

THE FAR EAST NETWORK OKINAWA: IMPACT, INFLUENCE,
AND PERSONAL STORIES FROM
THE FIRST 50 YEARS

by

LADONNA AIKEN

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Abstract

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LaDonna Aiken, M.A.

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Supervising Professor: Andrew Clark

The American Forces Network (AFN) began during World War II to boost the morale of troops serving overseas, and to that end, military broadcasters at AFN Okinawa have served as the link to home for troops stationed on the island since 1945. This research captures a pivotal time in the history of broadcasting through the memories of military veterans, their families, and the Okinawan people. Interviews with listeners reveal they tuned in for the music, friendly voices, timely weather reports, and American perspective. Military veterans describe the experience of broadcasting as exciting and uniquely challenging, while government reports and archives document changes at the station. The Far East Network (FEN) Okinawa, as it was known for most of the first 50 years, directly influenced the people and culture on the island and left a lasting impact on those who listened in or worked at the station. By capturing these stories from the formative years of broadcasting with a military perspective, we gain a greater understanding of the human experience and what it was like to be part of this world before the Internet changed the way we communicate and consume media.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Military Broadcasting

As I stepped off the airplane that sweltering June day in 1989, the air was thick and tasted of the sea.¹ Okinawa embraced me with a chorus of sights and sounds that were chaotic and unfamiliar. I didn't understand the language, the signs, or the traffic rules. Everyone in Japan drives on the left side of the road. Announcements on loudspeakers rang out throughout the neighborhood, and I had no idea what was being announced. The roads were narrow and the cars were small. School children in uniforms walked together, past grandmas in their colorful yukatas and construction workers in their high boots and baggy pants. Tiny convenience stores were tucked away between concrete homes and apartments that seemed to fill every available space.

This was my first overseas assignment as a Marine. Months earlier I had completed broadcast training at the Defense Information School (DINFOS), graduating at the top of my class and absolutely certain this was what I wanted to do in my life. I was thrilled when I got my orders to Okinawa, although I had never heard of it before. This tiny island, part of Japan, was soon to play a large part in my life. I was on my way to the military broadcast station for the first time, and my new roommate drove at breakneck speed on roads with no room to spare and only a mirror to warn you of approaching vehicles on a curve. I tried to take it all in.

A replica of Godzilla beckoned from atop a store, vending machines of all kinds offered a multitude of tiny drinks, and shop signs in English and Japanese whizzed past as we made our way to Rycom Plaza and a huge tower that marked the place where memories are made and broadcast to the island. Vibrant red Hibiscus lined the walk to

¹ Recollection of the author.

the front door, and once inside I toured the studios, control room and offices (see appendix A.1).² The sound of a live radio remote could be heard throughout the building, and without warning, the music took me back to another place, to home. I suddenly had a hard time breathing as I realized just how far away I was, and then I understood how important this assignment would be to the thousands of service members just like me. It was a link to everything we left behind and a familiar voice in a sea of cacophony.

I was on the other side of the world - 15 hours and 7,400 miles from everyone I knew and loved. Not only that, the climate and culture on Okinawa was vastly different from anything I had experienced before. Considering how different and confusing everything can be for someone arriving in a foreign country in modern times, imagine how much more it was for a young service member arriving during World War II. The stress of a hostile enemy and foreign environment can only lower the effectiveness of the military. The government recognized the need to boost the morale of troops who were far from home and all they held dear, but radio broadcasting specifically for military troops was an idea that grew from the soldiers themselves.³

After World War I, a government study found very little coordinated effort to improve or address morale among U.S. troops.⁴ Various sectarian groups competed to fill the need, but the report concluded that the best programs were not from charity but ones soldiers managed for themselves. While the Army focused on athletics, soldiers improvised other means of entertainment as well. In the Panama Canal Zone, a military requirement for a defense alert system morphed into an entertainment and information radio service, and in Alaska, soldiers created their own "radio station" from scrounged

² LaDonna Aiken, *FEN Okinawa front entrance*, 1989.

³ United States Department of Defense, American Forces Information Service and Armed Forces Radio and Television Service, *History of AFRTS: The First 50 Years* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), 2.

⁴ *Ibid*, 5.

parts and records donated by other soldiers.⁵ These temporary stations gave way to the first permanent station at Fort Greely on Kodiak Island, Alaska, where soldiers put together KODK in 1941. Although the broadcast only reached the mess hall, it was an immediate hit, and civilian workers helped raise money for equipment and volunteered their time and talent along with the soldiers in order to keep the station on air. Programming was created by volunteers or picked up from shortwave broadcasts in San Francisco. These stations provided an immediate boost in morale and troop effectiveness.⁶

When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor at the end of 1941, the newly formed Morale Branch of the War Department decided to move forward with plans for a worldwide radio service to reach troops wherever they may be stationed. They chose the head of radio at advertising agency Young and Rubicam, Tom Lewis, to spearhead this effort (see appendix A.2).⁷ Lewis was commissioned a colonel and quickly began building his staff and consolidating operations. A government directive established Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS) on May 26, 1942, and Lewis interpreted the mission of AFRS as “to assist in supplying the American soldier with the emotional and intellectual impetus he needs, in addition to his technical knowledge and training, to make him a better fighting man, and to strive to maintain in him the mental attitudes of a free American.”⁸

Lewis began his new position by getting to know his audience. He conducted audience research through surveys and field visits so his programming ideas were based

⁵ Department of Defense, *History of AFRTS*, 8.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *Commander AFRS - Thomas H. A. Lewis, circa 1942-1945*, at National Archives, <http://research.archives.gov/description/6682527>, retrieved 24 October 2014.

⁸ Department of Defense, *History of AFRTS*, 19.

on actual troop needs.⁹ He felt the basis of AFRS wartime programming should be “morale commercials” that conveyed messages of “morale, Americanism, security, things are going ‘OK’ at home, we are sending you the needed materials, we are doing all we can to help you, this is your country—America, you are the best soldier there is, the ‘why’ of things, and finally you will win.”¹⁰ These messages would be delivered through entertainment and information-based programming. Lewis was adamant that programming should never be used for propaganda, although some might argue the positive and motivational “morale commercials” were propaganda for the troops.

AFRS programming was not directed at the enemy, nor designed to combat the effects of enemy radio.¹¹ Lewis firmly believed that AFRS must be free of that type of propaganda, but he did not have complete control of the programming. The Office of War Information (OWI) controlled all of the shortwave broadcasts from the United States and produced some of the programs used by AFRS.¹² Shows were broadcast at irregular times, making it hard for service members to find them among the foreign language shows. Additionally, the OWI believed it was their responsibility to include propaganda within troop programs due to the “large eavesdropping audience” and the fact that “enemy governments did not consistently jam transmission of those programs.”¹³ Lewis felt AFRS should be the only agency in control of its programming and was able to secure control away from OWI in September of 1943, a step that helped ensure programs were free of propaganda and broadcast at regular times. Military broadcast

⁹ Theodore Stuart Delay, “An Historical Study of the Armed Forces Radio Service to 1946,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1951, 91.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 108.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 111.

¹² *Ibid*, 512.

¹³ *Ibid*, 513.

stations began to go on air around the globe as Lewis worked on getting the equipment needed and programming and distribution challenges worked out.¹⁴

1.2 Relevant Literature

Historians have differed in how to describe the influence of military broadcasting. Some historians describe military broadcasting as a powerful morale boost to service members stationed overseas, providing the same programs and news that troops are used to getting at home. Other historians feel the effect on the shadow audience of host nations is the biggest influence, indirectly spreading American ideology and dominance to nations around the world. Samuel Brylawski states that although AFRS officially prohibited propaganda, shadow audiences could form their own ideas about the American lifestyle from the music and informational programs military broadcasters presented.¹⁵ In many ways, military broadcasting could support the framework for international mass media advanced by Clark and Christie, where communication efforts fall into categories described as Survival, Countering Disinformation, and Facilitative.¹⁶ Weather and security reports, and health advice specific to the region, would be a form of survival information, and entertainment would be a form of facilitative communication, described as creating a friendly atmosphere.¹⁷ Countering disinformation is described as getting U.S. policies and news out in the face of adversarial messages and

¹⁴ Department of Defense, *History of AFRTS*, 5-23.

¹⁵ Department of Defense, *History of AFRTS*; Ted DeLay, "The Armed Forces Radio Service," *Speech Monographs* 20, no. 4 (1953): 300-305; Samuel Brylawski, "Armed Forces Radio Service The Invisible Highway Abroad," *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress* 37, no. 3/4 (1980): 441-457; Pat Cranston, "Some Historical Newscasts of the American Forces Network," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (1964): 395-398.

¹⁶ Andrew M. Clark and Thomas B. Christie, "Ready...Ready...Drop! A Content Analysis of Coalition Leaflets Used in the Iraq War," *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies* 67, no. 2 (2005): 142.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 147.

propaganda.¹⁸ Although this was not a stated goal of military broadcasting, there is a precedent for this category in a Department of Defense memorandum from August 1960 that describes three phases of operations for Armed Forces Radio, specifically for Cuba. It proposes that in normal situations (phase 1) programming would be in English except for some programs that teach the local language. As a situation worsened and an emergency existed around the military base, programming would change to broadcast directly to the local population in their own language, with no attempt to disguise the target audience. This would include Anti-Communist dramas and programs, as well as Pro-Democracy spots and programs (see appendix A.3).¹⁹ In this hypothetical situation, the target audience would change from military personnel to the host nation audience. This detail may take military broadcasting outside of the proposed framework, but there is no evidence that this was ever implemented, particularly on Okinawa. Perhaps a more accurate description of this category for military broadcasting would be “Information,” to include command information and international news. This type of description also supports the official stance that propaganda should not be part of military broadcasting, when defined as promoting hatred against or demoralizing the enemy.

In postwar Europe, most of the fan mail for the American Forces Network came from the shadow audience, and several articles about military broadcasters and the programming were a testament to their popularity among European listeners. The fact that programming was in English and comprised mostly of popular music convinced most foreigners that it was a true representation of America and not propaganda, a fact that did

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Department of Defense, Memorandum Concerning Operational Phases of Armed Forces Radio, 31 August 1960, Box 3, Folder 4, Califano Papers, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

not go unnoticed by military leaders.²⁰ The high profile of military broadcasting prompted government policy against interpretive news or editorials critical of U.S. policy, unless “the facts are irrefutable.”²¹ This may not have been considered outright censorship, but it was not completely unbiased either. The calm, friendly voice of American military broadcasters may have served as a subtle kind of propaganda for the American lifestyle, which may have been more successful than the more forceful propaganda message conveyed by Voice of America.²²

The definition of propaganda depends on whom you ask. After World War I, Harold Lasswell’s study on propaganda directly linked it to morale, saying “the problem of maintaining morale is only in part a problem of propaganda, because propaganda is but one of many devices which must be relied upon.”²³ He defined it as controlling opinions and attitudes “by significant symbols...stories, rumors, reports, pictures, and other forms of social communication.”²⁴ Since then it has also been defined as a “persuasive communicative act of a government directed at a foreign audience,” and “the attempt by the government of one state to influence another to act or think in ways which are conducive to the interests of the source by whatever means are considered appropriate.”²⁵ While Lasswell linked propaganda to morale, he also defined the broad goals of propaganda as “to mobilize hatred against the enemy, to preserve the friendship of allies, to preserve the friendship and, if possible, procure the cooperation of neutrals,

²⁰ Stephen R. Craig, “American Forces Network in the Cold War: Military Broadcasting in Postwar Germany,” *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 32, no. 3 (1988): 314-318.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 311.

²² J. Gould, “Two Voices,” *New York Times*, in Craig, “American Forces Network,” 315.

²³ Harold Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (1927; reprint ed., New York: Peter Smith, 1938), 9.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Gary D. Rawnsley, *Radio Diplomacy and Propaganda: The BBC and VOA in International Politics, 1954-64*, in Clark and Christie, “Ready...Ready...Drop!” 144.

and to demoralize the enemy.”²⁶ These were not the stated goals of AFRS, although hints of it are seen in the early programming proposals of shows like *Know Your Allies*, which was “designed to cement the feeling of brotherhood between American fighting men and their allies,” and in *Give ‘em Hell*, which was to be a “monthly dramatization of questionable Axis tactics.”²⁷

During World War II, most Americans received news from print sources. Civilian war correspondents were censored by the military and yet they would often self-censor themselves also, as part of the “good fight” mentality at the time. Military broadcasters began to report from the front lines as well, sending reports via radio as communication technology developed.²⁸ These reports may have helped fuel the view that the Japanese were more like tribal savages, as compared to the enemy in Europe.²⁹ Ernie Pyle, who gained fame as a war correspondent during World War II, gave Americans a compassionate and intimate view of the war through his stories, but his feelings about the Japanese reflected the bias many Americans had. He knew they were human, but he did not feel comfortable around them, saying:

In Europe, we felt that our enemies, horrible and deadly as they were, were still people. But out here I soon gathered that the Japanese were looked upon as something subhuman and repulsive; the way some people felt about cockroaches or mice. Shortly after I arrived I saw a group of Japanese prisoners in a wire-fenced courtyard, and they were laughing and talking just like normal human beings. And yet they gave me the creeps, and I wanted a mental bath after looking at them.³⁰

²⁶ Harold Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, in Clark and Christie, “Ready...Ready...Drop!” 143.

²⁷ Delay, “An Historical Study,” 118.

²⁸ Brianna Buljung, “From the Foxhole: American Newsmen and the Reporting of World War II,” *International Social Science Review* 86, no. 1/2 (2011): 45; Ralph Engelman, “My Rhodes Scholarship: Fred Friendly as an Information Officer in World War II,” *Journalism History* 30, no. 3 (2004): 114-122.

