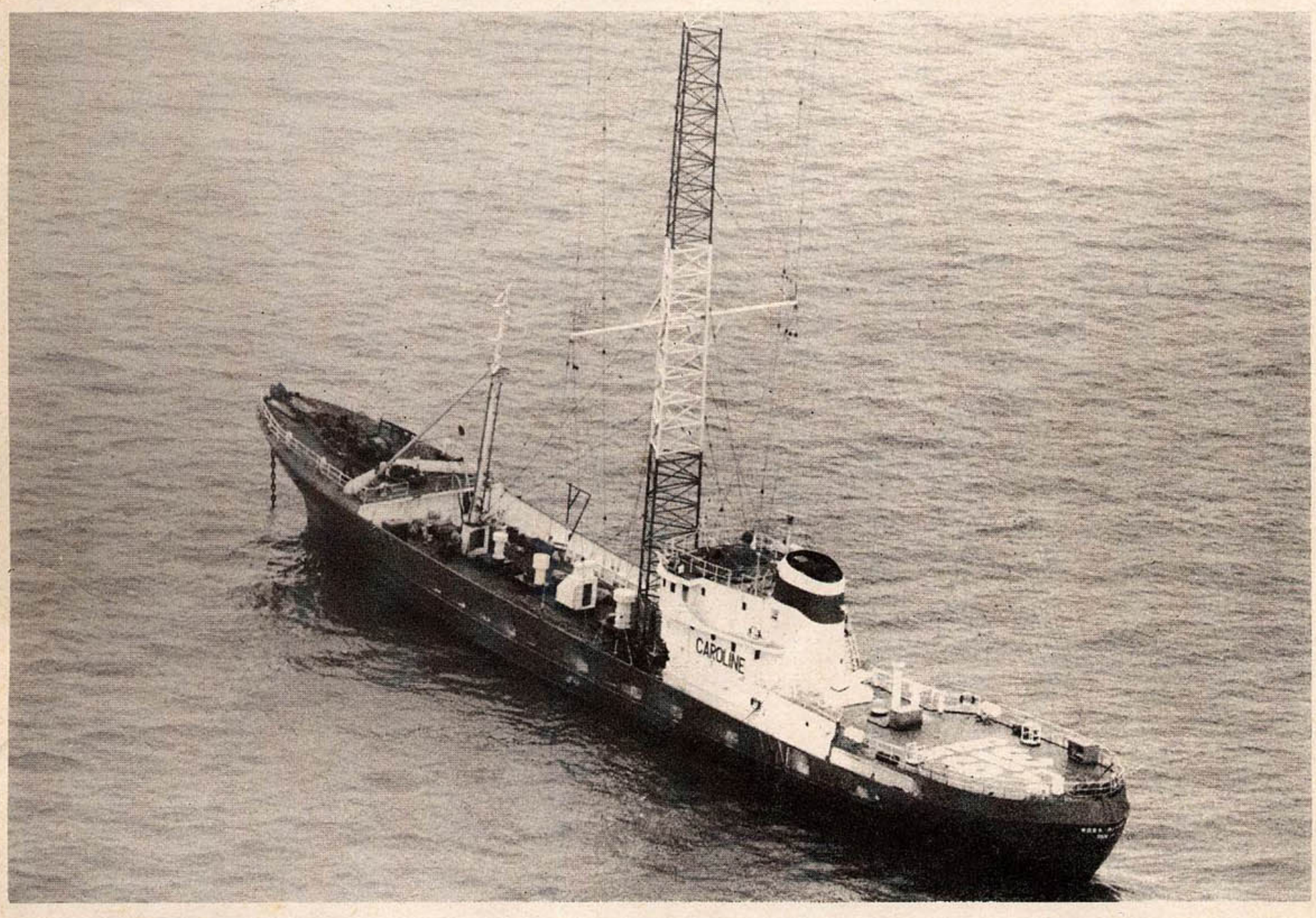
HAPPY BIRTHDAY

RADIO CAROLINE



20 YEARS OLD, EASTER 1984

£4 or $8

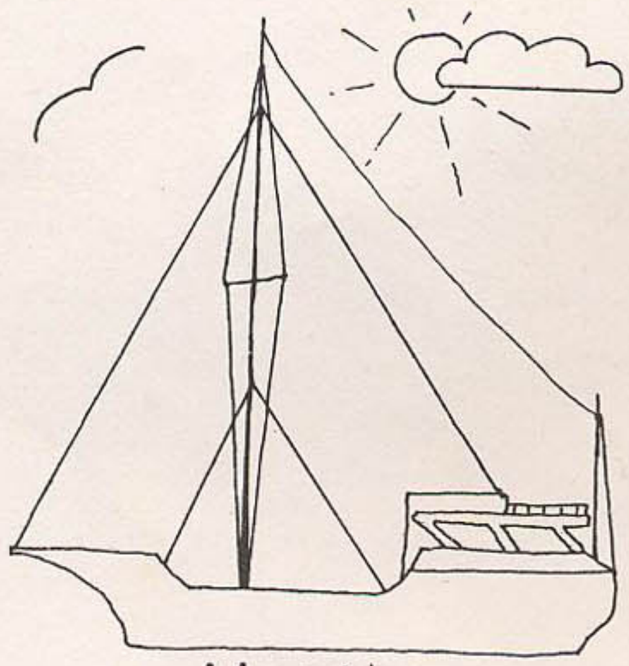
RADIO CAROLINE

Happy Birthday, Caroline. This little book is all about you. We hope it brings you and your family of listeners a great deal of pleasure.

Of course it can't be a complete history, for many reasons. Firstly, if it was ten times as long we still couldn't cover everything. There's always so much more to say; about the charismatic link with Loving Awareness; about the Stonehenge festivals and subsequent visit of the Yogi Surya Prem Ananda to the Mi Amigo; about all the religious broadcasters over the years; about Peter Norcott and his "Earthquake Theory"; about the time Greenpeace visited the Mi Amigo on their way out to protect the hunted whales; about the link-ups with other radio stations; about the "live" disco from "Flashback '67"; about the Caroline pigeons; the list must be endless! Secondly, as we've done our research, we've discovered many things but most of all we've discovered how little we really do know, especially about the early days. The questions we've asked, and the people we've found to try to answer them, have set the snowball into motion and it's growing rapidly. It could be that this is just the start, and because of it one day a much more comprehensive history may be possible. Thirdly, and most important of all - you can't write a complete biography about someone who's still very much alive! The Story of Caroline is one that never ends. We've compiled some memories and some statistics about the First Twenty Years; hopefully we'll one day publish "The First Fifty Years"; but we'll never write the full story, because we're only mortal, but Caroline will live forever!

Front Page Photo: Caroline's new ship the ROSS REVENGE

Back Page Photo:
RONAN O'RAHILLY



Monitor

THANK YOU!

Far too many people have contributed aid and encouragement to this project for your Editors to name you all individually. Thank you all. Without the help of each and every one of you this booklet could not have happened. We must not forget those readers who have not yet given assistance, but, after reading through the 50,000-odd words within the following pages, will send us corrections and additional information. In advance, thank you too.



Keep up-to-date with what is happening on Caroline and all the other offshore radio stations by reading "Monitor". Always renowned for its accuracy, it now has pictures too! Send 25p or one US Dollar for sample copy to: Buster Pearson, 31 Avondale Road, Benfleet, Essex SS7 1EH, England.

All the best offshore radio photos can be found in the German-language "Radio News", available from: Postfach 260244, D-2000 Hamburg 26, West Germany. It costs £1 or 4 IRCs per copy.

AND Ronan SAID .. .. ..

"Let There Be Sound"

I was in London, completely away from the family. I'd left all that. I was in a situation where if I'd stayed on in Ireland I could predict the route that I would go. A wealthy family, big industrial empire - it wouldn't be big in comparison to the UK, but in Ireland it was a big one - you could see that twenty years down the trail you'd be chairman of the company, you'd have a house, three kids, two ulcers, the Rotary Club, play golf on a Saturday afternoon and all of that. I could see the whole scenario - and I didn't like the game. Even though you're guaranteed a fairly rosy, cosy life in the economic sense, you would never go hungry, it was either that secure "insurance company" one or a mad one which was out into the Big Wilderness. I literally climbed onto a 'plane with fifteen quid in my pocket and landed in London.

When you land in London from another country it's a bit of a shock. It's a cold town if you don't know anybody, it's very inhibited. But that's what I did, and I thought there was an enormous adventure in this thing.

I got into Rock 'n' Roll bands. The first band I ever managed was Alexis Korner Blues Incorporated. We had people like Charlie Watts on drums; we had the Stones play in the interval. They were unheard of, they used to play for nothing just to be in the interval of our band. Then I got involved with managing the Rolling Stones, and it was all that kind of stuff. I was getting into things as they were happening. I did the groups and then I opened the Scene Club which was the West End venue for Rock 'n' Roll bands.

Then I realised there was an enormous block in the UK for exposure to music. There was two hours of popular music per week on English radio and if you were already established you could get played on that; if you weren't established your chance of getting played in that two hours was zero, more or less. So this was a natural progression from the thing I was already doing. It was another way of getting more music to more people. That's why I did it.

The First Lady

I originally had shipbrokers all over the world and eventually we homed in on this ex-Danish government ship, the engines and everything were in immaculate condition, everything was up to government-kind of maintenance and it looked good.

We started negotiating with them to buy it and in the middle of negotiations right out of the blue they sent a Telex to say "we understand this ship may be used for an offshore radio ship" and guarantees and things that it wouldn't be started to come into the contract.

It wasn't like I'd been in the game or anybody had said anything; Denmark had at that time got an anti-marine thing and because this was a Danish government ship they would probably be a bit embarrassed if Radio Frederica started up off the Danish coast. We had to drop negotiations with the brokers I was working with at the time and start with a second company.

I got a couple of people from Ireland who knew about ships, and so they wouldn't have to tell a fib, I said to them I was thinking about moving cattle. I put a whole phony scheme together to make it look like it was going to haul cattle from Ireland - it made no real sense at all unless you're a complete loony because it was a passenger ship and I was putting cows into the passenger area. Anyway, they went across to see this ship in the total belief that they were selling the feasibility for cattle carrying; they were measuring the cabins, telling the Danish people involved "get two cows in here, another couple of cows in here." They did actually go through all this, with the result that the question of it going to be a pirate ship never entered the arena, so it never came into the contract.

We put the mast on in Greenore, the family port. It wasn't ridiculously high; I can't remember thinking it was an enormously tall one. The fun part of that was we had to tell people in the area what was this thing sticking out of the ship - nobody had ever heard of pirate radio of course. They were told it was for getting sponges from the bottom of the sea! Once it got out to sea this thing would go down through the bottom of the ship and look around like a big eye and grab the sponges. People accepted that completely; it was totally accepted by everybody that it was there for looking for sponges.

There was no problem with the original Frederica. We never had a problem with the mast.

«Caroline» is born

I was travelling to Dallas, Texas, to buy the Continental Electronics equipment and at that point in time we hadn't got a name for the station.

You know the way it is when you're travelling, literally every magazine on board gets read. In either "Look" or "Life" magazine there was a series of photographs of Kennedy in the White House and he's down on the floor playing with his three-year old daughter, with some very important people sitting around waiting for the President of the United States to deal with the serious matters of the planet rather than play around. The headline was something like "Caroline smiles and disrupts the Western World"; and in that moment, Bang! I thought "We'll call it Radio Caroline."

When I came back and said to everyone that I'd got the name of the station they all said "You can't call a radio station a girl's name, that's really crazy." But after I'd done it, Jocelyn Stevens of Queen Magazine told me they'd discovered the most popular name for an English girl was Caroline; and I had a Jesuit priest come to see me and said "I know why you called her Caroline, because it's a Greek, or a Latin, word 'to love'." Then when Caroline became the subject of conversation in the House of Commons a member of Parliament said they all believed it was because of Queen Caroline of England who was in fact "the naughty queen" who did her own thing and gave them all a lot of aggravation.

But the reality was she was named after Caroline Kennedy, the innocence and the idealism.

The Transmitters

I brought them from Continental Electronics in Dallas and got them shipped to Ireland. I think we flew them into Shannon and then shipped them up to Greenore. Nobody cared or was even aware of what they were; they'd never even heard of pirate radio.

I went back again to Dallas after Kennedy was assassinated. I can remember having a Texas breakfast. It's like Christmas dinner, there's so much food laid in front of you. It's just enormous. Your English tea and toast and marmalade would not go down at all well in Texas!

The Merger

Radio Atlanta ran into huge money problems. The Wijsmuller group who ran it came to us and said "These people are in terrible trouble, they can't pay us, we're going to close the whole thing down and scrap the ship unless somebody comes up with some money rapidly. Would you come up?" So we said "Yes", and did it. We took over their project, basically.

Radio London

With some of the backers of Radio London we were trying to negotiate some kind of a deal.

I had a concept where I had the Frederica in the Isle of Man as Caroline North and I thought it made an enormous amount of sense to put the Radio London ship in The Wash to get a really good signal into the Midlands, then we were covering the whole country absolutely solid. But you run up against personalities; Phil Birch shot the project down, not because it was a bad idea but because he didn't want to be part of Caroline. He wanted his own trip to happen, even though it was a good idea to have the three working together as a Caroline network reaching 80% of the country, making it nice and easy for the agency people. Commercially speaking it was a good idea, but it didn't happen.

Caroline Television

It was technically feasible; I'd almost go as far as to say it's technically a better package because at twenty-odd thousand feet in a Constellation you get huge coverage, provided you get your aerial array and whatever right.

I had one Conny on charter and I was going to have a second one eventually so I had a spare. I didn't actually own them, but I had one all geared up. The one I had was in Spain; they were all over the place, the Connies were what they used for transatlantic flying in the Fifties and Sixties, so there were plenty of them around. NATO did an enormous amount of surveillance work with them. They were nice, reliable planes.

You have to actually go back to a base; you can't leave the equipment up in the air while you come back for refuelling. Base was in Yugoslavia; Tito's operation gave me the green light to land and take off there. I did a very good deal with the Yugoslavs. All I had to do for them was to run 'X' number of commercials per night to promote their tourist industry, which I was very happy to do. That was a very good package from our point of view.

Those units could fly, with the special wing tanks for the transatlantic work that they used to do, for twenty-six and a half hours with the full tanks. As our programme concept was for an eight hour schedule, from six until two in the morning, it gave us quite a few hours of balance if we had problems.

One of the places in Europe we thought we'd get away with it was Amsterdam; but Holland wouldn't have worn it. Once we started blasting out the reaction would have been so heavy.

The reaction was enormously heavy. The government took full-page ads in all the newspapers saying anybody involved with this project would be arrested and beaten to death and everything. They really did an enormous paranoia-type attack.

John Stonehouse was the Postmaster General and he was pretty heavy about it before he decided to go for a walk on the beach.

The «Atlantis» Mast

I will tell you the absolutely true story, and it's a very interesting story; it's a story of humankind, the richness of goodwill to all men.

Adriaan came to me desperate. The one thing he wanted in the world was to bring pirate radio to Belgium. In Belgium, people were starting this station, that station; they'd say all kinds of things but it just never happened. He said "Nobody believes I can do it... Do you think...?" I said to him "Adriaan, on July the fifteenth I will deliver you a signal into Belgium. I'll give you your own Radio Station, Radio Atlantis." He was thrilled to pieces. He was not doing at all well financially at the time.

That Sunday, twelve o'clock, he had the whole of the Belgian and Dutch press at a cimema in Gent. At the final moment of truth, he and his wife were both literally in tears. They were just over the moon - the greatest day of their lives. All that was terrific. Now that the thing started rolling we were getting so much a month. We were depending on each other and all surviving.

I had pressures from other groups who wanted Adriaan thrown out and they in; I said "no way". Then I heard rumours that Adriaan was looking for a ship. I 'phoned him up, he said "Ronan, don't be silly! I wouldn't dream of starting my own ship. I'm absolutely committed to you, after all you've done. How could you even listen to people like that?"

Sure enough, behind our backs, without our knowledge, he had been putting together his own ship, with the plan to one weekend whip all the people off our ship onto his own from one day to the next. He'd announce it the day before on ours; we wouldn't know what was going on because we don't speak the language; next day we get left high and dry.

By this time Adriaan was doing very well with his shirts and everything and was driving around in a Rolls-Royce.

Next thing, one of the guys involved in our office in The Hague rings me up and says "Ronan, there's a mast builder down the road from here who has built this enormous mast for Adriaan van Landschoot and now he's finished building the mast Adriaan has told him he doesn't have any money."

This guy built steel gates for agriculture mostly. Adriaan said to the guy "There's no way I'm paying you the eighteen grand" or whatever it was, "but I'll pay you a thousand quid to take it off your hands." The guy went bananas at Adriaan, naturally enough because he'd built it to order. He realises Adriaan's tactics are quite good because having made this mast he doesn't have an alternative. What would you do with something like that if you didn't have a pirate radio ship to go with it? There's nobody in the world going to want to buy a telescopic, 160ft mast.

So, this guy rings me and I said to him "cost plus ten per cent" of whatever the figure was - I can't remember now. The guy agreed to it, so I said "Go round NOW and give him the bread; close the deal this afternoon, don't hesitate. The moment you've paid, get the truck in and move it."

The next morning Adriaan gets back to this guy and says "What I'll do is give you £3,000 to give you a bit of your bread back and I'll come down tomorrow to pick it up." By this time he'd had our money and it'd gone - the mast was now on the ship; not up yet, but it's out there. But the Dutch guy decided he was going to have a bit of fun. So he got Adriaan and a couple of his mates all to come down from Belgium to The Hague the next day. It's funny the sort of games people play!

STOP PRESS NEWS Just five days before this booklet is due at the printers, we have made a fantastic discovery. All the books over all the years have got it wrong. The original Caroline ship was not called "Frederica". She was "Fredericia".

Loving Awareness

I suppose to say "L.A. into the Eighties" you have to go back and say "How did L.A. go in the Seventies?" My feeling about it is this.

The original idea developed in my head in 1970. I had this very strong feeling to try and trigger in people the sort of basic Energy that you know is there anyway - it's like North Sea Oil, you know it's down there but you have to get to it; it's not the easiest thing in the world.

The concept was originally - and it is today - that by stimulating that particular nerve-end in people, and repeating the stimulation constantly, various things will start to happen. Number One: People will stop being embarrassed. As an achievement to date, people are not now embarrassed about an L.A. jingle.

It's hard to remember now, but I personally can remember actually being embarrassed to say to someone "Oh, by the way, we're going to do this Loving Awareness thing". I remember thinking to myself that it's extraordinary that such an important part of the human race's existence is something we actually feel embarrassed about.

In those first couple of years, in the Seventies, the massive achievement was that whatever audience we had - five, six, seven million in that period - we did manage to achieve the non-embarrassed thing. We could see it from the letters, and that was an enormous achievement. In the old days we'd get letters "How dare you have this on the air? I'll never listen to Caroline again" and all that type of stuff. That doesn't exist any more. It was enormous originally but since we're back on the air this time there's been no aggro at all about Loving Awareness. In the early Seventies I always spoke about Loving Awareness to journalists and they never printed it. I would say "I know you're not going to be allowed to print this... " just to get them at it, so they'd fight to get it in! But they would absolutely blatantly leave it out. Now, I always speak about it and they always print it. I've had enormously good reaction to it.

While they're embarrassed they don't hear the jingle. After you get through that, then they're actually hearing it. They start to hear the jingle and then they start to say "Well, what is this all about?" A lot of people become 'Members of the Club' and the moment they've joined these clubs they think "That's it, now I've taken care of that side of my life". You never hear on Caroline how you join the club or who the guru is. They keep saying 'L.A.' and they never say what it's about. I think what we've done is triggered a lot of reaction by the fact we don't explain it. I think the collective build-up of this is that people have to think out for themselves what it is, because nobody has told them. In the process of doing that, I would say ninety-five per cent come to the same kind of conclusion; not exactly, but in essence. They have a general feeling that is clear what it's about. I think by triggering that, by stimulating that part of the brain that deals with that, we've brought that idea to life in a number of people, reminded them that that's an important part of their life and that it's not something to relegate to Sunday when you're kneeling in the church for thirty minutes and then "That's it, now I've done that let's get back to hitting each other over the head" on the Monday.

There's probably quite a few people resent the message; we've had one "How dare you so arrogantly put this out over the air? The Church of England looks after that for us." You say to these people "Instead of the Church of England looking after it we're suggesting <u>You</u> look after it!" If they ask" Who's the guru?" and we said on Caroline "It's Fred", they'd say "Oh, we can let Fred look after it, he's the head of that department"! A lot of people say "As long as I don't have to do anything I'm for it. I'll pay an annual subscription or whatever as long as you don't ask me as an individual to get involved with some bit of madness." We don't give them a place to write so there's no way they can run to somewhere else.

I feel it's a unique situation to be in to have something that's being listened to by that number of people (although we had to create it for it to be there) and I think it's possible we've scratched at the European Consciousness. Of the people who listen to Caroline we've had a small effect on some and maybe a slightly larger effect on others - and some,obviously, are not affected at all. In the Great Lake of Life it's a tiny pebble in the middle of the lake; but it is a pebble and it does hit the lake and there are ripples. When those ripples hit the shore, and if they hit the shore, at what point and how, will depend on all kinds of factors; mainly on how receptive the person who receives the message is.

It could have been a lot bigger. We made some fundamental errors along the way. If the Loving Awareness band had taken off in '76 as we had planned that would have been a tremendous influence. Those four guys really were an enormously powerful consciousness, the four of them together; if that had kind of plugged into this box and went "plop" there would have been a band putting that out and actually living it, genuinely living it. That would have been staggering because millions of people would have had that kind of Energy coming at them and say "I can feel that they really mean it". That is the key to it. Mike Hagler, his wife told me when I went for the new jingles, was so thrilled that we came back to him to do it that he rushed out and paid five thousand dollars for studio equipment to get all the right sounds on.

The other part about it is, I think, that if millions of people could live that idea, not for any religious reason or "I want to be good for the neighbours" but because they felt better in their own heads for being there, that's the basic feeling of it. That's the best way to sell it; that you will feel a lot better if you live, in your head, in that sort of place; positive, optimistic and what have you.

A Dedication

What I would like to say is, there have been times in the dark days - and the dark nights - when the weather battles, and everything else, that I have actually had moments where I have thought "God, is all the battle and struggle worth it? Is there anybody who actually cares if this thing continues or not?" At that moment I've always thought of Buster, and I've thought "Well, there is one person who does care, one hundred per cent". A lot of people care about Caroline but he's somebody who absolutely cares about whether it actually survives. I can remember many occasions when his enthusiasm and dedication is such a reassurance. At moments that's enormously powerful. I can't say that had he not been there I wouldn't have gone on; but I can say that it's a possibility.

I believe that individuals make an enormous difference to things. I'm an enormous believer in the individual. If anything, Caroline is dedicated to the individual - and that means every individual. We're all capable of the best and the worst. So what I'd like to say in this book is I'd like to dedicate it to the Freedom of the Individual. And that's about it.

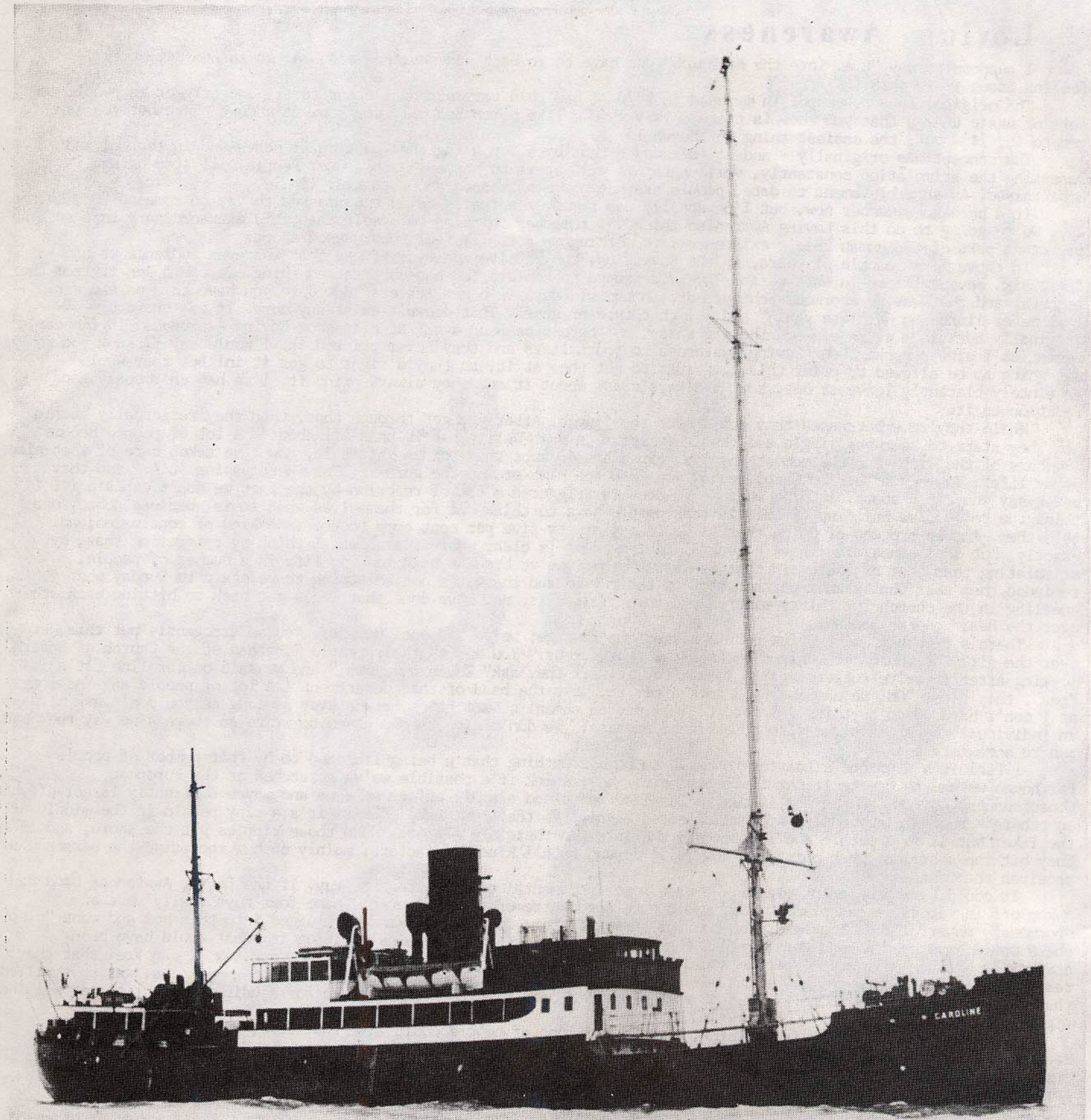
RONAN O'RAHILLY, March 1984

Radio Caroline

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M.V. FREDERICIA

the Fredericia

The "Fredericia" was built in 1930 by Frederikshaven V & F A/S in Frederikshaven, Denmark. She was a seven hundred and two ton passenger ferry, one hundred and eighty eight feet long, with a thirty foot beam. She could make a speed of fourteen knots.

In 1963 she was sold to a Swiss company, Araune, and found her way to Greenore in Eire where she was renamed "Caroline" and fitted as a radioship. Three hundred tons of concrete was added to balance her new one hundred and sixty foot aerial mast.

She sailed from Greenore under Captain Baeker on 26th March, 1964, and anchored in the Thames; three months later she retraced her steps and stayed off the Isle of Man until towed away by the tug "Utrecht" on 3rd March 1963.

After four years chained up in Amsterdam, she was publicly auctioned by R.W. Bais on 29th May 1972. She was purchased by Holland's biggest shipbreaker, Mr Frank Rijsdijk-Holland, for 26,500 guilders (about £3,500). Her life ended in the scrapyard of Arie Rijsdijk, Bos & Sons of Hendrick Ido Ambacht.

Caroline Firsts

Radio Caroline was the first offshore radio station to transmit from the coast of England, and Britain's first all-day music station. She first began to broadcast on Good Friday, 27th March, in 1964. On this day, tests were made at 1700 to 1715 and again between 2100 and 2200. Her first programme began at about three minutes past noon the next day.

The first record to be heard from Caroline was "Around Midnight" by Jimmy McGriff; this subsequently became established as the station's first theme-tune.

Contrary to popular belief, Simon Dee's voice was not the first to be heard on the station. Chris Moore made a few announcements during the Friday night test broadcasts, and it was Chris who presented the first programme after being introduced by Simon.

Most of the Caroline DJs in early 1964 recorded their programmes in London. Carl Conway was the first to have his tape aired , on the opening day of the station, 28th March.

The first female DJ on Caroline could have been singer Sylvie Vartan. While visiting the Mi Amigo to promote a record she got stranded aboard by bad weather, and took over part of Tony Blackburn's programme on 18th September 1965. In the Seventies, Debbie England was the first lady to appear behind Caroline's microphone, and in the Eighties the privilege went to Diane Lauren whose first programme was on 12th March 1984.

The first jingle used by the station was the Caroline Bell, which survives to this very day!

The first commercial ever broadcast by Caroline was for Woburn Abbey and was aired on May Day 1964. The advertizing campaign that really hit Britain by storm was the write-in competition "Caroline Cash Casino" which first appeared in October 1966.

The first live concert to take place aboard the "Caroline" was in May 1964 by musicians Jimmy Smith, Tony Crombie and Tony Thorpe. It all happened live on deck - not by design, but because Jimmy's organ was too large to take below!

The Caroline Club was launched on 1st July 1964. Membership cost five shillings. The first "Caroline Club Request Show" was aired on 11th July.

On Saturday, 4th July 1964 Caroline became the first station to broadcast live on the move! The "Caroline" began to sail from the Thames Estuary at midnight, began her day's broadcasting at 0600, and gave a running commentary on the journey all the way to the Isle of Man. Her anchor was put down on the Bahama Bank, five miles off Ramsey, on 6th July. Thus Radio Caroline became the first ship-borne station to transmit to the North of England, Wales and Ireland.

The first time a lifeboat was called out to Caroline was in July 1964 when a technician, Dermot Hoy, was suffering abdominal pain and was believed to have appendicitis. The first lifeboat to attend the North Ship took ashore the Chief Engineer, Manfred Sommers, with a crushed hand in February 1966.

Over the course of her career Caroline has been able to effect several rescues by being in the right vicinity when accidents have occurred. The first life she saved was that of American fighter pilot First Lieutenant John Wynn, when his McDonnell RF-101C Voodoo jet developed engine trouble, forcing him to ditch in an icy North Sea in April 1965.

Caroline ("like all Queens" says Tony Allan!) has an official birthday , which is Easter Saturday. She celebrated her first birthday by presenting four "Bell Awards" to record artists who'd supported her throughout that first exciting year of her life.

The first disaster to occur to Caroline was when the South Ship landed on Frinton Beach on 19th January 1966. For rescuing her DJs that night, in a blizzard of driving snow, the Walton Lifesaving Apparatus Company received the Board of Trade Shield, the first award of their sixty year history. That hadn't been the first time a Caroline anchor had been lost however; that distinction went to the North Ship a year earlier.

The "Caroline" was not just the first but the only radioship to have a wedding performed aboard her! Janet Teret and Mick Luvsit were married by Captain Martin Gips on 20th September 1966.

The G.P.O. (forerunner of British Telecom) was happy to supply the Caroline office with telephone services but didn't like the idea of printing "Radio Caroline" in their directory. Therefore; when Caroline's number first appeared in November 1964 it was as "Caroline Sales".

Radio Caroline was first discussed in Parliament on 7th April 1964; it took three years for legislation to be passed to silence the so-called "pirate" stations. The "Marine, &c., Broadcasting (Offences) Act 1967" came into effect at midnight on 14th August 1967. Caroline became the first station to defy this act, and the only one of the existing stations to continue. The first DJs to broadcast when the Act came into force were Johnnie Walker and The Admiral Robbie Dale; when the Act was extended to cover the Isle of Man, Don Allen's was the first voice to be heard on Caroline North after midnight on 1st September. The first DJs to be prosecuted under the Act were Andy Archer and John B. Mair; the first, and so far the only, DJ to fight the law - and win - was Johnny Jason.

Caroline's first brush with the law was in May 1964 when Customs officers from the "Venturous" were refused permission to board the "Caroline" to examine her bonded stores. The first - and only - time the British Authorities ever boarded the "Mi Amigo" was on 14th November 1975 after the ship had drifted. The Captain and three other persons were arrested and prosecuted for assisting illegal broadcasts from within territorial waters.

The first - and so far the only - time Radio Caroline's broadcasts have been subjected to deliberate jamming by the Government was while she was a guest aboard the "Mebo II" in June 1970.

The first time two transmitters operated simultaneously on different frequencies from the "Mi Amigo" was on 17th May 1973; they first carried separate programmes on 31st May.

And now, the biggest first of all - Radio Caroline is the first offshore station to be still on the air a full twenty years after her first broadcast! Happy Birthday, Caroline! And many, many more of them!

Democracy has it's fling Carl Conway

One day my agent, Alison Cuttler, said to me "There's some sort of radio station auditioning people; would you go along?" So I went to somewhere in St. John's Wood to a studio and did an interview. Michael Joseph seemed to be the spokesman. He said "We like that; could you come back next week?" I did, and he said then "We'd like to have you working with us. We'll tell you more about it now; it is a pirate radio station" - or "offshore"; they wouldn't call it "pirate" at the time! And that's how I got in.

Very shortly after that, we were all stockpiling tapes, myself and one or two others. John Junkin was one. We went to various places, one was in Gerard Street, and for about two or three months were making tape after tape, all taped programmes in advance, giving them days, times and so forth. Easter 1964, Simon Dee went out to the ship and he actually opened the station. He was doing live shows all the time and putting tapes on in between; Christopher Moore too went out there.

For the hour of transmission on Good Friday, I came home to Margate. Ronan O'Rahilly, who was the boss, said "Would you drive around Thanet and as far as you can to different parts of Kent, listening on your car radio, and make a report on how it's coming over and if it's fading anywhere?" I did; I dived up the Thanet Way and right across country up to Canterbury and so on, listening all the time, and it came in pretty good everywhere that I went.

None of us really knew what it would do, but when we were driving around, all the way from Margate as far as Colchester everybody seemed to be listening to this new pirate radio station. When we started getting more powerful, when we started getting fan-mail, we realised it was a terrific potential; we never realised it was going to be so gigantic as it was. It was brand new to us in England. It was something that had never happened before. If you listened to BBC Radio, they had nothing like it. There was Radio Luxembourg, and then there was an alternative - all day long! And subsequently all night. Of course people listened. There was nothing else to listen to of that kind.

I did have to go to the ship, unfortunately. It was comfortable, up to a point; I suppose "the bare necessities" would sum the whole thing up. It wasn't very big, but it was bigger than the Mi Amigo of course. Luckily, it was summer and I did a lot of sunbathing on the top deck. One thing that stood out for me was that there was no time. I suppose if you were on the ship for a long time you would get some sort of priorities, but apart from the shows that you were doing you didn't really think whether it was morning or afternoon or what; evening went into night, afternoon into evening, and it was all one sort of time. We did have television. It could be very boring though. The claustrophobic bit was that there were no women on board, and two weeks when you're virile was rather a long time. The girls at Caroline House were always a bit scared of me when I first came off the ship. I don't know what sailors do when they're on board for months on end; we made a fuss about a fortnight!

Simon Dee, Keith Skues, Tom Lodge, Gerry Duncan - he wasn't on the ship permanently, he was the studio manager at Caroline Headquarters - Chris Moore came and went. Of course we weren't on the ship all together because it was one week off and two weeks on. Ronan came out for a day just to see it all, he didn't do any broadcasting. I can't think of anyone else who was there.

I never went back to the original Caroline ship after she went North. Luckily, as I was doing a lot of commercials and clients couldn't exactly come out to the ship, they took me back to Caroline House in Chesterfield Gardens off Curzon Street. So I was nice and comfortable downstairs at Caroline House most of the rest of the time. I preferred it because it was standing still! We had lots of clients for the national adverts, they came to the studios, we were taping and making it sound like it was live.

I had my own little department and it was a great pleasure to go out and interview Roger Moore, Alfred Hitchcock, and any Americans coming over, directors or stars, at places I could never afford to go to, like the Penthouse Suite at the Dorchester Hotel for Jaqueline Suzanne, the authoress of 'Valley of the Dolls'. I'd interviewed Roger Moore twice; then, as I was reverting to acting from time to time, I played the part of the German wine waiter in one of the 'Saint' series and he said "You haven't come to interview me again, have you?" I said "No! I'm acting with you this time!" Ronan was tickled pink that I was appearing on television and films as well; he loved that, and so did I! Being on Caroline did help with TV commercials, overseas radio commercials and so on, because you were a Name, and once you're a name you get work. I was having also to go out and do personal apperances; crown carnival queens, various things like that, which was very nice. That was the glamour of the job, very much so, because Caroline was THE new fantastic thing in everybody's world of music.

I don't know what the beef was with Radio Atlanta; I don't remember what it was all about, but it really was like piracy at that time on land! We were still stockpiling these tapes, and Michael Joseph came into the little studio and said "There's some trouble with this Radio Atlanta station - can't tell you exactly what's happening, but stop doing your tapes right now. We're going to take all the tapes out with us, we don't want them to get hold of them, and we'll go and sit in the coffee bar around the corner until it's all ironed out." Then an amalgamation took place. Allan Crawford and the Australian DJs all joined us at Caroline House. They had one floor, we had the other, and we were all working together after that. The income was over-doubled when we had North and South; we covered the country, more or less.

We didn't mind Radio London because they were a really good professional station and good competition. Sometimes they took the lead and sometimes we did; but I think we ended up taking the lead because when Caroline Cash Casino with Bill Hearne started, and we put up our kilowatts, we really became Number One again. But some of the other small ones we weren't happy about at all, because some of them were always getting into trouble and unfortunately for us, who were very bona fide, this did not help our case. The shooting of Reg Calvert gave the British Government the excuse to say "There you are you see, we allow these things to happen, all these illegitimate things go on, and people get killed." We didn't need this sort of publicity.

Caroline's first day on the air:

Simon Dee in the studio with Jan Gunnerson at the controls; Chris Moore shares the Bridge with Captain Mackay.



It went on and on and we thought it'd never happen, especially when there were hundreds of thousands of people writing in all the time and petitions to the Government; but this wretched Short , the Postmaster General to the Labour Government of the time, made it quite clear that the more people wanted the radio they weren't going to let them have it. I remember his words: "We're not going to let them cock a snook at the British Government. It doesn't matter how many people write in and make petitions, we are not going to allow it." We knew then our goose was cooked - and it was. The axe dropped.

It was very sad. From then on there was a depressing atmosphere about the place. The office and the studios were shut down completely and they had to go to Holland. They did say "You can come with us, we'd like to have you there, it's up to you", but I thought "No, I'll carry on with the acting - who knows what'll happen in Holland? It might happen again". All right, call me a coward, folks; I was still working, still had my agent and all my contacts; if I had been purely radio, nothing else at all, it may be a different story.

I had three and a half beautiful years, and suddenly it was cut down just like that.

It's not the fantastic advanture now that it was. There will be many listeners of course, but they've got a lot of competition these days. Now there's plenty to listen to. I just don't think it's quite the same.

From an interview by TIM STEWART



The DOWNS and UPS of the masts

When the Mi Amigo first became a radio ship (she was then called "Bon Jour") she was fitted with a forty-three metre aerial mast in the free port of Copenhagen.

This mast didn't survive the Atlantic crossings in 1963. A new one, which was an aluminium structure that reached 168 ft above deck-level, was designed and built on the Isle of Wight and was fitted in the port of Greenore. On the journey from Greenore to the Thames Estuary the ship was forced to put into Falmouth harbour so that the riggers could return to do repairs to the mast.

Once broadcasting had begun, the mast was undamaged throughout the Sixties. It took in its stride the beaching at Frinton and subsequent trip to Holland; but in Holland it was removed for its own safety while the ship was in a harbour alive with swinging cranes! It was refitted before she left to return again to the Essex Coast. Two winters later the Mi Amigo was towed to Amsterdam with the mast still intact.

In September 1972 the Mi Amigo put to sea again, still with her original mast. But no maintenance had taken place on the structure since Caroline ceased to broadcast in 1968. This, combined with the fact the ship was in a much less sheltered anchorage off the Dutch coast, culminated in three-quarters of Mast Number One being lost into the sea in winds of 75 mph - force eleven - on 13th November 1972.

By the end of 1972, new bases had been prepared on the deck of the Mi Amigo, and a new lattice mast, designed by Chris Cary, was lying in sections in Scheveningen harbour waiting to be taken aboard. By 13th May 1973, when Radio Caroline began broadcasting on 389 metres, ten sections had been erected. From 26th June, the station was off the air for twelve days with generator trouble allowing Robin Adcroft, Norman Barrington and Bob Noakes to add the final two sections to bring Mast Number Two to its complete height of 180 ft.

Mast Number Two didn't even survive its first winter. On 1st October 1973, it came crashing down, leaving only a 26 ft section still standing. This section was still of some use; Chief Engineer Peter Chicago rigged a new aerial, of four wires in parallel, between the remains of the mast and the ship's after-mast. But this arrangement only lasted until 18th October, when the final section followed its mates into the brine.

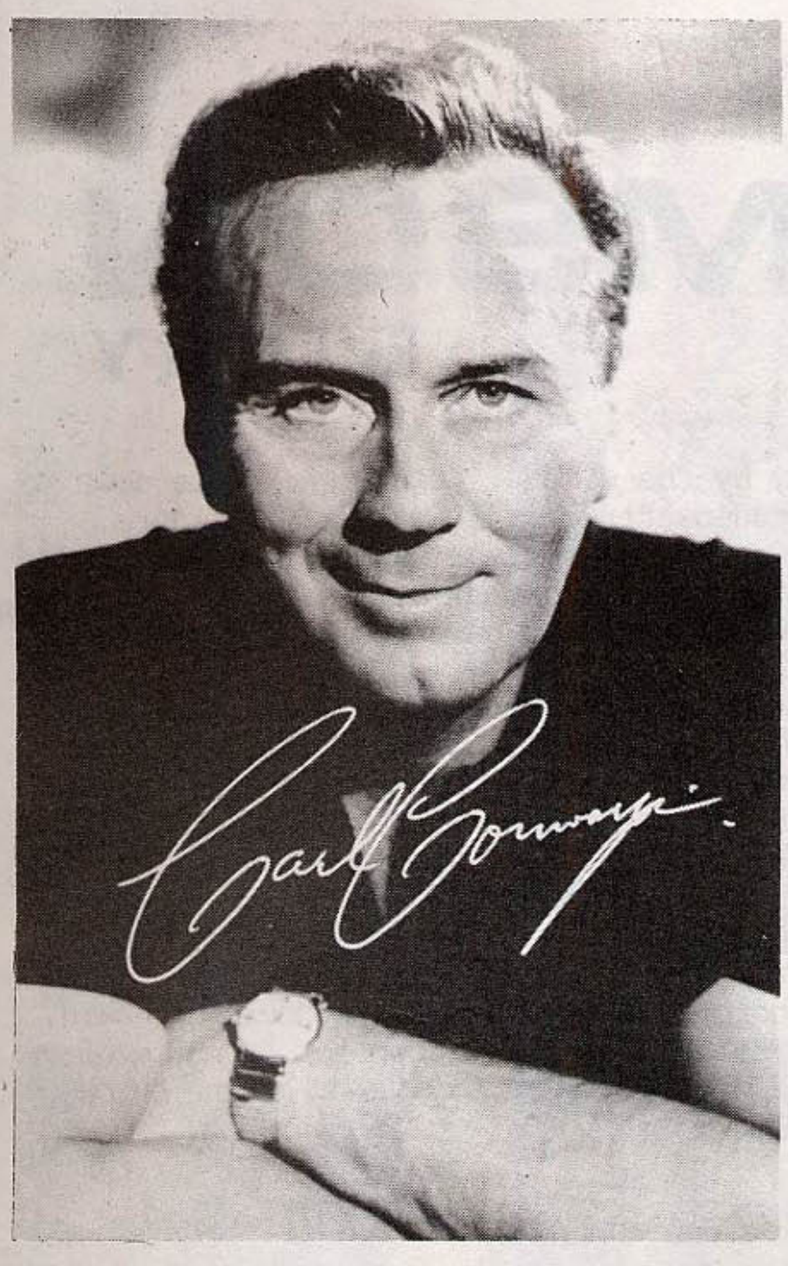
Radio Atlantis had at the time acquired a ship of their own, and had had a telescopic mast designed by ex-Caroline technician Will van der Steen and built by a wrought-iron gate company! By the time it was ready, Atlantis were not willing to pay for it; it was offered to Ronan at cost price and without delay he sent an emissary with the cash - plus an extra 10% to clinch the deal - and the new mast was collected and taken out to the Mi Amigo the very same day. It proved to be of far greater use to her than it could have been to Radio Atlantis, as they gave up the fight and closed down when the Dutch Government brought in a Marine Offences Act less than a year later.

By 23rd November, five of the nine sections of the yellow Mast Number Three had been erected, but professional aerial riggers were brought in to complete the job. This they did in a spell of calm weather before Christmas - and the full height of 165 ft was achieved on the morning of Christmas Eve! Radio Caroline was thus able to return to the air on Christmas Day.

On 19th April 1974, the mast was reinforced as far as the first crossbar. No further problems were experienced until 1st December 1975; then the top of the mast broke off. Repairs were effected on 8th January 1976. In August 1979, the top of the mast bent over; Kees Burrell climbed right to the top twice, once to assess the situation and again to take up tools and straighten it out. His journey to the top took him fifteen minutes!

Mast Number Three was regularly maintained. A complete spare set of stays was kept on board, but was never needed; it was only occasionally necessary even for any of them to need tightening, but checking them was a vital job which was usually undertaken by Peter Chicago.

It's Mast Number Three that's still standing, marking the spot where the Mi Amigo lies beneath the waves. Just before the tragedy it had been freshly red-leaded and was showing no signs of corrosion or decay of any kind. A strong, well constructed mast, it has every chance of continuing to maintain its position until the Mi Amigo is eventually reclaimed from the seabed!



The first QSL Card of the Seventies

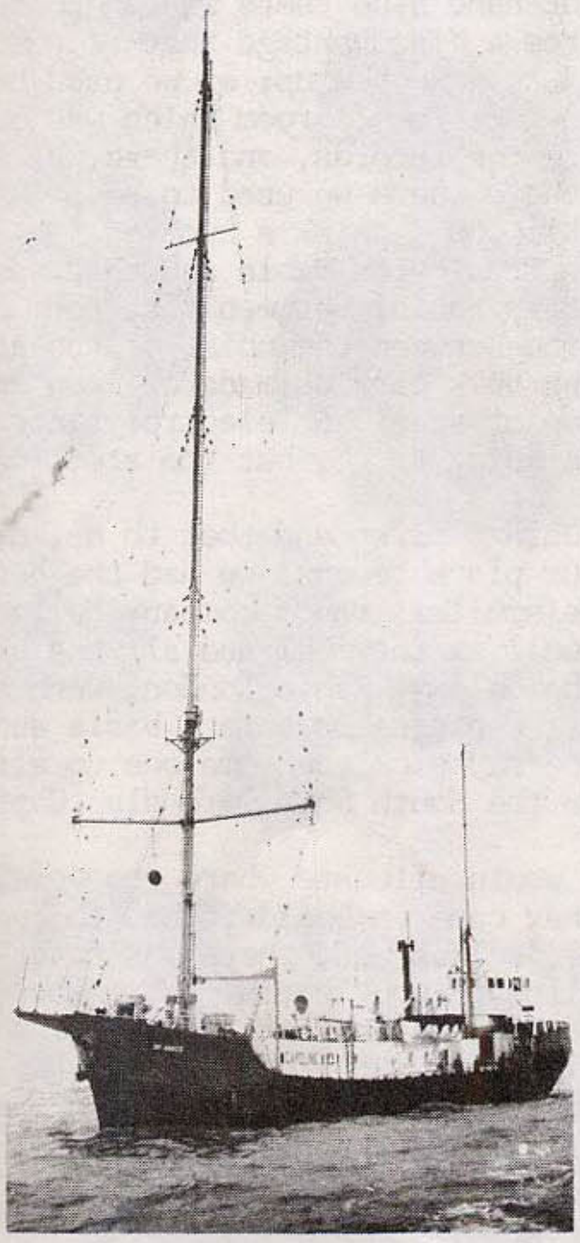
with love and music *

RADIO CAROLINE

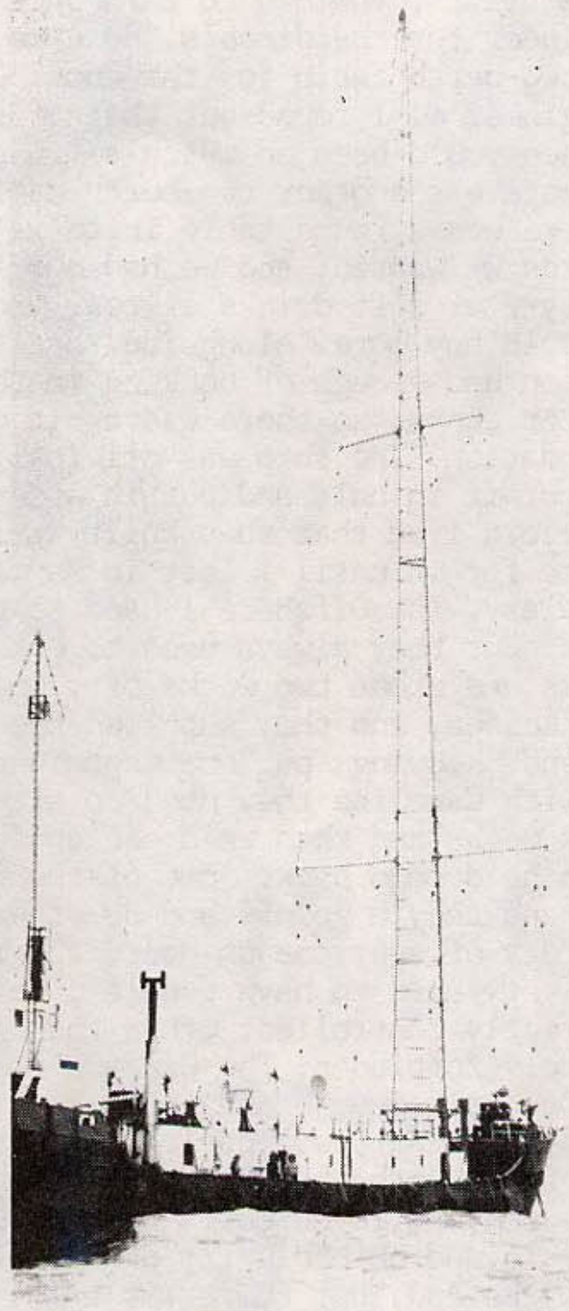
Many thanks for your reception report.
C.R.O.

