt the program and turn away advertisers who did not want to be associated with the city.³⁴

Kjar's questions put Jepko's staff on the defensive and the meeting turned tense at times. In the end, the two parties agreed to the conditions and a contract was signed. It now would take considerable amount of work to get the NCRN operational. It required planning and legal work. The planning sessions reduced Jepko's normal daytime sleeping and it affected his emotional health. He suffered several emotional "breakdowns" in the ensuing months.³⁵ Both Kjar and Madsen spent hours reassuring Jepko and trying to "ease his insecurities." They pleaded with him to take some "time off

³⁴ "Transcript of the December 1967 KSL Management Meeting," 3, Joseph Buchman Collection.

³⁵ "Transcript of the December 1967 KSL Management Meeting," 26, Joseph Buchman Collection.

for a weekend with his wife.”³⁶ Jepko refused to leave when he was so close to unveiling the NCRN.

The contact with KSL was finalized by mid-January 1968 and Jepko went public with the NCRN. He had an agreement with KXIV in Phoenix as the first affiliate. He excitedly announced to his audience, “it is our pleasure to welcome KXIV 1400-AM of Phoenix, Arizona to the NCRN.”³⁷ Jepko explained to Phoenix area residents that by tuning into the station, Monday through Saturday morning, they would “hear the program uninterrupted and without interference every night.”³⁸ He reminded listeners that the show still originated in Salt Lake City and to not call the KXIV studios to get access to the program; instead, they were to call one of the KSL phone lines.³⁹ KXIV’s affiliation gave *Nitecap* a strong footprint in the Phoenix area and provided residents the option to tune into a local station to hear the show. Additionally, he hoped to attract new late night listeners who were unaware that they could pick up KSL’s signal.

A month later, in February 1968, Jepko offered more news of expansion. He was franchising the *Nitecap* show for East Coast listeners.⁴⁰ An East Coast version of *Nitecap* would be simultaneously broadcast on WRFM 105.1-FM in New York City and Gordon

³⁶ “Transcript of the December 1967 KSL Management Meeting,” 30, Joseph Buchman Collection.

³⁷ “Telephone Talkathon Heading for Phoenix,” *Arizona Republic*, November 3, 1967, 90; also “Welcome to the Nitecap Radio Network,” *Wick*, January, 1968, 15.

³⁸ “Welcome to the Nitecap Radio Network,” *Wick*, January, 1968, 15.

³⁹ “Welcome,” *Wick*, January, 1968, 15.

⁴⁰ “Introducing Our Man in New York,” *Wick*, February 1968, 11.

Owen, a longtime radio personality, who had worked with Jepko at KSL, would serve as host.⁴¹ WRFM was the second of the BIC stations to join NCRN. The show was called *Nitecap with Gordon Owen*.⁴² The front cover of the February issue of the *Wick* featured a nighttime skyline of New York City to promote the new show. Owen's would host a version of the *Nitecap* show on WRFM in New York City from midnight to 6:00 a.m. and would target listeners on the Eastern seaboard. The *Wick* reported that WRFM's transmitter provided "very good coverage to the New York area, due to the fact that it is located atop the Empire State Building."⁴³ Jepko's own show remained on KSL and targeted West Coast and Midwestern audiences, while KXIV was available for Southwestern listeners. Both shows broadcast from midnight to 5:00 a.m. and would actually overlap for about three to four hours each night because of the time difference. Owen's East Coast version was facilitated by BIC's purchase of WRFM two years earlier. WRFM's management, under the direction of Madsen, sought to move the station towards 24-hour programming and the *Nitecap* partnership was an easy fit for both.⁴⁴ While the two shows were to be broadcast at the same time, each was broadcast independent of one another. However, Jepko wanted some synergy between the two programs. Each night the two hosts were to share "portions taped from each show to be

⁴¹ "Welcome WRFM In New York City: The Nitecap Show Expands Again," *Wick*, February 1968, 10.

⁴² "Introducing Our Man" *Wick*, February 1968, 11.

⁴³ "Welcome WRFM In New York City: The Nitecap Show Expands Again," *Wick*, February 1968, 10.

⁴⁴ Madsen, oral history interview by Larson, 1988, 152-154.

played” on the other program so that “we may become bigger and better.”⁴⁵ Jepko planned to do some live “linking,” as he described it, between the shows and even visit New York in March to be a guest on the Owen-hosted show.⁴⁶ The launch of the New York show was scheduled for February 11, 1968, which coincided with the four-year anniversary of *Nitecap*.

Owen reported that the first several weeks “lived up to our greatest expectations.”⁴⁷ A KSL newsletter states, “Herb Jepko reports that the New York arm of the *Nitecap with Gordon Owen* got off to a running start.”⁴⁸ Unlike the first week of the KSL program, the New York launch was “completely filled with telephone calls from all over the country.”⁴⁹ Owen shared an exchange that occurred on the show that exemplified the high level of engagement of East Coast Nitecappers. A man who ran a newsstand called the show during the first week to ask Owen if he would “talk to a soldier who was three days AWOL, to see if he could be convinced to go back to his base.”⁵⁰ Owen spoke with the young man on the air and after it ended, listeners who had similar experiences in the military, including a longtime Navy veteran, called in to offer

⁴⁵ “Welcome WRFM,” *Wick*, February, 1968, 10.

⁴⁶ “Welcome WRFM,” 10.

⁴⁷ “Our Man in New York,” *Wick*, April, 1986, 5.

⁴⁸ “KSL Newsletter,” March 1968, Vol. II, No. 3, box 25, folder 7, Tim Larson Papers, Accn. 990, University of Utah Special Collections and Archives, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁴⁹ “Our Man” *Wick*, April 1986, 5.

⁵⁰ “Our Man” *Wick*, April 1986, 5.

support. Another caller asked for the telephone number of the young man so that he could personally talk with him. Owen reported “about a half-hour later, the soldier called to say the advice from Nitecaps had influenced him to return to his base in Georgia. He left the following morning.”⁵¹ Jepko was pleased with the level of engagement demonstrated by the East Coast audience and it assured him that the risk of creating the East Coast show was paying dividends. The addition of WRFM to the NCRN increased its affiliate numbers to three stations: WRFM, KXIV, and KSL. Jepko saw this growth to the network as just the beginning. He envisioned a nationwide network of radio stations strung from coast-to-coast, providing extended coverage of *Nitecap*.⁵² Securing WRFM in New York was an important first step towards accomplishing that objective.

During the spring months of 1968, Jepko continued focusing on network development. He wanted to “add other stations between Utah and New York, in order to give the center section of the United States better and more ideal results in reception.”⁵³ At the same time, he sought a station that could “cover the metropolitan areas of the West Coast, primarily San Francisco and Los Angeles, and do away with the interference they are now experiencing.”⁵⁴ A number of *Nitecap* fans who lived in Southern California had expressed frustration that sometimes the KSL signal was difficult to tune in because of

⁵¹ “Our Man” *Wick*, April 1986, 5.

⁵² “Welcome WRFM,” 10.

⁵³ “Welcome WRFM,” 10.

⁵⁴ “Welcome WRFM,” 10.

the congested California airwaves.⁵⁵ Signal interference was a major concern and he wanted to ensure that such a large metropolitan area could pick up the signal with little overlapping interference. Addressing the problem in May, he added KBIG 104.3-FM - “Southern California’s most powerful FM station” and the third BIC owned station to the network.⁵⁶ The station, which chose the call letters BIG as a nod to its first disc jockey Carl “Mr. Big” Baily, broadcast from a transmitter on Catalina Island and while the signal did not provide extensive range, it offered a reliable signal to the millions of residents in the Southern California market and secured the West Coast anchor Jepko desperately wanted. KBIG was well known by Southern California residents and *Nitecap* was easily found on the dial. The signal extended into Mexico where a number of Americans vacationed and some retired.⁵⁷ As with WRFM, Jepko’s relationship with Madsen and the BIC had helped get the deal with KBIG approved. BIC acquired the station on May 1, 1968, and shortly thereafter, BIC executives agreed to broadcast the overnight show on KBIG’s airwaves.⁵⁸

Jepko’s creation of an independent nationwide radio network is historically significant. In the space of a few months the NCRN grew to include affiliates in large metropolitan areas on both coasts and an affiliate in the growing Southwest city of Phoenix. Jepko’s vision and tenacious work was the driving force behind NCRN’s

⁵⁵ “Welcome KBIG-FM,” *Wick*, 1968, 4.

⁵⁶ Don Page, “KMPC has Old Verve,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 24, 1968, D54.

⁵⁷ “Welcome KBIG-FM,” 4.

⁵⁸ Madsen, oral history interview by Larson, 1988, 152-154.

success and he benefited immensely from his relationship with Madsen and BIC. The signing of WRFM and KBIG was a direct result of this association. Thus, NCRN became the first independent talk radio network of its kind.⁵⁹

The execution of an independent radio network was more than just bold, it was expensive to maintain. Jepko had to pay monthly fees to the stations for the overnight time period and the phone line costs of transmitting the show to the affiliates. Satellite transmission technology was in its infancy and unavailable. Instead, the show was carried from KSL to the affiliates via telephone lines. This was at considerable cost. The new financial obligations put more pressure on the business to produce revenue. Jepko responded by creating a sales division of the NIA that he called Pacific Ad Arts, Inc.⁶⁰ Marshall Small, a former colleague of Jepko's at KSL, was hired to manage the new sales division. It was Marshall who had first hired Jepko at KSL and the two had a good working relationship. Small said that his decision to head the sales staff was based entirely on the amount of money he was offered. He recalled that the sum was, "twice the amount of bread [money] I was making. So I did that."⁶¹ The increased sales staff necessitated more space and the NIA moved the headquarters to a larger, but more expensive rental facility at 421 South 5th East in Salt Lake City.⁶² This represented

⁵⁹ Cox, *Say Goodnight, Gracie*, 174; Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

⁶⁰ *Wick*, May, 1968, 5.

⁶¹ Small, oral history by Larson, 1988, 62-64.

⁶² *Wick*, January, 1968, 2.

significant progress from “the first NIA office located in one room of the Jepko home.”⁶³ The company wanted the larger space to accommodate the additional staff, which now included 13 fulltime and four part-time employees. And with more fans dropping by unannounced, Jepko wanted a meeting place to host these visitors. He often told listeners that if they were passing through Salt Lake City to come by for a cup of cinnamon tea.⁶⁴ The company was operating on a thin margin financially. The cost of the network, the additional sales staff, and the move to the new building added financial demands that, if not met, could spell financial ruin for the organization. His ambition would either lead to great success or bankrupt him.

Nitecap Radio Network Unravels

Tragically, Jepko’s coast-to-coast network was short-lived. In June 1968, executives at WRFM decided to change the station’s format to an all-music line-up. The *Nitecap Show with Gordon Owen* was dropped. Jepko issued a statement to his listeners that explained the news. He lamented the loss but expressed a “firm desire” to secure another station on the East Coast that would provide better reception.⁶⁵ Jepko was discouraged, but he understood radio networks operated in a state of constant expansion and subtraction as new affiliates joined and others left. The NCRN would be no different. The loss reduced *Nitecap’s* total audience, made listening to the show more difficult for East Coast audiences, and shrunk the advertising potential that a New York-

⁶³ Ruth Conti, “In a Few Words,” *Wick*, March, 1968, 3.

⁶⁴ *Wick*, January, 1968, 2.

⁶⁵ Herb Jepko, “In a Few Words,” *Wick*, June, 1968, 3.

based radio station offered. Yet, Jepko remained committed and eagerly sought another East Coast partner.

Over the summer months of 1968, Jepko experimented with new ways to make money from the 100,000 registered NIA members. He secured a deal with a Utah-based insurance agent named Cal Horence to create the “Motor Club for Nitecaps.”⁶⁶ The plan was touted as “the best coverage for the least amount of money.”⁶⁷ Membership in the club garnered free attorney fees in case of an accident, a bail bond service, the cost of an ambulance if necessary, and \$20 [\$150] a day towards a hospital stay. To sweeten the deal, those who wrote in for a brochure had the first monthly payment waived. Those who joined were given a free subscription or renewal to the *Wick* for a year.⁶⁸ The NIA began planning a *Nitecap* retreat to the Hawaiian Islands. The event was scheduled to run for 10 days from September 26 through October 5, with a stop on each of the larger four islands. Tickets for the trip had to be purchased through the NIA, which made a small transaction fee on each reservation.⁶⁹

In August, more bad news arrived. The remaining two stations, KXIV in Phoenix and KBIG in Los Angeles, decided not to renew their monthly agreements with the NCRN and the network collapsed. A disappointed Jepko explained to listeners the reason for the withdrawal was a lack of support. In a *Wick* editorial he gently, but poignantly,

⁶⁶ “Introducing...Motor Club for Nitecaps,” *Wick*, July, 1968, 20.

⁶⁷ “Introducing...Motor Club for Nitecaps,” 20.

⁶⁸ “Motor Club,” *Wick*, July, 1968, 20.

⁶⁹ Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

placed the failure for the loss on *Nitecap* listeners. He believed that not enough listeners wrote to the management of the affiliated stations to voice their support of the program.

They were not supported through what the only gauge we can measure a program's acceptance with, and that, of course, is mail response. The mail from each of those stations was not adequate to support our sponsors who make possible the continuance of any program. This would, of course, include our home base of KSL.⁷⁰

Jepko constantly urged his fans to “continue in your support of our programs here at KSL by writing often.”⁷¹ He encouraged listeners to purchase the products of *Nitecap* sponsors. He implored them to “support our sponsors, because they make it possible for us to be with you on the air each night.” He urged them to continue subscribing to the *Wick*.⁷²

The *Nitecap* radio show relied on sponsorships and advertisements to make a profit. When fans did not purchase products offered by sponsors, it strained the partnership between the two. *Nitecap* was even more reliant upon the buying habits of its listeners because of the sales strategy the show employed. Commercial radio stations typically offered two sales strategies to potential advertisers: traditional and per inquiry (PI).⁷³ In the traditional agreement, advertisers paid a fee for the right to promote their

⁷⁰ *Wick*, August, 1968, 1.

⁷¹ *Wick*, August, 1968, 1.

⁷² *Wick*, August, 1968, 1.

⁷³ Barr, oral history by author, April 24, 2015; Stirland, oral history by author, April 8, 2015.

product or service on the radio. Popular shows charged higher advertising rates. *Nitecap*, however, employed the PI strategy in which advertisers paid a smaller upfront fee, but agreed to share with the broadcaster a percentage of the profits that were generated by the audience. Jepko offered this service to his clients because they were often skeptical of the show's non-traditional broadcast time, and the uncertainty of the overnight audience's spending habits. When *Nitecap* listeners wanted to purchase a product or service from one of the program's advertisers, they were usually asked to submit a paper inquiry – typically a postcard or letter – or place a phone call directly to the NIA headquarters. The order was filed at the office and then passed to the advertiser/manufacturer to be fulfilled. On each of these transactions, Jepko took a percentage. This allowed both the advertiser and Jepko the ability to better track the spending power of the audience. When Jepko chided his listeners for not supporting the program's sponsors, it was based on the sales data related to these PI transactions.

Moving from NCRN

The collapse of the NCRN was a bitter disappointment. Jepko's dream of a nationwide network of affiliated stations broadcasting midnight-to-dawn was dashed. But the loss should not have been a complete surprise. While he blamed the audience for not supporting the show with their wallets, in truth, the show did not have the financial capital to support such rapid expansion. Small recalled that shortly after taking the position as the sales director, he visited the affiliates on a sales trip and "they told me how much money [Jepko] owed them, which he didn't tell me. Didn't level with me."⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Small, oral history by Larson, 1988, 67-69.

Small said he returned to Salt Lake City and relayed the feelings of the affiliates to Jepko. During that conversation, Small told him that the show could not afford to continue to pay the stations for their airtime and that something needed to be done to rectify the problem. The company was simply not making enough money to pay the costs of the network and KBIG and KXIV pulled out. “I don’t know if they ever got their money or not,” Small said. “But at any rate it was a no win situation.”⁷⁵ Jepko had simply overextended the business.

While Jepko may have struggled to pay the affiliates, he made sure to meet his financial obligations to KSL. The station was too important to *Nitecaps* to risk damaging that partnership. He had a good relationship with the station, although there was some friction based on Jepko’s personal habits. He smoked cigarettes and drank alcohol, sometimes in the KSL studios during his broadcasts. The Mormon religion spurred these practices and Jepko’s indulgences created some tension between station employees and management who practiced the religion.⁷⁶ Despite these differences, the partnership was in good standing. On one occasion, he was honored in front of Harold B. Lee, the president of the LDS church, as well as two future presidents, Ezra Taft Benson and Gordon B. Hinckley, for his “phenomenal success” and they were “highly complementary” of his work. All sat on the BIC’s highest corporate management

⁷⁵ Small, oral history by Larson, 1988, 67-69.

⁷⁶ Buchman, oral history by the author, July 23, 2015.

committee.⁷⁷ Despite the good feelings that existed between Jepko and KSL management, both were wary of each other. Small reported that when he worked for Jepko, he acted as an informant of sorts for the station and made sure promised payments were delivered. He admitted, “I made sure that they got their money that Herb didn’t put them off. I would do everything I could to make sure they got their money.”⁷⁸ Fortunately, the demise of the NCRN was not a fatal blow to the *Nitecap* radio show itself. Jepko was still broadcasting on KSL. But he was not ready to abandon the idea of the NCRN. He still harbored hopes of a building a second NCRN. The next time he launched his own network he resolved to be more judicious about the stations he brought in and the amount of money he paid for their airtime.

With the NCRN on hold, Jepko focused on other pertinent matters. He had the upcoming October NIA trip to Hawaii that needed his attention and he wanted to address what he felt was unwarranted criticism from fans of the show. He codified the Nitecap Creed as the official mission statement of the NIA. It had been submitted to him unsolicited by a listener named Frank Pester.⁷⁹ He was so pleased with what Pester wrote that he declared it “something that we have needed for a long time.”⁸⁰ In the thousands of letters that arrived at NIA headquarters each week, undoubtedly, some were critical of

⁷⁷ “KSL Incorporated Executive Committee Minutes,” box 25, folder 1, Tim Larson Papers, University of Utah Special Collections and Archives, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

⁷⁸ Small, oral history by Larson, 1988, 67-69.

⁷⁹ *Wick*, September, 1968, 1.

⁸⁰ *Wick*, September, 1968, 1.

the show. Listeners complained about other callers, a topic that was brought up on the show, the amount of advertising on the show, or issues regarding the *Wick*. Jepko was particularly irked when a caller complained over the broadcast. He felt this detracted from the flow of conversation and irritated other listeners. It presented the show in poor light, which he wanted to avoid. Additionally, KSL's studios were "several blocks" away from the NIA office, which meant that getting the complaint addressed would have to wait until he arrived the next day at the office.⁸¹ It was difficult for him to get all the information over the air and sometimes what he did jot down was lost in the shuffle. Jepko continually reminded listeners that if they had issues with the show or other NIA programs, to contact the office and not bring it up during the broadcast. The creed was an attempt to squelch the criticism directed towards him and the NIA, an organization that was ironically instituted to promote friendship. He asked that all *Nitecap* listeners and Nitestand chapters adopt its guidelines. The Creed stated that members not "carp or criticize, but support and encourage" the organization and each other and included a personal pledge to "exalt the good I find in all persons."⁸² The document was published on the first page of the September 1968 issue of the *Wick* as a reminder.⁸³ Letters poured in for its support. Helen Miller of Neligh, Nebraska criticized other listeners, "if one is a

⁸¹ Jacque Nason, "A Word from Jacuqe," *Wick*, March, 1969, 3.

⁸² Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 5; *Wick*, September, 1968, 1.

⁸³ *Wick*, September, 1968, 1.

Nitecap, then he better read the Creed over and over until he learns it by heart, then he should live it.”⁸⁴

The NIA was also experiencing personnel turnover, which was typical in the transient radio industry. In 1968, the company restructured as people left for other job opportunities. The biggest loss was Thomas Little, the *Wick's* first editor and brother of Patsy. He resigned from his post for the “field of business and land management” in Utah and Idaho.⁸⁵ In his stead, Jepko appointed Ruth Conti as the new editor.⁸⁶ She ran the magazine for several months until she left and was replaced by Jacque Nason.⁸⁷ He assigned Dennis Dodd as the new sales manager for the *Wick* and had him fill in as host once a week.⁸⁸ The task of running the company and hosting a nightly show was exhausting and Jepko needed time to catch up on sleep and to attend to business matters. He liked having a fill-in host and continued to employ one throughout remaining history of the show. As 1968 closed, Jepko reflected back on the challenging year. It was full of bitter disappointments, marred by the collapse of the NCRN. He had invested effort into its creation and its initial success was tantalizing, which made its failure difficult to bear. Despite the setbacks, the KSL audience show grew steadily. Membership in the NIA had

⁸⁴ “From The Mailbag,” *Wick*, January, 1969, 22.

⁸⁵ *Wick*, January, 1968, 2.

⁸⁶ *Wick*, January, 1968, 2.

⁸⁷ *Wick*, July, 1968, 3.

⁸⁸ *Wick*, May, 1968, 5.

exceeded the 100,000 mark and *Wick* subscriptions totaled more than 10,000.⁸⁹ His total listenership was estimated to be near one million listeners each night.⁹⁰ It was clear from the thousands of daily letters and the hundreds of calls he fielded each week that *Nitecap* was among the most listened to radio programs in the country.

Nitecaps Abroad

In the early months of 1969, *Nitecap*'s fifth year on air, Jepko published a number of goals for the organization. First, he wanted to double NIA membership to 200,000 by the end of the year.⁹¹ He asked that each member of the NIA "be personally responsible for recruiting just one new member."⁹² He wanted to ignite a type of *Nitecap* evangelism among his community that he hoped would translate to significant gains in membership. Second, he made travel a top priority. He pledged that in 1969 he would "travel more this year than any other" and that he wanted to "feel that we have shaken the hands of Nitecaps everywhere."⁹³ He had not done as much in 1968 because he was preoccupied with NCRN and he missed interacting with his fans. Like a politician stumping on the campaign trail, he saw the rallies and travel events as a way to personally drum up support for the show. "Traveling to rallies," he wrote to listeners, "and going on tours

⁸⁹ Ruth Conti, "In a Few Words," *Wick*, March, 1968, 3.

⁹⁰ "Insomniac Oriented Broadcast Will Publicize San Bernardino," *The San Bernardino County Star*, B-1.

⁹¹ "From the Desk of Herb Jepko," *Wick*, January, 1969, 1.

⁹² "From the Desk of Herb Jepko," 1.

⁹³ "From the Desk of Herb Jepko," *Wick*, November, 1968, 1.

gives us an opportunity to spend time with you and personally, face to face, get to know you.”⁹⁴ Jepko made good on his promise to travel. He held rallies in Las Vegas, Nevada, against KSL’s advice; Carmel Valley, California; Rapid City, North Dakota; and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. His most ambitious plans, however, dealt with NIA-sponsored travel. The previous year, Jepko scheduled a single tour, a trip to Hawaii sponsored by the NIA. It went so well that in 1969 he scheduled five tours, including two trips to Hawaii, one in the spring and a second in the fall; a tour of Canada by railroad; and a three-week trip to Europe. It was by far the most ambitious travel schedule in the program’s five-year history.

The spring tour to Hawaii was unique in that in lieu of flying to and from the islands as they did the prior year, they flew to Hawaii and then sailed home via cruise ship.⁹⁵ The NIA booked the return trip on the S.S. Lurline, of the Matson Steamship Lines, which would be the ship’s final voyage before it was decommissioned.⁹⁶ The first leg of the trip went as expected and included stops on the islands of Oahu, Kauai, Maui, and Hawaii. On the voyage home, Jepko, Patsy, and 150 Nitecappers boarded the Lurline in Honolulu and set a course for the mainland. One night, while the group was having dinner with the ship’s captain and his officers the conversation turned to questions about how his *Nitecap* radio show was broadcast. He explained the process and the captain lamented that it was too bad that show could not be broadcast from aboard the ship.

⁹⁴ “From the Desk of Herb Jepko,” 1.

⁹⁵ “Hawaii...is Waiting for You Nitecaps,” *Wick*, January, 1969, 8.

⁹⁶ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 16.

Intrigued by the possibility, Jepko asked if could speak with the ship's radio operator. "I'll bet there's a possibility," he told the captain.⁹⁷ After consulting with the ship's radioman, the two determined that the technology existed to successful broadcast the show aboard the Lurline. The group gathered in the captain's cabin at his invitation and connected to KSL via radio. Jepko remembered:

Tom Bradshaw was backing me up on the air at KSL while I was gone, and so we talked to his radio operator and he got ahold of the radio telephone people in San Francisco and we put together the line hookup and I was actually talking to people on the ship...we were actually talking to people all over the United States and Canada from midway between Hawaii and the United States.⁹⁸

Word spread about what they had accomplished aboard the Lurline and when he arrived in Salt Lake City, the CBS network reached out and wanted to know how the transmission was possible. "I got our engineers to explain the technical end of it to CBS and they tried it a few times. I don't think they were very successful, but they did it once or twice."⁹⁹ The response from listeners about the ship-to-shore broadcast was overwhelmingly positive. Nell Wilkins, from Colorado Springs, Colorado wrote that "the call from the ship was wonderful" and, in a sentiment felt by many shut-in and homebound listeners, asked that "the highlights of the trip [be published] in the *Wick*. I'll never be able to take this trip only as I get it secondhand from you and I have been

⁹⁷ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 16.

⁹⁸ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 16.

⁹⁹ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 17.

enjoying it all so much.”¹⁰⁰ Jepko enjoyed doing the ship-to-shore broadcasts and it became a feature of other NIA-sponsored cruises. Years later, he chartered a ship to Mexico “and broadcast every night from the ship.”¹⁰¹

In the months after his return from Hawaii, he hosted a rally in Oklahoma City. In April, a *Nitecap* trip to Europe left from Montreal, Quebec, Canada. For 24 days, the Nitecap group traveled across Europe. The tour stopped in England, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and France.¹⁰² Jepko sent his oldest son Randy, along with Frank Nolan, in his place because he was feeling travel fatigue and believed that he could not afford to spend nearly a month away from the show.¹⁰³ In June, he was back on the road, hosting 450 Nitecaps at a rally in Las Vegas and then another rally in Rapid City, South Dakota where fans from 13 states and Canada attended.¹⁰⁴ He spent the last part of the summer in Utah before trips to California and then a return trip to Hawaii in the fall.¹⁰⁵

In between travels, Jepko expanded his insurance offerings to include life insurance.¹⁰⁶ “The Nitecap Companion Plan,” was offered exclusively to *Nitecap*

¹⁰⁰ “From the Mailbag,” *Wick*, May, 1969, 23.

¹⁰¹ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 16.

¹⁰² “1969 European Tour Itinerary,” *Wick*, May, 1969, 9.

¹⁰³ “1969 European Tour,” 9.

¹⁰⁴ “Las Vegas Rally,” *Wick*, July, 1969, 6-7.

¹⁰⁵ “From the Desk of Herb Jepko,” *Wick*, September, 1969, 1.

¹⁰⁶ *Wick*, March, 1969, 32.

listeners. The coverage consisted of two options: one for persons over 65, and another for those under 65. The paid out a \$300 [\$200] special nurse benefit, and an immediate \$1,000 [\$7,000] in the case of death as a result of an accident.¹⁰⁷ An advertisement ran in the *Wick* for several months and encouraged subscribers to “WRITE TODAY, Tomorrow may be too late!”¹⁰⁸ Listeners were asked to mail a personal letter or postcard with their information to the NIA offices.

As his listener base grew to more than a million nightly listeners, his revenue increased as well. By mid 1969, the show was on better financial footing. The company’s fortunes had improved dramatically in the six months from when it struggled to pay NCRN affiliates. The most profitable revenue streams were advertisements featured on the radio show and in the *Wick*. Secondary sources of income came through *Wick* subscriptions, NIA-sponsored programs like the book club, tours, insurance offerings, and the sales of *Nitecap* trinkets such as nightlights, and lapel pins. Jepko was not wealthy, but the show did provide him a comfortable living.¹⁰⁹ He “moved from a terrible old house in an older section of Salt Lake to a more fashionable area.”¹¹⁰ Oddly, he confessed to a reporter that he did not have a savings account.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ *Wick*, March, 1969, 32.

¹⁰⁸ *Wick*, March, 1969, 32.

¹⁰⁹ Brown, “Main Street Mainstay,” *Los Angeles Times*, Q32.

¹¹⁰ Lundstrom, “Midnight to Dawn,” *Deseret News*, W7.

¹¹¹ Lundstrom, “Midnight to Dawn,” *Deseret News*, W7.

Jepko was pleased with his company's financial state, but always on the lookout for ways to increase profits. It was costly to operate his businesses and the hopes he harbored of reviving the NCRN required additional financial commitments. In other words, the show needed to make more money to sustain the growth he desperately wanted. However, expansion created a significant financial challenge. Based on correspondence and the age of fans who attended events, most listeners were shown to be older, less affluent, and did not have the discretionary spending power to invest in many of the NIA products and services. He feared that if he raised costs, many fans would simply close their checkbooks altogether. He believed that his best approach was to increase the number of listeners subscribing to the various services.

The program was starting to reach its limits, as penetration into areas East of the Rocky Mountains was unreliable. KSL's signal offered him incredible reach for a single station, but its location in the Western United States resulted in a heavily influenced Western show, despite Jepko's best efforts to make it feel as national as possible. Fans outside the West complained that the program was "primarily designed for the interest of the listeners in the West."¹¹² The 1969 Nitestand directory illustrates their point. Most Nitestands were operating in Western and Midwestern communities in Arizona, California, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, and Washington. There was very little involvement in the Eastern part of the country and the Midwest was only marginally represented.

