kagnewstation.com chronicles

American Forces Radio and Television Service

Asmara, Eritrea, Ethiopia

# March 1948 - March 1974

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PREFACE **'You Had to be There'**

UNESCO observes, "Asmara represents perhaps the most concentrated and intact assemblage of Modernist architecture anywhere in the world". From Romanesque beauty to the tribal heritage just outside Asmara's perimeter, add the dichotomy of a self-contained American community for which the Department of Defense generously budgeted authorizations for continuously adding recreation, social, entertainment and educational facilities in order to keep up the morale of assigned personnel. Only the \*select few who served at Radio Marina/Kagnew Station/ NAVCOMMSTA ASMARA within the 30-plus year history of the DOD's presence there, can be expected to even begin to comprehend the difficulty in painting word pictures that truly capture the unique mosaic of that colony.

Fortunately, Rick Fortney, who is in his 14th year of extending the development of this web site, since its inception by John Harris, has built an outstanding collection that is the greatest source I have found for "getting the feel" of the most remarkable times we had in this unique area. Plus, there is now declassified information that permits one's learning about the important secret work at the "Tracts".

Troops with top security clearances were shuttled from the posts to their assignments at multiple outlying "tracts" where the enormous antennae, already nearing 8,000 feet above sea level, were pointed to the clear blue sky.

Limited AM radio broadcast service was begun at the first post, Radio Marina, in 1948, with a full time station going on the air in its new studios in 1951. In the early period of transition to Kagnew Station one of the first installations completed was the Army's first broadcast TV station, which went on the air December 1, 1955.

I am indebted to so many who have shared their memories and photos for this project. First, I must salute Rev. Peter C. Richards who, with his wife Jane, served two tours with AFRTS in Asmara totaling 7 1/3 years, the record. Mrs. Richards was Kagnew's entry for "Military Wife of the Year" in 1971 and was also named "ASA Wife of the Year". They returned to Eritrea in May 1994 as relief workers and remained until they were forced to close their optical center and return home in June 2003. Rev. Richards introduced me to John Winthrop, who referred Roger Coday, and others.

Early on in this endeavor, I was in touch with these gentlemen's OIC, Captain David Stanley. My OIC, 1LT Frank Griffiths, was also an early contributor of important official documents, information and photographs. Frank was the epitome of a "manager" with great instincts, who also knew how to handle "talent", as well as engineers! In simple terms: A leader, not a driver.

After graduation from the Army Information School, now Department of Defense Information School , I was in a satisfying assignment with AFRTS when, suddenly, orders to report to Ft. Devens, MA to await Cryptologic - Top Secret clearance, before reporting to the 4th U. S. Army Security Agency Field Station in Asmara, Eritrea, Ethiopia, were received. My immediate reaction was, there has to be a mistake, my MOS is "Broadcast Specialist." I had never heard of the ASA, nor Asmara. Those orders were no mistake. I spent three "cold" months in the depth of Winter at Ft. Devens, initially shoveling coal for the "pot bellied" stoves that heated the antiquated barracks before it was determined that I should be working in Special Services.

After a three-month wait, orders came for me to report to ASA in Asmara. To my delight, there wasn't an MOS change -- I found a functioning radio-TV facility and now realize how satisfying that period of my life really was. Such fond memories stimulated the desire to do this story.

Similarly, in reading all the postings on kagnewstation.com, I became aware that the great majority of both regular and career service personal has commented that their time in Asmara was the best period of their entire military careers.

This project would never have happened if it were not for the web site created by John and subsequently developed and maintained by Rick. It has become "the" source for information and contact for everyone who ever served at Radio Marina and/or Kagnew station, and those who have an interest. A few have seen fit to honor Rick with cash contributions from time to time to assist in paying for his out-of-pocket-expenses. To those, please join me in offering sincere thanks, especially to Jerry Ingle, Larry D. Smith, Jack Creamer, Lee Ruebush, James E. Steele, Joe Wilder, Linda Caudell-Feagan, Terry Hicks, Bob Reese, Jim Bannowsky, William Finn, Hank Fey, Placido Borruso, Randolph Simpson, David Coman, Vilnis Pakalns, and special lifetime sponsors, Jack Hill and John Sims. I encourage others who enjoy the fruits of his labors to let him know:

**Rick Fortney 3704 Windshire Dr. Springfield, IL 62704-6718**

Most Respectfully,

Sam H. Hale, ASA, Senior Broadcast Specialist, KANU Radio-TV 1957-1958 DINFOS Alumni Association, Life Member sam.hale@kagnewstation.com

**\***Published reports indicate that, to be considered for service in the ASA, personnel were required to score in the top 10% on administered intelligence tests.

The Early Years - WOG, AFSA, AFRS

Skyline AM Radio broadcast service began at Radio Marina on March 6, 1948 under the auspices of Special Services. SSGT **Robert Spencer Lane** is fondly remembered by several as having been an extremely talented individual and the original driving force behind the station. The original call letters were WOG**. Okie O'Connor** and **Frank Morgan** also remember **Jimmy Dobson's** being with the station in 1948-1950. Other early broadcasters recalled by **Allen Elgin**, who was stationed at Radio Marina from April '49 to August '51: SSGT **Fred Lane** – NCOIC, **Al Walker,** and **Donald L. Jones**.

**Rich Angulo,** who arrived in Asmara in mid-1948 and remained until June 1950, remembers the call letters WOG and says that R. Spencer Lane played those old Armed Forces Radio Services platters which contained radio shows and popular band music. He recalls the station's having been located over the PX at Radio Marina during his tour. Rich remembers having been the 92nd man assigned to Radio Marina, including "9434 Signal" people, and some Navy. Those numbers increased during his assignment but he has no way of knowing by how many. Later we learn that this number was in the 600-area about the time of the move to the new post and well over 4,000 at a later point in time. In one of the exchanges in the declassified consul messages listed near the end of this story, the Asmara-area audience was guessed to be well into the tens-of-thousands.

I have corresponded with Col **Don Davis**, Post Commander at the time of the origin of radio service. Col Davis wrote, *"I recall how very much I enjoyed the broadcasts of the big AFRS transcriptions of the popular shows like 'The Shadow'."*

It is reasoned that WOG was an unofficial designation that next became AFSA. **Hank** **Padva** was one of the early staff members and remembers that when he arrived in April 1950 the call letters were WOG, but agrees that the change to AFSA occurred soon after his arrival. Hank also recalls **Cal Walker** as having been with the station. At that time, the station operated 5:00 AM - 11:00 PM Monday thru Friday but began broadcasting at 10 AM on Saturday and Sunday. The opening theme was "The Warsaw Concerto".

**Jerry Pry,** who arrived in 1950, remembers the call letters were changed to AFSA in 1951 as was listed in Page 17 of the booklet "*USARS Handbook, Asmara 1951"*. Even though it was only a 1,000 watt AM station, because of the elevation, there are records of its broadcasts being heard as far away as Brazil, Finland and even Australia.

Subsequently, sometime between 1951-1953, the call letters had been changed to AFRS as documented in "The Weekly Gazelle APO 843" from 31 July 1953. This fact was also remembered by **Bill Cross** (who was not assigned to the station but spent some off-duty time there) after having arrived at Radio Marina in January 1951.

Bill recalls the station's *"being housed, for want of a better description, in a kind of trailer that was sitting on the barber shop side of the PX building. One of the ladies that worked in the PX was working part time as a DJ and she would sit in that location and play the records. Her name was* ***Anna Marie****. I remember it very clearly. Later the station was located above the HQ building and it stayed there until they built new facilities complete with everything needed by a radio station and that was probably near the end of 1951."*

I cite these attributions due to questioning by some of the fact that AM radio dated before 1951, as stated in another oft quoted publication. It is likely that the author of that story was referring to the time when the radio station had its own "real" studios to which it was moved in December 1951.

**Joe Nix,** who wrote for the post papers, hosted a late-night "Jazz Hour." He writes that this new facility was reached by an outside stairway from the headquarters 'inner courtyard.' It remained in that location until 1956 when it was relocated to Tract E and the TV building. Regarding the post papers, he says they got all the news on "telegraph" paper in rolls from the site, and picked out 'newsworthy' articles and typed them on mimeo stencils. Joe thinks **Hugh Gurley**, *"a very polite, pleasant out going chap, unlike his expression, delivered them."*

**Ty Curtis** arrived on 31 December 1952. He was the Troop Information and Education NCOIC. Among his several duties was the University of Maryland Overseas Program, as well as developing the daily mimeo "newspaper." Ty also taped the news every afternoon for replay in the evening over the radio station. He writes, *"I'd go down to the PX and agonize over hearing my voice."* Ty also developed the photographic darkrooms for the troops. He went on to terrific success in advertising; then wrote and produced documentaries for World Wide Pictures (Billy Graham's film company), before becoming a United Methodist Pastor. He retired from the ministry after 30 years.