²⁹ John W. Dower, “‘Culture,’ Theory, and Practice in U.S.-Japan Relations,” *Diplomatic History* 24, no. 3 (2000): 519.

³⁰ Ernie Pyle, *Last Chapter* (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1946), 5.

This viewpoint may have been shared by the troops heading to Okinawa during and after World War II, leading to a greater feeling of isolation from the “civilized” world.

Although most Americans turned to print news sources during World War II, the popularity of radio and television grew rapidly during the Cold War. American occupation forces remained in the Pacific and Europe, and military broadcasters filled the airwaves with programming that reflected the American experience and perspective to a captive audience.³¹ Some historians emphasize how the unique, original programming challenged social norms and news reporting policies. For example, this can be seen in the all-black variety show called *Jubilee*, which was not a show just for black service members but a genre that reinforced a feeling of community instead of racial divide.³²

There is much discussion about America’s influence among nations during the postwar years, and in particular the large number of American military bases and service members on Okinawa. Many authors conclude the physical presence of these bases is a source of controversy and an unnecessary burden on the island inhabitants.³³ Authors emphasize the tangible effects of the American military presence in host nations, but few quantify the cultural effects of military broadcasting on the arts, politics, or people. These authors cite the popularity of American music in Europe and parts of the Pacific and how

³¹ Catherine A. Luther and Douglas A. Boyd, “American Occupation Control over Broadcasting in Japan, 1945-1952,” *Journal of Communication* 47, no. 2 (1997): 39-59; Ellis Krauss, “Changing Television News in Japan,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 57, no. 3 (August 1998): 663-692; Jason S. Mittell, “Invisible Footage: *Industry on Parade* and Television Historiography,” *Film History* 9, no. 2 (1997): 200-218.

³² Lauren R. Sklaroff, “The Jubilee Show and the Paradox of Racializing Radio During World War II,” *American Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (2004): 945-973.

³³ Christopher Aldous, “Achieving Reversion: Protest and Authority in Okinawa, 1952-1970,” *Modern Asian Studies* 37, no. 2 (2003): 485-508; Toriyama Atsushi, “Okinawa’s ‘Postwar’: Some Observations on the Formation of American Military Bases in the Aftermath of Terrestrial Warfare,” Trans. David Buist, *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 4, no. 3 (2003): 400-418; Gerald Figal, “Between War and Tropics: Heritage Tourism in Postwar Okinawa,” *The Public Historian* 30, no. 2 (2008): 83-107; Chizuru Saeki, “The Perry Centennial of 1953 in Okinawa: U.S. Cultural Policy in Cold War Okinawa,” *Journal of International and Area Studies* 19, no. 2 (2012): 13-27.

the shadow audience in those nations used the American influence in new music and cinema.³⁴ Historians note that part of the reason for this influence was the innovative broadcast technology employed by military broadcasters that helped spread communications globally.³⁵ Besides the physical complexities of getting entertainment to networks across the globe, whether through the airwaves or printed discs, there was a need to remove the commercials that were usually recorded with the live broadcasts. Programs that were broadcast 'live' in the United States and then edited for distribution were called transcriptions. The technique of editing out commercials and creating new introductions and closing for some programs was born out of necessity, and is considered to be probably the most important contribution by AFRS to the broadcast industry.³⁶

Once this process of transcription was mastered, Hollywood performers took notice. Bing Crosby had made several appearances on *Command Performance* and enjoyed the convenience of transcribed programs. He wanted his shows at NBC to be recorded and edited so that he could have time for other activities, but NBC had rules against using transcribed materials. Crosby took his contract to ABC in 1946, which did not have rules against using transcribed shows. By 1950, all the major networks were using transcriptions to improve their programming structure.³⁷ The techniques developed

³⁴ Shin Hyunjoon and Ho Tung-hung, "Translation of 'America' during the Early Cold War Period: A Comparative Study on the History of Popular Music in South Korea and Taiwan," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009): 83-102; Christina Klein, "The AFKN Nexus: US Military Broadcasting and the New Korean Cinema," *Transnational Cinemas* 3, no. 1 (2012): 19-39; Pierre Sorlin, "The Cinema: American Weapon For the Cold War," *Film History* 10, no. 3 (1998): 375-381.

³⁵ James O. Weldon, "The Early History of US International Broadcasting from the Start of World War II," *IEEE Transactions on Broadcasting* 34, no. 2 (1988): 82-86; Timothy Stoneman, "A Bold New Vision: The VOA Radio Ring Plan and Global Broadcasting in the Early Cold War," *Technology and Culture* 50, no. 2 (2009): 316-344.

³⁶ Delay, "An Historical Study," 244.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 247-249.

by AFRS producers proved that programs could be edited and distributed around the world, and still maintain their high quality.³⁸

Military broadcasting, the idea that began with soldiers, for soldiers, began to take shape and grow during World War II and continued to flourish after the war ended. The need for high morale among service members stationed all over the world has not changed through the years, but very little research has focused on how military broadcasters help provide that.³⁹ Media studies on international broadcasting by the United States frequently focus on social and political impact in foreign countries, but military broadcasting gets scant attention. In particular, very little research has focused on the influence of military broadcasting on Okinawa, although the island hosts the largest Air Force base outside of the United States as well as the largest number of U.S. military bases in Japan, and largest listening audience. Okinawa is part of the Ryukyu island chain and is only 60 miles long and 2 to 16 miles wide, but its place in the Pacific keeps it isolated from mainland Japan and other countries by a vast expanse of ocean. Military members stationed there during and after World War II had limited options for entertainment or news. Military broadcasters were the link to home for these service members and a window into America for the shadow audience of civilians.

³⁸ Brylawski, "The Invisible Highway Abroad," 452.

³⁹ A. Ross Johnson and R. Eugene Parta, *Cold War Broadcasting: Impact on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe: A Collection of Studies and Documents* (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2010).

Chapter 2

Methodology

Historical study should be a search for the truth about the past. How the truth is interpreted is based on a historian's perspective, and understanding the ideological, professional, and cultural perspectives are important to properly interpret history.⁴⁰ It seems a complete history would consider multiple perspectives, and that is the goal of this research. A critical analysis of history requires a thoughtful, thorough, and informed search of many types of sources. Some facts and sources, such as dates, times, people, and events, are indisputable. Yet history is much more than a timeline of indisputable facts. People want to know the how and why of the past, and oral histories provide human perspectives that help us create deeper connections to history. Alice Yang Murray notes that many critics of oral history fail to recognize that many of the texts they hold dear, in newspapers or other archival documents, are based on oral sources or memories.⁴¹ Official documents and records often get their start as an oral source, and to ignore the context of history, including how an event or time period is experienced, is to discard a unique perspective that is not accessible through a simple recall of dates and events.⁴² There is meaning in the way people relate to each other or in a group, and oral histories provide the details about these unwritten rules of group dynamics that are not found in public documents.⁴³

⁴⁰ William D. Sloan, *Perspectives on Mass Communication History* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

⁴¹ Alice Yang Murray, "Oral History Research, Theory, and Asian American Studies," *Amerasia Journal* 26, no. 1 (2000): 114.

⁴² Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, in Laura Homan Lacey, "Stay Off the Skyline: A Personal History of the 6th Marine Division," Master's thesis, University of Texas at Arlington, 2002, 21.

⁴³ Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Practical Guide for Social Scientists*, in Lacey, "Stay Off the Skyline," 21.

An oral historian should acknowledge the social context surrounding their research and use this knowledge to triangulate the facts discovered in their interviews, as well as lead them to further areas of research. This leads to a dilemma, because the process of gathering oral histories leads to the realization that each source leads to more sources, and deciding when you have enough is a balance between quality and quantity.⁴⁴

Once a historian has gathered a number of interviews, based on resources of time or availability, what do they have? Is it the truth about the past, or simply narratives of a past built on social context? Maurice Halbwachs asserts that individual memories are really “collective memories” based on experiences that fit into social constructs and patterns of a society, and that these are the “real” memories.⁴⁵ But individual memories are based on experiences that are unique to each person and should remain distinct, while still, inevitably, contributing to the shared memories of a group. Each story is a unique perspective on a common theme, and each reveals details that would be lost in generalizations. The individual memories may be conveyed through social contexts or influenced by time and a greater understanding of events in hindsight, but this does not make them untrue.⁴⁶ Oral history in the form of interviews, as well as an examination of programming and technological changes, are appropriate for this research because they reveal the unwritten dynamics of a diverse military organization and the people they serve, and ultimately, deeper insight into the role of military broadcasting on Okinawa.

⁴⁴ Murray, “Oral History Research,” 116.

⁴⁵ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, in Noa Gedi and Yigal Elam, “Collective Memory – What Is It?” *History and Memory* 8, no. 1 (Spring – Summer, 1996): 37.

⁴⁶ Lacey, “Stay Off the Skyline,” 22.

Fred Morrow Fling, an early historian, wrote in 1899 that without sources, there would be no way to investigate history.⁴⁷ Interviews preserve sources that would eventually be lost to time, and they help provide multiple perspectives to an institution that impacted many people in a variety of ways. Fling also noted that while it would be comfortable for a historian to be able to study all his sources from home, most will be accessible only by long journeys or through direct observation.⁴⁸ No doubt the Internet has finally made it possible to complete much historical research from the comfort of home, but certain sources still require long journeys and direct observation. For the research necessary for the completion of this thesis, the Internet could not reach into prefectural archives and access microfilms, or the minds of Okinawans who experienced war and military broadcasting first hand. It was necessary to travel to Okinawa for these types of sources, and doing so effectively meant knowing where to look. In *The Modern Researcher*, Barzun and Graff emphasize the importance of seeing within a situation.⁴⁹ To see within is not to judge a situation or hold on to personal bias about a subject, but to use personal interest to find a more complete view.

A large subject is like a mountain, which no beholder ever sees entire: if he climbs it he discovers only selected aspects; if he stands off, he sees but an outline and from one side only; if he flies over it, he flattens it out.⁵⁰

The author's personal experience as a military broadcaster on the island helped her understand the context of broadcasting within the framework of the military environment. Many of the experiences she had while learning about the island, its history, and culture, helped her synthesize the experiences of those she interviewed. She

⁴⁷ Fred Morrow Fling, *Outline of Historical Method* (Lincoln: J. H. Miller, 1899), 20.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Jacques Barzun and Henry F. Graff, *The Modern Researcher* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2004), 157.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 158.

understood the process a service member goes through to settle in a foreign country, and her personal experiences helped form a more complete picture of the history of FEN Okinawa. It also helped in the search for interviews, personal letters, and documents. She was able to contact a survivor of the battle of Okinawa, Setsuko Inafuku, who used to collaborate with her on cultural stories about the island. Inafuku continues to give tours and was able to provide personal letters and photos about the war, and she helped arrange a meeting with the former governor of Okinawa, Masahide Ota. Additionally, the author discovered a former Air Force meteorologist still living on the island who was able to recruit several English speaking colleagues to discuss their memories of the military broadcasts. The family of a former intern that worked at the military broadcast station provided vital assistance with translations at the Okinawa Prefectural Archives, allowing the author to search through microfilms for government records. This family was also able to connect her to a former civilian employee of the station who provided a unique perspective as compared to the military experience. These personal connections were vital for the interviews and documents collected on Okinawa.

The interviews on Okinawa were all conducted face-to-face and recorded with an audio recorder. Interview questions were prepared beforehand, but the interviews were open ended and allowed for follow up and exploration. What follows is a list of questions used for the interviews and the statement that was read. These questions served as a guideline. Some were omitted depending on the experiences of the interviewee, and follow up questions were also used to help elaborate on the answers.

Far East Network (FEN) Okinawa History Project

The purpose of the project is to collect audio/video recordings and selected related documentary materials (such as photographs and manuscripts) in order to document the history of Okinawa and in particular, FEN Okinawa. The recordings and documentary materials may be used for exhibition, publication, presentation on the World Wide Web and successor technologies, and for promotion of the institution and its activities in any medium.

Interview Questions (civilians)

1. Name and contact info/job
2. How often did you listen to FEN and how did it make you feel?
3. What do you remember about FEN Okinawa the most?
4. How did it compare to Japanese media?
5. What are some things you liked or didn't like about it?
6. What were your favorite shows or on-air talent?
7. What are some things you learned about American culture or Okinawa from FEN?
8. What was your opinion of the programming (news/radio/PSA's)?

Interview Questions (broadcasters)

1. Name and contact info/job
2. Tell me about when you arrived on Okinawa or at FEN.
3. Tell me a little about the equipment you used at the station.
4. Did you have any mentors at FEN and why?
5. What are your memories of the civilians/Okinawans at the station?
6. Thinking about the audience, do you remember any feedback from listeners/viewers?
7. How would you describe the experience of working together with all of the services?
8. Do you remember any major news stories and how you handled it?
9. Do you have memories of the typhoons and what you did at FEN during that time?
10. What were some of your favorite/least favorite things to do in your job (news/radio)?
11. What was your biggest take-away/lesson learned from your time working at FEN?

Once back in Texas, the Internet became a vital tool for finding the military broadcasters that had been stationed on Okinawa and were now scattered throughout the world. The United States Marine Corps Combat Correspondents Association posted an appeal on its website, encouraging former military broadcasters on Okinawa to contact the author by email. The Internet made it possible to search the archives of *Stars and Stripes* newspaper, as well as *Leatherneck* magazine and *Time*.

Social media platforms online were instrumental in locating special interest groups devoted to former military broadcasters, and through online chats, email, and phone calls, interviews were recorded that made it possible to triangulate some of the facts and stories from those contacted. These broadcasters also shared personal photos that were posted online, which sparked memories from other broadcasters of the time

period. In total, 24 different interviews were recorded for this thesis research, and 22 were used.