¹¹² "From the Desk of Herb Jepko," *Wick*, October, 1969, 1.

Jepko's inability to foster more engagement from Eastern audiences was a result of factors beyond his control. KSL's signal was sporadic during the summer months caused by changing atmospheric conditions. In a 1969 editorial, he lamented to Eastern listeners that in the summer "we don't hear from you quite as often in the mail."¹¹³ He explained that "turbulence in your area, thunderstorms, hurricanes, tornadoes, lightning, just wind, or perhaps atmospheric conditions are such that our signal is not penetrating the area in which you listen."¹¹⁴ He reminded listeners that the *Wick* was still an excellent way to stay connected even when weather conditions made listening infrequent. He encouraged Nitecappers to renew subscriptions to the magazine and to continue correspondence with other community members via the pen pal service.

A Rebirth of NCRN

Jepko grew increasingly concerned about signal interference and the need to increase revenue. In the fall of 1969, he decided to resurrect the NCRN. This time he was determined to be more judicious about which stations he signed. Instead of small or regional stations like he had acquired in the first incarnation of the NCRN, he targeted powerful clear channel stations similar to KSL. He believed that this represented a better return on his investment. Clear channel stations in the Midwest or East Coast, if he could sign them as an affiliate, could provide the same amount of coverage as three or four local AM radio stations. In October, he happily announced to the *Nitecap* community that the NCRN was back and that a deal was reached with KVOO 1170-AM in Tulsa,

¹¹³ "From the Desk of Herb Jepko," *Wick*, September, 1969, 1.

¹¹⁴ "From the Desk of Herb Jepko," 1.

Oklahoma to join the network.¹¹⁵ Midwestern and Southwestern listeners could tune into the show from 12:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m., six nights a week.¹¹⁶ KVOO was a strategic acquisition by Jepko, primarily because it was a 50,000 kw clear channel station. The station's signal did not travel as far as KSL's at night, but it still had a considerable reach. The signal was easily heard throughout the Midwest and it extended into the eastern portion of the country as well as Texas and other parts of the Southwest. In a letter to *Nitecap* listeners, Jepko wrote that KVOO would "offer clearer reception to our listeners in the Midwest" and subsequently extend "national appeal and add considerably to our membership in the Nitecaps International Association."¹¹⁷ He pledged to spend more time on topics that concerned Midwestern audiences and to take more calls from them each night. "We will begin a plan to involve our Midwestern audience to a greater degree by stepping up the number of calls taken on the Midwest-Eastern line each night," he reported.¹¹⁸ The statement reflected Jepko's determination that *Nitecap* remain a national program.

Almost immediately after the show began on KVOO, calls and letters flooded the NIA headquarters from fans praising the affiliation. Fans from across the Midwest,

¹¹⁵ "From the Desk of Herb Jepko," *Wick*, October, 1969, 1.

¹¹⁶ "Editor's Comments," *The Indian Journal*, March 26, 1970, 1; "New Nitestand Group Organized," *The Waco Citizen*, July 29, 1971, 3.

¹¹⁷ "From the Desk of Herb Jepko," *Wick*, October, 1969, 1.

¹¹⁸ "From the Desk of Herb Jepko," 1.

Texas, and even Florida, described the signal as “now coming in loud and clear.”¹¹⁹ The addition of KVOO was a needed boost for the radio show and it had an immediate effect on the program’s tone. Jepko took more calls from people living outside the West and it further cemented the *Nitecap* show as a national talk radio program. A number of Midwestern newspapers featured the show, the *Nitecap* community, and the creation of several new area Nitestands.¹²⁰

The NIA closed 1969 with nearly 200,000 members. Jepko’s goal to double the NIA membership was successfully met. His nightly audience was nearing two million.¹²¹ The NCRN network had two 50,000 kw clear channel stations and was clearly heard in 39 states.¹²² Jepko reported that listener mail increased “30 to 40 percent.” The majority of the increase was credited to the affiliation with KVOO.

In 1970, Jepko promised listeners that he would continue to make additions to the NCRN, “we hope to add still another station to give us maximum coverage throughout the Eastern seaboard as well as the central and Western United States.”¹²³ In February of that year, the show passed its six-year mark. A letter from Madsen published in the

¹¹⁹ William H. Darden, “From the Mailbag,” *Wick*, December, 1969, 20; Sidney Stone, “From the Mailbag,” *Wick*, December, 1969, 20.

¹²⁰ “Nitecap International Group Holds Regional Meeting Sunday,” *Greeley Daily Tribune*, May 27, 1971, 19; also “Editor’s Comments,” *The Indian Journal*, 1; also “Nitestand Group Organized,” *The Waco Citizen*, 3.

¹²¹ “Nitecaps to Attend Carmel Rally,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, October 10, 1969, 4.

¹²² “From the Desk of Herb Jepko,” *Wick*, January, 1970, 1.

¹²³ “From the Desk of Herb Jepko,” 1.

February issue of the *Wick* congratulated Jepko on “six years of successful service to KSL’s vast nighttime audience.”¹²⁴ Madsen singled out the show’s large and growing audience as especially exemplary and as a testament “to the popularity of this program concept, which you so ably pioneered.”¹²⁵ The issue contained an essay from Helen and Karl Little, Patsy’s parents, who praised the *Nitecap* community for their commitment to the show and each other. They wrote that such commitment was evidence “over and over again that there is a need for this type of an organization.”¹²⁶ They called the show a “public service” and one that “had never been introduced before.”¹²⁷ They spoke of the coming years and boldly proclaimed that “what has been accomplished, which is phenomenal, during the past six years is only a prelude to what we can do in the future.”¹²⁸ Their prognosis for a favorable future was correct and the show continued its growth in 1970, aided by the affiliation with KVOO. Jepko’s relationship with KVOO’s management was strong and payments were made each month in full. Lingering in his mind, however, was the loss of the first NCRN and the factors that led to its demise. He was concerned that a lack of listener correspondence would affect his partnership with KVOO as it had with other stations. In April, he addressed his fears with the *Nitecap* community with a reminder to stay engaged.

¹²⁴ *Wick*, February, 1970, 9.

¹²⁵ *Wick*, February, 1970, 9.

¹²⁶ Helen Little and Karl Little, “Reminiscing,” *Wick*, February, 1970, 6.

¹²⁷ Little, “Reminiscing,” 6.

¹²⁸ Little, “Reminiscing,” 6.

Your letters to us during the summer months are most important. This is, perhaps, the most difficult time to measure the strength of the program. So, I ask that you give serious thought to ways and means of assisting the summer growth of our *Nitecap* program.¹²⁹

In July 1970, he implemented a policy that he hoped would spur correspondence. He announced that each Friday night he would field more phone calls from the areas where he received the greatest number of letters that week.¹³⁰ He told listeners that “if your area has not been heard from often enough on the program.... may I suggest a deluge of mail from you and those who could be influenced by you to write.”¹³¹ The campaign worked, despite the complaints of some listeners whose areas had underperformed, and letters poured in throughout the summer months.

Jepko had promised listeners that he would expand the NCRN to include an East Coast affiliate, but he was unable to complete a deal in 1970. His plans were hampered by poor health. He scaled back the number of rallies, but still encouraged listeners to attend as many NIA events as possible.¹³² The year’s travel schedule included stops in Santa Barbara, California; O’Neil, Nebraska; Las Vegas, Nevada; and Tulsa, Oklahoma. He reduced group tours as well. Only two were organized that year, a spring Alaskan cruise and a late summer tour of Scandinavia.¹³³ He found the stress of overseeing all the

¹²⁹ “From the Desk of Herb Jepko,” *Wick*, April, 1970, 1.

¹³⁰ “From the Desk of Herb Jepko,” *Wick*, July, 1970, 1.

¹³¹ “From the Desk of Herb Jepko” *Wick*, January, 1970, 1.

¹³² “From the Desk of Herb Jepko,” *Wick*, May, 1970, 1.

¹³³ “Coming Events,” *Wick*, March, 1970, 9.

travel arrangements increasingly burdensome and it became too much for the NIA office to manage alone. In June 1970, he partnered with a travel agent named Paul Dubois, a Dutch native and a co-owner of a Salt Lake City travel firm.¹³⁴ Dubois' responsibilities included "arranging for all travel accommodations for the Nitecaps, Herb and Patsy, and staff members, and for all NIA rallies and tours - anywhere in the world."¹³⁵ The *Wick* had expanded to 40 pages in September and Dubois was given a column each month in the added space to promote his services and advertise upcoming events.¹³⁶ Eventually, Dubois left his travel business at the behest of Jepko and joined the NIA organization as the full time director of Nitecap International Travel.¹³⁷ In September, Jepko hired Bill Curtis, "an old friend" and former colleague at KCPX, as a fill-in host. Curtis hosted the show at least once a week and filled-in for extended periods of time when Jepko was sick or away traveling.¹³⁸ At the close of 1970, reportedly had more than two million listeners tuned into the *Nitecap* radio program on two 50,000 kw clear channel stations. NIA membership exceeded 200,000 members and the *Wick* had a reported circulation of 17,000.¹³⁹

¹³⁴ "Travel Along with Paul," *Wick*, June, 1970, 28; "Meet Paul Dubois," *Wick*, January-February, 1972, 3.

¹³⁵ "Travel Along with Paul," *Wick*, June, 1970, 28.

¹³⁶ "From the Desk of Herb Jepko," *Wick*, July, 1970, 1.

¹³⁷ "Meet Paul Dubois," *Wick*, January-February, 1972, 3.

¹³⁸ "Meet Bill Curtis," *Wick*, September, 1970, 2.

¹³⁹ "Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation," *Wick*, December, 1970, 18.

Nitecap Growth Stalls

From 1964 through the end of 1970, *Nitecap* had grown from a local Salt Lake City program into a nationwide phenomenon utilizing clear channel technology. It appeared that the show's momentum would continue unabated. However, 1971 was a year of challenges. The explosive growth that had defined the first eight years of the show slowed. New membership in the NIA leveled off, as did subscriptions to the *Wick*. The burst of interest that resulted from the KVOO partnership subsided. The *Wick* especially felt the pinch. The publication had always struggled to be profitable, but the increased subscription fees did little to offset its rising production costs and what money the magazine did generate was spent in support of the show or other NIA programs.¹⁴⁰ Craig Denton, who oversaw the publication in the early 1970s said, "it was hard for me to get resources to put back into the magazine. I always felt that some of the revenue from that went back into the radio network."¹⁴¹ In February, Jepko opened up to his listeners about the financial state of the magazine in a two-page manifesto that he titled "Help Keep the *Wick* Lit."

We realize that most of you do not know that *Wick*, in the five years of its existence, has never made a profit, but has had to be continually subsidized to keep it alive...the *Wick* cannot continue indefinitely with this being the situation...if you wish to continue the *Wick*, and if you want it to grow and prosper, you must help to keep it brightly lit. While it is growing in number of pages, the *Wick* needs more subscribers and advertising to assure its continued success.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ "Statement of Ownership," 18.

¹⁴¹ "Statement of Ownership," 18.

¹⁴² "Help Keep the Wick Lit," *Wick*, February, 1971, 33.

Jepko was resigned that the magazine probably would never be profitable. The easy solution would be to stop publishing, but it still served an important purpose. He called a staff meeting to discuss possible solutions. A few employees suggested reducing the number of pages, which would lower production costs. Jepko felt that this was a step backwards. Another solution was to raise subscriptions fees, but he feared listeners would balk at the cost. He finally decided to publish the magazine every other month. He called the bi-monthly plan “the needle in the haystack that will save the *Wick*.”¹⁴³ Jepko went public with the news. He informed the *Nitecap* audience that the *Wick* would be moving to the new bi-monthly schedule for “an indefinite period of time.”¹⁴⁴ The move reduced the magazine’s production costs and saved the magazine. It never returned to a monthly publication.

In September 1971, after two years of affiliation with KVOO, the partnership unexpectedly ended. Jepko attributed the problem was a lack of mail supporting the program on KVOO.

We want to stress and make sure you are aware of how very important your mail is. In previous issues I have discussed the mail but apparently I haven’t stressed it enough. If we are to get new stations, your mail is the only way we have of showing other stations how much we need them.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ “Notes from Herb,” *Wick*, November-December, 1971, 3.

¹⁴⁴ *Wick*, October, 1971, 2.

¹⁴⁵ *Wick*, September, 1971, 2.

The loss of KVOO was difficult for fans to accept. Many wrote into the show expressing feelings of anger, disappointment, and sadness.¹⁴⁶ One listener wrote with the hope that the community would “heed your warnings” and that “often it takes a shakeup to make one realize how important something is.”¹⁴⁷ Jepko responded by committing even more to the NCRN. The partnership with KVOO had convinced him that the NCRN was the best way to increase his nationwide audience. He earnestly searched for a new affiliate during the remaining months of the year, but could not find a replacement.

As he dealt with the turmoil surrounding NIA membership, KVOO, and the *Wick*, he experienced the personal loss of a friend and his father. His longtime friend and colleague, Bill Curtis, who he hired only a year earlier, suffered a heart attack at his desk at the NIA headquarters and passed away. He left behind a wife, three married daughters, and two sons. Curtis’ death left Jepko and his wife Patsy, “with a keen sense of personal loss.” Jepko said “we will seldom meet a more genuine person than Bill.”¹⁴⁸ In his place, Jepko hired Rex Walgren, another longtime associate who had been a co-worker at KCPX. Then, on November 12, 1971, his father Metro, who had moved to Salt Lake City a few years earlier to be closer to him, passed away at the age of 77.¹⁴⁹ The losses profoundly affected Jepko. He once described his father as a “pillar of responsibility,

¹⁴⁶ “From Herbie’s Mailbag,” *Wick*, October, 1971, 18.

¹⁴⁷ “From Herbie’s Mailbag,” *Wick*, March-April, 1972, 2.

¹⁴⁸ “From the Desk of Herb Jepko,” *Wick*, February, 1971, 2.

¹⁴⁹ Metro Jepko, U.S. Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014, Social Security Administration, [database online] Ancestry.com, Provo, UT.

dependability and strength” who he would go to “so often with little problems, problems that seem to be so little now.”¹⁵⁰ With Metro gone, Jepko became despondent. Yet, he hid his pain from listeners, many of whom had met Metro over the years at various NIA functions. Metro often joined his son on the show or at rallies, and made several appearances in the *Wick*. Jepko made no formal announcement about his father’s passing and there was no tribute to him in the *Wick*, something he had done when other prominent members of the *Nitecap* community passed away. He wanted his mourning kept private and did not want to discuss his grief on national radio. In the remaining months of 1971, Jepko buried himself in his work.

In 1972, Jepko moved through the grief, as the fortunes of the show improved. On June 29th, 1972, he brought back the *Nitecap* convention and held the gathering in Salt Lake City. It signified a return to the show’s roots. He had earlier dropped the convention in favor of tours and rallies, which made the company more money and required less planning. They called the 1972 convention the “Rendez-Vous ‘72” and it was held at the Salt Palace.¹⁵¹ The event was described as the “biggest and best of all Nitecap conventions.”¹⁵² The July-August edition of the *Wick*, dedicated six pages to a recap of the event. The convention was so successful that he decided to bring it back on a four-year cycle.¹⁵³ In the fall of 1972, he entered negotiations with WHAS 840-AM, a

¹⁵⁰ “From the Desk of Herb Jepko,” *Wick*, June, 1969, 2.

¹⁵¹ *Wick*, March-April, 1972, 2.

¹⁵² *Wick*, March-April, 1972, 2.

¹⁵³ Lynne Olson, “Late Night Radio Program Tries to Fight Loneliness,” *The San Bernardino County Sun*, September 13, 1971, A-11.

50,000 kw clear channel station in Louisville, Kentucky, to join as an affiliate of the NCRN. The network had not been operational since KVOO left the previous year. The negotiations with WHAS lasted for several months. Hugh Barr, the general manager of WHAS at the time, recalls that the opportunity to join Jepko's network came at the right time. Barr said the station had become "stodgy" and the executive team was looking to revamp programming.¹⁵⁴ Part of their strategy included the switch to 24-hour programming.

We were signing off, I think, at 1:00 a.m. And I needed something to fill the gap in those wee morning hours. We were pitched by Jepko about doing this overnight show. At that particular time it seemed to fit a need and they were willing economically to make it feasible and that would have been totally new income to me. It was really not a tough decision.¹⁵⁵

The financial arrangement was similar to what Jepko had offered other affiliates. "I hesitate to call it a rental agreement," Barr said. "But that's basically what it was. He leased the time from the radio station for his program." The lease was several thousand dollars a month [\$10-\$15,000], which was a significant amount of money to pay for a time slot that most general managers considered unprofitable.¹⁵⁶ Jepko assumed the costs to produce and transmit the show, but he kept all the advertising revenue the show generated and maintained full editorial control. The offer was attractive because it provided an easy, hassle-free solution for stations like WHAS seeking to expand to 24-

¹⁵⁴ Barr, oral history by author, April 24, 2015.

¹⁵⁵ Barr, oral history by author, April 24, 2015.

¹⁵⁶ Barr, oral history by author, April 24, 2015.

hour programming, but who were wary of committing company resources to research and development.

The two parties reached an agreement and on January 1, 1973, WHAS began broadcasting *Nitecap*. Both sides were pleased with the agreement but Jepko was especially ecstatic.¹⁵⁷ WHAS could be clearly tuned in by many residents in of the heavily populated cities on the East Coast and Jepko believed that between the two clear channel stations the show had better penetration than at any other time in the show's history. In the *Wick*, he wrote that with WHAS in the NCRN fold "the word 'Nitecap' was skimming over every square inch of North America. For the first time in radio history, a non-network radio program could be effectively picked up in every corner of the United States and Canada."¹⁵⁸ He admitted to feeling nervous about the show's debut remembering, "on the morning of our dual station programming...it seemed to me personally as though we were starting anew. Perhaps you noticed a reflection of nervousness and excitement over the air."¹⁵⁹ The time difference between the two cities presented a challenge. Midnight on the East Coast came three hours before it arrived in Salt Lake City, which necessitated that he be at KSL's studios two hours earlier. He worked around the problem by broadcasting the first two hours of *Nitecap* from KSL but aired it exclusively on WHAS. Once the clock hit 2:00 a.m. on the East Coast and midnight in Salt Lake City, Jepko would restart the show and for three hours the two

¹⁵⁷ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 11.

¹⁵⁸ "From Sea to Shining Sea," *Wick*, Buchman Collection, January-February, 1973, 5.

¹⁵⁹ *Wick*, January-February, 1973, 1.

shows overlapped. At 5:00 a.m. on the East Coast the show closed and Jepko broadcast the remaining hours on KSL.¹⁶⁰ Those listeners who lived in the middle of the country, who could pick up both WHAS and KSL, were able to listen to seven hours of programming a night. Jepko expanded *Nitecap* to include Saturday night as well, although a fill-in host often worked this shift.

Jepko anticipated that WHAS would bring in an avalanche of new callers as East Coast listeners discovered the show. He increased the number of incoming phone lines to 20. As always, each region of the country was assigned a line and with WHAS's reach, he assigned lines to new areas of the country such as the New York line, the Florida/Georgia/Alabama line and the Tennessee/North Carolina/South Carolina line. To his delight, he received more mail from listeners in Kentucky, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Iowa, and even the Bahamas.

In 1974, he added several more stations. The first was KIRO 710-AM, in Seattle, Washington, which joined the network on July 4th.¹⁶¹ The 50,000 kw was owned by BIC and managed by Jack Adamson and Lloyd Cooney, both of whom had previously worked at KSL.¹⁶² *Nitecap* had a strong following in the Northwest and the addition of KIRO provided a second option for those listeners. In the final months of 1974, Jepko added Baltimore's WBAL 1100-AM, a fourth 50,000 kw clear channel station for a total of four

¹⁶⁰ Barr, oral history by author, April 24, 2015; also "From Sea to Shining Sea," *Wick*, January-February, 1973, 5.

¹⁶¹ "Mutual All-Night Open for Calls, *Broadcasting*, September 1, 1975, 39, "Welcome KIRO 710 - Seattle, Washington" *Wick*, July-August, 1974, 4.

¹⁶² "Welcome KIRO," 4.

clear channel stations linking across the nation.¹⁶³ The NCRN stations by the close of 1974 were: KIRO, KSL, WBAL, and WHAS.

Patsy's Role Increases

Patsy took on a greater role within the NIA to help manage the growing responsibilities. She had served in various capacities within the NIA previously, and travelled when she could to rallies, but she was also needed at home with their children. By the mid 1970s, the children were older, several had left home or had married, and she now focused more attention on the day-to-day operations of the NIA. Patsy began serving as the NIA Operations Manager and took over as Executive Editor of the *Wick*. Because Jepko was up all night hosting the show, Patsy ran the daytime operations alone. Craig Denton, who worked under Patsy in the 1970s, recalled that it was she, more so than Jepko, who managed the NIA office. "Patsy, in my recollection, was more the business person. She would have been the operations manager. And she ran all the different departments. That was not Herb's forte."¹⁶⁴ Others who worked for the NIA had similar recollections of Patsy. "Because Jepko was sleeping, she was sort of the colonel on the front lines," said Kirk Stirland, a former part-time host and *Wick* editor. "She managed Herb and made sure he got his rest. She was highly involved in the day-to-day of the business."¹⁶⁵ Her personality was congenial but she could be intensely focused. "She was charming, she was efficient. She knew how the business ran. She

¹⁶³ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 12.

¹⁶⁴ Denton, oral history by the author on May 26, 2015.

¹⁶⁵ Stirland, oral history by author, April 8, 2015.

was, I think, an efficient money manager,” Denton recalled.¹⁶⁶ “She was a driver. She was involved and intense. She was driven. Quite a character,” added Stirland.¹⁶⁷

Sometimes her intensity rubbed employees the wrong way. Marshall Small, who worked as the program’s General Sales Manager for a period of time in the late 1960’s, described working for Patsy as “miserable.” He said that “Every time you walked in and got the check it was like you were taking her blood.”¹⁶⁸ Patsy’s passion and drive set the tone for the NIA offices and provided leadership that Jepko could trust when he was not around. In many ways, Jepko’s success was possible because of Patsy’s tireless efforts behind the scenes.

Optimism Abounds

On February 11, 1975, *Nitecap* celebrated its 11th anniversary. The feeling around the NIA office was one of momentum and optimism.¹⁶⁹ The program had moved past the challenges that plagued it in 1971 and 1972. Jepko, too, was in a better place emotionally. He made peace with the loss of father, although he missed him dearly. He was optimistic about the state of the program. *Nitecap* truly felt like a nationwide radio show. The NCRN had affiliates on both coasts (KIRO and WBAL), in the Rocky Mountains (KSL) and in the South (WHAS). The network’s extensive coverage allowed the show to be heard in almost every region of the United States. Jepko estimated that in

¹⁶⁶ Denton, oral history by the author on May 26, 2015.

¹⁶⁷ Stirland, oral history by author, April 8, 2015.

¹⁶⁸ Small, oral history by Larson, 1988, 63.

¹⁶⁹ Denton, oral history by author on May 26, 2015.

his 11 years on air he had logged over 115,000 phone calls from nearly every state and province in North America.¹⁷⁰ The NIA had 150,000 registered members and the *Wick* totaled 15,513 in paid subscribers.¹⁷¹ A reported two million listeners tuned in each night with 20 phone lines offering callers the opportunity to share their lives with a national audience.¹⁷² The regional rallies were attracting anywhere between 500 to 700 attendees and the tours and conventions were well attended. Jepko boasted that the show was responsible for 300 marriages.¹⁷³ The program was surviving financially, although economic struggles were a constant. Encouraged by the state of the NCRN, Jepko became more aggressive about finding new NCRN affiliates and expanding the audience. “Herb and others had such a burning desire to not only extend the signal, but have a degree of legitimization,” said Denton.¹⁷⁴ In 1975, one of the major national networks extended him an opportunity that would forever alter the trajectory of the show. Everything was about to change.

¹⁷⁰ “Ten Years of Brotherhood,” *Wick*, January-February, 1974, 4.

¹⁷¹ *Wick*, November-December, 1974, 46.

¹⁷² “Ten Years of Brotherhood,” *Wick*, January-February, 1974, 4.

¹⁷³ “Ten Years of Brotherhood,” 4.

¹⁷⁴ Denton, oral history by the author on May 26, 2015.

Chapter 6

1975-1983: Zenith of *Nitecap*

In 1975, four clear channel stations broadcast *Nitecap* across the country. Jepko's smooth baritone voice was transmitted thousands of miles and reportedly heard by millions who stayed awake into the early hours of the morning listening to the meandering conversation of other night owls. Among those tuning in were executives of the national radio network, Mutual Broadcast System. *Nitecap* captured the attention the network's newly appointed president, C. Edward Little. Little first heard the show in 1975 on Baltimore's WBAL, that could be heard in large East Coast cities: Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New York City, and Washington D.C., where Mutual was headquartered. Little was overhauling the network's programming offerings in an effort to make it more competitive with the other national radio networks: NBC, CBS, and ABC. Little was intrigued by overnight radio. The time slot offered a niche area of programming that the other major networks avoided and Little believed it was an opportunity where his network could distinguish itself and emerge as an industry leader.

Mutual Broadcast System

Mutual began operations in the summer of 1934 as a cooperative among four stations: WGN in Chicago, Illinois; WOR in Newark, New Jersey; WLW in Cincinnati, Ohio; and WXYZ in Detroit, Michigan.¹ Much of the programming that was shared

¹ Sterling and Kittross, "*Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting*," 157.

over the network came from the four founding stations. This differed from NBC or CBS, which were governed by a central ownership. Over the next two decades, Mutual added more affiliates, including stations in the Northeast and on the West Coast, making it a true nationwide radio network.² By the 1950s, Mutual had almost 600 affiliates, which was the highest number in the country, but the stations tended to be low power with small audiences.³ For those reasons, it trailed NBC and CBS in size and advertising income. The network did provide some quality programming that appealed to its affiliates. It was known for its news division and popular scripted radio drama programs such as *The Green Hornet* and the *Lone Ranger*.⁴ In the 1950s, the network underwent a succession of ownership changes that influenced their business philosophy and the company transitioned to a more traditional network structure with a centralized governing body. By the mid-1970s, Mutual struggled, along with the other national radio networks, as television and other competing forms of media drew the attention of Americans away from radio. Mutual was slower to adapt than its competitors and it became handicapped by revolving ownership and inadequate finances. In 1971, Mutual was looking for a dynamic leader to rehabilitate the network. They turned to C. Edward

² “Historical Note,” Mutual Broadcasting System Records, Collection Number MS2083, Special Research Collection. George Washington University. Hereafter Mutual Broadcasting System Records; also “Mutual All-Night Open for Calls, *Broadcasting*, September 1, 1975, 39.

³ Sterling and Kittross, “*Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting*,” 356; also Cox, *American Radio Network*, 178; also see 127-128 for figures on the major networks.

⁴ “Historical Note,” Mutual Broadcasting System Records, George Washington University.

Little, a former Major League Baseball player turned radio executive, to lead the company's efforts. Little had recently sold his interest in WGMA 1320-AM (now WLQY), a radio station located in Hollywood, Florida when Mutual hired him as the network head. Upon his hiring, Little boldly proclaimed "Mutual is now alive!"⁵ He wanted to offer programming that would "serve the communities in which our affiliated stations operate." He pledged that "Mutual is going to be more aggressive than ever before in getting its share of advertising sales."⁶

Little's new strategy included extending programming to audiences he felt were underserved by the networks. In 1972, he created two sister networks that catered specifically to African-Americans and Hispanics, the *Mutual Black Network* and the *Mutual Hispanic Network*.⁷ Then he turned his attention to the overnight listener. He read a research report that indicated "approximately 41% of Americans over 18 years old listen to radio between the hours of midnight and six am at least once a week."⁸ Little was taken aback by the report's findings. He was surprised that so many people were listening at that late hour, and became intrigued with the revenue potential that 24-

⁵ "C. Edward Little: Out to Boost MBS' Batting Average," *Broadcasting*, February 21, 1972, 63.

⁶ "C. Edward Little: Out to Boost MBS' Batting Average," 63.

⁷ "Historical Note," Mutual Broadcasting System Records, George Washington University; also for a history of the black and networks offered by MBS see Ray Broadus Browne and Pat Browne, "The Guide to United States Popular Culture," (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press, 2001), 97.

⁸ "The Media Report," Vol. II, No. 12, box 12, 1, Ron Nessen Papers, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan; also Kenneth Johannessen, "Mutual Broadcasting System 1972-1977: Coming to Life," accessed at <http://misterk60.com/1970.html>.

hour programming presented. All-night radio programs had grown more popular in highly urbanized areas of the country where people were more likely to be awake. These overnight audiences represented an untapped revenue source and could bring in additional income to the struggling network. Little was uncertain what type of programming to offer. Despite the growth of all-night programming, the number was still small compared to daytime programming and little market research was available to guide this decision. Most all-night programming was not taken seriously by station managers, who often had the night engineer play music records all night. Little was hesitant about a music-driven format because the network wanted to attract a national audience and tastes in music varied greatly by individual and region. He feared that listeners would tune out because they did not care for the genre of music that was played. Stations in large metropolitan markets already offered all night music programming, which meant that Mutual would have to compete with those programs for listeners. A variety show was a possibility, but that required investment in talent, writers, producers, and production. Little wanted to avoid committing network resources and capital to develop programming; instead, he looked for a cheap alternative to overnight programming that could be implemented quickly and could produce revenue.