MI AMIGO

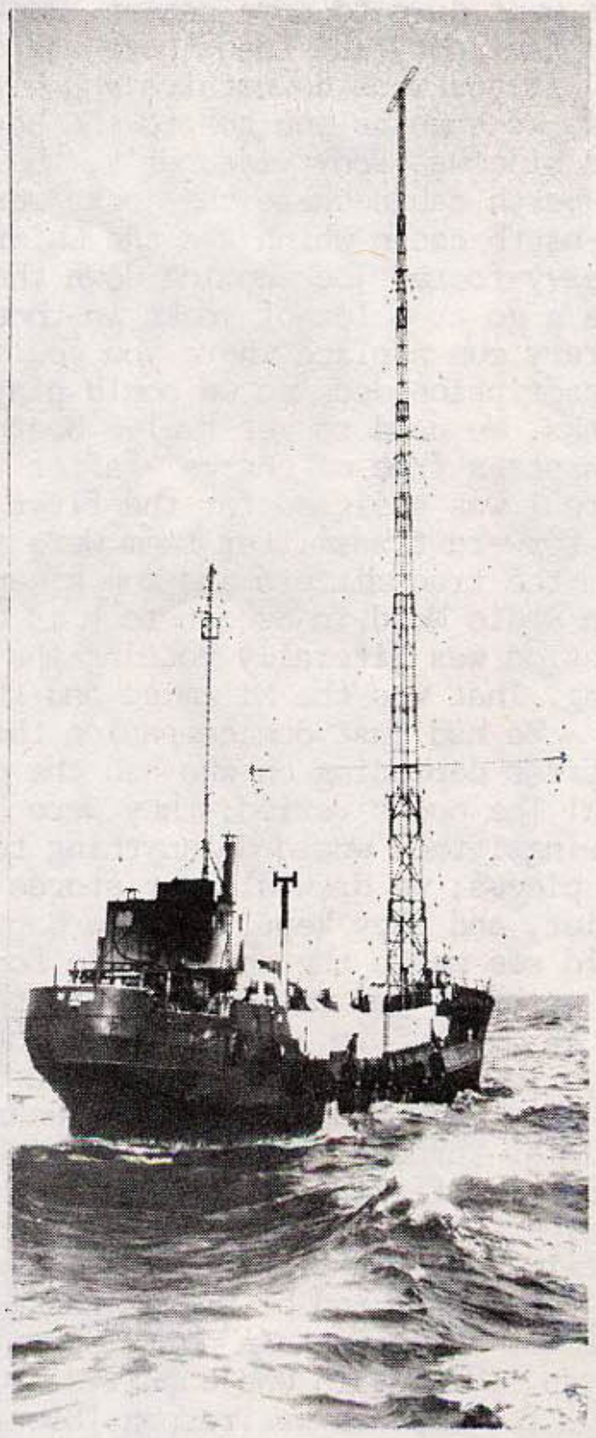
Broadcasts on 1187 KCs.
252.7 meters



Mast Number One 1963 to 1972



Mast Number Two 1973



Mast Number Three 1973 to ∞

THE CARL THOMSON STORY

I was working in the test department of Marconi Marine when one day a guy by the name of Stan Fisher came down to me and said "Do you want another job? Someone's looking for engineers for the radio station." It was Radio Atlanta, then. So on the way home one night I called in on this guy at Billericay - he was a radio amateur who's since gone to New Zealand - and had an interview. He fixed up another interview for me with the Chief Engineer at the agents which was down at Parkestone Quay. So I drove to Harwich to see Mr Gillman, an ex-BBC engineer who came from Devon. He said he'd employ me so I left Marconi Marine.

It must have been around the beginning of 1965 the first morning I reported to Parkestone Quay. There were Patrick Starling, Richard, a courier from London, and myself going out on Offshore II that day; the forecast was force six or seven, but the Offshore II was going to sail. So out of Harwich harbour we go - and ten minutes later I'm sick over the side and wondering what the devil I'm doing going out to this ship. It was a slow boat, took about an hour and a half to get us there, and after an hour I was sick, I was green, and I was wet because there was no shelter - you had to stay in the air all the time, if you went downbelow the smell of Dutch tobacco used to make you retch.

Finally we got on board. I was greeted by two other engineers, an ex-Navy man who was on the point of leaving, and Trevor. At that time the actual Chief Engineer was Ted Walters. He comes from Averly. Under him was George Saunders, under George was Trevor Grantham, and then I joined. In those days there were always two engineers on board. The guy I was relieving was going to stay overnight to show me the ropes; they said "Have a lay down for a couple of hours then we'll show you what's going to happen." We were on 10kW at that time and they were trying to get us onto 20kW through a combiner.

Aboard the Mi Amigo

Starting at the bow there was the actual fo'c'sle head which was just a paint store. Then you had the mast and the transmitter lead-in, which was through the hold. There was a doorway entrance that went down into the transmitter room in the hold. Next along was the studio which used Gates turntables and desk. Then they had another small editing studio because at that time they used to produce a lot of their commercials on board. Then we had the dining room - cum - television room -cum - general sitting and chatting room, then an area where there were some toilets and a stairwell that went down to some cabins. Just after the toilets was the galley, there was a bit of space which was the engine room fanlight, and then there was the crew quarters aft. We used to live in the centre section and leave the crew alone aft. If you went downstairs you hit your head against the bottom as you went down; you had to remember to duck your head. As soon as you got to the bottom of the stairs, you had to turn back and come for'ard. The first cabin on the port side was Tony Visscher's, the Chief Engineer for the diesels. He came from Amsterdam. Along on the port side was a two-berth cabin where the jocks were, and a two-berth cabin for the cook. On the right-hand side there was another two-berth cabin which was the Chief Radio Engineer's. I found out that it suffered from a disadvantage that if you got a heavy-footed jock coming down the stairs when you'd been on watch all night he used to wake you up; so we used to have a go at a lot of jocks in those days! There was another two-berth cabin, then you went into a room which was our library cum a place where you could meet. There was a round table in there, there were the records, and there was a transcription deck so we could play any records we wanted; and we had our fridge in there where we used to keep our drinks. We used to get twelve beers and twenty-four soft drinks a week, and we were allowed I think a hundred cigarettes free of charge - after that you could buy more. Alongside that there was a four-berth cabin and that was where I was assigned for the first time. I soon had enough of bunking in that four-berth cabin! Between that room and the forward transmitter room were the big water tanks, so there was a bit of separation between the noise of the air from the transmitters and the sleeping accomodation. The ship was originally a sailing bulk carrier made of iron and when Radio Nord in Sweden took it over they cut it in half and put in a centre section of steel. An electrolytic reaction was literally rotting the steel; the old iron that they built in 1921 wasn't going to go, but the steel was going. That was the Mi Amigo and that was home for me until I left in May 1967.

We had just one companion there, the Galaxy. The Offshore I used to go to the Galaxy first and then to us, or to us first depending on who had the crew change. But they always used to eat over at our place because we had the better cook! The cooks varied; they were on six weeks and about two weeks off. One of the Weismullers ran a company called Redwings, they would do anything to do with the sea, and they supplied the crew, as well as the fuel and all the bits and pieces; we drew all our stores from Holland. Redwings put one Captain on board the Galaxy, Radio London, with a relief, and they kept the same Captain, but with Caroline they used to alternate their Captains on a rota basis and we would see maybe the one Captain for about six weeks and then we'd see another one; you may pick the same one up after six weeks or you may go three months and then he'd come back. Some of the Captains on the South Ship were also Captains on the North Ship. They used to rotate them, and they'd go off and do other work.

The Captain was responsible for the safety of everyone on board and as such he would allocate where you were, to know how many people he had on board. It was very hard to have people come out. If they came on board it had to be official through Harwich; that was really strictly controlled. Other than those people we rescued, there was never anybody unofficial on board, that was absolutely forbidden. The Captain would even allocate your cabin. There was a story - and it is hearsay - that when Simon Dee walked on board and said "I'm Simon Dee, I'm the Disc Jockey," the Captain said "Oh yeah? Your cabin's for'ard." Well there was one cabin in the fo'c'sle down by the chainlocker and it was terrible - and he stayed there for about four months before the Old Man moved him from that bunk. The one thing I remember about Captain de Vrie was he was the one who loved curry powder. He was getting on for sixty at the time, he was an old Captain who'd sailed around Indonesia and he had curry powder with <u>everything</u>!

The Captain was responsible right up to the end, but there was a lot of emphasis put on the Chief Jock and the Chief Radio Engineer. The Chief Jock looked after the jocks but he always had to look to the Chief Radio Engineer for, shall we say, disciplinary matters, if he had any problems. If the Radio Engineer said somebody had to get off then he had to get off and that was that. He had the authority from Chesterfield Gardens to do that; they believed the Radio Engineer was a little bit more sensible. The actual programme content, though, was always the Chief Jock's responsibility entirely.

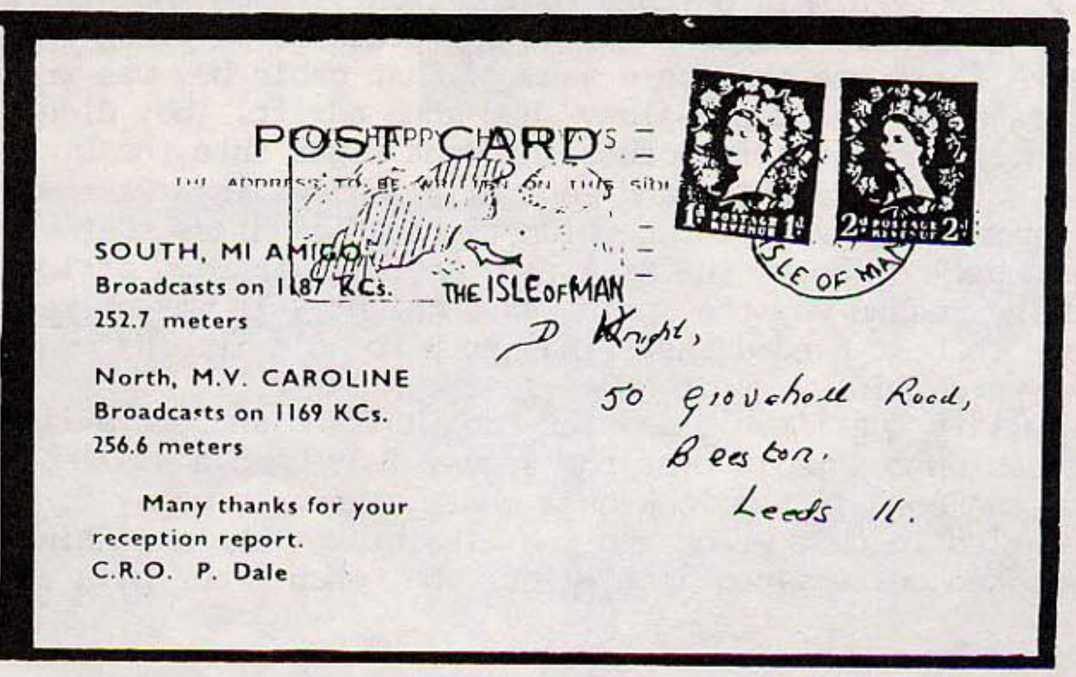
The Merger had taken place when I joined but the Atlanta crew was still there. The merger was for commercial reasons. Ainsley and his backers still ran Radio Atlanta, called Caroline South, and Ronan ran the North ship. I got into the routine of going out for two weeks on and two weeks off and got used to the job. Not much really happened, it was sort of maintenance; the only problem we used to get was the jocks letting go of their Coke into the machines, that

	3/4	10/4	17/4	24/4	1/5	8/5	15/5	22/5	29/5	
NORTH					1967					
SOMMERS		←			ON			→		
WRIGHT L20	ON	ON	LEAVE	ON	ON	LEAVE	ON	ON	LEAVE	
PERKINS L20	LEAVE	ON	ON	LEAVE	ON	ON	LEAVE	ON	ON	
SOUTH										
GLENDENING L20	ON	LEAVE	ON	ON	LEAVE	ON	ON	LEAVE	ON	
PEARSONS L15	LEAVE	ON	ON	LEAVE	ON	ON	LEAVE	ON	ON	
GRANTHAM L26	ON	ON	LEAVE	ON	ON	LEAVE	ON	ON	LEAVE	
THOMSON	ON NORTH	ON		ON	ON		ON	ON		

An Engineers Duty Rota from 1967

George Saunders, who was out there when I joined, left soon after we beached. He was a technical writer for Marconi's.
Ted Walters was very good. He used to build model steam engines. He used to spend his spare time offshore using the lathe in the engine room for turning hub castings.
On the North Ship was Manfred Sommers. the Austrian. He was on all the time, he didn't seem to want to go home.
Barry Wright was a guy who designed triggers for nuclear things!
Phil Perkins is a radio amateur.
Bill Glendening is dead now. He designed the suitcase transmitters for the agents during the war.
Pearsons didn't stay with us very long. He was a young kid, about sixteen.
Trevor Granthem was there when I joined. He stayed, and worked on.
There were some more that came on-and-off. Barry Goldborn was one; another was Ullamayer, he was a Hungarian.





The first QSL card 1964 • 1967

sort of thing. We were still trying to get the combiner to work; we finally did get it going but it was a long job. We couldn't get it to perform properly because the aerial resistance was lower than anticipated. And then the Merger suddenly became complete. The people that owned Atlanta dropped out and the Caroline staff came more onto the scene. We suddenly found we were on two weeks and off one, which was a little bit tighter, but the money was put up a little bit so we didn't mind that too much. I started off at £25 per week and when I left in sixty-seven I was on £80 per week (when I left Marconi's I was on £10 a week). We were classed as self-employed and I went on to self-employed tax which was a lot better than PAYE. I paid an accountant six guineas and that was the best six guineas I ever spent; he looked after my affairs all the time I was out there.

The Beaching

I was on board the night we came up on the beach. Having switched off the transmitter at the end of programmes for the day at eight o'clock, I'd been doing a bit of maintenance on the galley stove and the motion felt funny. I'd been on there just less than a year and the motion was different to what we used to get. Normally when we were in a gale the bow used to dip down, she used to come up and then there used to be a 'wallop' as she pulled the chain; then she used to stop, and you used to start diving again immediately. At about eight-thirty that night she came up, there was a crack, and she kept going.

The old Captain came forward and had a look, and the chain looked alright. We had a good mile of heavy duty chain down and it looked OK. He took a few bearings over half an hour and apparently we weren't moving. Then the tide turned.

At about nine o'clock, the TV picture kept needing adjusting. There was a rotator to keep the TV aerial pointing to the TV station, and the jocks had to keep getting up to adjust the position of the aerial. Then the Old Man took some more bearings and suddenly we noticed we weren't really in position. Then the Devil broke loose. Everybody started to run around; we were looking at the chain and it looked taut, but we weren't in the position we were supposed to be. The Old Man came in to me and said "I think you'd better get everybody up." Then we drifted up towards Clacton, and we came back down towards Walton, and the coast was getting rather close.

We were nearly on the beach when they started the engines, and they wouldn't hold. There was too much rubbish around the propellers at that time; she'd been laying there and they hadn't cleaned the weed from the propellers. So they got the engines started but it wasn't any good, it couldn't hold us. We started to come up on the beach rather fast. Suddenly the beach was there; we came up and the seas were breaking over.

If you ever go down to Holland-on Sea and walk along the sea-wall to have a look, you'll find that all the way along there are groynes that act as breakwaters. The Mi Amigo's length is about one hundred and eighty-seven feet, and the groynes were going out at one hundred and fifty feet spacing - except for one place where they had a cement structure that was an old war-time jetty. There there was two hundred and something feet, and we beached her up there. Just parked it nicely. Nobody had anything to do with it at all; Someone was looking after us that night.

We came up, then Tony Visscher said "get down" because they started firing the rocket-gun for the rescue lines to come over. One of them hit the side structure, another one hit us close to a window, but finally one of them got a line over and they put the breeches buoy on board. We all went up aft just underneath the bridge and we started to get the jocks off.

The Senior Radio Engineer on board was in charge of the whole of the English crew, the jocks and the radio engineer. At that time George Saunders was the Chief Engineer on that particular shift, although he was a lot younger than I was. While they were being got off I suddenly remembered the closing theme which was by Jimmy McGriff. I believed that there was only one copy of that; it was scratched but it was the only one we had on board and I thought we couldn't get another one from London. So I tucked it in my shirt. I'd already been down earlier and got some warm clothing, and taken the crystals out of the transmitter.

In the rush, George and myself had forgotten to put the covers over the top of the air vents to stop the seas from going down into the top of the transmitters. Later, when we spoke to Ted Walters, the first question he asked was about the covers. The answer didn't half make him unhappy! Its the only time I ever got a rollicking from him.

I told the Old Man that all the English personnel were off and he said "You must go ashore", and then I went ashore in the breeches buoy. I'd only got my slippers on. By the time I landed on the beach my trousers were soaking, I'd lost my slippers and I'd lost my socks. As I was walking up the beach I thought "We must be famous, they've even laid the red carpet out, I can't feel the stones". It wasn't until I'd scrambled up to the top and looked down with the headlights of the ambulances, I saw it was so soft because I'd been walking on six inches of snow! Carl's toes turned blue, and I actually got frostbite that night.

We came up to the nearest place in Frinton; I think it was the Golf Club. First person to greet us: British Customs! "Anything to declare?" So I took my cigarettes that were all wet and soggy, "Yes!", straight into his hand. He said "Oh, thank you very much, sir!" and threw them down. The Customs were only there for a minute, then the Lifeboat secretary and the Coastguard staff took over and did all the arrangements, and they got a hotel opened up. First of all they took us round to a store. As we were distressed seamen we could get some dry clothes out of this store and I got a shirt, a pair of jeans, a woollen jumper, some socks and some plimsoles. The jeans I wore for about fifteen years! They were blooming good quality that we got free of charge that night. I've still got the jumper somewhere too!

They took us to a hotel, and that hotel room was cold. The manageress who was running the place said "I'll make you a nice cup of tea" but we said "We're residents here, aren't we? Open the bar! Someone will pay in the morning", and we had double Scotch, and brandy, all round, and that made the pain go away. By the time we went to bed my toes were really aching but in the morning they transferred us to Harwich where they had a look at them, and they were alright.

I got mentioned in the press that day! I think this was from the old "Express": "Ashore, cold and soaked, came Dutch Steward Thys Spyker, nineteen, radio engineer Carl Thomson, twenty-three, chief radio engineer George Saunders, twenty-four, audio technician Patrick Starling and disc jockeys David Travers, twenty, Thomas Lodge, twenty-five, Graham Webb, twenty-nine, Tony Blackburn, twenty-three and Norman St.John. Lifeboatman John Hall said after the rescue 'The disc jockeys were laughing and waving pictures of girls when they reached the beach. They seemed cheerful." Tom Lodge was the first one that came ashore. That cabin boy was wrecked twice in one week! We reckon he was the Jonah! Only a few days before, the "Galaxy" had gone adrift. They didn't beach, they were lucky in that there was a tug around. We'd laughed at her because she went right into the Limits, she was nearly up in West Mersey. When they towed her back we were all laughing and generally joking. Thys was on Radio London then, and he transferred over to us because we were short-staffed. He didn't come back after that.

I went back on board the Mi Amigo the following day at low water and hung around when they got her off. We discovered the reason why the chain was straight - it was broken at the anchor and we still had all the chain down. It was so rough that it needed that final grip to hold it. That was the reason we were moving about so slowly we never realised we were going.

Weismullers tug Titan came over from Holland and put a line on board. He had two miles of line on to get a tow because he couldn't come in over the sands. They used a small boat to bring the line from the Titan to the Mi Amigo and fixed it to the bow. If you look on a chart, the only wreck for miles is that of a fishing boat. On the first pull, they got tangled in that wreck and the line broke. The next night they ran the line in again and got her off. We actually wrecked our engines getting off the beach - our main engines, not the generators. We had a small generator and





The Mi Amigo in Zaandam amongst the ice!

Chief Diesel Engineer Tony Visscher.





On the North ship.

Chief Engineer Manfred Sommers.

RADIO CAROLINE TOP.....WEEK COMMENCING, 15th JANUARY - COUNT DOWN

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK			
1	1	KEEP ON RUNNING	SPENCER DAVIES	P.632
2	3	MY SHIP IS COMING IN	WALKER BROTHERS	P.1454
3	4	A MUST TO AVOID	HERMANS HERMITS	C.DD7791
4	2	DAY TRIPPER/WE CAN WORK IT OUT	THE BEATLES	PAR.5389
5	6	TILL THE END OF THE DAY	THE KINKS	PYE15981
6	13	SPANISH FLEA	HERB ALPERT	PYE25335
7	7	A HARD DAYS NIGHT	PETER SELLERS	PAR5393
8	9	TAKE ME FOR WHAT I'M WORTH	THE SEARCHERS	PYE15992
9	14	ENGLAND SWINGS	ROGER MILLER	P.1456
10	51	MICHELLE	THE OVERLANDERS	PYE17034
11	10	YOU MAKE IT MOVE	DAVE DEE, DOZEY, BEAKEY MICK & TITCH	P.630
12	18	THE WATER IS OVER MY HEAD	ROCKIN BERRIES	PYE35270
13	22	MIDNIGHT TO SIX MAN	THE PRETTY THINGS	FON647
14	16	DON'T PUSH ME	HEDGEHOPPERS ANONYMOUS	
15	20	BYE BYE BLUES	BERT KAEMPFERT	POLY
16	27	MIRROR MIRROR	PINKERTONS ASSORTED COLOURS	
17	24	TAKE ME FOR A LITTLE WHILE	THE KOOBAS	PYE17012
18	15	THE WARLORD	THE SHADOWS	COL7789
19	28	THE VERY THOUGHT OF YOU	TONY BENNETT	COS
20	8	LET'S HANG ON	THE FOUR SEASONS	P.1439
21	31	YOU WERE ON MY MIND	CRISPIAN ST.PETERS	
22	29	I STAND ACCUSED	THE MERSEYBEATS	FON645
23	23	THUNDERBALL	TOM JONES	DECCA 1229
24	26	IF I NEEDED SOMEONE	THE HOLLIES	P.5392
25	37	A GROOVY KIND OF LOVE	THE MINDBENDERS	PH.
26	48	SECOND HAND ROSE	BARBRA STREISAND	CBS203625
27	33	EBB TIDE	RIGHTEOUS BROTHERS	LON10011
28	46	LIKE A BABY	LEN BARRY	BRUNO5949
29	41	SOUND OF SILENCE	SIMON & GARFUNKEL	CBS201977
30	30	AIN'T IT PERCULIAR	MARVIN GAYE	TAM54122
31	50	FIVE O'CLOCK WORLD	THE VOGUES	
32	38	FEVER	THE McCOYS	IMM.021
33	25	HELLO DOLLY	THE BACHELORS	F.12309
34	34	OUR WORLD	JOHNNY TILLOTSON	MGM1290
35	-	TCHAIKOVSKY ONE	SECOND CITY SOUND	
36	35	SOMETHING ABOUT YOU	THE FOUR TOPS	MO.1034
37	42	ARE YOU THERE	DIONNE WARWICK	P.25338
38	43	TAKE ME TO YOUR HEART AGAIN	VINCE HILL	COL77
39	44	CREATION	RICK AND SANDY	
40	36	THEN CAME SHE	FRANK IFIELD	

This was the Countdown we never played because we were up on the beach!

* * * \



m.v. cheetah II

a big one. When we came up on the beach we shut down the generators, but they worked off the small generator that only gave emergency lighting and compressed air. When they started to tow, Tony Visscher started the engines and they wopped it at "ahead". For about four minutes they gave just that extra impetus to get the Mi Amigo off the beach, but she took in so much sand that it just wrecked all the liners on the pistons. The sand blocked up all the cooling water, too, and everything overheated and she seized. But, they got her off, and she went out and anchored in the Gunfleet.

Mi Amigo goes to Holland

I and Patrick Starling, who was a studio tech employed to look after the studios, said we'd go with her to look after the engineering side. So, we were going to Holland with her, and off we went. The Offshore II took us to the Mi Amigo, and the Titan towed the Mi Amigo to Holland. Both the Offshores I and II remained in Harwich.

We couldn't do much except help the cook. On the first day, however, I used the opportunity to give the transmitters and the transmitter room a good clean out. Patrick cleaned and checked the studio. When I got up the next morning there was grease and oil all over the clean transmitter room and some of the pumps were running: we'd sprung a leak underneath the water tanks. It was the steel section of the hull. The iron was alright but the modern steel had gone and we were making water in there. So they had the pumps running all the time from then on, until we got into Holland.

We went into Ijmuiden, and Ijmuiden is one of the high points in Holland.There's a hill up on the starboard side as you go in through the lock. Well, it had been announced that Caroline was coming in on Radio Hilversum - and I've never seen so many people in all my life. That hill was black with people when we came into Holland. It was about five o'clock at night when we finally made the harbour entrance and all over the hill it was just a sea of bodies like ants. They'd come from all over Holland to see us. We went in the locks and up toZaandam where we stayed for a good while. That's when we hired the Cheetah for a period of time.

Cheetah II arrives

The Dutch Authorities were, shall we say, "nervous" about having transmitters on the ship in Holland. When I came back the next time (we were still on our two weeks on / two weeks off period) they'd already lifted off the transmitters and they were in bond. The Cheetah, from Radio Syd, was FM only, so what we did was to load one of our transmitters onto the Offshore I, take it over, and lift it on board the Cheetah and fit it out in one of the holds. We used a wire aerial which was nothing fancy, it was just a piece of wire up to the highest point on the mast and then back to a stay. I suppose we were getting 6kW into the thing; if we got 10kW we used to arc over like the Devil. But at least it brought Caroline's name back onto the air. We used the original studio of the Cheetah.

The 201 metre crystals stayed with me right up to the time we brought Cheetah on the air; I actually put them back in. They were large, glass crystals in valve sockets, so they were wrapped up in cotton wool. They were in my soap bag, in my shaving kit, the whole time, and were never found. The Jimmy McGriff record had been handed over to the office in London; it went out to the Cheetah and was transferred back again to the Mi Amigo.

We were broadcasting from the Cheetah within about four days of getting the transmitter in. All of the jocks came out; they just picked up their rota and continued. On the engineering staff, Ted Walters, Trevor Grantham and Patrick Starling all came out at some time. We all came out on the tender just as on a normal shift.

One night when I was at home I suddenly got a call to say that the Cheetah was going to Lowestoft! What had happened was, one of the dirty water dischargers for the toilets was so old it'd broken, and as it was below the water-line it was letting in seawater. They managed to get somebody to seal it off from the outside, then she had to come to Lowestoft, where they repaired this outflow at Richards Yards. I sailed on her from Lowestoft down the coast to the anchorage, then we started rebroadcasting.

I got on well with the tugboat crews. The tug that helped her up from Lowestoft came from Harwich on a Sunday, and I passed a crate of beer over to the tug for their lunch. Ever afterwards, if they couldn't get a tender and this tug came out in place of the Offshore I, they always remembered me and I always got a cup of tea from them!

So the Cheetah went on, and slowly people began to leave. Trevor went to pastures new for a time, George left, and that left Ted, myself and some new ones. Then Ted left and I came up into the Chief Engineer's position on the Southern Ship.

I wasn't on the Mi Amigo on the day she sailed back from Holland because it was my shift off. The engineer on there was Paul Dale. The new 50kW transmitter came on board in boxes in Holland and it was fitted on the tow. The new layout, as you came down the stairs, was the Ten directly opposite to you and on the right was the Fifty in four cabinets with all its meters and dials. At the bottom of the stairs we had a little cabinet with all the monitoring in, the modulation meter, the compressor, the monitor 'scope and the patch-panel. So as you came down the stairs you could check the modulation as you went in. It was the spare Ten that was over in Holland that went on board the Mi Amigo; the Ten that was on the Cheetah went, I think, to the North Ship as a spare.

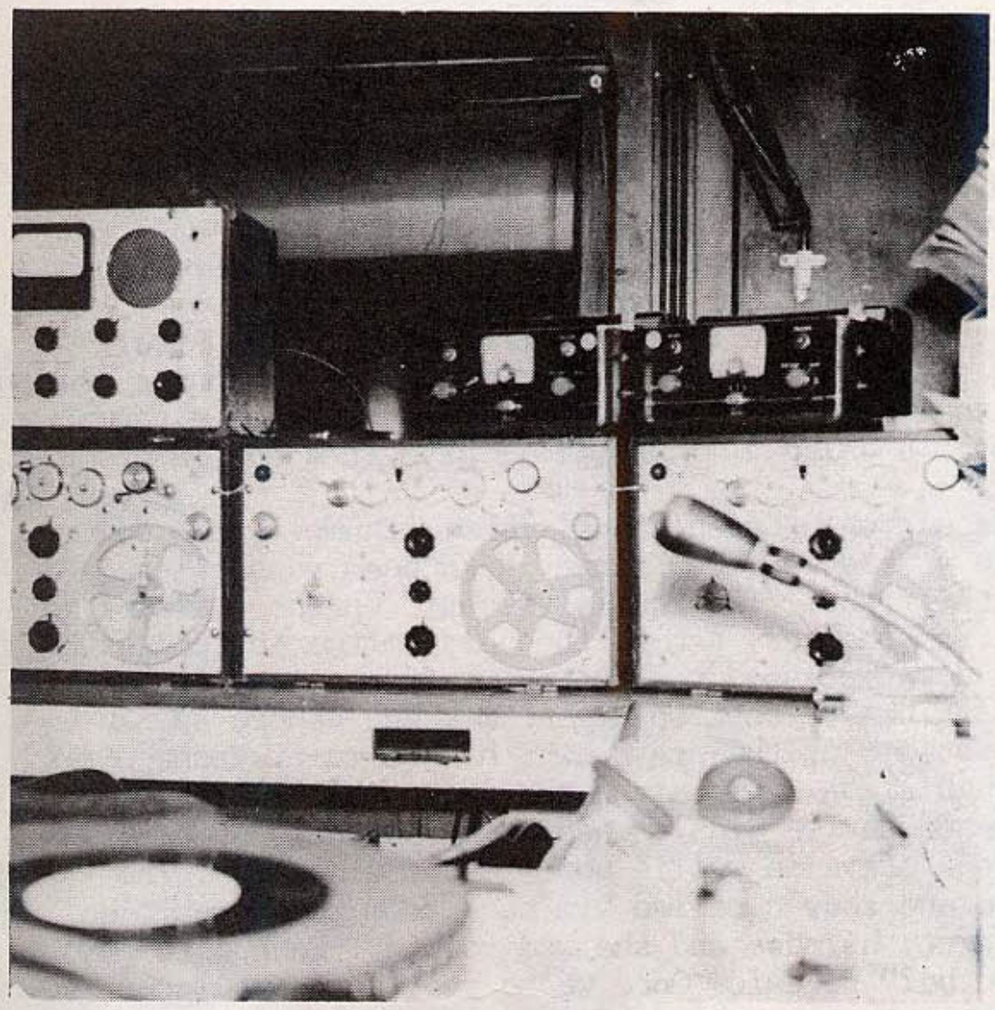
The Ten was a Devil of a job to get on. We'd lost the connection diagram and were trying to work out the phasing of the 'delta'. The HT transformer was three separate transformers with three windings and you had to phase them up; on the actual 'delta' winding you had to get the phasing right all the way round. There were six connections so you'd got all the permutations of any six with any six and it took us ages to work it all out how they went. We'd bring the generator on, switch on, and "Bang!" off would go the 200 Amp mains fuse. We went through fuse after fuse but we got it right in the end.

Mi Amigo returns

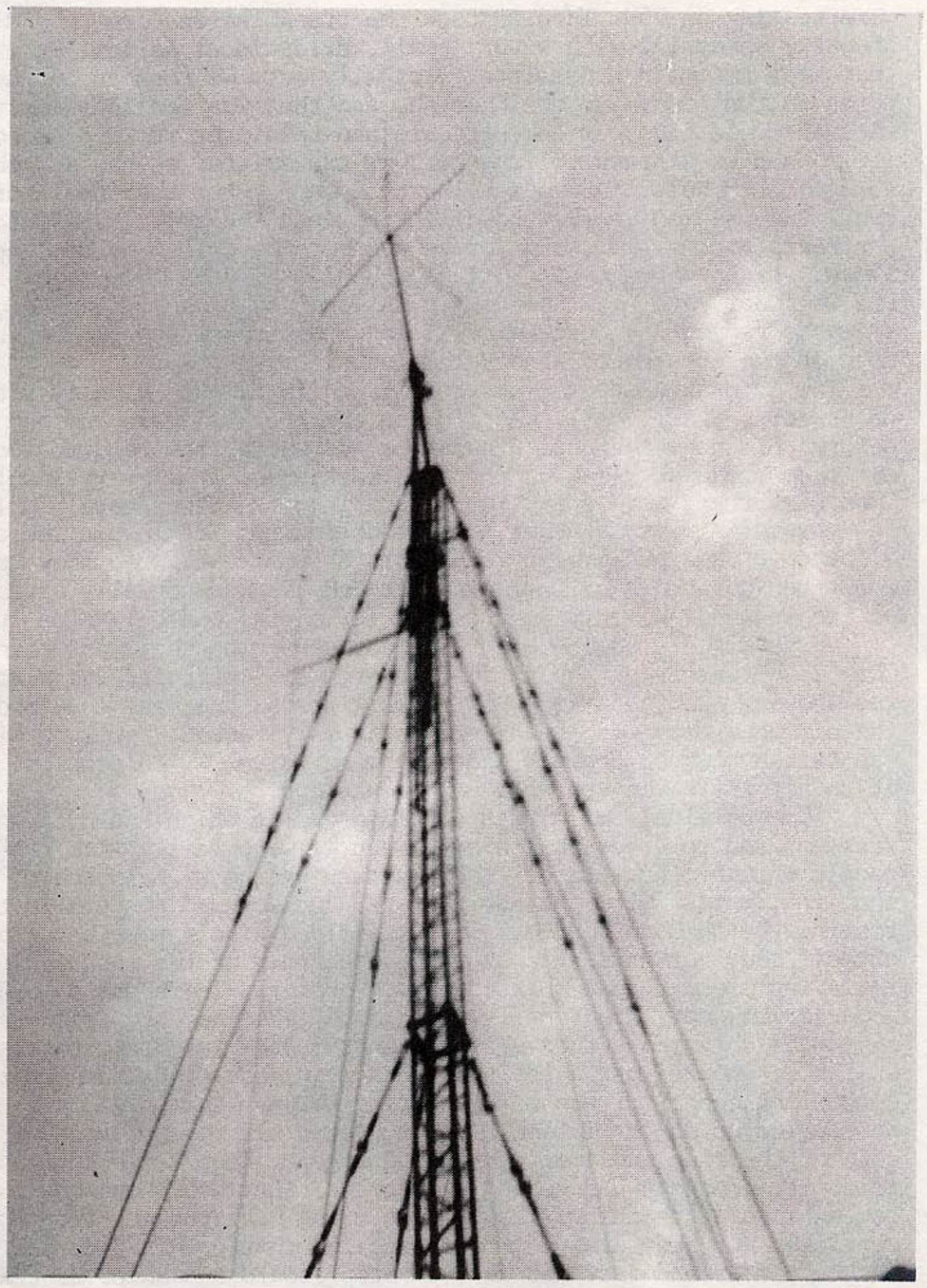
When we came back with the high power I think we literally took Radio London to the cleaners. It all settled down into a period when the Southern Ship was making number one in popularity charts all the time. Bill Hearne was a Canadian who became programme director. He was the one who brought us Caroline Cash Casino and that was a winner; that paid for the 50kW transmitter.

We had transmitter serial number Fourteen from Continental Electronics. We were due to get number Twelve, but it was at the time of the Rhodesian UDI and the U.K. Government set up a station in Botswana to broadcast into Rhodesia. So they bought numbers Twelve and Thirteen and we had number Fourteen. It was a very good transmitter, very reliable. They wanted to try and improve the aerial system and they had erected some sort of wire aerial. Every time they started to fire up they had sparking off this wire. I was looking after Cheetah's transmitter and went over to look at Caroline with Tony Blackburn and everybody else. That's the time Tony went up the mast; but that's another story. We then brought the 50kW on and ran it for forty-eight hours - and suddenly all the lights went dim as the big new generator coughed, spluttered and slowed. We went into the transmitter hall and it was full of black, acrid smoke. So I slid down the stairs to the transmitter and hit the 'off' button on the HT - and I blew every light-bulb that was on at the time on the Mi Amigo. They just went bright and went out. This was because when we lost the full load, the generator just raced away, the volts went up, and none of the stabilizers could take care of it because the generator was too quick for them. The HT transformer was faulty from new. We'd lost that and had to send back to the States for a new one. When we got a new one back we were OK.

On the Cheetah we were only running eighteen hours a day so there was a period in the middle of the night when we







The "Cheeta II" studios; and her mast.

Tony Blackburn, Norman St. John and Dave Lee Travis.
All were shipwrecked.



were testing on 259. Then we took the transmissions from the Mi Amigo. There was a portable receiver over on the Cheetah, something with a very small, directional aerial; it was put in a position by a window behind a metal panel and that kept the main transmitter virtually out. We took an output off the audio stage, matched it into one of the mixer ports in the studio on the Cheetah, and that was fed into the transmitter. We fed into a mixer panel so that the Cheetah could fade out the portable and take over its own broadcasts at any time; but it was never needed.

When we started to run the 50kW transmitter we had a problem because of the mast. It was quite a good mast, designed and built in Cowes by Harry Spence . But the insulators on the mast weren't designed for 50kW and were arcing over. They seemed to arc and discharge into the sky. I was out there by myself, one day when there weren't two engineers at the time, I'd worked the morning shift and been up doing maintenance since about three o'clock. After lunch, at about one o'clock, I thought I'd go down to my cabin and get my head down. At one o'clock they'd change over; DLT went out with his theme music "A Touch of Brass" - a nice quiet song - and Rosco came on with his theme, a thumping "Memphis" sound. So just before I left the transmitter I thought "Rosco's on in a minute, I'll give it a couple of dB's more on the compressor" and set it up.

I'd just taken my trousers off to lie down to have my afternoon nap when Crash! Bang! Thump, thump, thump down the stairs, "Carl! Carl! where's the engineer?" I came out and on the stairs is Tony Prince. He'd been sunbathing, and before this he was bronze - today he was white from head to foot, with fright! "The Mast's alight!" Up the stairs I go, out onto the deck, look up into the mast - and from every insulator from the very top to the very bottom in tune with "Memphis" there were sparks going out into the atmosphere! So I went down, pressed the button, switched it off, put a few more dBs in and brought Rosco back in at a little bit lower power. Then we sent an urgent message ashore and "C & S" came out and put bigger insulators on the mast. When they took down some of the stays, which were multistrand wires about an inch and a half in diameter, the RF had actually eaten through a lot of them and they were holding on by one or two strands. We only just caught it; it was the only time it happened but we didn't need it to happen!

The riggers came out in a gale and went up that mast changing the stays in wellie boots and sou'westers. The Chief, who went right up to the very top to direct it, was sixty-five and they'd called him back from retirement. He was showing the young kids how to walk across the mast - he had no safety harness and she was rolling. We had to go off the air when they were changing the stays; I asked "How long will you be?" He said "Once we're over that insulator you can switch back on again," and they were quite OK, no problem. They used the same bits of the mast, and just modified it to fit where they put the new insulators.

The original aerial was a folded dipole which had nulls going out into France, and up the country (the North ship was supposed to cover that area), when we were laying with the tidal stream. It was a very shallow null, not as deep as people thought, but if the tide was turning the signal used to drop, and you could lose it up in London. Then we had some complaints from the advertizers; but we used to turn in twenty minutes so it wasn't for long. At the same time as fitting the 50kW we went over from a folded dipole to a base-loaded antenna. At the point in the sky where you see it cut off they put an insulator in and the rest of the mast sat on top of that. That was the piece that was actually radiating; less than a quarter-wave, vertical. There was a loading coil up there which worked pretty well. It was a good aerial; but I personally would have liked to have tried the folded dipole with the 50kW. (1)

The only fault that we found on the 50kW was that, to start off with, we couldn't load it to full power, she went unstable, and we lost a lot of screen grid decoupling capacitors trying to solve this problem. The screen grid decoupling capacitor was a Teflon ring between the valve base and the chassis; the ceramic valve sat down in this ring. We doubled up on our Teflon rings to get a bit more protection because we used to get a salt-water build-up over the edge of the ring and then that was it, gone. Then Radio England came on the scene. The Yanks came over to teach us how to do it, and they had no end of trouble. They had about one ohm impedance at the base of the aerial and they just couldn't hold the thing. They had to bring over the guy from Continental Electronics, Joseph B. Sainton, an interesting character who had survived the Boeing 707 that caught fire and smashed up at Rome airport in the early Sixties. He was on the tender and just happened to step aboard our ship. He traced the problem and added some more screening decouplers on the P.A. valves, we could then load the full fifty without all the problems we'd been getting.

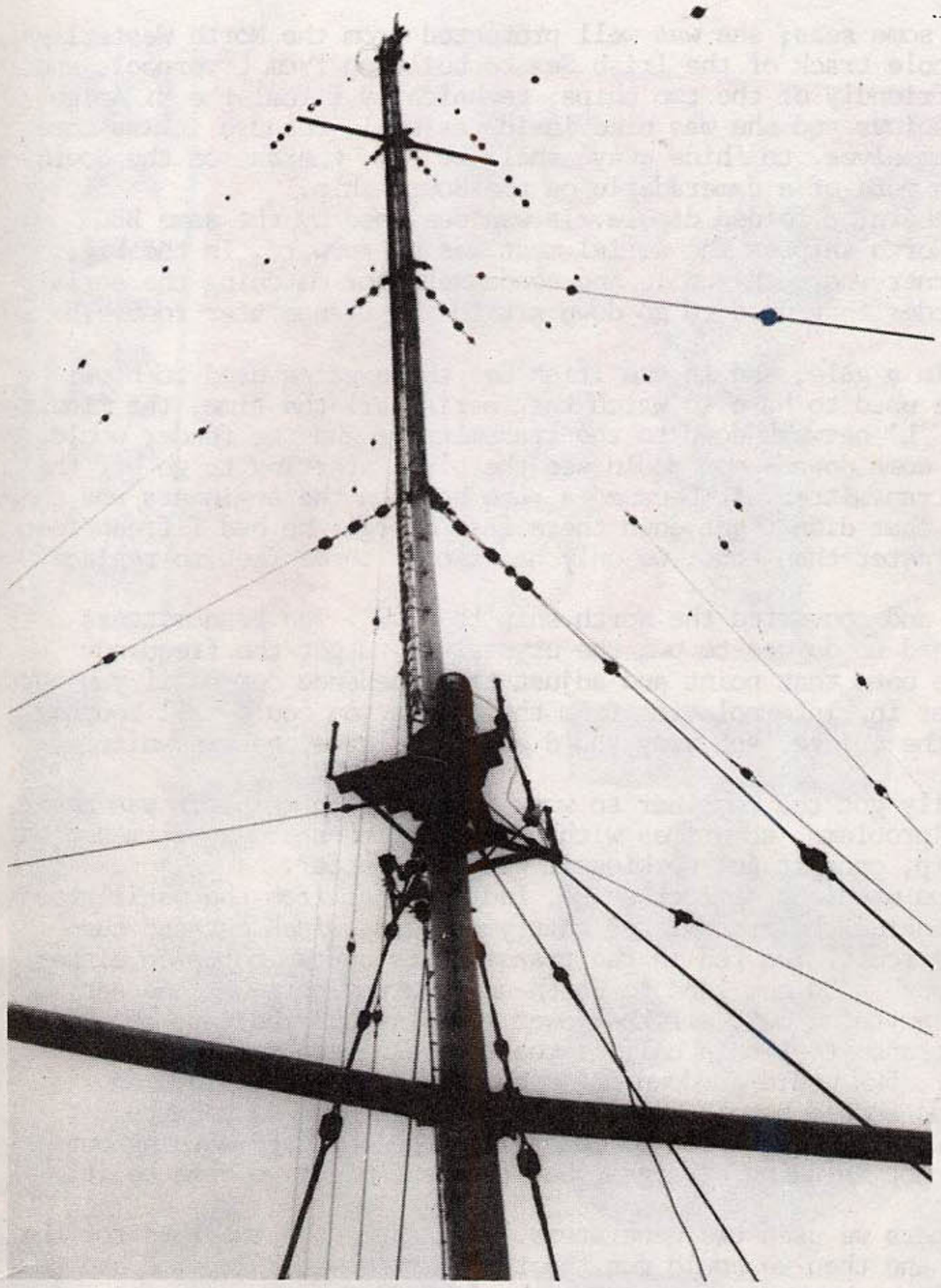
We used to get occasional flash-overs. I remember one night. We didn't move about a lot normally but this night we were in a gale situation. We were moving around quite a bit and as the mast swung with the motion of the Mi Amigo the impedence would change, the VSWR would go up, then the H.T. would lock out. We had a lockout relay, with four positions; it would switch the H.T. off, come back on again, if the fault was still there switch the H.T. off again, take four tries and if on the fourth try the fault was still there then the relay would drop out completely, deactivate a solenoid and switch the H.T. off. There was also a safety rod that would go over so that if there was any charge on the H.T. capacitors it would "crowbar" and discharge the capacitors. That used to go off with a wallop.

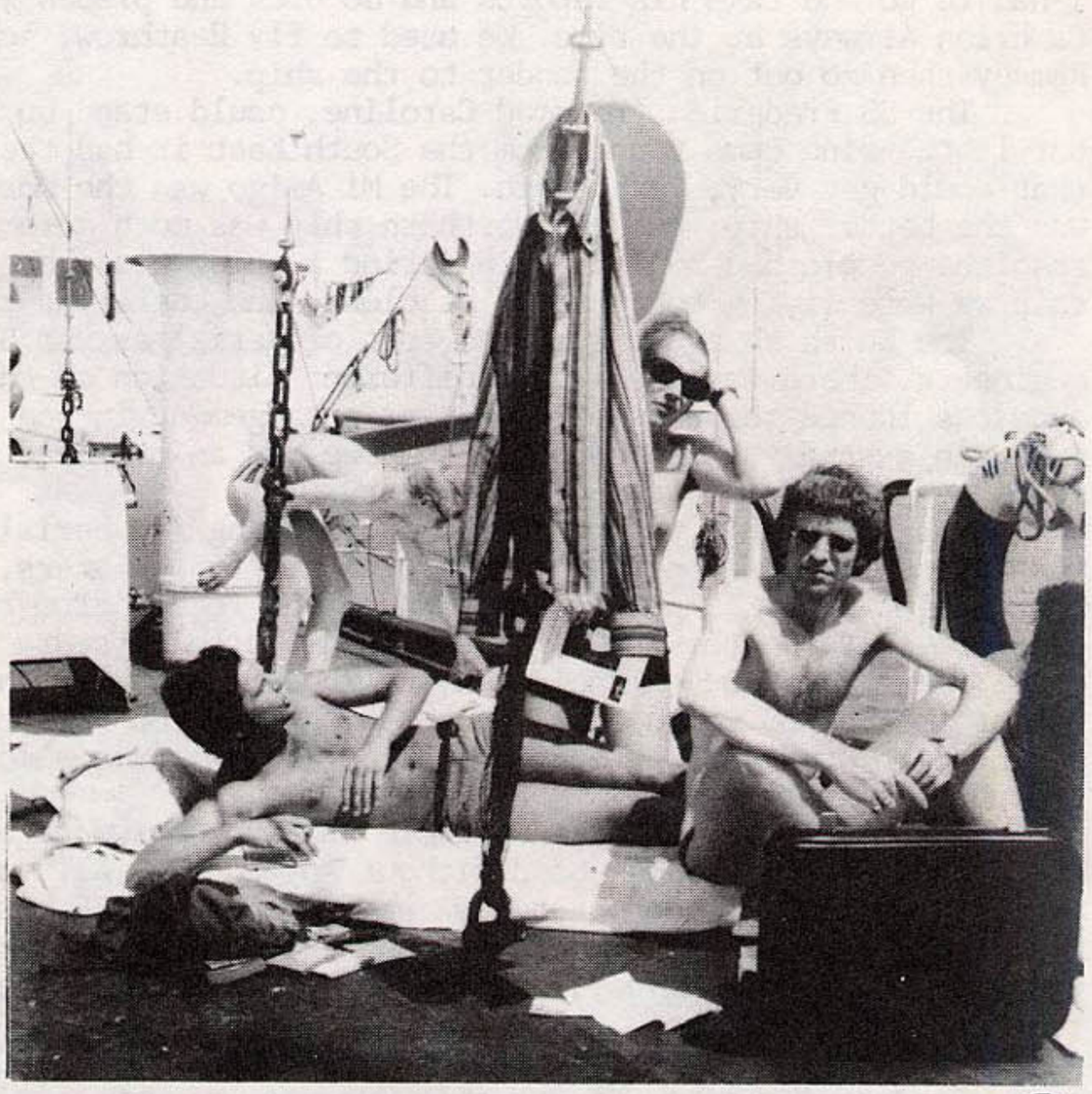
The stairs came down the side of the transmitter hall, and our little watch-keeping room was under the stairs. About two o'clock in the morning you could put your feet up and doze there nicely. So Carl is in his chair and he didn't hear the first one; couldn't have done; I swear to this day I counted three. We used to count the clicks and if it got to the third one you used to go and hit the HT and bring it off normally. The first one must have happened while I was dozing. The fault didn't clear; I heard "Click... Click..." and I thought the third one was coming, but then there was a Hell of a "Bang!" as the thing went off, and I fell out of my chair! This bang used to wake you up, it was 16kV at four amps; there was a Hell of a lot of charge in those capacitors. Coming out of sleep I wondered what the Devil had happened.