Announcers in the '54 era included **Ray Healey** and **Bob Anthony**. The NCOIC was SGT **Murphy**, described by Joe Nix as, "a short, dapper, guy who left in mid-1954.” The station was under the guidance of Major **John M. Merritt's** S-3 group.

The origin of Kagnew Station, replacing Radio Marina, came with the Base Rights Agreement 22 May 1953. The initial construction phase of Tract E was not completed until late in the 1955-1957 period when the formal dedication occurred.

When Jerry Pry returned to Kagnew Station in 1957, the call letters had again been changed. They were then KANU. Retired Major **A. T. Brainerd** reminds me that, "Kagnew in Amharic means to 'restore order out of chaos' and pronounced 'kanu'. Hence, our call letters."

Back in the states in the late 50's, independent radio chains were surviving the forecasted demise of radio, resulting from 'everybody's watching TV', by scoring dynamic up-trends in audience ratings with a new "Top-40 format" (www.reelradio.com). However, "block" programming was still dominate with the major radio networks. AFRTS supplied, not only those radio shows, but the latest recorded music on 16-inch, lacquer-coated aluminum discs. These discs were reduced to 12" in 1959.

Upon returning to the states in 1958, I was privileged to work with some names that became legendary in that new format at: Metromedia (Nashville), Bartell (Birmingham, Milwaukee, New York City), Plough (Chicago); Storz (Minneapolis), and Esquire (Atlanta), before switching to a "Wall Street" analytical career in 1966.

The Army's First Television Station

It appears that the mission of Kagnew Station was so important, and the location so remote, that the powers that be were generally supportive in providing entertainment for the troops. All are likely familiar with the remarks of **General William Westmoreland** upon his visit in 1971, *"I do not believe we have a more remote station of our Armed Forces than Kagnew Station".*

Rev. Ty Curtis writes, "I heard that the Army's first recreational TV station was about to be shipped to the Pacific when one of our officers heard about it and got the orders changed to Asmara." Ty designed the first station IDs and hung around the crew setting up the TV station at the "new post."

Joe Nix remembers that the first TV, just before he departed on 10 February 1956, was downtown in a store co-owned by a SGT from the Bay Area and an Italian.

1LT **Frank R. Griffiths** became OIC of radio/TV, in addition to the officer's club, on 20 November 1956. He has provided documents that confirm that the first broadcast television station operated by the U. S. Army, KANU-TV, went on the air December 1, 1955 from the newly constructed studios at Tract E. This was one of the first facilities opened on the new post. KANU radio moved to the same building on May 11, 1956. In order to get the station on the air, the original electrical power was from generators.

The radio-television facilities became a Mecca for VIPs visiting the post. (PHOTO) Here is a photo of **His Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie**, then Emperor of Ethiopia, being guided through the facilities by Lt Griffiths. This was the first of several such "inspections" of, not only the first TV station in Ethiopia, but the first in the U. S. Army world-wide. The remainder of the staff was present at their desks and/or controls during these visits.

Film for TV

KANU-TV was provided 16MM film copies of most all the popular TV shows in America. A major problem was delays in their arrival. In the early days, AFRTS had yet to supply TV stations with a permanent film library to be used as program material when the regular shipment of film didn't arrive in time.

In a later period, after renovations and plenty of room, I've learned that the stations got hit by the I. G.'s inspector for not reviewing the TV films and phono records annually and destroying those that were considered obsolete. The collection was even larger as a result of having received a load when Wheelus Air Base in Tripoli was closed.

A visit from the consular officer in Bahrain with the OIC at a later time (NOT LT Griffiths) established a film circuit to many of the embassies and consulates in the Middle East and Africa. They had 16 MM projectors but no way of getting movies or TV programs. The two set up a system whereby a few films would be sent each week around a predetermined route that would rotate the films from station to station (embassies and consulates) and get back to KS in just a couple of months. This system generated a generous amount of letters of "thanks" and "appreciation." This, of course, was not proper protocol from the standpoint of AFRTS.

"Live" TV

The 16MM film was the source of all the TV programming until the origin of a live country-western show. "K-Bar-S Ranch" featured off-duty service personnel, the **Peckinpaughs** and **Maynard Dahl,** with their bands.

LT Griffiths added a Saturday night variety show, "Kagnew Kapers." It became the most popular locally produced show during this era. It featured live music performed by service personnel, accompanied by Fran Mullins' combo,   
"The Esquires." (Mega Sponsor **Jack Hill** joined the Mullins' group in 1969, and later formed his own combo.) Country and Western singer/guitarist Maynard Dahl was a regularly featured performer, as were **Bob Renick** and myself. Bob and I alternated as hosts and vocalists. Later, **Jim Kornecki** was a frequent host. Occasionally, talent from the local populace was part of the show

In a letter to the "Commanding Officer, Kagnew Station", dated 28 January 1958, LT Griffiths wrote of several problems in the production of "Kagnew Kapers," including: Inability to schedule bands from Asmara because KANU could not pay for their services; forced to borrow a piano from the service club when we hold rehearsals or produce a show, etc. Frank added, *"It is felt that if the show is worth doing, it is worth doing as well as we can and that a poor production breeds poor public relations for the command and for the station."*

His letter resulted in some help and he was later awarded "A Pat on the Back" certificate signed by the Commander, "In Recognition of the excellent job done in connection with the 'Kagnew Kapers' show."

The Evening News

With newswire copy supplied through the cooperation of one of the receiving sites, a nightly radio-TV newscast, "The News Desk," was begun in the autumn of 1957. I alternated with Bob Renick and later, upon the completion of my service, Jim Kornecki alternated with Bob. In addition to the straight newscast, there were times when we included an interview, such as when Sputnik One was launched in October 1957. I worked with **Bill Nance**, an MIT graduate, in doing a special feature of this monumental event.

Others on the Radio-TV staff during this period were NCOIC: MSGT **Seth Ely;** announcer **Don "Doug" Douglas**; continuity/traffic director **Dave Edelin,** and engineers SP4 **Jim Franklin,** SP3 **Dan Blow** and PFC **William Sanford**.

The announcers recorded the audio station breaks and schedule promotions for TV every day in the small production room separating the (then) large radio studio and the back steps up to TV control. These voice tracks were then played behind slides on the station breaks.

Upon completion of LT Griffiths' appointment, he was awarded a Certificate of Achievement for Outstanding Service from LTC **Boyce V. Hawkins**, Commanding.

Personal

At that time, there was a small "Service Club" where a delightful lady, wife of a serviceman, worked as hostess to plan low-key parties and games, as well as to offer a course in Italian, and basic steps in ballroom dancing. It was in the dancing class that I was paired with a young lady named Joan. We enjoyed the class and I asked if she would like me to escort her home, not knowing she was the daughter of the Post Commander, Col **Murray A. Little**. I must admit that, when I learned that, I was somewhat "anxious" as, at that time, I had never seen the Commanding Officer, much less having had occasion to meet him. So, I was somewhat intimidated, though Joan was quite at ease with the situation. Turned out, I found the Colonel to be extremely warm and personable during the period that I accompanied Joan to the club events. I recall his asking me to play "Mocking Bird Hill," a recording by the McGuire sisters, on the morning show as it always reminded him of his service in Korea. Fortunately, there was never a cause for my meeting him in his official capacity.

At that time, the Little family had only been in Asmara for a few months, having assumed command from Col. **Orman G. Charles,** who completed his 3 1/2-year assignment on 19 June 1957. Col. Little had served in combat during both World War II, his National Guard unit having been called to duty in 1941, as well having served in Korea. I returned to the states in April 1958 and since learned that, later that year, Col. Little and several others were suddenly relocated.

This is pure conjecture on my part, and in "defense" of Col. Little, but I expect these changes resulted from an evaluation by National Security Agency VIPs who came from Washington to see what was going on after a dramatic drop in the Top Secret message traffic's being forwarded.

I've read that there was a "strike" of personnel in objection to the implementation of various military routines such as morning formations, restrictions, drills, etc. Reportedly, there was a called meeting for the Washington visitors to hear the complaints. I reason that, having had protracted combat experience, Col. Little thought that all service personnel should be combat-ready at all times.

Anyway, the troops reportedly prevailed and the more "casual" routines returned, and even grew for a while. I'm told by SFC **Peter Richards** that, in the last few years of the Army's operation of Kagnew Station, civilian clothes became the norm, except for the military police.