Nitecap Partners with Mutual

One early morning, Little heard *Nitecap* on WBAL's airwaves and realized it could solve his dilemma.⁹ *Nitecap* already had a large national following, and

⁹ Rollye James, "Mediatrix Market Profile: Baltimore," Vo. 1, Number 10, (Denver, Colorado: Mediatrix, 1989), 130.

production costs would be minimal. His interest was bolstered by an article in the *New York Times* titled “Small-talk Show is Big Draw in Wee Hours,” which painted Jepko’s show as an all-night party line and highlighted the millions of late night listeners and the tens of thousands of loyal NIA members invested in the program’s success.¹⁰

Moreover, the show was looking to expand into new markets. The *Nitecap* show was clearly an intriguing, if not a natural, fit for Mutual. The network began investigating the possibility of partnering with Jepko. They could offer the show a wide distribution platform of nearly 700 stations.¹¹ They contacted KIRO, the Bonneville-owned station and recent addition to the Nitecap Radio Network, to better understand how *Nitecap* operated. Two years earlier, KIRO had switched its radio network affiliation from CBS to Mutual.¹² The report from KIRO was positive and the network felt confident about extending an offer to Jepko.

In early winter of 1975, Mutual reached out to Jepko about bringing *Nitecap* to the network. Mutual touted their distribution potential and the financial boom that could result of the partnership. “Mutual came to Herb and just promised him the world,” recalls Joseph Buchman, a family friend. “They were going to have him on hundreds of affiliates, which meant that revenues were going to go through the roof.”¹³ The two

¹⁰ Broder, “Small-Talk Show,” *New York Times*, 29.

¹¹ Radio 1975: Biggest Year in the Making, *Broadcasting*, September 1, 1975, 23.

¹² “KIRO in Mutual Fold,” *Broadcasting*, March 19, 1973, 55.

¹³ Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

parties entered contract negotiations, but the deal progressed slowly, impeded by the contractual details that needed to be addressed: current NCRN affiliations, distribution, content, advertising, and finances. The Mutual contract was far more complex than the agreements Jepko offered his NCRN affiliates and it took a considerable amount of time to move the talks forward.

Jepko believed that the partnership with Mutual was an answer to his long sought quest to expand the show's reach; however, there was some apprehension about how it would affect the show's tone and culture. Patsy felt particularly anxious. She worried about external influences negatively impacting the show, knowing that ultimately they would have to answer to Mutual executives and meet their expectations.¹⁴ Jepko would no longer have full control over the show. There was much to consider for the small town program executive, but the tantalizing possibility of increased national distribution was enough to quell reservations. "No one expressed any kind of doubts. People may have had some doubts, but certainly didn't express them." Denton recalled.¹⁵ In the end, Jepko continued towards a partnership with Mutual.

In the March-April 1975 edition of the *Wick*, Jepko asked Nitecappers to accept his apology for the tardiness of that month's issue. Without revealing his negotiations with Mutual, he explained, "*Nitecap* business has taken us away from the program and the office more than usual the past two months, but we feel that this time away has been

¹⁴ Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

¹⁵ Denton, oral history by author, May 26, 2015.

well spent.”¹⁶ He rationalized his absence by suggesting “it has been in the best interest of the *Nitecap* program to take whatever time has been necessary for negotiating the enlargement of our radio coverage.”¹⁷ He foreshadowed the upcoming deal by revealing that listeners could expect a major announcement in the future, “we hope that you will stay close to your radios, whenever possible, so that you will be able to share with us in some truly exciting news within the next few months.”¹⁸

Negotiations dragged into the summer months of 1975 as Jepko’s busy travel schedule impeded progress. He visited Carmel Valley, California for a *Nitecap* function and then hosted a rally aboard the ship, Queen Mary. Later, in August, he entertained 1,100 East Coast Nitecappers in Baltimore, Maryland.¹⁹ Each of these events required his attention and took him away from talks with Mutual. Finally, in October 1975, almost nine months after negotiations began, the contract was finalized and he announced the partnership to his audience.²⁰ He declared *Nitecap* to be “the largest, call-in, conversational radio program in the world.”²¹ The show was scheduled to start on Mutual on November 4, 1975.²²

¹⁶ *Wick*, March-April, 1975, 1.

¹⁷ *Wick*, March-April, 1975, 1.

¹⁸ *Wick*, March-April, 1975, 1.

¹⁹ “Rally! The Queen,” *Wick*, September-October, 1975, 1.

²⁰ *Wick*, September-October, 1975, 1.

²¹ “Welcome to the New World!” *Wick*, September-October, 1975, 5.

²² “Welcome to the New World!” 5.

The front cover of the September-October issue of the *Wick* shows Chris Denton, wife of editor Craig Denton, with her arms raised to the sky, looking upwards as autumn leaves cascade down around her. The caption reads, “Chris celebrates the Nitecaps/Mutual marriage and the coming of autumn.”²³ Indeed, the agreement with Mutual was cause for celebration. For Jepko, who had toiled for the last 12 years to grow the show and expand the network, the affiliation with Mutual felt like he had finally achieved his dream. Jepko boldly proclaimed “this is the new world!” and that “from the maple glades of New England to the rainforests of Washington State, the land belongs to the Nitecaps.”²⁴ He called the “tie-up” with Mutual the “greatest gift possible from the Nitecaps.”²⁵ Denton remembers that the announcement infused optimism in the staff and legitimized their work.

It really felt like we've come of age. Here we are, joining a nationwide radio network, one of four, I guess, at the time. Yeah, it seemed like we were important and we'd made our mark. Everybody was very excited about it. I remember the feeling as being very positive and exciting. Everybody bought into it.²⁶

The announcement was big news in the media as well. Newspapers from around the country reported the agreement. The *Los Angeles Times* reported the venture with Jepko

²³ *Wick*, September-October, 1975, 2.

²⁴ “Welcome to the New World!” 5.

²⁵ *Wick*, November-December, 1975, 1.

²⁶ Denton, oral history by author, May 26, 2015.

resulted in Mutual becoming the first “24-hour radio network.”²⁷ In regional and local newspapers, editors alerted readers to the new show and where to find it. The *Daily News-Miner*, in Fairbanks Alaska, reported that area listeners could pick up the show on the local station, KIAK.²⁸ In North Carolina, the *Daily Times* headlined, “Millions Are Drawn to Late-Night Radio Show” and documented the show’s rise to national prominence.²⁹ The September issue of *Broadcasting* magazine ran an announcement titled “Mutual All-Night Open for Calls” and cited the NCRN as the catalyst for the Mutual agreement.³⁰

Mutual saw *Nitecap* as a new source of revenue for a network that badly needed money. The network wasted little time promoting the show as an advertising vehicle and ran a full-page advertisement in the November 1975 issue of *Broadcasting*.³¹ The notice highlighted the all-night show as a way for the network to generate “extra profits 24-hours a day!” and called it “a proven, time tested concept with operators often holding calls as much as five hours before show time with live participants waiting to get on the air.”³² The advertisement was specifically designed to generate interest

²⁷ James Brown, “Monterey Jazz Festival on KBCA,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 20, 1975, A5.

²⁸ “Herb Jepko Show Stresses Non-Confrontational Subjects,” *Daily News-Miner*, November 22, 1975, A-9.

²⁹ Associated Press, “Millions Are Drawn to Late-Night Radio Show,” *The Daily Times-News*, November 12, 1975, 7B.

³⁰ “Mutual All-Nighter Opens for Calls,” *Broadcasting*, September 1, 1975, 39-40.

³¹ “Now! Mutual Radio Delivers Extra Profits,” *Broadcasting*, November 3, 1975, 69.

³² “Now! Mutual Radio Delivers Extra Profits,” 69.

among Mutual's own affiliates that were undecided about the show. Many had never committed to 24-hour programming before. In bold blue lettering the phrase "Exciting Profits" was splashed across the top of the advertisement, and affiliates were promised that "22 minutes of commercial time are available for your local sale to produce extra revenue and profits."³³ Rates for the show were set at \$300 [\$1,500] per commercial minute and \$200 [\$1,000] per 30 seconds.³⁴

The November advertisement in *Broadcasting* magazine clearly revealed Little's intention that the show be a source of revenue, which stood in stark contrast to Jepko. He saw the show as public service, and community tool, for those who were lonely and destitute.³⁵ The money was important, but only because it was necessary to keep the show in operation. Financial considerations never exceeded the needs of the *Nitecap* community. Jepko was staunchly loyal to his audience and he would not allow that relationship to change based on his affiliation with Mutual or any other influence. Jepko reassured listeners that the partnership would not change the content and tone of the program. Nightly topics were still to be driven by the caller and the five-minute time limit would continue to be enforced, although he instituted a new rule that callers must wait a week before calling again.³⁶ Callers were still not allowed to discuss controversial topics, such as religion and politics. On this latter point, Jepko was

³³ "Now! Mutual Radio Delivers Extra Profits," 69.

³⁴ "Now! Mutual Radio Delivers Extra Profits," 69.

³⁵ Kramer, oral history with author, October 1, 2015.

³⁶ Kramer, oral history with author, October 1, 2015.

especially unwilling to budge and clearly stated so to Mutual executives.³⁷ They agreed to allow Jepko to continue the same format and conversational tone he had employed the last 12 years. The *Wick* magazine continued to be published and he maintained strict editorial control over its content.

Changes to the show were mostly manifest behind the scenes, particularly in the sales department. Mutual required the NIA to relinquish all advertising responsibilities to the network's staff. Little believed that his sales team was better equipped to handle national advertisers and Jepko agreed. He welcomed the idea because he would no longer face the intense sales pressure that accompanied the radio show, and which would only increase due to the national partnership.

You're this amateur in Salt Lake City doing this thing and you're getting by. Along comes Mutual with this national sales force and a national network, and they're selling to Coca-Cola and General Electric and major advertisers and you think, yeah sure, you all take care of that. I can focus on improving the quality and content of the programming. I don't have to worry about all this stuff anymore.³⁸

Jepko needed little convincing to allow Mutual full control over the sales department. Along with the sales duties, Mutual was to manage the addition of affiliates. This was another part of the business that Jepko was happy to give up. Affiliate recruitment and relations consumed much of his time and he was willing to turn it over to Mutual. The contract allowed him to keep the NCRN as a separate entity, but he was barred from adding new stations to it. He continued to pay out of his own pocket for the airtime on

³⁷ "Mutual All-Nighter Opens for Calls," 39.

³⁸ Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

KSL, WHAS, WBAL, KIRO, and a fifth station, KRLA 870-AM, which was added to the network in January 1975.³⁹ Beyond these five, any additional affiliations had to be brokered through Mutual corporate headquarters in Washington, D.C.⁴⁰

Nitecap Expands

Jepko reasoned that the Mutual partnership would put *Nitecap* on 500 to 600 of their 700 affiliated stations.⁴¹ He reacted to the anticipated growth by making a series of hasty financial decisions. He increased the number of people working at the NIA to 26 people.⁴² The additional staff doubled the NIA payroll, but Jepko expected the revenue from the Mutual partnership to offset those costs. He decided to move out of the KSL studios and into a newly renovated broadcast facility in Holladay, Utah, a suburb of Salt Lake City.⁴³ The building, originally a medical clinic, sat on a 1.5-acre lot under the shadow of the Wasatch Mountains. The clinic “needed substantial remodeling” to accommodate the “wholly different operation” that his national show required.⁴⁴ Jepko secured a business loan to transform the building into “a completely modern broadcasting plant,” which at its completion was considered “one of the most

³⁹ “Again! Welcome KRLA,” *Wick*, January-February, 1975, 4.

⁴⁰ *Wick*, September-October, 1975, 1.

⁴¹ *Wick*, September-October, 1975, 1.

⁴² Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 19.

⁴³ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 1.

⁴⁴ “Inside the NIA: The Home,” *Wick*, January-February, 1976, 5.

sophisticated broadcasting operations in the United States.”⁴⁵ Jepko promised that the new studio would provide “faster, more efficient service” and he had 25 phone lines installed to better accommodate the influx of callers the new affiliates would bring.⁴⁶ The *Wick* describes the chic new building as if it were reviewing a luxurious beachside hotel.

The plant is complete. The strikingly modern building more than doubles the working space of our old offices. Nestled near the foot of Mt. Olympus, the steel girder and smoked glass edifice is the focal point of the neighborhood. Lofty pine trees offer sylvan seclusion. Once the visitor steps inside, gracious wood paneling immediately catches his attention and radiates a warmth that underscores the fairy aura of the NIA.⁴⁷

When a KSL employee saw Jepko’s new studio, he declared “it was better than what we had here [at KSL]!”⁴⁸ The money spent on the new building indicated that *Nitecap* was ready to take its place on the national stage. KSL was dropped as the *Nitecap* flagship station. He no longer needed their studios and he was free of their oversight. Mutual was the new distribution partner and KSL became just another affiliate. The show had outgrown its small, country roots and Jepko believed that it would become one of the great entertainment productions in the country, if not the world. He started welcoming

⁴⁵ Inside the NIA: The Home,” 5.

⁴⁶ *Wick*, January-February, 1976, 1.

⁴⁷ Inside the NIA: The Home,” 5.

⁴⁸ Kramer, oral history with author, October 1, 2015.

audiences to the “night time service for the world from the Mutual Broadcasting System.”⁴⁹

Fans reacted positively to the new partnership. Joyce Fielding, a listener from Kalispell, Montana, wrote in words of congratulations on the partnership finding it “marvelous that you have succeeded in becoming affiliated with the Mutual Broadcasting System” and that “nobody deserves it more.”⁵⁰ Fans were pleased they could tune into the show on a local station and no longer had to deal with signal interference from competing stations. Local stations across the country from Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, Wisconsin, Connecticut, Alabama, Florida, and Texas were broadcasting the show to their listeners. To the delight of Jessica Harthsorn from Fort Worth, Texas, who discovered “about 2 o’clock, you came in so loud and clear that I sat upright, put on my specs and discovered you were coming in on the new KRLD Dallas hook-up. What a pleasure not to be bothered anymore with static and fade-outs.”⁵¹ Jepko was most pleased that the new affiliations were bringing in new fans. Bill McCormick Jr. of Temple Hills, Maryland sent a note into the NIA offices saying “I listened to your Nitecap show for the first time over the Mutual Network affiliate WAVA-FM, in Arlington, Virginia. I’m caught. The world needs you!”⁵² *Nitecap*

⁴⁹ “Next Stop Mars,” in Herbie’s Mailbag, *Wick*, March-April, 1976, 11.

⁵⁰ “Herbie’s Mailbag,” *Wick*, November-December, 1975, 11.

⁵¹ “Herbie’s Mailbag,” *Wick*, January-February, 1976, 10.

⁵² “Nitecap Family Grows with Mutual,” in Herbie’s Mailbag, *Wick*, January-December, 1976, 10.

became so widely available that it could be heard in just about any city in North America. In fact, Jepko instructed listeners who were traveling, vacationing or otherwise outside the reach of their home station, to set their radios to the AM band, move the dial to the extreme left and slowly move the dial right until the program was located. If that did not work, they were told repeat the process on the FM band. Between AM or FM, he said they could find the broadcast anywhere.⁵³ Sixty callers a night were getting through. NIA membership exceeded 300,000 and 100 Nitestands were in operation across the country. The *New York Times* reported that the total listening audience exploded to an estimated 10 million people nightly.⁵⁴

The new affiliates were crucial to the financial success of the show. Each station represented an opportunity to attract advertisers and enrollment in NIA-sponsored programs. Jepko was more concerned about revenue than he had been in the past because the cost of operating the program had increased significantly in the months since the partnership. He was still paying tens of thousands of dollars each month to five NCRN affiliates. He had to make payroll for the larger NIA staff and he was making payments on the new studio.⁵⁵

Adding to the expense was the cost of transmitting the show from Salt Lake City to the Mutual affiliates, a process that was cumbersome and costly. Satellite transmission technology was available in 1976, but few radio stations outside the major

⁵³ Wick, September-October, 1976, 1.

⁵⁴ Broder, "Small-Talk Show," *New York Times*, 29; also, Jarvik, "Small Talk Show," *Deseret News*, 1C.

⁵⁵ Denton, oral history by author, May 26, 2015.

networks had the capability of using it. The show had to be relayed from Mutual headquarters to affiliates via telephone lines. Jepko explained the arduous process:

We fed telephone line, class-A land line, broadcast line to Los Angeles. It went from the Los Angeles telephone line to the satellite, from the satellite it was beamed back to New York, from New York it was microwaved to Washington, from Washington it came down the network lines. If we'd had satellite in those days, the sound of the program would be better, the reach would be better, the cost would have been better. I mean we could have done it so much easier, so much less costly than it cost us in those days. We were pioneering in those days.⁵⁶

Despite the onerous operation to get the show out to affiliates, most of the broadcasts went smoothly. The multiple time zones created some difficulty, however. Jepko was behind the microphone for almost nine hours each night so affiliates around the country got the full program.⁵⁷ The schedule was grueling. Jepko continued to use Rex Walgreen as a fill-in host once a week, which provided him a small respite.

Trouble on the Horizon

Not all fans of the show liked the Mutual partnership. Some claimed the show was losing its charm and the pressure of hosting a network show made Jepko sound uncomfortable. Virginia Jameson of Blandford, Massachusetts voiced these concerns:

Congratulations--I guess. You achieved your ambition, I have heard you say, but to this listener, at least, the Nitecaps program lost something in the transition...I guess my enjoyment of the program was its atmosphere of homeliness. The next-door sense of a bunch of people enjoying friendship . . . you don't sound as relaxed anymore. It's as though you had instructions to keep the tempo up. It's the rush, rush, rush, of the present day world, and to this lonely old lady, it was not apparent in the old set-up.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 12.

⁵⁷ Herb Jepko, "The Rebirth of the Nitecap Radio Network," *Wick*, May-June, 1977, 6.

⁵⁸ "Working the Bugs Out," in Herbie's Mailbag, *Wick*, 1976, 11.

Jepko was aware that many felt like Virginia, and he struggled to maintain the homeliness to which his long-time listeners had grown accustomed. He was caught off-guard by the strong influence of new listeners. The Mutual partnership offered better distribution in large metropolitan cities and urban centers where previously the long distance signals from clear channel stations were interfered with by competing signals. Once these inner-city listeners picked up *Nitecap*, they flooded the show with calls. Jepko remembered that “all of a sudden we were getting a little different metro composition.”⁵⁹ Listeners from the large cities of the country were inclined to an edgier, more controversial talk format, which was beginning to emerge. Hosts such as Joe Pyne on KLAC in Los Angeles, California were opinionated and could be hostile to guests and callers with whom they disagreed⁶⁰ This style was at odds with Jepko’s folksy, conversational approach. He largely ignored the problem hoping new listeners would quickly assimilate into the *Nitecap* community. He thought a summer convention would help introduce new listeners to the long time listeners and ease their acculturation to the show. In June 1976, the NIA held the national convention, which was called “MUSTER ’76.” Jepko hoped for 2,000 attendees and charged \$50 [\$200] per person, significantly more than prior conventions. The convention drew less than half that number, a disappointing setback for the organization.⁶¹ Jepko tried to put a positive spin on the

⁵⁹ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 13.

⁶⁰ “Killer Joe,” *Time*, 30.

⁶¹ *Wick*, July-August, 1976, 2.

discouraging numbers by claiming that it was the most successful in the 13-year history of the show, but privately the disinterest in the convention was alarming.⁶² His listener demographic was changing and it affected the show.

By the close of 1976, a full year after the partnership began, *Nitecap* was on less than 100 Mutual affiliates.⁶³ The show was clearly having a hard time gaining traction with new affiliates. Many radio executives found the show uninteresting and bland. Other stations like WAVA 105.1-FM in Washington, D.C. caved to listener pressure to drop the program.⁶⁴ WAVA general manager Anita Altobello received several complaints from listeners only a few months into the show's tenure on the station. The *Washington Post* reported that Altobello made the difficult decision to drop the show claiming that it "didn't fit into the 'all-news' WAVA format."⁶⁵ The show's conversational tone was inconsistent with the station's hard news approach to programming. When the decision was announced to listeners, fans of the show expressed their anger. Altobello said that most of the "letters came from people over 50, and people with insomnia." She expressed sorrow for canceling the program but the "complaints about the Jepko show outnumber complaints about the cancellation 'at least

⁶² *Wick*, November-December, 1976, 1.

⁶³ "Nitecaps: Mutual Affiliates," *Wick*, November-December, 1975, 38.

⁶⁴ John Carmody, "Broadcast Notes," *Washington Post*, February 27, 1977, D10.

⁶⁵ Carmody, "Broadcast Notes," *Washington Post*, D10.

3 to 1.” A majority of station listeners wanted more hard news and commentary, not the slow, non-controversial *Nitecap*.⁶⁶

Advertising executives exhibited the same disinterest. New national Arbitron ratings estimated that only one-fifth of *Nitecap* listeners were under the age of 50.⁶⁷ This demographic was unappealing to many national advertisers. Little admitted that “more than a few” of the Mutual affiliates were unhappy with the show because “it did not give them the audiences they wanted, nor did it give them the sales opportunities.”⁶⁸ The Mutual sales staff struggled to sell the program. Jepko relinquished control to them because he anticipated that the network’s sales experience and contacts with national advertisers would generate notably higher returns than his own team could produce. He realized too late that while Mutual sales executives were experienced selling commercial daytime spots, they were unprepared to sell late night advertising.⁶⁹ They tried to sell *Nitecap* using the cost-per-thousand impression (CPM) approach. Under this strategy rates are set based on estimated audience. Typically, a dollar figure was assigned based on increments of 1,000 listeners.⁷⁰ With an approximate nightly audience of 10 million,

⁶⁶ Carmody, “Broadcast Notes,” *Washington Post*, D10.

⁶⁷ Jarvik, “Small Talk Show,” *Deseret News*, 1C.

⁶⁸ Crewdson, “Cut in All-Night Radio Show Has Insomniacs Muttering in the Dark,” *New York Times*, 14.

⁶⁹ Joseph Buchman, “The Nitecap Radio Movement: 1964 – 1990,” 7, accessed at <http://josephbuchman.com/Voices%20in%20the%20Dark.pdf>.

⁷⁰ For more on CPM strategy see Paul Farris, *Marketing Metrics: The Definitive Guide to Measuring Marketing Performance*, (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: FT Press, 2010), 289-300.

Jepko's CPM rate was exorbitant. However, advertisers balked at paying such high rates for an audience believed to consist of the "disenfranchised, widowed, lonely, fearful, elderly or just up-all-night oddballs."⁷¹ National advertisers like "Coca Cola and [other] major appliance manufactures don't want to reach people in their seventies, even fifties and sixties because their brand loyalties are pretty well set, and sales tanked," said Buchman.⁷² Mutual salesman, feeling the pressure themselves to hit quotas, focused on more fertile and lucrative daytime programming. Jepko was left with an uncommitted sales force.

The expected financial windfall that Mutual and Jepko anticipated never materialized. Jepko's financial situation was becoming dire and he had a difficult time making payments even to the original NCRN affiliates still under contract. In December 1976, WHAS dropped the *Nitecap* program from its airwaves. General Manager Hugh Barr stressed that the decision to drop the program was not a result of content or anything related to the program itself, although he speculates that at some point the bland conversational tone of the show might have run at odds with the station's long-term plans. The station dropped *Nitecap* because it was unable to pay the station for the airtime. Jepko typically sent a check in the mail, but because money was tight, the payments were deferred. Barr recalled that checks did not come for months at a time.⁷³ He warned Jepko that if he continued to miss payments, the station would drop the

⁷¹ Buchman, "The Nitecap Radio Movement: 1964 – 1990," 2.

⁷² Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

⁷³ Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

show. The money problems persisted and ultimately WHAS decided to sever the relationship.⁷⁴

Jepko and Mutual officials both realized that something needed to be done to stop the financial hemorrhaging or the venture would fail. Little proposed a two-step solution. First, he suggested Jepko change the tone and allow more controversial topics onto the program. Little reasoned that by tackling more interesting and contentious topics the show would appeal to younger listeners, and interest advertisers who coveted the demographic. Second, he suggested Jepko move to the East Coast and broadcast the show from Washington, D.C. The move would eliminate the considerable cost of routing the program through Los Angeles. Little laid down an ultimatum and said that “unless you do something about it, you ain’t going to be on Mutual.”⁷⁵ Jepko balked at Little’s directness. He had no interest in living on the East Coast. Besides, he had just built his own broadcast studios and did not feel he could not just pack up and leave. More than anything, however, he did not want to allow controversial talk on the show. He reiterated that the purpose of “those controversial talk shows. . . is to get listeners excited to the point that they get upset and call. I think they’re necessary programs, but I don’t think I’d be able to do one of those every night—my nerves would be shot.”⁷⁶

Jepko at least consented to bring the matter before his audience and gauge their feelings on the possibility of change. In the spring of 1977, he presented the idea of

⁷⁴ Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

⁷⁵ Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

⁷⁶ Broder, “Small-Talk Show,” *New York Times*, 29.

allowing more controversial topics on the show. He asked listeners to call or write with their feedback. The topic dominated nightly conversation for several months and letters flooded the NIA offices. The *Wick* reported the results of the inquiry.

Listeners from all sections of the world have sent us many cards and letters indicating their overwhelming desire to keep the Herb Jepko *Nitecap* program in its present mode. Therefore, we will do everything within our power to maintain the format of our *Nitecap* program just it has been these past 13 years.⁷⁷

Jepko “held to our guns” and told Little that he would not move to the East nor would he change the tone of the program.⁷⁸ The show would remain the same. Jepko held firm to his original concept that *Nitecap*’s purpose was to create friendliness and brotherhood, not tear it down. “The success of the *Nitecap* program” he wrote, lies in a format that allowed “people to talk about anything they wish without being subjected to pre-determined subjects for the entire night.”⁷⁹ Jepko’s response put Mutual in a difficult position. The network could continue with the partnership and hope the situation improved or terminate the agreement outright. With Jepko unwilling to budge, the network saw no recourse to the problem and opted to separate. The network notified Jepko that the contract would be terminated on May 29, 1977 and the show removed from the network’s offerings.⁸⁰ The partnership between Jepko and Mutual lasted only a year and a half. The Associated Press published a short story on the cancellation, which

⁷⁷ *Wick*, March-April, 1977, 1.

⁷⁸ Jepko, “The Rebirth of the Nitecap Radio Network,” 6-7.

⁷⁹ Jepko, “The Rebirth of the Nitecap Radio Network,” 6-7.

⁸⁰ “Bits of History,” *The Odessa American*, November 5, 1977, 22.

ran in newspapers across the country. The report was a eulogy for the show: “The Herb Jepko Nitecap Show was the country’s only nationwide, midnight-to-dawn telephone talk show on radio when it was canceled on May 29, 1977 by the Mutual Broadcasting System.”⁸¹ The *New York Times* was especially critical of Mutual and their decision, calling Little a “gray-flanneled, cost-cutting” executive and condemned him for abandoning a “nation of insomniacs.”⁸² The report alleged that Little was “silencing” the show “in favor of more scintillating all-night entertainment.”⁸³ Mutual took a beating in the press and from listeners who were incredulous that the program was dropped. Little said that he had “a room full of telegrams and mailgrams and letters and postcards telling me how great Jepko was.”⁸⁴ Even Mutual affiliates were “bombarded” with mail from irate listeners.⁸⁵ Carl Grande, who was then serving as the Station Manager of WERI 1230-AM in Westerly, Rhode Island, said that he received nearly 50 letters from fans complaining about the cancellation; although, Grande noted that most

⁸¹ Associated Press, “Bits of History,” *The Odessa American*, 22.

⁸² Crewdson, “Cut in All-Night Radio Show has Insomniacs Muttering in the Dark,” *New York Times*, 14.

⁸³ Crewdson, “Cut in All-Night Radio Show has Insomniacs Muttering in the Dark,” *New York Times*, 14.

⁸⁴ Crewdson, “Cut in All-Night Radio Show has Insomniacs Muttering in the Dark,” *New York Times*, 14.

⁸⁵ David Heckerman, “Herb and The Crusher,” *The Day*, September 3, 1977, 13.

of the letters were from “elderly persons, most of them women.”⁸⁶ He briefly considered picking up the show directly through Jepko, but opted against doing so.

Mutual Continues All Night Radio

Mutual abandoned Jepko, but did not abandon all-night talk radio show, despite the failure of *Nitecap*. Little still believed that all-night radio could succeed, but he needed to find a host to do what Jepko would not: work toward attracting younger listeners through edgier, more controversial talk and do it from Washington D.C. Mutual’s nationwide search lead them to Long John Nebel, an overnight host broadcasting his show to New York City audiences on WMCA 570-AM.⁸⁷ Similar to *Nitecap*, Nebel took calls from listeners, although not with the same frequency. He tackled the controversial topics of the day, but could easily digress into topics on the paranormal such as “ghost hunters and warlocks.”⁸⁸ “I can’t get two hours into a program without somebody calling to tell me the gas ovens are waiting,” Nebel told a reporter.⁸⁹ Nebel was a more in line with Little’s vision of all-night radio and he believed that if given a national platform his show would resonate with audiences outside New York. Mutual offered the overnight slot to Nebel who agreed on one

⁸⁶ Heckerman, “Herb and The Crusher,” *The Day*, 13.

⁸⁷ “Historical Note,” Mutual Broadcasting System Records, George Washington University.

⁸⁸ Claude Hall, “Vox Jox,” *Billboard*, January 15, 1972, 20; also Tom Tiede, “Talk-Jockey Jimmy Hits Phones,” *Mt. Vernon Register News*, March 3, 1977, 4A.