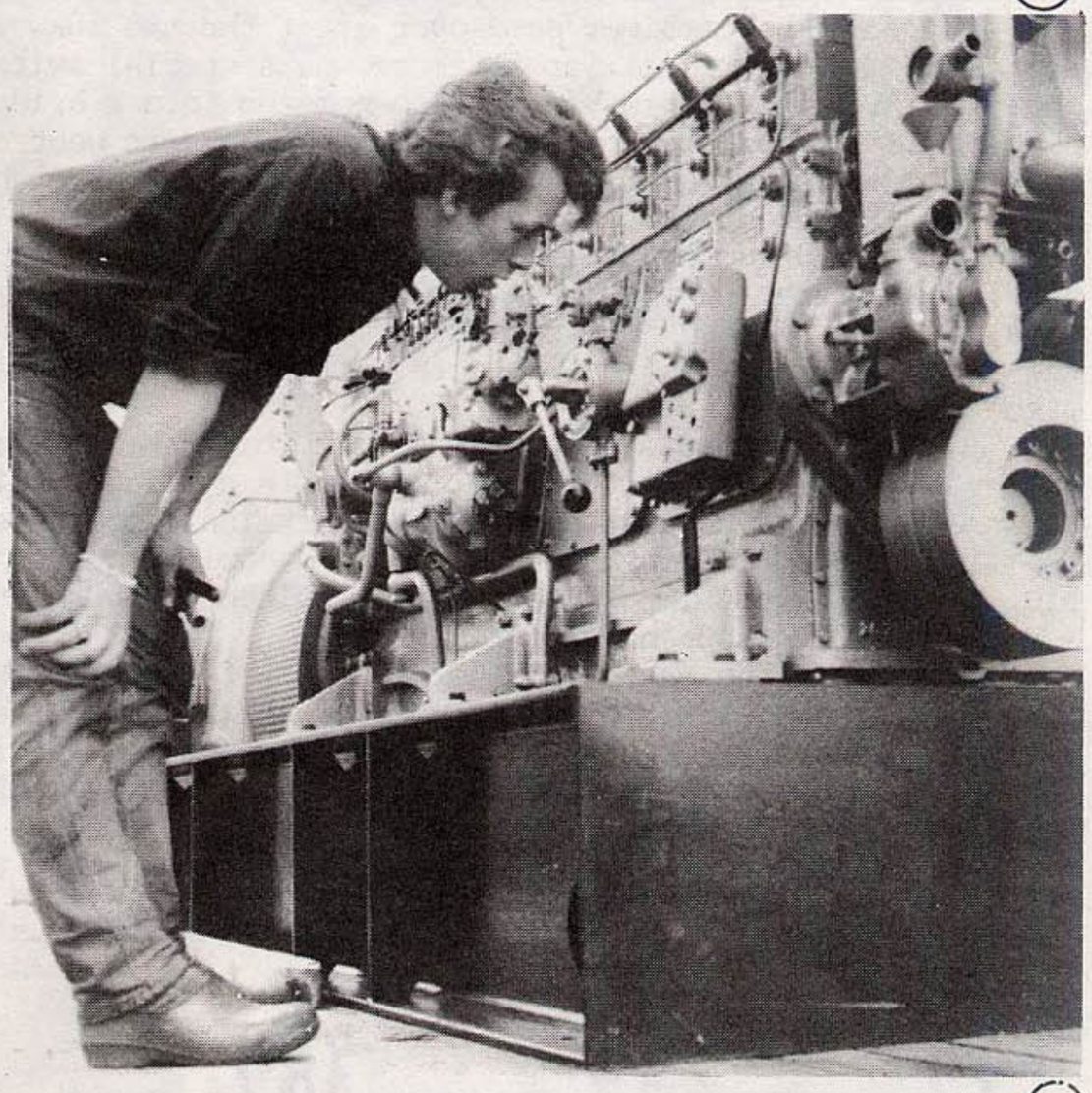
What had happened was that in the gale the phosphor-bronze lead-in at the bottom of the aerial had worked loose and broken adrift. It was actually swinging around in the gale. We modified it and were back on the air within about half an hour. Then I spent the night out with arc lights re-routing the damn thing to take the strain off it so that it couldn't happen again.

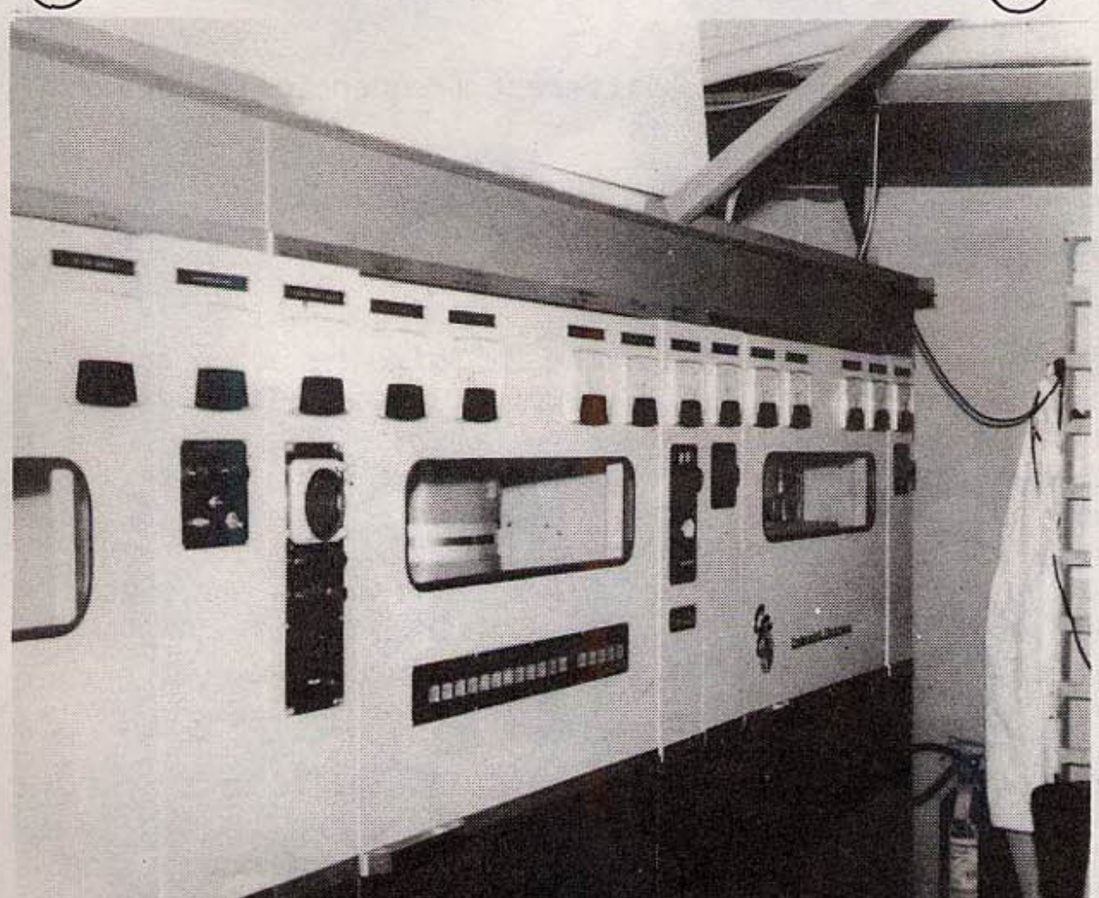
All of our maintenance was done during the night. We used to work a six hour period, come off for six hours, go back on duty for six hours. If we were running twenty-four hours we'd do the maintenance work about three or four in the morning. There were always two men on watch from about eleven o'clock Sunday night until five o'clock Monday morning, and that's when we had all our studio maintenance; we had a six-hour period when we were completely off the air and that's when we used to do all the work and any modifications we wanted to do. On Mondays it was engineers crew change. The guy who was leaving the ship would be the one who was going on nights, and the guy who was going onto nights would have to work part of the afternoon and the Sunday night through to Monday morning. He'd hold the fort until the guy coming on started his watch, then he'd go to bed ready for his night-shift. The guy coming on board would start off on days and the next week would go onto nights. The weeks I was off I had to call into Chesterfield Gardens; I suppose I went up twice a week, once when I came off and again before I went back. The ships were virtually autonomous as far as the running of the technical side. If we were off the air, which was very infrequently, then they would want to know the reason why. They used to have speakers up in Chesterfied Gardens and the minute it went off in the daytime - not in the middle of the night! - Ronan used to ring Bill Scaddon and a message would come out the next day calling for an explanation.

Before the full merger there were two chief engineers, both in London, and a sort of foreman out on each ship. When it became Caroline overall, once Mr. Gilmer had gone - he was past retiring age anyway - Paul Dale took over in London. His function really was an administrator and to advise Ronan who was always in the office running the show. After a time I got the job of looking after both of the ships; I was a sort of travelling chief, working so much on the South ship and then I would go up and have a look at the North ship. Manfred Sommers was the chief engineer up there so











(1) The mast was cut off, electrically, where you can see the 'box'.

(2) Rosko, Mike Ahern, Rick Dane and Tom Lodge sun-bathing on deck.

(3) Benny looking at the new Mi Amigo generator in the shipyard in Holland, March, 1966.

(4) The new 50kW transmitter.

(5) The new studio/panel built by Pete Posthumous.

I had to go and take his reports and do bits and pieces with him. We were flying up to Ramsey in the Isle of Man by Cambrian Airways at the time. We used to fly Heathrow, sometimes direct, sometimes via Liverpool, stay overnight in Ramsey then go out on the tender to the ship.

The SS Frederica, renamed Caroline, could stand up to some seas; she was well protected from the North Westerlies but if the wind came round from the South East it had the whole track of the Irish Sea to build up from Liverpool, and that could get very, very rough. The Mi Amigo was the more friendly of the two ships; technically I feel the Mi Amigo was the better ship; but the Northern ship was much more spacious and she was nice inside as well. Because it was more spacious people had room to go and find a quiet place by themselves, to 'hide away' shall we say; whereas on the South ship we were living together a lot closer and there was much more of a cameraderie on the South ship.

The North ship had the same sort of aerial as the Southern, a folded dipole. It was designed by the same BBC engineers. There was a slightly different situation on the North ship as the aerial mast was up forward. In the big, spacious lounge there was a shed-type arrangement in one corner where the coils and condensers for matching the aerial were, in a straight 'L' network. Then we had an overhead feeder that used to go down aft to the transmitter room. The studios used to be on the next deck up.

The North ship was very good at shedding its aerial. In a gale, and in the Irish Sea those gales used to blow, the engineers position wasn't down with his transmitters, he used to have to watch that aerial all the time, the minute that aerial broke it put a high VSWR on the feeder from the 'L' network down to the transmitters and the feeder would start to melt! So the inside of the feeder used to start to come down - you could see the black starting to go off the stuff - and you used to race down and knock the HT off the transmitter. It became a race between the engineers and the feeder to see who would win. The worst one was the engineer that didn't get down there fast enough; he had fifteen feet of the damn stuff to replace. But a lot of us became a lot faster than that, we only had two or three feet to replace and put a connector in.

About three of us went up there and worked two nights and converted the North ship to '259'. The transmitters would cover the broadcast band without any tuning. All you had to do was to put the crystal in to get the frequency that you wanted, disconnect the PA anodes, put the RF bridge onto that point and adjust the impedence out until you got two thousand ohms at the anode, adjust the taps and bring her in. Interpolating from the charts you could tell roughly where you should be anyway, then you used the fine tune on the bridge, and away you'd go. We'd leave one transmitter running all the time.

We increased the power to 20kW by combining. We actually got the combiner to work on the North ship. It was never used successfully on the South ship, we were always getting problems, sometimes with the transmitter and sometimes with the combiner itself. But funnily enough, on the Northern Ship, once it got working it was much better.

I think the combiner came over after the two 10kWs. You used one exciter stage, fed a signal from the oscillator across to the other oscillator, there was a special switch inside the transmitter that you could switch out and turn that into a buffer, then you used to come up into a bridge circuit. You fed in the transmitters on two ports on either side of the circuit of the bridge. The bottom part went through a 50 ohm load to Earth and the top port was the aerial. Provided the thing was in balance the bottom part never had anything out, all the power would go out the top, about 18kW. We lost about 2kW across the combiner. If you lost a transmitter then half of the remaining transmitter power would go, you'd go down to 5kW; 5kW would go into the aerial, 5kW would go down into the load as you went into an unbalanced state. During the conversion from 10kW to 20kW, we should have been up the first night but we got the phasing wrong. We had the wrong transmitter driving and we were putting a lot of power into the load and nothing out of the spout. We realized that we were getting a bit tired and not thinking straight, but the next night we came to it right away.

When on the South ship we had to combine the transmitters we used two generators. We had to shed the load for the galley and the load for the lighting onto a small generator and then we could run the transmitters at 20kw. You had to be careful what circuits you plugged electrical appliances into when we were running the full 20kW because certain of the lighting and heating sockets on board couldn't be transferred to the small genny. It was literally that you could plug the coffee pot into some sockets, switch it on and the large generator would go off because the load was too great - and that would happen.

I left in the May of '67 before the Act came in. I would do it all again now if it wasn't illegal. It was great fun. Towards the end it became a job of work; you'd got the same problem as you've now got on the oil rigs. They're alright while you're constructing them but once you get into the maintenance stage it gets pretty monotonous and boring. All you do is eat, sleep and watch transmitter dials. It could be a very boring existence if it wasn't for the ideals. A lot of us went out there with the idea that we could get commercial radio into this country. But at that time our idea of commercial radio was to bring the ship into the Thames and we'd broadcast nationally.

199 ___ 259 ___ 389 ___ 192 ___ 319 ___ 212 ___ 539

Over the course of twenty years, Caroline has broadcast on no less than eleven different frequencies! Here, you can check out if you can remember them all.

1964: On the now-famous Easter weekend, Caroline's broadcasts began on 1520 kHz.

Radio Caroline North retained this frequency; Caroline South took over the Radio Atlanta frequency, 1493 kHz. Both Carolines announced their wavelength as "199 metres".

1966: From the Cheetah II, Caroline broadcast on her usual frequency of 1493 kHz. When the Mi Amigo returned and anchored alongside the Cheetah II, she made a four-hour test on 1169 kHz on 17th April. Further broadcasts didn't take place until 25th April. The frequency was changed the following day to 1187 kHz.

Cheetah continued to broadcast until 1st May on 1493 kHz; from 27th April she relayed programmes from the Mi Amigo. So, for five days, Radio Caroline South could be heard on two different frequencies.

Caroline North changed frequency later in the year. She was first heard on 1169 kHz on 31st October. At that time one of her 10 kW transmitters was still tuned to 1520 kHz for normal daytime programmes and the other was retuned to 1169 kHz for tests at night. Eventually both transmitters operated together on 1169 kHz.

Both Carolines now announced their wavelength as "259 metres". These frequencies were retained until both stations were put off the air on 3rd March 1968.

1972: On 29th September, the Mi Amigo recommenced broadcasts after a four-and-a-half year silence on 1187 kHz. However, due to the loss of the aerial mast, a change was made to "199 metres" in time for Christmas broadcasts. From 17th December, the station was nominally broadcasting on 1520 kHz; however, the signal was off-channel, causing it to be obliterated by a heterodyne whistle during the hours of darkness. "199" closed down at 02:00 GMT on the morning of 30th December.

On the North ship: above, the spacious mess-room; below, one of the generators.

1973: Caroline returned to 1187 kHz on 2nd January, using the 10 kW transmitter. It was on this frequency that Caroline relayed the programmes of Radio Veronica in April.

After several weeks silence, on 13th May the 10 kW transmitter began broadcasting again, this time on 773 kHz, a new channel known as "389 metres".

It was joined on 17th May by the 50 kW transmitter - on 1187 kHz. This was the first time two different frequencies had been used simultaneously from the Mi Amigo, and after tests when two studio outputs were effortlessly switched from one transmitter to the other or simulcast from both, separate programming ensued.

	259	**389**
from 4th June	Dutch Service 05:00-18:00 GMT Classical Music 18:00-20:00 GMT Simulcast with "389" 20:00-01:00 GMT	English Service 05:00-01:00 GMT
from 19th June	Dutch Service 05:00-18:00 GMT Classical Music 18:00-20:00 GMT Alternative English Service with progressive music 20:00-01:00 GMT	English Service 05:00-01:00 GMT

On 26th June, a generator breakdown put both services off the air. The station returned on 15th July on 1187 kHz only. Both Radio Atlantis and Radio Seagull operated on this frequency.

1975: "389" returned on the air on 24th August. Irregular test broadcasts only ensued, while Radios Caroline and Mi Amigo continued their normal programmes on "259".

"389" was last heard on 15th October.

1976: On 31st March, the spare 10 kW transmitter was again brought into use, on 1520 kHz; the frequency was changed to another new spot, 1562 kHz, on 5th April. This new channel was to be known as "192 metres".

On 16th April, the Radio Caroline team moved into a new studio which had been specially built for them, leaving Radio Mi Amigo in sole possession of the original studio. This was in preparation for a new split-service which began on 15th May. Twenty-four-hours-a-day English programmes then began on "192", while Radio Mi Amigo continued their normal schedule on "259".

Radio Mi Amigo eventually decided they'd prefer to be on "192", so on 10th December both transmitters left the air, the 50 kW was converted to 1562 kHz and returned with Radio Mi Amigo on 11th December; Caroline returned the next day with 10 kW on 1187 kHz.

	259	**192**
Up to 7th May	Radio Mi Amigo 06:00-18:00 GMT Radio Caroline 18:00-05:00 GMT	Test Transmissions
from 8th May	Radio Mi Amigo 06:00-18:00 GMT Radio Caroline 18:00-05:00 GMT	Non-stop music 05:00-18:00 GMT "259" relayed 18:00-05:00 GMT
from 15th May	Radio Mi Amigo 05:00-17:00 GMT "192" relayed 18:00-05:00 GMT	Radio Caroline 24 hours per day
from 29th May	Radio Mi Amigo 05:00-17:00 GMT Radio Caroline 18:00-05:00 GMT	Radio Caroline 05:00-19:00 GMT
from 12th December	Radio Caroline 24 hours per day	Radio Mi Amigo 06:00-18:00 GMT "259" relayed
from 23rd December		"259" relay ends, transmitter closes 18:00 GMT approximately nightly

Meanwhile some tests had taken place on yet another new frequency - 962 kHz. The first of these took place in the early hours of 9th November, the "259" 10 kW having had a quick retune while theoretically off the air for a couple of hours for "routine maintenance"!

1977: After nearly eleven years on "259", Caroline closed down 1187 kHz for the last time at 18:00 GMT on 3rd March. On 9th March, the station re-opened on 953 kHz, to be known for the rest of the decade as "Caroline on 319". A further frequency change occurred in the early hours of 5th July when the transmitter was retuned to the adjacent channel, 962 kHz. The wavelength was of course still referred to as "319 metres".

Radio Mi Amigo were unhappy with 1562 kHz so left that frequency on 23rd July. They returned on 25th July on 1412 kHz, "212 metres". Thus the dual service continued:

	319	**212**
from 26th July	Radio Caroline 24 hours per day	Radio Mi Amigo 04:00-17:00 GMT (06:00-19:00 European Summer Time)

But even this wasn't the end of the Mi Amigo Move-Abouts! It was decided to move the 50 kW transmitter to 962 kHz, as even on low power that was a clearer channel in the Benelux. So from 1st December, both Radio Caroline and Radio Mi Amigo shared the 10 kW transmitter on "319". A loop-tape explained the move on "212" until 18:30 GMT on 4th December, when 1412 kHz left the scene. The 50 kW transmitter was then retuned and began its broadcasts on 962 kHz on 13th December, after a brief test in the early hours on 953 kHz.

The two stations then continued to utilise the same frequency, Radio Mi Amigo in the daytime and Caroline throughout the night, both (normally!) on 50 kW.

UP TO 20/10/78

1979: On Sunday 18th March, at 03:22 to 12:03 GMT, a test was carried out from the Mi Amigo on what would have been called "539 metres" - 557 kHz (obviously the crystal for this broadcast had been obtained before the Medium Wave changes of November 1978, as by this time 557 kHz was no longer a European channel. The correct frequency would have been 558 kHz). Only 4 kW could be loaded into the ship's aerial as it was too short for such a low frequency; the experiment was counted as unsuccessful and so "539" was never used.

Caroline had been off the air at the time of the aforementioned frequency changes. When she returned, on 15th April, it was on the correct new frequency of 963 kHz.

1983: Caroline returned on 9th August, after an absence of three-and-a-half years, on "319", 963 kHz. So far, transmissions have not been heard on any other frequency from her new ship, the Ross Revenge.

Researched and compiled by a "Monitor" reader, March 1984

In the beginning Radio Atlanta

COLIN NICOL

The whole and the true story of what happened with the 'pirates' has never been published. I can only tell it as I remember and as I experienced it.

The unsung heroine who really got pirate radio going is a lady named Kitty Black; a very intelligent woman who worked as a publisher, writer and translater and was involved in theatre festivals in London. She is still well known in the theatrical world, and was one of the prime instigators along with Allan Crawford and a man named Oliver Smedley. Crawford is an Australian, a Sydneysider, who was working in the music industry. He owned Merit Music, and used to run Southern Music in London.

That was the triumvirate who largely put together the ship Radio Atlanta, which was the first of Britain's pirate radio ships. It was based on Radio Veronica which had been running for five years previously and was itself based on Radio Syd which was off the South Coast of Sweden and had been going for some seven years at that stage, and Radio Nord, operating off Stockholm, which was even prior to that.

I'd spent six years in radio in Australia where I was born, and was the programme director of a radio station when I was hardly out of my teens. Then in 1963 I decided I wanted to see the world and I came to England - and, naturally enough, couldn't get any work in radio. I was introduced to another Australian disc-jockey who'd been over for a year or two; like me he wasn't in radio at the time, he was working in a record shop. His name was Ken Evans and he is now one of the successful producers for Radio Two.

Almost immediately after leaving me that day we met, Ken bumped into Allan Crawford whom he knew from Sydney. Allan said to Ken "Don't tell anybody, but I'm starting up a pirate radio ship. Do you know anybody who might be suitable to help set the thing up?" Ken immediately said "I've just bumped into a chap called Colin Nicol, he's just arrived from Australia and he's very experienced. He knows all about commercial radio which so few people in Britain do." That was true in 1963; nobody had ever heard of commercial radio except for Radio Luxembourg.

By November 1963 Ken and I were working in pirate radio, which puts us right in the front rank of people who were involved in it. We were working in a small studio at the top of a building in Soho which was the Merit Music office. Radio Atlanta was going to broadcast all taped programmes and we devised a system so that when it came out on the air it would sound fresh, as if it had been done that day. My job was to record the breakfast shift, which was a matter of sitting and panelling in a little booth in the corner of a large room full of records, with Ken basically lining up records and passing them through. They'd come through to the desk, we'd play them and recycle them. Later on we had someone to panel for us because the equipment was so clumsy and crude. We'd do it all synchronised to clocks and the endless tapes on reel-to-reel at 7½ inches per second being stacked up were carefully numbered and named so that when they came out on air they'd be in the right sequence.

The ship itself was a bit crucial to the whole thing - where was it and what was happening to it? The Mi Amigo, which was to be Radio Atlanta, was in a port in Texas and hadn't been able to get out according to the previously planned schedule. There was a hold-up that went on for quite some weeks and as there wasn't a lot to do during that period I went on holiday down to Spain for Christmas and just after. While I was away all these new faces appeared on the scene.

A gentleman I'd never heard of - none of the others had ever heard of him either - name of Ronan O'Rahilly had come on the scene. Initially he had been brought in as a probable investor but he decided he could do it better himself - I think probably quite rightly - so he bought or got hold of some way a former North Sea ferry, the Frederica, and started to fit her out in Greenore in Eire. He has some family contacts that allowed him to use Greenore. In the meantime the Mi Amigo had finally come across from Texas and Allan Crawford was looking out for somewhere to put her for her final fitting out. She was going to be fitted out in Northern Spain, but Ronan convinced Allan it'd be better to fit the ship out at Greenore.

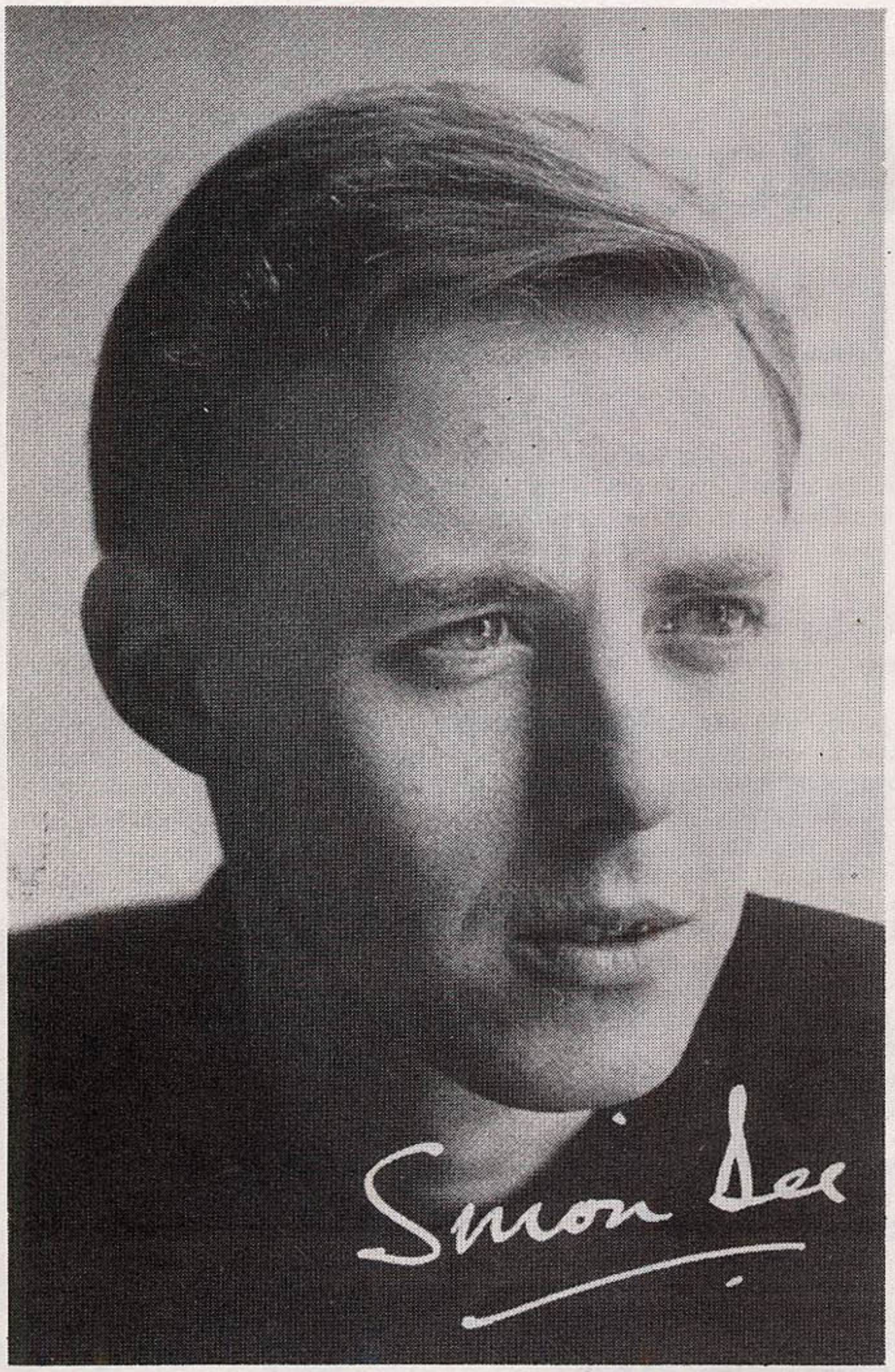
Although I should do them the courtesy of being able to remember more, the only names I can recall now who came along subsequent to the original team are Tony Withers - Tony Windsor, as he later became -, Simon Dee, Brian Vaughn, and Keith Martin. Johnny Jackson and Bob Scott were the Americans, father and son, who were there in February '64. They were both jocks who came from out of the blue: as they were from the Southern States of America, they may have got wind of something happening when the ship was being fitted out in Galverston. They were quite hot-shot Southern DJ types, but they didn't wash when it came to the crunch, and they weren't around for terribly long. Allan's General Manager was Richard Harris.

Suddenly we were no longer working together as a group. There were two ships and the two sides had split apart. One had to come off second best, and that was the Mi Amigo. It nearly went aground on a sandbank off Greenore in a force eleven storm. Caroline was in the meantime fitted out, set sail and got pretty close to the location that Radio Atlanta was planning to occupy off the coast of Essex, near to Clacton on Sea; they didn't quite get the location but they used the frequency that was intended for Atlanta. That was the reason it was Caroline and not Atlanta which started broadcasting first, on Easter Saturday at mid-day in 1964.

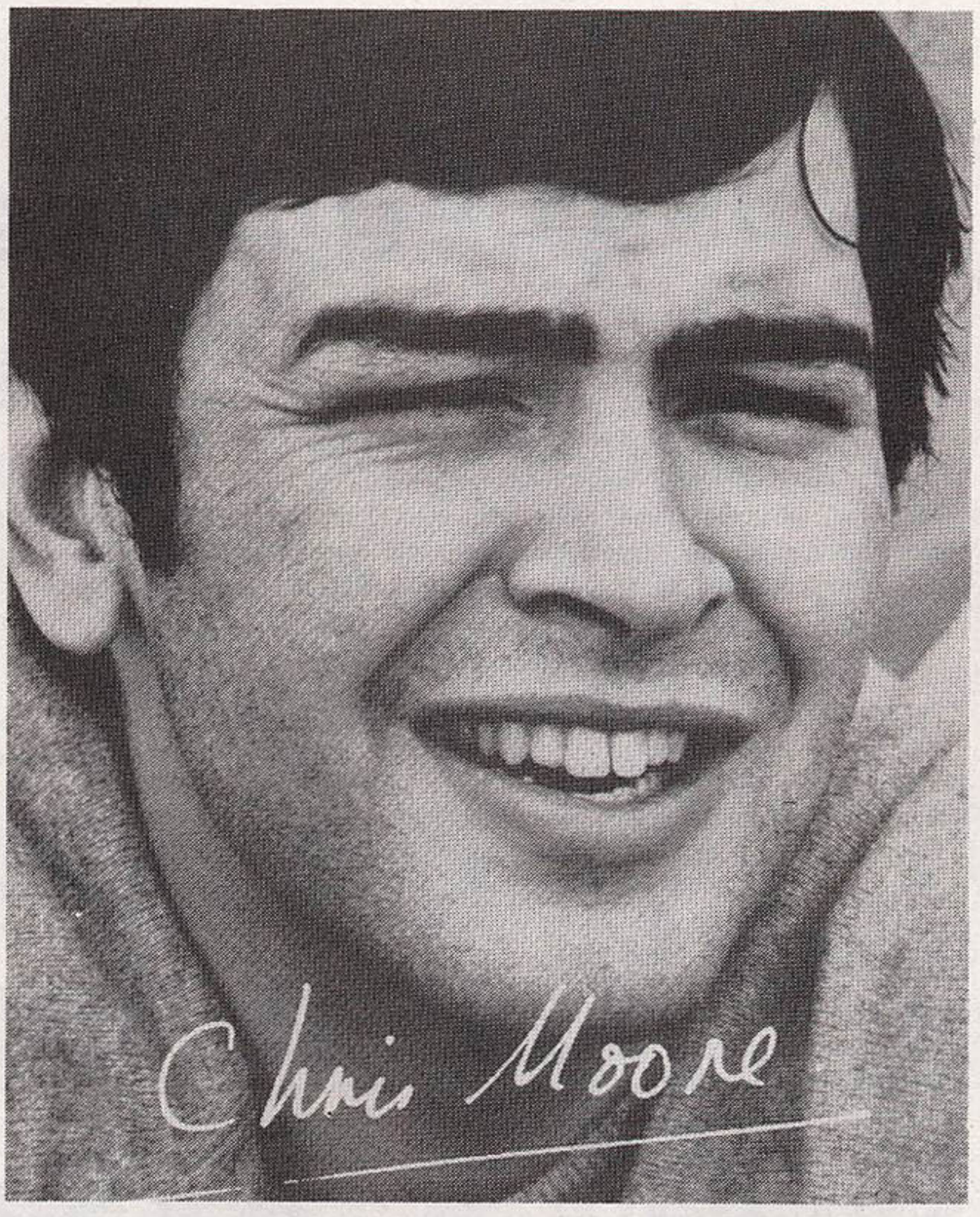
I've never been sick at sea in my life, thank goodness, but some people were in a terrible state. We were all teenyboppers at that time and would probably have lived and worked together under any conditions and not thought twice about it. Under those circumstances, especially on Caroline South, we were probably a lot better off in a lot of ways than we might have expected to be, and also better off than the other ships. It was a coastal cargo vessel that'd been converted and there were fairly extensive crew quarters below decks. Mostly they were two berth cabins; I had Tony Blackburn in the bunk upstairs of me, and I shared with Dave Lee Travis at another time. There was a small lounge at the back which we used as our recreation room/workroom/social room; and we had a reasonable sort of common room upstairs where we had our meals which the Dutch cook prepared for us. It was comfortable.

The only discomfort that was particularly noticeable to me was the constant vibration of the generators. You could never get away from the noise. When you finally got to sleep with it, it was the sleep of the exhausted - then you'd wake up and it was still going. You had to live with it all day and night. To me, the greatest relief was not having that around when you got ashore.

We had an all-Dutch crew who were terrific, very friendly and very helpful, but they were under a lot of pressure because they were on the ship for very long periods of time. They elected to go for very long terms without shore leave because of the money they were getting, but it made them very nervous and edgy. There were 'incidents' quite often; I know that I very nearly wasn't here to tell the tale for one of them. It happened through all the ships on and off, because of people just going ship-crazy; it was mostly the crew because the lucky announcers for the most part were on for two weeks and off for one, so had a chance to relax. I was there for six weeks at one stretch



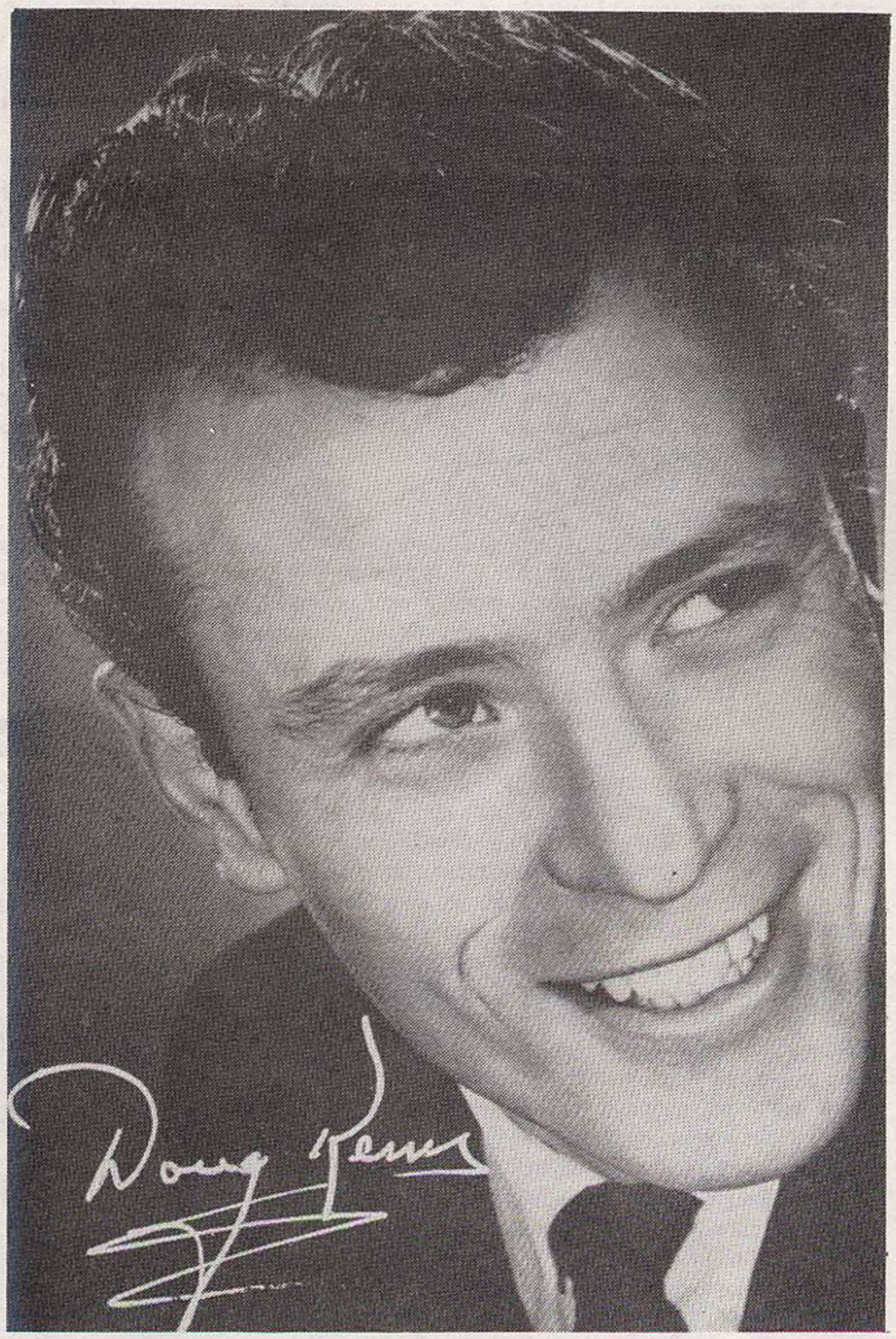
Simon Dee



Chris Moore



Tom Lodge



Doug Kerr

and was getting as sparko as the Dutch sailors. I suddenly thought "My God, what am I doing?" The height of the mast was really out of proportion in comparison with the length and beam of the ship and you looked at it and thought "How on earth does that stay up? Why doesn't it tip over and face wrong-way up? That'll be the end of us all!" But it didn't and it wouldn't; I've lived in that ship through a force eleven storm with water over the top of the ship and we didn't come to any grief. Not that time.

Allan Crawford's interest in pirate radio was largely that he thought it'd be a good way of promoting and developing the cover-version records that his music publishing company put together. We got over the business of playing those when we realised that we had to compete, especially with Caroline. Immediately we started playing all the pop records that were available we were absolutely deluged with them from every record company in the world. We had the best of everything that was produced and the more records we played, the more exposure we gave to records, the more record companies and publishing companies were formed to supply music for us, and the more and more artists there were who had a chance to succeed. The Rolling Stones make no bones about it, they would never have existed but for Caroline and the other pirate ships, and that goes for many, many others. The music scene up to that point was Radio Luxembourg playing one, perhaps one-and-a-half minutes of a record that was prepaid by one of the big record companies, and the BBC, bless their heart, were not really into pop records at that stage. So Caroline provided the first start that Britain had had in living memory for hearing all the pop records that nobody else was playing plus all those that everybody else was playing, and hearing them in full. So that's what we played - everything.

We were absolutely flooded with press from everywhere in the world too, coming to do stories on us and take photographs and so on. The people who brought out the public in little boats to shout and wave at us must have made a bomb. They were all dangerously overladen and came out in all sorts of hazardous conditions, circled the ship, and went back. I certainly would have been better off doing that than staying on the ship; but somebody was enterprising so good luck to 'em. A lot of people made money out of Caroline - everybody except Allan Crawford and Ronan O'Rahilly I think!

The Merger

Within a few weeks of Atlanta going on the air the Merger had occurred. It wasn't terribly long because it was plain nobody was winning by having two ships there and that the other half of the country needed to be served by another ship. Therefore one in the North and one in the South was a very logical move.

It was a very strange moment when Caroline hoved into view. I was in charge of the Mi Amigo at that time and I didn't know if it was a takeover, a merger, or whether there was piratical goings on because I'd had no answer to my telex to London. The tender came across and Simon Dee came aboard; we sat down and had a cup of coffee and we talked, and we sent off urgent messages on the Telex and waited for our instructions. Meanwhile everything carried on on-air much as it had done up to then.

When finally the tender came out and Ronan and Allan came aboard together it turned out that the whole thing was resoved and the only decision yet to be made was as to which ship was to become Radio Caroline North and which Radio Caroline South.

I think Allan Crawford may have won a point about his ship staying as the South one since she was originally intended to have been the first pirate ship for Britain and she had the better mooring. A lot of research had gone into mooring in the Estuary; it's a very tricky place to moor because of sandbanks and tides and exposed areas. Atlanta was securely moored but the mooring that Caroline had was not as stable. So the Mi Amigo won Radio Caroline South and I was certainly very glad about that as I very much preferred to be in the South; although I think it was the less profitable of the two. Caroline North was run on a more profitable basis.

Then the ship that was Caroline and became Caroline North, the larger of the two ships,did that spectacular sail around the coast up to the Irish Sea. It was dark when she passed us in the evening and I remember cars flashing their headlights out to sea all around the coastline as she sailed around.

We then found ourselves on our own with a totally new set-up and moving into Caroline House just off Curzon Street in Mayfair. It was a huge building which must have cost a fortune to run. I don't know how it was afforded, I'm sure. We'd been in trepidation and concern because with the two rival groups merging there would obviously be a need for less people; but in fact, for a while anyway, the Caroline organisation was employing a vast number of people. It was quite an empire. There were more people involved in the radio station in Caroline House than I'd ever seen in my life in a radio station. But the two factions never jelled, and within a year or so Allan Crawford and Ken Evans and I were the only ones who'd been part of the Atlanta crowd still around.

We lost a certain amount of editorial and programming control, we were less independent than we'd been before. With Atlanta we were doing our own thing in respect of the music we were playing and the compilation of programmes, with Ken Evans overseeing us and Richard Harris keeping an eye on us. Richard dropped out around the time of the merger too; he was an unfortunate loss because he was a very capable man.

Programming policy became centralised to Caroline House and we were then using their schedules. There was a programme director for Radio Caroline at that time who hadn't had any experience in the field before but who was apparently very laid back and therefore knew what he was doing, and the end result was some rather peculiar programming. It was a rather difficult time for the announcers because we were all supposed to be "well, man! All happening, man!" and not all of us were like that so it was a bit strange to understand what they wanted programming-wise and what their format was. When an amateur tries to tell a professional what he wants in programme planning one of them is going to end up looking silly, and it was a bit difficult to make some headway there. In the end, though, we scratched by.

As time went by, too many people came and went. People would come on, be on the air for a few weeks - in one case only one day - and one of the nabobs in London would send a signal through "don't like him, get rid of him". In a twelve-month period there were more than eighty people fired, which isn't a pleasant memory and it's not one I'd like to see repeated elsewhere. We had a sort of 'R.I.P.' roll on the wall of the recreation room where we listed all the names of those, the dear departed - because there were so many we were losing track. Ronan saw it one day and had it removed. In retrospect, I suppose that sort of thing was inevitable because most of the people pulling the strings had no previous experience in the field and nothing to fall back on in the way of knowledge and experience. They were working by the seat of their pants. and if they woke up one morning and didn't like somebody that was that. It was a sad commentary on the way it was put together.

In late '64, '65, it really got settled in and became established. I worked on the ship, came ashore for a while, went back to the ship a few times. It wasn't continuous, thank goodness, because by that time I'd already had quite a few miles of pirate radio under my belt and it was good to not have to be consistently on the ship. I spent long periods working in the office in production, doing recording work and so forth in Caroline House in addition to the times I was on leave. I've never been on the Mi Amigo when she'd had any of her major catastrophies. Although we'd survived that force eleven and had lost our anchor chain and had drifted a few times and had to put the engines on to take us out of trouble while I was aboard, we didn't have any of the major sort of accidents and I just missed the running ashore.

In late January 1966 Caroline went aground. I'd just gone ashore. The last record I'd played in my final programme was "Rescue Me" by Fontella Bass - and a few days later there were newspaper headlines all around the world with the ship lying on the sand at Clacton. So she was out of commission. No more Caroline South. But the coincidental thing is, at the very moment Caroline South went ashore and couldn't broadcast because she was on British territory, Radio Syd in Sweden, the MV Cheetah II, had to move from her moorings just south of Malmö in the Baltic Sea because the Sea was icing up. The Cheetah II, a gracious old lady of a ferryboat, had rather a soft hull and any chance of icing up around her would have been dangerous to the ship.

The Cheetah II needed servicing, she'd been harrassed a lot by Coastguards, and her owner Britt Wadner - a great celebrity in Sweden who was called 'The Viking Lady of Sweden' - had been put in prison. Britt and Ronan put their heads together and did some kind of a deal, and the MV Cheetah II came round and took Caroline's place. Meanwhile the Mi Amigo had been uplifted from the sands and towed to Scheveningen in Holland where they removed the transmitter and brought it back on a tender to be installed on the Cheetah II.

Ronan put me on board to help supervise, along with the technician we had, the fitting out of the ship for use as Radio Caroline South. I did this for ten solid weeks and it was the happiest time I've ever had on pirate radio. The Swedish crew and on-air staff, Britt Wadner herself and Kalle Wadner her son were the most charming and delightful people I've ever had any dealings with. The ship was very cosy and friendly, little individual cabins, terrific food, friendly atmosphere, lots of fun and room to move around. She was a small ferryboat but she had an upper and lower deck and a stairwell, proper steps and everything. There was a very large hold, so their transmitting equipment was moved and I helped supervise the dropping of Caroline's transmitter into the big, open hold of the Cheetah II.

The next quesiton was how to jury-rig some sort of a mast to transmit as quickly as possible. That was solved by getting some lengths of heavy copper cable and slinging them from the masts. The whole lot was patched together and tuned in and we got a good enough signal out of it to show that Caroline was back on the air in the South.

The minute we were ready to go, and I'd got the studio all set up and organised all round, Ronan came aboard with Britt Wadner and it was Press Day and we all had our photos taken together saying "We're all ready to go". It was at that moment that I decided I'd had a very pleasant time, and a very exciting one, and I'd been very privileged in what I'd been able to do and the people I'd been working with and that I'd had this last ten weeks on the Cheetah II with charming company - and I wasn't about to go through any more of it once the whole bandwagon started rolling again. I'd really had my lot by then. I was not only the longest serving disc jockey in pirate radio at that point, just over two years after I became involved in it, but I was also the only one left of the originals. Things were going a way I didn't like. The music I loved but a certain type of person and a certain attitude and philosophy which wasn't quite right for me was coming in, and the fun was going out of it. So I left. I believe I was the first to give his resignation to Ronan. He was a little taken aback.

The m.v. MI AMIGO

As these words are written, the Mi Amigo is still lying beneath the waves; but when we see how she's survived such a checkered career, it's impossible to believe that her final resting-place can be such an ignominous position.

In 1921, a three masted steel schooner was built at the Deutsche Werft A.G. in Kiel, Germany. She was named "Margarethe" and owned by Simon Ernst. Her mission in life was to transport cargo in coastal waters.

She passed into the ownership of Heinrich Koppelmann in 1927. Renamed "Olga" in honour of Frau Koppelmann, she was converted to a motor vessel by the addition of a four-cylinder engine. For this it was necessary for her to be stretched - a new centre section increased her length from 98 ft to 134 ft, and her gross tonnage from 156 tons to 274 tons.

Her engine was changed in 1933 to a six-cylinder, 44 HP, and this in turn was replaced in 1936 by a 200 b.p.h. Klöckner-Humboldt-Deutz single expansion engine.

War came to Europe, and "Olga" was commandeered to serve the German Navy from 9th June 1941 to 18th November 1943. She had a ramp fitted on her bows at the Kriegsmarine dockyard in Kiel and was used by the landing craft squadron in the Baltic. Even in those days she maintained a spirit of safety; in dangerous waters where ships were being lost almost daily, she and those who sailed in her came to no harm. She was restored and refitted before being returned to civilian life.

Herr Koppelmann died in 1951 and the vessel's ownership passed to Olga and Son Koppelmann.

It was in 1959 that our heroine's career as a radio ship began. Registered to Superior Shipping Corporation, Nicaragua, her name was changed to "Bon Jour", and she became the home of Radio Nord, broadcasting to Sweden from the Baltic Sea.

The Swedish Government didn't enjoy having an unauthorised radio station on their doorstep. One of their schemes to end its activities was to put pressure on Nicaragua to withdraw the ship's registry. This they did, in 1961, but Panama agreed to re-register her - providing her name was changed. Thus, she became "Magda Maria" and was registered to International Tug, Panama.

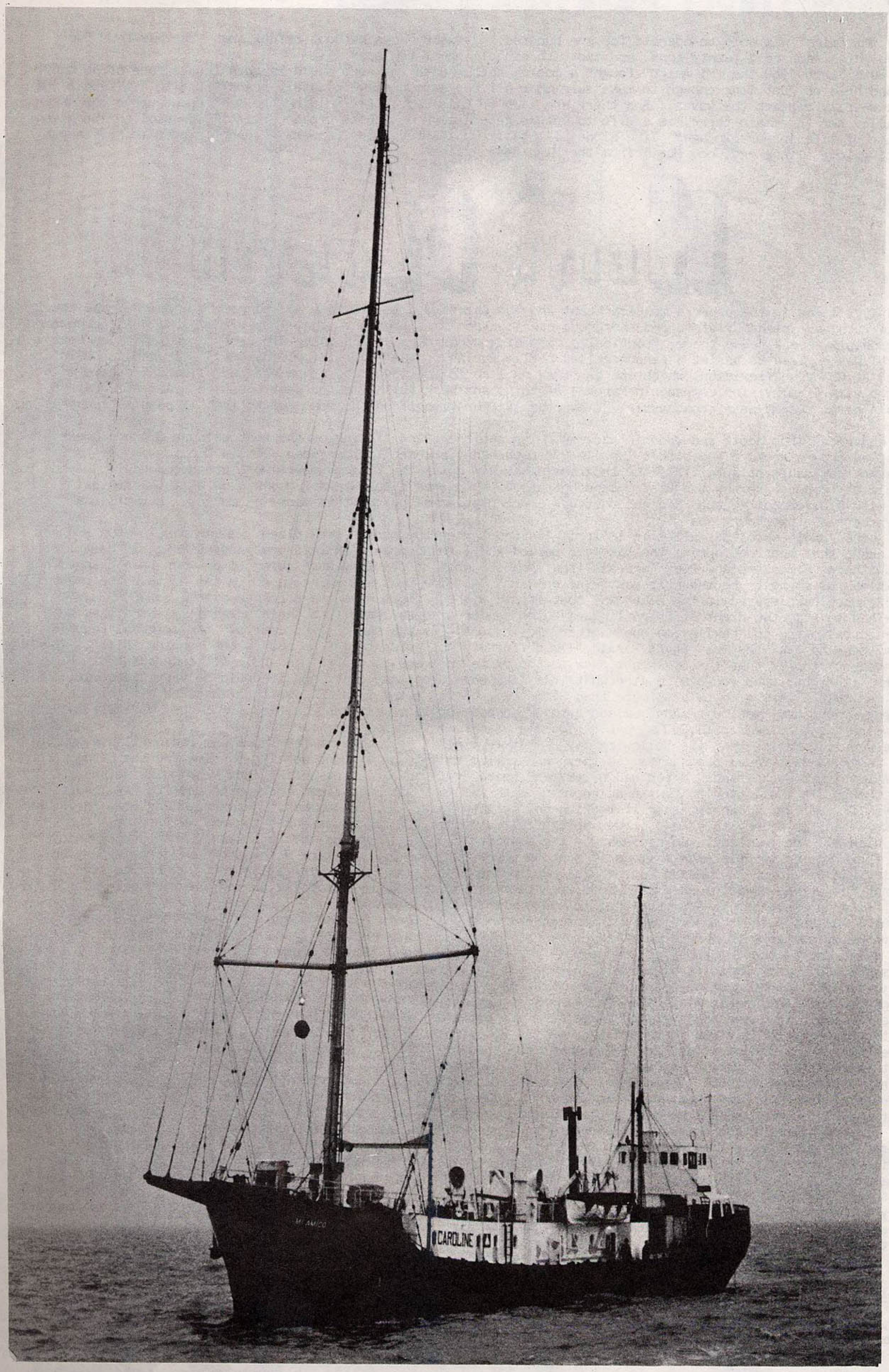
Radio Nord was finally closed down in 1962, and "Magda Maria" taken into port. In 1963 she was obtained by the Radio Atlanta project and it was at this stage in her career that she finally acquired the name "Mi Amigo" - Spanish for "My Friend". Under the registry of Atlantic Services Anstalt, Liechtenstein, she sailed to Galverston in Texas for a refit. There she was equipped with the most up-to-date American studio equipment.