The interview questions were created to discover what influences or impact FEN Okinawa had on the interviewee, based on categories such as the history of the station and the programming and broadcast functions it had. Interviews were subsequently organized according to Lasswell's formula of communication: who, says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect.⁵¹ Excerpts from the interviews were selected and then used in this research to help expand on the context of predetermined categories, but the open-ended nature of the interviews helped define the categories and create a hierarchy of order. Excerpts were also selected based on perspectives that provided a rich narrative to the historical facts of FEN Okinawa.

One of the most fundamental requirements for "good" history is the historical narrative.⁵² Narration must include facts but also tell a good story. Lester Stephens said good history "has literary qualities" and that "history which is drab, prosaic, and devoid of aesthetic value often merits the little attention it is likely to receive."⁵³ The long history of military broadcasting on Okinawa is filled with many technical and programming changes, and indisputable facts, but it's the personal stories that reveal so much more. Whether it was from a broadcaster delivering the latest news or music, a service member listening in the barracks, or a civilian who just wanted to know more about the American military forces next door, the stories surrounding military broadcasting help the reader see within, and they reveal the value and influence of military broadcasting on the island.

⁵¹ Harold D. Lasswell, *The Structure and Function of Communication in Society* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1948), 216.

⁵² William David Sloan and Michael Stamm, *Historical Methods in Mass Communication* (Northport, AL: Vision, 2010), 33.

⁵³ Ibid.

Chapter 3

History and Foundations

3.1 Postwar Okinawa

On April 1, 1945, a typhoon of steel rained down on the island of Okinawa. The bombs came from the ships and airplanes of Allied forces in preparation for what would be the final battle of World War II. This was also the beginning of Okinawa's love-hate relationship with America. During the battle on Okinawa 95 percent of the homes and buildings on the island were destroyed, and with little more than caves for shelter, Okinawans relied on American occupation forces for the most basic necessities.⁵⁴ They needed whatever work and assistance they could get, including leftover food from the mess hall and surplus military clothes.⁵⁵ The American government, however, wasn't eager to invest in Okinawa right away. While politicians tried to decide what to do with the island, Okinawa became known as "The Junk-Heap of the Pacific," where military surplus laid to waste and apathetic soldiers made do with meager funding and an uncertain future.⁵⁶ Occupation forces numbered 260,000 immediately after the war, but by 1949 that number had dwindled to 12,000.⁵⁷ These troops felt exiled as they suffered through typhoons, substandard facilities, and boredom. Personnel assigned to Okinawa were "of lower caliber than those assigned to Japan," according to a report from

⁵⁴ Headquarters Ryukyus Command APO 331-7, *The Ryukyu Islands*, 1947 (courtesy of Donn Cuson).

⁵⁵ Ruth Ann Keyso, *Women of Okinawa: Nine Voices from a Garrison Island* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).

⁵⁶ Demaree Bess, "Okinawa-American Island," *The Saturday Evening Post*, 11 July 1953, 86.

⁵⁷ Arnold G. Fisch, Jr., *Military Government in the Ryukyus 1945-1950* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), 74.

MacArthur's headquarters in 1949, and crimes against civilians were a serious problem.⁵⁸

This period of time was a struggle for everyone involved, but by 1950 a new era began.

After Communism was established in China in 1949, followed by the Korean War, the American government decided to invest millions into making Okinawa the keystone of its military presence in the Pacific.⁵⁹ The location gave the U.S. quick access to possible areas of conflict in the Pacific, allowing it to protect interests in the area as well as provide for Japan's defense (see appendix A.4).⁶⁰ The entire island was rebuilt with a focus on American needs for the military, with modern roads and buildings going up as quickly as workers could pour the concrete.⁶¹ The economic investment was estimated to be \$500 million by 1953, with another \$700 million estimated to complete the infrastructure for permanent bases and military airfields designed to last 100 years.⁶² Islands of American suburbia popped up within the bases, where service members and their dependents numbered around 40,000 people.⁶³ This renewed focus on Okinawa reflected the high military importance the United States placed on the island, which has been called America's unsinkable aircraft carrier in Japan.⁶⁴

Civilians suffered greatly during and after the war, but with the growth of permanent bases came opportunities for employment and a chance to rebuild. Many Okinawans had their land claimed for American bases, and efforts to recreate their agrarian lifestyle on the remaining land were not successful.⁶⁵ What islanders had most in supply was labor. By 1953, almost half of the island population was estimated to earn

⁵⁸ Ibid, 17.

⁵⁹ Bess, "Okinawa-American Island," 86.

⁶⁰ Fisch, *Military Government in the Ryukyus*, 17.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Christopher T. Nelson, "Occupation without End: Opposition to the US Military in Okinawa," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111, no. 4 (2012): 828.

⁶⁵ Fisch, *Military Government in the Ryukyus*, 131.

part of their income from working for Americans.⁶⁶ This was a completely new way of life for Okinawans, which required acceptance of a large foreign military presence on their island. It set Okinawa apart from any other prefecture of Japan.

Although many Okinawans worked alongside the military and learned about them first-hand, many others were able to tune in to the broadcasts provided by WXLH, the AFRS station on Okinawa. They were exposed to American music, news, and military policies. The station changed names through the years but has been a steady presence on Okinawa since World War II, longer than most people on island have been alive. The history of the station during the first 50 years reveals much about changes in broadcasting, the role of military broadcasters, and the effect of broadcasting to a large foreign audience while fulfilling the needs of the U.S. military audience.

3.2 Early Years as WXLH

Just three days after the invasion on Okinawa began, the equipment for the military broadcast station was brought ashore and six men set up the 50-watt gasoline-powered radio transmitter.⁶⁷ By May, radio station WXLH was up and running from a tent in an open, muddy field (see appendix A.5).⁶⁸ The location was close to what would later become headquarters for the island, known as the Ryukyu Command center (Rycom), and was the first AFRS station established in Japanese-held territory.⁶⁹ As Japanese bombs, tropical storms, and typhoons battered the island, broadcasters managed to

⁶⁶ Bess, "Okinawa-American Island," 88.

⁶⁷ "FEN Okinawa Celebrates 40 Years," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 24 May 1985, 16.

⁶⁸ *Dedication of WXLH; Gen. Buckner & MajGen. Wallace*, 20 May 1945 (courtesy of Donn Cuson).

⁶⁹ "WXLH Has Fine FEC Background," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 17 May 1949, 2.

provide 52 hours of recorded programs, live news reports, and original shows from its tent headquarters, “as long as the juice was on.” (see appendix A.6).⁷⁰

The head of AFRS, Colonel Tom Lewis, knew that entertainment was an important way to build up his listening audience. As part of the war effort, popular entertainers and singers often volunteered their talents for special radio programs for the troops. These shows were only available to the military troops and not for commercial broadcast. The first original program for AFRS was *Mail Call*, a show where soldiers could mail in a request to hear songs and jokes by Hollywood entertainers.⁷¹ The Bureau of Public Relations had created a show called *Command Performance*, which was broadcast by shortwave through its Radio Division in 1941 and then given over to AFRS in 1942. It had a similar format to *Mail Call* in that it was created with the idea that troops could command a certain performance by their favorite Hollywood stars.⁷² They may ask for certain performers to sing a special song, or something more unusual, such as when Betty Hutton grilled a steak on the show as Bob Hope offered commentary.⁷³ The sound of the sizzle must have been like a taste of home, perhaps bringing back memories of backyard barbecues or family dinners.

World War II was a time when the nation still faced racial divide and segregation issues, but efforts to come together for the war effort were seen in radio shows such *Jubilee*, which was an all-black variety show created by AFRS.⁷⁴ The *G.I. Jive* program

⁷⁰ “JAP BOMBS AND RYUKYUS TYPHOON FAILED TO HALT OUTPUT OF JIVE AND JOKES FROM RADIO OKINAWA,” *Weekly Okinawan*, 28 November 1945 (courtesy of Donn Cuson).

⁷¹ WXLH, “Mail Call,” 1945, at The Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/MailCall>, retrieved 25 October 2014.

⁷² WXLH, “Command Performance,” 1943, at The Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/StrictlyGi1943>, retrieved 24 October 2014.

⁷³ Erik Barnouw, *A History of Broadcasting in the United States: Volume 2: The Golden Web 1933 to 1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 186.

⁷⁴ WXLH, “Jubilee,” 1945, at The Internet Archive,

format featured popular jazz music hosted by a disc jockey.⁷⁵ By 1943, Martha Wilkerson became the permanent host, known on-air as G.I. Jill. She was an alternative to Tokyo Rose and Axis Sally, but without the propaganda. Instead of making the troops homesick, she tried to make them feel at home wherever they were in the world, ending her show with her signature sign-off, "Good morning to some of you, good afternoon to some more of you, and to the rest of you—good night." She became so popular she was getting a quarter of all the fan mail out of 122 AFRS shows in 1945.⁷⁶ The letters soldiers sent in showed the impact these shows could have, as one soldier wrote from an evacuation hospital, "The other evening we heard swing music and then, 'This is the American Expeditionary Station.' Goose pimples ran up and down our spines, and since then, our morale has increased one thousand percent." He went on to describe how the music "brought smiles of joy and complete forgetfulness of their pain."⁷⁷

After the war, these special programs for the military gradually ended. Entertainment still came from stateside networks and original shows and programs from each station, but there was also a need for educational programs. In 1944, Erik Barnouw was asked to head the education unit of AFRS, where he helped produce programs such as *Science Magazine of the Air*, *The Human Adventure*, *Heard at Home*, and *This is the Story*.⁷⁸ These programs had to go through a clearance process before they were approved for broadcast. Shows that had anything about foreign countries had to go through the Office of War Information (OWI), and shows that could possibly have racial

<https://archive.org/details/JubileeOldTimeRadio>, retrieved 25 October 2014.

⁷⁵ WXLH, "G.I. Jive," 1945, at The Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/AfrsG.i.Jive>, retrieved 28 October 2014.

⁷⁶ "Radio: G.I. Jill," *Time Magazine*, 5 February 1945.

⁷⁷ Department of Defense, *History of AFRTS*, 26.

⁷⁸ David Culbert, "Erik Barnouw's War: an Interview Concerning the Armed Forces Radio Services' Education Unit, 1944–1945," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 22, no. 4 (2002): 477.

issues went through the Social Science Research Council. These then went through the Information and Education Division, then a technical screening for quality.⁷⁹ One short series Barnouw produced for NBC that was also approved for AFRS was a program called *They Call Me Joe*, which was supposed to reflect the diversity of the armed forces. In a sign of the times, it raised the suspicion of a congressman who felt a Communist might have written the theme song, "The Ballad for Americans." He wondered if the title of the program might be referring to Joseph Stalin.⁸⁰ Barnouw returned to his civilian job in 1945, but many of his programs continued on for years afterward. He said it was fun to work out the procedures, a challenge to organize, and he loved every minute of it.⁸¹

AM Radio was the only means of broadcasting for WXLH in the beginning. Programming included transcriptions, local news, local radio shows, and shortwave transmissions when possible. The transcriptions were shipped on durable, flexible, Vinylite discs that could withstand the rigors of shipping and sub-tropical conditions. This was especially important since the initial broadcasts took place in a tent and were subject to typical summer weather conditions on Okinawa, such as typhoons and high humidity. Radio programs had commercials taken out because the unions stateside had requested it in exchange for the free programs.⁸² Because of this, editing techniques were developed that were the forerunner to recorded programs in Hollywood.⁸³ Radio schedules were published in various military command newspapers, and the programs featured many of the top entertainers of the time. One of the earliest schedules, published just two weeks after the dedication of the station, showed almost 14 hours of

⁷⁹ Ibid, 478.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 480.

⁸¹ Ibid, 490.

⁸² Virginia V. Saul, "AFRS 7th Birthday," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 28 May 1949; "Jap Bombs," 1945; Department of Defense, *History of AFRTS*, 21.

⁸³ Delay, "An Historical Study," 247.

Sunday programming and featured shows by Bing Crosby, Sammy Kaye, and Jack Benny, as well as brief news spots (see appendix A.7).⁸⁴ Two months later, a schedule published in an Army newspaper showed many of the same programs but included a highlight of *Jump Junction*, featuring Duke Ellington, as well as *Command Performance*, featuring popular cartoon characters Bugs Bunny and Donald Duck, among others in that particular edition.⁸⁵ By October, a program schedule showed expanded hours, including an original, local show called *Hi Neighbor*.⁸⁶ This morning program featured jokes and dry humor along with music selections. Military broadcasters would change duties often, and by January of 1946 Sergeant Blaine Cornwall was at the helm of the show, broadcasting an introduction with his signature sarcasm that began with, "Here it is again. The terror of the airlines... radio's harmful little armful. We expose all the phonies, we bet on the ponies, we slave until late at a very low rate."⁸⁷ The article goes on to explain Cornwall's other duties, which included hosting *Jive Junction*, straight announcing, and technical work at the station.⁸⁸ By this time, WXLH had moved into a Quonset hut in the Rycom area.⁸⁹

Three local request programs proved popular by February of 1946, with an average of 100 requests per day.⁹⁰ Radio staff complained that they were "going nuts" with the ongoing requests for popular songs such as *Groove Juice Special*, *Makin'*

⁸⁴ "Radio Okinawa WXLH Program Schedule," *New Okinawan*, 3 June 1945 (courtesy of Donn Cuson).

⁸⁵ "Radio Okinawa WXLH Program Schedule," *The Buccaneer*, 12 August 1945 (courtesy of Donn Cuson).

⁸⁶ "Radio Okinawa WXLH Program Schedule," *Kochi Tribune*, 13 October 1945 (courtesy of Donn Cuson).

⁸⁷ "Hi Neighbor's Disc Jockey Makes Rock-bound GI's Laugh," *Super-Fort*, 7 January 1946, 3 (courtesy of Donn Cuson).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Weekly Okinawan*, 28 November 1945.