⁸⁹ Tiede, “Talk-Jockey,” *Mt. Vernon Register News*, 4A.

condition: he could co-host the program with his wife, Candy Jones.⁹⁰ Mutual capitulated and in June 1979, less than two months after Jepko's departure, the network was broadcasting Nebel's unique voice to the country.⁹¹

Nitecap Radio Network Revived

The termination of the Mutual partnership resulted in Jepko suddenly losing half his listenership and most of the 80 stations carrying the program.⁹² However, he was able to put together a patchwork network of 10 stations to continue the show. In an open letter to fans titled "*The Rebirth of the Nitecap Radio Network*," he called the dissolution with Mutual, "truly a test of fire."⁹³ He asked that *Nitecap* fans spend money with the show's new advertisers and write letters to NCRN stations showing their support. Jepko promised that he "was expending all possible energy to produce and re-affiliate with stations which will serve all sections of our North American Continent."⁹⁴ Fortunately for him, KSL remained committed to the show. Two other clear channel stations stayed

⁹⁰ Bernard Timberg and Bob Erler, *Television Talk: A History of the TV Talk Show*. (Austin, Tex: University of Texas Press, 2002), 163; also Syracuse University maintains a collection on Nebel called the "Long John Nebel Papers," Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries, Syracuse, NY. The papers consist of correspondence, subject files, phonotapes, memorabilia, and selected writings.

⁹¹ "Philly FM Station Set New Schedule," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 November 12, 1977, 7; also Crewdson, "Cut in All-Night Radio Show has Insomniacs Muttering in the Dark." *New York Times*, 14.

⁹² Jarvik, "Small Talk Show," *Deseret News*, 1C.

⁹³ Jepko, "The Rebirth of the Nitecap Radio Network," 6-7.

⁹⁴ Jepko, "The Rebirth of the Nitecap Radio Network," 6-7.

on as well, WBAL and KTRH 740-AM in Houston.⁹⁵ Returning to three 50,000 kw clear channel stations, Jepko provided some measure of nationwide coverage to his audience. Seven other stations in the network were smaller and provided only regional coverage, although two of those were in major cities: Dallas, Texas and Detroit, Michigan.

By the summer of 1977, Jepko was back to where he was two years earlier, broadcasting his national show on a small independent network of stations. Because Jepko had relinquished control over sales to Mutual, his prior relationships with advertisers and sponsors had dried up.⁹⁶ All of his sales relationships needed to be rekindled. Jepko did his best to keep the program afloat, but the financial pressure was stifling. The affiliate fees for ten stations cost thousands of dollars a month. Payroll had to be met each month for nearly 30 employees and he was still paying off the new NIA headquarters building. Advertising revenue was not covering costs, so he turned to the bank to keep the show operating. “We were so economically stressed,” he said that he “mortgaged my home. . . my car. . . everything just to keep going.”⁹⁷ It was enough to keep the business in operation for the short term, but eventually costs had to be trimmed. Jepko scaled back the *Wick* to a seasonal magazine, rather than a bimonthly publication. The company published one issue in spring, summer, autumn, and winter. Fans were upset about the changes and the lack of affiliates. Jepko pleaded for patience. He told

⁹⁵ “Nitecap Radio Network & Affiliates,” *Wick*, May-June, 1977, 7.

⁹⁶ Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

⁹⁷ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 19.

listeners that “acquiring a new station often takes months of negotiations as well as technical evaluation and funding.” He aggressively sought out new stations to add to the NCRN and by the fall of 1977 he managed to sign: KTNT 1400-AM in Tacoma, Washington and WFLA 970-AM in Tampa Florida. He ended the year with 12 stations in the NCRN and an estimated listening audience of 5.5 million.⁹⁸

In 1978, *Nitecap* forged on. Jepko continued working on adding more stations to the NCRN and was less selective about which stations he brought into the network. He signed any station that would agree to his terms. He added WGST 640-AM in Atlanta, Georgia; KIT 1280-AM in Yakima, Washington; and KBLU 560-AM in Yuma, Arizona. None of the stations were a major asset to the network. Only Atlanta was a growing media market, but geographically isolated from the epicenter of *Nitecap* activity and neither Yakima nor Yuma presented new areas of growth. The NIA held a national convention that summer at the Salt Palace in Salt Lake City. The organization put down \$456 [\$1,700] to reserve the convention center for June 21 through the 24.⁹⁹ Arch Madsen spoke to the gathering of Nitecaps and expressed his admiration for what Jepko had accomplished.

Herb, you and your association and the millions of people in this nation have built a precious nightly audience who listen; who are involved; who are concerned...we salute you for making millions realize that they are precious and that they do matter. Good luck!¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Jarvik, “Small Talk Show,” *Deseret News*, 1C.

⁹⁹ “Radio Fan Club Faces Suit; County Says Bill Not Paid,” *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*, July 24, 1977, 18.

¹⁰⁰ “Banquets,” Volume 14, Number 1, *Wick*, 1979.

While the convention was a success, Jepko could not pay the fee for the Salt Palace. Salt Lake County filed a lawsuit in the Third District Court against the NIA seeking \$2,616 [\$9,500].¹⁰¹ Jepko kept his creditors placated, but the financial situation was bleak. The program limped on and made it through the year. In 1979, *Nitecap* suffered a crippling blow from which it would not recover.

Loss of KSL's Affiliation

The governing body of the Bonneville International Corporation and LDS church leadership had become wary about the considerable attention KSL was getting from federal regulators. Concerned that they were viewed as not doing enough for local audiences, the corporation's executives began refocusing on serving local interests. Gordon B. Hinckley, chairman of the BIC executive committee and prominent Church leader, led the effort. The topic was discussed at length during executive committee meetings and an independent review of KSL's programming was ordered. The report suggested that the station spent too little effort and time on "local programming and public affairs programming."¹⁰² In light of this report, the committee determined to renew their efforts to provide better local programming to Utah listeners. The minutes read, "Chairman Hinckley indicated that in his judgment KSL should lead out in the production of excellent local programming to reflect the tastes and needs of the

¹⁰¹ "Radio Fan Club Faces Suit; County Says Bill Not Paid," *The Ogden Standard Examiner*, 18.

¹⁰² "KSL Incorporated Executive Committee Minutes," box 26, folder 2, 5, Tim Larson Papers, University of Utah Special Collections and Archives, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, UT. Hereafter Tim Larson Papers.

community and its ownership.”¹⁰³ And Hinckley wanted KSL management and leaders of its parent company BIC to enforce higher moral standards among employees. BIC leadership promised “the personnel problems can be adequately handled.”¹⁰⁴ These directives may have changed KSL’s feelings about Jepko. *Nitecap* was a national program that avoided Utah based topics so as to not alienate a broader base of listeners. Jepko’s personal habits and beliefs were another matter. He was not a member of the LDS faith and often drank alcohol and smoked cigarettes inside KSL’s studios when he had broadcast *Nitecap* from the KSL facilities, much to the frustration of other LDS-KSL employees.¹⁰⁵ Jepko said he felt like an outsider and not “one of their own.”¹⁰⁶ The cultural disconnect between Jepko and the station created underlying tension between both parties.

Amidst the transition, deejay Danny Kramer was hired by KSL in the 1970s. He was charged, according to Hinckley’s instructions, to provide more quality local programming. Kramer, who was initially hired to host a weekend daytime music show, demonstrated to management how contemporary music and interesting discussion could bring back younger listeners who had migrated to other stations in the market in search

¹⁰³ “KSL Incorporated Executive Committee Minutes,” 5, Tim Larson Papers.

¹⁰⁴ “KSL Incorporated Executive Committee Minutes,” 5, Tim Larson Papers.

¹⁰⁵ Stirland, oral history by author, April 8, 2015; also Larson, oral history by author, July 30, 2015; also Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

¹⁰⁶ James and Buchman, *The Rollye James Show*, February 10, 2004, Joseph Buchman Collection.

of more youthful programming.¹⁰⁷ KSL liked his approach so much that they asked him to help revamp the station's entire programming slate. Kramer pushed the station talent to play more top-40 hits and discuss topics that would attract younger listeners. The effort resulted in higher ratings and more revenue.¹⁰⁸ Kramer's efforts were primarily focused on the station's daytime programming and they initially let *Nitecap* operate with impunity. By 1979, however, KSL had managed to attract back some of the younger viewers they had lost. Management began to look at the all-night time period where *Nitecap* occupied the lone time period. The show had become stagnate and there was a sense of fatigue felt both by listeners and KSL management. *Nitecap* was broadcast much the same way it had 15 years earlier and it lacked the energy of KSL's daytime programming. *Nitecap's* focus on national audiences, along with personal conflicts began to work against Jepko. Station management felt that a change was necessary. In truth, *Nitecap* had been on life support for several years. Jepko had mortgaged all his personal assets to keep the show on the air and it could not continue in its current state. While there were no records that he ever missed contract payments to KSL, given his financial condition, it was possible. KSL realized as well that *Nitecap* was teetering on collapse and they wanted to protect the station's interests.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Joseph Walker, "Utah Radio Personality Danny Kramer is on the Move Again," *Deseret News*, July 5, 2015; also Kramer, oral history with author, October 1, 2015;

¹⁰⁸ Kramer, oral history with author, October 1, 2015.

¹⁰⁹ Larson, oral history by author, July 30, 2015; also Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

On the morning of February 9, 1979, as Jepko sat at his desk sorting the day's mail, he opened a letter from KSL that notified him that contract for the year would not be renewed.¹¹⁰ He was bewildered. He realized the situation with KSL was tenuous, but with his positive relationship with KSL management he hoped that an agreement could be reached.¹¹¹ However, he was given no warning of the cancelation. He immediately picked up the phone and tried to reach KSL executives, but he was informed "all the people he needs to talk to have left that morning at 7:30 [a.m.] for two weeks in Hawaii."¹¹² Jepko had no recourse; no way to plead his case. *Nitecap* was no longer a part of KSL.

Nitecap Post KSL

KSL's decision to drop *Nitecap* was final. The 15-year partnership was dead, a short letter providing the fatal blow. KSL never publicly explained its decision to sever ties with Jepko. It was clear that *Nitecap* was struggling financially as profits decreased. Its audience, once reportedly in the millions of nightly listeners, was shrinking, aging, and unattractive to advertisers. The show's conversational theme and gentle tone was more attractive to older audiences. The show was at odds with KSL's renewed emphasis on attracting younger, local listeners. Station management were resolute that the proper decision was made. Several months later, Dean Lindsay, Director of KSL radio in 1979,

¹¹⁰ "1979 In Review: February," *Radio and Records*, December 14, 1979, 77; also *Wick*, Volume 14, Number 1, 1979, 1; also Jarvik, "Small Talk Show," *Deseret News*, 1C.

¹¹¹ Jarvik, "Small Talk Show," *Deseret News*, 1C.

¹¹² Jarvik, "Small Talk Show," *Deseret News*, 1C.

was asked to explain the station's thinking and he declined to comment. "I'm not too anxious to talk about it," he said. "I don't want to open a can of worms. We've chosen not to get into any of the gory details publicly."¹¹³ That was the most KSL executives said on the matter. It was a personnel matter and it was clear that the station no longer valued *Nitecap*. KSL continued 24-hour programming, which mostly included a mixture of talk and music.¹¹⁴

Nitecap tried to survive without KSL, but there was little hope the show would endure. The audience was cut by 40 percent and revenue was hit even harder.¹¹⁵ Jepko scrambled to find a station for his Utah listeners and found one in Provo's KTFN 1400-AM. But it was a poor substitute for KSL's powerful signal. The loss of nearly half his revenue forced Jepko into dramatic cost-cutting measures. "We couldn't keep up with the cost of the line haul [telephone lines], the personnel," he said.¹¹⁶ He laid off more than half his staff, reducing the number of employees to 12.¹¹⁷ Only those who were essential to the business remained. He moved the NIA out of the Holiday studios and into an older building at 84 West 700 South in downtown Salt Lake City.¹¹⁸ He tried publicly to remain optimistic. He told listeners that he was hoping for a "miracle" and

¹¹³ Jarvik, "Small Talk Show," *Deseret News*, 1C.

¹¹⁴ "Along The Clear Channel," *Billboard*, August 14, 1982, 34.

¹¹⁵ Jarvik, "Small Talk Show," *Deseret News*, 1C.

¹¹⁶ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 19.

¹¹⁷ Jarvik, "Small Talk Show," *Deseret News*, 1C.

¹¹⁸ *Wick*, Volume 14, Number 1, 1979, 1.

that things “might turn around.”¹¹⁹ He still believed that an NCRN with “a couple hundred” affiliate stations was possible.¹²⁰ In an open letter to the remaining *Nitecap* fans he wrote that “it seems that things are getting better all the time” and “your continued support of NIA activities and our sponsors will help to make all this happen.”¹²¹ But it was a hopeless gesture. The miracle never arrived. In August 1979, Jepko had run out of options. He was broke, in considerable debt, and without a way to distribute his program to nationwide audiences. Reluctantly, he closed operations.¹²² “I lost everything,” he recalled. “I just believed in it so much.”¹²³ For Jepko and *Nitecap* listeners, the voice in the night was silenced.

Life After *Nitecap*

Jepko was devastated by the collapse of *Nitecap*. In a 24-month span, the program experienced the meteoric rise with distribution on a national network, followed shortly by a sudden and devastating freefall that landed him broke and unemployed. His net worth had been invested into keeping the program alive during the year and a half after the Mutual failure. Following KSL’s cancelation, he had to liquidate his mortgaged assets to pay off the outstanding debts.¹²⁴ “When it went down, I lost everything I had

¹¹⁹ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 20.

¹²⁰ Jarvik, “Small Talk Show,” *Deseret News*, 1C.

¹²¹ *Wick*, Volume 14, Number 1, 1979, 2.

¹²² Associated Press, “Talk Show Host Returns to Air,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, October 7, 1982, D7.

¹²³ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 20.

¹²⁴ Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

and most of the people involved lost everything they had too,” he remembers.¹²⁵ There was no contingency plan. Jepko had become a heavy drinker and he turned to it more frequently to escape his predicament. The drinking put a strain on his business efforts, his marriage, and family life.¹²⁶ He managed to keep it under a level of control in the intermediate, but his problems with alcohol became more pervasive as time passed. He was described as a “functioning alcoholic.”¹²⁷

Jepko searched for new employment, but he was too hurt by the recent losses to return to radio, so he searched outside the medium for work. In the spring of 1980, six months after the *Nitecap* collapse, he was hired as the Director of the Humane Society of Utah.¹²⁸ He was passionate about animal welfare, especially for those that had been mistreated or abandoned.¹²⁹ He jumped into the new job with the passion and energy for which he had always been known. But he could not shake his heartbreak over the loss of *Nitecap*. He missed it terribly, and more so, he longed for the interaction with listeners. He derived personal self-worth and meaning from his role as the leader of his all-night crowd. That was now gone and it was difficult for him to find peace. He enjoyed his work with the Humane Society, but just as he joined the organization it too

¹²⁵ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 19.

¹²⁶ Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

¹²⁷ Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

¹²⁸ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 20.

¹²⁹ “Herb Jepko, “Friends of Insomniacs Across the Nation, Dies at Age 64,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, April 2, 1995, B3.

faced a financial crisis. Developers had purchased the building where the Society was housed and Jepko was tasked with raising funds to move to a new location. He worked on the problem for three months, but could not get the money nor find a suitable new home for the animal shelter. With no other option, the Society shut down temporarily.¹³⁰ By 1981, Jepko was desperate for income and with the Society unable pay his salary, he moved to Southern California in search of new employment opportunities and to be near his son Herb Jepko Junior who was living in the area.¹³¹ Jepko does not provide much detail about what type of work he was doing in the area, except that it was in radio and that it was mostly “just odd jobs.”¹³² The relocation to California lasted only a year and by the spring of 1982, he was back in Utah hoping to resurrect *Nitecap*.

The 51-year-old Jepko’s finances were still in shambles and he was unable to secure the necessary funding on his own. So, he partnered with a Salt Lake City businessman to revive *Nitecap*. Shirman Milliner “was really taken with the idea as a new business venture.”¹³³ Together, Jepko and Milliner began preparations to reboot the program. Jepko was to serve as face and voice of the show with Milliner as chairman.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ “Humane Society Fails to Find New Store Site,” *Deseret News*, September 22, 1980, 2D.

¹³¹ Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015; also Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 20.

¹³² Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 20.

¹³³ Sherman Milliner, “Herb’s Good News,” Volume 1, Issue 1, April 1983, 4.

¹³⁴ “Herb’s Good News,” 3.

They organized a company called Good Morning World Communications (GMWC) to run the business ventures. For six months the partners worked to find a studio, secure affiliates, and hire an office staff. In October 1982, the *Herb Jepko Show* launched on six radio stations, including three 50,000 kw stations: KBOI 670-AM in Boise, Idaho; KPNW 1120-AM in Eugene, Oregon; and WOAI 1200-AM in San Antonio, Texas. The other three affiliates were smaller, regional 5,000kw stations: KKOW 860-AM in Pittsburg, Kansas; KBCQ 97.1-FM in Roswell, New Mexico; and KPRQ 1230-AM in Murray, Utah.¹³⁵ KSL was not among the affiliates. Jepko purchased the overnight time period from the stations for a monthly fee, as he had done before. He proudly told the Associated Press “I never gave up hope that we’d be back.”¹³⁶ Fans of the *Nitecap* show were enthusiastic about the revival. Ida J. Collell placed a giant sign outside her house, which ran along I-5 in Salem, Oregon, with the proclamation “Herb is Back” and the call letters to the Eugene radio station where the show could be heard.¹³⁷ When Betty Minor from Meriden, Connecticut, found out that Jepko had returned, she sent him a letter expressing how “happy I am that you are back on the airways,” and that “I knew they couldn’t keep a good man down for long.”¹³⁸

¹³⁵ “Tune In: The Herb Jepko Show,” *Good Morning World!*, Volume 1, Issue 2, December 1982, 4.

¹³⁶ “Back on the Air,” *The Free Lance-Star*, October 8, 1982, 30.

¹³⁷ “*Herb’s Good News*,” 3.

¹³⁸ Betty Minor, “Can’t Keep a Good Man Down,” *Good Morning World!* Volume 1, Issue 2, December 1982, 2.

The new show was patterned after the old program, but the *Nitecap* name was dropped in favor of the simpler, *The Herb Jepko Show*.¹³⁹ Many of the old rules still applied: no controversial topics, calls must be limited to five minutes in length, callers should phone in only once per week and must use the phone number assigned to their geographical area.¹⁴⁰ The GMWC published a bulletin called *Herb's Good News*.¹⁴¹ The first issue was available in December 1982 and contained editorials written by Herb and Patsy, and a short letter of introduction by Milliner. The content explained that the enterprise's "biggest challenge, and one we meet with confidence, is alerting the radio public to the fact that Herb is back on the 'other side of the day.'"¹⁴² The newsletter introduced the GMWC's staff: Jerome Gourley as director of marketing, Sandra Turville, office manager, and her assistant Debbie Gregerson. On the back of the newsletter was an affiliate listing of the six stations that signed on to broadcast the show.¹⁴³

The Herb Jepko Show survived the winter and into early spring of 1983. GMWC management hoped that the show would again capture the attention of all-night listeners across the country and attract national advertisers. Jepko fully expected that the original

¹³⁹ "Back on the Air," *The Free Lance-Star*, 30.

¹⁴⁰ "*Herb's Good News*," 3.

¹⁴¹ *Good Morning World!* 2.

¹⁴² "*Herb's Good News*," 3.

¹⁴³ "*Herb's Good News*," 4.

Nitecap formula would successfully lead the new show to national prominence.¹⁴⁴ In April 1983, GMWC expanded the bulletin to a 16 magazine containing an editorial from Jepko, poetry, short stories, and a profile of GMWC affiliate, KBOI in Boise, Idaho. Former NIA employees, Frank “The Crusher” Nolan and Rex Walgreen made appearances in the magazine and on the show. The pain of losing the original *Nitecap* program was slowly fading. Once again, Jepko found himself behind the microphone, taking calls from people all over the country, and providing a home for the all-night listener. He was, yet again, the voice in the night.

¹⁴⁴ “*Herb’s Good News,*” 4.

Chapter 7

1983-1995: The Passing of a Radio Pioneer

In the spring of 1983, Jepko was back behind the microphone with his folksy brand of interactive conversational talk radio and working to rebuild his nationwide network. *The Herb Jepko Show* was distributed by six stations, three of which were clear-channel stations: KBOI in Boise, Idaho; KPNW in Eugene, Oregon; and WOAI in San Antonio, Texas. The stations provided coverage across much of the Western United States. However, the excitement and optimism that defined the start of the year quickly faded. Challenges that threatened the earlier program resurfaced and the relaunch proved more difficult than he anticipated. The overnight airwaves were now more crowded than they were when he first began *Nitecap* in 1964. Talk radio tastes had evolved over the 19 years since *Nitecap* began. Jepko discovered that it was more difficult to connect with listeners. The shifts in technology from clear channel to satellite links had greatly enlarged all-night programming choices and the competition kept the new show from maintaining a foothold. Jepko's poor personal decisions exacerbated the difficulties. Over the next decade, 1983 to 1995, his life unraveled and when family tragedy struck in the early 90s, the loss set him on a course from which he would not recover.

The Herb Jepko Show Fails

By the end of 1983, Jepko's attempt to revive his nationwide overnight radio show was failing. Good Morning World Communications, the organization responsible for its financing, had a difficult time securing the long-term financial support required to keep it on the air. Despite interest from former *Nitecap* fans, new listeners did not

materialize as they had in 1964. Jepko had mistakenly believed that there would still be “room for all of us” in the increasingly crowded overnight airwaves.¹ He presumed that by simply putting the show back on the air, his millions of listeners would return.² Instead, he discovered in the four years since the first *Nitecap* left the air that he had lost momentum in the late night universe and the show’s brand did not carry the same market value. The race for nighttime audience interests had grown increasingly competitive. He now faced aggressive competition from nationwide personalities who were backed by major networks. Jepko’s initial success had inspired these other networks to experiment with their own brand of all-night talk. Using Jepko’s foundations, ABC launched TalkRadio and NBC initiated Talknet. Both began in 1981. NBC’s nighttime programming was anchored by popular personalities Sally Jessy Raphael and Bruce Williams.³ In Williams’ show, the similarities to the *Nitecap* program were readily apparent. Williams kept a softer tone to the discourse and his audience skewed towards the elderly.⁴ Even regional and local markets were expanding to 24-hour programming. Ray Briem’s, *The Ray Briem Show*, was popular in Los Angeles.⁵ Art Bell’s *West Coast*

¹ Associated Press, “Talk Show Host Returns,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, D7.

² Associated Press, “Talk Show Host Returns,” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, D7.

³ Maria Eftimiades, “The Talk Show Host is also a Businessman and a Former Politician,” *New York Times*, July 2, 1989, NJ8.

⁴ Eftimiades, “The Talk Show Host is also a Businessman and a Former Politician,” *New York Times*, NJ8.

⁵ “The City’s Voice in the Night Falls Silent,” *The Daily News of Los Angeles*, December 16, 2012, A1.

AM, later renamed *Coast to Coast AM*, emerged in the late 1970s and focused on the paranormal. *Nitecaps* had gone from being the only choice on the nighttime radio airwaves to a show now facing competition from new talk radio programs and other forms of late night programming.⁶

Many listeners left the radio medium all together for a new medium. The advent of television in the 1950s captured the attention of Americans and sent radio scrambling to find new audiences and programming. By the 1980s, television was beginning to provide variations of talk programming to late and overnight audiences. NBC led off its late night programming with *The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson*, followed by *Late Night with David Letterman*. Afterwards, NBC broadcast several hours of *NBC News Overnight*.⁷ CBS counter programmed with *The CBS Late Movie* until 2:00 a.m., which was succeeded by *CBS News Nightwatch*, a two-hour news interview show that was then rebroadcast several times throughout the early morning hours.⁸ The program aired until 6:00 a.m. when it was replaced with *CBS Morning News*. The advent of cable television in the late 1970s, offered yet another option for late night audiences. Cable television networks like CNN and ESPN attracted audiences by offering a 24/7 schedule

⁶ Peter Knight, *Conspiracy Theories in American History: An Encyclopedia*, (Santa Barbara, California; ABC-CLIO, 2003), 120-121.

⁷ *NBC News Overnight* was one of NBC's first efforts to capture early morning audiences. The program was broadcast from 1:30 a.m. to 2:30 a.m. each weekday. The program ran for 367 telecasts before it was canceled in 1983. See John O'Connor, "TV View: 'Overnight-Low-Keyed News for Late, Late Viewing,'" *The New York Times*, Speteember 12, 1982, H29.

⁸ John Stark, "As the CBS Morning News Withers, Nightwatch's Charlie Rose Gets the Thorny Job of Keeping it Alive," *People*, Vol. 26, No. 14, 133; also "TV Schedule" *The Salina Journal Entertainment*, September 18, 1983, 12-14.

of entertainment, sports, and talk programming. The results increased audience choice and produced fragmented audiences. Jepko's new all-night show faced significant competition and it was clear that *Nitecap* would not overcome the challenges. In late 1983, Good Morning World Communications shut down operations. The airwaves were too crowded, the audience too fragmented, and the costs too prohibitive for the small independent network to survive.

The failure of *The Herb Jepko Show* once again left him unemployed. He found employment at KLUB 570-AM, a Salt Lake City station looking for a midday disc jockey.⁹ He had not hosted a daytime program since his arrival at KSL in 1962. He found this midday work uninspiring, but remembered it simply as “fun.”¹⁰ The work was steady and it allowed him to stay in the business. He remained with KLUB for two years, but the station was sold in 1985 and the new ownership began simulcasting with KLUB's sister station, KISN 97.1-FM. Without the need for talent at both stations, the ownership downsized the AM station.¹¹ “They systematically let all of us go one at a time or sometimes in groups,” Jepko recalled. “And I was out of work again.”¹²

Over the next five years, Jepko moved around as on-air talent at a number of different Salt Lake City radio stations. In 1986, he found work at his old station, KDYL.

⁹ Lynn Arave, “News and Notes from Radio Land,” *Deseret News*, November 22, 1984, W12.

¹⁰ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 21.

¹¹ Lynn Arave, “KLUB Goes from No-News to a Live-News Operation,” *Desert News*, October 12, 1985, 7D.

¹² Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 20.

At this job, he noted that his professional career had come full circle. “I’m back doing what I did thirty-five years ago when I first came here; working seven to midnight playing the music of your life, which is fun. Not as much fun as what it used to be, but it’s fun.”¹³ He stayed with the station for two years before moving onto KCPX in August 1988. The station was revamping its format from “Oldies” to “Easy Mix” and Jepko was hired to deejay the 7:00 p.m. to midnight show. The station offered an overnight program, but he was not assigned the time slot. KCPX may have thought that he was too old to deejay a music program that targeted young listeners.¹⁴

Despite the steady work, Jepko longed for his overnight radio show. “I guess way in the back of my mind I’m like the fire horse waiting for the fire again,” he said. He still believed that if he could find the proper funding, he would consider bringing back an all-night show for a third time. But he was still adamant that he would not compromise his stance on provocative radio. “Who knows if it [a third *Nitecap* show] would be better? It might be worse, but I still feel the same way I did then, so I’d do it the same way with a few modifications, but not many. Philosophically everything would be the same.”¹⁵

Jepko knew that his health and age were becoming limiting factors. He was in his late 50s and the amount of work and travel required to rebuild the *Nitecap* community would necessitate more effort than he could physically give.¹⁶ Patsy reported his arthritis

¹³ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 21.

¹⁴ Lynn Arave, “KCPX is Now KEMX and has an ‘Easy Mix’ Sound,” *Deseret News*, August 5, 1988, W3.

¹⁵ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 27.

¹⁶ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 27.

had worsened, which was painful and restricted his mobility. He had been drinking heavily since the 1979 cancelation of *Nitecap* and it continued to take a toll on his body. He realized that his opportunity for a third nationwide talk show might have passed, “it all comes to a conclusion of some sort, and I guess you have to deal with that.”¹⁷ But Jepko was deeply conflicted. In all likelihood, a third *Nitecap* show was improbable, given his health and the direction of the radio industry. However, he was not ready to close the door. He believed that if the workload was managed correctly and the financial backing available, he could recapture his earlier success. As he continued his work as local Salt Lake City on-air personality, he kept the door slightly ajar on the possibility of launching *Nitecap* for a third time.

A Final Nitecap

In late 1989, Jepko, with the help of his eldest son, Randy Jepko, decided the timing was right to bring back *Nitecap* and they began preparations. Jepko had demonstrated on many occasions that he was not afraid to take risks and plunged into the show’s revival with all his energy. On March 5, 1990, the father and son team launched the final *Nitecap* program. Randy took on a large part of the show’s hosting demands. Jepko’s health and limited stamina necessitated that he and Randy split the duties each night. Jepko took the first shift from midnight to 3:00 a.m. Randy then took over for the final three hours from 3:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. Randy hosted the full show on Saturday to

¹⁷ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 21.

give Jepko additional rest.¹⁸ Randy had radio experience as he on occasion had filled in for his father on the original *Nitecap*. He knew the format well. He understood the business behind the microphone and had a trusted relationship with his father. The duo worked out an agreement with KTKK 630-AM in Salt Lake City to purchase the midnight to 6:00 a.m. time period.¹⁹ To promote the program, Jepko called several Utah newspapers hoping to get some publicity. He secured a face-to-face meeting with Lynn Arave, a media reporter for the *Deseret News*. Arave remembers that Jepko arrived at the newspaper's headquarters in the company of his son. Arave said that from the moment he met Jepko, "there was something about him."²⁰ Arave described it as an aura of self-confidence mixed with a congenial disposition. They promoted the show as the "legendary" talkmiester's return to the overnight airwaves. During the interview, Jepko expressed confidence in the venture, but Arave remembered that the host seemed to be "a man out of time" who was overly committed to his brand of radio despite the new directions of the industry.²¹

National broadcast magazines announced the show's revival with enthusiasm. "Herb is Back," *Billboard* reported.²² Jepko told the magazine that "it's certainly good to

¹⁸ Lynn Arave, "'Night Person' Jepko Puts His Radio Cap On Again," *Deseret News*, March 23, 1990, 6W-7W.