The Lady's original certificate of seaworthiness classified her as a coastal, not seagoing vessel. She remembered this on her way back across the Atlantic, much to the consternation of her crew! Upon reaching Spain she was fitted with extra bilge-keels to increase her stability.

In Greenore in Ireland the "Mi Amigo" was fitted with the aluminium mast which was to hold her aerial aloft for over eight years. She sailed around the South Coast of England and dropped anchor on 27th April 1964, in the Thames Estuary, fourteen miles from the Caroline. On 9th May she began to broadcast as Radio Atlanta on 1520 kHz, switching on when Radio Caroline closed down for the night at 18:00 local time. On 12th May the frequency was changed to 1493 kHz and regular programmes began.

On 2nd July, at 20:00 local time, Radio Atlanta closed down. The "Mi Amigo" had now entered the most exciting and eventful period of her life - she had become Radio Caroline South. Thus it was in 1964 her ownership changed to Planet Productions Ltd.

Anyone who's ever been to prison, or confined to a hospital bed for months on end, might have an inkling of how miserable the "Mi Amigo" must have been when she was pirated in 1968 and left to rot for four years at a private wharf in Holland. Her reprise came in 1972 when her oppressor died and his family put her up for auction. On 29th May she was sold by R.W. Bais to a Mr. Frank Rijsdijk-Holland, who was bidding on behalf of undisclosed buyers, for a sum of 20,000 Guilders - about £2,400. Her registered owners became Vagabond Films, and she was returned to the airwaves in exactly four months.



m.v. MI AMIGO

The "Mi Amigo" was able to operate for one hundred and twenty days without refuelling. She has four fuel tanks, two which each hold twenty tons, and two with capacities of ten tons.

On 20th March 1980 the "Mi Amigo" fought a losing battle with the seas she'd laughed in the face of so many times. She held on just long enough to make sure that all her personnel were safely transferred to a lifeboat and then sank wearily beneath the waves. And there she lies to this day, still holding her mast erect above the water. Will we allow her to remain there, as a gift to future generations of marine archaeologists? Or will she be given a new lease of life in our own age? Time alone will tell; but whatever the answer, we don't expect to hear her broadcasting Love, Peace and Good Music from the High Seas again.

KEITH MARTIN

In 1963 I saw in the paper a mention about Project Atlanta; I looked them up and got to know them and inveigled myself in with our friend Crawford and the crowd there. Ken Evans, Brian Vaughn, Tony Withers and quite a number of other people were already there, frantically recording programmes on the third floor of the building in Dean Street. I was engaged to assist a person called Leslie Parish of the advertising department - I used to be in 'traffic' at Granada Television, which was as close as I could get to broadcasting before. I actually gave up a secure job with a television company in March 1964 to go and work full time for what was then Radio Atlanta. But they could never see me as a broadcaster. I eventually found myself on the boat due to lack of people, and that was my luck.

I can recall Bob Scott and Johnnie Jackson going out there and sitting on the boat because Bingo numbers had to be called once a week. They didn't last long because they sounded too American. Colin Nicol was the first live broadcaster from Radio Atlanta. All the programmes bar him doing the Bingo numbers were pre-recorded, so he had to put on all the tapes. He was the Master Tape Operator. There was a Bob Stewart who was on Atlanta originally. He came on with a Liverpool accent, decided that was unacceptable and put on this Canadian accent. He still has it to this day; he's on Luxembourg now.

I joined Radio Caroline full time in April '64, just when the merger took place. I was part of the Project Atlanta group that went out during the takeover period and I found myself in this boatyard at Brightlingsea listening to Tony Withers, Simon Dee and Doug Carr all arguing about what shifts they were going to do when this change took place, which was going to be the next day. The original Caroline boat was going to go to the North. The reason the Project Atlanta boat stayed in the South was that it did without doubt have the stronger signal.

We had to stay the night at Brightlingsea - the tender used to leave from there originally - and they were arguing and bellowing and bawling at one another. Simon Dee - he was the one who came off the original Caroline and left Tom Lodge to take the boat round - said "I'm definitely not going to get up and do the morning shift". Then it was pointed out to him that the breakfast show is the prime show and of course his whole attitude changed. Some of them were all right. But you can imagine what it's like when egos take over, and it could be very difficult.

I was told I was being paid £5 more than Simon Dee. I was being paid £20, so that meant he was being paid £15! £15, twenty years ago, was quite good; I don't think anybody could complain about that. But they were all talking about "we're going to demand £1,000 a year." You see what inflation has done for you!

We went out to the boat the following day. They were going to broadcast from what was Radio Atlanta, which used to rely on just taped programmes, so they were trying to get the studios working in time for the actual change-over. Atlanta had spotmasters, which had never been heard of in this country before, and were quite unique.

I thought it was a tiny boat with an enormous mast and that was it. First impression was "Oh Gawd, what have I let myself in for?" I can remember it rocking and rolling away. But the summer, I hasten to add, was the nicest summer we'd had for a long time, and it was delightful out there. A big tender used to come twice a week from Holland with all the food that was necessary - the inevitable nutmeg, because the Dutch always had nutmeg on every-thing. There was no trouble with mail as it went through customs. By this time we had to come through Harwich, so everything was picked up in Harwich and brought out to the boat. The cabins were all right. I used to live at the sharp end and it was dreadful when the winds were blowing and the ship was turning during the tide change. I never enjoyed being on board and that's why I had to leave eventually.

But I was happy to do my repertory in radio, sticking on records for all these would-be stars. Eventually they gave me my own show which was only one hour; and I think I broke big once when, due to lack of other staff of course, I introduced the Top Forty programme on a Saturday afternoon. At one stage, because it was so rough, Brian Vaughn and I kept Radio Caroline going between us for three or four days. The tender couldn't get out to relieve us nor could they push anybody else on. Must have been awful for the listener; it was awful for me, too!

You couldn't compare it with Radio One; in those days it was more middle-of-the-road. It had programmes more than programming. You used to have programmes like the Breakfast Show, the Mid-Morning Show; between four and six it was the Big Line Up if I remember; and then we had Soundtrack between two and four. I used to enjoy doing that. Simon Dee used to introduce it and Yours Truly was the producer/operator there. It was a mixture of music from films, theatre, etc; and it was extremely popular it would appear. It's the sort of thing Radio Two does occasionally, but we had it every afternoon. Simon was in his element then, and so was Ken Evans because he compiled the programme.

Ted King and Mike Raven never went to the boat. They used to record the programmes in Dean Street. The idea was that the boats would share the same programming tapes; it was Radio Caroline that decided to use only Carl Conway. He used to record one or two hours of mid-morning programmes and he was the only thing on Radio Caroline that was recorded. They broke away from the format which was going to be all pre-recorded material from studios on land.

With no disrespect to the 'broadcasters', I think it was ignorance that kept us going all that time. The manipulators, the O'Rahillys and the Crawfords, they weren't showbiz people. If I was dealing with the same people now, I think I would be very frustrated. There were so many people bumbling away, not knowing quite what they were, how they were going to achieve what they were after. From the others - Tony Withers is one, and as far as programming is concerned it was Ken Evans - I learned a great deal by just observing and finding out how they work and how they manage to make an audience tick.

I left the boat in October 1964 due to the seasickness bit, but they continued to pay me until the following year! I was doing commercials in Caroline House and on odd occasions I used to go backwards and forwards to the boat just doing relief. After I left Caroline I still used to go in and record commercials, at a pound or ten bob a time.

I wouldn't want to do it all again, I don't think. It was a time that'll never come up again, never ever. You'd have to put the radio clock back 25 years again to make it as exciting as it was then. It was the excitement of belonging to something which was then quite unique in English language radio.

From an interview by CHRIS EDWARDS of "Offshore Echos".

The Importance Of Being UGLI

Ray Teret

One morning as I came down for breakfast my mother said "Have you heard this on the radio? It's pop music being played all day!" That doesn't sound very much nowadays, but in the Sixties it was an amazing situation. We had the Light Programme, which was alright in its day, but it was not continuous pop music, i.e. Americana. This was Radio Caroline. It had sailed down the Thames and right the way out to the Isle of Man. So I listened to the station, and I thought "I'll write for a job."

I hadn't left school at the time, I was leaving that summer period. I was doing bits of work for Mecca dancing - actually as a waiter at night at the Ritz Ballroom in Manchester. I was getting about 50p a night (ten shillings of course in the old days!). I was running to work as I had no money for bus fare and I'd done a few sponsored running jobs to help out the local kids so what I did was send a cutting out of the paper of me jumping over a gate to "Radio Caroline, London" saying "You need me!" And they rang me up!

They said "We'd like you to come to London for an audition." So I borrowed the money to get to London and did an audition. They auditioned me in a big studio which was what they call a one-to-one studio, where they have an operator in one room and you go into a little booth. It was like two studios with a window where there was a man watching me and playing with dials, which panicked me to death!

He said "What records do you want to play?" and gave me a list. I picked out five that I knew and I had to do links between the five, read a piece of information and read out something about Caroline, which I did. They said "We'll let you know," and they rang me the next day and said "You're not quite what we're looking for," and that was that.

The next day they rang back, and said "We rang you yesterday but we spoke to the wrong person." Actually they did speak to the right person; I had no experience but when they asked me if I'd had experience I said I'd worked in a Mecca dance hall for two years. I didn't lie to them; they never asked me if I'd played records! So they rang me and there was the American voice saying "This is Radio Caroline, can you be on the ship on Tuesday?" I said "Is that you, Joe, winding me up on the 'phone? Piss off! Don't be messing me about!" I went mad down the 'phone - and it was the boss - I think it was Chris Moore.

They told me to be at Manchester airport at nine o'clock in the morning with a passport and my case packed ready to be away for two weeks. My Mom and Dad and a load of friends came to see me off; they met me at the airport and we flew off to the Isle of Man. When we arrived it was a very bad stormy day - there were many of those, as I was to find. I'd never flown before and the flight was scarey - they threw it into the Isle of Man and virtually dropped it onto the turf.

I was rushed straight to the Palace Casino for a wash and then to what they called a "Zowie Gig", because Caroline North runs "Zowie Gigs" everywhere! When they changed the tender they always had a gig-show for the jocks coming in, and the next night for the jocks coming off the ship. It was a clever idea really. We all got paid for that as well, which was great.

All the jocks that were going onto the ship that day were on stage and when I arrived, about ten o'clock, they took me up on stage: "And here he is, the new disc-jockey from Manchester, you're going to hear him on the air - Ray Teret!" I waved, and put a silly smile on my face, and said "Hello". Even the jocks on the stage didn't know who I was, they didn't have the slightest idea. They were known by then, they'd been tuned into for three months by now and everybody was getting to know their names - Jerry Leighton, Tom Lodge, Baby Bob Stewart and Murf the Surf. So when we came off the lads were giving their autographs. I didn't know what to write. My mother had a pet name for me when I was younger, called me "ugly", it was a bit of a giggle in the family. So I wrote "UGLI", and put a kiss. They said "Is that your name? Ha, Ha! They call him Ugly!" and it went around the room fast that this new disc jockey was called Ugly.

To the Ship...

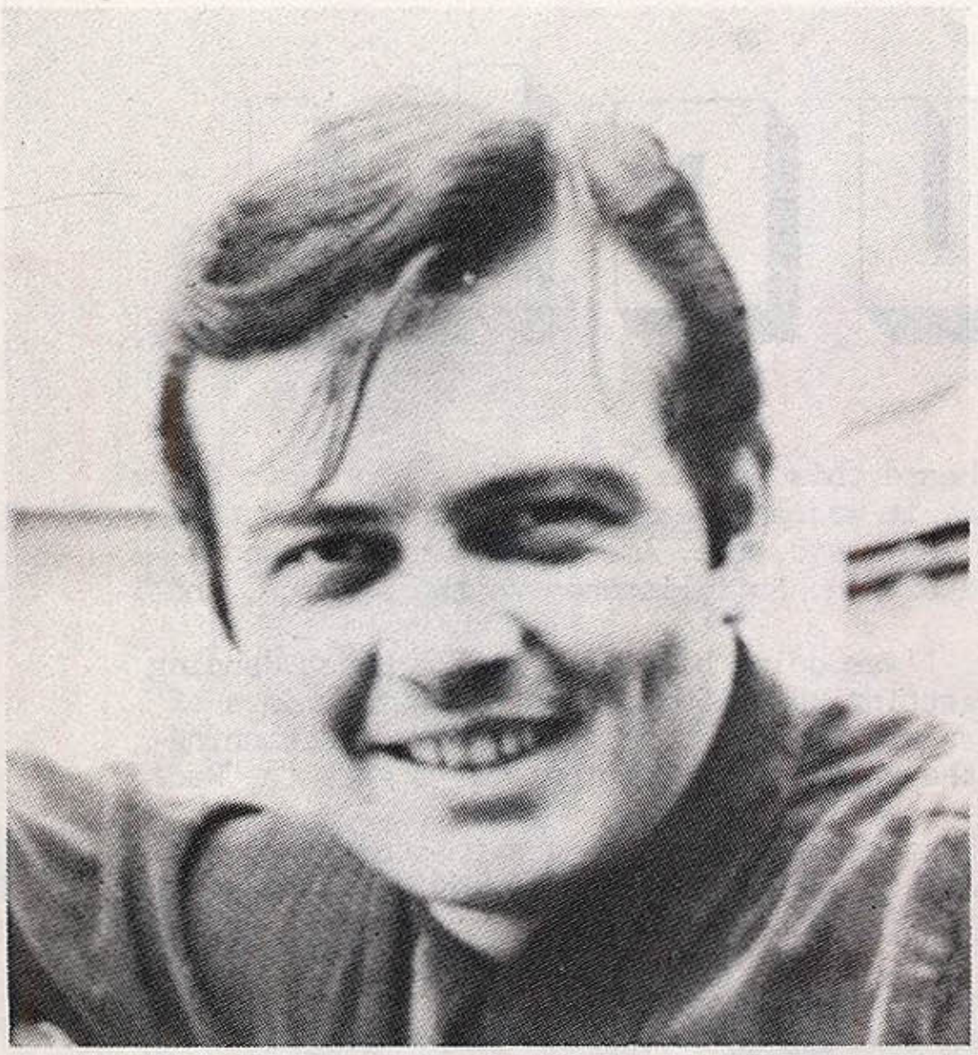
I was terrified, actually, to see this little tiny dot we were being rowed to on the tender, bobbing up and down. It was quite a rough day. Then it was a matter of getting on the ship or falling off the ladder on the side. They explained to me "When the tender gets to the top, you grab the rung, and run up the ladder before the boat comes back and gets your legs." So I went up over the side, and it was just a matter of bedding ourselves in. I was on-air the next day, doing the three o'clock-in-the-afternoon show.

The studios were excellent, very, very good, and they were maintained every single day. It was all Gates stuff. The Gates turntable was terrific, the way to stop-start that was just to drop the gear lever in and it was instant-start. It was a very unique situation where the mixer only had two lines out, and you dropped everything into two channels. You put one Spotmaster into Channel One, the other Spotmaster into Channel Two, and you put one of your decks in Channel One and one of your decks in Channel Two. So you had to make sure that whichever you were going to fade didn't have the things on it that were going to be your next link; because if you had Spotmaster One on Channel Two, when you faded it you wouldn't get anything out of it. It was very simple, because all the commercials were on a tape, on a full spool. Every day we had a complete tape, you played the commercial on the tape then you stopped it, and the next commercial was ready. But I have to make sure that goes on Channel One, because I've already faded Channel Two because the other deck was on it, so when I now cue up that other deck, and I've got this link out of the way and I've played my commercials, played my Spotmaster Caroline jingle, what I have to do now is leave fader two open, pull fader one down, because I've done all the bits on that, and now I have to re-block it, as it were. I have to now work out what I have to say on the next link and what I will read when the fader is up.

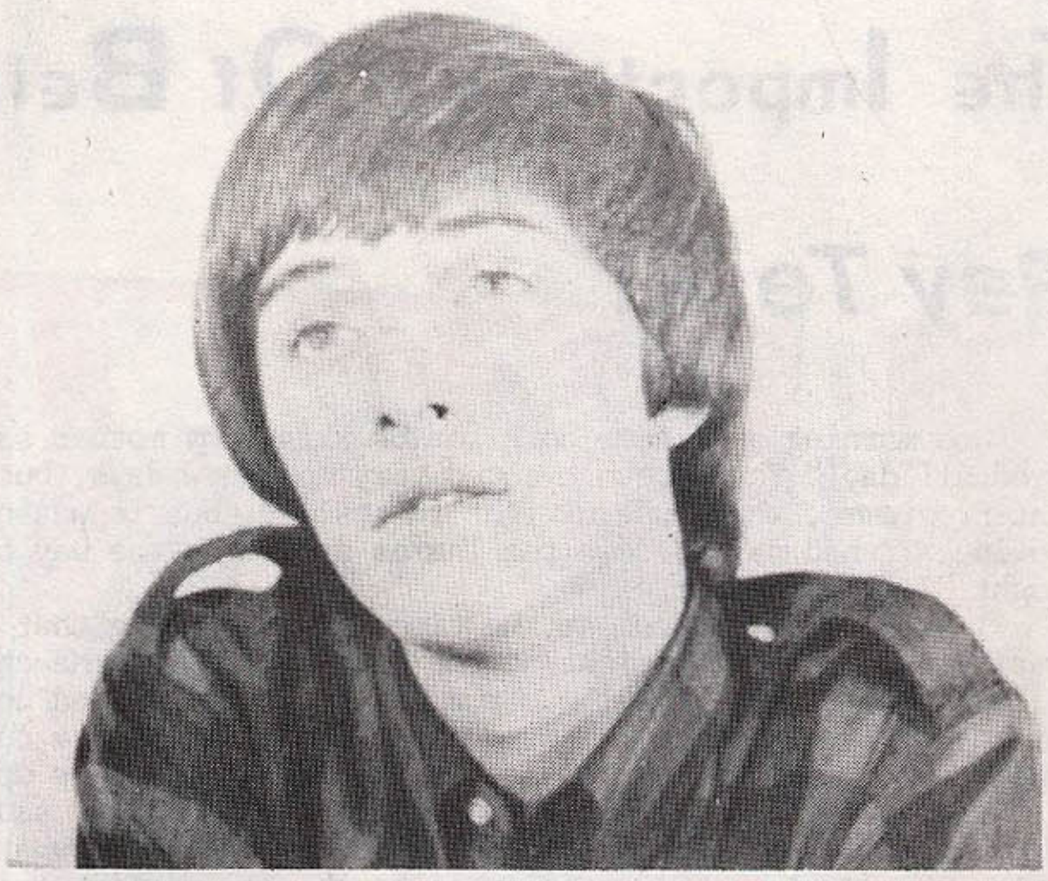
The standard of the galley where the food was prepared was first class. The service was great, we had lovely fresh steaks all the time. We had a Dutch crew and Austrian chefs and galley-people, and they were really fantastic.

They were very into salted food so you ended up getting quite thirsty, but of course they gave you a crate of beer and two hundred cigarettes a week. I had an individual cabin. What I didn't know was that if you didn't lock down your portholes very well - and they were very stiff old screws - on bad days when you got sideswiped by the waves: OOOW! The first day I ever slept there, it was rolling a bit but it was nice, and I had my window open. A storm blew up in the middle of the night. I was sleeping quite happily and I nearly died of fright; ten tons of water came in through the window in one smack and filled up the whole cabin!

The most frightening thing that ever happened to me was when we were actually in a force twelve. I'd been in nines and tens, most jocks have on the sea, but force twelve...! It was a daytime thing, I was actually on the air when

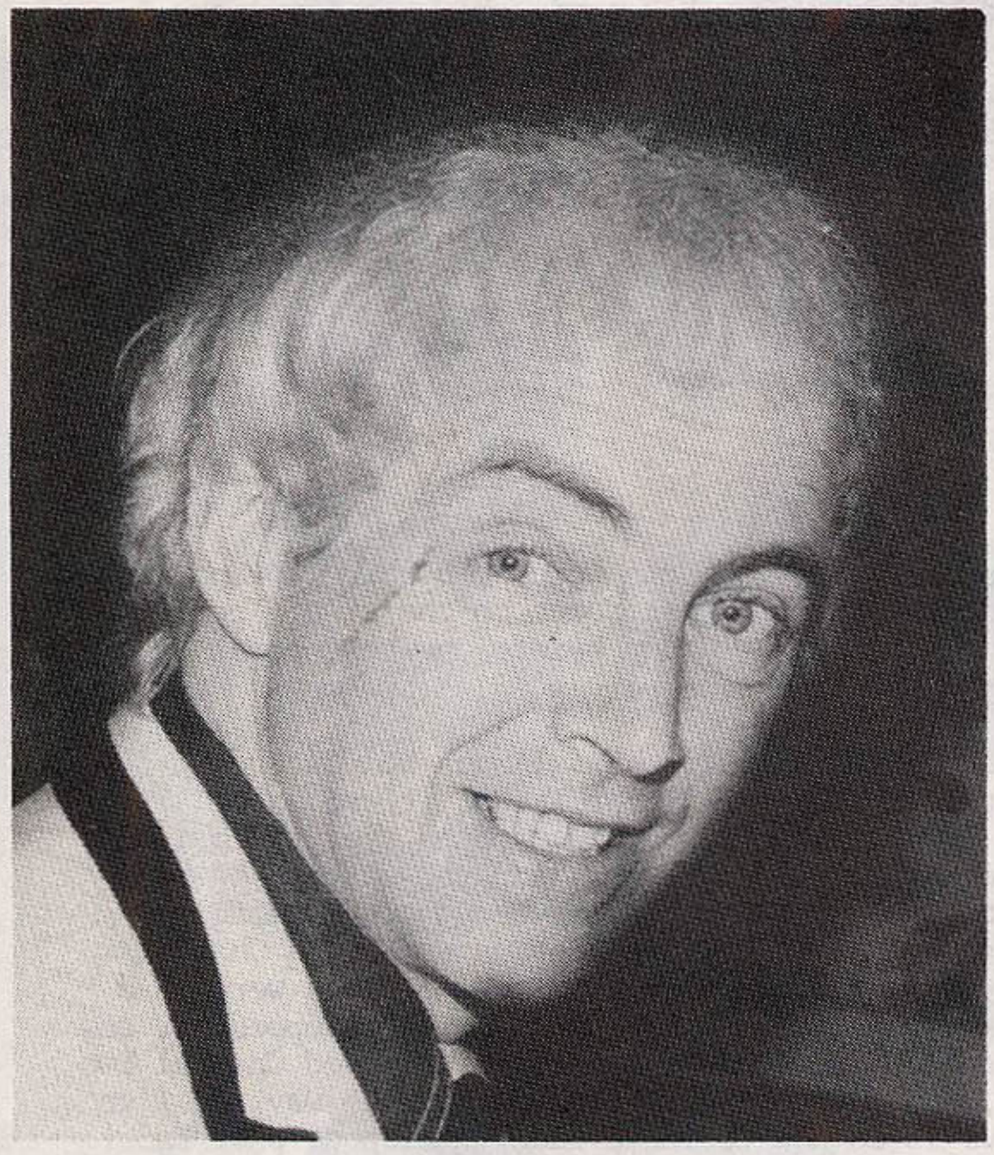


"Baby" Bob Stewart

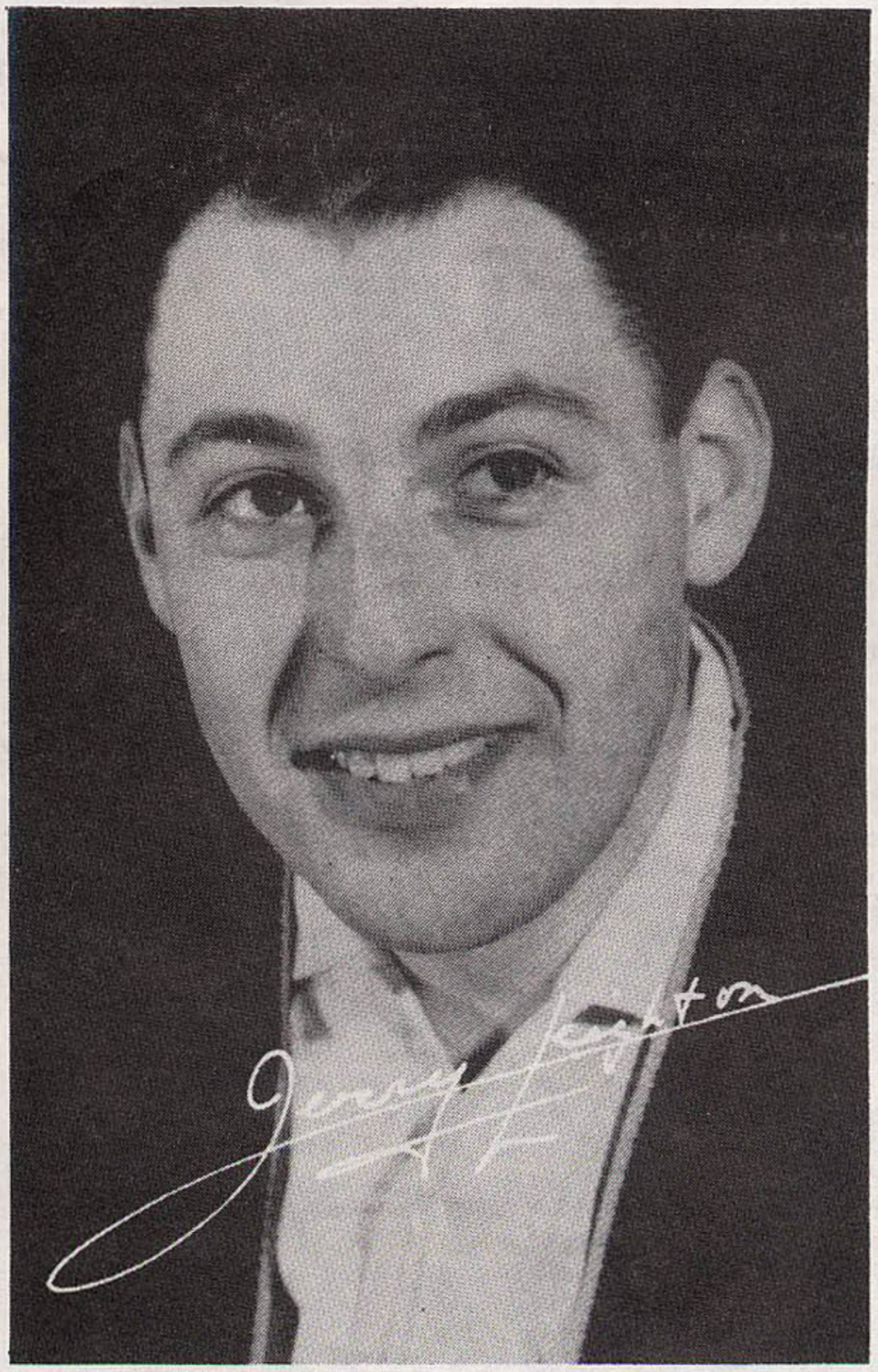


Tony Prince

Jerry "Super" Leighton



"Ugli" Ray Teret



it started to break. We had to go over completely onto tapes and forget about putting commercials out or anything, it was so bad. They strapped everything down in the studio and we all went below, but one of the guys had been painting on the front of the boat and got trapped down there. He couldn't get back because of the wind. I knew he was down there so I went out to try and get him back by rope - and that was frightening. We were trapped there at that end of the boat with it going right up in the air. They reckoned it was scaling about three hundred foot travelling up, and when it got up with the wave lifting it and the wave disappeared, it dropped four hundred foot, smack!

Only one real tragedy ever happened. We had an amazing engineer called Manfred who was totally balmy. He used to go mad about nothing, but in a foreign language so no-one could understand. He was always part smashed, he used to trade anything for bottles of beer. He had this great thing that when people came on the boat he had to show everybody around - he was the guide, to show them how the engine worked and everything. One particular day, it was a choppy day building up for a storm, we had the tender alongside with some dignitaries and some important people to do with the company having a look around. Manfred was taking them all around, saying "...Through here we come to ze vents and ze vents go through zis way through ze roof, and through ze roof goes all ze water, and all ze heat comes through zis way, through ze studio, down ze back into ze radiator, come through big fan here, zis massive, big wonderful fan; my favourite, zis fan. Ze water come down too hot, you have to put it through here to make it colder." This great big cooling radiator had a massive fan in it going round, it was making a big row, but it'd got a grill mesh over it so somebody said "Where is this fan?"

"Ze fan is in ze grill! Through here! Put finger through here!" So he put his finger through into the fan - and pulled out his finger and said "Oh! Finger Gone!" He held his finger up and half the crowd dropped dead because he just pulled out this fleshy bit on the end where his finger had been cut off by this chainsaw-like fan that's screaming around in there.

The Captain was informed, and came up and said "Manfred, what have you done?" "I just showed ze people. All I do is get my finger and put my finger in ze fan, and..." and he put another finger in the fan to show the Captain what he'd done, and took another finger off!

Some pleb strapped his arm up as you're supposed to do, like a tourniquet; all the blood was pouring out of his hand but nothing had shocked him yet. They took him upstairs and all his lunatic Dutch pals were saying "Have some beer, Manfred" and pouring it down his neck. He was telling them all at a thousand miles an hour, like the mad cook in the Muppets, about these two fingers - and all of a sudden he realized what had happened. He really went absolutely bananas and they had to tie him down. Manfred was a natural lunatic sober, balmy when he's drunk; he was now in shock and they're trying to give him tablets to sedate him, on top of all the beer.

Then the storm broke, and we were into a force ten. We had to put things out on the air to get the lifeboat to come out, but it was impossible to get anything out to the ship for two days, and poor Manfred spent two days like that. He lost about three stone in weight, he went white and he went thin, and he was very, very ill. He could have died. He was off for nine and a half months recovering.

Janet's Wedding

My sister had a very bad experience. She was going to marry a guy called Michael and he destroyed himself in a very bad crash in Manchester. He was in intensive care for three or four weeks but unfortunately died. Janet was of course very, very upset about the situation; she was at death's door herself, she was like a thin stick. I had to get her out of the environment so I got some leave from Caroline, took her to the Isle of Man, bought a boutique and stocked it up with clothes, and gave her the problem of selling boutique clothes in the Isle of Man in the Sixties. Actually it was a waste of time because the Isle of Man at the time was very into wellingtons, overcoats and umbrellas. I put every penny I'd ever saved from Radio Caroline into the boutique and I lost everything; but that's another story. It gave Janet a lot of time, and I bought a cottage in Glen Vine and she used to live there.

One day I came off the ship on leave with the new guy from Canada who had a song out called "Long time between lovers". He was a very together guy. He had a strange similarity to the guy who'd died; he was six foot two, broad shouldered, bronzed, quite sporty and he had a particular kind of hair which was kind of fuzzy and black, as Mike had had. He met my sister and when Janet saw him she flipped - instant Love. Overnight everything changed. The next thing I knew, she went back to England to see Mum and Dad, he went with her on his week's leave, he proposed, and they decided that they would get married!

He was an "illegal alien", as it were, working on a pirate ship so they couldn't really do it in England or the Isle of Man. So I had a great brainstorm: I said "Why not get married on the ship? We'll get the Dutch Captain to do it." We checked with Panama and they agreed so it was all arranged.

The night before, the house nearly burned down! We were cooking chips late at night and the chip pan set on fire. My other sister had flown out the day before, her boyfriend was a fireman so he put the fire out but all the kitchen was black and filthy, and Janet spent until five o'clock in the morning trying to clean up the kitchen and cover up all the burnt bits. Everyone had to get up again two hours later and race over from Glen Vine to the other side of the island to Ramsey to get on the tender.

Our guests and all the people from the national papers were there, all on boats and all going out. As we were travelling out the fog came in very badly and it was difficult to get onto the boat. My parents got stranded at Manchester airport; they flew into the Isle of Man once but couldn't land and had to go back and spend the whole afternoon listening to their little daughter getting married at twenty-one. They were dead sick, because it was the first marriage in the family.

Of course it was broadcast live on the air all afternoon. I was best man, and the guy who gave her away - I took my father's place. It was a really mad, crazy occasion. Everyone got smashed. But it was a tremendous day. The Captain was great, there was free ale and free drinks and all the Press came on board.

We actually got off via the Press boat, they had a bigger boat than our tender. It took about three hours to get back to the island, chugging gently. My Mother and Father did eventually arrive about nine o'clock at night, and we had a great civilized honeymoon party at the cottage.

When Caroline finished Mick and Janet flew to Vancouver where they bought a lovely house, because Mick had saved all his money. They had a daughter who's now thirteen, a lovely child. After two years of being married, Mick, being a disc jockey, decided to go flirting around the town with other young ladies and got caught by Janet. She's a good lady but a bit of a hard nut and she turned him out of the house. They're not divorced, they're still married, but although they're friends to a degreee there's no way Mick can get his way back into the family. Janet has a place of her own now with her daughter and Mick is jockeying for one of the Canadian stations.

I'll never be a married man - ladies I love, but I don't want to own one!

Murf the Surf was an absolutely amazing character. He was a very tall, long, thin thing, about six foot four, two feet wide and three inches deep! He was a "Real American Character, Man"! We'd say to him "Murf, you're going too fast, boy; nobody can understand what you're saying." He'd say "Ah, Man, I can't understand what I'm saying myself!" He had a good listening figure. A lot of coloured guys wrote to Murf because of the American influence. In the Sixties the coloured contingent in England were getting into the American Motown stuff, so as Murf was American and played a bit of Motown in the show every now and then he became very popular. He was great! Really, really good.

One day Murf said "That's it, man, I'm gonna go back to America now." He went off the ship for his week's break,

somebody else turned up in his place and we never saw him again. But his fame lived on; and his theme carried on through Bob Stewart, who came from Liverpool but was very Americanized, mid-Atlantic accent and everything. He was into wearing cowboy boots and drinking coke. He would always drink coca-cola, never beer.

I was the instigator of the Coke Shower. I always did it on Bob; he will remember it well because it used to drive him mad! Bob is quite a big lad; I don't mean tall, I mean well built (fat, but don't tell him I said so!) and when boys are a bit more meaty than I am they perspire quite a lot. He used to perspire, so he used to want coke. "Ray! Go down and get us a coke!" he'd say. "Can I have one too?" "Yeah!" So I'd go down to his cabin and on the way back I'd shake one like Hell all the way from the cabin to the studio up three flights. I'd open mine which I'd not shaken. He'd say "Yeah, man, I needed that, I've just got myself a coca-cola!" and he'd open it - and it used to just do him in. It didn't do any harm to the equipment which was banked in front of us; you always open it towards you anyway. Bob Stewart got the Ray Teret special, the coke shower, about three times, and he hated that joke!

Sometimes in our studio, which was built over the engine-room, it was very hot so we'd open all the windows. That's why you got that great ambience of sea sounds and seagulls - that's what it was, it wasn't on cart. People used to say Caroline North had a better sound than anybody else, because of that ambience of it being a ship at sea; where most studios were, they couldn't open the windows. We had ours all open.

To me, it was like a tremendous holiday, a three year holiday. With the fact it was two weeks on and one week off I was at sea for two years and a year off. I was bronzed all the time because I spent a lot of time on the decks.

I left two weeks before it finished. They were getting very serious at the time. I was the youngest guy on the boat and I thought they were going to arrest people and put them in jail; and Raymondo did not want to be in gaol.

Caroline is not back on the air. Even though Ronan's behind it, it's got no comparison or format or feel anything like Radio Caroline as it was. Ronan's lost the 'feel'. The presenters he's using now are not new, exciting, young presenters. They brought in people from America at that time because they were experienced people in radio. They were prepared to have a go at anything at Caroline and there was no law to stop you doing anything. With the ILR situation it's a media that's controlled by the IBA so you have to work within very strict guidelines. There are certain things you can't do. I used to read out commercials on the air all the time like they do in America. People would send in commercials or a pal would ring up and say "Don't forget to mention we've got a dance on tomorrow night" and I'd do it, because the firm didn't mind, there was no objection to that. It was very, very relaxed.

Ray Teret, Signal Radio, March 1984

*** Manfred the Engineer didn't lose his fingers and after his convalescence was back on board in time to help convert the North Ship to '259'.

Maritime Matrimony

Tony Prince: Everything's happening on Radio Caroline, we've got about five hundred reporters out here, television cameras... The time on Radio Caroline North, your cupid station, exactly five o'clock.

Jingle: Newsbeat! Bringing News to the Nation this is Radio Caroline Newsbeat, fast and factual!

Gordon Cruze: Commercial radio broadcasting hsitory will be made this afternoon when Caroline North disc jockey Mick Luvzit marries Miss Janet Teret in a ceremony to be broadcast from the lounge of Radio Caroline. For further details from the Lounge, here's Graham Webb.

Graham Webb: Well, the bride has arrived, naturally, and everybody is now anxiously awaiting the ceremony to take place. The parents have still not arrived, Mr. and Mrs. Teret have not arrived on board, but they'll be out on the next boat, which should be within the next half hour. That means the ceremony between Mick Luvzit and Janet Teret will take place on Radio Caroline, you'll hear it live as it happens, within the next half hour. Back to Gordon Cruze.

Gordon Cruze: ... On the Caroline weather front, almost all areas will have a calm and sunny day with temperatures well above the seasonal average. Mist patches will occur in some areas. The outlook for Wednesday and Thursday is for the fine weather to continue. The current Caroline temperature is seventeen degrees Centigrade, that's sixty-three degrees Fahrenheit.

Tony Prince: ... Mick is very, very nervous, I·believe; everybody gets nervous before they get married, don't they? Well, I'm not married yet girls, I'm probably the only - oh, me and Jerry Leighton, we're the only bachelors left on Radio Caroline now, nobody'll have us! Oh yes! Are you a bachelor, Gordon? Gordon Cruze is a bachelor. We've got three left! Three to go! And believe you me, we're going... Bringing the time up to ten minutes after five o'clock for all you folk who have just escaped from the slave caves... Mick and Jan are getting married within the hour; we keep saying this, and the tension is mounting up out here because we've only a couple of hours of tide-time left, we've got to get everybody back on shore within a couple of hours. But it won't be long now before you're hearing this ... wedding bells for Mick and Jan! Congratulations from everybody on Radio Caroline... Twenty six minutes to go before six o'clock and welcome to the show everybody; a big delay in the wedding ceremony, should have been at three o'clock, we're already two hours and thirty four minutes late. Anyway, that's life, isn't it? It's one of the most unusual wedding ceremonies of the century, I think, but it's going to be a very successful one I'm sure for Mick and Jan ... Serving the nation, this is your Number One Cupid Station, Radio Caroline North! The time, twenty three minutes to go before six o'clock and time for the number sixteen sound on the Countdown of Sound from the fabulous Manchester Mindbenders - we've got a wedding ceremony out here today but it sounds like a funeral when they sing "Ashes to Ashes" ... Not long to go ladies and gentlemen, believe you me; we've been promising all afternoon but honestly we just haven't known what's happening, we haven't even been able to see the Isle of Man because of a mist round the ship. But now everybody is on board barring the bride's folks, Mr. and Mrs. Teret aren't here, and young Murf the Surf isn't here but one or two people have yet to come out and they're being brought out right now, and then we'll be carrying on with the marriage ceremony at long, long last. Poor old Mick! What a lot of trouble he's had to go through to get married... Fourteen minutes to go before your Royal Raver says goodbye until tomorrow morning... Daffy Don Allen will be taking over at six o'clock with the Caroline action and request show, so do join him then for two fabulous hours ... but before that we should have the wedding ceremony, we're already blowing the fog-horns, trying to get the little boat to come near us and we've still got quite a mist round us at the moment, so fingers crossed and we'll get Mick and Jan married very, very happily ... I hear distant bells; but Jim Reeves,



Janet Teret and Mick Luvzit in the Caroline North studio.

he hears distant drums... Very sad news coming up ladies and gentlemen. Regarding Mick and Jan's wedding, very, very sad news, these Bells are getting ever distant for Mr. and Mrs. Teret, Jan's Mom and Dad. We've just heard the sad news that Jan's Mom and Dad cannot make the wedding. Their 'plane has been cancelled until seven o'clock, they're leaving Manchester at seven o'clock, so it's impossible for them to get out here for the wedding service. So, Mr. and Mrs. Teret, very unfortunate and our sympathies are with you, nevertheless, we've got a message from Jan and Ray, both your sons - your daughter and your son! - and they want me to tell you to make it to the reception at the cottage on the Isle of Man as soon as you get there. OK? And this is the latest news. Ray Teret, who was going to be the Best Man, is now giving Janet away, and Ray's younger brother, Colin, is being the Best Man. Quite a mix-up, but that's life out here in the middle of the ocean. So, Mrs. Teret: so sorry, darling... very, very sad, isn't it? I think that's the saddest thing of the year, actually, Mr. and Mrs. Teret not being able to get here to see Janet and Mick get married. Nevertheless, please make it, Mr. and Mrs. Teret, to the reception tonight in the cottage on the Isle of Man and I'm sure you'll have a great time. You can listen in a couple of minutes from now to the wedding ceremony. And for the latest happenings down in the lounge downstairs on Radio Caroline, let's go directly down to Mr. Graham Webb down there. Graham, over to you.

Graham Webb: Thank you very kindly, Tony. I'm just down here in the lounge and things are, well, excitement is mounting because in the next five minutes or so the big thing is about to happen, we're about to do the thing, as Mick would say. We have many dignitaries here on board, apart from dignitaries we have disc jockeys and newsreaders; and we have here Don Allen. How do you feel about things that are happening?

Don Allen: I'm more nervous than Mick!

Graham Webb: Are you really? I'd like to describe what Mick and what Janet is wearing, actually; the Bride is carrying red roses and she's wearing what would be called a trouser-suit, with white hipsters and a bolero top trimmed with lace. She has on a knee-length lace coat with blue ribbon, and a crystal-drop coronet and a bouffant veil. That's what the ladies would like to hear, I'm sure. There is one added feature that Miss Janet Teret, well I don't think many brides get married this way, she has bare feet. Well, that's the way things are; and the Groom and Best Man, and Groomsman are all wearing jackets designed by Janet and by Ugli Ray, and hipster trousers and cravats. As a matter of fact they're a very elegant looking group and the Groom and Best Man are wearing maroon, and Groomsman has a black jacket on, and I would like to say hello to the bridesmaid over here first of all. How do you feel about things?

Bridesmaid: I think it's fabulous!

Graham Webb: Getting nervous?

Bridesmaid: Yes, very!

Graham Webb: All right! Well now unfortunately we do have one bad bit of news, the parents of Miss Janet Teret will not be on board. Unfortunately their 'plane was delayed due to fog on the Isle of Man and so therefore they will not be here for the ceremony. But they'll be meeting Janet and Mick, Mr. and Mrs. Luvzit, as they go off the tender when the ceremony is all over. We'll be back straight after Caroline Newsbeat and we'll be bringing you a running description of the ceremony as it occurs here on board the MV Caroline. ...

Gordon Cruze: Following this newscast we take you direct to the lounge of the MV Caroline for the broadcast of the marriage of Caroline Disc Jockey Mick Luvzit to Miss Janet Teret. The ceremony is to be concluded by the Master of the vessel, Captain Martin Gips... This is Radio Caroline North. The time is now two minutes past six o'clock, and we take you to the lounge of the MV Caroline. Your commentator, Caroline News Director Graham Webb.

Graham Webb: Good evening. The ceremony is about to be performed by Captain Martin Gips, the Captain of the MV Caroline, and at this very moment the Best Man and the Groom are in place, the Bride is about to come into the hall now. So, we'll take you straight away to the Captain, Captain Martin Gips.

Captain Gips: Hello to you all. I want now all witnesses stand together.

Graham Webb: And the Bride is now coming in on the arm of her brother, Mr. Ray Teret, who is giving her away. ... We apologise for the slight pauses but the ceremony is in progress at this moment... We have all the witnesses in place, and now it's back to Captain Gips.

Captain Gips: I have received a written and signed request of Mr. Brown and Miss Teret, stating that they wished to be married according to the law of the Republic of Panama and I have accepted such request. Do you, William James Brown, wish that your request be carried out?

Mick Luvzit: I do

Captain Gips: Do you, Janet Elaine Teret, wish that your request be carried out?

Janet Teret: I do

Captain Gips: I will now ask the Secretary Interpreter to read out in Spanish the Article one hundred and ten, one hundred eleven, one hundred twelve.

(Now follows a statement in Spanish)

Captain Gips: Thank you. I will now read out the Articles of the Civil Code in English. Number one hundred and ten: Husband and wife are obliged to live together and to be faithful to each other. Husband and wife must observe protection and respect for each other. Number one hundred and eleven: The husband is obliged to provide food and other expenses for the family. The wife will contribute such expenses in proportion to her economic well being. A dispute which may arise in regard with the compliance of the Article will be solved by special trial pursuant to the proceedings regulations of such trials. Number one hundred and twelve: Husband and wife must live in the home and each is entitled to be welcomed in it by the other. If by a change of address or another cause a disageement between husband and wife should arise as regards to the settlement of the home it will be resolved in a summary trial by the Court of Justice. Can I have the rings please?

Graham Webb: The rings are now being handed to the Captain ... They are large gold bands and they are etched all round... The ring has now been placed on Miss Janet Teret, and Janet in turn places the finger on William James Brown, otherwise known as Mick Luvzit.

Captain Gips: I, Martin Gips, Captain of the Panamanian merchant vessel MV Caroline, in the name of the Republic and by the Authority vested in me by the laws of Panama, now pronounce you Man and Wife.

The Crowd: Hip Hip Hooray! Hip Hip Hooray! Hip Hip Hooray!

Graham Webb: The Ceremony is now concluded (The Wedding March is played) ... Back here in the lounge it's pandemonium, I don't mind telling you. Janet and Mick are now legally and very lovingly wed. Janet, I think I must at least have a word with the Bride; first of all, may I have a kiss? Mmm, beautiful! Janet, how do you feel, married?

Janet Brown: I don't know, yet!

Graham Webb: And what about you, Mick?

Mick Luvzit: I'm very happy, very happy.

Graham Webb: The Captain has asked me for one moment's silence while we have a word with the Bride and Groom. Now that the ceremony is all over, as I said, it is legal and binding not only in Panama as it sounded but in the whole world, and you two now have a very long and happy life and I think all those gathered, there must be at least a hundred people here, family, friends, of course, Press and - well, my goodness! I think we should have another three cheers for the Bride and Groom. How about it?

The Crowd: Hip Hip Hooray! Hip Hip Hooray! Hip Hip Hooray!

Graham Webb: And a return from Mick:

Mick Luvzit: I'd just like to say thank you so much to Captain Gips on behalf of Janet and myself, and thanks to all the disc jockeys here and all the crew, and of course to Ray for giving Jan away and to Jerry Leighton for being Best Man and also to Daffy Don Allen for standing in for my parents. Thank you very much.

Graham Webb: And Janet, what about your parents? They're no doubt listening.

Janet Brown: Yes, well, I'm hoping to see them later on.

Graham Webb: Well, there you are. And Captain Gips: This is undoubtedly the first time you've performed such a ceremony. How did you feel?

Captain Gips: Well, to tell you the truth, I felt a little nervous, but it's all over now so that's fine.

Graham Webb: Fine. Well, we'll take you back to the studio and have some very appropriate music.
(The special programme draws to a close to the strains of "Climb Every Mountain").

From a recording supplied by DICK MILLS

Hanging Out

When Radio Caroline first began, she shared an office with Queen Magazine at 52 Fetter Lane, London EC4.

The first Caroline House was at 6 Chesterfield Gardens, off Curzon Street, London W1 - close to Park Lane of Monopoly-board fame. The building still has "Caroline House" inscribed upon its entrance hall.

Caroline North had her own correspondence address - P.O. Box 3, Ramsey, Isle of Man. The Northern Caroline office was at 61 Lord Street, Liverpool 2.

In 1967, the advent of the Marine Offences Act forced Caroline to abandon England as a base. A new office was opened in Holland at Singel 160, Amsterdam.

On Caroline's return in 1972, her address was given as P.O. Box 2448, Den Haag. This was the number belonging to Gerard van Dam, who had an office in Zeekant. Early in 1973, when Gerard and Caroline parted company, operations moved to a new Caroline House in Den Haag, at Van Hogendorpstraat 16.

Radio Mi Amigo moved their operation to Spain in June 1974. Radio Caroline took over their old address, Postbus 847, Hilversum, for three months; then they "moved in" with Radio Mi Amigo at RADO, Playa de Aro, Gerona, Spain.

By 1976, Radio Mi Amigo were having difficulties even getting their programme tapes to the ship and couldn't cope with letters for Caroline as well. As sacks of mail piled up in Spain and no one on board received their post, Samantha got very frustrated with the situation, and in August began to read her own address in Holland over the air - Valkenboslaan 18, Den Haag.

Caroline obtained an address in Spain of her own, Apartado 321, Rosas, Gerona, in 1977.

In April 1979 Caroline replaced Radio Mi Amigo's programmes with a new Dutch language service of her own. The address for this service was Alta Mira, Avenida Ansol, Marbella, Spain.

When the Ross Revenge began to transmit Radio Caroline's broadcasts in August 1983, for the first time the station began to use an address in America. Post Box 69504, Los Angeles 90069 belongs to the Don Kelly organisation. In order to attempt to speed up the delivery of mail to the Ship, another address of the same organisation, but three thousand miles closer was added in 1984. It's Radio Caroline, New York 11518, U.S.A.

Caroline Newsbeat

Everyone assumed that we used to use the BBC for our news broadcasts, but that wasn't true. We used to use the news from Switzerland, that came in about five o'clock on their short-wave service, and there also used to be a news from Canada that we used to get early in the morning, about four o'clock. Our news was compiled basically from those English-language broadcasts - and cross-referenced against the BBC of course, but we ran stories that the BBC didn't run, or didn't fully cover. A case in point was the strike in Liverpool docks when Harold Wilson was in Parliament. There was a piece on the BBC that came out with this guy with the strike up there saying that they would bring down the Government. But on the Swiss news they broadcast about ten seconds before that bit that the BBC used and about thirty seconds after, he never said that - he said something completely different. The BBC had taken it completely out of context. They'd started out with their bit at six o'clock that morning; we put out our bit from Switzerland, and by eight-thirty the BBC changed their story.

A Caroline North Newsreader, 1967

Counting the Hours

During the Seventies, "Monitor" magazine became famous for its tabulations of the "hours on the air" of every Caroline DJ. We thought it might be impossible to produce one big chart for the whole of the decade, from the Mi Amigo's triumphant return in 1972 to her demise in 1980; but we asked the chief log-keeper, Les Hearson, and this - for your entertainment and delight - is what he's pulled out of his hat!

radio caroline

Except where shown, shared programmes have not been included.
* = See also Radio Seagull.
U/K = Unknown.