An Idea Heard Around the World

1LT **Paul Bue** was LT Griffiths’ replacement as Director of KANU Radio and TV. He arrived from the Army Pictorial Center on Long Island, New York on 2 October 1958. A native of Lowell, MA, Lt. Bue graduated from Boston University with a Degree in Communication Arts.

With Lt. Bue's consent, Disc Jockey **Bill Altman** sent a letter to AFRTS HQ in Los Angeles requesting the top tunes of the past ten years. This resulted in their providing 300 hit tunes to all AFRTS outlets for play around the New Year of 1960 -- "A Decade of Hits." Bill received production assistance from **Sonny Lewis**, an MP who devoted his off-duty time as a part-time announcer. Later that year, Sonny was hospitalized in Tripoli due to a recurring sinus condition.

Bill Altman notes that, *"In 1965 after completing my first newscast on AFVN Saigon, the phone rang and a voice on the other end asked me if I was the same Bill Altman who was in Asmara 1959-1961. When I replied in the affirmative, the voice said, 'This is LTC Paul Bue. I used to be your commanding officer. Welcome to Vietnam'!"*  Bill retired with the rank of Captain and is now with a trade association in Washington.

From another of several "Kagnew Gazelle" papers contributed by Jack Hill, it was noted that , KANUers SGT **Joseph Lyden**, **Jimmy Rogers**, and **Bill Pyne** were shooting a film entitle "Kagnew Station" for a briefing for **General Breckenridge** on his forthcoming visit.

The 60's

**Don Kirkpatrick**, a Senior Broadcast Specialist,arrived at Kagnew Station in March 1960 from AFRTS headquarters in Los Angeles. Lt. Bue was still the OIC and the late SGT Joseph Lyden was NCOIC. Radio staff announcers, between his arrival and departure (Feb '61), other than those listed elsewhere, were: **Pete Buckalew, Wesley Cain, Robb Webb** and **Gary Perkins.** He also recalled that Jimmy Rogers, mentioned earlier, had worked at ABC-TV before the Army.

Temporary Dislocations

At that time, the studios had been moved to the Signal Building while the reconstruction of the radio-TV facilities was taking place. Don states that, when he arrived, neither the radio nor TV station used a program log - not even a shift schedule for announcers on radio. He noted, *"whenever a film (kinescope) shipment arrived the engineers would just air whatever they felt like watching, whenever they felt like watching it."*

*"On TV, Lt. Bue approved my request to air a regular daily newscast. I worked out a deal with one of the sergeants at MESA to tap the Associated Press World Wire and set up a couple of teletype machines in the TV work space. We simulcast a 15-minute nightly newscast using that information."*

The interruption for the construction project was far more than I could imagine. As reported earlier, under Lt. Griffiths, we initiated the TV "News Desk" in the Fall of 1957, though our news wire copy was delivered from one of the Tracts. Until I received Don's Kirkpatrick's information, I had assumed that the first TV newscast that I did in 1957 was continued until the station's end. Too, we certainly had firm work and broadcast schedules; as did later crews. The broadcast schedules appeared in the post newspapers as far back as 1953, at least. Thus, these conditions must have only corresponded with this period of dislocation.

Jimmy Rogers, formerly with ABC-TV, produced an orientation film during the time of the stations' renovation. It was a 15-minute, 16MM color film, shot by SGT Lyden and consisted of scenes around the post.

By the late Fall of 1960, completion of the modernized KANU Radio and TV studios was nearing. Radio was temporarily housed in the Service Club's game room and TV from another temporary location. These were building improvements, not equipment upgrades. By that time, when atmospheric conditions were favorable, KANU aired stateside football games by direct relay from AFRS in New York.

Don also informs that, *"One of the engineers at the radio-TV station,* ***Joe Donat****, was sent to Viet Nam after my departure from Kagnew Station for Fort Bliss in El Paso, TX where I still live. SGT Donat was assigned to the AFRS station in Hue and was captured during the Tet Offensive. He spent five years as a prisoner of the North Vietnamese. I later learned that his cellmate during that time was John Anderson, who, as a sergeant in the Information Office at Fort Bliss, worked for me on week-ends at KROD Radio in El Paso before he, too, was sent to Viet Nam. That is my 'small world' story."*

"Command" Performance

Don writes that upon HIM Haile Selassie's immediate return from Brazil when he was informed of the attempted coup d'etat by his Imperial Guard on 13 December 1960, he and SGT Lyden shot 16MM film of his triumphant arrival at the Asmara airport with footage of his "parade". Don reported that people were lined 10-20 deep along the 10-mile route. After editing, they cleared the film with S-2 and aired a "special" on KANU-TV.

Later that night, **Post Commander Harris** called saying he had received a call from the palace and the Emperor wanted to see himself on TV again. They immediately reloaded the film and repeated the entire story as a "Special Report".

The coup attempt, which temporarily proclaimed Haile Selassie's eldest son Emperor, lacked broad popular support and was crushed by the Ethiopian Army and police forces. Details of that story are easily found in his biographies.

Don further remembers that it was during this period that, *"we became true soldiers with weapons (M-1 carbines) issued to every man on post to defend Kagnew Station", in case a coup was successful and we came under attack."*

The "Kagnew Gazelle" congratulated Don for having been selected Post SOM for the month of September 1960.

Equipment Check

**Ralph Reinhold** was stationed at Kagnew Station from April 1961 to October 1962 and reports that the original Dage TV cameras were still functioning this whole time and that the station was still on Channel 8. Ralph is "pretty sure" that a Dage Telecine and sync generator were part of the equipment but thinks the switcher was Roper. He remembers the switcher was mechanical as, *"they usually switched by wiping".* He also remembers that the AM transmitter was located*, "just West of the miniature golf course and South of the Oasis Club."* **Al Mix** and **Frank Wukovits** (sp?) are other staff members he recalls from that era.

He remembers an incident in which a critical component failed in the TV transmitter during his tour and the station went dark. He recalls there was a "panic" by the OB-GYN. The physician had recalled that, on an earlier occasion when the station "went dark," there was a tremendous spike in births about nine months later. In addition to technical issues, the station went dark during special morning periods, such as after the death of HIM's wife, **Empress Menen Asfaw** on 15 Feb 1962.

"We All Had to Start Somewhere"

**Norman St. Hilaire** arrived in Asmara in October 1962 assigned to the Judge Advocate's office. He soon had become friends with some of the staff at KANU and often visited the stations. After learning that Norman had an interest in broadcasting, **Shep Shepherd** acquainted him with operation of the controls. This OJT had lasted a couple of months until one night Shep became ill. Norman gave the live station break at 1:00. The phone rang immediately. It was Lt. **David** **Stanley** questioning who this was and ordering him to remain in the studio and he would be there in five-minutes. He ordered Norman to be in his office at 7:00 that morning. Norman, having been in a restricted area, and doing an on-air break, was so nervous he didn't sleep the remainder of the night. At the morning meeting, this 20-year old was near tears after being strongly scolded and heard, "dismissed." Turning to walk away, Lt. Stanley asked, *"are you interested in radio work,"* to which Norman responded he was. This led to his being transferred to KANU within two-weeks.

Norman began his radio "career" by hosting "The Night Train" from midnight 'til six. With the coaching of other staff members, he rapidly improved and was moved to the afternoon "Safari" show; then to the 11:00 five-minute late night TV news, and later, the Six O'clock Newscast, co-anchoring with **David Black** and **Dennis Loft**, who was the sports announcer. He also later hosted the Saturday afternoon bandstand show.