¹⁹ "Jepko's Back," *Billboard*, June 16, 1990, 21.

²⁰ Lynn Arave, interview by author on August 16, 2015, digital recording in possession of the author.

²¹ Arave, interview by author, August 16, 2015.

²² "Jepko's Back," *Billboard*, 21.

be back in the arena” and that despite the popular movement in radio to embrace controversial topics on talk programs, he maintained his long-held position that his show would avoid such subjects.²³ “It’s a fun show,” he said. “It’s different from the other talk shows, because we don’t rely on hype...we talk about what’s on people’s minds.”²⁴ Jepko and his son opted to keep the program as close to the original format as possible. Callers could talk for five minutes and were allowed discuss any topic as long as it was not offensive. Jepko had no plans to introduce another magazine, but he did allude to organizing trips and tours for his audience.²⁵

Like its predecessor, the final *Nitecap* struggled to find a foothold among the diverse late night audience.²⁶ Jepko, was unable recapture the earlier magic. Arave recalled that he tuned in a couple of times and remembered, “it just didn’t have any spark.”²⁷ Jepko’s congenial brand of radio was no longer viable to nighttime audiences. Despite his prior experience, and the wealth of knowledge he gained over a lifetime in radio, he refused to modify the *Nitecap* format, even slightly. Jepko’s inability to adapt set the show up for failure. The niche of listeners who still sought non-controversial and friendly overnight radio programming was neither large enough nor sufficiently affluent to attract interest or advertisers. The show struggled to generate the ratings to justify its

²³ “Jepko’s Back,” *Billboard*, 21.

²⁴ “Jepko’s Back,” *Billboard*, 21.

²⁵ Arave, “‘Night Person’ Jepko Puts His Radio Cap on Again,” 7W.

²⁶ Arave, interview by author, August 16, 2015.

²⁷ Arave, interview by author. August 16, 2015.

continuance. The venture failed within just a few months of its launch. For the third time in 11 years, a *Nitecap* show was canceled.

Jepko's passion, and his fierce loyalty to those it served, clouded his judgment.²⁸

Craig Wirth, a Jepko associate as well as a longtime radio broadcaster, believed that Jepko struggled to inject new life to a dated broadcast programming concept.

I can tell you, I've been in broadcasting 46 years, and you have to reinvent yourself every now and again. And he [Jepko] couldn't reinvent himself. Herb was the same song...the same nighty-Nitecaps, the same magazine...and he picked a demographic that would disappear and younger listeners weren't coming in.²⁹

In moments of honest reflection, Jepko understood that audiences were not enthusiastic about his brand of radio and were uninterested in switching back after committing to other forms of late night entertainment.

We were not unique anymore. There were other stations, other networks. ABC came on doing Ray Briem, my good friend out of KABC in Los Angeles. Larry King is now doing it. They were suddenly springing up here and there and now of course you can do it by satellite. Anybody can do it...but you need some sort of format that the people will approve of and participate in to a point where it can achieve economic status.³⁰

Jepko was discouraged by the overall direction of national talk radio. He had fought against the pervasive mindset held by many in radio that to achieve approval and become financially lucrative, talk radio needed to be controversial. He believed that *Nitecap* was a positive contrast to that mentality, even if subsequent attempts to revive it

²⁸ Denton, oral history by author, May 26, 2015.

²⁹ Craig Wirth, oral history by author October 7, 2015, digital recording of the interview in the possession of the author.

³⁰ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 18.

had failed. He challenged the industry to avoid controversial, argumentative talk and he was critical of those who continued to use such tactics to maintain higher audience ratings. He asserted that “a lot of them are failing” to provide their audiences with a sense of friendship and inclusivity.³¹ He believed that radio hosts had a responsibility to provide a space where listeners felt welcome and free from criticism.

I always felt that you should be in very personal contact with your people and make them feel welcome, and not put them down, not embarrass them, not criticize them. And everybody else, it seems, almost without exception, whether it be in a big city or a small city, they think you’ve got to be controversial . . . or it’s dull and people won’t like it and won’t listen to it.³²

Jepko’s final failure devastated his confidence. He watched begrudgingly as his contemporaries built upon the format he pioneered and reaped the rewards he had strived so long to obtain. He was especially disheartened by the success of Larry King, who indirectly succeeded him at Mutual Broadcast System.³³ The network had first replaced Jepko in 1977 with Long John Nebel and his wife Candy, but within a year of their signing, Nebel’s health deteriorated and he died of cancer on April 10, 1978.³⁴ The network scrambled to find a replacement and hired King, a young Miami-based broadcaster, to lead the overnight franchise on January 30, 1978.³⁵ King broadcast the

³¹ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 19.

³² Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 24.

³³ “Historical Note,” Mutual Broadcasting System Records, George Washington University.

³⁴ United Press International, “Long John Nebel, Broadcaster, Dies,” *The Hour*, April 11, 1978, 6.

³⁵ Associated Press, “When Radio Host Larry King Talks, Millions Listen,” *Wilmington Morning Star*, April 21, 1982, 3C.

first nine weeks of the show from Miami before he relocated to Washington, D.C. to be closer to Mutual headquarters.³⁶ *The Larry King Show* was initially carried on only 28 Mutual affiliates, perhaps because some stations were scared off by *Nitecap*'s lack of success. However, King slowly gained affiliates' confidence and in just three years the number of stations broadcasting the show rose to 250.³⁷ King had achieved the blockbuster outcome that Jepko had wanted for *Nitecap*. It was a bitter pill to swallow. But King was willing to do what Jepko was not. King relocated to Washington, D.C. to be close to Mutual headquarters, he heeded the network's directive to tackle controversial issues and his debate style was more attractive to younger audiences. As a result, advertising revenue followed. He frequently had on celebrities and allowed callers to ask them questions. *The Larry King Show* was described as an opportunity for listeners to "hear things . . . they've never heard before."³⁸ It was a winning formula for both Mutual and King. Jepko said, "They told him [King] what they wanted and he agreed, and of course he's very successful today. They offered me the same thing, but I turned it down, and so here I am in Salt Lake City playing records and there he is making a million dollars a year."³⁹

³⁶ Associated Press, "When Radio Host Larry King Talks, Millions Listen," *Wilmington Morning Star*, 3C.

³⁷ Associated Press, "When Radio Host Larry King Talks, Millions Listen," *Wilmington Morning Star*, 3C.

³⁸ Mutual Broadcasting System Advertisement in *Broadcast* magazine, October 8, 1980, 69.

³⁹ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 14.

The way King achieved his success irritated Jepko. King's edgy radio style reinforced the beliefs that talk radio formats needed to be contentious or outrageous to score big ratings. Jepko believed the opposite. King told the Associated Press "all good talk shows must entertain as well as inform. Any show that doesn't do that isn't worth its salt."⁴⁰ He did not single out *Nitecap* as unworthy of listeners' time, but it was evident that he felt much differently about talk radio than Jepko. Despite frustrating circumstances, Jepko felt he made the right choice, and if given the opportunity again, he would make a similar decision.⁴¹ He was philosophically opposed to Mutual's demands and their preference for controversial talk. It is clear that he harbored strong feelings about his dismissal from the Mutual network and King's success only deepened those emotional wounds.⁴²

Jepko's Final Years

By 1990, the careers of King and Jepko were on separate trajectories. King was in his 12th year hosting the overnight show on Mutual, and anchoring a second hour-long television program on CNN called *Larry King Live*.⁴³ Jepko was out of radio and living in a small apartment in Salt Lake City. Patsy found steady work at the Utah Department of

⁴⁰ Associated Press, "When Radio Host Larry King Talks, Millions Listen," *Wilmington Morning Star*, 3C.

⁴¹ Jarvik, "Small Talk Show," *Deseret News*, 1C; also Arave, "'Night Person' Jepko Puts His Radio Cap on Again," 7W.

⁴² Wirth, oral history by author October 7, 2015.

⁴³ "Historical Note," Mutual Broadcasting System Records, George Washington University.

Aging and the couple survived on her salary.⁴⁴ Jepko's drinking had become more pronounced as he grappled with the collapse of his radio career. The news that their youngest son, Herb Jepko Jr., was dying added to his grief.⁴⁵ Herb Jr. was living in San Diego, California when Jepko and Patsy learned he had contracted AIDS. Devastated, Jepko struggled with the reality that the only child he shared with Patsy was on his deathbed. He sank deeper into alcoholism to dull the tragic end he knew was coming. On July 15, 1992, Herb Jepko Jr. died.⁴⁶ His father "had a terrible time watching his son die," Patsy recalls.⁴⁷ Jepko was completely dispirited.⁴⁸ "Nobody deserved to see what happened to his kid. Nobody," said Craig Wirth. "It just killed him. It crushed him [Jepko]."⁴⁹

Over the next several years as Jepko's alcoholism intensified, it put a strain on his marriage and his health.⁵⁰ His arthritis worsened and the pain was difficult to bear.

⁴⁴ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 22.

⁴⁵ "Herb Jepko, Friends of Insomniacs Across the Nation, Dies at Age 64," *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 2, 1995, B3.

⁴⁶ Herbert Earl Jepko Jr. (Jep) U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007, [database online], Ancestry.com, Provo, UT.

⁴⁷ "Herb Jepko, Friends of Insomniacs Across the Nation, Dies at Age 64," *Salt Lake Tribune*, B3.

⁴⁸ Tim Larson, oral history by author, July 30, 2015.

⁴⁹ Wirth, oral history by author, October 7, 2015.

⁵⁰ Wirth, oral history by author, October 7, 2015.

Family members reported that he was “despondent” over the failures of *Nitecap*.⁵¹ The losses compounded with his health and drinking issues, which made it difficult to go back to work. It is unlikely he actively pursued a job in radio after the 1990 fall of *Nitecap*, but it is certain that he never worked in radio again. A memorial plaque presented to the Jepko family by the Utah Broadcasting Hall of Fame indicates that he “signed off in 1990.”⁵² His third attempt at the *Nitecap* was his last effort as a broadcaster. He was too emotionally and physically incapacitated to return to the airwaves.

By 1995, he was placed into hospice care.⁵³ On March 31, 1995, 11 days after his 64th birthday, Herb Jepko passed away from liver disease.⁵⁴ “The last words he said to me,” Patsy remembers, “were ‘I love you.’”⁵⁵ He was laid to rest at Wasatch Lawn Memorial Park on April 4, 1995 in Salt Lake City under the shadow of the Wasatch Mountains he refused to leave. In a gesture that suited the personality of the genial

⁵¹ “Herb Jepko, Friends of Insomniacs Across the Nation, Dies at Age 64,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, B3.

⁵² Joseph Buchman provides an annotated summary of the June 3, 2003 Hall of Fame induction on his Jepko tribute website at <http://www.nitecaps.net/ubahalloffame.htm>; also see the association’s website for more information about the Utah Broadcasters Hall of Fame at <http://www.utahbroadcasters.com>.

⁵³ Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

⁵⁴ Herbert Earl Jepko, U.S., Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007, [database online], Ancestry.com, Provo, UT.

⁵⁵ “Herb Jepko, Friends of Insomniacs Across the Nation, Dies at Age 64,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, B3.

Jepko, Patsy asked that instead of sending flowers, friends contribute to the Humane Society of Utah or to the state's Homeless Shelters.⁵⁶

The Name of Herb Jepko

Jepko's death occurred 31 years after he first started the *Nitecap* show at midnight on February 11, 1964, and 16 years after the cancellation of the first *Nitecap* in 1979. His star power had faded over the years and his death did not garner the media attention associated with a man of his accomplishments. However, Jepko left an indelible mark on talk radio programming. He was one of talk radio's early pioneers. A broadcasting "genius" as Wirth described him.⁵⁷ As host of *Nitecap*, Jepko captivated millions of listeners each night.⁵⁸ He presided over hundreds of gatherings attended by tens of thousands of committed fans. He talked with the great entertainers and politicians of the day and many supported the show. Ronald Reagan, when he was serving as Governor of California, was reportedly a fan and a card-carrying member of the NIA.⁵⁹ Former Vice President Hubert Humphrey tuned in occasionally. Humphrey told Jepko that he listened to the program when he was serving as a U.S. Senator from Minnesota as a way to "pick up the grassroots attitude and feeling of the American people."⁶⁰ Jepko received a

⁵⁶ "Herb Jepko, Friends of Insomniacs Across the Nation, Dies at Age 64," *Salt Lake Tribune*, B3.

⁵⁷ Wirth, oral history by author, October 7, 2015.

⁵⁸ Crewdson, "Cut in All-Night Radio Show Has Insomniacs Muttering in the Dark," *New York Times*, 14.

⁵⁹ Associated Press, "Party Line for the Lonely," *Post-Crescent*, September 12, 1971, A2.

⁶⁰ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 6.

personal invitation to the White House, although he did not indicate if he attended or who extended the offer.⁶¹ Politicians who appeared on the show or at *Nitecap* sponsored events included Governors Tim Babcock of Montana and Dewey Bartlett of Oklahoma.⁶² Jepko's admirers in Hollywood included: Pat Boone, Roger Williams, Hugh O'Brien, and Ted Lewis who all listened to the show and appeared as guests.⁶³ The Osmond Brothers once serenaded his audience.⁶⁴ The *New York Times* reported, "one in twenty Americans had listened to the program."⁶⁵

Jepko enjoyed his fame and initial financial success, but he professed that was not as important to him as his audience.⁶⁶ He was driven by his relationship with fans, which he often described as one big family.⁶⁷ He told James Bapis of the United Press International that his program "had given a ray of hope and friendship to people who are alone, without friends, or family."⁶⁸ Overnight radio personality Rollye James commented that one of Jepko's most important qualities was his "ability to form that one-

⁶¹ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 25.

⁶² Associated Press, "Party Line for the Lonely," *Post-Crescent*, A2.

⁶³ Associated Press, "Party Line for the Lonely," *Post-Crescent*, A2.

⁶⁴ *Wick*, February, 1970, 4.

⁶⁵ Crewdson, "Cut in All-Night Radio Show Has Insomniacs Muttering in the Dark," *New York Times*, 14.

⁶⁶ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 25.

⁶⁷ Dan Piller, "Nitecaps 'Big, Happy' Family," *The Lincoln Star*, October 8, 1967, 11.

⁶⁸ James Bapis, "Radio Amateur Has Big Audience," *The Daily Independent*, September 1, 1965, 27.

on-one connection” with listeners.⁶⁹ He held an influence over their lives. Jepko believed that over 600 marriages occurred as a result of the show.⁷⁰ The *Los Angeles Times* reported that a man named Bud, who was living in a remote cabin outside of Yellowstone National Park, had skied to a payphone so that he could call Jepko to report on his upcoming marriage to a woman in the Philippines who he had met through their membership in the NIA.⁷¹ Listeners claimed his show literally saved lives. Jepko recalled that a caller dialed into the show ready to commit suicide. After several tense minutes, Jepko successfully convinced the caller to seek professional counseling instead. Members of the *Nitecap* community who had experienced similar suicidal feelings called in and provided support for the caller.⁷² These moments allowed Jepko to discuss issues surrounding mental health and advocate for ways to overcome it. He cared deeply for his listeners and they revered him for it. One fan told a reporter that Jepko was “God’s gift to people.”⁷³ He galvanized a group of people who felt marginalized by society and provided them a place where they felt accepted, needed, and valued.

In 1979, Elaine Jarvik of the *Deseret News* was writing a profile of Jepko. The two met at the NIA headquarters in Salt Lake City so Jarvik could conduct an interview.

⁶⁹ James and Buchman, *The Rollye James Show*, February 10, 2004, digital recording, Joseph Buchman Collection.

⁷⁰ Jepko, oral history by Larson, 1986, 22.

⁷¹ William Gildea, “Night Voices: The Nation’s Dial-A-Friend,” *The Washington Post*, December 14, 1976, B1 & B7.

⁷² Bennett, “Who is Herb Jepko,” Joseph Buchman Collection, Alpine, UT.

⁷³ Bennett, “Who is Herb Jepko,” Joseph Buchman Collection, Alpine, UT.

During this exchange, a group of fans from Colorado stopped in for an unannounced visit. Jepko stopped the interview and took a moment to speak with them. Before they left, Jarvik asked the visitors what Jepko and *Nitecap* meant to them. A man said, his voice cracking with emotion, that “ever since Herb Jepko has been on the air, it hasn’t mattered that we’re retired or alone. We’re no longer outcasts.”⁷⁴ Fans routinely expressed these kinds of sentiments. A woman told the *Los Angeles Times* that Jepko “had done more for people than any could imagine.”⁷⁵ *Nitecap* was much more than just a radio show for those who tuned in.

The sense of community and involvement exhibited by *Nitecap* fans was attractive to radio executives who sought to create programming that resonated with listeners. The show’s success spawned numerous recreations. In the early 1970s, WCAU in Philadelphia began broadcasting *The Bill Corsair Show*. The program’s tone was singularly gentle, and it was described by a media critic as being for the “lonely who are bored but not sad. More entertaining, if less compelling, than *Nitecap* of Herb Jepko.”⁷⁶ Around the same time, KDKA, Pittsburgh aired *The Jack Wheeler Show*. It was characterized as a six-hour, midnight to dawn telephone show that was a “departure from ... controversial, heavy, issue-oriented shows.”⁷⁷ Wheeler’s show was reflective of

⁷⁴ Jarvik, “Small Talk Show,” *Deseret News*, 1C.

⁷⁵ Brown, “Main Street Mainstay,” *Los Angeles Times*, Q32.

⁷⁶ “For the Lonely Young,” *The Des Moines Register*, March 11, 1973, 3-TV.

⁷⁷ “Jack Wheeler’s Midnight to Fun Show,” *The Des Moines Register*, March 4, 1973, 3-TV.

Jepko's foundations. Even in the late 1980s, stations were still trying to duplicate the program. KOMO in Seattle broadcast their version of *Nitecap* called the *Overnight Show* hosted by Jaynie Dillon. KOMO management admitted that they "based it upon KSL/Salt Lake's '*Nitecap*' show with Herb Jepko."⁷⁸ Dillon even organized a fan club for listeners and published a regular newsletter to keep the community updated.⁷⁹ In spite of their best efforts, radio executives realized that it was difficult to achieve Jepko's success. Most of the signals on which these programs were broadcast did not have the range of KSL and that limited listenership. Network programming made capturing late night listeners' attention even more difficult. Executives seeking to duplicate *Nitecap* underestimated the amount of effort and monetary resources required to galvanize and organize overnight audiences. Jepko had spent considerable resources publishing a magazine and organizing conventions, rallies, and tours to keep the *Nitecap* community vibrant and growing. "He was a genius in what we now call interactive media," said Craig Wirth.⁸⁰

In the years since his death, Jepko has been honored numerous times for his contributions to talk radio. The National Radio Hall of Fame announced in 2000 that Jepko was nominated as a finalist in the "Syndicated/Pioneer" category. The achievement award recognized Jepko's efforts and legitimized his work. It is especially noteworthy that he was nominated in the pioneer category. A number of other candidates

⁷⁸ Donna Brake, "The Reigns of Seattle," *Radio and Records*, March 14, 1986, 52.

⁷⁹ Brake, "The Reigns of Seattle," 52.

⁸⁰ Wirth, oral history by author October 7, 2015.

were submitted for the award alongside Jepko, including *Lone Ranger* announcer Fred Foy, and actor Elliott Lewis.⁸¹ Ultimately, the award went to Foy, but Jepko's work was nationally recognized. In a testament to the foundations set by Jepko, a number of radio personalities who were beneficiaries of his success have been inducted into the hall of fame: Larry King, Long John Nebel, Art Bell, Howard Stern, Don Imus, Bruce Williams, and Rush Limbaugh.⁸² The foundations of their nationwide call-in talk radio success were all based on Jepko's earlier pioneering efforts and the popularity of *Nitecap*.

In 2003, he was posthumously inducted into the Utah Broadcaster's Hall of Fame. Patsy attended the ceremony, as did his daughter Kitty Brown and other friends and associates of the show.⁸³ Patsy spoke at the induction and in her remarks she described her involvement as "quite an adventure" and that Jepko would have been pleased to receive the award. Patsy was presented a plaque that, among other things, read: "Herb Jepko pioneered national talk radio."⁸⁴ In 2010, a number of benefactors, led by friend Joseph Buchman, established the Herb Jepko Memorial Scholarship Fund in his memory at the University of Utah.⁸⁵

⁸¹ "Street Talk," *Radio and Records*, April 21, 2000, 30.

⁸² A complete listing of the National Radio Hall of Fame inductees can be accessed at <http://www.radiohof.org/inductees.htm>.

⁸³ Buchman, annotated summary of Jepko's Hall of Fame Induction, The Herb Jepko Collection, Joseph Buchman Collection, Alpine, UT.

⁸⁴ Patsy Jepko, annotated summary of Jepko's Hall of Fame Induction, Joseph Buchman Collection, Alpine, UT.

⁸⁵ For inquires about the Herb Jepko Memorial Scholarship contact the Development Office at the University of Utah.

Talk radio hosts have been vocal in their praise for *Nitecap* and its influence on their professional careers. Rollye James, host of her own successful national late night call-in talk program, called *Nitecap*, the “granddaddy of them all.” She believed that talk radio personalities, especially overnight radio hosts, owed Jepko gratitude for his work developing the format.⁸⁶ Art Bell, whose program *Coast to Coast AM* was broadcast on more than 600 affiliates and had millions of nightly listeners, recalled an encounter with *Nitecap* in his youth that made an indelible impression on him.⁸⁷ While hitchhiking across America as a teenager in the early 1960s, Bell carried with him a small transistor radio. He remembered finding *Nitecap* on the AM dial and falling asleep listening to the ruminations of *Nitecap* callers.⁸⁸ Bell was captivated by the fans that dialed in from all parts of the country. He thought, “his will be a really big format in America.”⁸⁹ Years later, when Bell, began his own show he incorporated elements from *Nitecap*, including a heavy reliance on callers, the publication of a monthly newsletter, the use of a weekly fill-in host, and dedicated phone lines.⁹⁰ But it was Arch Madsen, Bonneville International Corporation’s founder, who authored the most poignant tribute to Jepko.

⁸⁶ James and Buchman, *The Rollye James Show*, February 10, 2004, digital recording, Joseph Buchman Collection, Alpine, UT.

⁸⁷ Frank Ahrens, “The Resolved Mystery of Art Bell: Radio Host was Upset by Attacks on Character,” *The Washington Post*, May 29, 1999, C1.

⁸⁸ Art Bell, email message to Joseph Buchman, August 12, 2003, The Herb Jepko Colelction, Joseph Buchman Collection, Alpine, UT.

⁸⁹ Bell, email message to Buchman, Joseph Buchman Collection, Alpine, UT.

⁹⁰ Bell, email message to Buchman, Joseph Buchman Collection, Alpine, UT.

On the program's 15th anniversary banquet on February 11, 1978, Madsen was given an opportunity to share a few words to the large audience that had gathered to pay tribute to *Nitecap*. In a few words, he defined Jepko's legacy.

Of all our human relationships, the most difficult of all is effectively communicating with each other . . . and that is why this program, to me, is a very special one. You (Jepko) are a pioneer and that is not an easy role to play in life. You conceived the concepts of the program when radio was on its way out and, by many, considered to be as obsolete as the buggy whip. Nighttime radio was considered utterly, practically worthless. There is a great renaissance in radio that you helped build. In 1978 all-night radio sparkles for more (listeners) than it did in the so called golden age of radio. Herb, we salute you for making millions realize that they are precious and that they do matter."⁹¹

Herb Jepko, host of all-night *Nitecap* radio show, changed radio programming. He provided the country with the first nationwide all-night talk radio program and filled the void that existed on the late-night airwaves. He realized his dream of providing nocturnal companionship to listeners around the world. His deep and inviting voice was the last sound many people heard as they drifted off to sleep or returned home from shift work. For at least six hours each night, people from all across the country had a place where friendships abound and loneliness had no place.

⁹¹ "Banquets," *Wick*, 1979, Volume 14, Number 1, 11.

Chapter 8

Conclusion: Jepko's Foundations

Herb Jepko broadcast the first nationwide overnight call-in talk radio show from Salt Lake City, Utah on February 11, 1964. The program, *Nitecap with Herb Jepko*, was broadcast on KSL 1160-AM, a designated clear channel station with a transmitter operating on 50,000 kw of power. The station could be heard at times across the United States, as well as parts of Europe, the South Pacific, and Central America. While KSL's clear channel status made it possible to broadcast its signal across vast distances, what made it unique as a distribution platform was its location. The transmitter was ideally positioned high in the Rocky Mountains, which reduced physical obstructions, and allowed the signal to travel farther. Its proximity to the Great Salt Lake acted as a natural booster for the frequency, giving it an estimated 100,000 kw of power.¹ As a result, KSL's signal was one of the farthest-reaching in the United States. At night, with little interference, *Nitecap* was transmitted to radio sets around the world. For many listeners it was the first program available to them at that late hour. By 1968, four years into the program's tenure, Jepko attracted nearly one million listeners tuning in each night.² Thousands of fans attended regional rallies and annual conventions. More than 10,000 people subscribed to his *Wick* magazine. The *Nitecap* program was a bona fide hit among late night listeners.

¹ "High Power Transmitter of KSL Goes on the Air," *Broadcasting*, November 1, 1932, 9.

² "Insomniac Oriented Broadcast Will Publicize San Bernardino," *The San Bernardino County Star*, B-1.

In 1974, *Nitecap* caught the attention of C. Edward Little, President of Mutual Broadcasting System. Little was considering expanding Mutual's programming to become the first national network to offer 24-hour programming. The network signed Jepko to a distribution contract in late 1975 and *Nitecap* became the first all-night call-in talk show to be syndicated by a national network. The partnership became a turning point in talk radio history. *Nitecap* had proved that overnight programming warranted network syndication. From 1975 to the spring of 1977, an estimated 10 million nightly listeners, on close to 100 different stations around the country, tuned in each night. But the partnership between Jepko and Mutual became strained by 1977, as advertisers were reluctant to spend money on a show whose audience was believed to be older and less affluent. The revenue shortage chilled affiliate interest and growth stalled. To address the problem, Little asked Jepko to change the show's content and discuss more controversial issues, which Little thought would be more attractive to younger audiences. In addition, he asked that Jepko move to Washington where the show would be less expensive to distribute. Jepko balked at Little's demands and *Nitecap* was dropped from the network in 1977. The show continued on ten NCRN affiliates, but it had incurred significant debt. Jepko anticipated a spike in revenue as a result of the Mutual partnership, so he spent a significant amount of money on a new studio and more employees. But that financial increase never materialized. *Nitecap*, overextended and struggling to attract new listeners, lost momentum. Then, in February 1979, KSL nullified its affiliation with the show after 15 years. Unable to distribute the program nationwide, Jepko ended the show in August 1979.

Despite *Nitecap*'s unfavorable ending, the show was instrumental in setting the foundations as the country's first national call-in talk radio program. This dissertation pieces together the program's history, from a show that few thought would succeed to the nationwide phenomenon it became. Jepko's ingenuity, which included strategic partnerships, aggressive expansion plans, and community-building tools spurred the show's growth. He developed marketing programs outside the radio show to create a community-like bond among listeners separated by distance. These programs included tours, rallies, national conventions, individual Nitestand gatherings, and the *Wick* magazine. *Nitecap* legitimized the overnight time period. It demonstrated that call-in talk radio could serve as a viable format for nationwide programming and that it could unite listeners who were separated by distance and culture differences. The first *Nitecap* techniques are still in use today, including assigning phone lines to specific areas of the country, gatherings and social functions held outside the broadcast, traveling shows, Per Inquiry sales strategy, block air time purchasing by independent contractors, and the use of auxiliary resources to connect with audiences away from the radio show. The program's success opened the door for other overnight programs and it remains an important foundation in the evolution of talk radio programming.

Overnight Talk Radio

Nitecap emerged at a time in radio history when industry executives were exploring alternative ways to find new listeners. Television had captured the attention of Americans, and radio was scrambling to remain relevant. Radio revenue was in decline as was audience listenership. Executives began to experiment with new formats in an effort to attract new audiences, but their efforts focused primarily upon the more popular,

and lucrative, daytime hours. The industry overlooked overnight radio as an opportunity for growth because the time period was generally considered to be “utterly, practically worthless.”³ They reasoned that most listeners were asleep during the overnight hours and that it made little sense to commit financial resources to developing programming if few would tune in. The radio stations that were able to offer all-night programming were limited by the FCC’s clear channel designation, which restricted the number of stations broadcasting at night. This limitation, coupled with the belief that the overnight period was worthless, stymied overnight radio’s development.

In 1960, Jepko was hired by KFI, a clear channel station in Los Angeles, California and one of the few stations in the country that offered an all-night program. His short time at KFI was revelatory. He was introduced to the potential of late night radio. He discovered that listeners did exist at that hour and that they wanted quality programming. He realized that these listeners were passionate, easily engaged, and loyal. However, little was known about the effectiveness of late-night radio, and if there were advertisers willing to buy airtime at this hour.⁴ Because overnight radio was thought to be for local radio audiences radio executives shied away from it. Jepko realized that this hesitancy created an underserved audience and he saw an opportunity capitalize on it. But he knew that radio executives were right on at least one point: it would be difficult for an all-night radio show to be economically successful if it was limited to a single local audience. The pool of overnight listeners was much smaller than what was available

³ “Banquets,” *Wick*, 1979, Volume 14, Number 1, 11.

