

Radio - Greg Zbach

1971 to 1974:

Took part in original proposal, design and building of WERG - Gannon radio; also music director, disk jockey, engineer, recording and production.

I was on the original committee to write a proposal for the station. It was submitted twice before the President of Gannon College, Monsignor Wilfred Nash, approved the station. I have an original draft of a letter to the committee, dated 8-29-71, requesting to be a part of the station (Anything to do with sound).

The original intent was to give the Department of Communication Arts an opportunity to teach radio broadcasting and management through actually running a station. WERG was established in 1972 as a 10-watt educational, non-commercial radio station.

I helped to build the facility, including setting up the antenna on top of the Zurn science building. The first good wind storm brought it down. It was a valuable lesson in mechanical engineering. The facility was on the air in December of 1972. In 1979, the station was upgraded to 3000 watts.

My radio show was called "The Greg Zbach Music Show," and aired on Friday evenings from 11pm to 2am; prime time for Gannon students. I put together a 10 - 15 second sound montage to introduce the show that included music, sound effects, comedy and voice. Some of the sponsors were Attuned Records, Windrose and Glass Growers Gallery.

All of my shows had a basic theme, but some of the specials I presented where:

- "Warriors and Tribes"
- "Sounds of the Sea"
- "A Radio Banquet"
- "Friends"
- "John McLaughlin Special"
- "The Last Radio Show"

I was very careful in setting the mood with the music. I looked at the mood of the music like a flowing river, and would change the styles and types to control the ebb and flow. The music styles ranged from rock, classical, folk, blues, jazz, electronic, comedy, progressive rock, space music and Avant Garde.

Also, on 10/73 I helped produce, added sound, edited, helped in sound effects, ran board and played Dracula in a "Dracula Radio Play."

Greg Zbach

Station History :: 90.5 WERG Page 1 of 3 (excerpt from werg web site - 2013)

The Seventies: “The Little 10-watt Station that Could”

In 1970, a group of students at Gannon College, led by Mark Modlo, came up with the idea of establishing an educational radio station for the purpose of training students to enter the field of broadcasting. Father Thomas McSweeney, a professor in the Department of Theatre, took on the role of Faculty Advisor for the radio station. In December 1972, WERG signed on at 89.1 FM with an effective radiated power of 10 watts. The original studios and offices were located in the basement of the Zurn Science Center, and the format was rock: lots of Jethro Tull, The Who, Led Zeppelin, and Deep Purple. Some of the original WERG jocks were Jim Snider, Greg Zbach, Tom McCarthy, Marcia Malinowski, Dave Glasier, Rick Donato, Ron Piluso, Steve Collins, and Ken Darby. AJ Miceli was appointed faculty advisor to WERG in 1975. In 1977, the WERG offices were relocated to the old Schuster Theatre while the WERG studios remained across the street in the Zurn basement.

Throughout the seventies, students would operate WERG during the week. WERG maintained broadcast operations over the weekends with the help of community volunteers, who ran alternative programming for the Erie community. One of these shows, *Super Soul Saturday*, has become an institution in Erie radio and an integral part of WERG's weekend programming schedule. Student managers began adding news, sports, and informational programming to WERG's broadcast day: this was the era of A.J. Uhrmacher, Gary Loncki, John Stehr, Matt Rouch, Steve Bohen, Mike Robinson, and Lowman Henry. Around this time, Jim Griffey designed and implemented some of WERG's first format clocks and playlists.

A Tower Tale from Gannon Alum Jim Griffey '77: WERG, The Little Station That Could

Published: 07/07/2021



WERG in the 1970's: "new" transmitter being installed in the Nash Library

Many of you know that from as far back as I could remember, radio was where I wanted to be when I grew up. I also wanted a college education, so by the time I got to my junior year in high school, I started looking for colleges/universities with a degree in something related to broadcasting/communication.

At that point, no college in the Erie area offered anything like that, not even Edinboro College (it wasn't University status by that point) even though they had a radio station. So I looked in adjacent states and found the closest option: Kent State University. They had a radio station and a four-year degree so I began the application process; I even took an additional Ohio Boards test.

Then, as I started my high school senior year, a curious thing happened. Gannon College put **WERG-FM** on the air. It was a 10-watt student-run radio station. Its signal covered mainly the center city area. Where I lived on the east side, I could only get it on my tuner in my bedroom that I had hooked up to an FM antenna. I loved what I was hearing.