Crispian St. John	01-12-72	16-01-73	82¼	
Jan Troost (Engineer)	01-12-72	18-12-72	1½	
Spangles Maldoon	01-12-72	23-06-73	19½	
Gerard van der Zee	18-12-72	16-01-73	57	
Mike Storm	18-12-72	30-01-73	71¼	
Dick Palmer* (Captain)	21-12-72	25-06-73	50	
Jeremy Bender	22-12-72	23-12-72	5	
Lion Keezer	22-12-72	03-01-73	12	
Paul Dubois	22-12-72	27-02-73	52	
Andy Archer*	22-12-72	08-11-74	555	
Peter Chicago* (TX Engineer)	23-12-72	18-12-77	136¼	
Theo	24-12-72		2	
Ron Dolman	30-12-72	15-05-73	183¼	
Tony Allan*	02-01-73	15-02-73		
(rejoined)	21-06-74	15-05-75		
"	13-05-76	02-07-76		
"	29-05-77	23-07-77		
"	15-04-79	14-07-79 (1)	1195 (2)	
Norman Barrington*	03-01-73	16-08-74	473 (3)	
Steve England	03-01-73	26-06-73	277⅔	
Dennis King	06-01-73	05-02-73		
(rejoined, "Berlin Service")	16-08-75	29-12-75	27	
Jolly J	06-01-73	09-01-73	12	
Peter Zonneveld	17-01-73	25-03-73	65¼	
Bert Bennett	17-01-73	26-06-73	74½	
Pierre van Gent	31-01-73	14-02-73	40	
Wil van der Steen (TX Engineer)	31-01-73	17-06-73	121	
Debbie England	31-01-73	02-02-73 (4)	2½	
Robin Adcroft (TX Engineer)	04-02-73	26-06-73	101¾	
Peter Bryan	21-02-73	25-03-73		
(rejoined for 1 programme)	26-03-75		59½	
Jos Mulder	21-02-73	25-02-73	4½	
Ellen (Cook) (5)	03-03-73		1½	
Graham Gill	06-03-73	12-03-73		
(rejoined)	08-06-74	30-08-74	131	
Joop Verhoof	07-03-73	18-06-73	87½	
Alan Wheeler (Cook)	15-05-73		½	
Paul Alexander	04-06-73	26-06-73	66	
Joost Verhoeven	04-06-73	23-06-73	45	
Ad Peterson	04-06-73	25-06-73	17¾	
Henk Meeuwis	04-06-73	26-06-73	15¾	
Dave West	05-06-73	06-06-73	3½	
Leo de Later	08-06-73	18-06-73	16½	
Michael Lindsay	10-06-73	30-03-74	3½	
Jerry van der Loo	15-06-73	26-06-73	18½	
Johnny Jason*	17-06-73	26-06-73		
(rejoined)	21-05-74	14-06-75		
"	01-02-77	06-04-77	1152 (6)	
Ted Bouwens	18-06-73	25-06-73	12	
Mike Wall-Garland (Poet)	23-06-73	03-05-74	7	
Roger Day	25-06-73	26-06-73	3	
Tom Dekkler	25-06-73	26-06-73	4	
Mike Hagler*				
(rejoined, "Space Play")				
Bob Noakes* (TX Engineer)				
Mickey Mercer* (Cook)				
Brian Anderson*				
Samantha Dubois (9)				
(rejoined)				
"				
Peter van Dyken* (Engineer)				
John B. Mair				
Robb Eden				
Dave Gotz				
Peter Wolf				
Paul Brandt				
Sue Mercer (Wife of Cook!)				
Steve Diamond				
Peter Haze				
Clive Corell (TX Engineer)				
Dave Owen				
Simon Barrett				
Don Stevens				
Alan Symonds				
Phil Mitchell				
Kelvin Carter (12)				
Michael Lloyd				
Nigel Elgin				
Jack O'Brien ("Berlin Service")				
Robbie Duke				
Jeff Bolan				
James Ross				
(rejoined)				
"				
Chris Elliott				
Michael Benjamin				
Mark Lawrence				
Dr. Boogie				
Jonathan Day				
Stuart Russell				
(rejoined)				
"				
"				
Tom Anderson				
(rejoined)				
Kenny James/Kenny Page/Jimmy James				
Steve Kent				
(rejoined)				
"				
Brian Richards				
Ed Foster				
Steve Gordon				
(rejoined)				
"				
Roger Matthews (Engineer)				
(rejoined)				
Mike Stevens				
(rejoined)				
"				
"				

Foot-notes

(1) Last heard, sharing programme with Tom Anderson, 22-07-79; (2) May have broadcast several hours more on Dutch Service; (3) Not including 74 hours on Radio Mi Amigo; (4) Last heard, sharing programme with Robin Adcroft, 06-03-73; (5) Later joined as Samantha Dubois; (6) Does not include 9 hours of taped programmes aired 1 to 17-09-77; (7) Does not include 1 hour on Radio Mi Amigo; (8) Does not include 127 hours on Radio Mi Amigo; (9) Graeme Kay shared 1½ hours with Samantha on 11-04-74. This was his only appearence on Caroline; he broadcast for 72 hours on Radio Mi Amigo; (10) Does not include 1 hour on Radio Mi Amigo; (11) Last heard, sharing programme with Mike Hagler, 21-08-74; (12) Later rejoined as James Ross; (13) Does not include a 1 hour taped programme aired 06-09-77; (14) Hours on English Service; (15) Hours on Dutch Service; (16) Last heard, sharing programme with Steve Gordon, 16-03-80; (17) Does not include taped programme aired 19-03-80.

Mike Hagler*		23-02-74	31-08-74	
	(rejoined, "Space Play")	10-11-79	15-03-80	370¾
Bob Noakes* (TX Engineer)		24-02-74	28-06-74	55¾ (7)
Mickey Mercer* (Cook)		25-02-74	16-10-74	167½
Brian Anderson*		26-02-74	30-08-74	171¾ (8)
Samantha Dubois (9)		06-03-74	10-05-74	
	(rejoined)	16-12-75	24-03-77	
	"	21-09-78	17-10-78	791¾
Peter van Dyken* (Engineer)		08-03-74	08-09-74	38
John B. Mair		27-04-74	16-11-74	321¼
Robb Eden		03-05-74	26-06-74	58
Dave Gotz		09-06-74	14-06-74	11
Peter Wolf		23-06-74	27-06-74	10
Paul Brandt		15-07-74	19-07-74	8 (10)
Sue Mercer (Wife of Cook!)		23-07-74		1
Steve Diamond		18-08-74	20-08-74 (11)	6
Peter Haze		31-08-74	30-10-74	64¾
Clive Corell (TX Engineer)		16-09-74	29-10-74	41¼
Dave Owen		01-11-74	09-03-75	350
Simon Barrett		29-11-74	13-11-75	758
Don Stevens		03-03-75	26-04-75	239
Alan Symonds		26-04-75	05-09-75	285¾
Phil Mitchell		14-06-75	18-10-75	175½
Kelvin Carter (12)		15-06-75	18-10-75	214
Michael Lloyd		30-07-75	14-11-75	187½
Nigel Elgin		31-07-75	06-09-75	70
Jack O'Brien ("Berlin Service")		01-08-75	24-10-75	7
Robbie Duke		07-09-75	19-10-75	86
Jeff Bolan		26-11-75	08-01-76	141½
James Ross		26-11-75	02-07-76	
	(rejoined)	28-12-76	18-06-77	
	"	19-09-77	31-03-78	1522
Chris Elliott		09-01-76	04-04-76	290
Michael Benjamin		09-01-76	13-05-76	287
Mark Lawrence		04-02-76	27-07-78	2192¼
Dr. Boogie		03-03-76	12-03-76	42
Jonathan Day		02-05-76	03-08-76	356½ (13)
Stuart Russell		15-05-76	03-02-78	
	(rejoined)	04-06-78	02-10-78	
	"	11-08-79	08-09-79	
	"	23-12-79	31-01-80	2221¼
Tom Anderson		14-06-76	01-02-77	
	(rejoined)	15-04-79	18-03-80	1012
Kenny James/Kenny Page/Jimmy James		23-01-76	02-08-76	231
Steve Kent		17-07-76	24-08-76	
	(rejoined)	10-12-76	09-01-77	
	"	03-07-77	31-08-77	715½
Brian Richards		03-08-76	24-08-76	126
Ed Foster		27-08-76	02-07-77	866½
Steve Gordon		29-09-76	31-01-77	
	(rejoined)	13-04-78	01-10-78	
	"	20-10-79	19-03-80	915¼
Roger Matthews (Engineer)		10-11-76	07-10-78	
	(rejoined)	29-06-79	01-07-79	1478½ (2)
Mike Stevens		10-11-76	28-05-77	
	(rejoined)	19-09-77	29-10-77	
	"	04-02-78	19-10-78	
	"	07-01-80	03-03-80	1292

love from caroline

The longest continuous sojourn aboard the Mi Amigo was thirteen weeks and six days. This record was set by Roger Matthews and Stewart Russell from 30 October 1977 to 3 February 1978.

The record for the longest continuous stint mic-side is held by Ronnie Dolman. He and Norman Barrington almost had a contest for marathon broadcasts during the test-transmissions of May 1973 - Ronnie won with a ten-hour session on 14 May.

ay")	23-02-74	31-08-74	
	10-11-79	15-03-80	370¾
	24-02-74	28-06-74	55¾ (7)
	25-02-74	16-10-74	167½
	26-02-74	30-08-74	171¾ (8)
	06-03-74	10-05-74	
ned)	16-12-75	24-03-77	
	21-09-78	17-10-78	791¾
	08-03-74	08-09-74	38
	27-04-74	16-11-74	321¼
	03-05-74	26-06-74	58
	09-06-74	14-06-74	11
	23-06-74	27-06-74	10
	15-07-74	19-07-74	8 (10)
	23-07-74		1
	18-08-74	20-08-74 (11)	6
	31-08-74	30-10-74	64¾
	16-09-74	29-10-74	41¼
	01-11-74	09-03-75	350
	29-11-74	13-11-75	758
	03-03-75	26-04-75	239
	26-04-75	05-09-75	285⅔
	14-06-75	18-10-75	175½
	15-06-75	18-10-75	214
	30-07-75	14-11-75	187½
	31-07-75	06-09-75	70
	01-08-75	24-10-75	7
	07-09-75	19-10-75	86
	26-11-75	08-01-76	141½
	26-11-75	02-07-76	
ned)	28-12-76	18-06-77	
	19-09-77	31-03-78	1522
	09-01-76	04-04-76	290
	09-01-76	13-05-76	287
	04-02-76	27-07-78	2192¼
	03-03-76	12-03-76	42
	02-05-76	03-08-76	356½ (13)
	15-05-76	03-02-78	
ined)	04-06-78	02-10-78	
"	11-08-79	08-09-79	
"	23-12-79	31-01-80	2221¼
	14-06-76	01-02-77	
ined)	15-04-79	18-03-80	1012
	23-01-76	02-08-76	231
	17-07-76	24-08-76	
ined)	10-12-76	09-01-77	
"	03-07-77	31-08-77	715½
	03-08-76	24-08-76	126
	27-08-76	02-07-77	866½
	29-09-76	31-01-77	
ined)	13-04-78	01-10-78	
"	20-10-79	19-03-80	915¼
	10-11-76	07-10-78	
ined)	29-06-79	01-07-79	1478½ (2)
	10-11-76	28-05-77	
ined)	19-09-77	29-10-77	
"	04-02-78	19-10-78	
"	07-01-80	03-03-80	1292

Martin Fisher (TX Engineer)

Mark Jacobs

Dave Brown
Paul (Cook)
Frank van der Mast
Hugo Meulenhoff
Tom (Cook)
Herman de Graaf
Dickie Allan
Alan (Cook)
Brian Martin

James Kay (Engineer)
Tom Hardy
Richard Thompson

Johan Visser
Rob Hudson
Paul de Wit
Ad Roberts
Stephen Bishop (Engineer)
Rene van Elst
Mike Barrington (Engineer)
Jeremy Charlton
Jeroen Woelwater
Chris Drummond (Engineer)
Nick Richards
Cliff Osborne
Kees Borrel (Cook)
Will Luikinga
Dominique Vautrin

	11-01-77	23-02-77	
(rejoined)	20-09-77	29-08-78	
"	12-05-79	26-06-79	578½
	10-05-77	12-09-77	21 (14)
(rejoined)	14-06-79	05-10-79	U/K (15)
	29-05-77	02-07-77	180
	04-06-77	08-05-78	91½
	21-07-77	27-07-77	5
	25-07-77	18-09-77	14½
	26-07-77	06-09-77	67½
	28-07-77	16-08-79	7 (14),(2)
	19-09-77	29-10-77	118¾
	24-09-77	27-11-77	60
	28-11-77	19-10-78	457⅓
	13-05-78	03-09-79	23
	05-06-78	15-03-80 (16)	586¼
	14-08-78	25-01-80	322½
	15-04-79	04-11-79	U/K
	15-04-79	10-10-79	U/K
	15-04-79	09-12-79	U/K
	16-04-79	23-12-79	U/K
	17-04-79	16-02-80	390
	06-05-79	11-08-79	U/K
	07-05-79		2
	21-06-79		1½
	26-08-79	30-11-79	U/K
	01-09-79		½
	09-09-79	19-03-80	157¼
	15-09-79	23-09-79	6
	21-09-79	21-12-79	2½
	01-10-79	19-03-80	112
	07-10-79	13-01-80	17
	31-10-79	17-03-80	260½
	11-11-79	19-03-80	65
	12-11-79	26-11-79	6
	15-11-79	20-02-80	15
	27-11-79	26-01-80 (17)	246
	30-12-79		1

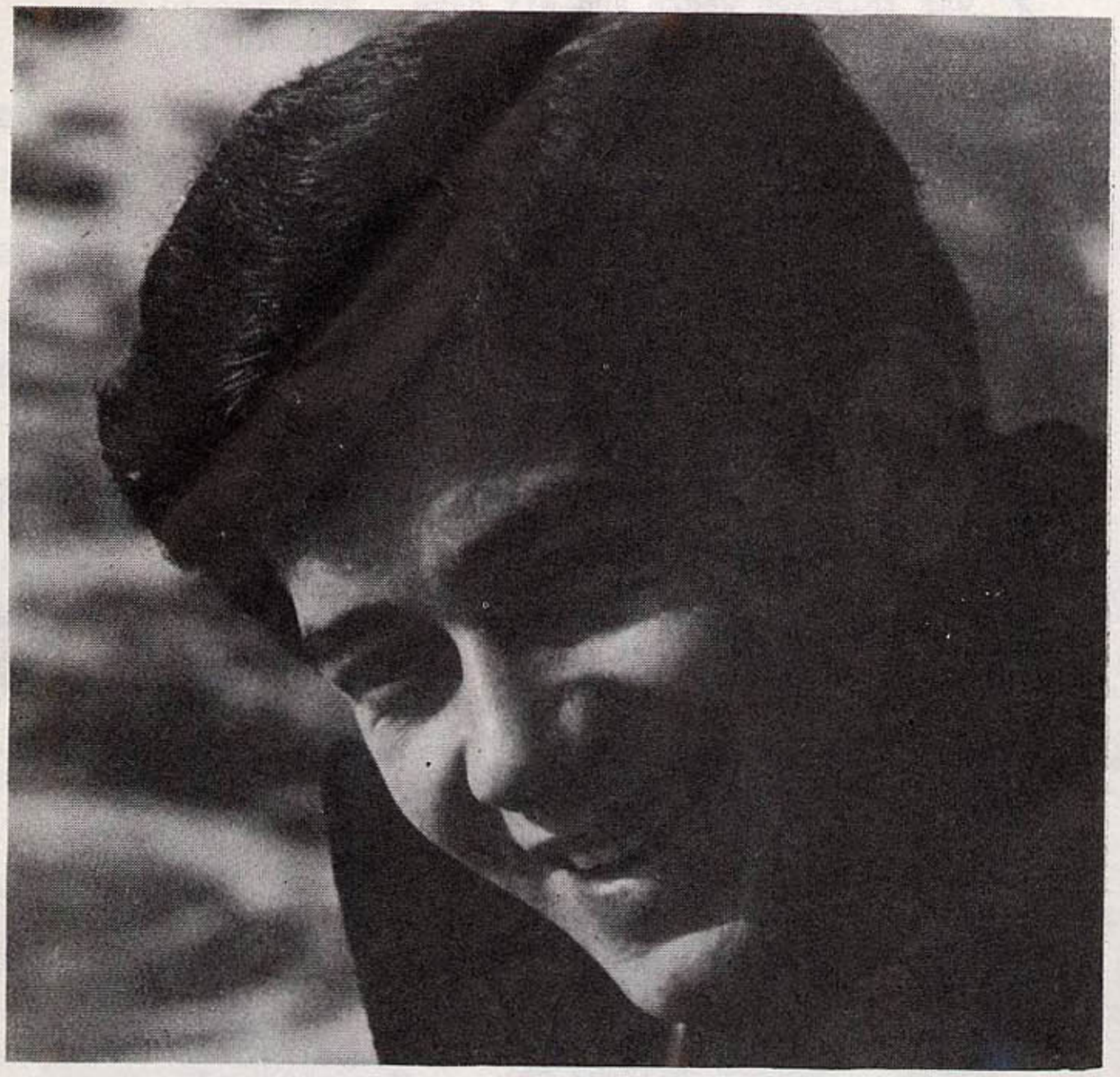
radio seagull

Andy Archer	24-07-73	22-02-74	189⅓
Barry Everett	24-07-73	12-09-73	77⅔
Norman Barrington	24-07-73	23-02-74	146
Bob Noakes	28-07-73	21-02-74	105½
John Farlow	10-08-73	22-08-73	29⅓
Hugh Nolan	11-08-73	24-08-73	43½
Dick Palmer	12-08-73	19-08-73	4
Russell Tollerfield	21-08-73		2
Phil Randall	26-08-73	07-09-73	29
Peter Chicago	12-09-73	04-02-74	21
Peter van Dyken	12-09-73	25-12-73	3
Baas	13-09-73	22-09-73	25
Johnny Jason	14-09-73	22-02-74	123½
Tony Allan	23-09-73	11-02-74	98½
Brian Anderson	11-01-74	11-02-74	22
Charlotte Ribbelink & René van de Snoek	13-01-74		1
Mike Hagler	20-01-74	22-02-74	42½
Mickey Mercer	05-02-74	23-02-74	19

This record is of necessity unable to be 100% accurate. During the period 1972-74 only one person was as far as I know keeping a log and naturally the call of the pillow meant that very occasionally a programme may have been missed. Since 1975 very accurate records have been kept certainly on the English Service, but as can be deduced, the Dutch Service during 1979-80 was not so well covered. As far as the 1964-68 period is concerned I'm sorry to say that as far as we know no records were kept (I for one was too busy watching Batman and International Rescue!) That said, I hope all these names bring back as many memories for you as they do for me.

Now that I have finally finished this labour of love I would like to express my thanks to Buster for his help and Jean for her cups of tea and cakes. Also thanks to all the engineers and DJs on Caroline since 1974 who have given me so much pleasure and made this possible. Finally I dedicate this table to someone who pretended not to notice when I spilt tea over his tapes!

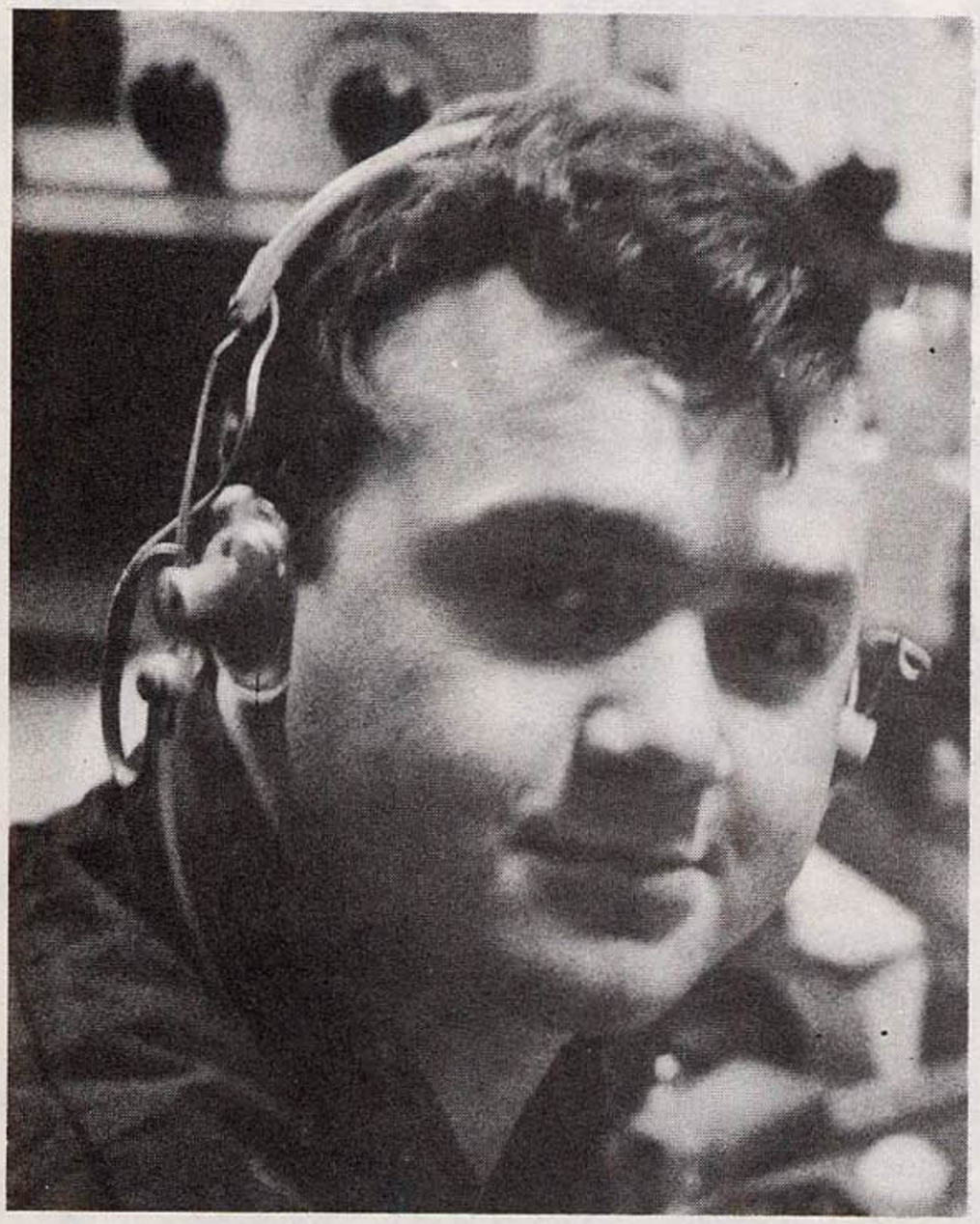
Les Hearson, March 1984



"Tatty" Tom Edwards



"The Emperor" Rosko



Keith "Keefers" Hampshire



Dave Lee Travis

The following is a transcript of an interview which took place in the Radio Carousel Studios in Navan, County Meath, Eire, on Tuesday 11th May 1982. The programme presenter is Pauric Welsh, and the guest

DAFFY DON ALLEN

P.W.: If there's a distinctly Country flavour to the show tonight, then you will know why when you meet my guest for the evening. He was born in Canada, of Rumanian parents, he worked in radio in both Canada and the United States. He came over this side of the Atlantic in the mid-Sixties to work on the High Seas as a DJ with Radio Caroline, presenting what they called "The Biggest Country Show This Side of Nashville". I know you've already guessed his name, because he has just become the newest voice on Radio Carousel here in Navan, he is of course DAFFY DON ALLEN, or DON ALLEN to us. Don, you're very welcome to this programme!

Don: Thank's very much indeed Pauric, it's nice to be on the show.

P.W.: How did I do for the beginning, is that an accurate description?

Don: Yes, very accurate indeed.

P.W.: Now how did it all begin for you?

Don: Well, I always look back at it in retrospect now; there's a song that Gene Stuart - who is a very good Irish singer - came out with, the song was called "I'm just Lucky I Guess", and you know, since I heard that song, I sort of look back as the years go by - seventeen in all - I came over for a holiday, and at the same time before coming over to England for a holiday, I was working between radio jobs. I was working for a firm known as Canadian National Railways, and coming back from Winnipeg one time to Vancouver, I picked up this old copy of Weekend Magazine - you know these colour supplements that you get out of newspapers - and there was a very interesting article about this ship, broadcasting from the High Seas. I thought, why over in Europe do they have to broadcast from ships? I just couldn't understand why these people were broadcasting from a boat. It seemed totally senseless. At the time, as I'm sure everybody appreciates, radio was state-controlled - even Radio Luxembourg. There was no such thing as Commercial Radio in the sense. But I didn't realise this, because I took Commercial Radio for granted, being a Canadian and having travelled extensively throughout America. I could not grasp this,that radio was not commercial over in Europe. I had not even been to Europe.

Anyway, I had saved a few dollars and decided to see Europe - Paris, London and places like that. I came over here and consequently pure professional curiosity led me to CAROLINE HOUSE.

To cut a long story short - I went up to London one day and I walked into Caroline House and there was everybody and everybody there. I walked up and said to the receptionist "Good afternoon, I'm a Radio Announcer from Canada, could I see the set-up?" She said "Are you a Disc Jockey?" I said 'radio announcer'. We didn't use the term DJ in Canada at that time, however. we sort of came to a conclusion that a Disc Jockey was an announcer and an announcer was a Disc Jockey. Next thing I knew, this Programme Director of the South (Caroline) Ship came up to me and said "you work in radio?" I said "Yes". He said "would you like a job?". And I said "Are you having me on?"

Anyway he interviewed me - I didn't do an audition - and, to cut a long story short again, next day I was on a ship called the "Mi Amigo" which was bobbing up and down like a cork in water, off the Frinton-in-Essex coast. I had never been to sea in my life and that was the beginning of my radio career on the sea

I don't think Caroline had reached its peak yet. There were people there - unknown people - but very dedicated people, who were yet to be discovered. Names like SIMON DEE, TONY BLACKBURN - I remember him very well. In the early days he was known as Tea Cosy, because his hair resembled one!

P.W.: But did he still tell those inane jokes that he tells now?

Don: No! He got that idea from various Disc Jockeys and blended them all together. He got that from a DJ known as KEITH SKUES, who now is Managing Director of a radio station in Yorkshire, England. Keith was a very intelligent announcer and a very witty announcer and of course Tony Blackburn took his style.

He was a good DJ, but I think he had his good looks and the fact that he was the very first voice in RADIO ONE helped him greatly. No disrespect to him, but I don't think he was as original as he would like people to think he was.

I knew Tony when people didn't know Tony... he didn't even know how to cue up a record when he was on CAROLINE SOUTH . Then he went to RADIO LONDON and said that he owed everything he had achieved in radio so far to Radio London, whereas in actual fact, anybody who worked on Caroline in the early days knows that Tony owes everything to RONAN O'RAHILLY and Radio Caroline.

P.W.: Before we got on to Radio Caroline itself, tell us something about Simon Dee, because I remember seeing Simon when he had made it very famous on television in England.

Don: As I said about Tony Blackburn, he was young - only in his teens at the time - and he had his looks going for him. Now Simon Dee had had a gimmick going for him, he was officially the first voice to be heard on Caroline. Simon was a very easy going bloke, I think success got to him too quickly. Like the Beatles, you know? The Beatles were just instantly discovered and suddenly BOOM! Success overnight and it was too much to handle. They tried everything - they went to India, they tried meditation and all this... well Simon, being the first voice on Caroline had that gimmick going for him. After he left Caroline he went on to Radio Luxembourg, then he went on Radio Two and then he had his own television show. Everything just fell out of the sky for him. Everybody who has been on Caroline has been very fortunate; that I can remember. I can name names - Tony Blackburn, Simon Dee - they are just two. Success just rained out of the sky for them. They didn't go seeking it. I don't believe that Simon was seeking a job on 208; I think 208 were after him. The same as BBC Radio Two - then the Light Programme - and his television programme, everything just fell into place. This all happened because he was the first voice on Caroline.

P.W.: Of course you worked with TONY PRINCE as well?

Don: Tony? Oh I remember Tony in the old days when he had his Oldham "Eee-ba-Gum" accent, you know. I've still got some of his tapes. Tony sounds very polished now... he's extremely polished... he's been with Radio Luxembourg now for about fourteen years. But when Tony arrived on Caroline in the early days, he was, well, the only thing missing was his welly boots and little flat cap! He was straight out of Oldham. But his heart was in entertainment. It seems small people are always more determined than bigger people, and Tony did graft. He wasn't accepted entirely at first, but eventually he was accepted. He was sent down to the South Ship to newsread... that was totally out of his depth.. this wasn't on. Tony just wasn't a newsreader. He was a Disc Jockey. An exhibitionist. An extrovert. I have been with Tony in some very embarrassing situations - which I won't go into detail, involving us both in the Isle of Man.



I LISTEN TO

The Big Wide Wonderful World of

LUV LEE

Daffy Don Allen

* * * *

Radio Caroline North



Caroline North
tendered by
the Offshore III.

On deck are
Don Allen,
Jimmy Gordon
and Mark Sloane.

The Big Wide Wonderful World of...

DAFFY DON ALLEN

MEMBERSHIP CARD

THE DON ALLEN FAN CLUB
COUNTRY AND WESTERN
APPRECIATION SOCIETY
RADIO CAROLINE INFORMATION NEWS

P.W.: To put it bluntly, Don, what was it like out on the middle of the sea, playing records?

Don: It's not the first time that question has been asked! In fact when Caroline got towed away, I was offered a substantial sum of money by a Sunday Paper to disclose the 'gorey' side of Caroline. And I couldn't do it. I didn't even think about it. The journalist, when he heard my reply, thought that everybody has got their price to pay, but I still refused. I spoke to Radio Caroline Boss Ronan O'Rahilly about it and he said well if you can live with your conscience, go ahead. I still refused to do the newspaper interview.

The station was very un-organised in some aspects, but I'll give you an amusing instance. In its heyday, Radio Caroline it was just bristling with success, no matter which way you looked at it. The agencies were clamouring, queueing up, to advertise on Caroline. Caroline House was in a very posh part of London, and there were so many people walking about that one did not know whether these people were working for Caroline, or whether they were just brousing through. Now I can remember one chap, called JIM MURPHY * MURPH THE SURF *. His wife was sitting in the foyer, waiting for him in Caroline House. The two directors - ALLAN CRAWFORD who owned Radio Atlanta and Ronan O'Rahilly who owned Radio Caroline - had a fall out or something, and when Allan came down, he was in a foul mood. He actually sacked Jim Murphy's wife, who was waiting for him in the foyer. She wasn't even employed at the station! But he just took it that everybody in that house was employed by Caroline.

P.W.: Well, I wasn't looking for the sordid details, Don; all I was really looking for was details about the ship!

Don: Well, put it this way, we were well looked after. The food was good. We had duty-free cigarettes. Booze was there... it was all duty free. It was as if you were in a different country. The only thing they didn't do when you came off the ship was stamp your passport. But they would go through your suitcase, and if there was anything you took out, like, say, an expensive tape recorder, radio, jewellery, or anything like that, you had to declare it in the customs hall, in Ramsey, Isle of Man, Otherwise, you were bound to pay duty when you came back in. Why, I don't know, because technically speaking it was as if you were going to another country. Even the laundry notes had to be triplicated first.

Life actually on the ship... a lot of people, first thing they say, was there any women on the ship? There was never any women on the ship... we lived, breathed, and slept radio. Three years on Radio Caroline was the equivalent to nine years on any ordinary radio station, because when you take on average, you work one third of the day; the other one third of the day is leisure and the other one third is sleep. We were spending three thirds of the day on Radio Caroline.

P.W.: Well, did you find it boring or... ?

Don: No! Not at all! I don't think I would have been there for three years. I would have been off after the first couple of months... I was dedicated to radio. It was one of the most exciting things that ever happened to me.

P.W.: And of course, you did two weeks on two weeks off?

Don: Well, originally on the South Ship in early '65, it was two weeks on, two weeks off, with pay. The pay was exceptionally good for that particular year. I spent March, April, May, June. I came off the South Ship and was all set to quit Radio Caroline because of health reasons; I just couldn't stand the sea. Then I was offered this job in Caroline House itself. I took this from June until September or maybe November 1965. Then they asked me if I would go on the North Ship, just as a temporary replacement, because a few of the lads had shifted about. TOM LODGE had gone to Luxembourg. Lo and behold, I agreed to it - reluctantly. I went up on the North Ship and there was only one person left on the ship to carry on broadcasting. BOB STEWART was the only one. So between us we kept the station going - just the two of us.

P.W.: It sounds like crisis point!

Don: It didn't seem a crisis point. That's the joy of it.

P.W.: I suppose when you have this type of dedication one doesn't count it as work. But let's move on to your own personal life. Say, during Caroline. You were in the public eye in Britain or certainly the public ear. Did your own life change because of this?

Don: Well, I tried my very hardest not to be in the public light when I was off the ship, because later on when I made up my mind that I was going to stay on the North Ship, when we got off, I thought to myself that one week out of three you've got to yourself. And after being on a ship for two weeks... I mean some people, like Tony Prince, liked doing gigs. I didn't. I just wanted to sit back and relax; go to places and, sort of, not be known. I love to entertain people behind a microphone, but I think I would have been lost on stage.

P.W.: Yes, but you must have got the fan mail?

Don: The fan mail? Oh golly! In fact they had to start a fan club. I found it totally impossible to adequately and accurately answer the letters. One lady in Yorkshire offered to start a fan club for me and I thought this is a good thing. So I gave her an answer to all the general questions that were asked. Generally it was just radio questions... what was it like on the ship? etc. Generally it was just radio questions. People used to write and say how lovely the boat looked... Tony Prince was one of the biggest offenders as far as exaggerating and stretching details. He used to tell people that we had waiter service out there... things like this!

The crew on the ship were Dutch. We had to adapt ourselves to Dutch food. You were well looked after. The food was exceptionally good, because food was the main thing. We got paid after enjoying ourselves for two weeks! The overall atmosphere on the ship was very, very good. That is the Radio Caroline North Ship. On the South Ship there tended to be a lot of megastars down there. Ones that ... sort of... made it... let's put it that way. However, there were people on the North Ship that made it too, like Bob Stewart, who is on Luxembourg now. Tony Prince - he's on Luxembourg. That's two. Then of course you have DAVE LEE TRAVIS, who was on the South Ship.

Radio Caroline South was aimed at a specific audience, the South of England - London primarily was their target. Whereas on Caroline North we were just the North. You know, people writing from Scotland, the North of England, Ireland. I remember getting a lot of mail from the South of Ireland - in fact a lot of people that I have met since I came over here in January (1982) were teenagers at the time. They are now married. They have children of their own and they say "I remember you from Radio Caroline".

P.W.: Honestly, we could stay talking about Caroline all day; I've got so many things to ask you, Don, we might have to do two or three shows. Tell me, were you very sad the day She was towed away?

Don: I was on board. It was the saddest... I sensed it... I'll try to keep this as short as possible because this could get very sad. Have you got any Kleenex?

Actually, we were not closed down by government legislation. A lot of people seem to think that we were closed down because of the legislation that was introduced. I will briefly go into why we were closed down and try to keep it as short as possible.

Radio Caroline North and South were being tendered - looked after - by a Dutch tender company, they sold us food, men to look after the ships, and oil to run the ships. After the Bill was passed, Caroline, I believe, was leased out. I won't go into detail there but anyway, to cut a long story short... and be as brief as possible about this, Radio Caroline continued to carry on broadcasting after September the first. It was outlawed - rather legislation was passed against it - on the fifteenth of August down in the South. All the offshore stations and the Forts were legislated against on the fifteenth of August. The one exception was Radio Caroline North. Legislation was not passed on us until fifteen days later. We were given a fifteen day reprieve - it was passed at the end of August, thirty-first of August - midnight. Caroline was legislated against not only by England, but the Manx Government. You see, we were off the Isle of Man. This is a very, very delicate situation, which is another story in its own right. However, the Isle of Man, feeling that after approximately four years of free publicity, which they would have had to pay thousands of pounds for, they were not happy about Caroline being outlawed.

After midnight, thirty-first of August, all the surviving ships that were on the High Seas ceased to broadcast - apart from Caroline North and South. They were the lone survivors. Radio Caroline continued to broadcast and it was on the fateful evening of March the first, I believe, that both Carolines were taken away by the Dutch tender company. Let me make that quite clear. Caroline South and North were not closed through legislation. They were towed away because of unpaid bills for oil, men and food. And as a result of that, the chains were cut, both ships were towed into Holland and there was every possibility that these ships could have come back, had the bills been met; the bills were never met. Therefore, the two Carolines began to rust in Amsterdam.

The North Ship was broken up for scrap. The South Ship - there were a lot of Free Radio people determined the South Ship was going to survive. And in later years, the South Ship was taken out of harbour, back out on to the High Seas.

The end of Caroline was because of unpaid bills and NOT government legislation. The day that we first got wind of this, I saw this very powerful tug. It landed a couple of days before they actually came over to the ship; they pulled into Ramsey (Isle of Man). They were in constant communication with Holland by Short Wave Radio and they were told when to cut the anchor chain. It happened on a Saturday evening. I had just finished my Country Show. We went off the air at ten o'clock and we watched a bit of television - myself and a few more fellas - and about two o'clock Sunday morning, we were all set to go to bed when we heard this 'thump' on the side of the ship. We all thought, what could that be? I had it in the back of my mind that it could have been this tug. Apparently men from that tug had come across and had taken over our ship. They had pirated it. We were sort of victim of our own fate. They said they had their orders to cut the anchor chain and late Sunday afternoon we were towed away. It took them a whole day to cut the anchor chain, it was that powerful. We were towed away - and we were on the High Seas for a week - the North Ship was, the South Ship was towed overnight into Holland. The North Ship was towed all the way down the coast of England and consequently a week later we landed in Holland. The ironic thing about it - if I may point this out - I started on Radio Caroline on March the eighth, 1965. I last stepped off the ship on March the eighth, 1968. - And a year, to the date, of that day, I started on Manx Radio. March eighth is a very, very critical day for me, believe me!

P.W.: Now, Don, when you were finally let off the ship on March the eighth, where did you go from there?

Don: Well, I was out of work in radio for exactly a year. In that period, I did, I think, one show, which will be remembered by a lot of people. It was called the CAROLINE REVIVAL HOUR and this was on RADIO ANDORRA, which I recorded in a Paris studio. This went on over the airwaves of Andorra, with the intention that they were going to do a lot of this, but the reception in England, unfortunately, was not as good as they had hoped it would be. It got press coverage, things like this. I had to quickly do that before I took up my position as Programme Controller of Manx Radio. I arrived there a year after the day I stepped off Caroline. That's when I started working for a living.

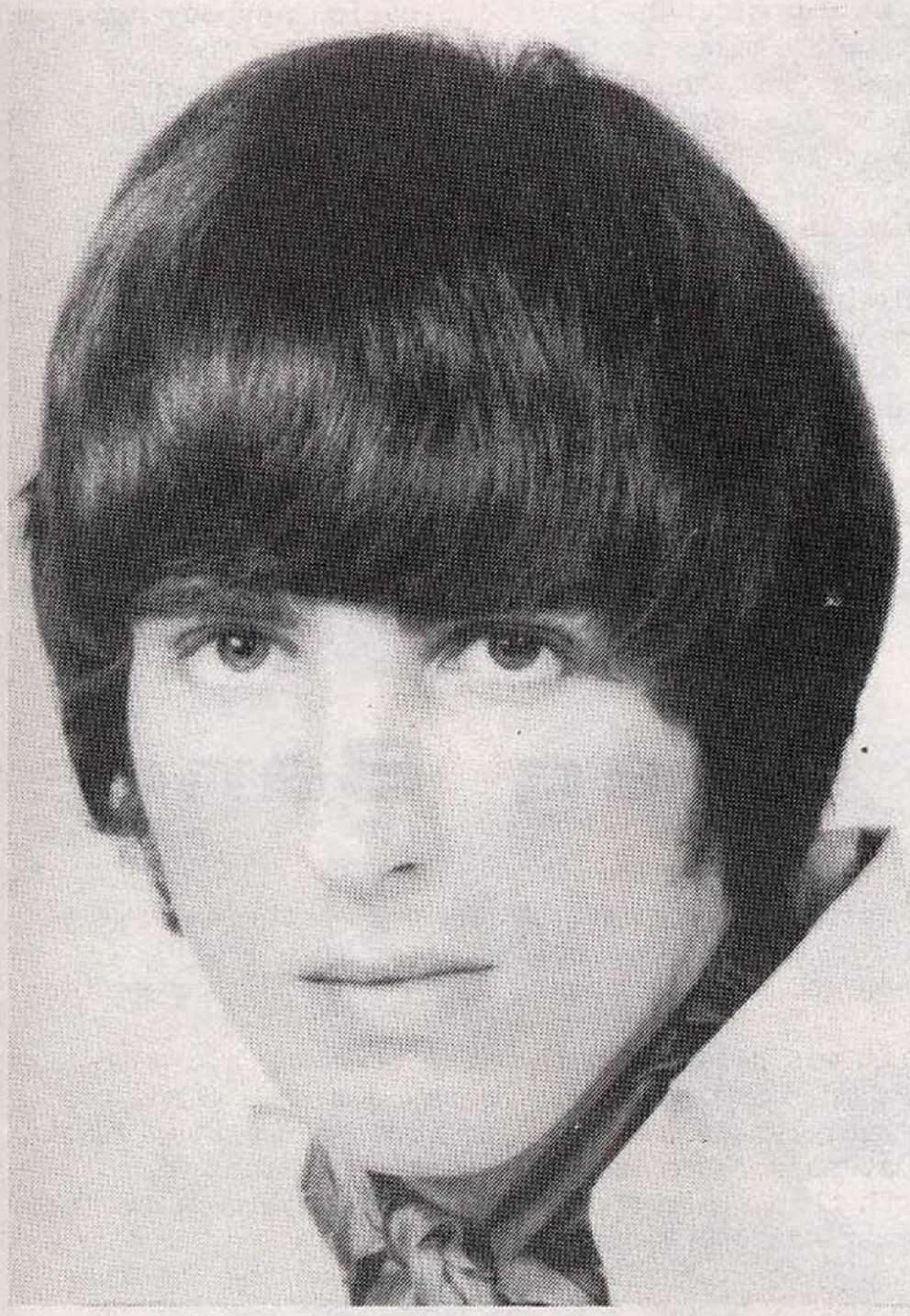
Interview transcribed by KIERAN MURRAY

Being towed away

A little over six months after the MOA a comment was made on Caroline South that the station may be off the air the following day as some work had to take place on the generator. It was an innocent remark, no one on board at the time knew that Caroline South and North would be off the air for a much more sinister reason. For the next day was Sunday 3rd March, 1968. At 2 a.m. Andy Archer closed down Caroline South; three hours later the duty engineer, Ray Glennister, began to play a few records in preparation for Roger 'Twiggy' Day's programme. Roger was unable to begin his programme at 5.30 a.m., however; a tug had arrived alongside and before anyone knew what was happening the Mi Amigo's anchor chain had been cut and she was under tow. Off the Isle of Man, the Caroline was suffering the same fate. A double act of piracy had finally silenced Caroline North, and forced Caroline off the air for what turned out to be four years, six months and twenty-six days.

South Ship **Stevi Merike**

Wijsmuller decided that they were going to tow the ships in and of course we knew nothing about it which was always the case. They sent off their little tugs, closed the transmitter down and locked the studio door, put the towrope aboard and away we went. Nobody knew what was going to happen.





"The Admiral" Robbie Dale

Johnnie Walker





Andy Archer

Roger "Twiggy" Day

It was a very misty Sunday morning and nobody on land knew that we'd gone. The first indication anybody had that we'd disappeared was when we passed the lightship which was about twelve miles to the seaward of us. They radiod back to North Foreland Radio that the Caroline ship had just passed them and that's the first anybody knew.

The trip back was very slow; it wasn't a particularly rough day, it just took the tug a long time to tow us back to Ijmuiden and via the trans-Nederland canals to Amsterdam harbour, to the wood harbour. It was about three o'clock in the morning by the time we actually got into Amsterdam.

Thanks to Andy Archer the trip was quite hilarious really, because he camped it up the whole way. I think if he hadn't been there it would have been very, very depressing.

I thought the idea was that eventually whoever was owed the pennies would get their pennies and we'd get towed back out again, but the British owners decided 'sod it', you know? Ronan O'Rahilly was just a figurehead, I don't think he was a director, I think he left the board in 1965.

When Caroline went off the air we were all thrown into poverty and obscurity, with the exception of Robbie Dale who stayed in Holland and went on TROS Radio. For the rest of us it was a very lean time. I had to get a job because I was married and our first baby was on its way, so I went and worked in a hearing-aid factory, which was dreadfully depressing. Then one day I happened to be talking to Richard Swainson who used to be the publicity man for Caroline and Radio London. He told me Screen Gems Colombia were looking for someone to hock their music around the BBC. So I went up there, they took me on, and I got back into the music business.

Fron an interview by BOB RENDLE

North Ship — Greg Bance

Since Radio 390 had closed down on 28th July 1967 I had done practically nothing. It was one of the extremely rare times when I had no work at all. I hadn't really considered Caroline as being an option after August 1967, mostly because the station sounded pretty ropey and it was all plug records. But by about February 1968 I was getting fairly deperate to do some kind of radio work again.

A friend and colleague, Alan Clark, was also looking around and it was he who had the idea of going along to Caroline's office - well, it wasn't really Caroline's office, it was Major Minor records. He saw Jim Hoolighan, who was something to do with Major Minor and something to do with Ronan O'Rahilly; he used to keep Ronan's unwanted guests at bay I think. He didn't want any experience or audition tapes, he just said 'When can you start?' In fact Alan was offered a job on the South Ship and I was offered a job on the North Ship. For some reason Alan never got as far as the South Ship; I think they'd closed down by the time he was actually going out there.

Three or four days after seeing this Jim Hoolighan fellow I went off to Dundalk, I went there on the Saturday because the tender was due to go out on the Sunday; but in fact it didn't. I bumped into Fred Bear who was RWB on Radio City and Ross Brown on Radio 390. Australians as you know always wear shorts be it summer, winter, anytime; and he always used to wear these infernal shorts. We filled the next few days going to places like Dublin and getting drunk.

Eventually we left to go out to the boat mid-evening on Tuesday night. It took all night and most of the following morning to get out to the Caroline Ship, which was anchored off the Isle of Man; and it was an extremely rough night. When we first went on the tender Ross Brown said 'Let's go on the Bridge', everybody else seemed to be on the Bridge for some reason, I never did discover why. I didn't want to go on the Bridge, I wanted to go to bed, which is what I did. I found myself a bunk, but I didn't sleep very much. We got to the Caroline about mid-day I suppose. It was a grey, nasty day, rough sea, raining, very unpleasant.

The only connection that I had with Caroline at that stage was the fact that Martyn Kayne was there. He had worked for Radio Essex a couple of years previously as Michael Kayne, so I knew him, but he was going off on shore leave as I arrived. I was going out there with Ross Brown, and coming off the boat were Martyn Kayne and Jason Wolfe. There was, apart from Ross Brown (or I should say Fred Bear) and myself, Jimmy Gordon - an Australian guy, he's in Adelaide now - Don Allen, of course, and Lord Charles Brown, more usually known as Lord Charles Brown than Charlie Brown. People had silly names on that ship; I don't know why. I was plain old boring Roger Scott - I should say the first plain old boring Roger Scott - at that time. I can't remember much about the engineers. The cook was a Dutch guy, so we had the usual Dutch food, which was Wonderloaf and pickles and soup. The food was quite good actually; as far as Wonderloaf and pickles and soup goes, it was only the best type.

The initial impression of the Caroline boat was delapidation basically, although inside it was a different story, it was fairly well appointed. The most eye-catching part of the boat, in a rather poetic way, was the staircase! This had been a ferry in Scandinavia, so the ordinary passengers wouldn't climb up and down ladders, they had to have a stairway; and it was a sweeping stairway, the sort of thing you have in Capital Radio. I had the cabin at the bottom of the stairs, which was the DeLuxe Suite actually, built-in sanitary facilities en suite! Which was quite unusual for an offshore station.

The most noticeable thing about Caroline North from my own personal point of view was the fact that it was probably the least friendly station I worked on. It was fairly soulless, a bit disappointing actually. Had I worked there longer perhaps I would have got to know people better, but it was a station very much of individuals. There wasn't much of a team spirit. It seemed to me that everybody was just passing their time, knowing that the station was eventually going to close. We didn't know it was immiment but we knew it was going to happen sometime, so there wasn't a great feeling for the station.

Initially I was given news to do, which came from Manx Radio. So I was doing news during the day Wednesday afternoon, Thursday and Friday, then Saturday I did my first and only programme. I did six till eight in the evening I believe. Had it been a weekday my voice would have been the very last to be heard on Caroline North. However, that distinction evaded me because being Saturday Don Allen did his Country and Western Jamboree, so he closed at ten - and that, as is well known, was that.

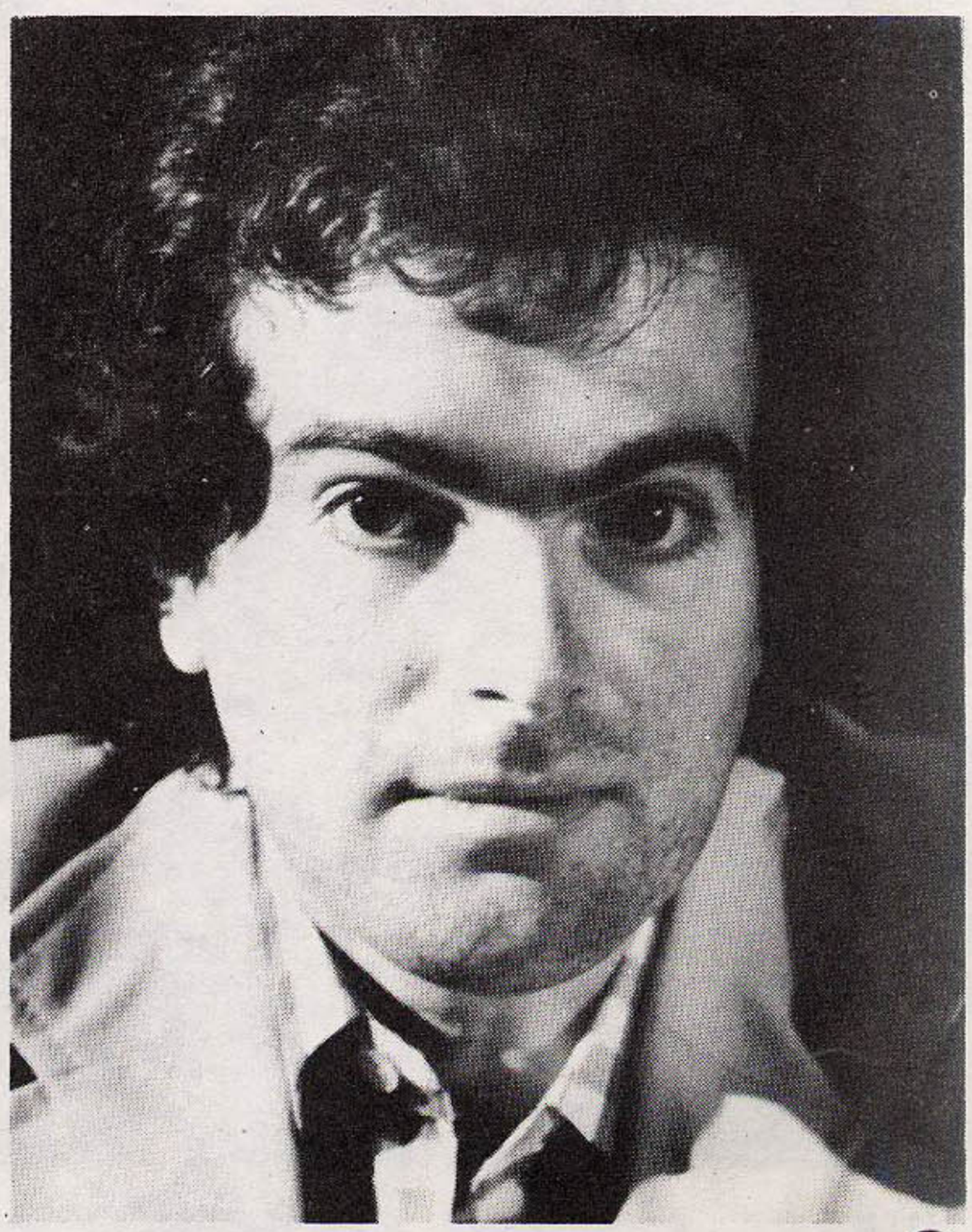
The following day the boarding party, the people who had come to take us away, arrived early in the morning. I hadn't detected anything being in the offing, during those few days I had been there I never heard anybody talking about the possibility of it happening. Yes, things were a bit decrepit, but people had been paid on time; the plug records were there so we presumed the record companies were paying for their plug records. Things seemed to be carrying on in, for offshore radio, a fairly normal way.

I missed them actually coming on board. I was asleep. I was awoken by one of my colleagues, I think it was Don Allen, and went up to find out what was going on. There had been no nastiness as far as I could gather. They'd stated what they were there for, it was quite obvious they had come to keep the station off the air, quite obvious they'd come to tow the ship in, they took the crystal out of the transmitter and there was nothing much we could do about it. I don't think they'd met with very much resistance because I'd have heard about it had they done. I'm sure

Off the Isle of Man midnight approaches on September 30, 1967. Martin Kayne is the host, and the guests at the "going illegal" party are Dee Harrison, Don Allen, Wally Meehan, Mark Sloane and Jimmy Gordon.

Don Allen and Roger Scott; they were towed away on 3 March, 1968.





Caroline North is towed away

there's not any drama or anything deedy, but it was all very matter of fact and really quite mundane.

We left the anchorage on Sunday evening and of course all the people on board at the time stayed on board until the boat reached Amsterdam. We didn't feel like hostages or anything like that. It was all very amicable. They joined in with the cardgames and the drinking and the eating; it was just a larger crew than usual, that was the only perceptable difference. One of the crazy things about offshore radio is you tended not to worry about things that you would do normally. Even in the roughest conditions I don't think any of us ever worried about personal danger. You basically went there for a bit of adventure so whatever happened that was adventurous was a bit of a bonus.

It sounds kind of romantic sailing from the Isle of Man round the country by way of the Lleyn Peninsula, Cardigan Bay, Lands End, English Channel to Amsterdam, but there really wasn't anything spicy about it, it was more boring. It was a week of quite rough seas, not very much happened; most of the time I remember lying in my bunk looking at the porthole getting soaked and occasionally some water would come in. It was not a particularly exciting time.

I think it was noticeable there were no hoards of weeping girls waving their knickers at us. This had been the case, we had heard, on Radio London when the Marine Offences Act came in, but we went in the mouth of the canal that leads to Amsterdam and there were hoards of totally indifferent Dutch people fishing and wondering what this strange boat was. Only in our imaginations were the people on the quayside aware of who or what we were and why we were there. Generally we were met without very much excitement at all. The South Ship was already tied up. It must have been there a couple of days; there was nobody around, they'd all gone.

We were paid off on the quayside and we were told that we'd be kept informed as to what was happening. Of course we were not. I think it was generally accepted that as far as Caroline was concerned that was it, there wasn't any future in it. So very rapidly everybody went their own way. I came back on a flight with the Caroline representative whose job it was to pay people. He was based in London, probably something to do with Major Minor; I can't remember his name. Don Allen followed a couple of days later. Jimmy Gordon became Guy Blackmore and did a few shows for Radio One. Lord Charles Brown faded into oblivion. Ross Brown I think probably went back to Australia to get his shorts laundered. About a month after I'd finished on Caroline, I joined Harlech Television.

FILLING IN

The T.V. Project

Caroline didn't stay out of the news while her ships were chained up in Amsterdam from 1968 to 1972.

Rumour abounded almost from the moment Radio Caroline vanished from the airwaves that Caroline Television was about to make an appearance on the magic box!

It was to broadcast from airborne Super Constellation aircraft, which were to be based in Yugoslavia. With the use of two aircraft, the station could be on the air eight hours a day. Caroline TV was to broadcast on UHF and in colour - both relatively new services in Britain which most viewers weren't equipped to receive in the late Sixties. As with early Radio Caroline, it was planned to record programmes in a studio in London and broadcast them from tapes; but it would look and feel "live" because the tapes wouldn't be edited. Simon Dee was tipped to be host of a chat-show where anyone could join in if they cared to find their way to the studio. Pop music programmes too were predicted as being the order of the day.

"We will broadcast anything that people will watch", Ronan told an Irish newspaper. "We will get our programmes from all over the world and we will use them completely without censorship. 'Ulysses', for instance, was banned in Ireland and some other places. That is just the sort of thing we might use." He predicted that signals from the aircraft would cover 75% of the British Isles - and that viewers wouldn't even have to adjust their TV aerials!

Obtaining advertising was to be no problem. Although British firms would be banned by the MOA - which includes aircraft as potential sources of offshore broadcasts - American and other foreign firms whose products are available in Britain would be completely free to book airtime through the station's offices in New York and Canada. Over a million dollars worth of commercials had already been booked by the time the station was ready to go on the air.

After two years of planning and preparation an on-air date was finally announced - 1st July 1970, beginning at six o'clock in the evening. Did it ever happen? That's the mystery! Certainly the Super Constellations did exist; but the potential viewers never saw Caroline Television on their screens. Stories about the project faded away... and have never been heard again.

The R.N.I. Incident

Meanwhile, back on the High Seas, Radio North Sea International had appeared on the scene, sailed to the coast of England - and made history by being the first radio station ever to be deliberately "jammed" by the British Government!

A General Election was due in Britain - the first at which eighteen-year-olds were allowed to vote - and the station personnel believed that a change of government might mean a change of policy and an end to the jamming. Ronan believed this too, and so gave permission for RNI to change its name to Radio Caroline for a week of political campaigning.

Thus on Saturday, 13th June 1970, when broadcasts began at 05:30 local time, all of a sudden RNI had disappeared and Radio Caroline had returned! Almost all of the RNI jocks at the time had previously worked on Caroline and lots of old Caroline jingles had appeared overnight. Only the Caroline Bell wasn't genuine; in the absence of the original recording, the jocks found the Mebo II's ship's bell and used that to record a new jingle, so that the station sounded totally like the real Caroline.

For six days, Caroline exhorted her faithful young voters to "do your thing for Caroline" on election day, 18th June. Meanwhile on land Ronan joined the campaign, touring marginal constituencies with a Caroline Bus. He and Simon Dee appeared at an anti-jamming demonstration in Hyde Park on 14th June.

When all the votes were counted, it became frighteningly obvious what a powerful propaganda medium Caroline could be - she'd achieved a landslide victory for the Conservative Party. Unfortunately the story didn't have a happy ending. With the election over Radio Caroline again disappeared, and RNI returned. The jamming continued, eventually forcing the Mebo II to return to the coast of Holland.

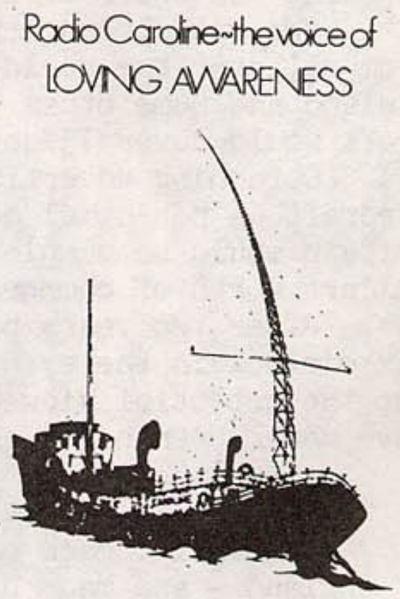
It's interesting to note that most of the venom of the election campaign was directed against the then Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, Mr. John Stonehouse, the man held to be responsible for instigating the jamming. Mr. Stonehouse went on to suffer a series of misfortunes, culminating in a prison sentence and a heart attack. He is the most dramatic but by no means the only example of life going wrong for someone who has acted against Caroline. Just as she has always protected those who have faithfully cared for her, so her spirit has the power to torment those who have tried to do her harm. Caroline is a very special and very loving Lady; but she can show a dark side, too!

D.J.'S THEME TUNES

Mike Ahern	"Buckeye"	Johnny and the Hurricanes
	"Disadvantages of You"	Sound of Brass
	"Consulate Theme"	Mood Cool
Don Allen	"Quite a Party"	Fireballs
Andy Archer	"Soul Coaxing"	Raymond Lefebvre
	"Flamingo"	Herb Alpert
Simon Barrett	"Come a little bit closer"	Fleetwood Mac
Tony Blackburn	"Beefeaters"	Johnny Dankworth
Jeff Bolan	"Wring that Neck"	Deep Purple
Ross Brown	"Raunchy '65"	Ernie Freeman
Errol Bruce	"I gotta a woman"	Jimmy McGriff
Robbie Dale	"I was Kaiser Bill's Batman"	Whistling Jack Smith
Rick Dane	"All for you"	Earl Van Dyke
Roger Day	"Green Grass"	The Ventures
Simon Dee	"On the Sunny Side of the Street"	Tommy Dorsey
Robb Eden	"Boy Blue"	Jan Akkerman
Tom Edwards	"Wigwam"	Ted Heath and his Music
Roger Gale	"A Walk in the Black Forest"	Horst Jankowski
Graham Gill	"Way Back Home"	Junior Walker and the All-Stars
Jim Gordon	"Wipe Out"	Safaris
Keith Hampshire	"Sidewinder"	West Acre and the Rebels
Bill Hearne	"I get a kick out of you"	Tommy Dorsey
Johnny Jason	"Welcome"	Steve Miller Band
	"Remember the beginning/Return to Eden	Steve Miller Band
Gary Kemp	"Let's Go"	Ray Charles
Tom Lodge	"Rinky Dink"	Johnny Howard Band
Mick Luvzit	"Tune Up"	Junior Walker and the All-Stars
Spangles Maldoon	"You didn't like it"	Hotlegs
Stevie Merike	"Billy's Bag"	Billy Preston
	"Happy Organ"	Dave Cortez
Carl Mitchell	"In the Midnight Hour"	Little Mac
	"Slim Jenkins Place"	Booker T. and the MGs
Paul Noble	"Nobles Theme"	Noble Watts Band
Tony Prince	"I'm coming through/Go"	Sounds Incorporated
Rosko	"Memphis"	Lonnie Mack
Keith Skues	"Groovin' High"	Don Jacoby Orchestra
	"Mr. Tambourine Man"	Golden Gate Strings
Mark Sloane	"Flamingo"	Herb Alpert
Bob Stewart	"Peter Gunn"	Henry Mancini Orchestra
	"Image"	Alan Haven
Jon Sydney	"Brothers go to Mothers"	Henry Mancini Orchestra
Ray Teret	"Jungle Fever"	Tornados
Dave Lee Travis	"A Touch of Velvet - a Sting of Brass"	Mood Mosaic
Tommy Vance	"Yeh Yeh"	Mark Nirtz Orchestra
*Bryan Vaughan	"Cheers"	Henry Mancini Orchestra
Johnnie Walker	"Because They're Young"	Duane Eddy

*Please note the correct spelling of "Vaughan".





I have not left Caroline, I've never left Caroline, I might go away for awhile, but I'll always be back.

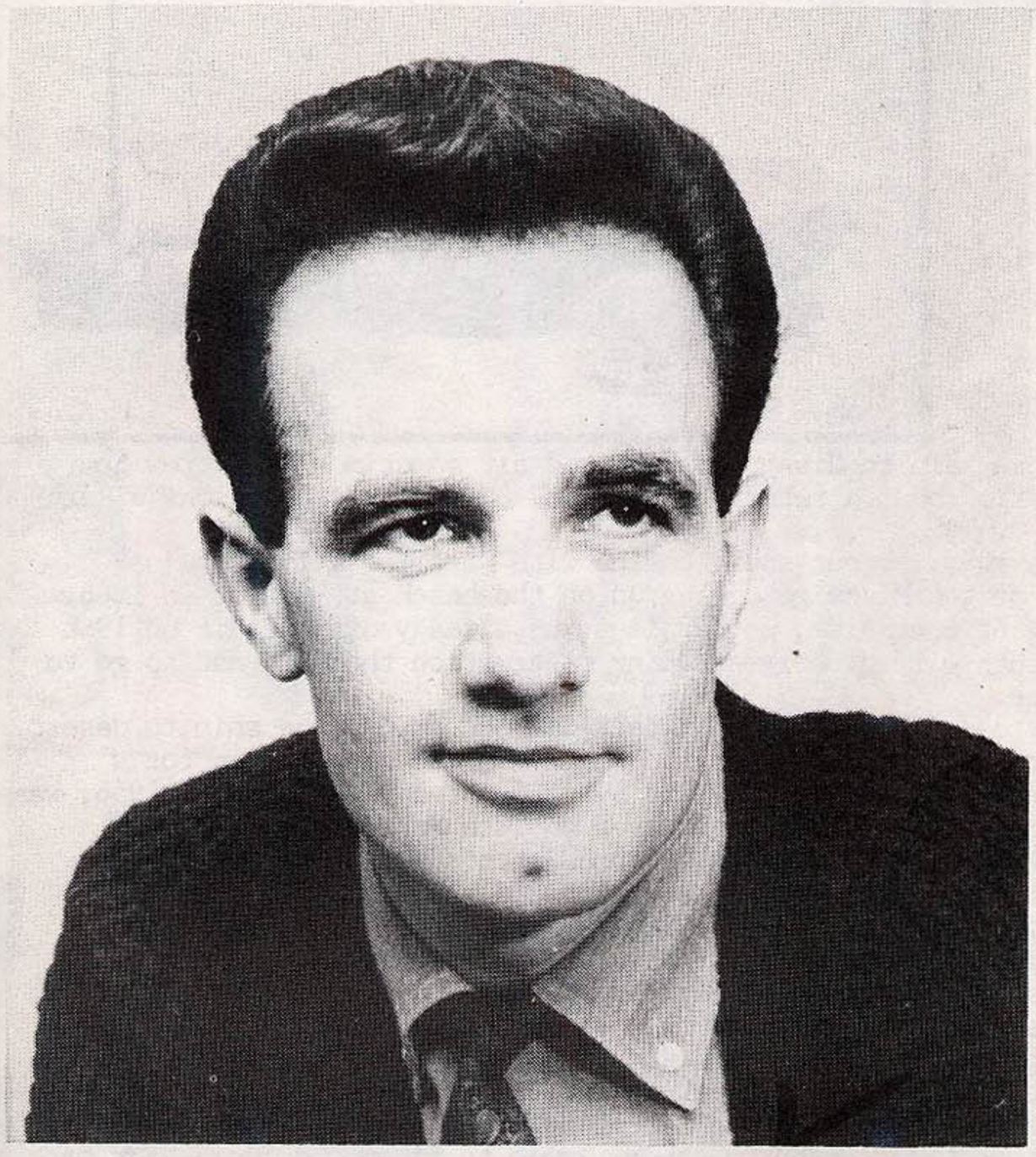
Tony Allen

We all say 'This is going to be my last trip', but we all come back. It's the same with everybody, you all get fed-up and uptight at least once a trip, and you say 'Oh, I'm not coming back, I've had enough', but as soon as you get back on land the old fingers start to itch.

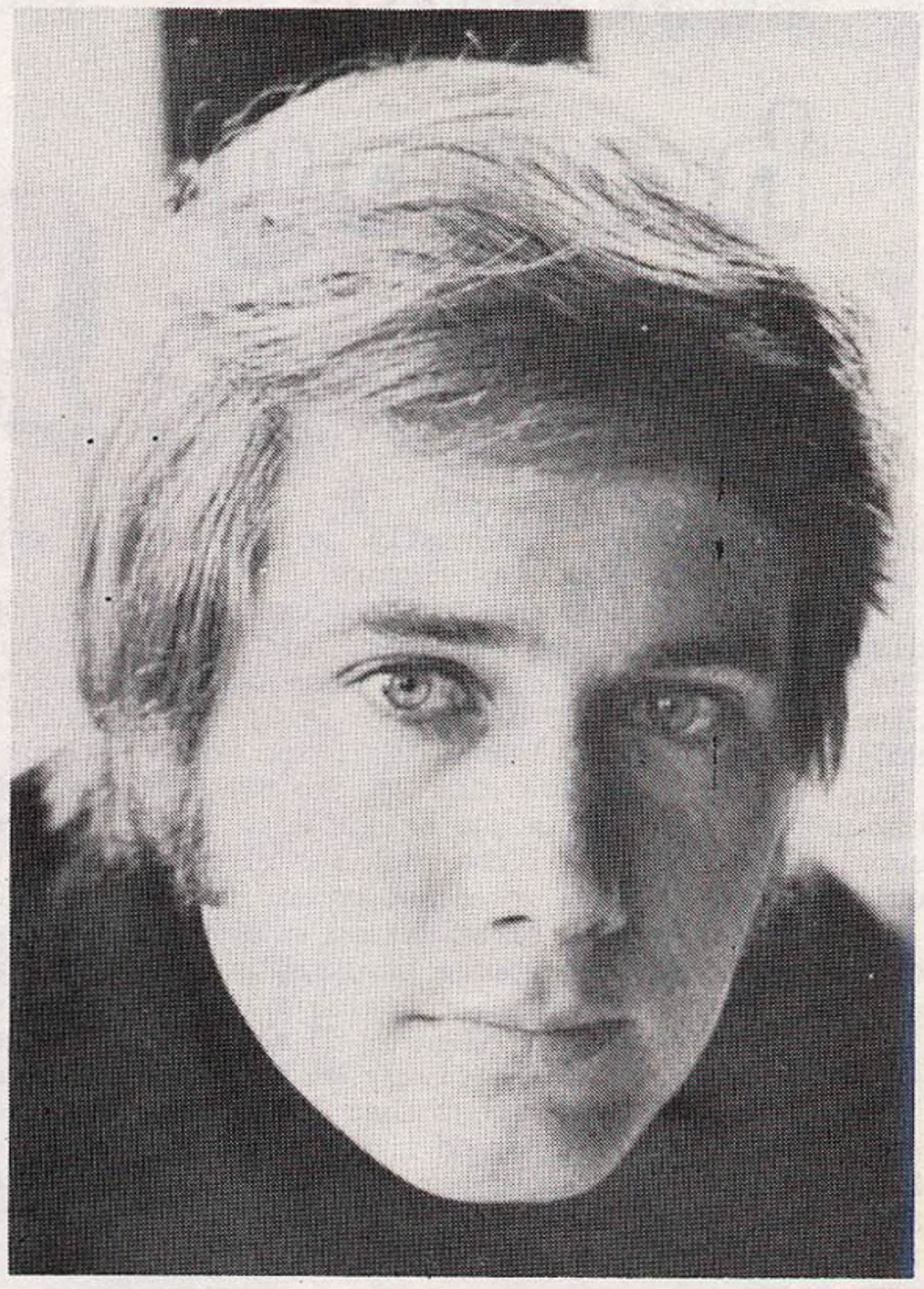
Stephen Bishop

Nobody actually wants to leave the station. I think you can fairly say that everybody who's worked for the station would love to go back. I certainly would; not to work out there, but out of curiosity to see how it is now.

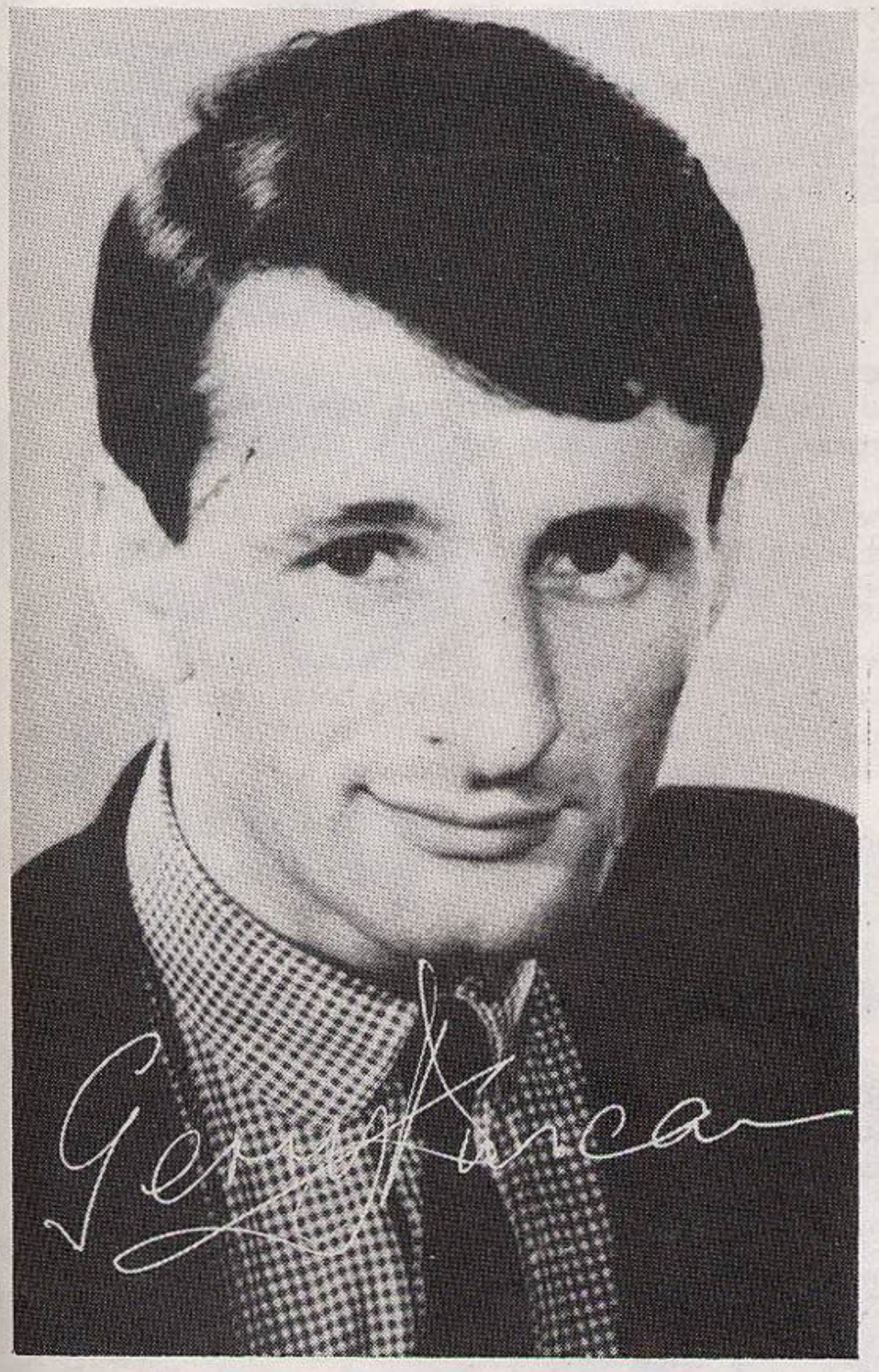
John B. Mair



Alan Turner



Rick Dane

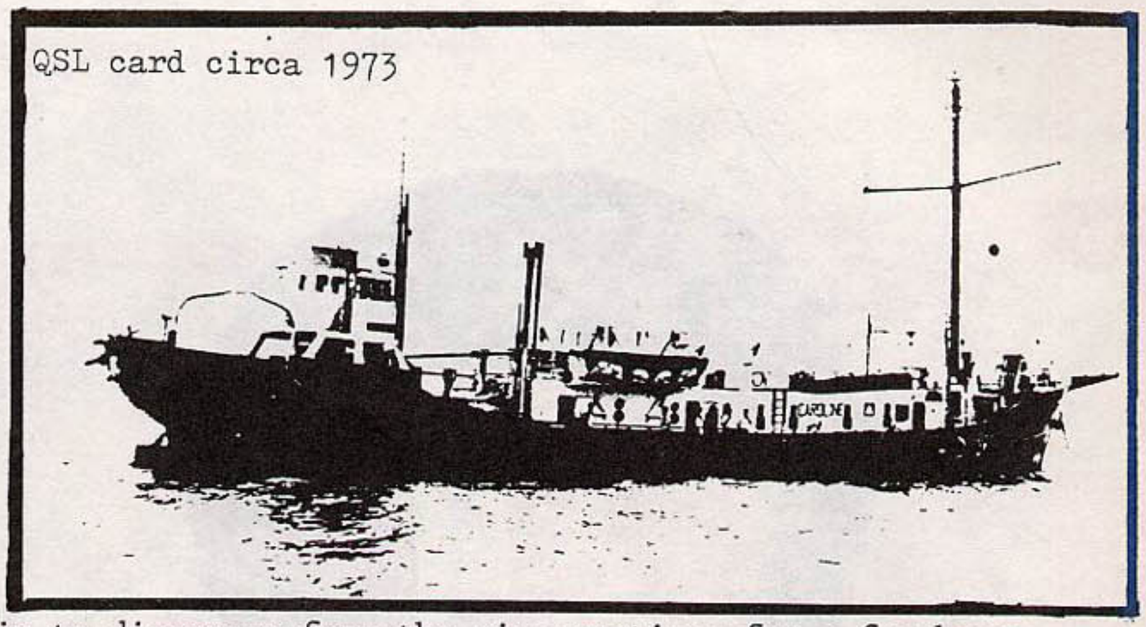


Gerry Duncan



Mike Ahern

many happy returns!


QSL card circa 1973

There's nothing unusual for a radio station based on a ship to disappear from the air sometimes for a few hours or even a few days; so normally there's nothing very dramatic about a return to the air. But on some occasions a Return is actually a spectacular victory!

Of course, someone can't return until she first goes away; so our story begins with Caroline's first major disappearance from the airwaves. This was on the occasion of the Mi Amigo coming up on the beach at Frinton in 1966. The station's normal closedown time was 20:00 each evening at that time, so Caroline was already off the air on 19th January when she lost her anchor and began to drift. Although miraculously escaping destruction the ship had to go to Holland for repairs, leaving Caroline South without a voice.

At about the same time, Radio Syd, the Swedish "pirate", was off the air; pack-ice had forced the ship to desert her usual anchorage in the Baltic Sea. The station's owner, Britt Wadner, offered Ronan the use of her ship for a couple of months until the pack-ice cleared. Thus, the Cheetah II arrived off the Essex coast on 1st February 1966, was quickly converted to broadcast on medium wave, and Caroline returned to the airwaves on 12th February.

The Mi Amigo's first Return to England occurred in April, 1966. She was equipped with a new and more powerful transmitter tuned to a more favourable frequency. Caroline not only Returned; she extended her coverage considerably and with that, of course, she also extended her already considerable band of faithful followers.

It was a grey day when by an act of real piracy both her voices were silenced on Sunday, 3rd march, 1968. The staid Fredericia and the lively Mi Amigo were chained up and forgotten in an Amsterdam wharf for four years. Four years! If you've ever spent that long in prison or confined in a hospital bed then you know how those ladies felt. If not, how can you understand their suffering? Worse was to come for the Fredericia, the stately lady named after a Danish queen. She gained her freedom only to meet her final doom in a shipbreakers yard. All was not lost, however. She'd guarded in her hold a fifty kilowatt transmitter that had been meant to strengthen her signal when she lived off the Isle of Man but had never been used. This transmitter was transferred to the Mi Amigo to become her voice for many more years.

The Mi Amigo was free at last! In May 1972 she was taken to a dockside in Zaandam where she was refitted and repaired, and at last she returned to her natural element, the sea, on 3rd September. She arrived and anchored next to the Mebo II in the early hours of the morning. On board the Mebo II Tony Allan was on the air at the time and was very excited by her arrival. After announcing she was there "big mast and all" he added "Chicago, you don't stand a chance. We're bigger than you are, we're better than you are and we've got more money than you have." It took him only a few weeks to leave RNI and join his good friend Peter Chicago, the transmitter engineer, on Caroline.

The big day was 29th September. Peter switched on the transmitter - and Caroline was alive again after four and a half years of silence. This undoubtedly was the biggest Return of her career and the most joyful occasion in the life of that Lady.

Two weeks later the joy was mingled with despair. The one hundred and sixty-eight foot aerial mast fell down. She was off the air again; but not for long. She returned to her old, original frequency of the early Sixties, 1520kHz, and was on the air as "Radio 199" in time for Christmas.

Chicago announced on 30th December that the station would go off the air for a couple of days and would then return on "259", her 1187kHz frequency. This did happen, but subsequent events turned it into one of her more victorious Returns!

A crew that had been employed on the Mi Amigo to take her out to sea and had then been dismissed then decided to take over the ship. Under cover of darkness they cut her anchor chain and towed her into Amsterdam! On this occasion the law was on Caroline's side and as soon as it was established that the mutinous crew were not owed money, as they were supposed to have claimed, the ship was theoretically free to return to sea. Unfortunately, by this time officers of the Shipping Inspectorate had examined her and she was declared unseaworthy. Frantic repairs took place and she quietly slipped to sea again on New Years Day - when all the officials were on holiday!

So, Caroline made yet another triumphant Return on 2nd January, 1973. Then the mammoth task had to begin of building a new mast at sea.

It wasn't Caroline but Radio Veronica who made the next Return. Veronica, too, suffered a beaching just as Caroline had seven years earlier. By this time ten of the twelve sections of Caroline's new mast had been erected. So, her transmitter sprang into life on 11th April and for several days, until the Norderney was able to return to sea, the Mi Amigo was the home of Radio Veronica. Thus, in the Spirit of International Friendship, Caroline was able to pass on in her turn the favour extended to her by Radio Syd in 1966.

Caroline's next Return was rather a special one. She came on air on 17th May; it was not only on "259" but with a second transmitter on "389" as well! For the first time, Caroline was able to offer two services at the same time from one ship!

Disaster struck again in October when the second mast was lost. A third was erected in time for another Return at Christmas.

The major event of 1974 was Caroline's Return to the English coast in August, two days before the Dutch version of the MOA was to come into effect.

After the ship lost her anchor and drifted, she was raided by the British Authorities and her transmitters disabled. Therefore her next Return, on 26th November, 1974, was a particularly glorious one.

The Return of 15th April, 1979 is noteworthy as Caroline had at that point been off the air for one hundred and seventy-seven days, and during that time the Mi Amigo had been abandoned and reported as sunk! That time she survived; a year later she did disappear beneath the waves, where she lies still. "She is not dead, she's only dreaming" as the Poet said; let's hope her dreams are happy ones of the good times she shared with us in the past and of all the possibilities for her resurrection some time in the future.

This time we had three and a half years to wait for the exhilarating Return of August, 1983. With a new ship, the Ross Revenge, new transmitters from RCA, and a great deal of enthusiasm from a DJ team made up of both old and new personnel, at last Caroline was part of our lives again, geared to meet the challenge of the Eighties.

Glimpses Of CAROLINE

Ian Anderson

SCENE ONE: I'm walking along a shopping street one Saturday in late September 1972 when a voice calls me. "Hey, was that Caroline back on air last night? I heard a Moody Blues LP". "It sounds like it", I reply. "It also sounded as if Archer was on board - you can tell from the music."

SCENE TWO: It's a dark, cloudy, raining,early December day and I'm making my way along the inner harbour of Scheveningen in Holland, heading towards the Trip Tender office which handled Radio Nordsee International's provisioning. Out of the corner of my left eye I catch the movement of the Dolfijn, an old, rusty ex-trawler which in summer is used for tourist sea angling. Something, probably the sight of several young people in jeans and jean jackets, suggests that this might be the Caroline tender returning. I stop and wait.

The boat docks and the oldest of the young people steps ashore. "Do I know you?" he asks in English, having obviously decided I'm not Dutch. "I'm Tony Allan", he adds. "come and join us for a drink."

SCENE THREE: Half an hour later I'm equipped with an orange juice and the rest with various forms of Pils. "So how's life on the Mi Amigo?" I ask. There's a groan from the young Dutch lads, but Allan quickly interrupts. "No problem. The pipe fell down but we'll soon get another up then we'll knock RNI off the airwaves."

SCENE FOUR: The next day is Friday and I'm heading towards RNI on the tender. I see the Mi Amigo in the distance for the first time, sad, wallowing, no aerial mast (so that's what Allan meant by the 'pipe' coming down) and with that permanent list of a few degrees to port.

SCENE FIVE: There are so many images that they now become a blur . But I can recall TV pictures of the Mi Amigo being towed into Amsterdam, followed by various interviews, and then in no time being towed out again. I can recall hearing test transmissions and regular programmes with many voices, different station names, and a multitude of broadcasting styles. I hear muffled voices, shouts of "fire on board" and then "no fire on board" and then so much echo behind the voice that all is virtually unintelligible.

SCENE SIX: A bleak February afternoon and out of the gloom the Caroline tender of the day, a silver painted tourist ship called Zeester, comes almost alongside the Mebo II. Those of us in the mess room go out on deck to be greeted by Tony Allan yet again. "What's this,Allan, fired again?" shouts Arnold Layne to the uncomfortable-looking Allan, well wrapped up in the famous big-lapelled, double-breasted Caroline tweed coat, as previously worn by Andy Archer and many others. "No;I'm just off to the Peace ship", shouts Allan as the Zeester heads off for land.

SCENE SEVEN: It is a beautiful early spring afternoon. I'm passing a pleasant hour or so in the greenhouse atmosphere of the bridge of the Mebo II. A flash in the direction of the Mi Amigo catches my attention followed by another. I pick up the ship's binoculars and focus. "Wow" I exclaim to myself and the seagulls, "they're actually welding a new aerial mast on board."

SCENE EIGHT: The last Saturday in March 1973 and Brian McKenzie, Graham Gill, three Dutch crew members and myself leave RNI in a rubber boat heading for the Mi Amigo. Caroline had been silent for some weeks and we decide to call on our neighbours.

We are welcomed on board by Dick Palmer. As this is my first visit on board I'm shown the works - the silent transmitters, the half wired studio, the generators, the record library which is entirely covered in tins of food: "We're painting the food store."

Although Steve and Debbie England are on board they are asleep after painting through the night. Samantha Dubois appears and Graham Gill gives her a hug and gets paint on his jacket for his trouble. One of our crew members makes a naughty comment in Dutch but doesn't realise that Samantha is fluent in Dutch. He soon does as she tears into him in his own language. Much embarrassment and laughter all round.

But now the sea is rising and the sky is becoming grey. In choppy seas we head back to the Mebo II. Throughout the rest of the day and Sunday the weather worsens into the famous storm of 2nd April 1973.

SCENE NINE: It's nearly a week after the early April storm that put RNI off the air and Veronica on the beach. Caroline is still off the air. The Zeester sails by with what looks to be an entire Caroline crew. An RNI Dutch crewman says to me "Do you think they're abandoning ship?" "Oh no". I reply, "when the crew leaves the disc jockeys stay on board." We both laugh. A few days later the Mi Amigo starts broadcasting the programmes of Radio Veronica.

SCENE TEN: Throughout May the mast on the Mi Amigo grows. Welding continues into the night throwing showers of sparks through the air into the sea, a man-made twentieth century Saint Elmo's Fire.

SCENE ELEVEN: On shore in Amsterdam I'm staying in the same hotel as the Caroline staff. Chris Cary (Spangles Maldoon) drops by and we talk about Caroline, RNI and some threats to bomb Caroline. We decide the threats are nothing more than that. Chris heads for the office. I take a stroll out in the back yard. I try to amuse Chris's little daughter Louise who seems alone. We talk and then have some eggs for breakfast together. It's a beautiful day and my last one before going back out to RNI again.

SCENE TWELVE: The next morning I'm heading towards the RNI tender. I pass the Caroline tender being loaded with supplies. "Ian", a voice shouts and Andy Archer comes leaping across the deck and on to the quay. "Ian", he says, "come and meet Ronan."

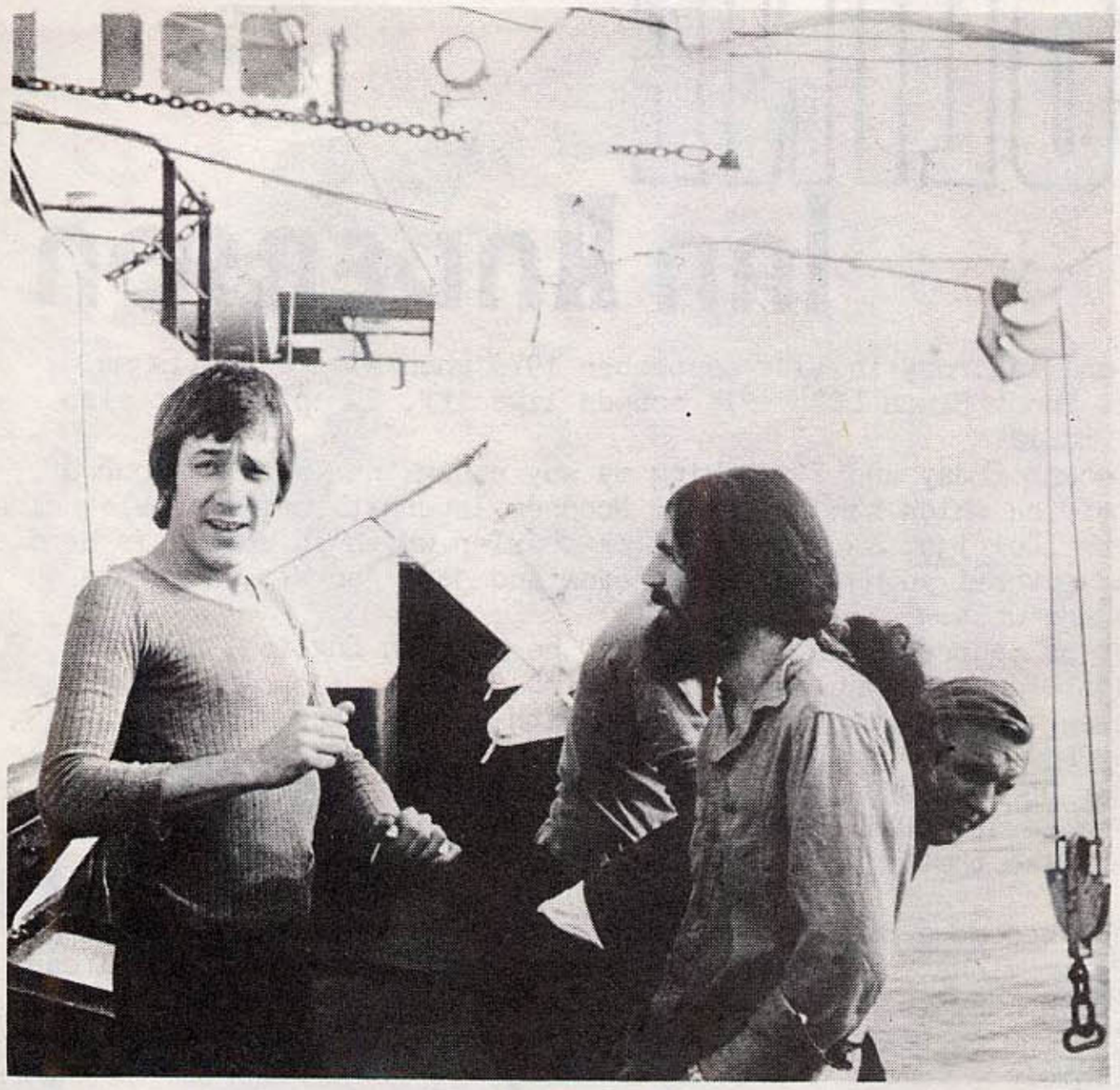
I'm introduced to the Boss and he asks how life is on RNI. "Pleasant and boring at the same time", I reply, "if that isn't a contradiction." "So when are you going to join us?" asks Ronan. "When are you going to ask me?" I reply. "Tell me, what do they think about Caroline coming back?", he asks nodding towards the RNI tender. "I can't really say, but as far as I'm concerned, I'm in favour". I say. "We could do with a better music station." He smiles his charming smile and then makes an unusual remark. "That's very socialist of you", he says.

SCENE THIRTEEN: I'm back in my home town for the first time in seven months. My period at RNI is over, with at least two people with influence on board of the same opinion of my ability as I am of theirs: that is, not very favourable.

It's a beautifully clear Sunday morning of the type common in summer in the Northern Isles. There's a click at the gate and a postman arrives with a telegram . "I had to get out of bed for this", he grumbles, obviously knowing that it wasn't bad news.

The telegram read "Please telephone The Hague 631940 - Radio Caroline". What could they want, I wonder? There's only one way to find out - let's phone!

Chris Cary answers. "Ian, we've only talked a couple of times but I'm told you're very together and quite bright", is his surprising comment. "What do you mean?" I ask. "Well, we need someone very organised to work out a news room and news service and someone to sort out a system for advertising and commercial scheduling. I want you to do it. Can you come over?" "Well, I answer, "I've just got here and I'd like a little holiday." "You have your holiday but start thinking out a system for the station", was Chris' reply.



Tony Allan chats to Mickey Mercer (the American cook); Captain Meyer is on the right.

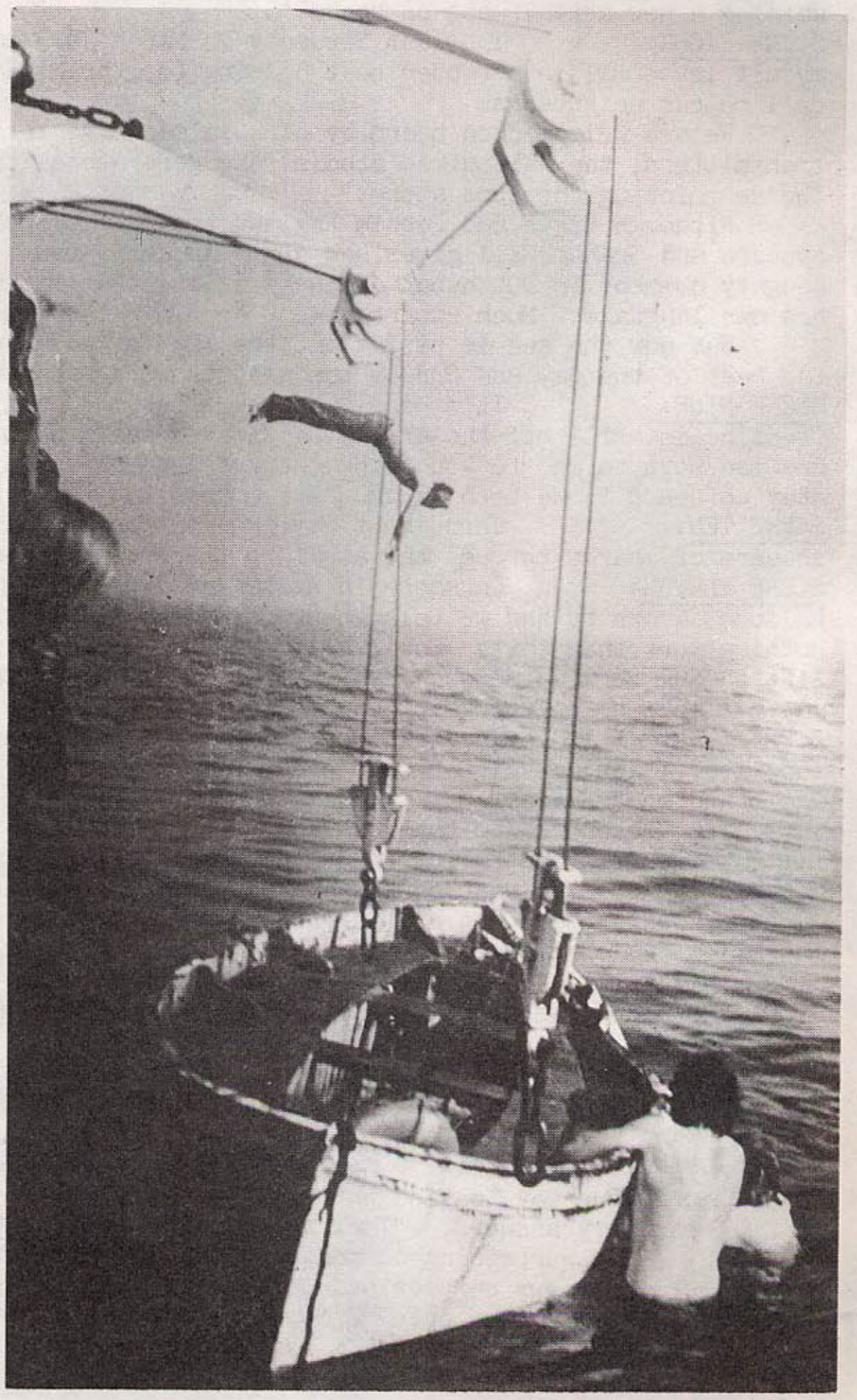
Ian Anderson on board.



Barbara Johnson played records when the Radio Atlantis tapes ran out.

Swimming around the Mi Amigo.





SCENE FOURTEEN: I'm sitting on a Shetland hillside having walked all day. I've now worked out a simple system and I've arranged with my friends in the news agencies to supply the news service with excellent and often exclusive news. It's who you know that matters. I feel proud of the work I've done. Soon it will be time to book a flight back to The Hague and to put everything into effect - a great news service and an efficient system for the commercials which would be bound to come in. It is a beautiful day for dreaming.

SCENE FIFTEEN: Barbara Johnson and myself appear at Caroline House in The Hague. "All present and correct and reporting for duty", I say. "Who are you?", a girl says. I explain. "Well", says the girl, "maybe Chris Cary wanted you, but he's not here any more. You'll have to talk to Andy." "Where is he?" I ask. "He's on the ship", she says. "Well, what do we do? I've done all this work" I say. "Well, I'm sorry I can't help you; anyway what's this about adverts? There aren't any. And I'm only here for a few days then I'm off to Israel." Suddenly the funny side of the situation is obvious and we all laugh.

There then follows what on reflection is a very happy period while we wait for Andy to come ashore, during which we stroll the beach, cycle the sand dunes, visit the museums and half translate a history of Scheveningen.

SCENE SIXTEEN: Chris Cary, the news service and adverts, and the reason we are at Caroline House no longer apply; but we have come a long way so Andy says: "Why not go out to the ship for a couple of weeks?" It seems a fair enough idea and at least it is another experience.

"Any instructions?" I ask Andy. "No", he says, "just play the good music you used to play night-time on RNI."

SCENE SEVENTEEN: We are on the tender, the Dolfijn this time. Stores and a new exhaust pipe are put on board. Ronan joins us and we slip out to sea in the gathering dark. I explain to Ronan my ideas for the news and say what a pity it was that the new mast had collapsed. I am reassured my work will not go to waste, and that a new mast is being designed.

We arrive alongside the Mi Amigo in the dark. Provisions. exhaust pipe and people transfer from one ship to another. Immediately I'm struck by how untidy the ship is compared with the Mebo II. The Captain looks sick. Ronan gives him pills and instructions. "They're from the best Harley Street doctor", he tells the Captain. The Captain looks unimpressed. We are allocated our cabin - right under the generators - great for light sleepers!

Tony Allan, back from the Peace Ship, seems to be in charge on board. "What have you come out here to do?" I tell him and he replies that there are only Radio Atlantis tapes during the day and two programmes with himself and Johnny Jason at night. "That's OK", I say, "I'll hang around and polish up my ideas for the news service."

SCENE EIGHTEEN: Although there isn't much in our line to do we're quite busy. Barbara and I play non-stop records for the Radio Atlantis service now that the tapes have run out. Barbara has taken it onto herself to paint out the forward cabin. It is generally believed on board that Radio Atlantis has been given the heave-ho and that a new organisation has taken over. I recall a conversation at Caroline House where Steve England is telephoned and asked to come back and help with the making of jingles.

SCENE NINETEEN: Tony Allan decides to make a curry, encouraged by Mike the Poet, Johnny Jason, Barbara, and Bob Noakes. Peter Chicago suddenly appears - we've been on board for a week and I've seen him only once. I give him my outline for the news and information service. He says that teleprinters and RTTY converters for point-to-point news services are no problem. "So you'll be getting some?" I ask. "I'll see to that when I go ashore", he says.

The curry is ready. The smell doesn't drift through from the galley - it crashes through like a ten ton truck. The curry is eventually voted the hottest ever known to man - when everyone gets their breath back.

SCENE TWENTY: Perhaps it was the aftermath of the curry, but the water supply is now getting low. Just to be on the safe side Mickey Mercer is the one-and-only cook again. I come out of the shower to hear a crew member on deck complaining in Dutch: "We have no water and yet those disc jockeys want a shower every day." I stick my head out of the studio window and shout "I hear you" in Dutch. Something is very wrong; a tender arrives with no water but with several cartons of fancy individual packs of paper handkerchieves.

SCENE TWENTY-ONE: As the water runs out there seems to be more round-the-table discussions between Norman Barrington, Mickey Mercer, Mike Wall Garland ("Mike the Poet"), Johnny Jason, Tony Allan, Bob Noakes and ourselves. Everybody roundly condemns organisation on shore.

There is talk of draining the radiators for drinking water, but most have switched to soft drinks where possible -I use Seven Up to rinse out my toothbrush! Buckets are thrown over the side to draw water to flush toilets. Washing clothes or oneself is only possible in seawater.

SCENE TWENTY-TWO: A guy wire insulator attached to the remains of the aerial mast is sparking. There is a discussion on what to do. One side advocates cutting it, the other says this will leave no support for the mast. The guy is cut.

SCENE TWENTY-THREE: The following morning just before nine o'clock. I'm coming up the stairs from the record library with a pile of records ready to go into the studio. There's a crack and the transmitters trip out. As was argued, the remains of the aerial mast has slipped off the insulators and over at an angle. The insulators have shattered in the movement. The Mi Amigo is silent again.

SCENE TWENTY-FOUR: Several days later a tender is promised. We are dirty and fed up and decide that we are contributing nothing to life on board and so we pack our cases. This time the tender is the Zeester and Charlotte Ribbelink is on board. Now she will appreciate the problems! Chicago comes up. "Would Barbara like to stay on another fortnight and act as cook?" he asks. She shakes her head. We both jump across to the Zeester.

Attempts to pump water across to the Mi Amigo fail as the hose rips. There are only two crew members and Bob Noakes left on board. Maybe they will drain the radiators.

SCENE TWENTY-FIVE: A last view of the Mi Amigo ever as we head for land. Wallowing, mastless, sad, silent. I know that I have just about ended my last contact with offshore radio.