⁴ Armin, “Night Owls Flock Together,” *Independent Press-Telegram*, 28.

during the daytime. However, if these listeners, who were dispersed over a wider geographical area, could be united into a large community they would represent a sizable and lucrative audience. He believed that for overnight programming to be successful it needed to be done on a level much greater than local radio. He needed two things to make that happen: a program and a platform strong enough to disseminate the show to nationwide audiences.

Jepko found his opportunity when he was hired at KSL in 1962. The station had the ability to reach nationwide audiences in a way that few stations in the country could. In 1964, he successfully convinced station management to allow him to broadcast the first all-night call-in show. His success was immediate. His vision of uniting overnight audiences was ingenious. Tens of thousands of letters poured in each week.⁵ He took phone calls each night from listeners across the country. Night owls and shift workers rallied behind the program and his nightly audience ballooned to 10 million nightly listeners.⁶ Late night listeners finally had a program available to them. Jepko's efforts disproved the myth that overnight radio was unviable; instead, his show demonstrated that listeners would tune into overnight programming, and that from this listening audience a program could generate enough sales to justify its existence. *Nitecap* proved that overnight programming was a part of the solution for radio programmers looking for new audiences and new revenue streams.

⁵ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 11.

⁶ Broder, "Small-Talk Show," *New York Times*, 29; Jarvik, "Small Talk Show," *Deseret News*, 1C.

National Call-in Talk Radio

Jepko opened up the overnight hours to national programming, but his use of caller-driven programming was likewise foundational. Prior to *Nitecap*, the call-in format was thought to be a poor fit for nationwide audiences. Two-way interactive talk was believed to work best in local programming where hosts and audiences shared Mutual interests and were motivated to communicate with each other. Radio executives reasoned that audiences were simply too fragmented and the regional and culture barriers too diverse for the format to succeed on a national level. Why would a listener from Bend, Oregon care about the life of someone in Naples, Florida? There was nothing to connect the callers together aside from their Mutual interest in a radio show. The idea of national audiences calling a single radio station, likely hundreds, maybe even thousands, of miles away to speak with a host for a few minutes seemed far-fetched. It was believed that talk radio best functioned as a point-to-masses medium, where a single host could communicate with thousands, even millions, of listeners. This format was used successfully by programs like President's Franklin D. Roosevelt's Fireside Chats or Father Coughlin's fiery sermons on CBS, and later, on his own independent network.⁷ Two-way talk was thought to add little value and only detract from the discourse. As a result, the stations or networks capable of offering national programming did not seriously pursue the format.⁸

⁷ Ronald H. Carpenter, *Father Charles E. Coughlin: Surrogate Spokesman for the Disaffected*, (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1998), 13.

⁸ For more on understanding talk radio audiences see Angela Cora Garcia, *An Introduction to Interaction: Understanding Talk in Formal and Informal Settings*, (New York, NY: Bloomsbury: New York, 2013), 1-23.

Most radio stations had little reason to create their own national programming. They were focused on listeners within their immediate reach, where most of their advertising revenue was produced. Furthermore, few signals had the range to reach national audiences. And even if a station's signal was strong enough to allow for a nationwide call-in talk show, telephone technology made the logistics extremely difficult. Some local deejays found rudimentary ways to work around the problem but it was impractical to take a long distance call live on air.⁹

In the 1950s, direct-distance dialing emerged, which allowed people to place long-distance phone calls directly from their home or business telephone without the help of a switchboard operator. By the 1960s, direct-distance dialing was widely available to Americans and it became an important tool in connecting the country. The ease by which listeners could place long-distance phone calls made a nationwide call-in show plausible, but the technology was ignored by the radio industry. Executives still did not understand its value. Jepko held a different opinion about the technology. He recognized the appeal of a nightly nationwide conversation. He believed that if listeners were presented the opportunity to communicate with the host and other listeners, even if they lived thousands of miles apart, it would be embraced. Jepko became the first talk radio host to employ the two-way format and his intuition proved correct. Listeners responded in force. For six hours each night, his phone lines were backlogged with callers trying to get on the show. Some waited on hold for hours each night.¹⁰ Patsy and her Jepko

⁹ Wayne Munson, *All Talk: The Talk Show in Media Culture*, (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1993), 36.

¹⁰ Broder, "Small-Talk Show," *New York Times*, 29.

worried about the long distance charges callers incurred, but fans ignored the cost.¹¹

Some callers tried unsuccessfully for months before finally getting through. He had to install multiple phone lines and assigned phone numbers to specific regions of the country to manage all the calls he received.

Jepko took advantage of technological advancements that made long distance calling more available and affordable for his vast listening audience. He showed that listeners did care about communicating with others outside their locality and that they were highly motivated to call in to the program despite differences in time, region, ethnicity, religion, politics, and culture. He proved that the call-in format could increase audience engagement, add depth and meaning to the dialogue, and create a sense of community among listeners from diverse geographical areas. He said that each night he broadcast his show he felt he was among a large family of listeners. Each party was concerned and interested in the other.¹² Listeners reinforced these ideas. Margie Kohler said she was elated that she could communicate with “so many people in the world just like me.”¹³

The nationwide call-in format Jepko successfully pioneered is still used today in national talk radio as a way to create an interactive community of listeners and to heighten engagement in the show. The format is especially prevalent on national news and sports talk programs, where hosts frequently allow callers to express their opinions.

¹¹ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 10.

¹² Bennett, “Who is Herb Jepko,” Joseph Buchman Collection.

¹³ Bennett, “Who is Herb Jepko,” Joseph Buchman Collection.

Art Bell and Rollye James, both long time talk radio personalities, credited Jepko with introducing the format to radio audiences.¹⁴

KSL-AM

Jepko's success would not have been possible without KSL, as he used KSL resources, partnerships, and relationships to advance his goals. He was inspired by the growth at Bonneville International Communication (BIC) and influenced by its Corporate President, Arch Madsen. Madsen's vision was that BIC would grow to become a global telecommunications company. He had big ideas and bold plans. He was energetic, resourceful, and inventive in accomplishing these goals. He was caught up in this excitement and it influenced how he managed his own company. He showed that he was willing to take risks. Madsen recognized this trait he shared with Jepko. Located in Jepko's personal papers at the University of Utah is a handwritten note given him by Madsen. The note reflects the deep mutual respect between the two men. The note contains an illustration of two people with clubs in their hands in the act of beating the word "idea." The caption reads: "new ideas are constantly in danger of being beaten to death - by the ignorant - and by those whose apple carts they upset." Madsen signed this note: To Herb Jepko, who knows, who REALLY knows, what this means. Best Wishes, Arch Madsen.¹⁵ Jepko's bold thinking and strategic decisions helped the show grow from a small overnight show to a nationwide program of reportedly 10 million listeners.

¹⁴ Bell, in an email to Buchman, Joseph Buchman Collection, Alpine, UT.

¹⁵ Inventory of Herb and Patsy Jepko Certificates, Tim Larson papers, Accn. 2649, Tim Larson Papers, folder 1, University of Utah Special Collections and Archives, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, UT.

Jepko was able to pursue his national agenda because of his unique contract with KSL. Shortly after his arrival at the station he persuaded executives to let him host the experimental program. KSL, unwilling to assume the financial risk, acquiesced but required that he purchase the airtime from the station. He resigned as a fulltime employee and to become an independent contractor. The agreement placed much of the risk on Jepko personally, but it also became an advantage for him. It is likely that if KSL produced the show their interests would have focused on their local audience and not in developing the show into a nationwide program. But because he owned the rights to the show, he was free to focus on his national strategy. His independent status stipulated that he maintain full editorial and distribution control of the program. He was free to broadcast the program on other stations, which he did at considerable personal risk and effort in 1968 with the creation of the independent radio network, Nitecap Radio Network (NCRN). The network expanded the reach of program into parts of the country where KSL's signal was not as strong or faced stiffer competition from competing signals. The network was a defining moment for him professionally, as well as for the national call-in talk radio format. Syndicating *Nitecap* to other stations demonstrated that the format's appeal extended beyond KSL's audience. Jepko struggled at times to keep the network in operation, but it helped to broaden the fan base and bring in advertising revenue. *Nitecap* was heard via the NCRN on stations in Arizona, California, Washington, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Baltimore, and New York. For many of the stations, such as WHAS in Louisville, Kentucky, it marked the station's entry into 24-hour programming and provided listeners their first introduction to the call-in format. Jepko negotiated the same arrangement with his affiliates that he had with KSL. Stations had used similar

independent contracts before *Nitecap*, including KSL, but Jepko helped establish its use as a way for independent broadcast operations to get their content on the radio airwaves.

Jepko's Youth

The research revealed that in Jepko's youth and early radio career, two areas of his life which had previously been unexamined, influenced his style of radio. Events in his childhood impacted his motivation to create, and aggressively expand, a program that could provide companionship to millions of overnight listeners. He felt a strong connection with people who were lonely and friendless because he dealt with similar emotions as a youth. He felt abandoned by both his birth mother and adoptive mother. Even his father, whom he loved deeply, left him in the care of others for a period of several years while the war veteran recovered from old wounds. As a result of these experiences, Jepko developed sensitivity to those who suffered from feelings of isolation and exclusion. He was driven to alleviate these feelings through a radio program that provided nightly companionship.

I enjoy this job more than anything I have ever done. I guess it's because all my life I've wanted to help people. As a young man I studied medicine until lack of finances compelled me to drop out of school. If, through this program, I can help combat some of the loneliness, which surrounds so many lives, I shall feel it has been more than worthwhile.¹⁶

Jepko believed that *Nitecap* was the antidote to loneliness and he wanted to share it with as many people as possible. He was so committed to this ideal that when the tone of the show came under fire by Mutual executives, he rebuffed their overtures because he feared that he would ostracize this group of people. His unyielding stance was a factor in

¹⁶ Herb Jepko Show, Americana Collection, 16.

the program's eventual demise, but he was deeply committed to keeping *Nitecap* inclusive to all people, even if it jeopardized the show's success.

An examination of Jepko's pre-*Nitecap* history revealed that his passion for broadcasting developed during his military service. His position as a communication specialist with the Army provided an introduction to the medium and offered him his first lessons in broadcast production. He enjoyed the work so much that he decided to enter the broadcast profession at the close of his service. In 1955, he accepted his first professional radio job at KLEN 1050-AM, a small station in Killeen, Texas. This marked a period of transience in his life as he searched for opportunities to advance his career. Jepko's willingness to take risks is evident as he moved between various jobs during his first years in radio. He worked in four different states: Texas, Arizona, California, and Utah. He worked in several managerial capacities including promotions director, assistant general manager, and station manager. These experiences proved invaluable later in his career, when he served as *Nitecap's* general manager, lead salesman, and promotional director. He relied on these managerial skills as he hired personal, ran the business operations, created promotional tools, developed strategic goals, balanced complex financial arrangements, and closed deals with advertisers. The nearly ten years of executive experience he accrued prior to his arrival at KSL in March 1963, were crucial to the business side of his program.

Patsy's Role

It would be difficult to consider Jepko's success without acknowledging the participation of his second wife, Patsy. From the moment she married Jepko in 1960, she became an integral part of his life and career. She described him as the love of her life

and after years of marriage, he could still make her heart flutter.¹⁷ They had a deep and affectionate marriage. Their relationship became strained towards the end of his life as his addiction to alcohol worsened, but she was at his bedside as he passed. His last words expressed his strong love for her.¹⁸ Patsy was a central figure in his personal life and she was active in the *Nitecap* business as well. She was instrumental in helping develop the original overnight show concept. Patsy's parents recalled that *Nitecap* was the shared vision of both their daughter and Jepko.¹⁹ In newspaper reports, she was described as "Jepko's cheerful inaudible broadcasting buddy."²⁰ *Nitecap* was very much a joint venture between the two and she was a vital presence behind the scenes.²¹ In the show's early years, she was responsible for making sure product orders were filled and delivered to listeners. Each night after putting the 6 children to bed, she would retire to the family dinner table to fill product orders while she listened to her husband on the radio.²² In these early years, Patsy managed the correspondence but as the listening audience grew, and the volume of letters increased to thousands a week, the work became so consuming that she became ill from exhaustion.²³ Jepko hired help to meet the demands of the

¹⁷ Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

¹⁸ "Herb Jepko, Friends of Insomniacs Across the Nation, Dies at Age 64," *Salt Lake Tribune*, B3.

¹⁹ Little and Little, "*Reminiscing*," 6.

²⁰ Brown, "Main Street Mainstay," *Los Angeles Times*, Q32.

²¹ Bennett, "Who is Herb Jepko," Joseph Buchman Collection, Alpine, UT.

²² Buchman, oral history by author, July 23, 2015.

²³ *Wick*, June, 1965, 13.

business and Patsy oversaw their work. In 1975, the staff totaled nearly 30 people. Once her children were raised, she took on a greater role in the business, serving as Vice President of the Nitecap International Association.²⁴ She remained the central figure in the operation throughout the fifteen-year tenure of the show. Her duties included managing the company's finances and the workflow of the office staff. Marshall Small, who worked for a time as Sales Director, remembers going to Patsy to discuss sales strategies and to secure funds to entertain clients.²⁵ Those who worked at the NIA offices in the mid-1970s believed that they were better acquainted with Patsy than with Jepko, who slept during the day and did not come into the office until the afternoon. She was described as a passionate and capable leader. She drove the staff to work hard and prided efficiency.²⁶ She could be warm and personable to fans. She often accompanied her husband to conventions, on rallies, tours, and at other social functions. Jepko was the visionary and the face of the organization, but it was Patsy working behind the scenes to make sure the day-to-day operations were completed.

Why Has Jepko Been Forgotten?

Despite Jepko's contributions to overnight radio, he has remained in obscurity. The evidence yields some clues as to the reasons for this anonymity. In the years following the show's collapse in 1979, the show faded from the memories of listeners

²⁴ Brown, "Main Street Mainstay," *Los Angeles Times*, Q32.

²⁵ Small, oral history by Larson, 1988, 63.

²⁶ Denton, oral history by author, May 26, 2015; also, Stirland, oral history by author, April 8, 2015.

and historical works have given it only a perfunctory examination. Why has it not been given more attention? The answer is multi-layered. *Nitecap*'s success arrived quickly and while it ran as a national talk radio program for nearly 20 years, the show's greatest moment of national exposure was relatively short. *Nitecap* moved into the national spotlight beginning in the mid-1970s with the Mutual partnership, even though the show was broadcast to nationwide audiences since 1964. The Mutual partnership signified the first time that a national network offered a full slate of 24-hour programming and the first time a nationwide call-in talk radio program was syndicated. News of the partnership was published in the national press and hailed as an important moment in radio history.²⁷ Unfortunately, the partnership dissolved less than two years after its inception and the show floundered in the aftermath of the cancelation. As a result, Jepko's national spotlight faded quickly and he took a backseat to those who followed him.

Larry King, who indirectly took over Jepko's overnight timeslot on Mutual, cast a long shadow over the format. King is mistakenly believed to be the person responsible for its success because he presided over the overnight airwaves for several decades on Mutual and garnered critical acclaim for his longevity and popularity. While there is little doubt that King is among those most responsible for the proliferation of the format, it is clear from this work that he built upon the foundations set by Jepko. In the late 1980s and 1990s, other call-in talk radio programs, such as those hosted by Don Imus, Rush Limbaugh, and Howard Stern, attracted national audiences and their success

²⁷ Brown, "Main Street Mainstay," *Los Angeles Times*, Q32; Crewdson, "Cut in All-Night Radio Show has Insomniacs Muttering in the Dark," *New York Times*, 14.

concealed Jepko's efforts. Radio programming was transient and as people moved about they promoted their own works, not radio's history.

The show's content and audience also contributed to its anonymity. The program's soft, congenial tone, with its hours of conversation, made *Nitecap* appointment listening for millions of people; but, it failed to provide as deep a cultural impact as other controversial debate talk programs. Consider radio historian's Marc Fisher's description of the show:

The show was the C-Span of all-night radio, but scrubbed clean of partisanship - a dispassionate forum for the anonymous, a collective expression of the insomniac's idle thoughts, fragments of daily experience flitting through the minds of too many people losing too much sleep. Jepko - his voice a soothing, Midwestern baritone - never judged, never criticized, never made fun. He didn't tell stories; he simply presided over a nonstop stream of verbal pitter-patter that sounded like a radio version of the quiet chuckles that passed for humor in the pages of Reader's Digest.²⁸

When *Nitecap* quietly left the air in 1979, the show struggled to maintain its legacy as a programming trailblazer. Jepko's personal health issues and problems with alcohol compounded its lack of relevance. He was never able to fully champion the program's legacy. He was deceased when he was inducted into the Utah Broadcasters Hall of Fame, nor was he present for his nomination to the National Radio Hall of Fame. Promoting his place among the influential broadcasters in radio history has been left to others, which is problematic. *Nitecap* listeners were typically older and less affluent. Many were lonely, shut-ins, and without many friends. They had limited means to support the show, and his most vocal supporters likely passed away in the years

²⁸ Fisher, "*Something in the Air: Radio, Rock, and the Revolution that Shaped A Generation*," 116-117.

following the show's cancellation. *Nitecap* was left with few listeners alive in the succeeding decades to carry on the memory of the show. In the decades that passed since *Nitecap* first left the airwaves, the show has been overlooked as an important step in the development of talk radio programming.

Call for Future Research

This dissertation adds new knowledge on Jepko's foundations in talk radio, but others who contributed to the development of overnight radio have gone unexamined. Barry Gray, the New York City deejay who is believed to be the first to take calls live on air in the late 1940s, is an example of a broadcast pioneer who has received little attention from scholars. Likewise, Long John Nebel, another New York radio host and a successor to Jepko at Mutual, is a worthy subject. Nebel was renowned for his storytelling and his obsession with the paranormal. A selection of Nebel's personal correspondence and show recordings are housed at the Syracuse University.²⁹ The collection could yield a trove of previously unexamined information on the host.

There are surprisingly few published histories on early clear channel stations. These stations held significant influence over listeners in their communities in matters of politics, culture, and economics. Their histories are intertwined with radio history. Unfortunately, the existing body of work dedicated to these stations is sparse, as too few of these influential stations have received attention from historians. Woolsey's dissertation on KSL-AM, and Litchy's work on Cincinnati's WLW, illustrate the impact

²⁹ "Long John Nebel Papers," Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries, Syracuse, NY.

of these stations on their communities and their contribution to the medium's development.³⁰ A better understanding about these stations is warranted.

Mutual Broadcasting System lacks a definitive history. Mutual helped grow overnight call-in talk radio when they agreed to syndicate *Nitecap*, but there are other contributions worth exploring. The network created two of the first networks exclusively dedicated to minorities, and their programs like the *Lone Ranger* and *The Shadow*, were cultural icons.³¹ Mutual's news division was among the most esteemed during the golden years of AM radio. Its cooperative arrangement between stations was unique and it helped it become the country's largest network for many years. Mutual has a large collection of historical materials located in special collections at The George Washington University. The collection would provide a starting point for a scholarly pursuit.

Further study is needed on the advancement of long-distance calling and its impact on radio and other forms of mass communication. This concept is discussed in this dissertation but not in the depth it deserves. Prior to this technology, national radio was relegated to a point-to-masses medium, meaning that those behind the microphone could reach nationwide audiences but listeners were limited in ways to return the communication. Two-way communication on national programming was difficult, time-consuming, and expensive to be of use to national programmers. Jepko changed this

³⁰ Wolsey, "The History of Radio Station KSL from 1922 to Television," Michigan State University; Lawrence Wilson Lichty, "The Nation's Station: A History of Radio Station WLW," (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 1964).

³¹ "Historical Note," Mutual Broadcasting System Records, George Washington University; also for a history of the black and networks offered by MBS see Ray Broadus Browne and Pat Browne, *The Guide to United States Popular Culture*, (Madison, Wisconsin: Wisconsin University Press, 2001), 97.

when he successfully employed the technology on *Nitecap*. Yet, that does not tell the full story of the technology's development, its origins, and how talk radio personalities, other than Jepko, have used it to foster two-way communication. Such an important development in talk radio programming deserves greater consideration.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

This bibliography focuses on the general literature and the environment that surrounded the life and career of Herb Jepko. These sources provided a history of radio, talk radio programming, and overnight radio programming. Specific documentation is provided in the notes.

Abramson, Albert. *The History of Television: 1880 to 1941*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarlan 1987.

Barnouw, Erik. *A Tower in Babel to 1933*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1966.

_____. *The Golden Web 1933-1953*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1968.

_____. *Image Empire from 1953*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Blanchard, Margaret A. *History of the Mass Media in the United States: An Encyclopedia*. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998.

Bliss, Edward. *Now the News: the Story of Broadcast Journalism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Briggs, Assa. "Social History and Human Experience." The Grace A. Tanner Lecture Series in Human Values. Cedar City: Southern Utah University, 1984.

Buchman, Joseph. *Jepko, Herb 1931-199:5 U.S. Radio Talk Show*, in *The Museum of Broadcast Communications Encyclopedia of Radio*, Volume 3 ed. Christopher H. Sterling. Taylor & Francis, 2004.

Chayefsky, Paddy, Fred Coe, Delbert Mann, Rod Serling, Fielder Cook, Ira Levin and Alex Segal. *The Golden age of Television*. [United States]: Criterion Collection, 2009.

Cox, Jim. *American Radio Networks: A History*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, 2009.

_____. *Radio After the Golden Age: The Evolution of American Broadcasting Since 1960*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, 2013.

_____. *Sold on Radio: Advertisers in the Golden Age of Broadcasting*, Jefferson, NC: Mcfarland and Co., 2008.

Dominick, Joseph R. *The Dynamics of Mass Communication: Media in the Digital Age*. New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2009.

- Douglas, Susan J., *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination: From Amos 'n' Andy and Edward R. Murrow to Wolfman Jack and Howard Stern*. New York: Times Books, 1999.
- McCleave, Easterly and William Mcleave. *The Belgian Rattlesnake: The Lewis Automatic Machine Gun: A Social and Technical Biography of the Gun and Its Inventors*. Cobourg, Ont., Canada: Collector Grade Publications, 1998.
- Edwards, Bod. *Edward R. Murrow and the Birth of Broadcast Journalism*. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley, 2004.
- Ewbank, Henry Lee and Sherman P. Lawton. *Broadcasting: Radio and Television*. New York: Harper, 1952.
- Fisher, Marc. *Something in the Air: Radio, Rock, and the Revolution that Shaped a Generation*. New York: Random House, 2007.
- Fornatale, Peter, and Joshua E. Mills. *Radio in the Television Age*. Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1980.
- Foust, James C. *Big Voices of the Air: The Battle Over Clear Channel Radio*. Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 2000.
- Godfrey, Donald. *Methods of Historical Analysis in Electronic Media*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006.
- Godfrey, Donald, and Frederic A. Leigh, *Historical Dictionary of American Radio*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1998.
- Gomery, Douglas. *A History of Broadcasting in the United States*. MA: Blackwell Pub, 2008.
- Halper, Donna. *Icons of Talk the Media Mouths that Changed America*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2009.
- Hilliard, Robert L., and Michael C. Keith. *The Broadcast Century and Beyond: A Biography of American Broadcasting*. Boston: Focal Press, 2001.
- Hilmes, Michele. *The Television History Book*. London: British Film Institute, 2003.
- Keith, Michael. *Sounds in the Dark*, Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 2001.
- Küng, Lucy, Robert G. Picard, and Ruth Towse. *The Internet and the Mass Media*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2008.

- Lichty, Lawrence Wilson, and Malachi C. Topping. *American Broadcasting: A Source Book on the History of Radio and Television*. New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1975.
- Munson, Wayne. "All Talk: The Talkshow in Media Culture." Philadelphia, Pa: Temple University Press, 1993.
- Murray, Michael D. *Encyclopedia of Television News*. Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1999.
- Routt, Edd, James B. McGrath, and Fredric A. Weiss. *The Radio Format Conundrum*. New York: Hastings House, 1978.
- Shingler, Martin and Cindy Wieringa. *On Air: Methods and Meanings of Radio*. London: Arnold, 1998.
- Stephenson, Alan R., David E. Reese, and Mary E. Beadle. *Broadcast Announcing Worktext: A Media Performance Guide*. Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2013.
- Sies, Luther F. *Encyclopedia of American Radio, 1920-1960*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2000.
- Sterling, Christopher H., Cary O'Dell, and Michael C. Keith. *The Biographical Encyclopedia of American Radio*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Sterling, Christopher H., and Michael C. Keith, *The Museum of Broadcast Communications Encyclopedia of Radio*. New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004.
- Sterling, Christopher H., and John M. Kittross, *Stay Tuned: A History of American Broadcasting*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002.
- VanderMeer, Philip R. *Desert Visions and the Making of Phoenix, 1860-2008*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010.

JOURNAL ARTICLES

- Anderson, Maurice and L. Oriana Linares. "The Role of Cultural Dissimilarity Factors on Child Adjustment Following Foster Placement." *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34, no. 4 (2012): 597-601.
- Benjamin, Louise. "Working It Out Together: Radio Policy from Hoover to the Radio Act of 1927." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 42, no. 2 (1998): 221-236.

- Birdwhistell, Terry L. "WHAS Radio and the Development of Broadcasting in Kentucky, 1922—1942." *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* (1981): 333-53.
- Bierig, Jeffery and Dimmick, John. "The Late Night Radio Talk Show as Interpersonal Communication." *Journalism Quarterly* 56, no. 1, (1979): 92-96.
- Bondad-Brown, Beverly A., Ronald E. Rice, and Katy E. Pearce. "Influences on TV Viewing and Online User-Shared Video Use: Demographics, Generations, Contextual Age, Media Use, Motivations, and Audience Activity." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 56, no. 4 (2012): 471-93.
- Crittenden, John. "Democratic Functions of the Open Mike Radio Forum." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (1971): 200-210.
- Esplin, Fred. "The Church as Broadcaster." *Dialogue* (1977): 42.
- Godfrey, Donald. "Canadian Marconi: CFCF, The Forgotten Case." *Canadian Journal of Communication* 8, no. 4 (1982): 56 – 71.
- _____. "Senator Dill and the 1927 Communications Act." *Journal of Broadcasting* 23, no. 4 (Fall, 1979): 477-489.
- Godfrey, Donald, & Louise Benjamin. "Radio Legislation's Quest Backstage Negotiator: Wallace H. White, Jr." *Journal of Radio Studies* 10, no.1 (June 2003): 93-103.
- Jacobsen, Pearl S. "Utah's First Radio Station." *Utah Historical Quarterly*. Utah State Historical Society 32, (1964):133.
- Jacobson, Susan. "Does Audience Participation on Facebook Influence the News Agenda? A Case Study of the Rachel Maddow Show." *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 57, no. 3 (2013): 338-55.
- Lau, Anna S Alan J. Litrownik, Rae R. Newton, and John Landsverk. "Going Home: The Complex Effects of Reunification on Internalizing Problems Among Children in Foster Care." *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 31, no. 4 (2003): 345-358.
- Lepore, Jill. "Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography." *Journal of American History* (2001): 129-144.
- Mendelsohn, Harold, "Listening to Radio," *People, Society and Mass Communication* (1964): 239-248.
- McChesney, Robert, W. "The Battle for the US Airwaves, 1928–1935." *Journal of Communication* 40, no. 4 (1990): 29-57.

Perry, Stephen D., "Securing Programming On Live Local Radio: Wdz Reaches Rural Illinois 1929–1939," *Journal of Radio Studies* 8, no. 2 (2001): 347-371.

Ptacek, R., H. Kuzelova, and L. Celedova. "Social and Emotional Loneliness in Children in Foster and Institutional Care." *European Psychiatry*, 26 (2011): 338.

Romney, Miles. "The Voice in the Night Unheard by Scholars: Herb Jepko and the Genesis of National Talk Radio." *Journal of Radio & Audio Media*, issue 21, no. 2 (2014): 272-289.

Turow, Joseph. "Talk Show Radio as Interpersonal Communication." *Journal of Broadcasting And Electronic Media* 18, no. 2 (1974): 171-180.

PERIODICALS AND NEWSPAPERS

Newspapers checked for Herb Jepko References (1932-1995).

New York Times

Los Angeles Times

Washington Post

Salt Lake City. *Desert News* and *Salt Lake Tribune*

Ogden. *Standard-Examiner*

Prescott. *Daily Courier*

Phoenix. *The Arizona Republic*

Selected publications of newspaper or magazine articles that reference Jepko.

"1979 In Review: February." *Radio and Records* (December 1979): 77.

"A Fond Farewell to the King." *R&R: Radio and Records* (May 1994): 34.

"A Radio Special." *Deseret News*, February 23, 1967, B3.

"Actions on Motions." *Broadcasting*, (February 1959): 74.

Advertisement for KSL. *Broadcasting*. (October 1964): 32.

Ahrens, Frank. "The Resolved Mystery of Art Bell: Radio Host was Upset by Attacks on Character." *The Washington Post*, May 29, 1999, C1.

"Along The Clear Channel." *Billboard* (August 1982): 34.