"The" Big Story

From **Walt Sandell** – Adm. Asst. to Deputy Commander: *"I was watching a softball game between Navy and Air Force when the announcer relayed the word from KANU that JFK had been shot. I went to* ***Major Stone's*** *house to advise him, and he confirmed with KANU and had a copy sent to* ***COL Wilson's*** *home.”*

*"We then went across the back yards to COL Wilson's and were there when the message arrived. I was sent o open Post HQ, notify the MPs to get everyone back to base, and get all staff officers to HQ. We reviewed intelligence for any possible complications, and some people were issued weapons. We monitored the wire services; but it was a few hours before there was anything official from AHS. When it became apparent that JFK had been killed, we began preparations for the Memorial Parade, which was probably the first worldwide due to the time and our location. Post HQ remained open throughout the night, and we were on alert for any possible international developments. I caught some flak from the SGT Major for not calling him. He didn't find out until he heard the parade.* ***LTC Wheeler*** *interrupted, and backed me up."*

Norman St. Hilaire adds, *"One of the most difficult tasks during my tour with KANU occurred on the death of President Kennedy. For 48-hours KANU continuously simulcast its TV news on the radio. Staff slept on cots in the studio. Food was brought in. Some staff monitored AFRTS-Germany, others cleared news copy off the teletype and brought it to on-air news staff. The city of Asmara's local population and every GI and family were tuned in. It was the saddest time ever for KANU radio and television. Many of us were in tears and yearned to be home in the USA. But, like everyone, we professionally accomplished our mission."*

During his tour from December 1962 to July 1964, **Veral Gamble** remembers: LT Stanley,SGT **Smith,** SGT **Frank McNeisch, Tom Rea**, Dave Black**, Russell Grosch, George Proctor.** Veral recalls that old equipment and what it took to keep us on the air but he adds, *"I wouldn't trade those days for all the tea in China."* He recalls that he and **Floyd Pena** rewired all of the radio control boards as well as the recording studio. They also replaced the transmitter that set just inside the entryway to the TV control room. He says that Floyd got a "nasty" RF burn from the old transmitter trying to keep it up and running. We are grateful for the number of excellent photos shared by Veral.

Captain David M. Stanley was OIC in 1963. Other staff members during this period included, other than those mentioned above, whose term continued, were:

Station Manager: SFC **Billy Brinson** '63-'65; SFC **Robert C. Sanders** '65 - '67 Program Director: SSGT Peter C. Richards '63-'65 AND '70-'73 Announcers/DJs: SP5 **Ken Schuster**; SP5 Norman St. Hillaire; SP4 **John Harris,** SP4 **John** **Winthrop**; SP5 **Dwayne "Butch" Garner**; SP4 **Gordon Sinclair**; SP4 **Jim Richards**; SP4 John Harris, SP4 **Jerry Higgins, Brian"Woody" Woolworth;** Shep Shepherd. Television: Ken Schuster, **Alan Kent,** Dennis Loft, **Jim Graham** Engineers: SP4 Floyd Pena (Acting Chief); SP5 **Roger Coday** (Acting Chief); SFC **Archie Bell** (Chief); SP5 **Roger Hay**; SP5 **Jerry Andrus**. SP4 Jim Richards; PFC **Ben Mumme**. Production Staff: Jim Graham, Artist/Illustrator; Sp4 **Tom Curran**,

Publications PFC **Wayne Fuchs**. Part Time: SSG **Danny Dance**; Sp5 **Joe Scott**.

Tom Curran was also Editor of the "Kagnew Gazelle" and the KANU-TV Guide from June 1964 to October 1966. He was discharged in Asmara in order to, *"bum around Ethiopia and East Africa as a civilian before returning to the states".*

Captain Stanley was later assigned to AFIS in Washington and, among other duties, was responsible for the historic documentation of the Armed Forces' internal information programs but never ran across the fact that KANU-TV was the Army's first broadcast television station. He reports that all that kind of information was moved from the Pomponio Building in Arlington and may have become "stealth" files and he has had no success in locating it.

His Program Director, Peter C. Richards, notes that the FM transmitter was in simulcast when he moved there in 1964. *"The FM transmitter was an RCA 60 Watt output model circa 1960. My recollection is that it was installed in the 1960-1962 timeframe.”*

CHRISTMAS

Rev. Richards also remembers their doing a great Christmas show one year ('64) for which he played Christmas music, Tom Curran of the Kagnew Gazelle played Santa Claus, and all the base children were invited.

This brought back a memory of my having been asked by the Post Chaplin to narrate the Christmas Story in 1957 as the characters from the story, including animals, such as camels and donkeys, paraded by under a beautiful Christmas Eve sky. I still have that script.

You'll hear of **Roland Richter's** memories later but, recalling Christmas, he wrote:

*"I know there were lots of different live shows done during the history of the station. For winter of 1973, we got a huge Christmas tree flown in from Germany and decorated it in the studio. We had one of the guys dress in a Santa suit and read letters to Santa every day after the news.* ***Col Light*** *read parts of the Christmas story (very politically incorrect, but who really worries about that other than over wrought liberals anyway).”*

Lalmba Association

Rev. Richards received an Army Commendation medal and Letter of Commendation for his coverage of SP5 **Hugh Downey's** Lalmba Association's 1963 "start-up" in which three schools were built and, later, an orphanage. He reports that the Radio-TV stations were highly supportive of Downey's work as it made for good local news.

Hugh's wife Marty told me that Hugh was driving his jeep, "Margaret," to Keren from Asmara in his "time off" from work at Kagnew when he met an elderly priest walking to his village, which is called Schinnara. Hugh offered the gentleman a ride and the priest accepted, but insisted that Hugh visit the village's "tumbledown" school. That's how it all began.

After the completion of his military commitment, Hugh returned home to Kansas City where his parents helped him form Lalmba Association, a non-profit, tax deductible, charitable corporation, IRS 501-(C)-(3). He and Marty, both of whom had grown up on the same block in Kansas City, were married in 1965. Marty told me that on their "honeymoon" they went to live in Keren where, by the height of the Civil War, they had built 10 Village Schools, mostly in the lowlands of Western Eritrea, as well as a 75 bed modern hospital for the town of Keren, and an OB/Pediatrics Clinics. In addition, various other projects were completed, such as a town library and various wells, which they dug by hand with the help of local people -- their orphans. They had 110 orphans total at any one time, but also ran an elementary school for 200 local children on their orphanage compound.

Lalmba Association is all volunteer (top-to-bottom) and will mark the 47th Anniversary of Hugh's "vision" on 10 September 2010. Learn more at www.lalmba.org.

From Channel 8 to Channel 2

Acting Chief Engineer Roger Coday has been remarkably generous in sharing information and photographs which go a long way in helping make this story complete. I am most grateful for his contributions.

Roger advised: *"When Stonehouse operation was being commissioned by the Signal Corps, it was discovered that the Channel 8 analog output from KANU-TV, falling between 180-186 MHZ, created significant RF interference to their operation. As a result, KANU-TV was moved to Channel 2 (54-60 MHZ). The installation of a new antenna tower, antenna, and broadcast transmitter, occurred between July and September, 1965."*

He further notes that the little black and white DAGE cameras, as well as the Telecine Train for converting 16MM film and 35 MM slides to video/audio, were still in use when he completed his tour in November 1965. At that time, there was a project scheduled to implement Image Orthicon cameras, video tape, and color.

John Winthrop concurs that the small DAGE Vidicon cameras were still in use at the time of his departure in 1966. Roger continued correspondence with some staff members who informed him that*, "the project to upgrade the station's video capability had been delayed"*. That would mean replacement of the DAGE cameras and addition of video tape capability occurred after 1967."

John remembers that the station did get its own newswire, which was located in front of the production studio. He adds that, as Chief Announcer, he complained to NY about the tape because they were sending 1/4" milar tape which the spring-loaded Ampex machines stretched badly, ruining the playback. They responded with a thicker tape which alleviated the problem.

The founder of the Kagnew Station website, John Harris, was at KANU in the 1965-1967 era. He notes that, after working late night shifts, *"it was really 'wonderful' trying to sleep in the HQS building with house boys jamming their floor buffers into my bunk."* John later worked at ABC-New York from 1975 to 1990, *"before an early retirement and a move back to California."*

I've, thus far, been unable to pinpoint the time that the KANU call letters were dropped. I assume it was sometime in this era as **Larry Limbach** ('67-'69) writes, *"When I was on the Radio and T-V at Kagnew, it was known as AFRS Radio and AFRS T-V … we never used KANU".* (Somewhere I have read that change was necessitated by someone's associating K - A - N - U as the acronym of some African political organization?).