⁹⁰ Sgt. J.W. Stepp, "WXLH Requests Driving Us Nuts," *Daily Okinawan*, 15 February 1946 (courtesy of Donn Cuson).

Whoopee, That's What I Love About the South, and *I Wanna Git Mareed*. In fact, as the concrete flooring was being laid in the Quonset hut for their barracks, station personnel buried a well-worn copy of *I Wanna Git Mareed*, saying they could cover the floor with these records but instead they would play them as long as they were requested. Daily Okinawan writer Sergeant Stepp lamented, "One of these days we'll, all of us, go to the asylum together."⁹¹ Not only were listeners encouraged to send in their requests, they also were encouraged to audition for a spot as a radio announcer in a new program called *So You Want To Be In Radio*.⁹²

WXLH celebrated a year of service with a special broadcast listing the year's accomplishments accompanied by live music from the Rocketeers of the 47th Engineers.⁹³ A birthday party followed in the main studio, with a gathering of staffers and well-wishers (see appendix A.8).⁹⁴ Several changes took place during the following years, as America entered a postwar period and AFRTS focused on troops in occupied territories. By 1947 the Far East Network was officially established and included 11 stations. WXLH held the distinction of being the first AFRTS station in Japanese-held territory, and by 1949 it dropped its call letters and was simply called the Far East Network (FEN), Okinawa.⁹⁵

3.3 Staff Diversity

Throughout the years, staffers at FEN Okinawa have been a diverse mix of seasoned and newly minted broadcasters, interns, journalists, public affairs specialists, engineers, and civilians. In the beginning, many service members serving as broadcasters were already seasoned professionals in civilian life. Their experience and

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² "Radio," *Daily Okinawan*, 2 February 1946 (courtesy of Donn Cuson).

⁹³ "WXLH Celebrates Anniversary," *Daily Okinawan*, 22 May 1946 (courtesy of Donn Cuson).

⁹⁴ Trudeau, *WXLH 1st Anniversary*, 1945 (courtesy of Donn Cuson).

⁹⁵ "Profile: AFRTS History," *TV Guide Okinawa Edition*, February 1991, 8.

connections provided a professional feel to this new venture, but after the war, they were eager to get back to their civilian jobs, and as the military contracted they were able to do so. Conversely, some of the military broadcasters went on to become successful civilian broadcasters and entertainers. Sergeant Hyman Averback started out at WVTR in Tokyo and then went on to perform in Hollywood in various shows and alongside Bob Hope in many episodes of *Command Performance*.⁹⁶ The connection to Hollywood continued through the years. At FEN Okinawa, Dale Dye was the station manager from 1978-1981, but afterward he became an author, actor, and military advisor in Hollywood. He recalled how his tour of duty at FEN Okinawa helped shape his future in show business.

I think it was really a vibrant time. Vietnam was over and we had an opportunity to really focus on stuff that served the population instead of worrying about where the next rotation into Southeast Asia was.

I think me, and a lot of the other people who were senior enough to have been in Vietnam had some adjustment problems, but in large measure, working at FEN allowed me to get outside of myself. You know, a lot of that business of feeling sorry for yourself is just masturbation. You need to get out of yourself, stop thinking about that crap and get on with it. It's tough, and there are times when something will remind you, and you suffer with it. It's not a disabling thing; in large measure if you can survive it, it makes you stronger. It was helpful for me to be at FEN and have that position of responsibility.

I think it's pretty hard to look at me as a writer, director, actor, showbiz guy, and say that I didn't have some foundation somewhere, and it was probably FEN. I think FEN gave me, conceptually, taught me the power of the media; especially the electronic media in today's youthful society. I began to see it. I began to understand cognitive disconnect. I began to understand that you can't expect people to believe in one medium, what they've seen in the medium, which literally is the deluge in their life, and that's radio and television. Anyway, that's one of the things I began to conceptualize at that time.⁹⁷

Military broadcasters at FEN Okinawa served in a variety of roles, including TV production, radio production, master control, the newsroom, studio, and technical areas.

⁹⁶ Saul, "AFRS 7th Birthday," 12.

⁹⁷ Dale Dye, phone interview by the author, Bedford, Texas, 20 February 2015.

There were 11 AFRS stations in the Far East Network by 1949, and in order to provide the most authentic experience for enlisted men, on-air announcers were enlisted men themselves. Officers were rarely allowed on-air.⁹⁸ For most, the time assigned to Okinawa would have been just one to three years, although some were able to get more than one tour and experience at the station. During that time a broadcaster may do several different jobs depending on the need and openings available. It was a brief period of time that left a lasting impression for many. Some staffers had vivid memories of their arrival on Okinawa, and the emotions they felt as they settled in. Marine Bob Jordan served as the operations officer and detachment commander at FEN Okinawa from 1974-1978. He remembers how he was expected to get to work as soon as he arrived.

I got there the last day of January in 1974, and I had gone through officer broadcast school at Fort Ben Harrison just before I went over there. I arrived with my wife and six kids, and Master Gunnery Sergeant Bob Green was the senior Marine NCO [non-commissioned officer], and I'm trying to think who the major was... The major and Bob met me at the airport and said, "We've got a motel for you and your children. Check them in and then be at the headquarters no later than noon because you got two weeks to convert us from black and white to color TV, and you can't go off the air." So I took my family to a little two-room motel and put 'em in there and tried to calm them down because everything was strange to them, with the open benjo ditches and everything. I told them I would be back as soon as I could and off I went to FEN Okinawa.⁹⁹

Steve Reuss was a Marine broadcaster that arrived in July 1991 and served as news director and operations manager. He described his experience upon arriving in Okinawa.

Kind of a weird arrival...we got there about six hours late because of a long layover in Alaska. We had some issues with the plane, so instead of getting there at noon we got there at six and didn't know we were in water rationing, and my sponsor was a single guy and didn't do much to help me. I was there with my wife and my two kids: a six year old and a seven year old. So we get into billeting, no food, no water, no bathtub full of water to use for water rationing or anything, so he says, "hey, pick you

⁹⁸ Saul, "AFRS 7th Birthday," 1949.

⁹⁹ Bob Jordan, phone interview by the author, Bedford, Texas, 2 March 2015.

up at seven!" so kind of a rude awakening. So he came by the next morning, he picked me up and we went over because he used to drive the commander in, and then we sat around in his room and he's drinking coffee and smoking and getting dressed, and I'm thinking, what's going on here? A little bit of a strange beginning but it worked out much better.¹⁰⁰

Charles Bonilla, a Navy broadcast journalist, served at FEN Okinawa from 1987-1989. It was his first duty station, and like many newbies, he got special treatment when he arrived. By the time he completed his tour, he fell in love with the island.

Gunny Herring was rigging lights in the studio and ragging on Christmas. "F°°k Christmas and the horse it rode in on!" I thought he was serious. Jay was cracking up and Gunny was doing all he could to not crack up. Yeah, breaking in the newbie.

In some ways the Navy goofed sending me there because it was the greatest place with the most awesome people. Everything I learned as a film student in college paid off whether I was in master control or working in news.... I couldn't believe I was getting paid to do what I did. It wasn't work at all. I bought my first car on Okinawa: a dark green Toyota that I literally drove into the ground. It died on the Okinawa expressway. Staff Sergeant Luis Rivera had to come get me.

For the longest time Okinawa was idyllic, precious, pristine. I've long since stopped working in broadcast and video production. These days I coach veterans transitioning back the civilian world. I help them realize their skills are valuable and transferrable. I help them with their resumes, and drill them with mock interviews. It's great work. However, a kind of weird thing happened: gradually, as I interviewed and coached them and listened to their stories, different memories began to come back. Unflattering memories. I slowly began to realize that, back then, I was something of a spaz. How I got off that island without losing my chevron is God's own mystery. I made up for it though in my subsequent duty stations, and really brought it all together. Okinawa still holds a special place in my heart.¹⁰¹

A recurring theme among staffers interviewed was that their tour of duty on Okinawa was an educational, life-changing, positive experience. Many came away with a new respect for the culture of the island and its people. Jon Yim remembers this from his time on Okinawa as military dependent in the 1970's, and then later as a member of the

¹⁰⁰ Steve Reuss, phone interview by the author, Bedford, Texas, 24 March 2015.

¹⁰¹ Charles Bonilla, online chat with the author, Bedford, Texas, 1 April 2015.

military. He served at FEN Okinawa first as a member of Explorer Post 190, part of the Far East Council of the Boy Scouts of America, and then also as part of a work-study program at Kubasaki High School that provided job skills in lieu of Social Studies credit. Bob Jordan had set up the Explorer Post as a community outreach program and his son Craig was also a member. Yim returned to work at the station in 1982 as a Navy broadcast journalist. He said his time on Okinawa opened his eyes to the unique culture of the people there.

Being an Army brat you grow up everywhere but it was just one of those defining moments within your life where you go, wow, you know, I am living and working and learning in a culture that spans thousands of years. A culture that has endured tragedy and disaster from acts of war and has learned how to get back on its feet again, slowly but surely. Unfortunately there are those that still hold the resentment from that and I totally understand where they come from, but I look at it as an opportunity to learn and grow. And that was what it was. To learn and become friends with some of the most gentlest people on earth I believe, and the most generous, and the most accommodating. So I took bits and pieces of that and tried to apply it to my life. So the Okinawan experience was just great. It was wonderful, it was eye opening, and I'd do it all again if they asked me to.¹⁰²

Marine Sandy Wilson served at FEN Okinawa in the late 1980's and early 1990's. She also came away with a love for the people of Okinawa.

I think probably the biggest takeaway is my love for the Okinawans. Because we were a freely radiating station they treated me just as, kind of like a star when I'd be out on the street. But they were nicer than Americans are because Americans, you know, can be pushy. Like, "oh aren't you on FEN, hi, FEN sucks!" where the Okinawans would go, "oh, Sandy-san!" Yes, that's me, thank you. I remember one time I was wearing like a short sleeve shirt on, like a muscle shirt, and one of the ladies said, "oh, gomenasai" and she was saying excuse me she wanted to touch my arm. She said, "oh, like geisha!" because I was so freaking white (she laughs). I had no skin color where they have, you know, that olive kind of look.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Jon Yim, phone interview by the author, Bedford, Texas, 21 February 2015.

¹⁰³ Sandy Wilson, phone interview by the author, Bedford, Texas, 11 March 2015.

The people that served at FEN Okinawa were a mix of military personnel and civilians, but not everyone was a trained broadcaster. Besides the high school students who were able to work at the station for school credit, civilians were hired for various support positions throughout the station as well. Many times military personnel from jobs in public affairs would get orders to the station. These staffers recall how they quickly learned the basics of broadcasting. Ricky Spaulding was a Marine print journalist that worked at the station in the late 1980's. He said he really loved doing the TV logs in Master Control, which was a document of everything that went on air.

I was in TV programming from 1985-1987. I also learned how to run the field cameras, the studio cameras for our 15 minute newscast, dub carts for radio, and I did everything else, but on-air switching. When I left, they gave me 4313 [broadcast journalist] as a secondary MOS [military occupational specialty] and the Air Force commendation medal for my efforts. Working at FEN made me realize that the hours didn't matter...mission accomplishment was the only thing. I still roll that way; no excuses, let's get it done. I learned that it took ALL of us to get the mission dealt with, always. One person's contributions were a part of the whole FEN operation and that no one was above anyone else.

I mostly recall all the hard work we did. The Challenger Space Shuttle disaster is the one event that sticks out in my mind the most. I awoke to the footage being repeatedly shown on FEN TV with a crawler at the bottom of the screen saying, "All FEN personnel report to work immediately." I jumped into my uniform and reported to Rycom Plaza Headquarters. Crazy day for sure.¹⁰⁴

Gordi Breyette was an Air Force weather forecaster and FEN volunteer that would often do the weather forecast for the evening newscast. Although he wasn't trained as a broadcaster, he recalls how he got his start working at the station.

Well what a lot of people didn't know back then was my purpose for coming to Okinawa in the first place was to train Karate with the top seniors of my system. So in order to do that I needed to get out of rotating shift work and the guy who was doing FEN weather at that time, I don't recall his name but it was back in 1982 or 1984, he was going to be leaving Okinawa within the year so they were looking for a replacement. And I understood that we would be finished around 6:30 so

¹⁰⁴ Ricky Spaulding Sr., online chat with the author, Bedford, Texas, 1 March 2015.

I volunteered, not knowing at all what it entailed. So this guy, staff sergeant at that time, took me down to the FEN studios two or three times, and I watched them set up the map, and I watched them do the thing on the air, you know, live. And I sat there in the studio very quietly because I was scared to death of the cameras, or making a sound and destroying the entire thing and then I'd have to talk about it later to the commander. I think the third or fourth night I went down there he said "whelp, you've seen me doing it, can you set up the map now?" so I went and set up the map and he said, "Oh very good. Well it's yours, I'm going for coffee, goodbye." And we're on the air in like 15 minutes, and I said "You're what? Going for coffee?" and he says "Yeah, you got it, I'm going to be getting coffee and I'll watch you from inside the control booth." So I went on the air, scared to death, but I got through it. I didn't stall or anything like that, but actually, me talking to the camera was a lot easier than talking to a lot of people, so it didn't go that badly. So after that they had me up there alternating for him, back and forth, back and forth, and then I took it over when he left. So that's how I got it.¹⁰⁵

Jackie Almanza's father was a former Marine that married an Okinawan and stayed on the island. Jackie grew up on Okinawa then left for college in Massachusetts, returning for a time to complete an internship at FEN Okinawa. She grew up watching FEN and was excited and nervous about the opportunity to train at the station with the military broadcasters. Okinawa was home for her, but she found out how much the military members coveted reminders of their own hometown when she was working at the station.

My degree was in communications, so I was required to do an internship. I was at Endicott College at the time. It was like a two-year school and it was up in Massachusetts. This has nothing to do with your thesis but I had a Bart Simpson's Boston Bruins t-shirt on one day, and Rob Morrison (Marine broadcaster from Boston) tried everything to buy it off me or get it off me or something. I was like, I'm not getting rid of this! Absolutely not.

Even though we weren't that far in age, to me, the military people were so much older than me was my thinking. I think my first time there I was extremely nervous, because I'm not even sure who I checked in with.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Gordi Breyette, interview by the author, Okinawa, Japan, 8 January 2015.

¹⁰⁶ Jackie Almanza, phone interview by the author, Bedford, Texas, 11 February 2015.

The station had some military retirees as well as the teenage interns. Dennis Provencher made a living selling insurance on Okinawa when he retired from the military, but before then he worked for a year at FEN Okinawa as a civilian. He was never allowed to do anything on air, but said he would do it all again if they offered more money.

Actually, in the Air Force, six months before you retire you can go someplace and do something. I went with the exchange system, but I didn't like that at all, so then I went with FEN and Dale Dye was the manager at the time. He said to me, "Come work for me Dennis and in a year I'll get you a raise." I was at the low end of the scale and I wanted to get to GS-9 for more money. I was doing everything; I was putting stuff up on the air, I did the lighting. I did everything up there except on camera. I didn't do the news, but everything else like the lighting, I helped build the sets, it was a lot of fun.

I use to loan money to everybody up there, my God, them guys lived from payday to payday. I loaned everybody money except for Dale Dye. I even, one of the captains that was in charge after he left, I loaned him money. They called me the banker, and my daughter, they called her the little banker. Harrigan still owes me \$500.¹⁰⁷

The staffers were not only diverse in age, skills, and experience, they belonged to various branches of the military as well. Marine green, Air Force blue, Army khaki and Navy white all worked together under a local commander. They exemplified the concept of a "purple suit" network.¹⁰⁸ Although staffers worked together, personnel in each branch of the military still had their own regulations to follow. Dale Dye was a Marine combat veteran of Vietnam, and when he arrived at FEN Okinawa he found the Marine training had become lax. The station was under Air Force control but with all the branches of the military represented, there was less structure for the individual services. Dye set out to change that, not only for the Marines, but also for all the military members at the station.

I had gone a long way to squaring that outfit away; I mean when I arrived it was in pretty sad shape militarily. Well, as an old former infantryman, it got in my case. So I initiated inspections, I initiated PT [physical training], I initiated all kinds of things that I felt reminded those guys and gals who

¹⁰⁷ Dennis Provencher, interview by the author, Okinawa, Japan, 12 January 2015.

¹⁰⁸ Tom Bartlett, "The Purple Suit Network," *Leatherneck Magazine*, April 1982, 38.

they were, what they were, and that they weren't just a gang of sloppy, no haircut, nobody ever sees me military broadcaster and I can get away with anything. Hardly that case. What I found was it initiated kind of a unit esprit. They really became proud of who they were and what they were doing, and I fought hard for that. I kept reminding them how important what they were doing was. It worked brilliantly, I thought, and it certainly improved the image of the station.¹⁰⁹

Joe Carr was a Marine broadcaster who arrived in January 1979 and served in TV production and as operations chief. Carr said the inspections Dye conducted in the studio, and the grueling physical training he initiated, all contributed to the success of the station (see appendix A.9).¹¹⁰

What Dale did was make sure we never forgot, number one, we were Marines. And after awhile the Army and the Air Force and the Navy guys, but especially the Army and Air Force guys, bought in to what we were doing, and they wanted to, you know, kind of be a part of it. And we'd run a PFT [physical fitness test] up there, that was brutal, because we had two hills we had to climb, and some of those guys would come out and run with us. They'd want to be part of the Marine thing.¹¹¹

Members of each branch of service had the opportunity to see how the other services operated, but they had to work together to get the job done. Pat Miner was an Air Force broadcaster at FEN Okinawa and he recalled the inspections and why Dye made it mandatory for all the services to have them.

Apparently the Marines were in the TV studio doing a quarterly inspection, following the quarterly PFT earlier that morning, and the two Air Force guys sharing their cups of coffee were kind of giggling, and knocking each other in the elbows like, "Isn't that cute, look at the Marines over here getting inspected." Dale blew a gasket and rightfully so. That was extremely embarrassing to have NCO's making fun of other service members who were being inspected, per their service's requirements. Dale went over and talked to Doc Mills [station commander] and basically told Mills, either we're going to do the entire station as quarterly inspections or I'm going to raise an IG [Inspector

¹⁰⁹ Dye, interview.

¹¹⁰ Dale Dye, *Quarterly Inspection*, 1980.

¹¹¹ Joe Carr, phone interview by the author, Bedford, Texas, 7 March 2015.

General] complaint. And Mills backed down and allowed Dale to call quarterly inspections for all the services.¹¹²

Despite the adjustments that had to be made for the services to work together, Breyette recalled how it felt like a military family.

I had to think it was kind of unique, because it was my first and only experience in that manner. All of my previous tours had just been on Air Force bases, and there was no mingling with the others. What I saw was the kind of teamwork you would expect between military organizations. Everyone supported everybody. There wasn't a thing about, who's going to control who. I saw a lot of teamwork, mutual support, and a lot of respect for each branch of the service and each person who worked up there. I know that personally each person behind the teams, there might have been some friction here or there, but when it came time to put the production together or whatever it was, everyone functioned smoothly and worked together, and supported each other in a way that I have never seen before, and I've never seen since.¹¹³

In addition to the diverse service members, local Okinawan and American civilians provided support at the station. At FEN Okinawa, local civilian employee Kunio Kiyon worked since 1961 as the staff artist.¹¹⁴ He created the graphics needed for newscasts, promotional materials, and artwork for the building and radio remote trailer (see appendix A.10).¹¹⁵ One such project was a large billboard filled with caricatures of Hollywood stars that greeted visitors in the front lobby.¹¹⁶ Other civilians worked as engineers, housekeepers, and translators. Their continuity and dedication were the backbone of the station. Carr said it was their steady presence that helped during times of crisis.

When I became the news director I got a phone call about 5:15 in the morning at my house on Kadena, from Staff Sergeant Randy Ashurst, our Air Force guy, our morning drive guy, and he said, "Gunny, we have

¹¹² Pat Miner, phone interview by the author, Bedford, Texas, 18 April 2015.

¹¹³ Breyette, interview.

¹¹⁴ Katherine Scheidel, "AFRTS Marks 50 Years on the Air," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 30 May 1992, 7.

¹¹⁵ *FEN Okinawa Radio Remote Trailer*, circa 1980's.

¹¹⁶ "Note of Professionalism Added to AFRTS Lobby," *This Week on Okinawa*, 31 August 1964 (courtesy of Donn Cuson).

a problem. The president's been shot." And I'm thinking, what did you call me for...and then I realized, I'm the news director. And I asked him, "The president's been shot?" He says "yeah," so, crap. I said, "what are you doing?" and he said, "Well, I'm looking at the regs to see what we're supposed to do." And I said we've got regs on what to do if the president's killed, which was developed after Kennedy had been assassinated...so I jumped on my moped and I'm trucking on over to FEN thinking, what am I gonna do, man, this is, this is important. This whole island's going to be watching what we're doing and listening to what we're doing here, we gotta do this right now...it got serious all of the sudden. This is the real world.

I got to the station and sure enough, I'd say three quarters of our Okinawan employees were already there. Some had been [working] there since the early 50's. They knew what to do. They were there when Kennedy was shot. So they just knew the situation was bad. They had NHK, they had the Japanese station, and it was all live you know, it was all direct reporting. We didn't have that of course, we didn't have satellite then. So we didn't sign on till noon back then [television] and of course Randy was talking about it over the air, and we had a special report in and he was trying to find feeds to switch the signal over and I told him not to do that, and just pull all the rip and reads you can find, and then finally the Air Force commander came in...we were able to get NHK to agree to let us offline their stuff...we put it on tape and then played it for our audience in our system. We just put 'courtesy of NHK' and the captain just said, "Do it." One of our Okinawans, I think it was Joe Takamiyagi, got on the line and Joe T set that up for us.¹¹⁷

Dye said the changes he helped instigate at the station to make it more locally based got the attention of the Japanese broadcasters on island. With the help of his Okinawan civilians on staff, they were able to share more cultural news and events.

NHK and RBC, they didn't look at us as competition necessarily, but they looked at us as, I guess colleagues. They started to visit the station, and we started to visit them. Our Japanese staff at FEN really helped out with that. They were cooperating, they would give us tape, give us film on stuff that we couldn't cover...I couldn't get into Japanese politics. But if there were big Japanese festivals and events that we couldn't get to or we didn't know about or weren't invited to, suddenly we would get a call and a courier would come up and there would be a videotape cassette of what went on. We would get one of our guys to translate it and we would use it, compliments or courtesy of NHK or RBC.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Carr, interview.

¹¹⁸ Dye, interview.

Reuss remembered when Kunio Kiyan used his artistic skills to correct a mistake on business cards, and another time when a longtime station member at Iwakuni got a high-ranking visitor.

I remember when Kunio, I had ordered business cards, and he spelled, well I don't know if he did but somehow they came back and my name was spelled wrong. And of course, you know the way the Japanese were, you know, he was embarrassed. So he actually ordered replacement cards but in the meantime there was like a pack of 100 or 200, and he had spelled my name or it came out like R-E-U-S-E, like re-use, and he went in and he did a white-out over the E and hand did an S that matched, pretty much, and I was like, Kunio, you didn't have to do that. It really, was not that big of a deal, but he was just, you know, their pride is very big, which I found, both of my times in Japan, they definitely were proud of what they did.

We had an engineer when I was at Iwakuni who had been there for a very long time. General Stackpole had worked at FEN Iwakuni as like, a captain, so one day I'm at the front office in Iwakuni, which was much smaller than Okinawa, but I was right by the front door, and I'm just yabbering something, about to walk out, and I looked and the air station commander is there. And it's like five o'clock so it's really disarming, like holy crap, and right behind him is General Stackpole, three star general. Of course I snapped to attention and about crapped my pants, and this guy called ahead of me and says, "Ah it's OK, see General Stackpole wants to see somebody. So General Stackpole says, "Is Yaneda-san here?" I said yes sir, so we go in the back to the engineering department, and General Stackpole...he starts speaking to Yaneda. And Yaneda-san, older guy and he has, like the glasses, and he lifts them up and he goes, "Oh! Stackpole-san!" and he starts talking to him and I was like, wow. So after that it was like, don't mess with Yaneda-san, he's got friends in high places.¹¹⁹

FEN Okinawa was Jordan's first assignment after officer broadcast training. After telling his 26 Okinawan engineers to get started on the switch to local broadcasting in color, he says they got a plan together and took a vote on what to do, which surprised him because he expected them to simply follow orders. The lead engineer, much older than Jordan, said through tears that they would vote because it was the democratic way

¹¹⁹ Reuss, interview.

they had learned from them. So Jordan said it would be OK as long as they got the job done, and they did.

I had a handicap going in because my name was Jordan. You know what "joudan" means in Japanese? Joke! So I'm introduced as lieutenant joke or lieutenant joker. They warmed up to me right away, a little bit too much. I learned the hard way not to go to lunch with them, because I think within the first month I was there, after we got the color up and running and everything, we went to the little restaurant down at the bottom of the hill for lunch, and they're you know, doing salutes and kampais and the booze is flowing and I drank a little bit more than I should have, and I missed a staff meeting, which didn't set me in good graces with the detachment commander. Moreover, I had to call Bob Taplin to carry me home so I could sober up. So I made it a policy to never to go to lunch with them again.

Kunio was my favorite. Kunio was a very shy guy, but highly talented, and all you had to do was tell him what you wanted and he made it happen. I remember I wanted Plexiglas lecterns for the production studio, and I laid out a design for it and everything. I had seen it on several TV's back in the United States. It was just coming into vogue, and I had several of the senior NCO's that were really bucking me for making this thing. "You can't do that, it's ridiculous, blah, blah, blah." Well Kunio put it together and it worked like a charm.¹²⁰

Almanza said although she was learning things as an intern at the station, the military members were learning as well, from the experienced Okinawans.

I liked the people. There was a mixture of the local people, plus the military people. It was interesting to see the different dynamics because they [the technicians] were the mainstay. They were there, and then the military people rotated in and out, so it was interesting to see because in a sense, they knew how everything operated and were teaching some of the new people.¹²¹

Yim was one of those learning from the Okinawans. Although videotapes were slowly replacing film, Yim needed to learn how to work with the older technology.

Back in the 70's we didn't have ENG cameras at the time...we were shooting film. So I learned from Kunio how to shoot film, how to process it and how to edit 16mm film. Back then we had limited videotape. Most of the stuff that came to us from AFRTS at the time, like some of our primetime programs, some of our other programs, came to us on 16mm

¹²⁰ Jordan, interview.

¹²¹ Almanza, interview.

reels, so like *The Tonight Show*, when Carson was the host of that, came to us on film. I think the only thing that came to us on videotape was sports events, and some primetime events like the Oscars, the Grammy's.¹²²

Carr said it could be a fun place to work, but sometimes he would have to remind his TV production crew when it was time to get to work. Kunio overheard him talking to his crew and then created a sign for him with what he heard. "Some times you've got to turn the party lights off and turn the work lights on," said Carr. "I still got Kunio's sign he made for me. I've got it hanging in my office."¹²³

These stories reveal the diverse types of people and experiences that helped form the history of FEN Okinawa. No matter how each person arrived, they came away with new viewpoints, memories, and a shared mission.