- “Announcing the Birth of a New Radio Station.” *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*, November 8, 1961, 11A.
- Arave, Lynn. “KLUB Goes from No-News to a Live-News Operation.” *Deseret News*, October 12, 1985, 7D.
- _____. “KCPX is Now KEMX and has an ‘Easy Mix’ Sound.” *Deseret News*, August 5, 1988, W3.
- _____. “‘Night Person’ Jepko Puts His Radio Cap On Again.” *Deseret News*, March 23, 1990, 6W-7W.
- _____. “News and Notes from Radio Land.” *Deseret News*, November 22, 1984, W12.
- Armin, Julie. “Night Owls Flock Together.” *Independent Press-Telegram*, September 18, 1955, 28.
- “Arizona: Directory of AM and FM Stations,” *Broadcasting Telecasting: 1957 Yearbook-Marketbook Issue* (1957): 54.
- “Arizona: Directory of AM and FM Stations” *Broadcasting Telecasting: 1958 Yearbook-Marketbook Issue* (1958): A-239.
- “As Ever, Sadie.” *The Daily Journal*, October 22, 1966, 4.
- Atta, Dale Van. “Nitecaps with Herb ‘n Friends.” *Deseret News*, June 25, 1976, 1B.
- Associated Press. “Nitecap Cancellation Announcement.” *Panama City News-Herald*, November 20, 1977, 141.
- _____. “Millions Are Drawn to Late-Night Radio Show.” *The Daily Times-News*, November 12, 1975, 7B.
- _____. “Party Line for the Lonely.” *Post-Crescent*, September 12, 1971, A2.
- _____. “Talk Show Host Returns to Air.” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, October 7, 1982, D7.
- _____. “When Radio Host Larry King Talks, Millions Listen.” *Wilmington Morning Star*, April 21, 1982, 3C.
- _____. “Back on the Air.” *The Free Lance-Star*, October 8, 1982, 30.
- Bapis, James. “Radio Amateur Has A Big Audience.” *The Daily Independent*, September 1, 1965, 11B.
- Benson, Ezra Taft. “Do Not Despair.” *Ensign*, (November, 1974): 66.

- “Boy Scout Campaign Has Raised 4,558 to Date.” *Arizona Daily Sun*, May 23, 1957, 3.
- Brake, Donna. “The Reigns of Seattle.” *Radio and Records* (March 1986): 52.
- “Broadcasting Schedule for Monday.” *Deseret News*, 6 May 1922, 1.
- Broder, Mitch. “Small-Talk Show is Big Draw in Wee Hours.” *New York Times*, February 23, 1975, 29
- Brown, James. “Herb Jepko Main Street Mainstay: Everyman—Leader of Nitecaps.” *Los Angeles Times*, May 25 1975, Q32.
- “C. Edward Little: Out to Boost MBS’ Batting Average.” *Broadcasting* (February 1972): 63.
- Carmody, John. “Broadcast Notes.” *Washington Post*, February 27, 1977, D10.
- Crewdson, John M. “Cut in All-Night Radio Show has Insomniacs Muttering in the Dark.” *New York Times*, July 18, 1977. 14.
- “Division Music Show Appears on TV.” *The Armored Sentinel*, August 5, 1954, 3.
- “Economic Value of Rally is Cited.” *Desert Sentinel*, October 18, 1967, 1.
- “Editor’s Comments.” *The Indian Journal*, March 26, 1970, 1
- Eftimiades, Maria. “The Talk Show Host is also a Businessman and a Former Politician.” *New York Times*, July 2, 1989, NJ8.
- “Farewell Review Honors Gen. Biddle.” *The Armored Sentinel*, March 20, 1959, 1.
- “Fates and Fortunes.” *Broadcasting* (May 1959): 90.
- “Fireworks at FCC Hearing,” *Billboard* (June 1946): 14.
- “For the Lonely Young.” *The Des Moines Register*, March 11, 1973, 3-TV.
- Foust, James. "Technology Versus Monopoly: The Clear Channel Group and the Clear Channel Debate 1934–1941" (1997): 218-229.
- “Ft. Hood Out to Maintain Army’s Jinx Over Navy.” *The Armored Sentinel*, December 15, 1955, 6.
- Gildea, William. “Night Voices: The Nation’s Dial-A-Friend.” *The Washington Post*, December 14, 1976, B1 & B7.

- Grimm, Glenna. "Editor's Mailbag: Night Owls." *Eugene Register-Guard*, February 26, 1959, 10A.
- Gunn, Steve. "No Religion or Politics Please." *The Evening Independent*, July 27, 1977, 1B.
- Gunnell, Opal. "A Night Owl, Flies to Coast, Honolulu." *The Evening Courier*, June 25, 1956, 3.
- "He Helps Them Get Through the Night." *The Des Moines Register*, March 11, 1973, 3-TV.
- "Hello! I'm Herb Jepko." *The Salt Lake Tribune*, June 23, 1964, 18.
- "Herb Jepko, 'Friends of Insomniacs Across the Nation, Dies at Age 64.'" *The Salt Lake Tribune*, April 2, 1995, B3.
- "Herb Jepko Show Stresses Non-Confrontational Subjects." *Daily News-Miner*, November 22, 1975, A-9.
- "Humane Society Fails to Find New Store Site." *Deseret News*, September 22, 1980, 2D.
- "Insomniac Oriented Broadcast Will Publicize San Bernardino." *The San Bernardino County Star*, November 4, 1968, B-1.
- "Jack Wheeler's Midnight to Fun Show." *The Des Moines Register*, March 4, 1973, 3-TV.
- Jarvik, Elaine. "The 'Small Talk' Show of Midnight Radio." *Deseret News*, August 22, 1979, 1-2C.
- "Jepko's Back." *Billboard* (June 1990): 21.
- Kasindorf, Jeanie. "King Maker: Emceeding the Election." *New Yorker* (October 1992): 53 -59.
- "KDJI: Arizona, United States AM Radio Stations." *The Radio Annual and Television Year Book*, (1964): 142
- "KIRO in Mutual Fold." *Broadcasting* (March 1973): 55.
- "KRIZ Opening: Sept. 1 Set for Debut." *Broadcasting*, (July 1950): 38.

- Lande, James and Tracy Waldon. "Reference Book of Rates, Price Indices, and Household Expenditures for Telephone Service." Washington, D.C.: Industry Analysis Division, Common Carrier Bureau. 1997.
- "Look Who's Coming to Town on May 1st on KSL Radio." *The Salt Lake Tribune*, March 12, 1963, 19.
- Lundstrom, Joseph. "Midnight to Dawn Belongs to Herb Jepko." *Deseret News*, March 1, 1975, W7.
- "Meet the New Host of Crossroads." *The Improvement Era* 66 (March 1963): 191.
- "Mutual All-Night Open for Calls." *Broadcasting* (September 1975) 39.
- "Nitecaps Set Three-Day Convention." *The Daily Herald*, July 29, 1965, 4.
- "Nitecap International Group Holds Regional Meeting Sunday." *Greeley Daily Tribune*, May 27, 1971, 19.
- "Nitecaps to Attend Carmel Rally." *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, October 10, 1969, 4.
- "New Nitestand Group Organized." *The Waco Citizen*, July 29, 1971, 3.
- New York Telephone, *New York Magazine* (June 1977): A-33.
- "North High Seniors to Graduate Tonight." *The Phoenix Gazette*, June 2, 1949 (no page number listed).
- "Now! Mutual Radio Delivers Extra Profits." *Broadcasting* (November 1975): 69.
- O'Connor, John. "TV View: 'Overnight-Low-Keyed News for Late, Late Viewing.'" *The New York Times*, September 12, 1982, H29.
- Olson, Lynne. "Late Night Radio Program Tries to Fight Loneliness." *The San Bernardino County Sun*, September 13, 1971, A-11.
- "Parade Hour is Moved Up to 10." *Prescott Evening Courier*, November 9, 1934, 1.
- "Pastor Guest on Jepko Ruidoso Show." *El Paso Herald-Post*, June 23, 1966, C-1.

- Pearson, Howard. "Herb Jepko Going into 10th year." *Deseret News*, April 20, 1973, B9.
- _____. "For Insomniacs, Prime Time is 2 a.m." *Deseret News*, August 19, 1882.
- _____. "Jepko Show." *Deseret News*, June 11, 1977, D7.
- Piller, Dan. "Nitecaps 'Big, Happy' Family." *The Lincoln Star*, October 8, 1967, 11.
- "Radio 1975: Biggest Year in the Making." *Broadcasting* (September 1975): 23.
- "Radio Editor, Chronicle." *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 27, 1922, 8.
- "Radio Fan Club Faces Suit; County Says Bill Not Paid." *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*, July 24, 1977, 18.
- "Radio Log." *The Salt Lake Tribune*, April 2, 1963, 20.
- "Radio, TV Merger by the Church." *Deseret News*, September 5, 1964, B3.
- "Radio Station KANN." *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*, September 12, 1961, 4B.
- "Radio Programs" *Broadcast Programming and Production* (September-October, 1977): 34.
- "Radio Programs." *The Ogden Standard-Examiner*, May 15, 1962, 4B.
- "Salt Lake City Radio Station Plainly Heard." *Oakland Tribune*, September 15, 1922, 32.
- "Speeches Sent Broadcast by Deseret News Radio." *Deseret News*, May 8, 1922, 1.
- Stark, John. "As the CBS Morning News Withers, Nightwatch's Charlie Rose Gets the Thorny Job of Keeping it Alive." *People* 26 (October, 1986): 133.
- "Stations with Spanish Programming and Total Weekly Hours." *Broadcasting Telecasting: 1956 Yearbook-Marketbook Issue* (1956): 418.
- Stavitsky, Alan G. "9XM Talking: WHA Radio and the Wisconsin Idea." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 51, no. 3, (2007): 541-542.
- "Street Talk." *Radio and Records* (April, 2000): 30.
- "Telephones Discussed at Kiwanis Club." *Arizona Daily Sun*, April 16, 1957, 3.

- “Telephone Talkathon Heading for Phoenix.” *Arizona Republic*, November 3, 1967, 90.
- “Texas Radio Stations.” *Broadcasting Telecasting: 1956 Yearbook-Marketbook Issue*, (1956): 304.
- Tramer, Harriet and Leo W. Jeffres. "Talk Radio—Forum and Companion." *Journal of Electronic Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 27, no. 3 (1983): 297-300.
- “TV Schedule.” *The Salina Journal Entertainment*, September 18, 1983, 12-14.
- “The Casualty List.” *New York Tribune*, November 5, 1918, 9.
- “The City’s Voice in the Night Falls Silent.” *The Daily News of Los Angeles*, December 16, 2012, A1.
- United Press International. “Long John Nebel, Broadcaster, Dies.” *The Hour*, April 11, 1978, 6.
- Walker, Joseph. “Utah Radio Personality Danny Kramer is on the Move Again.” *Deseret News*, July 5, 2015.
- “Your Radio Dial.” *The Daily Sun*, February 11, 1958, B6.

ORAL HISTORIES

Complete citations of these interviews are in the endnotes. The author conducted the interviews unless otherwise noted.

- Arave, Lynn. August 16, 2015.
- Barr, Hugh. March 19, 2015.
- Bell, Art. Interview by Joseph Buchman, August 12, 2000.
- Buchman, Joseph. July 23, 2015.
- Christensen, Bruce. January 19, 2016.
- Denton, Craig. May 26, 2015.
- Gale, Don. January 28, 2016.
- Glindmeir, Frank. March 17, 2015.

Halper, Donna. April 2, 2015.

James, Roylle. Interview with Joseph Buchman, February 10, 2004.

Jepko, Herb. Oral history interview by Tim Larson, 1986.

Kimball, Edward (Ted). Oral history interview by Winnifred Margetts, 1985.

Korttnap, Kitty. April 15, 2015.

Kramer, Danny. October 1, 2015.

Larson, Tim. July 30, 2015.

Madsen, Arch. Oral history interview by Tim Larson, 1988.

Small, Marshall. Oral history interview by Tim Larson, 1988.

Stirland, Krik. April 8, 2015.

Wirth, Craig. October 7, 2015.

ARCHIVES, REPOSITORIES, AND MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS

Arizona Genealogy Archives. North Phoenix High School Yearbook. 1949. This archive contains Jepko's high school yearbooks. He is featured prominently throughout.

Americana Collection. Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. Provo, Utah. The papers contain promotional material and a short history of the *Nitecap* radio show. Jepko used the document as a promotional tool in 1968 to attract potential affiliates to the Nitecap Radio Network.

Herb Jepko Collection, Joseph Buchman private collection on Herb Jepko, Alpine, Utah. It is the largest and most extensive collection on Herb Jepko. Buchman acquired the materials through his own research and from donations from the Jepko family. The Buchman Collection contains a full edition of the *Wick* magazine.

Everett L. Cooley Oral History Project. J. Marriott Willard Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah. The project contains the oral history interviews of hundreds of Utah's prominent residents. A subset of the project focuses on the histories of the state's influential broadcasters. This collection contains the only known Jepko oral history as of the date of this publishing. Other histories in the collection referenced Jepko, KSL, and development of radio in the state of Utah.

- Long John Nebel Papers. Syracuse University Libraries. This collection contains documents and airchecks (recordings) of Nebel's life and career.
- Tim Larson Papers. J. Marriott Willard Library, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah. The Tim Larson Papers is one of the most comprehensive collections on the history of broadcasting in Utah. The files contain original reports and documents from Bonneville International Corporation and KSL. These sources provided the foundation for understanding KSL.
- Thunderbird School of Global Management Archives. Arizona State University Libraries, Tempe, Arizona. The archive contains newsletters published by Thunderbird Airbase and reference Metro's (Jepko's father) employment and duties.
- Mutual Broadcasting System Records. George Washington University, Washington, D.C. The Mutual collection contains information about the network and the many on-air personalities that have been employed by the network. Much of the archive's holdings are show recordings of Mutual programs.
- National Archives and Records Administration. Harry S. Truman Administration File, Elsey Papers.
- Records of the Adjutant General's Office, 1780's – 1917. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
- Texas State Historical Association. *Handbook of Texas Online*. The association has archived news reports about Fort Hood and the surrounding area. The paper published reviews on radio and TV productions that Jepko produced while serving at the base.
- United States World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Metro Jepko's military service records.
- Mexican Border Campaign Veterans Card File. Pennsylvania State Archives, Harrisburg, PA. Metro Jepko military records.
- United States Census Records. 1940. U.S. National Archives and Records Administration Federal Census, Washington, D.C.
- United States Department of Veterans Affairs. BIRLS Death File. Washington, D.C. Metro Jepko death information.

Utah State Historical Society. Utah Historical Quarterly. Salt Lake City, Utah. The archive contains documents that outline the birth of KZLN, which later became KSL. It also contains records detailing the *Deseret News*' vision for the station and explains how it became a fixture in Utah society.

Utah State Historical Society. The Eugene Jelesnik Photograph Collection. The collection holds many photos that Eugene Jelesnik took of a *Nitecap* rally in Las Vegas, Nevada.

DISSERTATION AND THESIS

Bick, Jane Horowitz. "The Development of Two-Way Talk Radio in America." University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 1987.

Lichty, Lawrence Wilson. "'The Nation's Station: A History of Radio Station WLW.'" The Ohio State University, 1964.

Linton, Bruce. "A History of Chicago Radio Station Programming, 1921-1931: With Emphasis On Stations WMAQ and WGN." Northwestern University, 1953.

Wolsey, Heber Grant. "The History of Radio Station KSL from 1922 to Television." Michigan State University of Agriculture and Applied Science, 1967.

INTERNET SOURCES

American Radio History archive. Accessed online at <http://americanradiohistory.com/index.htm>.

Herb Jepko Facebook page. Accessed online at www.facebook.com/herb.jepko.

Google News Archive. Accessed online at <https://news.google.com/newspapers>.

Consumer Price Index Inflation Calculator CPI. Accessed online at http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm.

National Archive. Accessed online at <http://www.archives.gov>.

United States World War I Draft Registration Cards. Accessed online at Ancestry.com.

United States Social Security Applications and Claims Index. Accessed online at Ancestry.com.

Utah Digital Newspapers, accessible at <http://digitalnewspapers.org>.

Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism. *The State of the News Media 2007: Radio Audience*. Accessed online at <http://stateofthemediamedia.org/2007/radio-intro/talk-radio>.

Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism. *The State of the News Media 2011: Data for All Talk Stations*. Accessed online at <http://stateofthemediamedia.org/2011/audio-essay/data-page>.

Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism. *The State of the News Media 2013, Audio: Digital Drives Listener Experience*. Accessed online at http://www.stateofthemediamedia.org/print-chapter/?print_id=13369.

APPENDIX A

HANDWRITTEN NOTE FROM MADSEN TO JEPKO

- 1837 Samuel F.B. Morse applied for the first patent on telegraph system (received 1840).
- 1897 Guglielmo Marconi forms the Wireless Telegraphy and Signal Company in England.
- 1901 Marconi sends signal across Atlantic, from St. Johns, Newfoundland to Cornwall, England.
- 1907 Lee De Forest begins radio broadcasting in New York
- 1912 U.S.S. Titanic sinks and proves the value of wireless transmission
- 1916 Forest radio broadcasts the first presidential election returns in New York
- 1919 General Electric forms Radio Corporation of America (RCA)
- 1920 KDKA becomes the first commercial radio station
- 1922 The "Jersey Journal" buys airtime on WAAM in Newark, New Jersey from midnight to 1:00 a.m. marking one of the first past midnight broadcasts. Thirty station on the air.
- 1922 KZN takes to the airwaves; later becomes KSL

- 1922 The *Jersey Journal* buys airtime on WAAM in Newark, New Jersey from midnight to 1:00 a.m. marking one of the first past midnight broadcasts
- 1926 NBC-Blue radio network is launched
- 1927 Radio Act of 1927 mandates that all commercial radio stations be licensed by the U.S. Government
- 1928 Clear, regional and local AM radio channels announced by the FRC. Paley purchase control of CBS.
- 1929 Four stations group together to form the Quality Network. The network would later become Mutual Broadcasting Systems
- 1928 KGFJ in Los Angeles becomes the country's first regular 24-hour radio station
- 1931 Herb Jepko is born in Hayden, Colorado.
- 1933 President Franklin D. Roosevelt begins his popular Fireside Chats.
- 1934 Jepko is placed in foster care for several years before reuniting with his father
- 1934 Communications Act of 1934 creates the Federal Communications Commission, and gives it power to govern radio and other forms of wireless communication.
- 1945 ABC becomes third radio network. Radio establishes itself as a significant national media force during World War II
- 1945 New York Deejay Barry Gray begins interviewing celebrities on his radio show and eventually takes their phone calls while live on air

- 1949 Jepko graduates from North Phoenix High School
- 1951 AT&T completes the first direct distance phone call between Englewood, N.J. and Alameda, California
- 1952 Jepko enters the Army and is stationed at Fort Hood
- 1952 Ben Hunter is hired by KFI in Los Angeles and begins broadcasting his overnight radio show, *Nite Owls*
- 1955 Jepko leaves the Army and finds work at KLEN, 1050 AM, Killeen, Texas
- 1956 New York's WOR moves Jean Shepard to the overnight time slot and he regales listeners with his monologues and stories
- 1957 Jepko relocates to Arizona; named Assistant General Manager at KVNA 960 AM, Flagstaff, Arizona
- 1958 Jepko is named general manager of KDJI 1270 AM, Holbrook, Arizona
- 1958 Jepko leases KHCD 1450 AM, Clifton, Arizona
- 1959 Jepko moves to Los Angeles, California; works as a promotion director at KFI 640 AM; gets first exposure to overnight radio; meets and marries Patsy Little Brown
- 1960 KABC in Los Angeles switches to an all-talk format becoming one of the first stations to completely embrace talk radio programming

- 1961 Jepko and his family move to Ogden, Utah; works as a sales director and afternoon radio deejay for KANN 1250 AM
- 1961 Jepko joins KCPX 1320 in Salt Lake City, Utah as sales manager and afternoon deejay
- 1962 The first communications satellite, "Telestar," is launched
- 1963 Jepko is hired by KSL to host *Crossroads*; later that year moves to the morning timeslot
- 1964 Jepko leaves full time employment at KSL and begins *Nitecaps with Herb Jepko*, the first national call-in talk radio program
- 1964 Bonneville International Corporation is created and Arch Madsen is named president
- 1965 Jepko creates the Nitecap International Association (NIA); organizes regional Nitestands chapters; hosts the first radio rally and first *Nitecap* Convention; introduces the *Wick* magazine
- 1965 *Nitecap* becomes the first talk radio show to utilize direct-distance dialing technology
- 1967 KSL cuts back *Nitecap* programming window by an hour
- 1967 Ray Briem begins his all-night show on KABC in Los Angeles

- 1968 Jepko creates the first Nitecap Radio Network (NCRN) with KXIV 1400 AM in Phoenix, Arizona; later signs WRFM in New York and KBIG in Los Angeles
- 1969 Participates in 5 NIA tours: East Coast, Canada, Europe, and Hawaii (twice)
- 1969 The NCRN is revived with the signing of KVOO 1170 AM, in Tulsa, Oklahoma
- 1969 *Nitecap* closes the year with an audience of 2 million nightly listeners and 200,000 NIA members.
- 1970 Jepko organizes the first *Nitecap* travel agency with Paul Dubois
- 1971 KVOO ends NCRN partnership 1971 C. Edward Little is hired by Mutual
- 1971 The *Wick* moves to a bi-monthly format
- 1973 Jepko signs WHAS in Louisville, Kentucky to the NCRN
- 1974 Adds WBAL in Baltimore, and KIRO in Seattle to the NCRN
- 1975 Jepko signs with Mutual Broadcast System (Mutual)
- 1977 Mutual drops *Nitecap* after Jepko refuses to move to Washington D.C. and tackle more controversial issues on the program

- 1977 Jepko revives the NCRN with 10 affiliated stations
- 1978 Mutual hires Larry King to take over the overnight franchise; Art Bell begins his late-night show Las Vegas West Coast AM, it would later be renamed Coast-to-Coast AM
- 1979 KSL cancels *Nitecap*
- 1979 *Nitecap* goes off the air
- 1981 NBC's TalkNet and ABC's Talk Radio are launched. These efforts signify the networks' first attempts at syndicating national overnight talk radio
- 1982 Jepko restarts his all-night show with a new title and new financing
- 1982 The show fails to gain traction and the second *Nitecap* show is terminated
- 1983 Jepko moves between several radio stations working mostly as a daytime deejay
- 1988 Rush Limbaugh begins his national talk radio show at WABC
- 1991 Jepko revives the *Nitecap* radio show with his son Randy; the show quickly flounders
- 1992 Herb Jepko Jr. dies and Jepko spirals further into alcoholism
- 1995 Jepko dies of liver disease at the age of 64
- 2000 Jepko is nominated to the National Radio Hall of Fame

2003 Jepko is inducted into the Utah
Broadcasters Hall of Fame

2010 Joseph Buchman creates a
scholarship in Jepko's name at
the University of Utah

APPENDIX B

HANDWRITTEN NOTE FROM MADSEN TO JEPKO

UNIV. OF UTAH LIBRARIES
NOTICE
THIS MATERIAL MAY BE
PROTECTED BY COPYRIGHT LAW
(Title 17 U.S. Code)



*Here's a new
idea for
the boys of
Utah
New ideas
are constantly
in danger
of being
beaten
to death
by the ignorant
and by those
whose apple
carts they
upset.*

**“New ideas are constantly in danger of being beaten to death
—by the ignorant
— and by those whose apple carts they upset.”**

APPENDIX C

FIRST ISSUE OF *WICK* MAGAZINE PUBLISHED JUNE 1, 1965

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NIT ECAP INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION

ISSUE 1, JUNE 1, 1965

the Wick



LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER



THE WICK PUBLISHING CO.
P. O. BOX 6108
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84106

June, 1965

Dear Reader:

You are about to embark upon a new experience in reading and viewing as you open the pages of your first copy of THE WICK. We at Wick Publishing hope that you will find this new magazine to be of great enjoyment to you and to all of your many Nitecap friends around the world.

The Wick Publishing Company has been licensed by the NIA to edit, print, and distribute this magazine for its membership. We are dedicated to an editorial policy of political and theological neutrality. We will maintain a strict adherence to the principles of the Nitecaps International Association (NIA), the purpose of which is to promote good will and friendship around the globe.

We may, at our own discretion, print articles contributed by our members who hold opposing viewpoints; and we will attempt to balance this in a just and fair manner. Please remember, however, that we take no stand with either side and will reiterate this from time to time in future editions.

This is your publication, and we here at Wick hope you will make your wants as to content known to us. We encourage and welcome your contributions. However, we are not obligated to print all material submitted and maintain the right to edit and delete as we see fit. Photographs should be of good quality, black and white preferred.

We again welcome you as a reader and contributor and hope that you will help us make THE WICK burn bright and clear.

Sincerely,

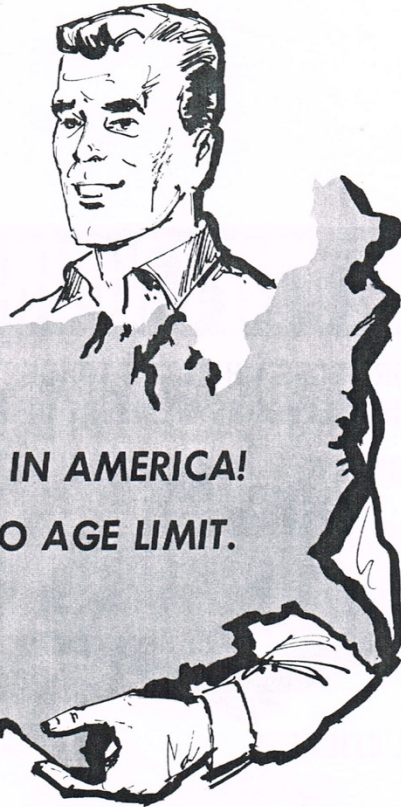
Thomas A. Little
Thomas A. Little
Publisher



HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO SAVE MONEY ON YOUR HOSPITALIZATION?

The Board of Directors of the Travelers Safety Club has recently selected and approved a very fine hospital plan designed to save you money. This plan is offered at special rates through one of the leading insurance companies in the nation. If you are not now a member of the Travelers Safety Club, our dues are only \$5.00 for a lifetime membership.

NOW AVAILABLE: EXCLUSIVE CLUB GROUP INSURANCE. Could provide you **SAVINGS UP TO 40%** on your Hospital, Surgical, Medical Expense Insurance, with **More Benefits** than you now have.



COMPARE WITH ANY PLAN IN AMERICA!

SURGICAL BENEFITS up to \$500.00
Miscellaneous Hospital Expenses up to \$300.00.
Maternity Benefits up to \$240.00.
Immediate First-day, First-dollar Coverage from policy date with **NO WAITING PERIODS** — except for maternity.

NO AGE LIMIT.

FIRST AID BENEFITS for emergency accident medical expense treatment anywhere, \$25.00.

Pays a Hospital Room and Board Benefit up to 365 days per each sickness or accident.

Up to 10 years' premium returned upon the accidental death of the principal insured.

For immediate information, please
**COMPLETE AND MAIL THE ATTACHED
 FORM NOW.** You will be glad you did.

**LOOK AT THESE LOW
 MONTHLY RATES
 FOR THIS PLAN
 (REGARDLESS OF AGE.)**

**Individual \$4.80 — Couple \$8.50
 Family \$11.65**

MAIL TODAY HERB JEPKO Telephone: 467-4059
 P. O. Box 6008 Salt Lake City, Utah 84106 Area Code: 801

Name..... Age.....
 Address.....
 City..... State.....
 Phone..... Married..... Single.....
 Thank You

CONTENTS

ARTICLES

Convention Time!.....	Herb Jepko	4
Article from THE EXHIBITOR.....	Viola B. Hutton	6
No Holds Barred.....	Frankie Nolan	7
Along the Trail.....	Ed Welch	8
NeahKahNie Mountain's Lost Treasure.....	Eleanor Wimber	10
Music Box Collection.....	Alice vanDiest	10

POETRY

A Letter to Dad.....	Viola M. Allen	5
The Wick Is Lit.....	Hazel Heppler	5
High Flight.....	John Gillespie Magee	5
Herbs.....	Mrs. J. F. Yerik	9
Nitecap Mania.....	Jim Anderson	12
Simon Says.....	Charles F. Simon	12

FEATURES

A Letter from the Publisher.....	2
A Message from the Governor of Utah.....	4
Introducing Gene Jelesnik.....	6
Recipe Column.....	9
Nitecaps in the Spotlight.....	11-12
The Jepko Family.....	13
A Message from Herb.....	13

COVER: HERB JEPKO, President of the Nitecaps International Association (NIA)

Printed in the U.S.A. by Sun Lithographing Company, Salt Lake City, Utah.

©The Wick Publishing Company
All Rights Reserved

For change of address, submit complete old and new address. Allow six weeks for change.

For your letters of comment to the Editor, please address your letters to:

Letters to the Editor
The Wick Publishing Company
P. O. Box 6108
Salt Lake City, Utah 84106



Editor and Publisher.....Thomas A. Little
Art Director.....Lo J. Andriese
Poetry Editor.....Barbara Little
Copy Editor.....Diana Jennings
Technical Director.....Lynn Birkinshaw
Photographic Director.....Bill Birkinshaw



SUBSCRIPTION RATES: One year.....\$4.00
Two years.....\$6.00

The Wick Publishing Company
P. O. Box 6108
Salt Lake City, Utah 84106

NAME.....

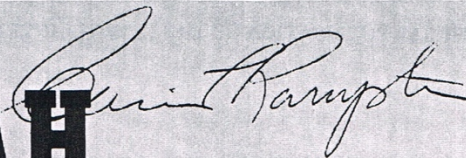
STREET.....

CITY.....

STATE.....