Students were playing all the album rock of the day and it was the only Erie outlet for that kind of music (at that point WMDI was still playing Frank Sinatra, Perry Como, and other easy-listening faves).

I went to an open house, saw the radio station and met Father Tom McSweeney, the head of the department who proceeded to paint the sky every possible shade of blue. I then decided to put Kent State on the back-burner and give Gannon a shot. If it wasn't to my liking, I could always transfer.

Well, ultimately that never happened.

In September of 1973, I entered as a freshman at Gannon, and on the 20th of that month, I did my first radio show. The record will show that Borstal Boys by Rod Stewart/Faces was the first song I played. And as far as I was concerned, it was like I was on CKLW.

Of course, the WERG studio back then was anything BUT CKLW level. It was in the basement of the Zurn Science center, occupying a very small corner. The studio was (estimating from my memory) maybe 12X15 feet. The record library containing approximately 100 albums lined one wall. The 10-watt transmitter sat on a table in the back. Outside the door was a desk and file cabinet that served as the "office." And the staff was maybe 15-20 dedicated students.

Our broadcast day during weekdays went from 6 p.m - 2 a.m. and the format was whatever the jock on the air wanted to play. It was mainly variations on rock. But every jock leaned in their own musical direction. Some like myself played the album favorites of the day (Chicago, Traffic, Procol Harum, Led Zep, Deep Purple) while others played singer-songwriters like James Taylor or Joni Mitchell and there were those that liked the jazz fusion of Weather Report or Mahavishnu Orchestra. And since the album inventory was rather limited, we all brought in our own collection to augment our air shift.

On weekends, we signed on at noon. Sunday was mainly ethnic and classical music while Saturday was Super Soul Saturday, a fixture on WERG that started in 1974 and continues to this day.

Next to my time at K104, WERG was an invaluable learning experience for me. In 1975, AJ Miceli started his four-decade professorship at Gannon and was made WERG's faculty advisor. I cannot say enough about AJ. This was a broadcast pro that did it all - from on-air work to sales to copywriting and production to management. From him, I learned so many of the basics that I utilized throughout the rest of my career, both at K104 and in my 30-year tenure as Production/Creative Director and Copywriter for 471 (Robison Road). AJ steered the station in a unified direction with the idea of making WERG as close to a real-world station as we could be. And it was a breeding ground for talent that went on to great careers in broadcasting.

From my era, there were people like **Tony Bonvini** who recently retired after over four decades managing stations in South Florida. There was **Harry Hairston** who went on to WICU as a TV newscaster and reporter before eventually working in markets like Detroit and Philadelphia, racking up several awards along the way. My good friend Gary Loncki worked for several years as news director for K104 and as Editor of the Lake Shore Visitor.

That's just a few. And as WERG and the Communication Arts department grew at Gannon, the list of successful grads just got bigger and bigger.

A few years after I graduated, the station upped their power to 3,000 watts from an antenna that sat atop the Gannon Library. Years later I would play for shows at the Gannon Schuster theatre and sometimes the guitar amps would "pick up" WERG. We'd joke that the station would have to shut down while we did performances. That never happened, of course, and that first guitar chord would generally obliterate WERG.

A few years back I got to see the current WERG studio and office complex that now occupies a good part of the 2nd floor in the Com-Art Building at 7th and Peach. And today as the station under the guidance of my friend and former co-worker Chet Price continues to rack up recognition and national college radio station awards, I feel nothing but pride for how far WERG has progressed. I was proud to be there at the beginning and to be a part of the foundation of what is now a legendary college radio station.

"The Little Station That Could" - Shared with permission from Gannon alum Jim Griffey '77.

LANCE YEARBOOK 1974



1. Peg Oiler, Wanda Moore, Lenah
2. Rich Preyton, Sam Plaxo, Jim Griller,
3. Tom McCauley, Bill Young,
4. Dion Clarke,
5. Dave Claster, John Potts.



WERG-FM First Year A Success

WERG-FM, Gannon College Radio, completed its first year of broadcasting on December 1, 1973. The radio station, created to be used primarily by Communications majors, was built by students, and is completely student-managed and operated. Over thirty people of various majors are active in the station's programming.

The students gain experience not only in broadcasting, but also in engineering, business management, newswriting, and public relations.

This year the station presented a special "Halloween Party;" the program featured "Dracula," starring Greg Zbach.

Other activities this year included presenting a Christmas special and sponsoring the Walt Disney flick, "Make Mine Music."

WERG 10th anniversary program cover:

CELEBRATE

WITH
US



Gannon University

our

**TENTH
ANNIVERSARY**

THE BEGINNINGS OF WERG

The original processing of the idea of a campus radio station involved all the necessary committees and meetings. For a long while it seemed to be a halting process, as proposals were written and redrafted five times before administrative approval, which ultimately came from Monsignor Nash himself. (Monsignor Wilfred Nash was then President of Gannon College).

The original impetus for the station was to provide a most necessary means for students of the Department of Communication Arts to learn comprehensive skills in radio broadcasting and management, and an opportunity for students to train in these skills. This training function proved to be sufficient reason for the administration to allow WERG to be established at 10 watts, educational, non-commercial. But, in a year's time, it was clear that WERG was clearly fulfilling an emerging programming function for its small audience. While Father Tom McSweeney was instrumental in launching WERG's training program, A. J. Miceli contributed the fine tuning of the programming function.

It was only a matter of time before WERG's training and programming functions were establishing the radio station as the true voice of Gannon University. Dr. John Duda, Father McSweeney and A. J. Miceli proposed to the administration an increase in wattage from 10 to 3,000 ERP. Quite remarkably the administration sanctioned the increase without delay on January 1980.

WERG-FM PROGRAM SCHEDULE

MONDAY

- 6:00 A.M. SIGN-ON
6:00-10:00... MORNING MADNESS w/ DAVE GLASIER
10:00 A.M. SIGN-OFF
- ~~~~~
- 6:00 P.M. SIGN-ON
6:00-6:30... WERG-FM NEWS
6:30-7:30... BEYOND TOMMORROW, THE NEW SCIENCE
WITH STEVE ELLIOTT
7:30-10:00... SIDES OF SOUL w/ WINSTON ELLIS
10:00-1:00... MARCIA MARIE w/ MARCIA MAJANOWSKI
1:00 A.M. SIGN-OFF
- ~~~~~

TUESDAY

- 6:00 A.M. SIGN-ON
6:00-10:00... WERG IN THE MORNING w/ TOM MCCARTHY
10:00 A.M. SIGN-OFF
- ~~~~~
- 6:00 P.M. SIGN-ON
6:00-6:30... WERG-FM NEWS
6:30-7:00.. THE STORYTELLER
7:00-7:30... INSIDE GANNON BASKETBALL
7:30-10:00.. YESTERDAY w/ LARRY ROCK I
10:00-1:00.. TOTAL BLACK EXPERIENCE IN SOUND
WITH DION CLARKE
1:00 A.M. SIGN-OFF
- ~~~~~

WEDNESDAY

6:00 AM..... SIGN-ON

6:00-10:00... MORNING SHOW w/ Jim KILCOYNE

10:00 AM... SIGN-OFF

6:00 P.M..... SIGN-ON

6:00-6:30... WERG-NEWS

6:30-7:00... DIMENSION 5 w/ DAVE STRAZISAR

7:00-7:30... GANNON PERSPECTIVE w/ CHRISTHORN

7:30-10:00... KALIDESCOPE w/ RICH JEKES

10:00-1:00... A NEW SOUND w/ RICH DONATO

1:00..... SIGN-OFF

THURSDAY

6:00 A.M..... SIGN-ON

6:00-10:00... WERG IN THE MORNING w/ Tom MCCARTHY

10:00 A.M..... SIGN-OFF

6:00-6:30... WERG-FM NEWS

6:30-7:00... PORTRAIT GALLERY w/ ANNE MARIE CLANCY

7:00-7:30... STUDENT SENATE

7:30-10:00... ROUNDABOUT w/ JIM GRIFFEY

10:00-1:00... KEN DARBY

1:00 AM..... SIGN-OFF

FRIDAY

6:00 A.M..... SIGN-ON

6:00-10:00... MORNING SHOW

10:00 A.M..... SIGN-OFF

FRIDAY (cont.)

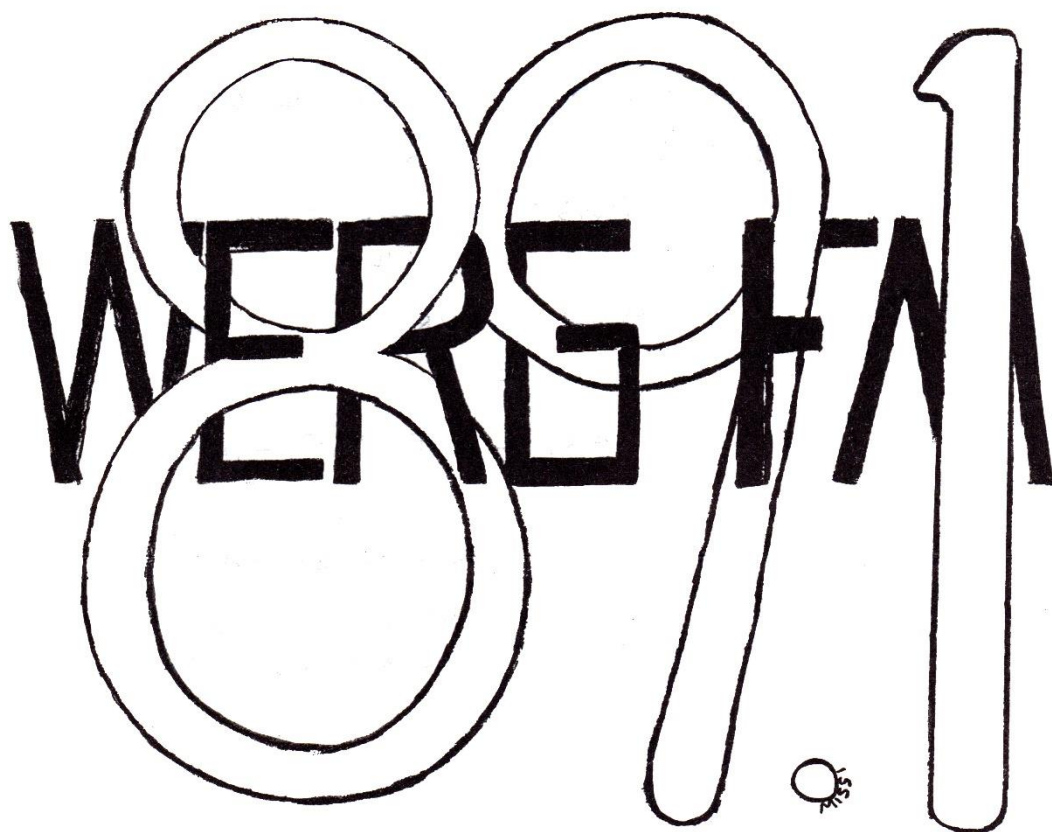
- 6:00 p.m. SIGN-ON
- 6:00 - 6:30 ... WERG-FM NEWS
- 6:30 - 7:30 ... SIGHT & SOUND w/ Andy Roth
- 7:30 - 11:00 ... REGULAR RADIO w/ CREED ERICKSON
- 11:00 - 2:00 ... GREG ZBACH MUSIC SHOW
- 2:00 - 6:00 ... FS² w/ LARRY ROCK I
- 6:00 a.m. SIGN-OFF

SATURDAY

- 12:00 p.m. SIGN-ON
- 12:00 - 2:30 ... SAT. AFTERNOON ROCK w/ RON PIKUSO
- 2:30 - 3:30 ... EDUCATIONAL SLOT
- 3:30 - 6:00 ... COUNTRY-SIDE w/ DAVE GRASIER
- 6:00 - 6:30 ... WERG-FM NEWS
- 6:30 - 9:00 ... TOTAL BLACK EXPERIENCE IN SOUND
WITH DION CLARKE
- 9:00 - 11:30 ... BOB BRITTON
- 11:30 - 2:00 ... EGOCENTRIC HABERDASHERY w/ Jim Snider