SCENE TWENTY-SIX: At Caroline House I manage to talk to Charlotte who has been doing a lot of phoning. "I've come for my money", I say. "Well, you didn't do much on board", she says. "Who says so?" I ask. She says nothing. "Well, we both did as much as anyone on board", I say, which was quite true. "And anyway, it wasn't my fault that I couldn't do what I'd planned to do." "How much do you get?" she asks. "One thousand guilders", I say. "Nobody gets that here" is the shocked response. "Well, I do", I say.

Finally most of what I've asked for is extracted from a wallet and I'm offered a cheque for the remainder. I refuse, saying I'll come back on Monday (This is Friday) for the cash.

SCENE TWENTY-SEVEN: Monday. At Caroline House again, but no balance of the money. Eddie de Boeck (who seems to be organising Radio Mi Amigo) asks me into his office and starts asking questions. I'm not sure what he's getting at, but he's unhappy about something. He asks about my ideas for news and features.

A girl comes up and asks if I got all my money. I say I got most of it and she says that I was lucky. I add that I was promised the rest, but it's nearly time to catch the train for the ferry. She offers me a choice of LPs for the balance. We decide to accept and head for the railway station.

SCENE TWENTY-EIGHT: On the night ferry from Hoek van Holland to Harwich. We are safely on our way back to Britain. Out of the crowd Steve and Debbie England appear. They had come over to work for Radio Mi Amigo and to produce the jingles; they have had enough as well. A party atmosphere develops, and Steve and Debbie invite us down to their home in Deal for a week or two.

SCENE TWENTY-NINE: In Deal it has been a day of 'phone calls. Mark Lett of Record Mirror 'phones and asks what pirate I'll work for now. I say I'm more likely to work for the BBC. He reckons I'm a traitor. Chris Cary sounds cheerful. "You should have come over when I was there", he says. "We could have got some good broadcasting going". Maybe.



Graeme Kay, Bill Danse, Graham Gill, Tony Allan, John Mair, Ben (Carpenter), Andy Archer & Peter van Dijken.

Johnny Jason and Dennis King in Berlin.



It's a time for reflection. In years to come this period of my life would still retain some memories, but it was far from being the most important part of it. Unlike many on the ships, offshore radio was not my first experience in radio, it was merely a stage I wanted to experience - and having done so I'm glad I did. Several lasting friendships came out of it and that to me was more important than any dubious achievement on air.

Many of us went on to greater things; Chris Cary in particular to create, in Eire's Radio Nova, the best "pop" station ever heard in the British Isles; and Steve and Debbie England to produce some of the best UK-made jingles. I myself have settled into a routine of freelance writing and broadcasting although from time to time I seem to become involved in other business activities. I'm still interested in Caroline, but I suspect that if I were twelve years younger and working for them again I'd still find the same frustrations and be annoyed by the same deprivations. But for a short period in my life it was well worth it.

I always say you've got to sound happy on the air, I think that's why Caroline is so popular, because the DJs don't sound false, everybody's so happy.

Stephen Bishop

What do I think a DJ should try to achieve while doing a show? Ronan answered that one years ago. He said "It's the DJs job to make each listener as happy as he or she can be" - and I agree with him entirely.

Martin Kayne

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the SEAGULL . . .

When Caroline's transmitter returned, after a month off the air with generator problems, on 24th July 1973, all of a sudden something new was happening - she'd become RADIO SEAGULL.

Seagull was more than just an amalgamation of Caroline and Europe's first progressive music station, Radio Geronimo. It was the nearest entity that Caroline could produce 'out of thin air' to a living embodiment of Loving Awareness.

Seagull was more than just Love, Peace and Good Music. All of human life was there somewhere. Casual discussions in between the records encompassed everything from reviews of the Glastonbury Fair festival, through a recommendation for the Manchester-to-Harwich-via-Lincoln railway journey, to a debate on how to save from demolition the Alexandra Palace in London - "the place where British Television was born".

Records would be dedicated to the Moon when she decided to peep in through the window, and we'd be admonished "Be nice to each other and the Planet". It sounds incongruous now, but at the time it was right to include classical music - and jingles! One morning Andy awoke and said "I know! We'll play all oldies today" - and they did! Tony returned from the Voice of Peace in the Mediterranean with some Arabic records and played those. Sometimes it was mostly music but that didn't prevent the chat from being relevant and together. Sometimes there was a lot of talk but it didn't get in the way of the music.

Mike the Poet had joined the ship as a deckhand. He became an indispensable part of the team on the air, reading poetry of his own and items that listeners sent in; one day a magazine cutting about "how to be a better human being" arrived and Mike read that out, too. The station broadcast for a month before an address was ever given, but hundreds of letters kept arriving anyway; everybody knew that Seagull was part of Caroline. About a year later, when Seagull was just a memory, Mike was killed in a car crash in Italy.

At odd times comments would be dropped about "euphoric substances". This had the tedious effect on land of prompting the Customs to search every single tender on its way to the boat. They needn't have bothered; when a shortage of "the happy black stuff" was reported on board, they wanted something we're all hooked on - TEA! We didn't need 'substances' to get 'high' on Seagull; all we needed were the Vibrations, and the radio waves that carried them.

In the early hours of one morning a storm began to blow up and someone - I think it was the "hairy sunset on stilts", Norman - suggested we should all send out thought-waves to calm the sea. By the end of the programme the sea was flat and the wind had dropped. The very fact we knew we could do that helped us to put our heads together six years later to literally hold up the ship and save her from sinking. Yes, we knew we could do it; that night we were not DJs and listeners, we were hundreds of parts of one mind, all joined together in a communion of spirit.

That was Seagull. That was the way it felt for many nights; and it didn't stop in the daytimes while the station wasn't broadcasting. We still stayed together, maintaining the Energy. It can't be described. It had to be lived. There was never anything from any other radio station remotely like it. Seagull was a living thing.

On 23rd February 1974 Seagull disappeared as suddenly as she'd begun, and, with no explanation, Radio Caroline was back. It felt as if Seagull had been a part of our lives, hearts and souls for ever; but over the past seven months so much transmitting time had been lost through aerial problems that Seagull had actually broadcast for a total of only forty-eight days!

Dedicated, with love, to my friend Peter Chicago, who was part of it all but still claims he doesn't believe in it!

Jean

. . . "Ich bin ein Berliner"

Something Special arrived on Caroline on 1st August 1975. Introduced by President Kennedy's famous "Berlin Wall" speech, this new series of programmes produced in Berlin embodied Caroline's ideals of International Freedom and Co-operation.

The Berlin Service was the brainchild of Jurgen Kauer of FRC-Germany, and was put together by Dennis King, himself a citizen of Berlin, and American serviceman Jack O'Brien. Jack worked on AFN Berlin and it was in the AFN studios that the first three Berlin Service programmes were recorded, as the new studios that were specially built for the Service were at the time still under construction.

Three programmes were transmitted most weeks until 29th December 1975. Then suddenly they ceased and were never heard of again. Yet for that five months they made their impression; enough to hold us in the belief "Every free man, wherever he may live, is a Citizen of Berlin. This is why, as a free man, I take pride in the words 'Ich bin ein Berliner'".



In 1973 off the coast of Holland
the Mi Amigo needed a large anchor.



Samantha

Ronan and Simon Dee at the Hyde Park anti-jamming rally in 1970.



AnchorS AwaY!

No, our headline isn't a spelling error! In all probability, the Caroline ships over the years have lost many more anchors than we'll ever know about. Usually, it's not mentioned over the air when such a thing happens. But sometimes, subsequent events are quite dramatic. Here's a chronicle of those lost anchors that we have heard of.

The Caroline North started out with two anchors, but the loss of one during a gale in the night of 13th/14th January 1965 caused her to drift from her position off the Isle of Man; the Sun reported that she'd come inside territorial waters. A different system was later employed, which Ray Teret describes: "We had what they call a centralised anchor which had three legs out of it all with anchors on them, then we had one chain that came up to the boat that the boat could spin around on. We didn't have the boat's tail bagged down, it swung whichever way the wind was so it was always facing into the waves coming towards us." It seems this system worked, for we saw no further reports of Caroline North drifting!

Caroline South, on board the Mi Amigo, really hit the headlines worldwide when on Wednesday 19th January 1966 a lost anchor resulted in her landing on Frinton beach! It was on this occasion that people first began to realise that Caroline had magic as well as music in the air, when she found herself the only stretch of beach where she could sit down without breaking her back on a concrete groyne.

The Cheetah II, perhaps because the weather was kind during the time she carried Caroline's programmes, has the distinction of not suffering a drifting incident!

During the time the Mi Amigo was anchored off Holland she lost two aerial masts, but as far as we know, only one anchor! Even in the heavy storms of Spring 1973, when both the Mebo II and the Norderney went adrift, the Mi Amigo stayed firm.

It was only a few weeks after she'd recommenced broadcasting in 1972, after a four-and-a-half year silence, that she lost her first anchor of the Seventies. The chain broke on 13th November, she drifted about three miles, and then held on two emergency anchors that the crew were able to lower. A new anchor was taken out to her and installed the following weekend, after she'd been towed to a new position about five hundred metres from the Mebo II.

The Mi Amigo returned to the Essex coast on Friday 30th August 1974, and survived her first winter in the Knock Deep for eleven years without serious incident. But on Saturday 8th November 1975, Simon Barrett suddenly interrupted his programme at 18:13 GMT to announce "We're in some difficulties at the moment. In heavy seas we're drifting..." Peter Chicago came to the microphone to explain that the main anchor chain had broken at least half an hour before, and that the coast guards had been alerted. It was only an hour later that it was realised on board that the Mi Amigo was grounding on a sandbank.

Expert seamanship from the Captain, Werner de Zwart, freed the Mi Amigo from the sandbank,but worse was yet to come. She continued to drift and eventually came within British Territorial Waters. Because of this, programming ceased and the transmitter was switched off at 22:06.

In the early hours of 9th November, the lighter of the two emergency anchors, which had been very difficult to handle, was finally lowered; it was followed by the heavier anchor in the evening, at which point the ship's engines were turned off. The only danger to the Mi Amigo at that point was that of swinging on her anchor and crashing into the South Edinburgh Number Three buoy!

One of Caroline's supply ships arrived alongside on the evening of 12th November; it had powerful engines but wasn't a tug, and its crew knew very little about towing. After damaging the Mi Amigo by attaching a tow-chain to her railings and trying to pull her sideways, they actually began towing her with the chain attached to the base of the mast! When the ship had moved less than a mile the new anchor was dropped with the Mi Amigo just about in International Waters. Thus on Thursday 13th November, broadcasts recommenced.

The British Home Office decided that Caroline was near-enough British Waters to make something of it. At least fifteen police officers and officials boarded the Mi Amigo on 14th November, put the transmitter off the air at 15:01 GMT, and arrested four of the seven persons on board - the Dutch Captain, Simon and Peter who are both British, and the American DJ Michael Lloyd. They appeared in Southend Court the following morning where all were charged under the Marine Offences Act and then released.

The Mi Amigo returned to her usual anchorage on 26th November and recommenced broadcasts within a few hours of a new anchor chain being planted.

Samantha Dubois returned to the ship shortly after this incident, and later informed friends in the Free Radio world that the Mi Amigo was constantly drifting about due to the fact the chain on the new anchor was far too short - it was only as long as the water under the ship was deep, and it's recommended that an anchor chain should be three times that length. However, the anchor remained attached to the Mi Amigo for a further ten months.

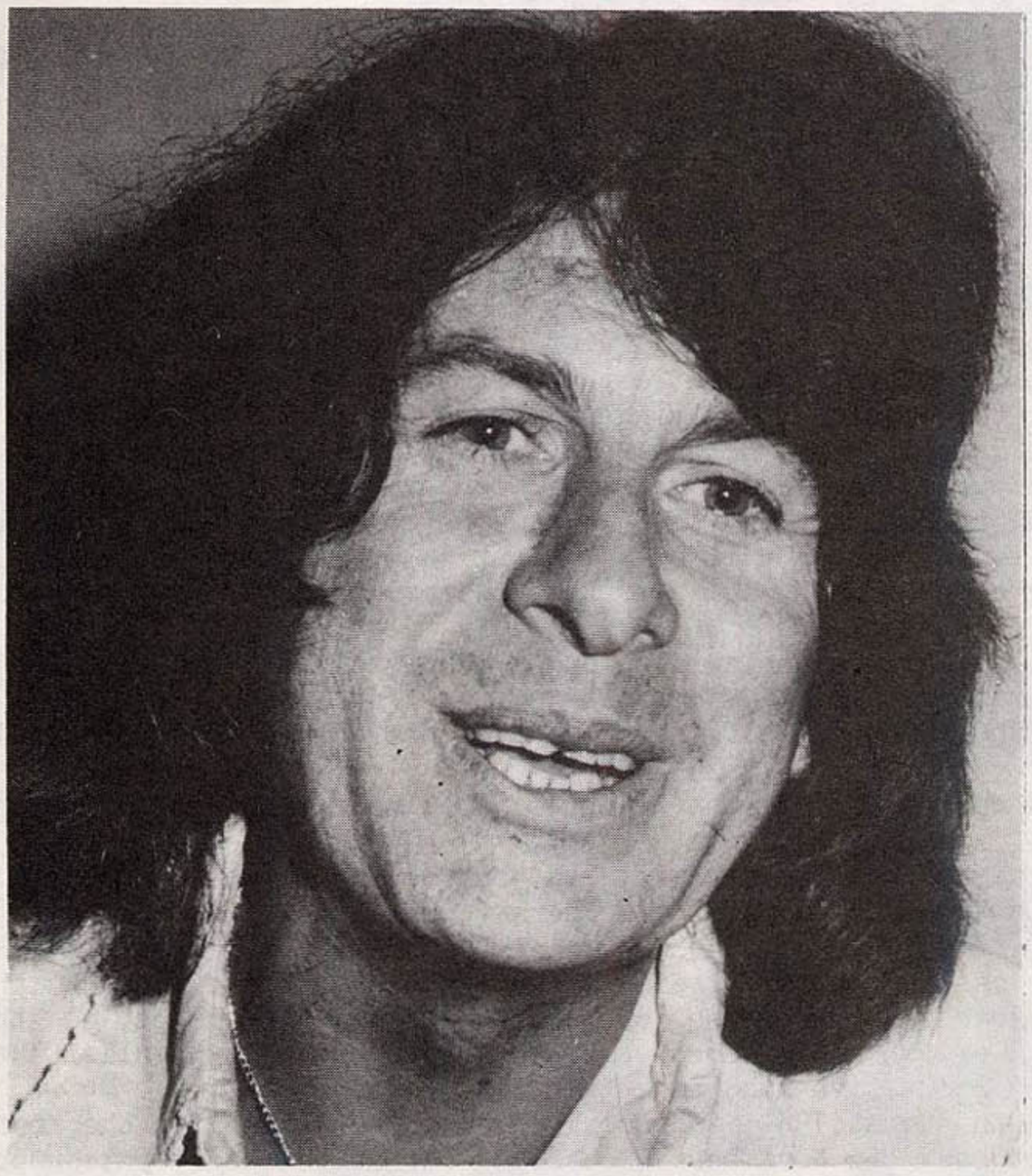
On Friday 19th September 1976, it appears no one realised the chain had snapped until the ship landed on a sandbank! She hit the bank between two wrecks; she was slightly damaged, but could have been destroyed had she not managed to avoid these dangerous obstacles which could have ripped open her hull. Once again, her natural survival instinct had taken over and found her a safe resting-place, just as it had on Frinton beach ten years earlier.

The station went off the air on the Saturday morning. not as a direct result of the lost anchor, but because the aerial feeder snapped in the continuing high winds. By the time she returned on 16th September, welding equipment had been taken to the ship and had been used to repair the feeder and the damaged hull-plate, a new anchor - with an adequate length of chain this time - had been fitted and dropped into position. and a new emergency anchor had been mounted on the deck - where it could be lowered just by cutting its securing rope.

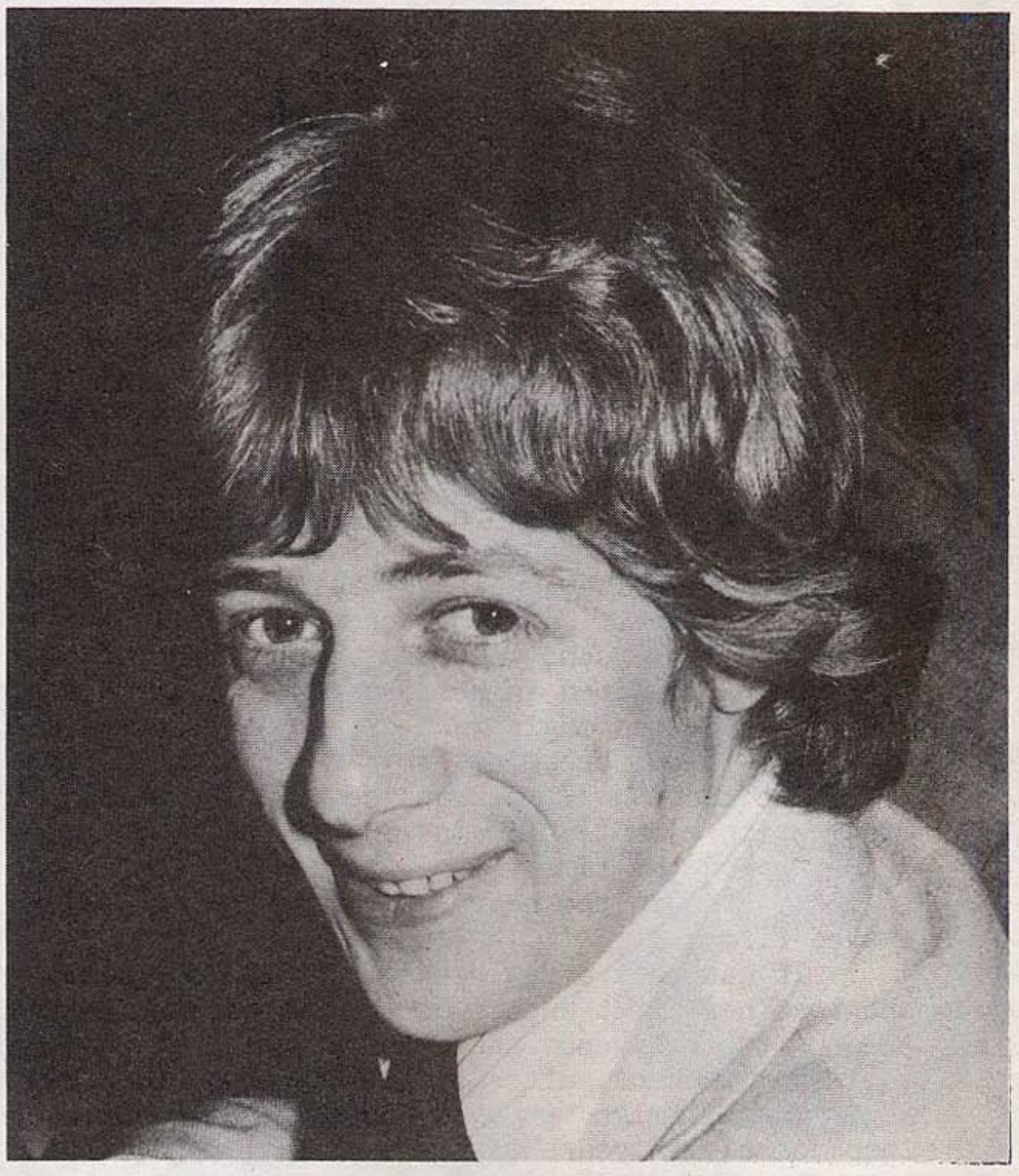
The Mi Amigo lost her anchor for the final time on Wednesday 19th March 1980. "They found out they were adrift when Tom Anderson went on deck to answer the call of nature and saw a beacon flying by", said Stephen Bishop later! However it occurred, the discovery was made in the afternoon. and the emergency anchor was dropped by 15:30 GMT, but by that time the Mi Amigo was already on the edge of a sandbank in only half a metre of water. As the tide rose, the ship bounced on the sandbank, was holed, took in water, and was abandoned at midnight. So ended the broadcasting career of the valiant MV Mi Amigo.

Caroline's new radio ship, the Ross Revenge, had been broadcasting for only five months when she first lost her anchor! She hit a sandbank and went off the air at 21:20 GMT on Friday 20th January 1984. But she was undamaged and able to make her own way back to her position the following Wednesday after riding out the storm on a temporary anchor. She continued to use her small anchor for several weeks although it wasn't too effective and she still moved around quite a bit. Then on Monday 5th March, a large tug arrived from Spain, repositioned her, and equipped her with a large new anchor and chain.

We can only hope that this one will hold for many years - now that she's twenty years old, surely Caroline ought to have grown out of needing this type of excitement!



Graham Gill



Michael Lindsay

Spangles Maldoon (alias Chris Cary) with Gerard van Dam and Ronan.



WORDS FROM JOHN MAIR

I arrived in April, 1974. There's been various stories about how I got out there and none of them are true!

I went over to Holland, to VanHogendorpstraat, and I met practically everybody you could think of there - Koos and Lones, Denis, Elja, Charlotte, Rene, Ellen, Chicago, Bob Noakes - and I spoke to them all and said I wanted to go out to the ship. They said "Oh yeah, another free radio fantic," and didn't really pay much attention. Denis was helpful - not encouraging, but very helpful! I went back to the office on a Friday which was tender day. Elja said "They've just left; why don't you go down to Scheveningen and see if you can catch them?" So I got on a tram for Scheveningen, but got off at the wrong stop, about three stops too far on. I started walking - hadn't a clue where I was going - and eventually got to where several boats were lying. I saw some people about to go out on a boat there and thought "That's Chicago" so I gave them a shout. He recognised me and came over with another guy with dark glasses on, who he introduced as Andy Archer. I said "Is there any chance of getting out to the boat? Practically everybody is due to come off and there's only Andy and Ellen going out." So they went away and had a chat, came back and said "OK, we'll take you out for a week."

It so happened that on that particular day I was carrying a bag with some of my belongings in it because I was about to move into a room in Den Haag. So I was lucky that by coincidence I had some clothes with me. I went out with the opinion I was going for one week and ended up staying for three weeks that first time. I didn't want to go off in case I didn't get back on again!

All sorts of strange things happened in the frst couple of weeks I was there. The laces were stolen from my shoes; shampoo was poured into my shoes; buckets of water were thrown over me on the air; eggs were crushed over my head; people used to come in and stop the record deck while the record was playing or press the button on the Spotmaster and play a jingle in the middle of my programme; all kinds of things, which can be very offputting as you can imagine - all geared to get rid of one in the first week. After you've had to put up with that for a couple of weeks you become part of the team.

I didn't expect to get anything for that first three weeks but when I came off Koos paid me seven hundred and fifty Guilders - that was an average of about £40 per week at that time, which was quite nice. I went off for a week, and then returned - and stayed.

We had a good crew at the time, all Dutch except for Mickey and Mike. There were two Captains that were alternating, they'd each be on one week. Captain Taal and his crew used to stick together, they were Dutch and we were English and there was no feeling of togetherness; but we all worked together with Captain Meyer, Jaap, Peter van Dyken and the late Mike Wall-Garland. Meyer left a week before the Bill came into effect and Donald took over; he was a carpenter and did a lot of work and repairs on the ship. We lost a lot of good people then, actually; but Captain Taal became much more friendly with the English when we were stuck on the ship together for weeks on end.

The Thursday night that the boat went across from Scheveningen to the British coast there was nobody on board to do programmes but Tony! He did something for a couple of hours but no other programmes went out. I think on the Friday night he used a pre-recorded tape that Mike Haggler had left behind and also one that Brian Anderson had left which was for a Saturday. There was also a Graham Gill one; Graham still reckoned he was going to record programmes for the station but nobody had told him one way or the other.

Because of bad weather we couldn't get out the first week. We arrived about four o'clock in the morning on Saturday, touched alongside and put a nasty dent up on the bridge, which remained there. We threw all the food across, dropping some tins and things into the water at the same time, then eventually put across a line attached to us. It's the first time I've ever gone across ship-to-ship with a line across; it must have been quite bad that day. So we got on board, sorted out all the Mi Amigo tapes; Mi Amigo got it together quite quickly. We used to get their tapes appearing in the middle of the night - and a boat was some way out into the distance again. It was quite freaky. They used to send all sorts of strange things on board with the tape, odd bits of food here and there. We had a proper tender every two or three weeks.

When we went out that time we thought we'd be out a month, six weeks at the most. It ended up being nearly nine weeks. As we'd been used to working two weeks and having two weeks off, to break the routine and do about eight weeks was a bit heavy.

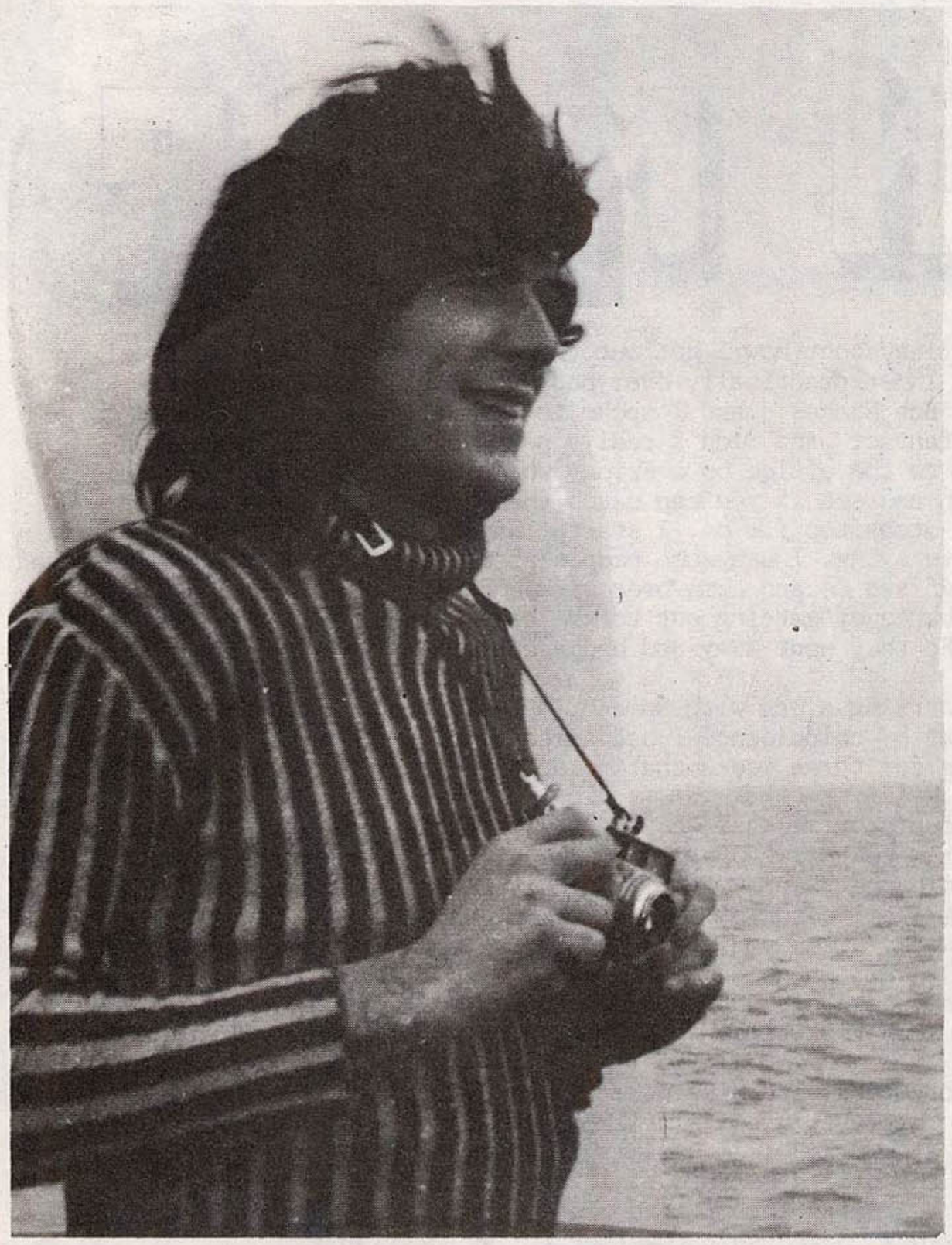
It was quite nice from the British coast in a way because you'd get small boats appearing with pints of milk and a daily paper, packets of Smarties and bars of chocolate; a proper luxury life we had for a couple of weeks. Sadly that didn't last. Eventually we got to the stage where we were using the last of the food and began to run out of water. We weren't able to shave or have a shower - no wonder people used to say we looked pretty scruffy when they came alongside!

We used to get extremely depressed about it but there was nothing you could do. If no boat arrived alongside you couldn't go anywhere. If you really wanted to you could go off on a boat that was commissioned to throw tapes and things on board on its way out to sea; but that wasn't the sort of frame of mind you were in. You were there to do a job and you wanted to get on with it. That's how I felt most of the time. We found as the weeks went on we got less enthusiastic about going to the library and picking out records but you felt that you had to do it because you had to put on a show. I used to try to pick out something different every night because I never wanted to play the same things too often.

Then the weather broke, and we had three weeks of pretty bad weather. We were thinking "We've got to get out of this place." Then this boat appeared from Burnham-on-Crouch; we were so pleased to see this thing coming alongside after weeks of "Oh, the tender will be out tomorrow" and never turning up, that Johnny, Andy, Clive and myself quickly said our goodbyes and jumped on board. We'd been there about nine weeks and couldn't care less where we went to. Jose the cook was over the side with his white trousers and cooks hat happily painting away the day and singing - that's how it used to be, a lot of fun - and we waved goodbye to it all not knowing it was the last time or what was ahead of us. In the distance was a small trawler with nice, happy fishermen giving us a wave and being very friendly; it's only afterwards we found out what they were up to.

We set off, watched the Mi Amigo disappearing into the distance, and I went below to get some sleep because I'd been up for about thirty-six hours. About half an hour later Andy came down and said "There's a boat following us, I think it might be a police launch because it's been staying behind us for quite some time." It seemed to keep in close contact with us all the way in. Eventually there was one which came in on the starboard side and flagged us down, and the one from the stern came alongside as well on the port side.

Two guys who I assume must have been Home Office officials stepped on board, and also two policemen. We were duly



Peter Chicago

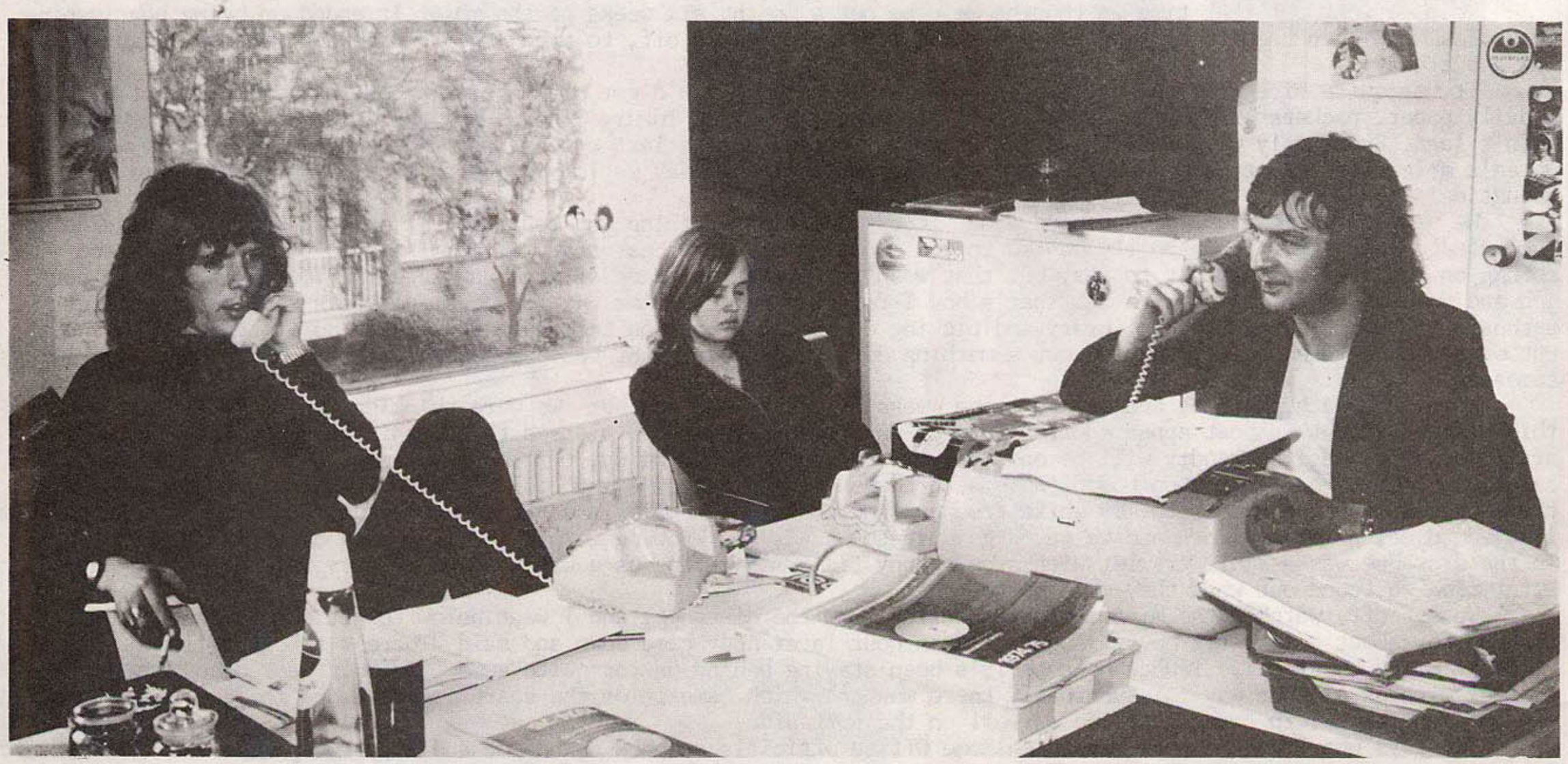


Paul Alexander



John B. Mair

Robb Eden, Samantha and Andy Archer in the Van Hogendorpstraat office.



cautioned in connection with supplying an illegal vessel or whatever, they took our names and asked if we had anything to say and we all replied "no". The two policemen stayed on board and the other two went back to their boat.

We came into port and as is the practice if you're coming in from a foreign port or from the United Kingdom Continental Shelf as it's termed you've got to be Customs cleared. Two plain-clothed Customs men came on board and they went through our baggage. It was unfortunate that all four of us, thinking that perhaps it could be our last visit to the ship, took off a couple of recordings of programmes we'd done just to keep for future reference - something I had never done before; on reflection I wish I had! Andy had a recording of his famous Barkley James Harvest interview in his possession. They were all confiscated and later came up as exhibits in the Southend court case. Following that we were just allowed to walk free.

In March I spent about three weeks in Edinburgh and the day I arrived home I had a telephone call from the police inquiring if I was at home. What else could I say but "yes"? I was informed there was someone from Chelmsford to see me, so I went down and we had a chat.

We'd had a reporter come out from the Southend 'Evening Echo' - that was the one that convicted us I think! Hargreaves said "Is that you in the photograph?" "I'm sure that's not me, it doesn't look a thing like me! But it does look a similar name to me, so it could be." The details were in that article anyway. I was reluctant to say anything to him at that time other than acknowledge that my name was John Mair. But it was obvious I was the same person and I couldn't deny that.

A few months later one of the local detective constables came to my door with a big summons sheet with about twenty-four pages that didn't make much sense to me about various people that had monitored the station and taken bearings and come to the conclusion it was in International Waters and the frequency it was on. I was summoned to appear at Southend sometime in September.

In the Court area all the people who are due to appear are billed - like a lot of stars at a pop concert! The names were all listed there - Andrew Dawson, Michael Baker, etc. - my name wasn't there! So I went down to them and said "I've been summoned to appear here at ten o'clock this morning and my name's not up on the Court list. If you want I can go away home and forget about it." So they checked on it and sure enough I was due to appear. We hung around outside for a while, the Press started to arrive and supporters came; we walked in and had some coffee in the interval and eventually were called into Court. The gallery upstairs was absolutely packed with people although at that time I couldn't see them - didn't particularly want to see them because I was a bag of nerves, shaking all over.

Mike Baker I think came first for supplying records and food and so on to the ship; he pled guilty. The boatman was next - he had done several trips but not the one we were connected with. Our boatman was on holiday and couldn't appear, but appeared at a later stage. Myself and Andy were asked if we had any objection to appearing together because we were both on the same charge; no objection was raised (it made little difference to us), we went forward and pled guilty. Johnny's appearance was put back as he was to plead not guilty and the witnesses weren't available for that particular day.

They later came forward with the fines. We didn't know quite what to expect because you could be subject to a £400 fine. We were all fined the same with the exception of the boatman who they were fairly lenient with as he was slightly elderly. He probably came out of it best as he did several trips and was paid each time. I was fined £100 with £50 costs - pretty heavy stuff. I wasn't too happy about it; I don't suppose anybody else was either.

It was a bit sad that that was the last connection I had with the station where I'd had a good time. I would have liked to have gone back but it would have been a bit risky; and at the time they didn't need anybody out there. With my financial situation I had to make a decision to take a shore job; I didn't know what to do as all I'd ever wanted to work in was radio.

The only thing I regret about being out there is that I never took any photographs!

TRYING TIMES

In 1967, when the British Government passed their Marine Offences Act which made it illegal for a British Subject to work on an offshore radio station, much was made of the fact that Britons were being denied the basic freedom to work where they chose and that even freedom of speech and expression was threatened, as it was theoretically illegal to display a Caroline sticker in a car. However, the new law was never put to the test in the Sixties.

In the Seventies it was a different story. Spain became the only European country with a coastline not to ratify the Treaty of Strasbourg - that is, to introduce their own Act outlawing offshore stations - and personnel from Caroline and the other radio-ships started to play a cat-and-mouse game with the Authorities.

It was not only Caroline staff who were to be pursued by the would-be upholders of the British Act. Harassment began almost as soon as the Mi Amigo returned to the Essex coast in August 1974, with police raids on small boats suspected of supplying groceries to the ship. Some policemen disguised themselves as fishermen, sat on a trawler close to the Mi Amigo and took photos of everyone who sailed near. These tactics eventually resulted, a year later, in the first Home Office victory - successful prosecutions of two DJs being brought ashore to England, and a man supplying records to the ship, and a pensioner whose boat had been used for some of these crimes.

The four accused appeared in Southend Magistrates Court on 18th September, 1975. Andy Archer and John B. Mair both pleaded guilty of broadcasting from the Mi Amigo and were each fined one hundred pounds. Michael Baker was proud of having supplied a few records to the ship and had no wish to deny it; his fine was twenty-five pounds. Walter Arthur Ord, a wartime commando, admitted assisting the Mi Amigo and was fined twenty-five pounds. Another man who came ashore with Andy and John was transmitter engineer Clive Corell. He avoided prosecution by going to work in the Middle East until the two-year 'statute of limitation' on the MOA had expired!

On 9th October a second boat owner appeared in the same court, accused of carrying four passengers from the Mi Amigo. Mr Vincent Ferguson also pleaded guilty, and was fined fifty pounds. So far no-one had decided to fight the charges - but that was about to change. Mr Ferguson's fourth passenger, Johnny Jason, also appeared in court charged with broadcasting from the Mi Amigo. He pleaded Not Guilty and his case was transferred to the Crown Court where he would be tried by jury. He had to wait a further six months before his case came to court however.

Meanwhile harassment continued both in Britain - where the disabled Editor of a free radio magazine was threatened with prosecution for having printed Caroline's wavelength! - and in Holland where a boat was arrested with programme tapes and a faulty generator on board which was believed to have come from the Mi Amigo.

Great Drama on the High Seas developed on 14th November, 1975. After the ship had lost her anchor and drifted from her normal position, the Home Office decided she was broadcasting inside territorial waters - and raided her! About fifteen policemen - including one Sergeant Hargreaves of the Essex Constabulary who seemed to be in charge of offshore radio prosecutions at the time - and Home Office officials boarded the Mi Amigo and put her transmitters off the air at 15:01. They did their best to disable the transmitter; a tuning-coil that they confiscated can be seen to this day in the National Wireless Museum which is situated in the middle of the Isle of Wight.

Four of the seven men aboard were arrested and taken to Southend, three of them handcuffed to policemen. The following morning, a Saturday, the court was specially opened so that they could be charged; all were charged under the Marine Offences Act. The four were freed on one thousand pounds bail each, and ordered to surrender their passports.

Caroline was already back on the air - and back at her usual anchorage - by the time the four appeared in court again, on 11th December. Only the Chief Engineer - the one man who'd refused to be handcuffed - pleaded Not Guilty to the charges of taking part in an illegal broadcast. British DJ Simon Barratt was fined two hundred pounds; American DJ Michael Lloyd fifty pounds; and the Dutch Captain Werner de Zwart one hundred pounds.

Peter the Engineer was scheduled to appear in Court again on 23rd February, 1976. By that time the police had convinced him that there was no point in defending his case as they'd siezed the ship's log which he'd been in the habit of signing twice a day. So, he changed his plea to guilty of maintaining radio equipment while illegal broadcasts were being made and was fined one hundred pounds. Another Caroline jock was also in court that day; Don Stevens admitted he'd broadcast every night for fifty-two days and was fined fifty pounds.

The big day for Johnny Jason finally arrived on 26th April, 1976. In Southend Crown Court he was defended by internationally-renowned James Comyn QC. The crux of the case was whether or not Johnny broadcast live from the Mi Amigo. Mr Comyn showed that without actual witnesses this could not be proved. The Home Office case now revolved around the fact that police officers Hargreaves and Burden stated that J.J. had admitted the offence when being interviewed, despite the fact that statements and notes taken at the time did not show this. The officers "remembered" a few weeks before the trial that he had said it. Mr Comyn challenged this evidence, making the officers look rather incompetent if not a little silly. Judge Martyn Ward stopped the case, as the police didn't have enough evidence for a prosecution; he instructed the jury to return a verdict of NOT GUILTY; and Johnny left the Court a free and innocent man, and the hero of the hour.

It may not surprize you to learn that since J.J. fought and won, no further prosecutions have been brought against Caroline DJs in Britain. But the next set of courtroom antics could only be described as bizarre...

Have you ever "Published an Inscription, displayed in public, calculated to promote either directly or indirectly the interests of a business whose activites are considered illegal?" Ronnie Doyle and John Shannon of Liverpool did - they displayed Radio Caroline stickers in the windows of their cars! They appeared before Liverpool Magistrates on 26th April - yes, on the very same day that J.J. was winning his great victory, Ronnie and John were undergoing a very different experience.

The case, in fact, ran for a whole week; evidence and exhibits included tapes of Radio Caroline, T-shirts printed with skull and crossbones designs, photos of the Mi Amigo taken by a Sheerness boat owner who'd been paid eighty pounds plus VAT by the Home Office for them, photos of Ronnie's shop with free radio material and models of radioships in the windows, and a poster advertizing Ronnie's disco. The the very 'posh' prosecuting council had to read out in court: "Get on in there and do yer thing, to the swingiest, ringiest 'Sound of the Nation' with them mad Caroline DJs turning them groovy turntables - Yes Man! Psst! Don't be late."

The disco in question had a console designed to look like a radioship - complete with mast - and was called by Ronnie "The Official Radio Caroline Roadshow". It regularly appeared at the Fleece Hotel, St. Helens; James Monks, the manager of the hotel, was found guilty of "indirectly promoting this illegal station" by displaying Ronnie's poster in his foyer and was fined twenty-five pounds - and ordered to pay costs of fifty pounds!

Ronnie and John, not having James Comyn to defend them (Ronnie conducted the defence himself), were both found guilty of publicizing an illegal offshore station. They appealed, but ended up with five hundred pounds costs to pay apiece! Ronnie paid his fine, gave up his radio business and took a job as a taxi driver. John, however, refused to pay the court costs and spent Christmas in jail, serving forty days for non-payment (not for his MOA charges).

This particular case caused a great deal of anger in the free radio world, partly because it had cost the British taxpayer a four-figure sum to stage, but mainly because Britain can no longer consider herself a free country when her subjects can be fined and imprisoned for uttering the innocent words "Radio Caroline" in public!

The Home Office strengthened their position a fortnight after John Shannon was released from jail. On 27th January, 1977, Southend Magistrates Court took the limelight again when David Hudson was fined for wearing a Caroline badge! David organised a sightseeing trip to the Mi Amigo, and one of his passengers was a policeman disguised as a fan; Detective Constable Gary Skull testified that David had "published an advertisement" by selling Caroline badges to his passengers (Gary himself purchased one - in the line of duty, of course!) and had allowed newspapers and letters to be supplied to the ship. As David couldn't afford to pay a lawyer to defend him he pleaded guilty on all counts - and was fined a total of one hundred and twenty-five pounds.

Walter Arthur Ord was also in court, as it was his boat David had chartered from which to commit his offences. Mr Ord was for the second time found guilty of contravening the MOA - he also offered no defence due to lack of finance - and was this time fined two hundred pounds.

Mr Ord, a sixty-eight year old pensioner, was only able to afford to continue to run his boat by hiring it out to fishing parties and pleasure trips, such as visits to the Mi Amigo. Following this incident the Board of Trade examined his boat and decided it wasn't safe to carry passengers unless it was equipped with radio and modern navigational aids. As Mr Ord could not afford to install the equipment his licence to carry passengers was revoked. A friend of Mr Ord's told us "It broke his heart to have to sell his boat and shortly afterwards he died."

For awhile, things cooled down in Britain; but the heat had already been transferred to the Continent.

On 11th May, 1976, fifty-four year old Captain Jacob Taal faced the Amsterdam Court. After the British police had closed down Radio Caroline and Mi Amigo the previous November, Captain Taal had assisted the m.v. Mi Amigo by moving her back to her normal position. His defence was that at that time she was not a radioship because her transmitters had been disabled, so he was merely aiding an ordinary ship that was in distress, having lost her anchor and being without a captain. However the court found against him and he was fined Dfl. 1,000 (£200) and given a six-weeks suspended prison sentence.

Tried with Captain Taal was Koos van Laar, a merchant from Ijmuiden. Van Laar was found guilty of transporting Captain Taal to the Mi Amigo and of supplying the ship with a new anchor-chain. He was fined Dfl. 2,000 (£400) and sentenced to eight weeks suspended imprisonment. His sentence was more severe than Taal's because, said Judge van Waarden, it's the people who supply the radioships that allow them to continue their activities.

A month later, on 29th June, the same punishment was meted to two other persons who had asssisted the Mi Amigo at that time. Lones T. had taken a new anchor to the vessel and done some work aboard her, and Koos van D. had also worked aboard the ship and had helped to repair the transmitter. The Officer of Justice claimed that these two were the Mi Amigo's top men in Holland and had been found by the Dutch police operating regular radio contacts with the ship; their defence lawyer replied that the real top men couldn't be touched. A crew member, Jan van der V., also appeared and was fined one thousand guilders and put on three weeks probation.

On 14th September, seven people received stiff penalties for helping the radioship. The most severe was a four thousand, five hundred guilder fine and a six weeks suspended sentence for Donald van B., who was found guilty of ferrrying staff to the radioship on five occasions. Johan P., Jozefus H. and Gunther de Vries and seaman Leo V., were all fined five hundred guilders and given two weeks suspended imprisonment; machinist Albert A., was fined one thousand guilders and a four week suspended sentence. The seventh man was DJ/newsreader Tim Riddler of Radio Mi Amigo, who was not in court as he'd moved to Spain with the rest of the Dutch contingent of the radio station. In his absence he was fined two thousand guilders and sentenced to six weeks suspended imprisonment.

Radio Mi Amigo, although operating from Radio Caroline's ship off the British coast, was a Belgian radio station.

On 29th September, 1976, a trial began before the Correctional Court of Justice in Belgium of forty-one persons suspected of running, working for, or advertizing on the station. When the verdicts were released on 12th November, thirty-three of the accused were given fines and prison sentences. The station's two owners, Sylain Tack and his brother-in-law Christiaan Hendrickx were most severely dealt with. They received fines of four million B.Frs (£65,466) and two million B.Frs (£32,733) and also one year's imprisonment, respectively.

Sylvain never served his sentence nor paid his fine. He'd already left Belgium for good and at the time was living in Spain. He told reporters that he hadn't received an order to appear in court and hadn't even known when the case was to be tried!

The year ended with another DJ/newsreader, Jan van der Meer, leaving the ship on 4th December only to be arrested. In the town of Harderwjk in Holland he was found guilty of illegal broadcasting and fined Dfl. 1,000.

Samantha Dubois went to court in Amsterdam on 12th January, 1977. She denied broadcasting illegally from the Mi Amigo but was found guilty and fined two hundred pounds with a three weeks suspended sentence. "The three weeks suspended sentence is for two years, so if I get caught within two years I go to jail for three weeks," she later explained, and added "I haven't paid the fine and I'm not planning to either which means forty days imprisonment." She meant it; so you can imagine her fury when she discovered that her Grandma had quietly paid the fine on her behalf!

The Dutch authorities had had no difficulty tracking down Samantha as she'd given her own home address in Den Haag over the air as a correspondence address for Radio Caroline when she discovered that letters were piling up in Spain and never reaching the ship.

France was the venue for the next round in the battle. On 25th February, 1977, a court in Lille found five businessmen - Frederic Doucedame, Patrick Ringart, Paul Balogh, Jean-Marie Talleux and Jean-Pierre Delva - guilty of supplying the Mi Amigo with food and laundry. Fines ranging from one thousand francs (£117) and five thousand francs were imposed.

On 4th March, another boat was intercepted under suspicion of supplying Caroline; its crew came to court on 1st June, 1977. The skipper, Andre Fauchet, was fined five thousand francs and the mate, Francis Bigand, two thousand francs; their crewman, Michel Delpierre, was acquitted. The skipper and mate, it was claimed, knew very well what they were doing as they'd specially constructed tanks fitted to their boat to transport fuel to the Mi Amigo.

A young Englishwoman, Mrs Oonagh Huggar, who was introduced as an ex-Caroline employee, now working for a Liechtenstein company in a secretarial capacity, appeared in court with the sailors. She was found guilty of finding suitable boats to tender Radio Caroline and was fined four thousand francs (about £500). Because of the affair Mrs Huggar lost her secretarial job and so returned to live in England. She had also lost her address-book, which was confiscated by the police.

Backing Britain (I'm sorry, I'll read that again): back in Britain, Caroline's Chief Engineer, Peter Murtha, was arrested on 5th August, 1977, after hitching a lift from a Belgian trawler and coming ashore at Gorleston in Norfolk. He was released on an unprecedentedly high bail of one thousand, five hundred pounds, and appeared before Norwich Magistrates again on Friday, 9th September. He pleaded guilty to "maintaining wireless apparatus for illegal broadcasts on the high seas" and was fined one hundred and fifty pounds. Peter made it clear to the court "Under International Law what I am doing is not wrong; it is wrong because I was born British." As Peter now has two convictions against him under the MOA in Britain, a third could result in a prison sentence.