A MESSAGE FROM THE
GOVERNOR OF

UTAH



May 5, 1965

Mr. Herb Jepko, President
Nitecaps International Association

Greetings:

It is with great pleasure that I, as Governor of the State of Utah, welcome you and the members of the Nitecaps International Association (NIA) to the State of Utah for your first annual convention, to be held in our beautiful and historic capital, Salt Lake City, on July 30, July 31, and August 1, 1965.

I have read the charter of your organization and wish to commend you for the high purposes to which your organization is dedicated. Your promotion of friendship and understanding among peoples of all faiths, races, and nations and the public service projects carried on by your local Nitestand groups are indeed ideals and works which persons of good will everywhere can espouse.

The incomparable scenery of Utah's mountains, lakes, national and state parks, and the innumerable places of unique historic interest are all open for your edification and enjoyment. I urge all your members from outside Utah to stay with us throughout the convention and to enjoy association with the friendly people of our state for as long as possible.

Sincerely,

Calvin L. Rampton
Governor



Governor Calvin L. Rampton presents Herb with a proclamation of welcome to the Nitecaps in an official ceremony in the Governor's office at the Utah State Capitol.

CONVENTION TIME! JULY 30, JULY 31, AND AUGUST 1, 1965

Tom has asked me to say a few words about the first annual convention of the Nitecaps International Association in this first edition of *The Wick*, and I am delighted to do so.

Utah and, more specifically, Salt Lake City will have the red carpet out for all of our many Nitecaps when the thirtieth of July rolls around this year; for this will be the kickoff of the first Nitecap convention, which will be three fun-filled and friend-making days to remember. Nitecaps from all over the United States and Canada will gather together to meet each other, to enjoy convention activities, and to infect everyone around them with good-will and brotherhood.

We have a full slate of special activities planned for your entertainment during this three-day week-

end, and you will be able to select the individual activities in which you personally wish to participate while in Salt Lake City. The only thing we are not able to plan for is the weather, but it is usually very pleasant here during that time of year. We have set aside the evening of Saturday, July 31, as the night of our banquet activities. This is one event I hope all of you will be able to attend. In the next edition of *The Wick*, we'll have a complete listing of all activities for the entire three days of the NIA convention.

Nitecaps everywhere are urged to attend this first great convention. I'll be looking forward to greeting each and every one of you personally.

Very truly yours,
Herb Jepko

A LETTER TO DAD



Dear Dad,

Since Fathers' Day is near,
I take my pen in hand
To write the words I've never said:
"I think you're mighty grand!"
You know, I'm really grateful for
The fact I bear your name;
I'll always love and honor you,
And never cause you shame.

I'm sorry 'bout the times you've
Given up your car for me,
And I have done some planning so
This need no longer be.

If you would sign a little note —
'Twould only be a loan—,
Together we could find a car
To call my very own!

And, just to prove I am sincere,
I'll sign the note with you;
This letter with my signature
Can be my I.O.U.

I realize I'm still in school;
But I'm a man, you see;
And I will always do those things
Which make you proud of me.

I'm sure, as long as I may live,
To you I'll be indebted. . . .
In fact, on second thought, dear Dad,
It's better we forget it!

Your ever-loving son
By Viola M. Allen
Salt Lake City, Utah



"How to stay young," says Mr. and Mrs. John M. DeMoss, Nitecaps from Sun City, Arizona.

THE WICK IS LIT



(This verse won the prize from NIA this year,
and Hazel Heppler received a \$25 U. S. Sav-
ings Bond.)

One tiny ray of candlelight
May point the way from wrong to right,
So light your wick and take your stand
And serve our freedom-loving land.



KARL AND HELEN LITTLE



Pat's mother and dad will be with you in the next
issue with stories of their own. Look for them!



HIGH FLIGHT

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth
of Sun-split clouds and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of, wheeled and soared and
swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hovering there,
I've chased the shouting wind along and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air.
Up, up the long delirious, burning blue,
I've topped the wind-swept, heights with easy grace,
Where never lark nor even eagle flew;
And with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

By John Gillespie Magee, R.C.A.F.
Killed in action over England, 1942

Submitted by Peggy Robinson
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

INTRODUCING EUGENE JELESNIK



Eugene Jelesnik, a noted violinist as well as the conductor of the Salt Lake Philharmonic Orchestra, is also one of our prominent Nitecaps. Among his own compositions is the popular "J.F.K. March."

Mr. Jelesnik revealed that he was inspired to write this piece when John F. Kennedy, then a Senator from Massachusetts, was interviewed on Mr. Jelesnik's television program, "Talent Showcase." At that time, Mr. Jelesnik noted Mr. Kennedy's uniquely brisk and precise walk, which made him appear as if he were almost marching. Mr. Jelesnik decided immediately that he would compose a march in Mr. Kennedy's honor if he was elected to the Presidency.

John F. Kennedy, of course, did become the thirty-fifth President of the United States and first heard this now-famous march during his 1963 visit to Salt Lake City. On October 23, 1963, Mr. Jelesnik received a letter from Mr. Kennedy himself, in which the President stated: "I appreciate this thoughtful expression of your great musical talent."

**ROUTS MUGGERS,
PROWLERS, ATTACKERS!**



**USED BY AUTHORITIES,
CANVASSERS, NURSES,
NIGHT WORKERS . . .**

No bigger than a lipstick! The perfect weapon for purse — glove compartment — night stand! Stops aggression at the push of a button! Each REBUFF will "fire" up to 25 times . . . needs no refills! Laboratory and field tested proven 100% effective . . . shoots a liquid stream up to 15 feet with accuracy. Convenient to carry! Easy to use! Powerful enough and painful enough to send a thug running and screaming for help . . . yet produces no permanent damage.

**\$2-
P. P.**

**this ad 10¢
WORTH ON EACH Rebuff!**

POSTAGE PAID — SEND TO:

FRANK PESTER, 4084 W. 4865 So., Kearns, Utah

Article from "The Exhibitor" Magazine, a national publication of the motion-picture business, as reported by our own Nitecap, Viola B. Hutton:

SALT LAKE CITY — Local radio station KSL recently broadcast its "Night-Capers" program from Las Vegas with a telephone hook-up from Salt Lake City. Moderator was Herb Jepko and the master of ceremonies was Eugene Jelesnik. Stars appearing were Ted Lewis, Jonathan Winters, Jose Ferrer, Sarah Vaughn, Marvin Cohen, and many others. "The Exhibitor" correspondent Viola B. Hutton also appeared on the all-night program, which is intended as a good will gesture on a world wide basis.

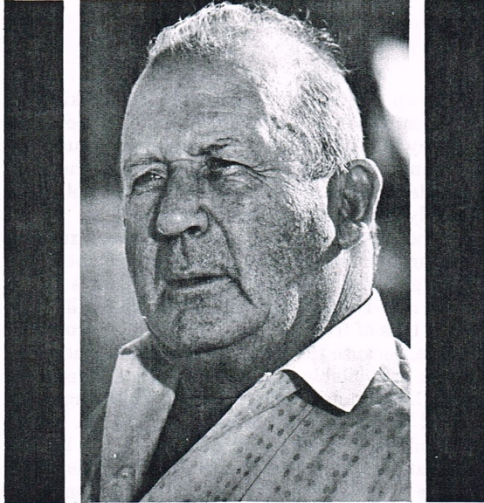
"THE LADY PROSPECTOR"



Northern California is her playground, and panning for gold is her favorite sport. Here pictured with her faithful four-wheel-drive Jeep is Uma Pearl Emerick of Redding, California. Best of luck, Pearl, we hope you strike it rich!

NO HOLDS BARRED

By Frankie Nolan (The Crusher)
Salt Lake City, Utah



Well, we have finally reached this point — our paper — so here go a few words from our corner. First a poem:

TO HERB

Did you ever think you would grow up
To be the big guy that you are,
To do the things that you enjoy
With people from near and far?

Has it ever once occurred to you
That fate stands in your way,
That the things you think and the things you do
Are controlled from far away?

Herb, do you know
How many people you make happy
Just by the things you do day by day
And because your wit is quite snappy?

God bless you, Herb, you're a wonderful guy;
May you be around for a long, long while.
We all like a guy who is pleasant,
So thanks for your wonderful smile.

Thank God for people just like you;
The world needs a whole lot more;
And, when the Maker checks the records,
You've run up a wonderful score.

A SHORT SEA STORY

When I think of the speed of the ships at sea
today, I never cease to be amazed.

In 1906, at the ripe old age of eleven, I made my
maiden voyage on a windjammer, a four-masted bark

called the J. M. Watson. We were at sea one hundred
eighty-six days from San Francisco, to Honolulu,
eighty-eight days in a calm. We tried every way to
whistle up a storm or a little breeze — but no luck.
We were very low on water and food when we finally
raised the islands, and very happy we were!

We spent a few days unloading in Honolulu
and then made our short trip back — thirty-eight
days. I have been back many more times since, but
never again have I experienced a trip like that first
one.

÷ ÷

A call from Midland, Texas, the other night re-
minded me of a story, which I hope you will enjoy
as much as I did:

It seems that a wealthy Texas rancher was very
ill. He had lots of doctors attend him, but none
could help. Then he heard of a doctor in Iowa and
called him, saying, "Fly it down here Doc. Maybe
you can help me." So the doctor flew down, exam-
ined the rancher, and said, "I believe I can help you."

When the doctor has cured the rancher, the
grateful rancher told him, "Just name anything you
want, and it's yours." The Doc replied, "I'm quite
an old man, and there aren't many things I want.
However, I have always wanted one thing — a
matched set of golf clubs."

The doctor returned to Iowa, and more than a
year went by before the rancher heard from him
again. Then one day he called the rancher and said,
"I guess you've wondered what has happened to me."
The rancher replied, "Yes, I have been wondering
why I haven't heard from you, for I have those golf
clubs ready for you. They are all matched except for
two which don't have swimming pools."

÷ ÷

One night when I was wrestling in the North-
western Circuit, I was in Portland, Oregon, with Ira
Dern. Ira had the main event, and I had a night off.

A not-too-famous wrestler named George Wag-
ner was showing on the curtain raiser; but, as he
climbed into the ring, a girl in the third row was
heard to say, "My, what a gorgeous creature!" After
the bout, which George won, he came to the dressing
room and said to me, "Frankie, from now on I'm
'Gorgeous George.'"

A new star was born and, with him, a new era
in wrestling.

÷ ÷

SIGN IN RESTAURANT: Don't kill your wife
cooking at home — Bring her here.

÷ ÷

As the bell rings, Vern Gagna is the next heavy-
weight wrestling champion.

÷ ÷

This is 30 for this month — see you next.



By Ed Welch
Salt Lake City, Utah

AND THE TOP OF THE MORNING TO ALL YOU NITECAPS EVERYWHERE! Since this is my first attempt at being what is known in the trade as a columnist, I'll try to keep my humble offering readable and interesting to all of you friends on the other side of the day, sometimes writing about lost mines and treasures which I have either heard or read about, occasionally writing about the various phases of Extra Sensory Perception (to all you Nitecaps who don't 'dig' this bit, this is what makes things go 'bump' in the night; actually, this new-born science does have its serious side, and I'll try to write of this side of it, too), doing some researching and reporting on the little men of Mars and U.F.O.'s ('pears as if I'm going to have to teach you some new words; that means unidentified flying objects), and once in a while even spinning one of those spine-chilling ghost stories that so many of you seem to enjoy.

First off, however, my little ole buddy Herb tells me that maybe I'd better give you all a little background on myself so that we can get better acquainted, so here goes nothin': I first saw the light of day in a smallish town in Ohio named Springfield (which, by the way, was a way station on the underground railroad during the Civil War — but that's a story for another day.) Then my family moved to the capital city of this fair state, Columbus, Ohio, with its cheese-box-on-a-raft state capitol building, where

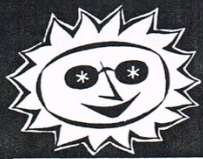
I grew up like most of the average city kids do, getting into the usual quota of juvenile scrapes. (And don't say 'juvenile delinquent' to me! If I caught my son Tom, the Teen Terror, in some of the same escapades and shenanigans my gang and I pulled, I'd probably send him into exile in Siberia.)

I ran away from home when I was sixteen to 'bum' around the country during the roughest part of the great depression. (And, kids, it was rough, believe me! I can still remember whole families riding the tops of freight trains, trying to get from here to there, because the father of the family had heard a rumor of available work over there.) I ended up in a C.C.C. camp in southern Utah, where I met and married the better half of my team, my B.W. (That's beautiful wife, in case you don't read the big-city chit-chat columns), twenty-five wonderful years ago.

We proceeded to increase the population of our fair state by four more bodies: June (whom you Nitecaps know as the gal from here in Salt Lake who talks to you all once in a while about witches and goblins and such — Boy! We sure are a 'kookie' family, huh!); Michael, another girl (Yep, I said girl; that's not a typographical error. She was supposed to be a boy, and we had her name all picked out; and I was too darned cantankerous to change it after she arrived); then Tom, the Teen Terror; and, finally, our baby Ann (She's the talented one in our family, has her heart set on being a commercial artist some day; and, you know, she just might do, it, too!) — some 'baby': She stands half a head taller than her old dad and is the best-looking kid in the block.

There are also a couple of pretty little grand-girls chasing their mother, June, around the Dave Penman house here in the City of Salt: Mendy, the five-year senior, who is such a big ham that she stopped crying and smiled when the photographer said 'cheese' on the occasion of her first birthday picture, and her little sister, Lynan, the rowdiest little pixie you ever saw. Phil and I love every one of them and wouldn't take a million for any one of them but wouldn't give you a dime for another (We're only kidding of course!).

Well, Nitecaps, there you are. That's a thumb-nail description of my life and family. I hope that you enjoyed meeting all of my gang and hope that you all have the pleasure of meeting them in person someday soon. If you have any special preference as to story material for my space-filler here each month, drop me a line in care of *The Wick*; and I'll do my darndest to put it down here for you or bust a gallus trying. And now I'll pretend that I'm a real 'pro' at this and say 30.



MOST EXCITING HOBBIES UNDER THE SUN



FOR YOUR SUMMER BIBLE SCHOOL PROGRAM . . .

Most popular craft for all ages! Fun and easy to do even for beginners . . . no experience required. Tandy offers leather-crafts for every need—memory belts, key cases, bag tags for gifts or profit. All parts pre-cut; just assemble. Quantity discounts.

Write for 112 Page **FREE CATALOG**

TANDY Craft Center

164 East Second South, Salt Lake City, Utah • Phone EL5-8239

HERBS

There are herbs to use in cooking,
Giving meals a special glow,
With a tasty, tangy flavoring,
As every chef would know.

But there's another special Herb
Whose friendships grow and grow
From the many warm and kindly words
Exchanged on radio.

His phone is always ringing;
He's never dull or slow;
And a million hearts are singing
Because of Herb Jepko.

By Mrs. J. F. Yerik
Spokane, Washington



Recipe Column

PEPPERMINT ROCKY ROAD BARS

Submitted by Ethel Heiple
Auburn, California



- 40 Miniature Marshmallows
- ½ Cup Walnut Meats, broken
- 2 6-oz Packages Chocolate Chips
- ¼ Tsp. Peppermint Extract

Arrange marshmallows on a waxed-paper-lined pan (I use an 8" x 8" x 2" square pan.) Fill spaces between marshmallows with nuts.

Partially melt chocolate over hot water and then beat until smooth. Add peppermint extract to chocolate and pour over marshmallows.

Cool until set and then cut in squares. Store in refrigerator.

+ +

Here's a recipe from Old Mexico:

MENUDO

- 2 lbs. Tripe, cut in slivers
- 3 qts. Water
- About 2 tsp. Salt
- 4 lbs. Thick, meaty slices of Beef Shank
- 4 Large Onions, chopped
- 2 Whole Cloves of Garlic
- 3 cans Drained Golden Hominy
- 1 tsp. Oregano
- 2 Cinnamon sticks, three inches long
- 8 Whole Cloves

RELISHES: Place in separate containers 1 to 1½ cups each sliced green onions; chopped mint; and canned red chili sauce, green chili salsa, or taco sauce.

Put tripe in deep pot. Add water and 1½ tsp. salt. Cover pot, bring to a boil, and simmer for two hours. Add beef shanks, onion, garlic, hominy, oregano, cinnamon sticks, and cloves. Simmer 2½ hours more. Cool with cover on and chill overnight.

Skim off fat and discard shank bone and tissue. Cut meat in pieces and return to soup. Simmer 30 min. Salt to taste and ladle into large individual bowls, adding 2 tablespoons of each relish to each serving.



NEAH KAH NIE MOUNTAIN'S LOST TREASURE

By Eleanor Wimber
Nehalem, Oregon

NeahKahNie Mountain, located on U. S. Highway 101 in the north end of Tillamook County, Oregon, rises abruptly from the ocean to a height of approximately 1,500 feet and dominates the scene at the north end of the Nehalem Bay area.

According to an old Indian legend, passed down since before the days of the white man, pirates came ashore sometime during the seventeenth century, took a heavy chest to some spot on the lower slopes of NeahKahNie Mountain, dug a deep hole, placed the chest down in it, and then, to keep the superstitious natives from digging it up, killed one of their own number, a black man who had helped dig the hole, dropped him on top of the chest, and then buried both man and chest. The mountain has kept its secret well.

Treasure hunters have been searching and digging every few years ever since white settlers came into the region during the 1880's. One story (myth?) has been circulated that John Jacob Astor came down from Astoria, dug up the chest, and took it away. However, most people believe this story to be an invention of a searcher in an attempt to discourage efforts by others. We talked to one man several years ago who assured us that he knew "exactly where it is, but government red tape has to be unraveled before it is finally recovered."

On display near the real estate office in the unincorporated community of NeahKahNie, situated at the base of the mountain and adjoining Manzanita on the north, is a large rock weighing about two hundred pounds, on the face of which are markings believed to have been made by those who buried the chest. On its flat surface there are chiseled the letter 'W' with a cross on each side, the letters 'D' 'E' with eight dots beside them, and, below all, an arrow

which points to the slope of the mountain. Farther up, other rock markings have been found, all of which are thought to be associated with those discovered nearer the beach. But, to this day, the chest has not been found.

Nitecap Alice vanDiest of Colorado Springs, Colorado, tells us about her music box collection.




Since music is a very personal hobby, I have tried to incorporate it into my home, where even the decor is musical, with the music box. Replicas of beautiful figurines and boxes years old may be found from kitchen to living room, wherever their pleasant sound reverberates.

Those who enter here share in the musical box festivities. The seasons of the year are represented by Christmas decorations with appropriate tunes. Then come Easter rabbits jauntily playing "In the Easter Parade." Birthdays are celebrated with cake plates that play "Happy Birthday," and afternoon teas are presided over by musical teapots and "Tea for Two."

Because the musical box comes out of antiquity, it is interesting not only to hear the tunes played but to examine the infinite variety of types; snuff boxes, jewel boxes, dolls, carousels. The silver snuff box belonging to Sir Walter Raleigh, in which he put the tobacco he brought from the New World, sings like a bird. The carousel from France, a music box 150 years old, swings the dollies as a haunting melody is played. The King Farouk collection has provided the doll I am holding in the picture, which is of the first Basque variety. The bird in the cage sings merrily with the song of a lark.

Behind me is the great console, which came from the Black Forest in Germany. It is called a polyphone, and each roll plays four tunes. To the left is an Edison phonograph of 1886 vintage, and next to it is a Regina that was the forerunner of the Victor talking machine disc. To the right is a French chair, made by hand during the reign of Louis XV, which plays when sat upon. These represent only a few of the more than 150 boxes which decorate this joyous house of music in which I live.



NITECAPS IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Salt Lake City Nitestand Number One

1st Row front left to right: Violet Matson, Alfred Johnson, Minnie James, Hazel Hepler, Lucille Babcock, Marie D. Oliphant, Sec.-Treas., Margaret V. Johnson, President, Paul Wymer, Harry Nelson, Leah Oxborrow, Clara Gibson, Sarah Harter, Don Oliphant, Vice President.

2nd Row left to right: Ernest Matson, Mary Johnson, Evelyn Updegraff, Virginia Monteer, Beatrice Bixby, Edna Burt, Larry Burt, Pearl Gil Leland, Ellen Squires, Grace Brooke, Willetta Moss, Mary S. Johnson, Mary Moyle, Viola Hutton.

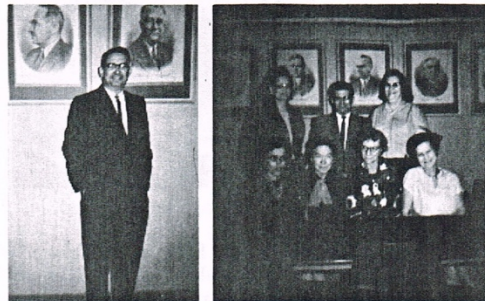
3rd Row left to right: Pete Stepanovich, Mary Stepanovitch, Della Edmonds, Ruby Nielson, Helen G. Young, Howard Burt, Roy Gil Leland, Josephine Frost, Mrs. H. S. Kelly, Frank Pester, Genevieve Pester, Ione Brockbank, Austin Moyle.

4th Row Back left to right: Alyce Husbands, Ruby Garff, Fay Hodgson, Ralph Cunningham, Joe Garza, Grace Nuffer, Cady Travis, Oliver Travis, Rev. Merit Smith, George Black, Eula Bryant, Hi Bryant, Ruth Saxey, Bill Galagher.



NITESTAND AT OGDEN, UTAH

First row: Millie Berglund (Refreshment Chairman), left; Betty Johnson (Treasurer); Ruth Reeves (Secretary); Melba Martin; Muriel Handy. *Second row:* James Luvaris (Color Bearer), left; F. A. Behling; Janet Nixon (Entertainment Chairman); Paul Reeves (Project Chairman); Ruth Nixon (Vice President); Geraldine Gledhill; Ray Gledhill. *Third Row:* Ron Johnson (President), left; Carolyn Wilberg; Roger Shreeves.



NITESTAND AT SPOKANE, WASHINGTON

Front row: Essie Kuesterman (Project Chairman), left; Mildred Withnell; Joe Tyler; Mary O'Neill (Secretary - Treasurer). *Back row:* Elizabeth Berner (Publicity Chairman), left; Paul Metzger (Vice President); Glenna Metzger.

**CITY OF ROSES NITESTAND,
PORTLAND, OREGON**



Front row: Ruth C. Wood, left; Pauline Bercovitz; Fern Bailey; Roma Cunningham; Evelyn Morris; Leona Hamilton; Arbie Stetzer; Florence Copeland; Grace M. Royse; E. Pat Unruh. *Back row:* Herb Rickert, left; Lillian Ward; Ray Ward; Rivka A. Pratt (Program and Project Chairman); Belle McElroy (Secretary); Jewel MacKenzie (President); Gilbert J. Royse (Vice President); Leslie A. Petersen; Marge Nelson (Telephone Chairman); Claude Hamilton; C. M. Cunningham; Ora F. Morris.

**TACOMA NITESTAND,
TACOMA, WASHINGTON**



Front Row: Jessie Boyer (Ways and Means), left; Isabell McKee; Miriam Athou; Ellen Whitlock; Ione Light. *Second Row:* Claudia Freinwald (Publicity Chairman), left; Ella Kingwell; Florence Nimrick (Project Chairman); Dave Barclay; George Athou; Dorothy Taylor; Georgiana Oursler; Laura McCartney. *Third row:* John Boyer, left; Vera Ellsworth (Treasurer); Patricia Nelson (Secretary); Helen Nicholson (Vice President); Frances Mitchell (President); Joe Davis; Edith Davis; Elizabeth Wood; Ruth Rogers (Sunshine Chairman).

NITECAP MANIA

Hey, all you people
Who stay up all night,
Plug in your radio
For a show that's just right.

You find the station
Nitecap is the name.
Herb Jepko's your host,
And he's gained world fame.

The format is simple
And comes from the heart.
The air waves are busy
When you do your part.

For this is a program
of polite conversation,
and Herb's telephone rings
From all over the nation.

Someone out in Texas
Is lonely and blue,
So he places his call
To Jepko and you.

Even the brilliant,
The smart, and the witty
Like someone to talk to
When alone in the city.

Some say "not constructive,"
But little they know;
For members of a Nitestand
Have their civic pride grow

As they put forth great effort
In some worthy cause.
Yes, giving help to others
Is one of their laws.

So, night people, "awake";
Don't just sit and stew.
Join with the Nitecaps.
I'm one — are you?

By Jim Anderson
Brigham City, Utah



SIMON SAYS

By Charles F. Simon
Salem, Oregon

SIMON SAYS: THUMBS UP to Herb Jepko.
As Nitecaps, at least, we should all do our bit
By lighting our "Candle" and *keeping it lit.*
In other words, light *The Wick* and do it quick
And hold it high in the candlestick.

THE JEPKO FAMILY & A MESSAGE FROM HERB



Front row: Randy, left; "Jeppy"; Kelly; Pat; and Tina. Back row: Herb, left; Karla and Kitty.

Many of you Nitecaps have written to the Jepkos, telling about yourselves and your families. Now Herb and Pat wish to say "Hello" to their many Nitecap friends around the world and to introduce their family to you.

Kitty, at eighteen, is the oldest as well as the most academic of the Jepko children. She attends Westminster College in Salt Lake City and wants to be a social worker.

Karla, fifteen, is the domestic daughter. She enjoys cooking and helps Pat with the housework and younger children.

Randy is a typical boy of ten. He likes to make forts out of old boxes and is already skilled at leathercraft.

Tina, age eight, is the tomboy of the family. She plays a good game of baseball and is a nimble tree climber.

Kelly is a feminine youngster of six. She loves pretty dresses and jewelry and passes her time playing house with her dolls.

"Jeppy" (Herb Jr.), a shy little lad of four, still spends his days at home with his mother.



The publishers of this first edition of *The Wick* magazine have offered me an opportunity to say "Thank you" for the many pleasant hours of friendship I have personally spent with you on the Nitecap show. I couldn't begin to express the deep sense of

belonging and companionship that I know could only be found among such gracious and interesting people as the Nitecaps.

During the first year of the Nitecap show, Pat and I tried to keep up with the tremendous personal demand of the show; but, as the end of the first year came, we found it increasingly difficult and finally impossible to keep pace with it. Pat's exhaustion and eventual illness from overwork at last made it necessary to enlist the help of Tom Little, Pat's brother. With Tom and his wife Barbara pitching in to lift some of the load, we have been able to answer some of the many letters and inquiries that come through the daily mail. To apologize for the thousands of unanswered letters would only be redundant; but to pledge better communication and more interesting and entertaining programs in the future is a promise I can now keep. We have said many times that no man walks alone, and this statement is exemplified through the untiring encouragement and support I receive from my wife Pat.

I look back now at the long winter days and evenings that gradually turned into summer as they were filled with reading your interesting letters. It is, after all, your letters that keep us running; for your comments render an ever-changing complexion to the program. We constantly search for diversity on the Nitecap show: in the guests we present for your interest and entertainment, in the questions we ask to stimulate your comments, and, most important, in your calls, around which revolves the entire concept of the Nitecap show. Thank you for being there!

CLASSIFIED AD SECTION

Messages from Beyond, by M. Houts. Beautiful cloth-bound book. 340 pages. Not fiction. Unique! Might change your life. Satisfaction guaranteed. \$3.00 postpaid. Clark Dristy, 719 First Ave., Miller, S. Dak.

ATTENTION, TREE LOVERS!
"Trees In The Wind"

Poems about the Beauty, Goodness, and Friendliness of trees. Compiled by Ada Virginia Hull. An ideal gift! 104 Pages. May be ordered from Ada V. Hull, 1016 North Orlando Ave., Los Angeles 69, Calif. Cost of book, tax and mailing, \$2.00.

Starter and recipes for delicious Crow Creek Sourdough foods, one dollar. Big Bend Enterprises, Box 544, Fort Thompson, South Dakota.



Monkeys DeeDee, left Tu-Dee; and ChoCho frolic with their "Muzzie," Nitecap Edith vonRadesky of Rialto, California.

BELVEDERE
APARTMENT HOTEL



NITECAP MARGUERITE T. BECK, PRESIDENT AND MGR.
GLORIA L. JOHNSON, TREASURER

A hotel of unusual refinement, catering to a transient and permanent clientele. Highest quality in Comfort and Service. Conveniently located in center of historical Salt Lake City, one block from famous Mormon Temple and Tabernacle, in shopping and theatre district. All rooms with Bath and Shower. Apartments complete with Kitchen Facilities. Daily, Weekly, and Monthly rates. Dining Room, Coffee Shop, Grocery Store, Pharmacy, Barber Shop, Beauty Salon, Gift Shop, Garage.

★ *Just Released!*

stirring
EUGENE JELESNIK'S
JFK MARCH
45-RPM-RECORDING
PERFORMED BY
STAGG McMANN
WORLD-FAMED HARMONICA ARTIST
- MULTIPLE SOUND -
A Living Memento to
President John F. Kennedy
An Everlasting Souvenir

Also - RAIN ACROSS the MOON
A WESTERN BALLAD by MARYHALE WOOLSEY
Composer of "WHEN IT'S SPRINGTIME in the ROCKIES!"

Beautifully Packaged...
IN ALBUM-TYPE JACKET.
WITH EXPLANATION
OF HOW the JFK MARCH was created.

Now Available!...
...FOR ENJOYMENT
IN YOUR OWN HOME!

\$1.00 - TOTAL PRICE!
DIRECT FROM MANUFACTURER TO YOU. INCLUDES POSTAGE HANDLING. SEND CASH... CHECK or MONEY ORDER to
GOLD LEAF RECORDS
HOTEL NEWHOUSE - SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH