

# **“AUSTRALIAN RADIO HISTORY” by BRUCE CARTY Ph.D.**

## **BOOK INTRODUCTION and AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY.**

Bruce Carty started his interest in radio at the age of five as a member of the A.B.C. “Argonauts” club. By seven his radio interest was listening to A.B.C. news broadcasts. By twelve, Bruce avidly followed the 2UE TOP 40, obtaining their weekly listings from the local music store. At fourteen he became Australia’s youngest commercial radio announcer in 1963 with radio 2KA in Katoomba. He used to pester the announcers to let him panel for them. One day they were short an announcer so Bruce was asked to step in. So started his media career. Later, in Brisbane, he studied announcing, script writing, and program production with Jim Illiffe’s School of Broadcasting classes held at radio 4BC. Bruce then studied for his Broadcast Operators Certificate of Proficiency, with lectures in Brisbane by P.M.G. engineers. These lectures included an examination on the theory and operation of a 2,000 watt transmitter with water-cooled valves.

Bruce launched his own closed circuit radio station in his spare time on Queensland’s Sunshine Coast, with a studio in the Mooloolaba surf lifesaving club. From here, his SUNRADIO station was relayed via P.M.G. landlines to every Sunshine Coast beach through the public address system at each surf club. SUNRADIO operated every weekend and public holiday, playing the current Top 40. On the odd occasion, he even announced shark warnings for swimmers.

Bruce moved into television, working for BTQ-7, TVQ-0 and ABQ-2 in Brisbane, plus stations at Tamworth, Mackay, Darwin, Newcastle, and Wagga Wagga. He then worked as Presentation and Traffic Manager at Canberra, Station Manager at Mount Isa (after installing some of the equipment), and General Manager at Geraldton. Geraldton was quite a shock to him as when he arrived he discovered that the station was only on air four hours a day (6PM - 10PM) and running at a loss. By the time Bruce left Geraldton two years later, the station was on air twelve hours daily, and making a profit, achieved with an increase in staff of one.

While in Geraldton, he joined the local Citizens Radio Emergency Service Team (C.R.E.S.T.) as a volunteer, and was eventually appointed to the volunteer position of Western Australian State Director.

Bruce also worked for NASA at their Honeysuckle Creek tracking station, one hour South of Canberra, in their communications control room, supporting the later Apollo moon missions (16 and 17) and all the Skylab missions. With the aid of an 85 foot diameter dish antenna, he controlled all two-way voice transmissions and monitored all the bio-medical information from the astronauts. The Apollo missions included monitoring all the ALSEP (Apollo Lunar Surface Experiment Packages). These packages were left on the moon by each Apollo team to continue collecting and transmitting data back to Earth.

Bruce took his experience overseas, visiting 100 countries, starting in Mexico. While travelling through a town called Taxco, he visited a local radio station, and accepted an offer of an announcing position for three months. The pay consisted of full board only, but he thought of it as a great experience living with the local Mexicans. He then travelled through all the Central American and South American countries, spending three months in Brasilia (the capital of Brazil) where he worked as a videotape operator for a TV station. In Columbia he was shot at by bandits, and in Chile he was outside the Presidential Palace when it was strafed by the Chilean Air Force during an attempted coup.

Moving on to Europe, he obtained a drivers position for Atrek, a camping tour company taking young (18-30) Aussies and Kiwis on tours through North Africa and Europe. The North African itinerary included Morocco, Algeria, (with a crossing of the Sahara Desert), and Tunisia. Once while escorting his passengers through the Marrakesh (Morocco) markets he was approached by an Arab Sheik with an offer to buy one of his young female blonde blue-eyed passengers. Back in the U.K. he was on a car ferry crossing the English Channel to Ostend in Belgium when a force 14 gale hit. The ferry survived, limping into port with a 30 degree list, while two nearby ships, including a British naval destroyer, were sunk.

Bruce’s travels included numerous flights, some of which he didn’t enjoy. A TAA Boeing 727 flight from Perth to Sydney landed unexpectedly in Adelaide at 3AM with a bomb on board. A Laker Airways DC9 flight from Gatwick (London) to Toronto in Canada landed very heavily at a top secret Military base on Newfoundland Island with only one engine, as they had run out of fuel. An old DC4 above the jungle in Guatemala experienced one third of its’ starboard wing falling off, and spiralled down to an emergency landing on a fortuitous dirt track. While taking off from Kuala Lumpur in a British Airways 747, one engine exploded too late for the take-off to be aborted. The pilot struggled to get the Boeing jumbo into the air with reduced power.

Upon returning to the U.K. he obtained a position with London Weekend Television as an audio operator on sport outside broadcasts.