**Bill Kling: "***Ah, memories. The Oasis Club, the "gherry" races, the lousy Melotti (sp?) biere. The C.I.A.A.O Hotel in Massawa. Swimming and fishing in the Red Sea. What a strange feeling I had in 1968 when, as a Washington correspondent for the 'Chicago Tribune,’ I covered Emperor Haile Selassie's White House visit with President Lyndon Johnson."*

The 70's

MajorA. T. Brainerd was Public Affairs Officer into the new decade ('69-'72) and both the radio-TV operations and newspaper were under his supervision. He told me, *"just keep in mind, I really had very little to do with the inner workings of the stations. I left that up to the people who knew what they were doing. I did get to know some of the people very well, like:* ***Mike Bertalan*** *(I got Mike to come to Ft. Devens by offering him the Army would pay for him to finish his degree at Boston U. (and gave him time off to attend class). He did and we did. Really a talented guy."*

Other names recalled off the "top of his head" included: **Rod Madden, Hal Gardner,** Pete Richards**, Ron Buckholt, Phil Urie, Allen Christopher** ("that wasn't his real name but can't think of it right now, it might have been Christopher Allen"), **Dan Minchen, Mike Rogers** and **John Kircher**. Also, *"Mike Bartalan used the name* ***Mike Stevens*** *on the air (his middle name was Steven, as was his dad's). Great bunch there!"*

He further noted*, "I was the last regularly assigned (Army) OIC there. My deputy,* ***John Rasmuson****, took over after I left. I don't know how long he stayed after that but it couldn't have been long -- I hired him starting as a GS9 at my next duty station. "*

He adds, "*I believe we won the 'Station of the Year' award in 1970. I used to have a copy of the slides and audio tape that went with it that was presented to the AFRTS portion of the National Association of Broadcaster Conference in Chicago in 1970, but I loaned it to a broadcasting school in Fitchburg, MA in 1973, or 1974, and never got it back. What a shame! It showed the entire AFRTS staff and volunteers and highlighted the many 'extra' programs we did for the community."*

Major Brainerd's daughter, **Cheryl**, also got into the act. She delivered the "Kagnew Gazelle" on roller skates every Friday for which she often received tips. She adds that her dad did the Armed Forces Day festival every May and even got the horseback competition, as well as the parachute jump ride and carnival activities, going. There is one story in which she was talking on the phone with the radio on in the background*: "My dad's music just quit and I must call him and let him know. I don't think anyone else listens to him."*

**Don Strickland** arrived in Asmara in July 1970. He had been News Director at WFM-TV, the closed circuit instructional television station at the Signal School at Ft. Monmouth, NJ. Don writes, *"I only had ten months of service left in the Army when I received my orders. When I arrived at Kagnew I was surprised to be assigned to the radio side of the operation as I fully expected to be assigned to the television station.”*

*"I was glad I got radio when I saw the television facility. It was, to say the least, primitive considering what I had been use to at Ft. Monmouth. They had no video tape capability and the video switcher was capable of only straight takes, dissolves and cross fades, real stone-age stuff. There were two black and white cameras in the studio that at least had zoom lenses. After seeing the control room I fully expected to see cameras with fixed lenses that had to be racked and then the cameraman would have to dolly or truck the camera around in order to frame a shot.”*

*"When I arrived, Rod Madden was the Program Director for radio and television,* ***Don Brown*** *(on air name Don Ryan) was Chief Announcer,* ***George Allen*** *was Sports Director and on air talent for the sports reports for television, Allen Christopher (don't know if that was his real name) was News Director and on air announcer for television news. George was a real short-timer when I arrived. I   
remember his staying up night and day during the week and taking copy off the TTY and trying to tape sports events from some sort of shortwave radio or some type of similar setup we had that would receive broadcasts from AFN Europe and then he would crash and sleep all weekend. It seems to me I remember his hanging out a lot with Don "Ryan" Brown. I don't remember who took over sports, but I remember doing it a couple of times when the regular guy wasn't available.*

***"****Mike Bertalan took over* from Allen Christopher *and if I remember right the other TV news announcer was the guy identified as Phil Urie in the* ***Sherman Watstein*** *photo in the scrapbook section of* ***Rick Fortney's*** *Kagnew website. I took over as Chief Announcer on radio when Don left and turned the job over to* ***Lou Krieger*** *when I left in May 1971. My regular gig was a live country music show in the afternoon. I filled in for other DJ's when they were unable to do shows and did board shifts at times when regularly scheduled guys couldn't be there. Other DJ's doing live programs that I remember were* ***Bill Coleman, Rick Glasby*** *and my roommate Lou Krieger. We had several part time DJ's who were assigned to Stratcom, ASA or the Naval detachment. Two that I remember are* ***Norm Bennett*** *and* ***Al Brandyburg****.* ***Ray Komar*** *was Chief TV board operator and also served as the Kagnew Station Fire Chief, if I remember right.*

*"The thing I remember most was the temperamental nature of the AM radio transmitter. It would go off the air at anytime and especially during thunderstorms. I don't pretend to know how they did it but the engineers had rigged up a telephone at the transmitter site and when it went down we would call that number, the phone would ring and kick the transmitter back on. We could not tell our listeners how we restored power. Apparently the telephone setup was a no-no. I usually announced that I had called out to the site, the engineer had put a new hamster on the wheel and we were back in business.*

*"One other unusual incident I remember was when the TV station's film projector broke and while they were waiting on repairs the TV people pushed a camera up to a window of AM radio control room and broadcast Rick Glasby's show live over the air.”*

*"When I arrived they were just finishing the installation of the automated FM-Stereo station. They installed several tape machines (I think there were five or six, not sure of the number) that played prerecorded 10-inch reels sent out by AFRTS. As one tape ended another machine would start. I don't think they ever changed those five or six tapes during my time at the station. I'm probably wrong about that but it seemed like whenever I listened I always heard music that had played just the day before."*

Ron Buckhalt (03/71 - 12/71) reports that he has 16 MM B&W news pieces that he did. John Kircher was the producer of the twice-weekly "Military News" and notes that Ron did an excellent job of anchoring and that it was a pleasure working with him. Ron recalls, *"we shot the show we sent forward on 16 MM in the studio and edited it to appear like a real live air check newscast since we did not have a video tape at that time. Changed camera angles and everything to appear as if we had a multi-camera operation."*

Ron further writes, *"****Pat Pipes*** *and I worked on a film special shot on location at a leper colony in Massawa about the work being done by the Italian doctors there. He was the videographer, I was the news interviewer.* ***Sylvana*** *(sp?) an Eritrean/Italian native and wife of Rod Madden, served as translator for the film. Pat Pipes finished the production as I was able to get an early out to go back to school. He may know more about what happened to it. Have not yet been able to locate Pat. As I recall, the film did have some great shots of Massawa and a late afternoon panoramic from the Red Sea to the mountains to close the documentary. Since then I have produced many video news releases and features, but we cut our teeth on this one."*

AFRTS-Asmara received the Freedoms Foundation Honor Certificate from the Freedoms Foundation in Valley Forge, PA for the radio special, "A July 4th Special, 1971". The 30-minute program, based upon historical events from the first July 4th to those of later years, was aired on Independence Day, 1971, on both AM and FM Radio. It was a narrated by SP4 Mike Edwards, the Program Director under NCOIC Peter Richards. ASA's Copy Desk Awards were also presented in recognition of the station's creation.

In addition to his producing twice-weekly "Military News" (above), John Kircher also produced Buckhalt's other features, including one on malaria and another an interview with Congressman Bill Dickinson's visit, for whom, John says that Ron went to work for upon returning to the states.

John Kircher also hosted the longest-running live AFRS-FM program, a weekly *Music of the Masters*. It aired every Wednesday night without interruption from January 1971 through August 1973. John shares that, "When our twins were born on Wednesday, May 17, 1972, I began the show this way:

*"It isn't very often I dedicate a piece of music. Tonight, give me the pleasure of dedicating Music of the Masters' opening to* ***Jeff and Stacey Kircher****, my brand new son and daughter. So, Jeff and Stacey, this is Goldman's 'Children's March'."*

Following military service, John spent 15 years doing national corporate marketing for PBS, where he and his staff landed over $100 million for shows like *Nova, The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, and Wall $treet Week.*

Peter Richards, who was in his second tour and station manager at this time, notes that SGT Mike Edwardswas his Program Director. He also has kept in touch with some others on his staff, including Rod Madden, who followed Mike as Pd, became Public Affairs for Disney Corporation in Orlando. **Donald "Wayne" Strickland** did TV and radio new in the '70-'72 period.

I gather that Peter, in his second tour and as station manager, expected the best of his personnel by not letting negligence go unnoticed. At Rick's 2003 Las Vegas reunion, I learned from **Dean Tiernan** that he received "remedial training" for having played Jimi Hendrix's version of the National Anthem for sign off. Peter, himself, notes he was relieved of duty by LTC Light in 1974 for being too aggressive with a soldier for deserting his post in the middle of the night and sneaking off to the movie theater next door and leaving the station unattended.

Dean gave me a 1973 article from the "Kagnew Gazelle" about a "facelift" of AFRTS in August 1971. New AM and FM studios were constructed to make room for new equipment, thereby increasing still more the station's broadcast and production capabilities. A new studio was constructed in early '72 for radio news.