3.4 Radio

Changes through the years included adding an FM station in 1965.¹²⁴ Whereas 650 AM was devoted primarily to music and live shows, on 89.1 FM, pre-recorded AFRTS shows played through an automated tape system (fondly named "Bernice"), broadcasting jazz, classical music, and specialty programming.¹²⁵ In 1971 a second AM station was added; 1420 AM was devoted to news, sports, special features, and educational programs that appealed to an older, more educated audience.¹²⁶ The second AM station only existed for a couple of years due to a Japanese law that stipulated that

¹²² Yim, interview.

¹²³ Carr, interview.

¹²⁴ "Celebrates 40 Years," 16.

¹²⁵ Jon Yim, *FM Automation System "Bernice,"* circa 1970–1975 (courtesy of Jon Yim).

¹²⁶ LtGen. James Lampert, "Okinawa Reversion: FEN Radio Frequencies, March 1972," Records of the U.S. Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR), Record Group 260, Okinawa Prefectural Archives, Okinawa, Japan.

only one AM frequency per area in Japan proper was authorized.¹²⁷ Another change related to Japanese rule was the radio frequency changed to 648 AM in 1977 due to a change in Japanese policy to allow 9 kilohertz between AM stations, instead of the 10 kilohertz based on standards in the United States.¹²⁸ In the studio, long-play albums and digital compact discs took their place among the reel-to-reel machines and carts. Live radio remotes were planned at various events throughout the island, giving listeners an opportunity to meet their favorite on-air personalities, and publicity for various command-sponsored activities.¹²⁹

A portion of record discs sent to military broadcast stations were kept in the radio library, but some radio shows could only be kept for a few months and then had to be destroyed. At FEN Okinawa, Kunio would create keepsake plaques out of these discs, which included a custom “Sayonara” label. These were framed and presented to military members leaving the station (see appendix A.11).¹³⁰ He also created record-breaker booths that would be used at events on base, and according to Yim, the money raised went to the station recreational fund (see appendix A.12).¹³¹

From a technical standpoint, putting together a radio service with outlets around the world was no small feat, but one of the most vital components of its success was programming. A compilation of radio schedules from the archives of *Pacific Stars and Stripes* shows that educational shows, news, and sports were part of the radio schedule, but music made up the largest portion of radio programming on FEN Okinawa’s AM station. Alexandra Fleming lived on Okinawa from about 1972-1975 while her dad was

¹²⁷ High Commissioners Office, “Okinawa Reversion: FEN Radio Frequencies, February 1972,” Records of the U.S. Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR), Record Group 260, Okinawa Prefectural Archives, Okinawa, Japan.

¹²⁸ “FEN Moves on the Dial,” *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 13 November 1977, 13.

¹²⁹ Jon Yim, *Mobile Radio Broadcast Booth*, 1972 (courtesy of Jon Yim).

¹³⁰ *Sayonara Record Presentation*, 1991.

¹³¹ *Break The Record*, 1990.

active duty Marine Corps there. She recalled that for her and her high school friends, music was everything.

In those days remember, we didn't have, even in the United States, you didn't have that much. We had records, and we had the radio, and so the radio was really, really important. Its kind of where your teenage culture came from, I would say, is from the radio...I mean, still today of course I'll hear songs that I hate, but they completely remind me of Okinawa, and what I was doing on that day.

From what I remember, the DJ's were like that old-time hokey DJ personality, you know...with that kind of howling into the microphone, sort of loud, boisterous persona. That's how I feel like those radio people were. I liked it; I was a kid so I thought it was cool. Pretty much anything they did I thought it was cool.

I really don't remember anything about the TV stuff, but as far as the radio went, they did do *Casey Kasem* every Sunday. That was a huge deal, to listen to that. Because that radio show really made you feel connected to other people. Because you felt like, you know how he ranks the songs, it made me feel like I was part of that community that was figuring out whether something was good or not, or worthy enough. So, I really liked that. It's like even though we were so far away, and you feel like nobody is thinking of you or knows where you are or where Okinawa is, you were still somehow a part of this whole teenage community, sort of global teenage community, or at least American teenage community. So that was cool.¹³²

While the AFRTS network shows were important and many popular radio programs were shipped in, Dye made sure the radio DJ's were taking listener requests and talking about local events and places whenever possible during their radio shift.

At the time I wanted to do more local radio programs. We had packages that came in, Roger Carroll, and Charlie Tuna, and all of that, that came out of AFRTS in Los Angeles. They were all fine and they were all popular, but I thought we should give a voice to music choices, because we had a lot of folks at Kadena Air Force base and at various other bases on the island that worked shifts. They always had a radio on in the background, and I wanted it to be us. I wanted to give them some voice in what we were doing. So I localized the DJ's, and I had them talk about things that were happening on the island while they were doing their snappy patter and all that sort of thing. Occasionally I had to get in their case about some things because they tended to be opinionated about what was going on, on the island. We don't want your opinion; we just

¹³² Alexandra Fleming, phone interview by the author, Bedford, Texas, 19 February 2015.

want to hear about it. So over the course of about the first year we became really popular. People began to see us, especially the dependent population, as just like a local station in their hometown, where they had some input, where they weren't just being fed pablum.¹³³

The radio remotes were another way to give listeners input into the local music shows, and helped promote the feeling they had a voice in the programming. Carr remembered the fun atmosphere created with the radio remotes.

I liked doing the remotes. The remotes were very, very interesting. Getting in that trailer, people hanging around outside, having fun and dancing to the music we were playing on the radio. You know it was just a tremendous experience.¹³⁴

Breyette also participated in the radio remotes, showing his karate skills. It gave listeners a chance to see another side of their favorite broadcast talent.

I think if I was doing a kind of karate demonstration at a radio remote there were several forms of entertainment they had planned for that, so I was just one of them, and I probably said, "Hey, I'll volunteer, people will know me from FEN so they'll come and see the weather forecaster get his butt kicked in public. It's what they've always wanted!"¹³⁵

Yim recalled how fun the radio remotes were at the various festivals and carnivals around the island.

Bill [radio engineering chief] was always in charge of making sure the 648 mobile van was ready to rock and roll. We had tons of fun with the remote, of course. We did the *Kadena Karnival* and made sure that puppy was parked on the midway, in the middle, of the midway. Bill, of course, always made sure the van was parked adjacent or at least five or six steps from the MWR beer booth. So make sure you're off shift, and then go to the booth.

While the occasional radio remotes got the DJ's out among the listeners and helped with community relations, local radio shows at FEN Okinawa had to be staffed every day. Yim remembered the hard work that went into doing each radio shift.

¹³³ Dye, interview.

¹³⁴ Carr, interview.

¹³⁵ Breyette, interview.

As a teenager, our family lived at Plaza. Our house was three houses away from the station. I come back to the island [as a Navy broadcast journalist in 1982], our house is still there. In fact it's there in 2015, it still stands, but anyhow, I remember one day I got called in to work a double shift because one of the guys was sick in quarters so I had to fill in for his air shift. So I had to do the 5 to 9 am *Clockwatcher* shift, then *Daytripper* 11 to noon, then the PM drive *On the Road*. It was all me, all day. Trust me, it was a long day. I remember I was walking out the station; it was 10 o'clock at night. I walked out of the station and I had my car parked out in the parking lot, but I'm walking across the lawn, OK, to go across the street. Somehow in the back of my mind I'm thinking, I gotta go home. It's not that far away, I just gotta go home. And I'm standing there, right at the corner of the station, just before I would cross the street going into the housing area, and I go, stop, wait, think, OK. You're in a Navy enlisted uniform. This is officer's country. You don't live here anymore. Get in your car and drive home (laughs). That's how tired I was.¹³⁶

FEN Okinawa began as a radio station and radio continued to be a vital part of its programming throughout the years. Listeners had the opportunity to interact with the DJ's at radio remotes, and DJ's worked long hours to provide live news and weather updates, as well as pull music for listener requests.

3.5 Television

As technology developed, radio was soon joined by black and white television and a name change was in order. AFRS became known as Armed Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS). On Okinawa, television arrived on December 24, 1955.¹³⁷ It was separate from the Far East Network and run under Kadena's 313th Air Division as AFTV-Okinawa, broadcasting on channel 8.¹³⁸ New studios were being prepared at Rycom Plaza, and in 1958, television and radio were combined under Air Force supervision as an independent station, broadcasting as AFRTS-Okinawa. It was the

¹³⁶ Yim, interview.

¹³⁷ "Celebrates 40 Years," 16.

¹³⁸ United States Air Force, *Okinawa Information Guide*, 1955 (courtesy of Donn Cuson).

largest Independent AFRTS station in the world.¹³⁹ It rejoined the Far East Network in 1972, when Okinawa reverted to Japanese rule.¹⁴⁰

At first, television programming included commercials at the insistence of the networks that provided the shows. This practice continued for a few months until it was argued that the television programs would have to be decommercialized, just as radio programs were.¹⁴¹ Television brought with it a demand for programming the troops enjoyed at home. This programming was provided by the AFRTS broadcast center and flown to the station for broadcast. A TV schedule from 1961 at AFRTS Okinawa looks very similar to a stateside channel, with shows such as *The Untouchables*, *Gunsmoke*, the *Ed Sullivan Show*, and *What's My Line*.¹⁴²

Testing for color television began in 1970, and by 1971 all programming was in color except for locally produced shows. Production in color of locally produced shows began in 1974 with the arrival of color studio cameras.¹⁴³ Satellite programs were available through SATNET and began to be received on Okinawa in 1985.¹⁴⁴ Programming was available 24 hours a day, making it ideal for broadcasting time-sensitive news and sports programming, and complementing the local news and command information. On the day Desert Storm began in 1991, the station was able to switch to continuous satellite programming on CNN, then break for the local newscast for important command information regarding security and safety on Okinawa.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ Department of Defense, AFRTS Okinawa, 26 June 1962, Freimuth Collection, Okinawa Prefectural Archives, Okinawa, Japan.

¹⁴⁰ "Profile: AFRTS History," 12.

¹⁴¹ Department of Defense, *History of AFRTS*, 81.

¹⁴² "This Week on TV," *This Week on Okinawa*, 24 February 1961 (courtesy of Donn Cuson).

¹⁴³ "Celebrates 40 Years," 16.

¹⁴⁴ Department of Defense, *History of AFRTS*, 112.

¹⁴⁵ FEN Okinawa, "Island 8 News," 18 January 1991. Recollection of the author.

As new technology such as satellite programs came along, those at the station had the challenge of installing it and keeping it maintained. Spaulding remembers when the new satellite dish proved especially challenging.

We had SatNet, in fact the satellite dish was on a flatbed trailer out in the parking lot!!! TRUE STORY!! We had to run a SatNet Test logo every 30 minutes in the TV logs!! We started having trouble with the satellite dish so the techs spent half a day out in the parking lot trying to fix it to no avail. So I finally went out to razz them about it. The Air Force master sergeant in charge finally got pissed off and climbed up on the trailer and gave the dish a swift kick. You guessed it, FIXED IT PERFECTLY...!!! About the time I returned to the joint public affairs office, in October of 1987, the satellite was permanent and no longer in the parking lot.¹⁴⁶

Besides installing new technology, as Spaulding did with the satellite dish, there was older technology to maintain. Jordan recalled the great lengths they went to keep TV available when the audio went out.

Actually, the sound on the television was an AM tube, and it was a vacuum tube. It was about 6 inches across and about a foot high, and it was an old-fashioned vacuum tube that had been made back in the 20's or sometime. Of course, the Air Force supply system has a load factor algorithm that they use to decide what parts they will load and what parts they won't. And this thing had been put in there, I don't know if the antenna had been shanghaied from some older station or what, but it was the original tube and when we lost it we didn't have a replacement. I went to the Air Force and they said they couldn't order it, because we didn't have any demand for it. They also didn't know where to find it. So my genius, Bob Taplin, did some research, and of course he had a stack of manuals and sales catalogs and so forth, and he located this thing in Edison, New Jersey, of all places. We had to dispatch a courier to go back to the states to get this thing and procure it, and hand carry it back. Well it was going to take something like two weeks, and we didn't want to go off [the air]. We had the TV, video, because that was on the FM channel, but you couldn't watch TV without sound, so what we did was during the hours of TV broadcasting, we broadcast the audio over our AM station. We just informed the community that during this time, if you just turn on your AM radio and put it by your television set [he laughs] you'll have sound. And that's the way we worked around it. They just turned it to our frequency, the same one they listened to normally for the English language broadcasting.¹⁴⁷

Provencher would often work in master control, making sure the programs were on air. He would cue up spots on videotape and film, and as a program would fade to

¹⁴⁶ Spaulding Sr., online chat.

¹⁴⁷ Jordan, interview.

black, he would run a spot while he cued up the next program. He said this was how he got hooked on TV shows.

I got stuck on General Hospital. I got stuck on that because General Hospital was on just before I had to put the tape on for the news, so I had to watch that so I could make sure we were doing it right and I got stuck on that stupid General Hospital, drove me nuts. But after I left, sometimes I noticed they went black on air, and sometimes you would call and nobody would answer the damn phone. So, sometimes when it went black on air for 30 or 40 minutes I would call up and I figured the guy went to the bathroom or something and didn't check his tapes because they put the tapes in and let them run.

You don't want black on air. Everybody hated it, and they would tell you, too. If you worked there, and I don't care what you were doing, if you worked there they would tell you, "Uhh black on air 13:29." Thank you very much, I knew that.¹⁴⁸

Breyette felt that although some of the equipment was outdated, the technicians did an amazing job keeping it running.

Generally speaking, the workers up there, the technicians kept everything together pretty well. They extended the life well, well beyond the expected life. Most of the equipment we had, for the most part, ran in tiptop shape. I was always marveling at the way they could get in and tear down a piece of equipment, put it back together and make it work like it was new. They didn't jury rig anything, because everything was necessary, and you couldn't bypass certain circuits.¹⁴⁹

As operations manager, Reuss would often give studio tours to scouts and students. He liked to show off the latest technology at the station to the visitors.