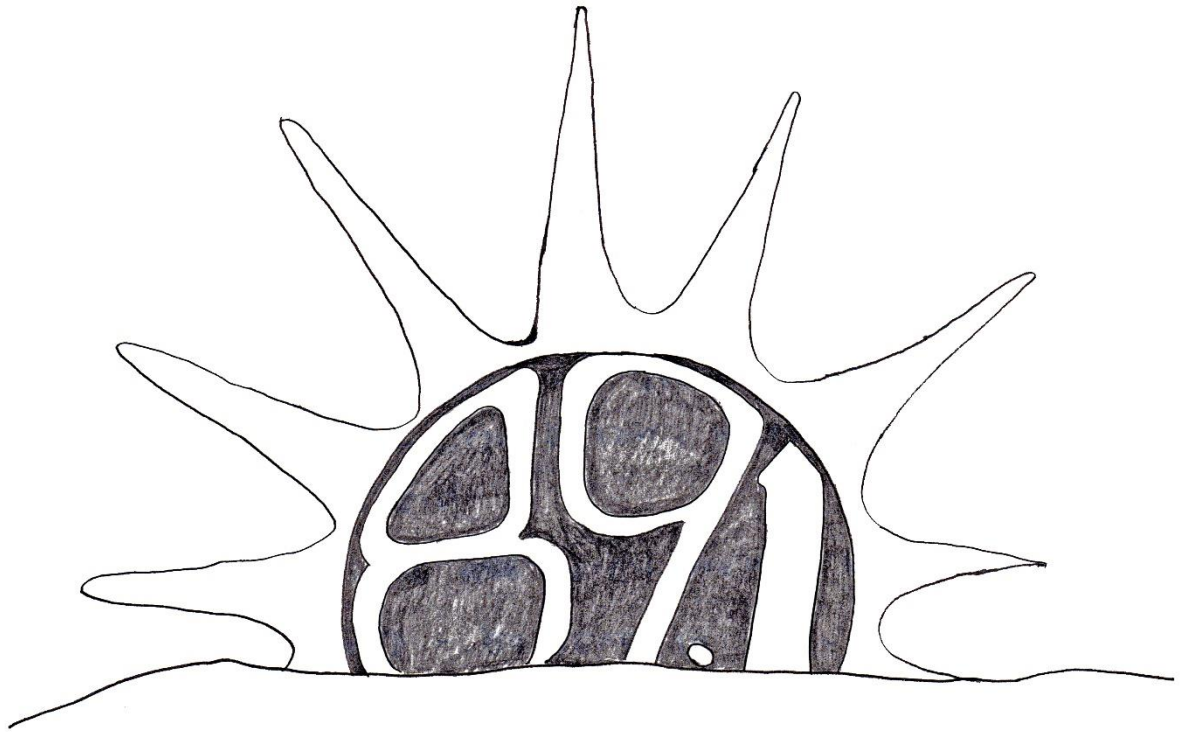
SUNDAY

- 12:00 p.m. SIGN-ON
- 12:00 - 2:30 ... MOODS w/ WANITA WAWRYZENIAK
- 2:30 - 4:30 ... SUNDAY SPOT w/ CREED ERICKSON
- 4:30 - 6:30 ... POLKA JAMBOREE w/ MARK OLSEWSKI
- 6:30 - 7:00 ... WERG-FM NEWS
- 7:00 - 10:00 ... JAZZ
- 10:00 - 1:00 ... EASY LIVING' w/ JIM BARLOW
- 1:00 a.m. SIGN-OFF



Broadcasting Daily from Gannon College

monday-friday 6 PM - 1 AM
saturday & sunday noon - 2 AM



...is rising

weng-fm 89.1
broadcasting daily from
gannon college

GANNON COLLEGE/ERIE, PA. 16501

DETACH BEFORE
DEPOSITING

VOUCHER
NUMBER **83235**

INVOICE NO.	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	DISCOUNT	NET AMOUNT
STIPEND	GREG ZBACH W	10.00		10.00 10.00*

DETACH BEFORE DEPOSITING

Aug. 29, 1971

~~Dear Sir,~~

I am a Junior, majoring in E.E. My main interest is ^{in the} Radio stations ^{and} audio, whether it be editing, recording, or playback. I have a trade certificate in Electronics from Technical Memorial High, and was sound manager ~~of~~ on Tech's stage crew. I have designed and built my own ^{stereo} audio equipment, and do much experimenting and repair work on my own. At the Gannon theatre I ^{put together} ~~put together~~ and played back sound tracks for "Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf" and "Indians".