During a visit to Heathrow (London) airport he saw a flight to Iceland on the departure board. A sudden decision saw Bruce buying a ticket, with the flight leaving in two hours. While visiting Vestmannaeyjar Island off the South coast of Iceland, he was hurriedly evacuated when a lava flow from a volcano destroyed half their town. He then set out hitchhiking around Iceland and called in to a Government operated radio station at Akureyri on the Arctic Circle. He accepted an offer of an announcer’s position, but left a few months later when their severe Arctic winter arrived.

Back in Australia, Bruce obtained a Science degree with a Major in Broadcast Communications in 1989, then an M.B.A. in 1991, and a Ph.D. in 2012. As the volunteer program manager for community station 2CCC in Gosford, he organised a publicity stunt for the station in 1993. He attempted to break the world record for the *Longest Continuous Broadcast by One Announcer*. He reached 121 hours, breaking the world record, which was then recognised and published in the 1995 edition of the Guinness Book of Records. (The previous world record was also achieved at an Australian station with announcer Mike Summers at 2GF in Grafton in 1986).

Bruce was concerned that there was no radio station available that specialised in music for baby boomers on the Central Coast of New South Wales. He organised a group of volunteers and launched a Nostalgia station, concentrating on the bright, popular, well known songs and artists from the 1930s to the 1960s. They were forced to operate on various temporary frequencies due to no permanent frequency being available. They even had to endure long periods off the air while other temporary radio stations were on. In order to keep the station operating, Bruce launched the station on the internet. In 2010, after eighteen years of lobbying the Australian Communications and Media Authority, they were finally issued with a permanent licence. The lobbying had included nearly 2,000 letters of support from listeners, plus a 30,000 signature petition. At the time, this was recognised as the largest petition ever submitted to an Australian Federal Department. However, the licence was issued for Lake Macquarie instead of the Central Coast.

So as not to disappoint their Central Coast supporters, he bought an “out of band” broadcast licence, requiring a special receiver. He used this licence, broadcasting on 151.625 MHz. to launch Radio Yesteryear, with the help of his supporters. Their format was “Bright, Popular, Songs and Artists 1930s – 1960s”. Such was the demand for their music format that nearly 1,000 receivers were sold. A large amount of letters, phone calls, and emails also came in from listeners saying that they were hearing the station on multi-band communication receivers. Coverage on this frequency was from Mona Vale in Sydney to Charlestown in Newcastle and out to Mount Victoria in the Blue Mountains. This was achieved using the maximum allowed transmitter power of 50 watts.

Bruce was asked to explain the origin of letters in some broadcast station callsigns. As a hobby, he then researched the origins of the letters in all Australian A.M. broadcast station callsigns. The number of callsigns kept increasing until he reached nearly 700. This was a much higher number than any previously published listings, and even exceeded official Government records. Bruce realised that there was no published research on these stations on an “individual station” basis. He then compiled a brief history on each A.M. broadcasting station, organised in chronological order within each State. His research included the early broadcasting experiments in Australia from 1918 with Walter Coxon in Perth, plus A.W.A. in 1919 in Sydney, and 1920 in Melbourne.

Bruce’s journey started with emails being sent to all A.M. stations, plus the F.M. stations that had converted from A.M. The response was very poor, so he wrote to the remaining stations. Again the response was poor, so he telephoned them. Most ‘*promised him everything, and sent him nothing*’. He formed the impression that most stations either had no interest in their history, or had experienced so many changes of ownership that their history was lost. A small number of stations did have some history on their web sites. These sources of information were of some use; however, except for **2AD** Armidale and **2DU** Dubbo, they lacked much detail. **2RE** Taree and **2GF** Grafton were both good enough to send a book on their history. While on holidays each year, he visited as many stations as possible. Again he was promised that information would be sent. Nothing ever arrived.

Commercial Radio Australia was good enough to publicise his quest to all their member stations. However, this resulted in only one station responding (**3GL** Geelong). The **A.B.C.** sent some information which, unfortunately, contained numerous contradictions and errors. Bruce then researched the availability of relevant books on the internet. These were borrowed through his local libraries at Gosford and Kariong, and were a great source of information, despite also containing numerous errors. He visited the National Film and Sound Archives in Canberra, the Australian Communications and Media Authority library in Sydney, and the Mitchell library (several times) in Sydney. These three sources were very cooperative. Other worthwhile sources were the Radio Heritage Foundation website and individual members of the Historical Radio Society of Australia, plus various radio-interest Facebook sites.

Bruce then contacted every local council library, every historical society, and every local newspaper, in locations where information was still lacking. These three types of sources proved to be of immense value. Also of value was the National Library of Australia ([www.trove.nla.gov.au](http://www.trove.nla.gov.au)) with old newspaper cuttings. Following interviews on radio stations **2GB**, **2UE**, **2AD**, **2GO**, **3AW** and **6WF**, he was contacted by numerous helpful ex radio station employees and their descendants. The Daily Telegraph also assisted Bruce by locating the grandson of Charles MacLurcan from Australia’s first licensed broadcast station (**2CM** in December 1922).