Probably the biggest change while I was there was we got the Odetics, which was an automated system. It basically gave you an eight-hour walk away capability you could program, and it was a robotic arm. The arm would go into, kind of like a big closet, pull the correct tape, drop it into the player. And so you could program spots and everything, so it was like an early, automated system.

So we did a lot of school tours, and I would tell the TV guys, OK, do some whiz-bang. They would push a bunch of buttons and the arm would start sliding all over the place, you know, grab a tape, pop it into the player, then go back and get another one. Technically that was a

¹⁴⁸ Provencher, interview.

¹⁴⁹ Breyette, interview.

huge change, because you didn't have to be there making every reel change, and commercial at the appropriate time. It was all done automatically.¹⁵⁰

As television technology improved, the viewing audience expected more, such as the current TV shows available in the states. Unless it was carried by satellite, shows were often months behind. When Almanza was growing up, she remembers how VCRs allowed her friends in the US to send shows they recorded only days before.

If Dad was watching TV, and of course back then I think we just had the one TV, unlike today when you have multiple TV's in the house, so if Dad was watching TV, you were watching what Dad was watching. Because the shows were behind what was in the United States, we would watch the shows but sometimes it would be fun if someone had friends in America that would record shows and mail them. Then we could find out what was going on in the U.S. while we were behind.¹⁵¹

Television was an important part of the entertainment provided by FEN Okinawa, but not everyone was an avid viewer. Jason Maness spent part of his childhood on Okinawa when his father was in the Marines, and he returned as a Navy Seabee on Okinawa. He and his family took advantage of the many outdoor activities available on island, and for him, television was a smaller part of his life.

Well, I was 14 or 15 years old then. TV is not really one of the, uhh, focal points of a young teenagers life. But I do remember coming home from school, sitting down, turning on the TV and there it was; your one channel, the Far East Network. More commonly known as "forced entertainment network," but you know there were certain shows that were on, like *The Simpsons*, we always watched *The Simpsons*. But if you wanted to watch something else you were putting in a VHS tape or something. Mostly my family, we were all pretty active, so not a lot of TV time or things like that. But when we did it was that channel. Well, it was better than Japanese TV cause no one, you know, we didn't speak Japanese or anything so at least we had something.¹⁵²

Michelle Fukuyama is an Academic Advisor on base for the University of Maryland and remembers that TV was important for her because she liked to watch it to

¹⁵⁰ Reuss, interview.

¹⁵¹ Almanza, interview.

¹⁵² Jason Maness, interview by the author, Okinawa, Japan, 10 January 2015.

relax, and she didn't speak Japanese when she first arrived. It wasn't always easy to get the station's TV signal where she lived in Naha, but she found one offbeat solution.

I lived down in Naha so Naha didn't get the TV waves as well, but I heard if you buy the cheapest brand of television it was possible you could get FEN, and it was true! I don't know why but like, something about it like... so I went and bought the cheapest like, strange branding I never heard of before TV, because you could kinda see FEN from my house so like, when I was having a really bad day I could sort of watch English TV. But the radio is all I've listened to ever since I came to Japan, because Japanese radio irritates me a lot the way they cut off songs in the middle and keep talking and talking and talking.¹⁵³

As television technology changed through years, staffers at FEN Okinawa had to learn and adapt. Black and white programming gave way to color, which required a careful coordination of equipment and engineers. Local programs were supplemented with satellite programs, and parts and supplies had to be repaired or replaced with each upgrade. It took ingenuity and creativity to stay ahead of the technical challenges.

¹⁵³ Michelle Fukuyama, interview by the author, Okinawa, Japan, 10 January 2015.

Chapter 4

Programming

4.1 News

News has always been a part of military broadcasting. When AFRTS first began, civilians with prior broadcast experience were assigned to the stations. Training for news reporting and on-air delivery took place at the Army Information School at first, eventually becoming the Defense Information School (DINFOS). Military broadcasters were not trained to be investigative reporters, but they learned broadcast writing and reporting techniques, and technical skills.¹⁵⁴

At FEN Okinawa, news reports were transmitted by radio and television, with stories compiled from the Associated Press, United Press International, stateside networks such as ABC, NBC, and CBS, and local public affairs offices. This allowed for timely reporting of stories that could be broadcast just as quickly as families in the states heard it. One example of this is when military broadcasters interrupted regular programming to announce that President Kennedy had been shot, just six minutes after the shooting. News of his death was transmitted via live shortwave transmission 10 minutes before it was officially confirmed by wire services.¹⁵⁵ On Okinawa, news of Kennedy's assassination was followed by 30 days of somber music and programming. Richard Risk was the information officer at Naha Air Base at the time, and he remembers how the programming changed. He said when General Douglas MacArthur died a few months later they were all relieved the mourning period only lasted a couple of days.

I lived off base with other lieutenants, and schoolteachers that worked on base lived in Quonset huts and didn't have any kitchen facilities so we let them use our kitchen. They came over on Saturday morning and, I guess I was still in bed, and they said, "Well, what time did you hear about the

¹⁵⁴ Department of Defense, *History of AFRTS*, 117.

¹⁵⁵ Cranston, "Some Historical Newscasts," 396.

assassination?" My immediate thought was that another Vietnamese president had been assassinated. They said no, it was Kennedy. It was Friday in the states, so it was well into the morning on Okinawa. It was unbelievable so I got dressed and went into the base. I don't remember what we did exactly, but what I do remember is there was a directive from somebody that all of the AFRTS programming, music, would be classical. Of course, being close to the troops, you hear grumbling. It was like, what are they doing? At the same time you had a commercial station, by Okinawans I guess, KSBK, that was a top 40 format disc jockey type station. They were playing all the popular music of the day. I guess this was a heyday for them.¹⁵⁶

Breaking news comes in all varieties and when questions arise about how to handle it, Department of Defense regulations help with guidelines to follow, even when your gut feeling tells you otherwise. Jim Martin was a Marine broadcaster at FEN Okinawa in the early 1980's and he remembered the day KAL 007 was shot down.

I was doing radio news at that point, and we had a single wire report that some of the spooks up in Misawa had tracked that the airliner descended from 33,000 feet in a matter of about 3 ½ minutes, which basically meant it fell out of the fuckin' sky, like a rock. But our journalistic standard was we needed to have a second confirmed source before we went on the air with it. And I think I got this, it was like 1:30 in the afternoon, and for the two o'clock, the three o'clock, the four o'clock, the five o'clock, and the expanded news at six o'clock, I had to go on the air and tell everybody in Japan, that we still think that the airplane landed on Sakhalin Island, because I couldn't get a second source to confirm what Misawa had said. I mean we knew there was some serious shit going on. About two weeks prior to that we had been over on Kadena and done a two-part series of reports on the Westpac Rescue Coordination Center. And that fell under their purview, to know what's going on over there, so you know we had just talked to them two weeks earlier and they're talking about an airplane down in the Pacific, so I went to pick up the phone; they wouldn't even talk to us, so we knew there was some serious shit going on, and I couldn't say shit about it. You know, and that was, an education.

Because most of what we were doing was national, international stuff, it taught me to understand the nuance of politics and governments...It was an education of how the world works.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Richard Risk, phone interview by the author, Bedford, Texas, 14 April 2015.

¹⁵⁷ Jim Martin, phone interview by the author, Bedford, Texas, 24 February 2015.

Yim said one incident he remembers clearly was when the Marine barracks in Beruit was bombed, and the immediate response of the broadcasters at FEN Okinawa who wanted to volunteer to help.

When the barracks bombing in Beruit happened, when the news hit the station, you would not believe how many people were on the phone or asking Captain Nuttall to call our respective service branch and ask for emergency transfers to man up the Navy broadcasting det [detachment] in Beruit. Joe Ciokon was a good friend of mine, he's a retired master chief journalist, he was the station manager at the time when it all went down. He is a Beruit survivor. He got thrown out of his hooch when the explosion happened because the det was located about 500 yards from it. The det was able to go back on the air in a couple of hours. It injured two journalists, and one Army technician sustained minor damage. Considering the amount of blast destruction...most of the station staff wanted to go over, as did staff from other outlets, to relieve them and keep the station on air.¹⁵⁸

Television news programs were formatted to look and feel like stateside news, with local and international news leading the newscast, followed by weather, sports, and feature stories. The most obvious difference was that announcers were in military uniform. Broadcasters would go out to cover local military or cultural events at the request of public affairs offices, or commanding officers, then compile reports for broadcast. At FEN Okinawa in 1980, there were 60 to 70 local television news spots being produced each month, resulting in an Air Force Media Broadcasting award for the evening newscast.¹⁵⁹ Risk, who went on to work at AFTN (Armed Forces Thailand Network), said entertainment programming was a morale boost and drew an audience, but the reason for building the audience was to deliver news and information.

You know it was an internal information communications device for members of the armed services. They would have public service announcements, but they were internal information programs for the G.I.'s. Yes, they provided entertainment programming, but it's like with commercial broadcasting. The purpose of the program is to collect an audience, for the purpose of delivering commercials. And that was pretty

¹⁵⁸ Yim, interview.

¹⁵⁹ Bartlett, "The Purple Suit Network," 39.

much what this was all about, too. You had entertainment programming, but it was designed for dissemination of important announcements, and the news.¹⁶⁰

Localized, internal information could be specific to certain bases or military units on island, or involve the entire island population, as what happened when Okinawa reverted back to Japanese control. One of the changes needed was a traffic switch from driving on the right side of the road, as is done in the U.S., to driving on the left side of the road, as is done in Japan. Logistically, this took a few years to plan and actually took place July 30, 1978, a Sunday. FEN Okinawa ran public service announcements, short driving films provided by the government of Japan, and locally produced programs covering the switch. There were even special pedestrian safety tips presented to children on the locally produced children's show.¹⁶¹ Dye recalled how important this information was and how they covered the event.

We had to completely change everything on the island. We started driving on the other side of the road as they do in Japan. So we set up a 24-hour telethon, and we ran PSA's all the way up until, it changed at midnight one night, but we stayed on air completely through the day until the change. We had news crews out on the street and kept reminding people and kept doing public service segments and that sort of thing, and it went off like clockwork. There was just, absolutely nothing to it. We didn't even have any accidents. That was an example, the only reason I bring it up really is it was an example of how important we could be if we got the bone in our teeth and really did what we were suppose to do to serve the audience.¹⁶²

Broadcasters could suggest news ideas or events to cover, and often had the opportunity to pursue topics that held special interest to them. Wilson, along with fellow broadcasters Rick Bretz and Steve Short, was inspired to create a documentary called *The Typhoon of Steel*, about the battle of Okinawa. The station did not officially sanction

¹⁶⁰ Risk, interview.

¹⁶¹ "FEN to Cover Oki Traffic Switch," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 26 July 1978, 8.

¹⁶² Dye, interview.

it and they had to work on it on their own time, but it reflected the freedom staffers had to try new ideas or programs. Wilson said she thought they aired it once a year for awhile.

First of all I had to get permission to do it, because it wasn't something they wanted to let me do. I begged Top Yohe. He gave me permission to do it but he said you cannot do any of it on "company time". He said if you're scheduled to be here doing something, don't let me catch you doing any of that documentary you want to do. Rick was really into it. Me and Chuck Bonilla and Rick would sit and listen to music and talk about the world like we thought we knew stuff. Chuck and I would hang out and we'd take those tours on the island just to get to know things better, and that kind of motivated me to do the story, because the islanders are so nice. They're like country folk. Mamasan [housekeeper at the station] and Kunio and Joe T, they were my motivators to go do something about the island and they would talk to me about what it was like. Mamasan introduced me to the lady that was the nurse on the island. She was a 14 year-old nurse that talked about what it was like to have the white phosphorous grenades thrown on her, and that the Japanese soldiers would shoot them if they tried to escape...the only thing that saved her was that her best friend died on top of her.¹⁶³

Almanza was surprised to learn how the military broadcasters did their local news stories. She said it seemed the reporters had lots more autonomy than she expected, and were allowed to shoot and edit stories without much direction.

You always think that the TV station already has all these things planned out and they're dictating where things go or what the news story is supposed to be, but I think you guys were the ones who really made the stories. It was your story, your coverage, you guys edited it, and I'm sure the gunny and everybody had final OK but it was ya'lls perspective for the most part. You think that, OK here's ya'lls assignments and get this perspective or whatever. It wasn't, it wasn't molded in any direction, per se.¹⁶⁴

The local Okinawan television broadcast company, Ryukyu Broadcast Corporation (RBC), often did stories about the activities of the military bases. During Operation Desert Storm, reporters hit the streets to talk to service members about their thoughts regarding the war and how they felt about possibly going to fight.¹⁶⁵ Japan's

¹⁶³ Wilson, interview.

¹⁶⁴ Almanza, interview.

¹⁶⁵ RBC, "Okinawa Reaction to Gulf War," 1991.

public broadcast company (NHK) and Tokyo Broadcast System (TBS) are also a source of news for Okinawa. During a special documentary about the Far East Network, TBS focused on several military broadcast stations and described their mission. They showed the television schedule for military broadcasts published in the Japanese newspaper and interviews with listeners who tuned in.¹⁶⁶

During a separate documentary that focused on the relationship between residents and the military on Okinawa, NHK reporters interviewed a military broadcaster about her viewpoints regarding the Okinawan people themselves. This type of programming made the military commander at FEN Okinawa uneasy, and he questioned the broadcaster about her involvement with NHK and what was discussed. After that, she continued to produce cultural stories for the newscasts, but the commander would often sit in on the edit. It was apparent that the station commander was very sensitive to what may be broadcast to the military but also residents of the host country. Shows that may have seemed critical or condescending to Asians or the Japanese culture would not be broadcast.¹⁶⁷ Carr said they made sure to provide information on local news and events, but stayed away from commentary or opinion.