The TV Transmitter Event

**John Cooley** (12 '71 - 6 - '72) has provided a couple of very personalized stories.

*'You never know how much something is needed until it is not there. Most of the TV shows were 16mm film of older shows and of course Army info. A few local productions thrown in. After I had been there a while, 2 new techs arrived fresh out of school. The cardinal rule in any Army technical school is "Preventive Maintenance is SOP".*

*"Now these 2 techs were excited about their 1st assignment. It was decided to perform PM on the Television Transmitter. Now this transmitter was state of the art for its time, but I used tubes instead of transistors. Tubes need to be changed because they wear out. This is normal. But what the school didn't teach the techs was that, over time as tubes age the characteristics change. When a tube is removed from equipment for testing, it must be replaced back in the same socket. What the techs did was pull all of the tubes at one time, test them and randomly put them back.*

*"Of course when they turned the transmitter back on, there was no picture or sound. Normally in this situation, you would simply re-tune the transmitter (several hours long, about 30 steps). But we didn't have the necessary test equipment. SGT* ***Aho*** *called around and what luck, the calibration team was here to certify all of the field stations' test equipment. They had the necessary stuff. We borrowed it and promptly discovered it was defective and couldn't be used. The cal team managed to repair the test equipment and we continued.*

*"Several days had now passed with no TV. The troops were getting restless. Since I had the most experience, I got elected to re-tune the system. The second evening of tuning, I got a visit from a fresh young 2nd Lt. wanting to know why I wasn't done yet. What could possibly take so long? He was not technical.*

*"I picked up a 10" crescent wrench and informed him he could stay and wear it or quit bugging me and depart. He was a little upset at my reply. But he left. The following day I finally got the transmitter back on the air. I also got a visit from the post's Public Information Officer. He thanked me for spending long hours fixing the transmitter, but asked if I could be a little more tactful handling new officers.*

John has some more personal stories and memories:

*"'All In the Family' was popular in the states. No one at Kagnew could believe that that type of show could be on the air;*

*"The desert sand was so fine that the filters in the FM station automation system didn't keep it out. The system kept getting confused and never played anything in the correct order."*

Other's Input

Rick Glasby ('71-'73) has provided an air check and jingles to Rick Fortney. He also was helpful in identifying those in the staff photo of March 1971. Several identifications were added with the help of **Bob Hunt** and Ron Buckhalt. Here is the listing to accompany the staff photo from Sherman Watstein.

Back Row, Left to Right:Ron Buckhalt, unknown, Mike Bertalan, Bill Coleman, Pat Pipes, **Joe Scott**, Donald Strickland, unknown, Sherman Watstein, John Kircher

Middle Row, Left to Right: SFC Pete Richards, **John Kostelanski**, Rod Madden, Lou Krieger, **Ed Perry, Dan Minchen,** Hal Gardner, rest unknown

Front Row, Left to Right: **Andy Fralic**, Bob Hunt, **Dan McGrath, Mike Rogers, Brian McGarry, Ron Laib**, Phil Urie, Mike Edwards, Rick Glasby.

New Equipment, Nearing the End *(For Those Technically Oriented)*

Roland Richter was at Kagnew Station from Aug '72 to Dec 1973. This meant he was there during the transition to the Navy's control of the stations. Roland reports that it was during this time that a new Grass Valley switcher was installed in TV, which afforded the ability to do quite a bit in the realm of effects: mattes, keys, etc.

*"They moved the audio console next to the switcher where one operator could do everything, even do slide IDS and start the cart machine for the audio all with one hand (if your fingers were long enough you could punch the film chain stop, and slide start and push the cart start all at the same time!).*

*"We had a kids puppet/cartoon show on Saturday mornings. And there are some real stories about the Security Agency Benefit Association TV auction, too. In fact, one evening I was supposed to do a preview, showing some of the items and describing them. Some kind of altercation broke out in the control room and I had to just keep going … the cameraman just kept giving me the "stretch" sign, so I kept stretching! I was amazed you could not hear the bumping of people against the wall on the air! The director, who had delayed putting the preview on the air until after the first show following the news as getting "dressed down" by someone who had set up the scheduled times for the cut ins and ended up working somewhere else on post after that night!*

*"The AM transmitter site was located in the base housing area … and was pretty much up to commercial broadcast standards. The tower was a quarter wave, with lots of ground radials. When I was there the transmitter was a Gates BC-1T. I was very familiar with it since I had taken care of one for three years at a commercial station in Texas.*

*"The program audio was fed via equalized telephone line, but at one point, we got a 900 MHz studio-to-transmitter link. I found an old Gates peak limiter in the shop, put new caps and tubes in it and used it as a pre-processor in front of the STL, with the Gates solid statesmen AGC and Peak Limiter at the transmitter site…the modulation was really HOT and it was the loudest thing on the dial…that transmitter was capable of highly asymmetric modulation, allowing modulation to about 130% on positive peaks without exceeding 100% on negative peaks. I had learned about that while working at KILT in Houston just before I got my draft notice.*

*"We also equalized the audio to make it really crisp while narrowing the bandwidth down to that which would fit most receivers…it was LOUD!!! And of course the Army kept us well supplied with fresh 833A's for both modulator and final. I am sure the station got reception reports before, but we really dragged them in from DX-ers as far away as Finland.*

*"One disappointment is there was no audio processing at all on the FM. I understand the equipment was brought in when Wheelus was shut down in Libya…We had Gates solid state exciter and final amplifier with a pair of 6146's in it…put out about 50 watts into a four bay circularly polarized antenna up about 125 feet. Because of the mountain top location, of course, it was audible a long ways…even in Massawa.*

*"TV had been moved from Channel 8 to Channel 2 because of interference with one of the missions at Stonehouse. We had a Gates 100 watt transmitter and a two bay Batwing antenna up 100 feet. One day the Plate transformer blew in the transmitter, and we had to scrounge one from Tract D transmitter site…It had the proper voltage and more than enough current capacity, but it was too big to fit inside the transmitter cabinet, so we had it sitting on the floor, properly protected from the hands that might have been given a nasty shock. The transmitter and antenna did not match well, however, and turning it up was a real juggling act between getting enough power output and having it broadbanded enough to have decent definition. Color would never have worked!!! There was some serious phase shifting going on. I forget what was in the final of that transmitter, but I know we could not readily get spares, so we watched the tuning closely. The AM could run for weeks with no attention. It ran at a cool kilowatt 24/7…*

"*We did lots of news on both AM and FM in the mornings, and did full financial reports in the afternoon on FM, probably more for the folks downtown than anything else. The old 250 Gates rig was set up in the PA&E building at the end of the street behind the studio building and was supposed to be a standby, but when we got there, it had not been used for years. There was a vertical whip antenna on the roof of the tin building with a military type antenna tuner that was supposed to match it…but no one took into account that the tuner only worked down to 3 MHz…a couple of us managed to score some big fixed capacitors and a vacuum variable and rebuilt the thing and soon had it working like a champ. As I recall, it had a pair of 810's modulated by a pair of 810's…and those we could get by the dozen! After re-tubing the old beast, it was sounding great. I think it was only really used seriously on the air a couple of times when we took the BC-1 down for maintenance and the one time we had a power failure in the housing area.*

*"The only real pain the place where the Scully 260's and 280's in the place…those things have always been a real bear to keep tensions right and brakes adjusted so they would not spill tape. But it was nice to have two in the stereo production room…we could do some neat spots. The stereo production room had a Gates Solid Statesman stereo console in it and doubled s a live studio for FM when we weren't on automation.*

The Volunteers

I have learned that, scattered throughout the history of WOG/AFSA/AFRS/KANU/ AFRTS/NAVCOMMSTA ASMARA radio, there have been numerous instances where non-staff personnel hosted record shows and/or appeared on TV.

Service personnel with special music knowledge/interests were frequently selected for these programs. In addition to the contributions of Joe Nix and Sonny Lewis, mentioned earlier, another example of non-staff air personalities conducting special record shows in the late-fifties/early sixties is **Rice Hershey**. He volunteered as host of "Afternoon with the Classics". The program's popularity resulted in its being expanded to a two-hour segment.

As reported earlier, Norm St. Hilaire turned his volunteer experience at KANU Radio-TV into a career.

Other volunteers on TV include **Jutta Robeson** (Riediger) who was there with her (then) husband Mike in the 1965-1969 period. Jutta says, *"my great fun was going to AFRTS station in the evening and joining the guys as the only woman on TV and offering a weather report. An easy task with '13 months of sunshine". But it was lots of fun being the weather girl."* For those who weren't there, published reports are that the average temperatures year-round ranged from 60-67, with highs 67-73 and lows 61-53.

**Warren Krech**, whose official job was Special Services (lifeguard), was, *"a sidekick on the morning show on AFRS, 'The Big 14/The ROCK of East Africa'. The host was* ***Mike King****, with* ***Roland Richter*** *on news".* Warren thinks the FM might have been simulcast (Roland [below] indicates only part of the day). On Saturday morning (having been a theater major in college) he did a kiddy cartoon show*. "I was* ***Crater Eddie****, and we had some puppets and a studio audience of little Army brats and a few local kids."*

***David Hesselbrock*** *did a country music show in 1969 and 1970. David writes that, "I have a very distinct Texas Drawl and they thought I would be a natural. I was assigned to the post signal group and did the radio show after normal duty hours. It was fun.* Staff members that David recalls are: **Doug Poor** (real name); Don "Ryan" Brown, George Allen (sports), **Terry Kirkpatrick** and engineer **Bob Blatnic**.

A regular mid-afternoon Italian music program featuring a gentleman from Asmara was a regular feature and was often mentioned in the local newspaper *ERITREO.* The paper also did several articles on KANU-TV. I have a copy of one from *ERITREO* - *GIOVEDI* - 18 November 1957, in which their reporter wrote about "Kagnew Kapers" - *ALLA STAZIONE CAGNEU - La 'mezz" ora locale' della Televisione.* Translated the story reads that as Mr. Mullins' orchestra plays, the announcer (me - though they wrote "Sonny Hills" - rather than Sammy Hale) smiled at the invisible audience with LT Griffiths at the controls. As mentioned earlier, in addition to service personnel, local talent was often featured on this Saturday night program.

And from the 10 October 1969 issue of "Kagnew Gazelle": *"The changes on AFRS-FM have been splendid thanks to the efforts of four volunteers -* ***Greg Henderson, Jerry Anderson, Rod La Duron and*** *Hal Gardner. The organized programming makes for easy and delightful listening.*

*" One of the station's downtown listeners really unwound to Diogenes one day in his praise of AFRS-FM, even before the changes, saying the FM was the best thing Kagnew Station had done for Asmara in years. Of course the younger Asmara set feel the same way about the new world on AM. On the other hand, if old Diogenes wakes up to another news-less Monday morning after a news-less weekend that is also barren of football scores, he's going to blow that lamp right out, and quiet the search."* (Perhaps someone there in October 1969 can explain this "cynical" story to us).

THE AUDIENCES

I've been in contact with native Italians as well as Eritreans now living in Italy and the U. S., respectively, who offered great praise for AFRTS radio. Also, the large dependent population with numbers of young students have responded very positively, not only to radio, but to their appearances on "Teen Dance" and "Bandstand" on TV. These shows were hosted by Norman St. Hilaire and \_\_\_\_\_, respectively. There were also TV shows locally produced for the younger children, as well as Halloween and Christmas parties.

The 16 July 1971 issue of "Kagnew Gazelle" reported that AFRTS PD Rod Madden had conducted an audience survey in which nothing startling was revealed. FM listeners would like to hear more news. On AM, current Top 40 ranked the highest with easy listening, oldies, hard rock, classical, soul, jazz and country western following, in that order. More than 40 percent of the public listened to radio from two to five hours a day, with more than 10 percent listening over 10 hours.

TV preferences were: Viewers requested news at 10 PM, rather than 11; comedy, drama, westerns, variety and sports, in that order. Almost half TV viewers spend from two to four hours a day watching.

The "Brats"

PAO Major A. T. Brainerd**,** recalls, *In those days we couldn't get "Sesame Street" so our school teachers, along with all sorts of support from the staff and community, did a "Sesame Street" program for our youngsters. It was quite a hit."*

**Gene Barlowe, Jr.** has assembled a nice roster of former dependent students at Kagnew Station and generously encouraged their input to this project. Gene noted, for the local shows geared to the dependent children, *"The station provided the equipment and expertise, but it has always been the kids who made the show."*

**Ed Satterley,** who was a part of the "Bandstand" show, remembered, "*the TV station was pretty good, it aired standard TV show re-runs and had "short" (like a song from Nat King Cole) to make up the time for exerted commercials. I wish it were like that now, LOL."*

To that comment, Gene replied, *"Unfortunately today the commercials seem to get more time than the show. The commercials seem to be more entertaining than most shows, too.*"

Barry Ritchie was 14 when his family was stationed at KS in 1961-1963. He says,

*"I do remember the teen dances at the TV station. I remember if the song was fast we would, most all, do the twist and if the song was slow we would all cuddle. The radio station we often listened to at the teen club on track A for our music to dance too. I remember you could call in and request and often messages were sent in that request. The smallness of our community made the radio and TV an important part of our memories."*

**Gary Gordon** recalls:

*"My father was in STRATCOM and we were there from 61-64. Re: KANU - Remember it well. Was on the Dance band show as well as lived at the station during the Kennedy assassination. There is a person in town who was a disc jockey (?) there and his name is Norm St. Hillarie. I Think he has a picture of me in the studio during the dance band show <g>. I know he has some pictures and maybe more of the old place.*

**Cassandra Smith** (**Susie Harris**):

*"Hi, I was at Kagnew Station from 1958 to 1961 and I was known as Susie*

*Harris. I remember dancing on that radio program with* ***Roy Tabbi.*** *I think I*

*also danced with* ***Rocky Gilbert.*** *I remember we had TV but I don't remember*

*what programs we particularly watched."*

**Sandra Wohlford Cunningham**:

*"A friend and I 'worked' at KANU radio maybe 1959-1961. We started by typing up and filing their card catalog of all the records in their collection and went from there to typing up their daily schedule.*

*"Seems like Rob Webb and Wes Cain created the sets for Teen Time. They were well done and the pictures show that. I remember the records as being larger than an LP. One of the pictures of the broadcast booth on the website, Kagnewstation.com, looks like what I remember the booth to look like. And the “record” would have fit the large turntables in the picture. One of the on air staff once tried to teach me to cue up a record. I failed miserably.*

*"Seems like the room right outside of the broadcast booth was maybe 10’ by 8’ with floor to ceiling shelves holding what I remember to be the records in paper sleeves. I think that my friend and I typed up the cards for the card catalog and then put the cards in order in the card catalog and the records in that order on the shelves. I think when we entered the radio station we walked directly into this room.*

*"The only television that I watched in those 4 years was when I was at a friend’s house or sometimes when I saw Dobie Gillis or Bonanza at the TV station in a room behind the set. Thinking about it now I remember my parents did buy a Grundig unit from the PX with a turn table and a radio, one of those sets that also had short wave capabilities.*

*"Radio personnel that I remember? Wes Cain (James Wesley), Rob Webb,* ***Eddie Kelly****, and* ***Dan Scott*** *(Scottie). I think perhaps that Eddie Kelly worked behind the scenes and wasn’t on the air. Wes and Eddie were from Alabama, one from Dothan and the other from Decatur. Rob Webb was from Eastern Kentucky, perhaps Pikeville. Dan Scott was DJ for my 16th birthday party at the Teen Center.*

*"While we were living off post (I think during the first year we were there) an evening radio show was hosted by one of the radio station personnel and a teenager. I never hosted the show but remember listening to them play “our” music while I talked on the phone with a friend and discussed what they were saying and what songs they played. Others on our party line must have been frustrated while I hogged the phone for 30 minutes. I guess the show was 30 minutes long. Don’t really remember.*

*"Later, I think maybe 1961 and 62, there was a late night show that I listened to with my radio under my pillow. Hosted by a radio station staff member and, as I remember, the wife of a GI. Your questions have brought back many fond memories."*

**John Lopes**:

*"Sounds like a great project you're working on! I did do a short DJ stint and I'd love to give you my input. What's your time frame? Do you have a deadline?"*

A note from John today, promised to have his story to me within a few days.