The next incident to hit the headlines was the "Press Freedom" Case. On 15th November, 1977, two directors of "Music Radio Promotions" appeared before Marlborough Street Magistrates Court, facing twenty-four charges under the MOA, relating to advertizing Radio Caroline in their magazines "Wavelength", "Radio Guide" and "MRP News". The hearing was adjourned to 6th January, 1978, on which occasion both pleaded Not Guilty and asked for their case to be transferred to a Crown Court, to be tried by jury. Much publicity attended this particular case, as it was felt the freedom of editorial content of all magazines and newspapers could be jeopardised by this precedent.

The two defendents had to wait two years before their case was finally heard by Knightsbridge Crown Court. The judge, Justice Gordon Friend, directed the jury to decide if any advertisements in "Wavelength" had the effect of implying that Radio Caroline was broadcasting. They found that four of the advertisements did promote the station; Nic Oakley and Mike Baron were each fined fifty pounds for each offence, a total of four hundred pounds. They expressed their intention to appeal; but by this time "Wavelength" and "MRP News" were no more, and "Radio Guide" had been taken over by IPC Magazines and contained news only of British Independent Local Radio stations.

A possible spin-off of this particular case was that the GPO withdrew the services of Post Office Box Numbers from Music Radio Promotions and two other organizations, "Caroline Newsletter" and the Free Radio Supply Service. The GPO felt it was inappropriate for Post Office Box Numbers to be given out over the air of a radio station they considered to be operating outside the law. MRP managed to convince the GPO that their ads on Caroline were not paid for or even asked for and would stop, and their P.O. Box was reinstated. The other two groups found themselves new addresses.

The Belgian government held a "week of action" against the Mi Amigo in 1978. The "Mi Amigo Drive-in Show" had its equipment seized (it was later returned); air tickets to Spain that had been paid for by Radio Mi Amigo were confiscated; the magazine "Radio Visie" was raided; and every one of the advertizers on Radio Mi Amigo had their houses searched. This all culminated in the Court of Bruges trying a number of people on 6th November, 1978. For tendering the Mi Amigo, ship owners Germain Ackx and Andre van Lul and Skipper Hector Snauwaert were fined sixty-nine thousand B.Fr. each and given three month suspended sentences, and fisherman August Gheys was fined twelve thousand B.Frs and given a one month suspended sentence. DJs Frank van der Mast and Hugo Meulenkoff and radio technician Robert Veramme were each fined twelve thousand B.Frs.

It was more than two years after the radioship sank by the time all the cases had finally worked their way through the courts! Sylvain's sentence stood, as no appeal had ever been lodged against it. But at the Ghent Court of Appeal on 23rd December, 1982, all other prison sentences were quashed, only fourteen people still had a fine to pay, and their original fines were considerably reduced.

So far, that's the end of the story. The Mi Amigo finally succumbed to the elements and sank beneath the waves in 1980; radio Mi Amigo obtained a ship of their own in 1979 and have had their own share of troubles.

Since the new Radio Caroline ship, the Ross Revenge, has been broadcasting, only one brush with the law has been noted concerning her personnel. In November 1983 Andy Archer left the radioship and entered Britain aboard a small launch. He, and three other "Caroline Crewmen" were arrested as they'd avoided customs; they were advised that if they are to be prosecuted it will be for illegal immigration.

It is to be hoped that, in the current political climate, no-one would want to try to revive the ill-conceived and badly constructed Marine Offences Act of 1967.

Researched by Robin Humphreys from "Monitor" magazine



The most popular sticker of the Sixties!

Tom the Cook, Otto, Stewart Russell, Herman de Graaf, Steve Kent, Roger Matthews and Marc Jacobs.

Kenny Page, Michael Lloyd and Tom Anderson.

Sharing a Ship

In the Seventies, when money and commercials were in short supply, Radio Caroline developed a new concept in sponsored programmes. They hired out their entire station to other organisations for hours on end every day - sometimes for the whole of daylight hours.

The idea may have arisen in 1973 when storms drove the Radio Veronica vessel, the Norderney, onto Scheveningen beach. Caroline was off the air at the time and offered Veronica the use of her transmitter until the Norderney could be refloated.

Veronica's tapes began at noon local time (11:00 GMT) on 11th April. The Norderney was successfully refloated on 16th April. She drew alongside the Mi Amigo, and at 10:00 GMT on 18th April began to broadcast again on her usual frequency of 557 kHz. Caroline relayed her transmissions on 1187 kHz until 17:00 GMT on 20th April. So, for ten days, Radio Veronica enjoyed the privilege of broadcasting from the Mi Amigo and Caroline had the honour of keeping on the air Holland's first and best-loved offshore station.

It was rumoured that Veronica was so grateful for this service that she paid for the new mast that Caroline needed at the time to get her back on the air.

Radio Atlantis

The first station to contract for regular hours from the Mi Amigo was RADIO ATLANTIS. It was owned by Adriaan van Landschoot, a young Belgian businessman who had made his fortune in the world of textiles.

Atlantis was first heard on Sunday 15th July 1973. It took to the air at noon Belgian time (11:00 GMT) on 1187 kHz. This was Caroline's "259" frequency, and Atlantis always used this transmitter throughout her stay aboard the MV Mi Amigo; yet the station always referred to itself - even on its stickers! - as being on 385 metres.

Targeted at an audience in Belgium, Radio Atlantis broadcast for thirteen hours per day, in Dutch and Flemish. All the programmes were taped in Oostburg, a Dutch town near to the Belgian border.

By the time the three-month contract with Caroline had run out, van Landschoot had decided to obtain his own radio ship, so the contract was not renewed. The last of the Atlantis programmes were heard on '259' on 10th October; although over the following week old programme tapes were replayed. At 08:20 GMT on 18th October the transmitter left the air due to the loss of the aerial mast. Radio Atlantis was never again heard broadcasting from the Mi Amigo.

Radio Mi Amigo

On Saturday 29th September, a new programme was heard on '259' after Radio Atlantis had ended for the day. For one hour from 18:00 GMT, Radio "Joepie" took to the air (Joepie is the name of a magazine in the Benelux). As with Atlantis, its wavelength was announced as "385"; in fact, the following day the station occupied the same time-slot but this time called itself "Station 385"! Their third programme appeared on Saturday 6th October, with yet another name-change. They had now become RADIO MI AMIGO.

'259' returned to the air in time for Christmas broadcasts. From 28th December, Radio Mi Amigo took over the transmitter from 05:00 to 20:00 GMT each day; the station officially opened on New Year's Day, 1974. Radio Mi Amigo was to remain with Caroline for almost five years.

Like Atlantis, Mi Amigo was a Belgian station. It was financed by Sylvain Tack, owner of the Suzy Wafels bakery and Start Records. Most of the programmes were taped. The project had taken over the old Caroline Studios in Caroline House and renovated them for their own use the previous October; but at the end of January 1974 they moved to new studios in Wilhelminastraat, Breda, also in Holland. With the introduction of Dutch legislation against offshore stations in August 1974 Holland could no longer be used as a base; by that time the whole of the Mi Amigo operation had been transferred to a villa in Playa de Aro on the Mediterranean coast of Spain.

Sylvain was a "jingle freak", therefore his station soon became famous for its jingles. Their first package was produced by Steve England, who spent three weeks in Holland working on them.

When the taped programmes ended for the evening, Mi Amigo inaugurated an English Service live from the boat. They employed their own English-speaking jocks for this, although most of them also did programmes on Radio Caroline and Seagull. This service began on 10th January, 1974, and was usually for one hour per evening. Its last programme was aired on 26th July 1974; although on many occasions after that date the English jocks on board "filled in" with a live programme on Mi Amigo when tapes hadn't arrived from Spain in time. Likewise Mi Amigo's newsreaders on board often presented live shows both on their own station and on Radio Caroline.

Another innovation was introduced on 13th October 1976; this was a "pop news" bulletin in English. It was recorded in England and aired weekly.

In an effort to produce a better signal in its Benelux target area, Mi Amigo changed frequency three times! On 10th/11th December 1976, '259' was abandoned in favour of '192'; that in turn was deserted on 23rd July 1977, and the station returned to the air two days later on '212'. The third change took place on 1st December 1977, to '319'.

A new wavelength means a new jingle package. The '192' set were recorded by three top Dutch groups, Catapult, Octopus and Roots.

Radio Mi Amigo's days on board the ship she was named for came to an abrupt end on 20th October 1978. At 10:54 GMT the station went off the air due to a generator defect. When Radio Mi Amigo returned to the air it was from her own radio ship, the Magdalena, anchored in the Thornton Bank off the Benelux Coast. She never again broadcast from the transmitters of Radio Caroline.

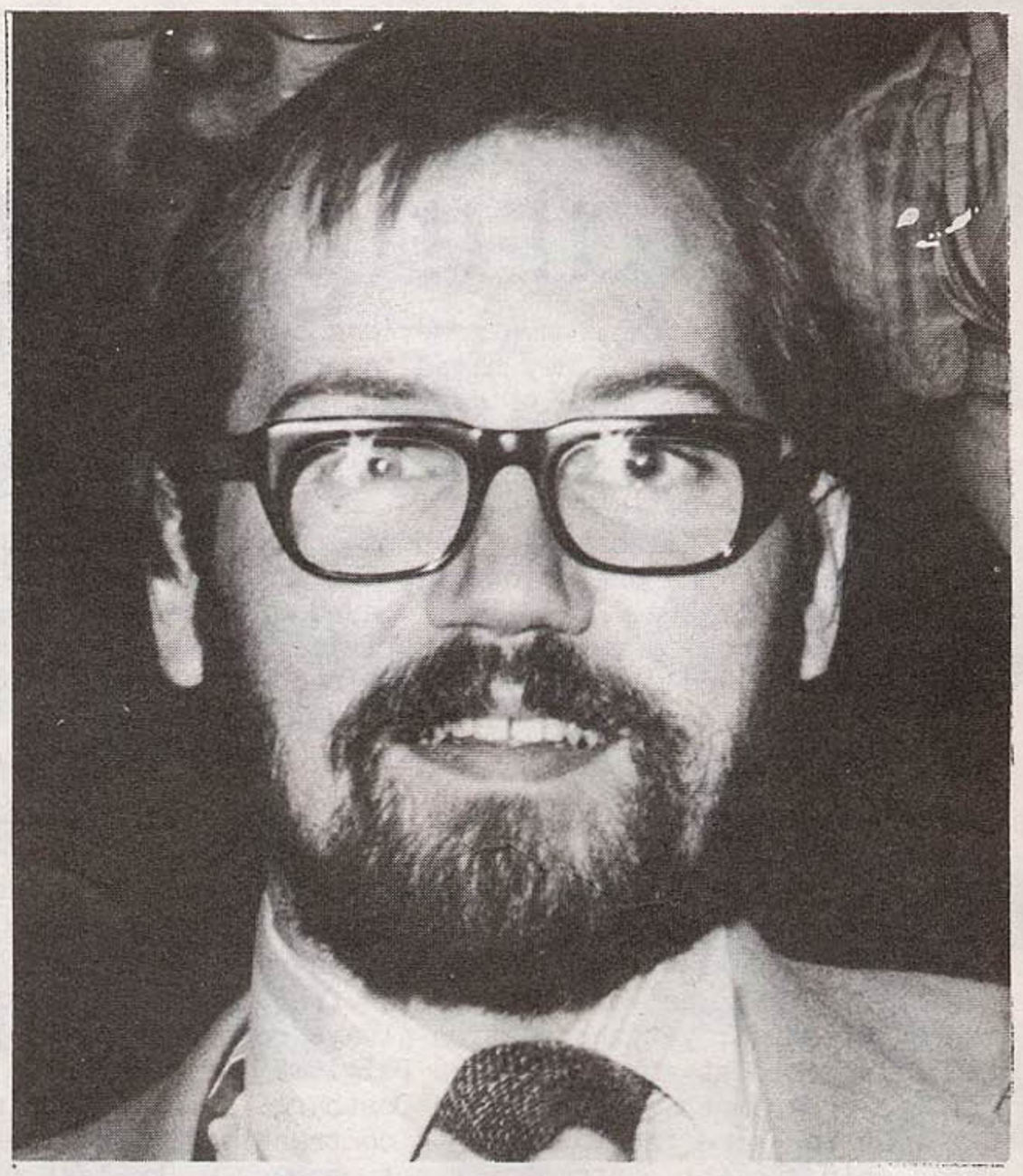
MI AMIGO Rappin'

At Easter 1978, when the Caroline Roadshow visited the Southend United Football Club, Bob Rendle went along with his tape recorder and chatted with Frank van der Mast and Stuart Russell. Hugo Meulenhoff was there too. Let's eavesdrop on the conversation...

Frank: We had one disc jockey, Eric, taken off after he had an epileptic fit. We were looking at a James Bond film and he went to the toilet, then Samantha went two minutes afterwards and she started screaming so we all went up there. He was stiff and had about a 39° fever. The next day he was all right but the next day he had a fit again. He had to be taken off by a lifeboat because it was too dangerous to leave him on the ship. He was only seventeen, he's at school again now, studying English, and he works for Hospital Broadcasting in Den Haag. He likes radio and he's very good.



Mike "The Poet" Wall-Garland



Bob Noakes

Elja, Mike Philpott, Barry Everett, Andy Archer, Norman Barrington, Robin Banks & Mike the Poet.



Bob: What were your first thoughts when you went out to the ship?

Stuart: What the Hell am I doing out there? No, it's very exciting when you go out there for the first time, and it's a good feeling all the time when you see the old thing out there.

Bob: How do you feel about the fact that if you were on, say, Radio Orwell you'd be a "personality" whereas on Caroline and Mi Amigo you may have ten times as many listeners but you're ignored by the media?

Frank: It's not really important I think.

Stuart: It depends on if you're going on the radio just to get your face in the paper and to get your name known. If you work on Mi Amigo and Caroline you go there because you want to, not because you want to be well known. It's a different kettle of fish altogether.

Bob: What sort of cassettes arrive on the Mi Amigo?

Frank: BASF chrome dioxide C120s. because it has to hold one hour of programme. Everything's mono.

Bob: What happens if a cassette jams?

Frank: We have to go on live, and then try to fix it.

Bob: When the seagulls come up on the tapes, are the seagulls actually on board the ship?

Frank: No, they're on the tape. We fade them out, we play the commercials, and then we fade the seagulls back in again.

Bob: What's the actual count-down to the C120s?

Frank: "This tape has been made for promotional purposes by AVOC Musical Service in Spain to be used only in restaurants, hotels, discotheques and dances. It is unlawful to broadcast this tape. Persons breaking these orders will be prosecuted by AVOC Musical Service, Spain. Tape number is... blah blah blah... and here is the countdown: three - two - one." That's how they start. Then we press the pause button and we release it after the news.

Bob: The C120s don't give any trouble?

Frank: No, none whatsoever, it works perfect.

Bob: How many times are they used?

Frank: Usually only once because it's very difficult to take them off again.

Bob: They can't be taken off the same time as new ones are put on board?

Frank: No, because new cassettes are sometimes brought in a way in which it is impossible to give them something back - unless you can fly!

Bob: What happens to them once they've been broadcast?

Frank: They end up in a big box, we keep them, and when there's a really big tender coming they're going to Spain; but usually they're going over the side. We take a lot of them home. We record practically all our live programmes and take them home as a souvenir.

Bob: At the end of 1976, you were using a piano music piece at the top of the hour which you never announced.

Frank: It was called something like "Root Beer Rag", it's from Billy Joel, from one of his albums.

Bob: Stuart, when Ferry Eden came on board you were doing joint 'flashback' shows on the last half hour of Mi Amigo, then you suddenly stopped and Ferry took over the whole thing.

Stuart: Yes, because it was dinnertime! I went for my dinner between six and six-thirty.

Frank: Nothing could keep him away from his potaahtoes!

Stuart: No, I love my potaahtoes. I let Ferry get on with it so I could do my own programme later on; it was a new thing at the beginning but then I thought "It's Mi Amigo or it's Caroline"...

Frank: Actually, he became too popular!

Stuart: Yes, I got so popular I got so many letters the ship started to sink so they took me off!

Frank: Ferry Eden is unpleasant to work with because he thinks he's a superstar, and he just isn't. I think with a lot of practice and good guidance he could be a good disc jockey, but he's got a lot to learn. It's very easy to comment on all the disc jockeys on the ship at the moment, but what they need is somebody to tell them how to do it because all five of them - Ferry, Rob Hudson, Johan Visser, Leo van der Graaf and Dick le Haerle - haven't got the real experience.

Hugo: Because you're not there?

Frank: They need anybody who knows what he's talking about to say to them what sort of music they must play, how they must use the jingles, but there's nobody there. They can do what they want, but it's not the right situation. That's why I'm thinking of going back, Marc Jacobs too. I'm not saying we're the greatest disc jockeys, but we know how it must be done, so we can tell other people how to do it.

Bob: Before you went on the air, who told you what you must do and what you must not do?

Stuart: It's not exactly telling people what they must do and what they mustn't do. Everyone knows what Mi Amigo and Caroline is; and when you get out there you find out a little bit more about one thing and another. The obvious things you know you can't do and can't talk about you don't do, but it's not a question of someone standing over us and telling us what we can and can't do. You just use your common sense. It as simple as that.

Bob: So you'd say the same to any new chap going out there who'd never been on before?

Stuart: Yes. You'd take him under your wing when you get out there, and he'd follow on from there.

Frank: It's the way they programme which is silly. Everybody has his own half-hour, for instance.

Bob: How much choice do you have in the music you play?

Frank: You can pick what you want as long as you play the Mi Amigo format: Top Fifty, golden oldies, new records.

Bob: And that would now include the Lieveling and the Playatip.

Frank: Not the Playatip, that's only on the programmes in Spain, not on the ship. That's why it's called the Playa-tip.

Bob: Could you name any of the advertisers and what they actually advertise?

Frank: Herman Kramer, Golden Chickens; Stimorol, chewing gum; Leda, which is a fashion house, Joepie...

Hugo: Also Miss Sheila is a fashion house; Canada Dry, beer...

Frank: Mode Aalst Standing were prosecuted, that's why their adverts stopped. It's a bit silly because the law can't really touch them in Belgium and Holland.

Bob: How did they get prosecuted then?

Frank: Because Belgium is a funny country when you're talking about the law. In Holland and also in England you're not guilty until you're proven guilty. So for instance if a guy from the Home Office walks to me and says "You're Frank of the Mast, you work for Mi Amigo", I say "well, up yours, prove it." But when they say in Belgium "You work for Mi Amigo" you have to prove that you're not. That's the difference. But a Dutch firm that wants to advertise on Mi Amigo can't be touched. They never have been in the past four years and they never will be. They can't, because technically they're advertising on a station in Spain.

Hugo: The station is actually a complete Belgian station and it's very popular out there. It's going down well there in Belgium.

Bob: Sylvain Tack wouldn't come along, then, and say "what the Hell is Stuart Russell doing on my programmes?"

Frank: Oh, no! Mi Amigo disc jockeys did Caroline programmes all the time.

Stuart: It's the same old cliché: one happy family. Right, lads?

All: Yeah! L.A., Man! Wow!

Bob: How much do you think L.A. is generated not only on board the ship but with the listeners?

Stuart: It's got more of an effect, probably, than people are prepared to admit. They think about it, probably, and try to start it but need a little bit of encouragement for the whole thing. It's the same as the people on the ship, when a new chap starts to talk about it he's of course a little bit embarrassed, but when he starts to do it a bit more, and a little bit more, it all becomes a little bit more natural. We try to put it across as best we can, but we're the same as the listeners, really, just other people doing it their own way.

Bob: Does anybody lay down what L.A. 'commercials' have got to to out?

Stuart: No, no, it's up to the individual people to put it across. We all know what L.A. is, what it stands for, and we put across our way of thinking because the listeners don't all think of it the same way. We don't all think of it the same way, so we all have our own way of putting it across, so that it affects a wider scope of person.

←→ Eric Beekeman was aboard the Mi Amigo for twelve days and presented programmes for ten days. He was taken →← off by an Essex lifeboat at midnight on 26th February 1977, and taken to Essex County Hospital at Chelmsford. His mother came to collect him from the hospital and he was flown back to Holland under sedation. Details in "Monitor" number fourteen.

CAROLINE:

Improving your standard of living but not necessarily your material wealth.
Tom Anderson

The station that's so laid back the DJs operate the controls with their toes.
Ed Foster

Nine out of ten radios said their owners preferred it! Peter Quinn

"We're Sinking!"

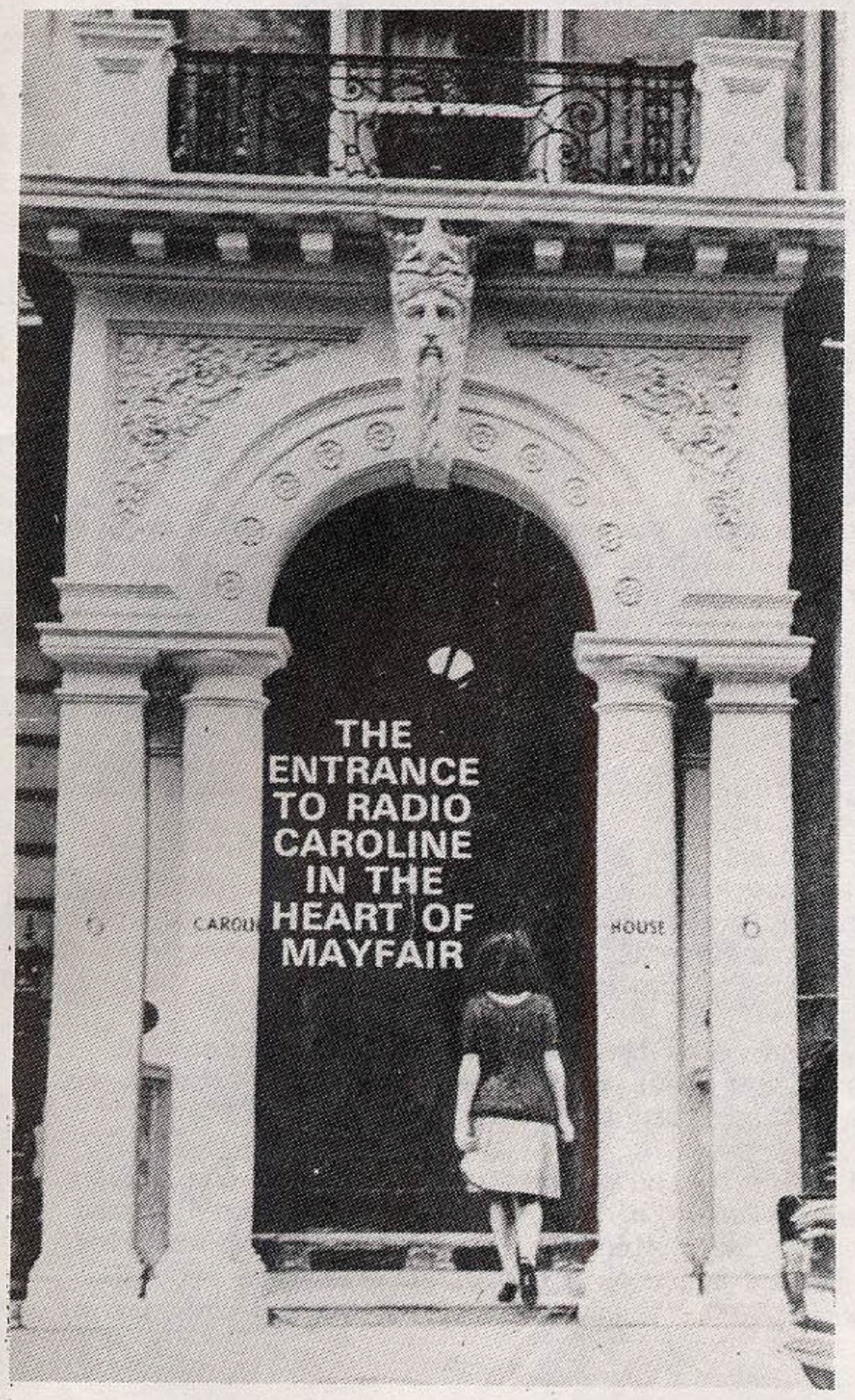
Four times the Mi Amigo took in water, causing those on board to fear the ship may be about to disappear beneath the waves. Three times she was saved, but on the fourth occasion she was finally claimed by King Neptune.

Episode One

Hurricane-force winds were buffetting the Mi Amigo on Friday, 10th September, 1976. The radio Mi Amigo studio, at deck level, had been flooded out when a wave smashed a porthole. It was too rough for records to stay on the turntables so only tapes had been aired all day. Yet it was still a shock to hear Ed Foster suddenly announce at 19.35 GMT "We are on a sandbank and in distress, and require assistance from shore." It's not known exactly when her anchor chain broke; according to the Coastguards there was no noticeable change in her usual position. However, the ship had been damaged by landing on the sandbank, she was taking in water and those aboard had to constantly empty her out with buckets until a pump had been rigged. The pump then ran day and night until welding equipment could be taken aboard to repair a hole and a gash in the hull.

The Englishmen on board - Peter Chicago, Tom Anderson, Ed Foster and Mark Lawrence - knew that they were in no danger by staying aboard the trusty vessel; but their faith was not shared by their Dutch companions. When a boat pulled alongside to offer assistance, the Captain, crew and Dutch DJ's abandoned ship!

Miraculously, the high winds that continued to ravage the countryside stopped completely in the vicinity of the Mi Amigo. In a bubble of calm right in the eye of the storm her hull was mended and she was towed off the sandbank and back to her usual moorings - where the formidable task of clearing up and drying out had then to be performed.



Caroline House in the Sixties - it still looks the same twenty years on!

Andy Archer
Radio Caroline International.
Singel 160,
Amsterdam,
Holland

Marine, &c., Broadcasting (Offences) Act 1967

CHAPTER 41

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

Section

1. Prohibition of broadcasting from ships and aircraft.
2. Prohibition of broadcasting from marine structures
3. Prohibition of acts connected with broadcasting from certain ships and aircraft, and from marine structures outside United Kingdom.
4. Prohibition of acts facilitating broadcasting from ships, aircraft, &c.
5. Prohibition of acts relating to matter broadcast from ships, aircraft, &c.
6. Penalties and legal proceedings.
7. Special defence available in proceedings for carrying goods or persons in contravention of section 4.
8. Saving for things done under wireless telegraphy licence.
9. Interpretation.
10. Power to extend Act to Isle of Man and Channel Islands.
11. Short title and commencement.

Andy Archer's copy of the MOA!

An emergency anchor was fitted in the late Seventies.



Episode Two

On Thursday, 4th August, 1977, Herman de Graaf noticed a pool of water under the radiator in the record library and assumed the radiator was leaking. But further investigation showed that there was far too much water for a simple leak - in fact there was about a foot of water in the engine-room and downstairs cabins! Bilge-pumps were brought into operation at once; the Coastguards were informed of the situation, and some of the ship's lifeboats were thrown overboard and inflated - they "exploded into great big orange and blue and green things", explained Stuart Russell later.

All was going well until the pumps suddenly stopped working! Then a frantic search began to find the source of the trouble. Floorboards, hatches and metal plates were ripped up, but nowhere could any hole in the hull be found. Eventually one of the diesel pumps was brought back into operation and the water level began to subside again.

It seemed as if the water was coming in under the working generator, so the other one was started and the first one turned off. At that point all became clear - there was no damage to the hull, the water was being pumped into the ship through the cooling system of the generator, which had developed a fracture in its inlet pipe!

The valve was turned off, no more water was coming in, and so the emergency was over. Unfortunately, the water was accidentally turned off to the cooling system of the other generator too, causing it to overheat, cut out, and put the station off the air! So, ironically, by the time the listeners knew there was something wrong, the danger was already past. Later, Roger Matthews told "Monitor" that "We had quite a party that night! Then in the morning we gave a full account of what happened."

Episode Three

Friday, 19th January, 1979. The station had not been broadcasting regularly for the past three months due to the lack of a fuel-supply tender. At the time of the emergency she was off the air.

On New Years Eve, the hull of the Mi Amigo was damaged during a storm and she began taking in water. This didn't cause a problem until 18th January, when the generator running the pumps literally fell to pieces! The spare generator couldn't cope with the necessary load; there was on deck a brand new generator that would have provided enough power but it couldn't be started. So, on Friday afternoon, in a force seven, East-south-easterly, the Harwich lifeboat "Margaret Graham" was called out and rescued all souls aboard; three Englishmen, two Dutchmen and Pete Wilson, the canary.

However the Mi Amigo didn't sink! Why not? It could be that she was saved by the BBC! When they announced that she was in such danger on their TV "Nine O'clock News", all the listeners knew about it, and we all started to send out waves of Love to the ship, to keep her afloat... on Saturday, the salvage team found that although still full of water she was afloat and no longer listing.

Pump equipment, fuel and paraffin lighting were put aboard the Mi Amigo by the salvage crew, but only one person was willing to stay aboard her overnight - and that was the Chief Engineer, Peter Chicago. On his own, he fixed up and kept alight paraffin navigation lights, got one pump working in the area of the engine-room, and another pump emptying water from the studio and the central cabins. Another boat went out on Sunday and took a petrol generator to provide lighting and general power, and brought back the report that the ship was saved - thanks to the courage and devotion of Peter Chicago.

The transmitters were undamaged and Caroline returned to the air at Easter.

Episode Four

Wednesday, 19th March, 1980. The Mi Amigo was sitting on a sandbank after losing her anchor in gales and heavy seas. As the tide rose, she began to bounce about, causing holes to appear in the hull-plates. Holes had been appearing, one at a time, throughout the winter; twenty-seven of them, regularly spaced in a row. It's believed that the plates were damaged when she'd sat on her anchor-chain on a sandbank in 1976. Each hole had been repaired as it appeared, with a wooden plug and concrete. But now the concrete was cracked and the plugs knocked out by the pounding she was receiving.

Water rose fast, and although all the pumps were working at their capacity, they were fighting a losing battle. The Sheerness lifeboat "Helen Turnbull" was standing alongside and advising the crew to abandon the Mi Amigo as the weather was worsening. Finally they agreed, closed down the station at midnight, and prepared to leave. It took three-quarters of an hour to transfer four men and one canary to the lifeboat, in a force ten storm.

Everything was against the Mi Amigo that night. Peter Chicago wasn't on board to work his own particular brand of magic, and the listeners didn't know of anything amiss until it was too late to generate a Love-bubble to keep her afloat. She was reported sunk within twenty minutes of the lifeboat's departure.

Four years later, the Mi Amigo's mast can still be seen at position 51° 35' North, 1° 17' East, about five cables from the NW Long Sand beacon. And nobody can say that we've heard the last of the Old Lady yet; there have been many plans to raise her, if only as a museum piece. Who knows if one day someone might just provide her with a new lease of life?

Researched from "Monitor" Magazine

DOUG WOOD talks to Tony Blackburn

Doug: Why did you want to go on Caroline in the first place?

Tony: I wanted to get into radio, and there was nowhere else you could go. If you went to the BBC they told you to go and get experience elsewhere and the only other station would be Radio Luxembourg. I also wanted to get into records because I was at the time a singer.

Doug: When did you actually join the station? And what were your first impressions of the ship?

Tony: I joined in late July 1964. When I was sailing out there it was a very calm day and I remember seeing this massive great mast that was there and it was just a beautiful sight. It was something unique and novel and one of the most exciting things of my life.

Doug: What were conditions like on board?

Tony: On Radio Caroline they were a little bit cramped; the conditions weren't quite as good as on the Radio London ship which I lived on about two years later. Nevertheless it was bearable and I had a thoroughly enjoyable time out on Radio Caroline.

Doug: Caroline's history is punctuated with drama. You were on board when the Caroline South ship actually went aground on Frinton beach in January 1966. What was it like on board that night?

Tony: I was doing the breakfast show at that time, so I went to bed fairly early. It was about nine o'clock when we started going ashore and Norman St. John, another disc jockey on board, came downstairs and said that I should get up because we were going aground. It was always a bit of a joke that we would eventually end up on Frinton shore, so I said "Oh go away, Norman, I've got to get some sleep." He went away, then about five minutes later the Captain came down and said "You really must come up and get dressed." I went upstairs and all the lights of Frinton were all around, it was amazing. We still thought we were about a mile and a half out - we didn't have any radar on board, you see - but then the Captain shone this light at the side of the boat, and about two hundred yards away there were people walking along the seashore! I remember him shouting out "Mayday!" and that was it. We just came into shore, there was just a little bump and we were there. The waves were all over the boat and everything; it was really a most amazing night.

Doug: Are there any other dramas that you can remember during your stay on Caroline?

Tony: Well, they did move us to the Thames Estuary at one time to try and get a better signal into London. They anchored us in a very bad place where all the tides met up and the boat really was rocking from side to side. The transmitter caught fire in the transmitter room, and we had to actually be strapped in our beds there, in case we fell out. You know when they say "green with seasickness"? A guy called Keith Martin actually went green.

Doug: Did you ever believe that Caroline would be made legal and come ashore?

Tony: There was a time when we thought the pirate ships would be made legal, yes. I think there was a deal going on behind the scenes with the Conservative Party when the General Election was going on, where if the Conservatives were returned to power they would have legalised commercial radio. They more or less said that perhaps Radio Caroline and Radio London could be brought to shore and anchored at the side of Harwich for the time being before we got studios. But then the Labour Party got in and of course they destroyed the whole lot.

Doug: What made Caroline such a big success? Was it just the music?

Tony: Caroline, of course, and Radio Atlanta, were the first to get on the air. They were successful because the BBC wasn't providing anything in the musical sense of the term; they only had one programme a day that played records. Also, up until that moment the BBC had always said "there's no room for non-stop music", and they were obviously totally wrong. So Caroline had to be successful

Doug: Caroline is now twenty years old; a new, bigger ship is now in the Thames Estuary; what sort of future do you think it's got?

Tony: It's difficult to say. To me, the heart went out of Radio Caroline, and the actual sound of Radio Caroline died, when the Marine Offences Bill went through. It just lacked everything from that moment on. There's probably a great audience for what it's doing now; I personally don't listen because it isn't my sort of music, but nevertheless if people enjoy it the best of luck to it. I personally would like to remember it as it was, which is why I don't listen to it now, but I think if it went for a Top Forty format I think it would sweep the board; it would really be a terrific threat to commercial and BBC local radio stations - and Radio One for that matter. I wouldn't necessarily like to go out there, but with a format that I could put on board there we could sweep the board with it. But the way it's doing it now is not for me, or the mass audience.

* * * As Caroline entered the Eighties, it was sponsored programmes from American religious organisations which were paying the bills, as well as taking up a large slice of Caroline's airtime. Some were enjoyed by the listeners, some disliked; but there was one that couldn't be ignored and became compulsive listening for those who hated it as well as its followers. This was "How Your Mind Can Keep You Well In A Moment Of Truth" and was a 'phone-in advice column hosted by one Roy Masters, an Englishman living in Los Angeles.

Our thanks to Bill Rollins for making available to us the following interview, more of which can be heard on the new Jumbo Records six album set "The Radio Caroline Story, 1964 to 1984".

ROY MASTERS Speaks Out

Interviewed by Bill Rollins

Bill: How did you first hear of Caroline in the States?

Roy: Through radio broadcasters here in Los Angeles and the agent who booked the show for me through the Paragon Agency.

Bill: Did you find advertising with Caroline was cheap or expensive compared to America?

Roy: About the same for what we were getting.

Bill: How many stations do you broadcast on in America, Roy?

Roy: Seventeen. I started to do a programme in New Orelans by Short Wave, hoping to get to England and have an international radio programme where people of all races and colours and creeds can call in, and we can broadcast the answers to show that the whole world has the same problem whether you come from Timbuctoo or you come from China or India. We all have the same emotional problems with one another, the same feelings, the same gut-level reactions that destroy us. I feel that somehow by crossing international boundaries and religious boundaries, and speaking deeply to the hearts of human beings, we could UNITE THE WORLD. But that deal fell through because the station got a little bit upset because I spoke a little bit about politics too. They didn't like me criticising the Federal Reserve Board, which I do on a regular basis.

Bill: What response did you get from Caroline's English, or European, listeners?

Roy: Phenomenal! As a matter of fact, a phenomenal response. I think my programme was widely respected and widely listened to. We still get people writing to us and calling from England regularly; maybe once a week now from England people still call me about problems they have. and they can't hear me on Caroline and they want to know when I'm coming back. There's one man that used to listen to Caroline and he has a little 50 watt radio station, he hangs his antenna from one tree to another tree, in London, and he puts my programmes on in London right now! So we're getting some response from that too. but I wish I was back on Caroline.

Bill: Some people in England have criticised certain ways you handle people. Do you feel when you are abrupt sometimes to people that that is the necessity they need to pull them together?

Roy: Yes, that's very necessary. I feel that if you're too nice to people they cling to you and they never learn. My duty is to speak sharply to them so that they are shocked into the realisation of what I'm saying and don't cling to me but grow from their own understanding. It takes a certain amount of dispassionate qualities in order to do that. You can speak Truth in an inoffensive, sweet, musical way, where people will love you for speaking the truth; but you'll never help them. You have to be firm, dispassionate, almost sometimes to the point of being unfriendly. But I don't want them to worship me or put me on a pedestal or to get caught up with me in any way. I have to shock them into the realisation. like a slap in the fact. People need someone to love them to make them realise what fools they are. There's a certain amount of love in that and I'm not into the business of ego-stroking. I'm not in the business of being popular. I'm in the business of being dead honest and the Truth hurts sometimes. Those who are ready for the Truth will love you for it and those who are not ready for it, who smart. who don't like their problems exposed, resent you for it. They'll accuse you of all kinds of things like being smug and egotistical and arrogant and harsh and cold; I'm used to that, though. I have it in America too. but I have a big following in America, maybe two or three million.

Bill: You were, Roy, the most listened to 'religious' broadcaster; but you're not like many religious broadcasters where you are preaching God. You are preaching to Humans. How do you react to that?

Roy: I feel, and I have always felt. that religion has missed the point, and that people are caught up in personalities and words. and they're caught up in history, and that Christians, religious people, are mostly historians and they're not civilised in their heart. They haven't found the way to be human towards one another. So I have felt very strongly that something more was needed and I've searched all my life. I used to be a professional hypnotist and that's how I discovered that people were hypnotised, and the whole world is, including when they're caught up in religion they're still hypnotised. I found that the cause of all problems is the way we react to stress and how we're caught up in our religions (which seems to be an answer but isn't) and so I have found a way to teach people to be objective to their own thoughts and feelings and take control over their own lives, which I believe is really the root of real religion. It's the basis of the Old Testament and it's the basis of the New Testament, to be a free human being living by what appears as wisdom in your heart and mind, and not to listen to other people and be motivated by the people and let Christians or religious people tell you how to live your life and how to think. We have to think for ourselves. We have to discover for ourselves, and that's what I needed to teach people. I needed to learn that myself, and I did; and then I needed a way to reach people. Caroline was the most wonderful opportunity; but one night I had a very heavy programme and I think that's what sank the ship. I blame myself for that, I feel a little guilty. I hope they can resurrect the ship and I can get on again.

Bill: In Los Angeles, how did you hear of the sinking, and what were your feelings?

Roy: The listeners called us from England and told us the ship had sunk. I saw it on television too and people wrote to me, but people called us right away. The next day the 'phones were ringing, people from England informing us that Caroline had gone down. I felt very sad about it. We'd been on there almost a year and the audience was getting bigger and bigger and bigger. It was very sad.

Bill: There were some rumours that you were going to help finance a new ship. Any comments on that?

Roy: No one's ever approached me! So that's all I can say. As a matter of fact that wouldn't be such a bad idea.

Bill: You would take airtime again?

Roy: I'm standing in line! For seven o'clock in the evening until eight o'clock, that was my old time. So we're standing by waiting with our money in our clammy little hands. It was a great service that the people in England had. Even if it only played music. it wasn't under some kind of Government censorship. I do not believe in Government censorship. PEOPLE SHOULD BE FREE TO LISTEN TO WHAT THEY WANT EVEN IF IT'S GARBAGE.

Los Angeles, 1982

The Ross Revenge

The "Freyr" was built by Seebeckwerft, A.G. Weser of Bremerhaven, West Germany, in 1960. She had been ordered by Isbjorninn, a major Icelandic fishing company, for whom she worked for eighteen months under the captaincy of Asgeir Gislason.

She was sold to Ross Trawlers Ltd., had her name changed to Ross Revenge, and was converted for side fishing. Thus she became the largest sidewinder operating from the UK when her skipper, J.N. Kerr, brought her from Reykjavik to Grimsby in 1963.

With exceptionally large fish-rooms of a 27,000 cubic feet capacity and a 2.300 hp N.V. Werkspoor diesel engine which gave her a speed of 16 knots, it wasn't long before her catches were breaking records with almost every trip, mostly under the commands of skippers Jim Meadows and Ray Pepper.

Her ownership changed in 1969 to British United Trawlers Ltd., when that company took over Ross Trawlers Ltd.

Various problems in the fishing industry finally made our super-trawler redundant. She was sold in 1979 and converted to a North Sea wreck-recovery vessel.

In March 1983, the port of registry of the "Ross Revenge" was changed to Panama, under the ownership of Grotham Steamship Lines Inc. At this time she was harboured at Santander in Spain being converted to a radio ship.

Her new 300 ft. mast was the tallest ever constructed on a ship - it is 62 ft. taller than the ship is long!

The "Ross Revenge" is a very stable ship. Crew members from her trawling days say they wouldn't even notice if there was a gale blowing. Perhaps with the Caroline Spirit aboard she'll prove to be as safe as the old "Mi Amigo"!

Bibliography

There are certain books - records too - that a dedicated Caroliner shouldn't be without. Are all these items in your collection? Some are no longer available first-hand; some can be obtained from East Anglian Productions/Jumbo Records, 21 Walton Road., Frinton-on-Sea CO13 0AA, Essex; or from FRC-Holland, Postbus 17460, 2502 CL Den Haag.

Caroline - A Story in Photos.
A collection of high-quality photos, with text in English and Dutch. The most recent publication in our list, it includes info up until 1980.

Radio Caroline by John Venmore-Rowland.
The first book to be published about Caroline, it appeared in 1967 before the Marine Broadcasting (Offences) Bill was passed. Contains many photos of DJs.

S.O.S. - Ten Days in the Life of a Lady by Simon Barrett.
Tells the story of the drifting and arrests of 1974.

Radio Caroline.
A collection of photographs edited by Mike Baron and published by Music Radio Promotions.

The Radio Nord Story by Jack Kotschack.
English translation published by Impulse. Photos and details about the mv Mi Amigo which carried Radio Nord before Radio Atlanta.

Offshore Radio by Gerry Bishop.
The only encyclopedia ever published on this fascinating subject. Correct until 1974. A valuable reference book.

When Pirates ruled the Waves by Paul Harris.
The first book about offshore radio, Paul had to form his own company (Impulse) to get it published! Too innaccurate to use for reference, but an essential collectors item.

Independent Radio by Mike Baron.
Of general interest to anyone keen on the history of radio and includes details of Caroline and other offshore stations.

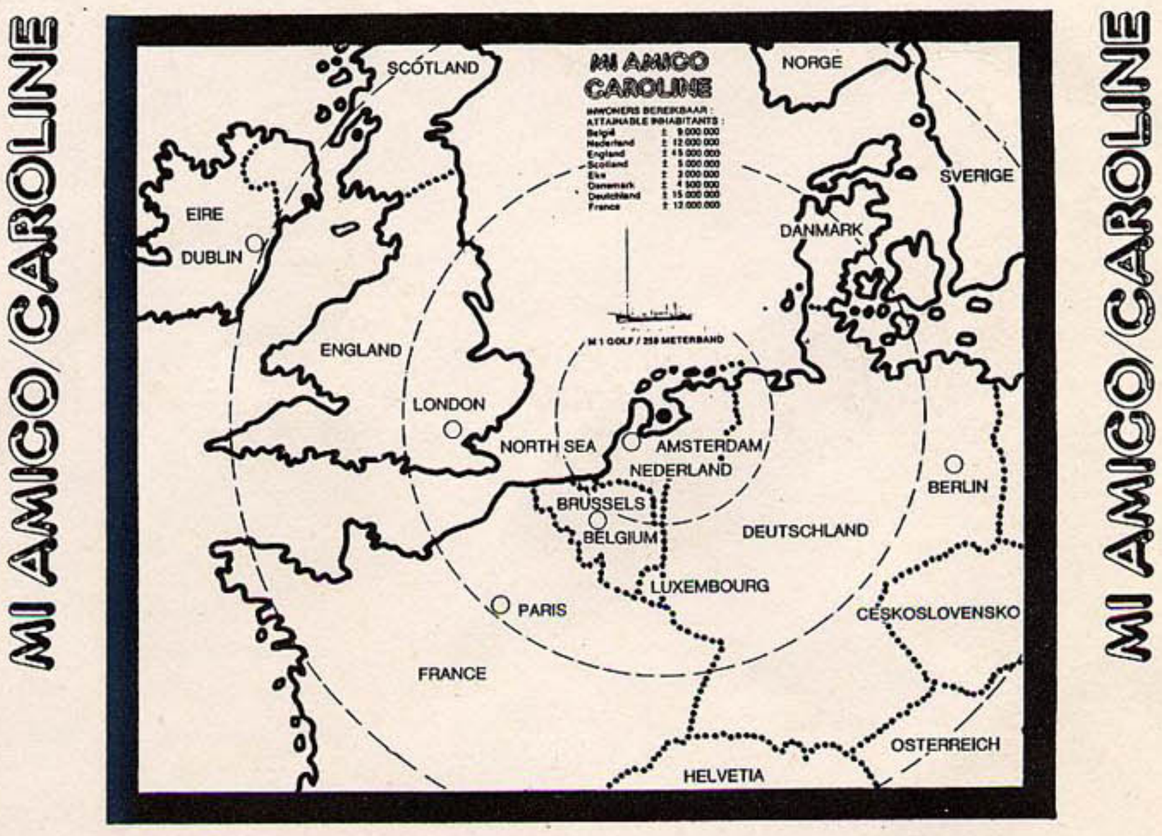
Radio Luxembourg by Richard Nichols.
One chapter is devoted to the offshore stations with photos of Caroline DJs.

Records

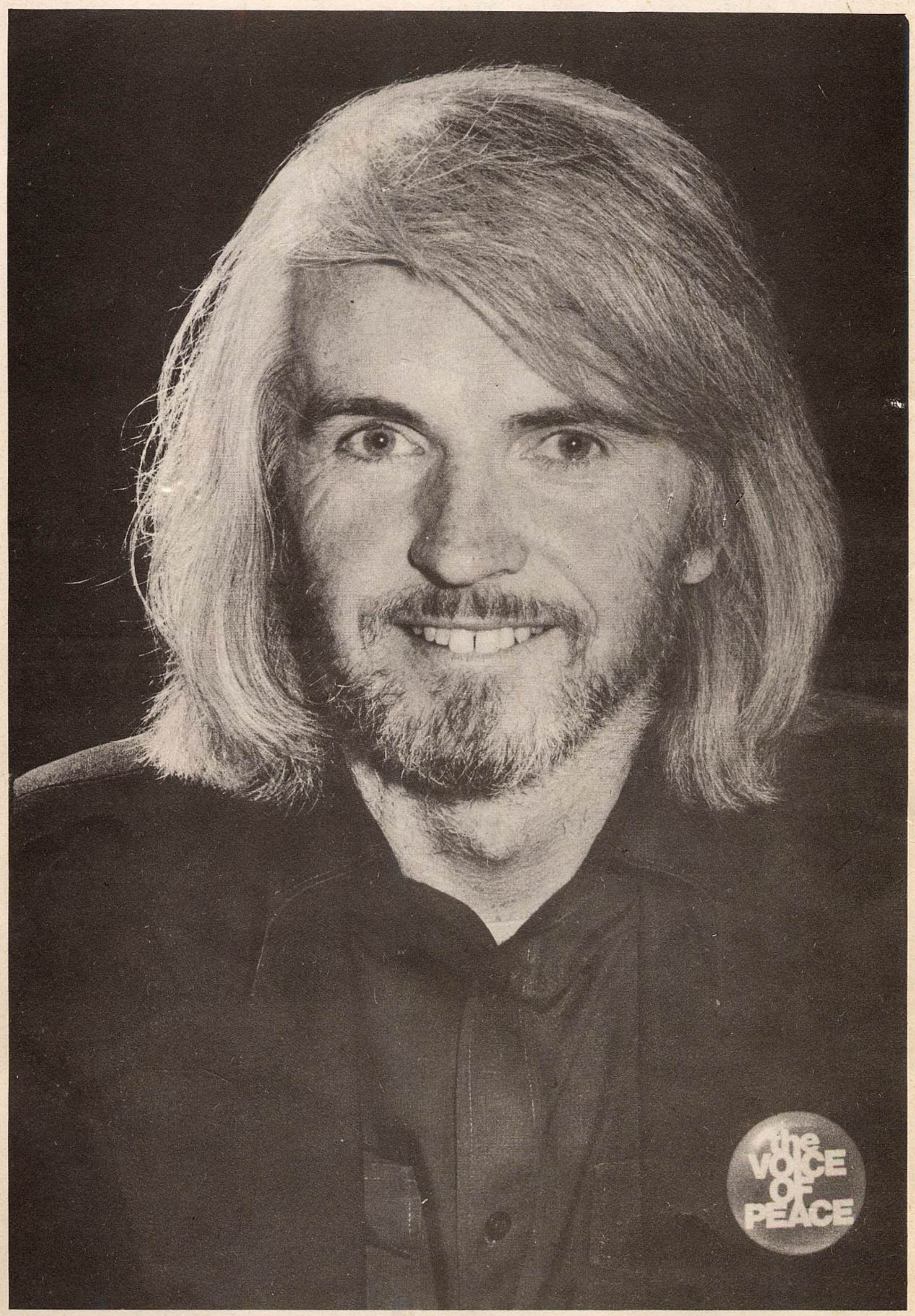
Caroline - the True Story.
Produced by Brian Anderson, Norman Barrington and Bob Noakes, it makes exciting listening and is unique in giving Gerard van Dam's side of the story!

Caroline - the Official Story.
A double album produced by Jumbo Records; perhaps not as exciting as the true story, but makes up for it in accuracy.

Loving Awareness.
"What can we say about this one that isn't said in the music itself?"



The Radio Caroline Story.
This brand-new set from Jumbo Records comprises six albums and a photo souvenir booklet. We consider this set to be a perfect complement to "Happy Birthday Radio Caroline"; both are being published to celebrate Twenty Years of Caroline and contain much original material. Whereas we have concentrated on the Sixties, The Radio Caroline Story, while being quite comprehensive about the early days, throws a great deal of enthusiasm into being right up to date. The DJs interviewed are too numerous to list; Andy Archer links their stories together with much background information. You'll be satisfied to find everything you expect - and delighted to find quite a few "extras" too!
*** The first One Thousand sets are being pressed in Caroline Blue vinyl and each set will be individually numbered - so for a real collectors item don't delay in sending in your order!


the
VOICE
OF
PEACE