The **2CM** licence followed the Australian Government issuing “The Regulations – Radio Laws for the Amateur” on 1-12-1922. The broadcast licence (number one) was signed by Prime Minister, The Rt. Hon. Billy Hughes. Despite not being a commercial licence, Charles often advertised his own MacLurcan Radio receivers. Callsign **2CM** is listed by the Federal Government as “*Never to be Reissued*”, in recognition of the pioneering broadcast achievements of Charles MacLurcan. (Most publications recognise **2SB**, on air 23-11-1923, which soon changed to **2BL**, as the first licensed broadcast station to go to air in Australia). **2SB** was the first licensed commercial broadcast station in Australia; not the first licensed broadcast station. They ceased broadcasting advertisements when they became an **A.B.C.** station on 1-7-1932. Numerous amateur operators were also issued broadcast licences. Several of these stations, which, contrary to their licence conditions, did broadcast advertisements, were later granted commercial licence status and still exist today. In addition, several licensed broadcast amateurs became the Chief Engineers, managers, and owners of the early commercial and pre **A.B.C.** licences.

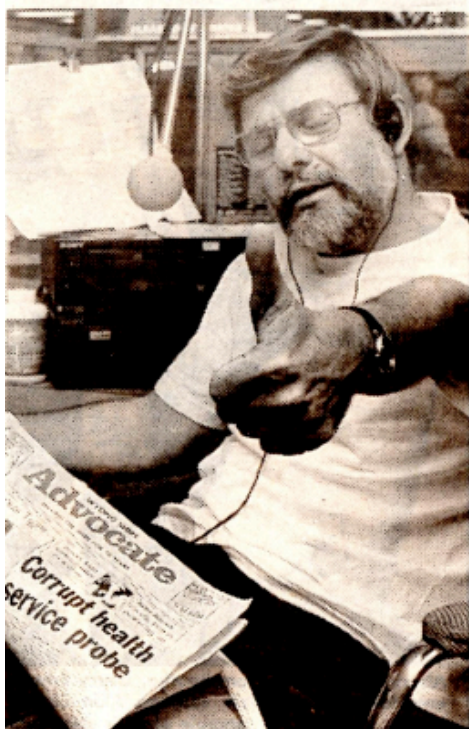
This research started in 2005 and is still ongoing. The fully updated fifth edition of his book “*Australian Radio History*” was published in 2014 and reprinted in 2015, and includes over 600 historical colour station logos and photographs. Also included are numerous relevant separate articles on the early development of broadcasting throughout Australia.

Bruce was driving to work six days a week at his job in Sydney, and looked after some of the technical requirements for community radio station transmitters at Gosford and Wyong. He often acts as a volunteer consultant for other aspiring community radio stations. Bruce also fills in to speak at various community group meetings, using PowerPoint to talk about the development of Australian radio.

He survived bowel cancer surgery at 56, 67, and 69, prostate cancer surgery at 58 and 69, kidney cancer surgery at 62 and 65, and bladder cancer surgery at 69. He then retired to Listening Hill.

Photo = *Wyong Advocate* 23-9-1993.

## World record!



DJ Bruce Carty nears the end of his marathon stint

2CCC FM disc jockey Bruce Carty has captured the world record for continuous lone radio broadcasting.

Bruce set the new world record of 121 hours and three minutes at Bay Village shopping complex last week.

His marathon stint beat the old record – set by 2GF announcer Mike Sommers in 1986 – by an hour and three minutes. He began the attempt on September 11 at 6pm – he finished, exhausted, last Thursday night at 7.03pm.

Bruce said the first 36 hours of the marathon were easier than he expected. “Then on Monday morning I started to feel very tired,” he said.

“I had a few psychological problems, but I had them under control by Monday afternoon. Monday night till about 1am Thursday I was fine.

“After 1am I was close to the edge and thinking of quitting. I started to think I’m only doing this as a publicity stunt for 2CCC FM.

“Then I thought of all the people who’d backed me and I told myself I couldn’t let them down.

“Thursday morning between 2 and 9 I was hallucinating and not quite with it. I couldn’t think as clearly as I should. It was not a matter of staying awake, but my mind wasn’t alert enough to cope with panel operating.

“For one three-hour period I used a panel operator to do the mechanical work for me. Incidentally, the guy who held the record before me didn’t operate his own panel,” he said.

Once he passed the old record Bruce kept on for another one hour and three minutes before he gave it away.

“I’d achieved what I wanted and I knew I wasn’t in the mental state to think what I had to say on air.

Bruce’s wife took him home and after 1½ hours relaxing he went to bed.

He slept for 14 hours straight, got up for a couple of hours and went back to sleep for another five hours.