An Earlier "History" from the "Kagnew Gazelle"

In the 5 January 2003 edition of the post newspaper, **Tom Ryan** contributed "The history of AFRTS-Asmara", in which he wrote:

"*Making do with what was available, in hopes that it would hold together yet another day, and another, and which, by necessity, has continued to effectively broadcast to its Asmara audiences despite having to deal with more than its share of equipment failure and remote supply lines.*

*"Continued updating of format, new shows, specials, opinion polls and new equipment at just the right times have brought AFRTS-Asmara into modern times with nary a scratch. As the only English speaking radio-TV stations in the area, this morale-booster, miracle-maker serves Kagnew Station and the community around the clock, seven days a week.*

*"Recently, AFRTS has presented a number of noteworthy specials:*

*The White Elephant Sale, held Sunday, Sept. 24 for the benefit of ASA's SABA fund drive proved to be the highlight of the past year...*

*"AFRTS - Asmara received the Freedoms Foundation Honor Certificate from the Freedoms Foundation in Valley Forge, PA for their special radio program entitled: 'A July 4th Special, 1971'. The 30-minute special, based upon historical events from the first July 4th to those of alter years was aired on Independence Day, 1971 on both AM and FM Radio. 'It was a narration with music', explained SP4 Mike Edwards, chief narrator. ASA's Copy Desk Awards were also presented in recognition of the station's creation.*

*"Election '72 was another successfully acclaimed project of the station, which provided continuous in-depth reports of the U. S. presidential, gubernatorial, congressional and senatorial races over AFRS-AM and TV.*

*"Nearly a year and a half ago, in August 1971, AFRTS underwent a face lifting New AM and FM studios were constructed to make room for new equipment, thereby increasing still more the station's broadcast and productions capabilities. A new studio was constructed in early '72 for radio news.*

*"Though a locally independent station, AFRTS-Asmara is aligned like a network headquarters in respect to its situation of being the only such service in East Africa. According to the AFRTS station briefing compiled April '72, each department operates independently, but as a part of the whole station."*

CONTROL TRANSFERRED TO THE U. S. NAVY

On 30 June 1973 the Navy assumed full responsibility of Kagnew Station, which became "NAVCOMMSTA ASMARA". John Kircher recalls that one of his last interviews on Kagnew Forum was with the new **Commanding officer Noggle**.

LTJG **Melvin Sundin** was the first AFRTS Officer in Charge from the Navy and, as it turned out, and for AFRTS, the last OIC period He ran the stations during the time they were changed over to become "NAVCOMMSTA ASMARA". Mel reports their leaving "under less-than-desirable conditions" in March 1974. He further reports, "I had a top-notch group of Army and Navy people working for me, some full-time journalists and several part-timers from other job specialties as well. He trimmed the radio-TV staff to 17 from 32 and increased the newscasts by 25%. TV reached a peak of 90 hours per week and top-of-the charts music "continued to pour forth from AFRTS".

I've been in communication with Peggy Ellis, who thinks she has the distinction of being the first woman to broadcast on the Rock of East Africa in 1973. She remembers what a close knit group they were. Peggy reports that the last live TV was the 12/31/73 news on which she ran one of the cameras. She wrote: "*What I remember the most is what a close-knit group we were. I remember Mr. Sundin (he was a young LTJG then and wearing braces on his teeth). Of course, I was only 21 myself at the time. Others on the staff, many of whom went on to bigger and better things were Station Manager JOCM Brown, Program Director* ***Perry Brandt, Ron Hester, Lew Reed, Jim Kout, Ron Maxwell, Steve Hiney, Phil and Deb Galloway.***(Ed.Others, identified in the staff photograph: **ATAN Dahlquist**, ,**ETC Ryan, JO1 Godrin, JOSN Galloway, ETN York, YN1 Kaut, AWJ02 Faison, JO1 Reed, JOSN Krawec.** Here is a photo of that staff.

Peggy says, "*Steve Hiney and I were stationed together in Rota, Spain, as well, him at the NBS Detachment, and me editing the base newspaper. Although 30 years have gone by since then, I remember things like the firefights and we were restricted to base, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. I'll be honest, I can't tell you too much about the equipment since I am one of those people who just want to know the right button to push. I went on to work in broadcasting at FEN Misawa, Japan, Guam, and Signorelli, Sicily. But Asmara is where I got my start.*

Bill Benack thinks he was the last one on the air on radio and I'm awaiting his further input.

LTJG Sundin, notes the official final day for Kagnew Station was 29 April 1974.

What happened to the Radio-TV Equipment?

That had been a question on my mind since I learned of the closing of Kagnew Station. I've recently uncovered a flurry of declassified traffic among the Sec of State - Washington, Department of Defense - Washington, American Embassy - Addis Ababa, and Am consul Asmara, between Dec 1973 and March 1974 relating to the "Disposition Kagnew TV and Radio Equipment. Examples:

The Embassy in Addis Ababa in a priority message: TO SEC STATE WASHINGTON INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA an argument was made to transfer it to IEG for incorporation of the Ethiopian Television service, thus becoming the only station servicing that area. Among this message's several arguments was owners of the approximately 5-10,000 TV sets in Asmara, at an average cost of $350, would become worthless as the IEG was unable to finance completely a new facility. This message pointed out it would be an effective means of communicating with large audience (estimated viewers approx 30,000-50,000) in a region beset by insurgency problems. According to Minister, station would include 7 hours per day of educational television and approximately 3-4 hours per day for commercial programming.

The response from the DOD, approved by **Navy-ADM. Nagler** and others, and transmitted in February 1974 was:

1. WHILE WE RECOGNIZE THERE COULD BE SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL BENEFITS WHICH WOULD ACCRUE TO USG IF KAGNEW TV/RADIO FACILITIES WERE GIVEN TO IEG, REQUIREMENT EXISTS IN DOD FOR THE EQUIPMENT AND WE ARE UNABLE TO PROVIDE FUNDS FROM ANY USG RESOURCES TO REPLACE EQUIPMENT. WE BELIEVE IT IS WITHIN CAPABILITY OF IEG TO REPLACE THESE FACILITIES AT REASONABLE COST, AND PROBABLY AT A LONGTERM SAVING COMPARED WITH MAINTENANCE OF PRESENT FACILITIES. STATE/DOD POSITION REMAINS AS OUTLINED REF C.

2. WE AGREE THAT THE SOONER IEG IS INFORMED OF OUR DECISION ON TV AND RADIO EQUIPMENT, THE BETTER, SINCE THE KAGNEW TV AND AM RADIO WILL BE OPERATIONAL UNTIL ABOUT 1 MAY 74 AND FM RADIO UNTIL ABOUT 1 JUNE 74. MEANWHILE IEG COULD DETERMINE IF THEY WANT TO PURCHASE NEW AND

SIMPLER EQUIPMENT FOR THE PEOPLE IN THE ASMARA AREA BEFORE THAT TIME.

3. AS INDICATED IN PARA 7, REF C, SHOULD IEG BE INTERESTED IN BUYING NEW EQUIPMENT, WE WOULD THEN BE WILLING TO SEND QUALIFIED DOD REPRESENTATIVE TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL CONSULTATION AND ADVICE. FYI TECH. REP. WILL NOT BE AVAILBLE DURING PERIOD 13 TO 20 MARCH.

RUSH CONFIDENTIAL

Another March 74 reply from AMCONSUL - Asmara stated that, **"AFRTS personnel at Kagnew Station indicate that equipment suitable for use is scheduled to be packed and shipped to Diego Garcia**. (Emphasis added.) It further reads, "Commander Noggle indicated that Navy may be willing to sell radio equipment. Purchase price and list of equipment should be obtained from CNO. He also said that MAAG ETHIOPIA had shown an interest in stand-by transmitter.

I have been unable to find any later official document to substantiate the final details of the dispositions. In a note from Rev. Richards in 2003, he states that the equipment was turned over to a crew to *"pack it up and ship it to Diego Garcia, where the equipment wore out and was replaced by 1978".*

He further notes, *"If you were to return you would find our once wonderful Radio and TV station location, next to the base Movie Theater still visible, but in horrid disrepair. The Den Den base of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and their ex-fighters have taken over all of the old base and several ladies do laundry in front of the big bay window where folks in the 70's used to come by and watch our DJ's work."*

With the closure of Kagnew Station in 1974, a relatively small number of military and civilian personnel remained for special functions. Theylater faced most difficult challenges into 1977. You may find those references hon kagnewstation.com under the History Tab / Final Days.

More Recent Photographs

**Hans van der Splinter** of The Netherlands, who is married to an Eritrean lady, began annual visits to Eritrea in 2000. He was last there in November/December 2009 for three-weeks. His next visit is planned in July/August 2010. Unfortunately, he is not allowed to film ANY military property. Therefore, there are no photographs of KS on his site. He has given me permission to include the address for his web site where you may see the excellent photographs and stories of his walking tours around the city. http://www.asmera.nl/asmara/htm.

Final Thoughts

It has been a joy to communicate with so many who were a part of AFRTS-Asmara in all its phases. While I have had such wonderful memories of my time there and, as others, had a desire to return, the emotions run deeply when realizing "it's not the same". I had written the U. S. Embassy in 2003 about the possibility of a group tour to Asmara and, even then, there was no support for the idea. Since, the tensions have grown greater.

Even as we have aged, I'm aware that there are times when I mentally shift through time and space, to that period and place; seeing the faces and hearing the voices of those wonderful friends and associates, and even sense the heated aroma from the broadcast equipment. Then, the realization that, it's only a "dream" and I must be content with the gratitude I hold for once, in real time, having been a small part of this special fraternity.

Ciao!