We did try to cover things in the community, but we had to be careful on what we covered. We don't get involved in the local politics. We don't get involved in the decisions made by the local government, or the people. We stay away from that because it's none of our business, we're guests in this country. So we were not permitted to grab our cameras and run out there and photograph riots, or photograph people at the gates protesting, waving their signs. We would make announcements that would say, you might want to be advised that there are demonstrations...that's pretty much the extent of what we were able to do.¹⁶⁸

Dye explained further:

¹⁶⁶ TBS, "Tokyo Hodo Tokushu," January 1991.

¹⁶⁷ Recollection of the author.

¹⁶⁸ Carr, interview.

It was a very sensitive time in Japanese relations. They wanted Okinawa back under Japanese control and we had had it since World War II. There were some enormous complaints about training accidents or the camera helicopter would fly over a Japanese neighborhood, there were always constant complaints about that. We reported those things, but we didn't take a position on them. At first, they didn't even want me to do that. And I said that it would hurt our credibility, everybody knows its happening, hell, and they can see it. So we can't ignore that, and I won that fight. We were able to report it but not take any position on it. There were certainly records that AFRTS censored...Did we get tight political news censored? No, we read the wires; we pulled stuff off of the wires the same as any other news outlet. Occasionally there would be something that came in like, an airman had been arrested for rape in the Philippines. And I would say, if he was an airman from Kadena we would air it, as it is, let the Philippines do that. I exercised editorial control. I was really broad based. I was more for getting it out there than I was for hiding anything. That was just my general attitude. Or else, everybody else hears about it, and then what do we look like?

Objectivity in news is kind of an oxymoron. I would have tried; I might have gotten slapped down. You've got to have the guts to stand up and tell them.¹⁶⁹

Reporting on local events without taking an editorial stance was expected, and because FEN Okinawa was broadcasting on Japanese soil there were special regulations to follow that would not have applied to a regular television network in the states. Wilson recalled the time the Japanese emperor died and how the programming at FEN Okinawa changed because of regulations regarding host nation sensitivity.

The emperor was dying and when the emperor was dying we couldn't air programming that was happy, or happy-go-lucky, or laughter or anything. We had to be somber. That's when we would air nothing on the station except some, you know, brooks, waterfalls, and stuff like that, and have contemporary classical, and classical music on. We called it the "dead emperor" time period, because the emperor was so sick. When the emperor died we couldn't even show news programs about the emperor, like NBC was going on the Today show talking about how the emperor was so sick and we had to cut it immediately. They came back and told me to stop airing that. I switched it off and said we were having difficulty with our station signal the whole time and we couldn't air it. They weren't

¹⁶⁹ Dye, interview.

allowing us that because the Japanese government was telling us what we were allowed to say about the emperor.¹⁷⁰

Any time service members are called to action there is a need for news coverage that addresses the concerns of a military audience. During Operation Desert Storm, military bases on Okinawa went to a higher level of alert, with stricter procedures for getting on and off base. Military members were getting orders to report to the Middle East, and new rules for travel were given. These are the types of local news reports military families are concerned with, which are not easily accessible on local Japanese stations. FEN Okinawa was able to provide a live satellite feed of CNN news during the crisis, with breaks for local live news.¹⁷¹ Carr admitted that it wasn't until the attempt on Reagan's life that he really began to appreciate what AFRTS was, and how much work it was to present the news accurately and professionally.

And that's when it all came to me, you know, hey this is an important assignment. This is, very, very important, and we need to be total professionals at all times, and we gotta keep the egos intact. And [Dye] did a good job of making sure because he'd kick your ass. He'd take you outside and square you away fast. "Now let me remind you just who you are," and he'd also let you know any egos around here is mine, you know, but he was one of the big reasons we had so much success, and he used his staff NCO's very effectively.¹⁷²

Delivering the news quickly and accurately has always been a cornerstone of AFRTS programming, and especially so in an isolated location like Okinawa. Local news coverage of base events, programs, threats, and military specific information helped military members settle in and make the best of their tour of duty.

4.2 Military Audience

On Okinawa, FEN did not have to compete with several different networks, but it was still important to provide programming the military audience wanted. Dye said when

¹⁷⁰ Wilson, interview.

¹⁷¹ Recollection of the author.

¹⁷² Carr, interview.

he arrived at FEN in 1978 there was practically no focus on what was happening on the island of Okinawa. He initiated several programs that focused on the local population. He had reporters out doing stand-ups in local stories, and he had a weekly five-minute show called *Feedback*, which allowed him to answer questions about programming on air. Although viewers may not always get the shows they wanted, the *Feedback* program helped address some of the complaints and suggestions for change.¹⁷³ By listening to the audience, he created lots of interest in the station.

Well, we started to get tons of mail from the dependant population. I was fielding phone calls every day; in fact we had to put someone, a woman Marine, on the phones as sort of an ombudsman. What happened was the island population began to sense that there were new and interesting things going on with that TV station and radio station, which was normally just background noise. Now there was something new here and that always generates interest and I knew that. So we started to hear really interesting comments and requests and things from the civilian population. We started to hear great things from the island commands at Kadena Air Force base, or Camp Butler. The public affairs folks were saying it was a great outlet; we gotta get a piece of this. So they would start cooperating when we were out collecting news stories and that sort of thing, and tipping us off. So we were seeing that light up. We were seeing people, both military and civilian, looking at the station as their voice, as part of them, as something that served them, not just as something the Department of Defense shoved down their throats. That immediately told me we were on the right track.

We were a favorite place, and very often, interestingly, commanders on the island, Marines, Air Force types, who wanted to get a message across, would ask for time on air and we would set up an interview. I tried to do that myself so that it wasn't some airman third class being intimidated because he's sitting across from a two star. I could ask the tough questions and I would. Because what the hell are they going to do to me? So I would ask the tough questions and it really became a popular aspect. I found the commanders on the island liked it, they wanted to be able to talk and so I would initiate that.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ "Okinawa FEN Show Answers Listeners' Complaints," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 20 June 1978, 8.

¹⁷⁴ Dye, interview.

One program that proved extremely popular among many of the families on island was a locally produced children's show called *Kiddie Kapers*.¹⁷⁵ Carr had a background in theater and helped produce the *Kiddie Kapers* show at FEN, which featured several hand puppets with names and personalities, as well as a studio audience of children (see appendix A.13).¹⁷⁶ He recalled one episode that generated lots of viewer response.

I remember we had a character named Lionel Lion, and an Air Force Sergeant by the name of Carl Sergeant played the voice of the lion. It was a very, very popular thing. So we decided when Carl left, the lion had to go, too, and we were going to introduce a couple of other characters. Well we did this very, I don't know why we did it this way, but we did this very emotional, sad, you know, empty studio, tumbleweed running through it, and the lion was gone. And the phones started to ring. I mean we aired it on Saturday and the phones were ringing in the newsroom, and I got a phone call from somebody saying, "Hey, could somebody come up here and help me answer the phones?" I said, what's going on? "We got a lot of complaints. A lot of kids are crying, a lot of kids are emotionally upset, we got parents ready to kill us," and I asked why, what's happened? "Because of that *Kiddie Kapers* show you guys did, man! It was so sad and emotional it looked like the lion was dead, you know." He said it was the howling wind at the end, it had the sound effect of wind blowing, and the empty stands where the kids sat, you know, it was really... and I don't know why we did it that way, we just did...so we came back to do the show the following, to do the show on Tuesday night, and we really amped it up. We brought a miss piggy character in, and we brought some other character in, and then I think I took over radio after that. I think I got a little too carried away with that show and the adults started liking it more than the kids.¹⁷⁷

Carr explained that his job as a broadcaster was definitely influenced by his military career. He said most of the time he had the freedom to try new ideas or programs, which added to the connection he could make with the military audience. Carr loved play-by-play sports reporting and found it very exciting, thinking at the time, "I can't believe I'm doing this in the Marines!"

¹⁷⁵ SSgt. C.D. Gilbert, "Oki FEN's Own Menagerie," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, 12 March 1975, 9.

¹⁷⁶ *Kiddie Kapers*, circa 1974-1975 (courtesy of Jon Yim).

¹⁷⁷ Carr, interview.

You can get a little too carried away, and I used to get a little too carried away...I would say what I wanted to say, do what I wanted to do, I was a gunny in the Marines, I was a D.I. [drill instructor], you know, hey, you didn't like what I do, too bad. I mean this was just another assignment to me, and I was going to do the best I could. I was hardcore, I was a tough Marine, I played a lot of sports, and this is what I got to offer you. You don't like it, hey, I'm not one of them multi-million dollar announcers man, give me a break. Somehow it got to me that DINFOS was playing, in their broadcast class, my sportscast, to show the level of [he laughs] excitement you can put into your job. Well I was just; I just thought that was just wonderful. I didn't take that seriously at all. I thought they were just harassing me or mocking me, really. I didn't know if that was how you were not supposed to do it, or how you were supposed to do it, so a lot of those sports things just happened where human emotion just steps in. I don't know, at times we got just a little crazy and carried away with the things we did...you know you still have that Marine in you, and anybody that joins the Marines, and I don't care who you are, I don't care what sex you are, I don't care what year you joined, if you joined the Marines you've got an inner spirit that you haven't even tapped into yet. You know, you want to prove something to yourself.¹⁷⁸

Reuss said work as a military broadcaster was unique because the stories they covered were often training exercises that allowed them to experience a variety of military specialties. These stories would focus on why the training was needed and what was accomplished, so it was very informative and helped create a sense of pride among the military members.

I got to participate in the last full-blown air exercise in the Philippines. That was kind of neat. I flew down on a KC 130, and the next day the commander, who I had a very good relationship with, he's like, "You ready? You ready, Gunny? Let's go!" and I said, yes sir, so we jump in a KC 130, we fly to an outer island, land, and helicopters were coming in from Okinawa and they didn't have the same capacity to fly distance as the KC 130, so they did a rapid ground refueler. So the 130's would come out and they would run the hoses on the ground, helicopters would land, they'd refuel, and you know you're in the middle of an island so a lot of the young kids are coming out and trying to see what's going on. The final day they were like, "OK, we're going to do a flyover with a formation of all our aircraft." They had the OV 10 [light attack aircraft], all the different helicopters, Harrier, and KC 130. The Harrier is like, almost falling out of the sky because it moves much faster than the others, so the pilot's got me on the headset and he says, "Tell me what you need,"

¹⁷⁸ Carr, interview.

you know, so I'm like, man, I'm a gunny, telling this pilot go here, go there. It was pretty slick.

We really did get to do some neat things because of the relationship with Public Affairs...I ended up going on a submarine out at White Beach. They would come in and do a crew rest, and they would take VIP's aboard. So you'd go out for eight hours, and they said "Just stick with this guy and he can tell you what you can shoot and what you can't shoot," so I was like, cool! So, like I said, we were out for about eight hours, we're under water and periscope and the whole thing, and it turned out, I mean, the whole time I was like, OK, this isn't a one-part story, this is like a five-part series, and I'm thinking of all the different angles and promos we're going to run and everything. You know, I get back and I start working on it and then I get a call saying we can't run it and I was so disappointed. I was like, augh! Because it hadn't been cleared in the correct way or something.¹⁷⁹

One benefit of being a military broadcaster is the access to all types of military activities and events. In order to tell the story, broadcasters at FEN Okinawa would often fly in military aircraft to get to a training location or as part of relief efforts conducted in the Pacific. Martin enjoyed the perks of being a broadcaster, and said it gave him a lesson in world affairs.

Many of us were well aware of something we came to call the FEN syndrome. Because we were the celebrity, you know, we had access to everything. We could see everything and be responsible for none of it, which is one of the things I liked about it. You know what I'm talking about, I flew on AWACS [Airborne Warning and Control System]. You know there was all kinds of things I got to do because of FEN. I was a celebrity out in town. I say there came to be a thing known as the post-FEN syndrome, where you know, you're not in the spotlight anymore. Hell, you're just a staff sergeant someplace (laughs). You know, I had the commandant on camera for about a half hour talking about, you know, just like Dan Rather might talk to the commandant just before he retired and exploring what he felt were his high points and his low points while he was commandant. And then of course it did broadcast all over the island.¹⁸⁰

While military training was often featured in the news, servicemembers also wanted to learn more about the local culture, activities for families, and organizations on

¹⁷⁹ Reuss, interview.

¹⁸⁰ Martin, interview.

island. Carr created a show called *FEN 5:30 Live*, where he focused on local events, and then he quickly changed clothes to do the live 6pm newscast.

I got the idea simply as a way to get some live, local coverage of any event. Mine was sports and I did a lot of them. Not rehearsed, just gathered some facts and went for it. It was on for 15 minutes then I had to dive into the uniform for the opening of the live six o'clock newscast. I also did a show called *Sports Locker Room* that aired on Saturday mornings. On occasions I would do that live depending on what was happening in the world of sports, but I usually taped it on Friday. Used a chalkboard and hand wrote the top ten stories I would discuss in the world of sports. We had some great behind the camera folks, from directors, sound, to cameras, to pull off all the live stuff we did. They were some of the best military and civilian people I ever worked with in my 28 years in the Corps.

I also give a lot of credit to the station manger, Dale Dye. He loved initiative and people not being afraid to takes chances. We all would just go for it and if we didn't hear from him we knew we had done good. He was the best possible leader for that group.¹⁸¹

Working as on-air talent on the only English TV channel for hundreds of miles subjected broadcasters to extra scrutiny and recognition. For Breyette, who volunteered for broadcasting so he could schedule time to train in karate, being in the spotlight was new and took getting used to.

At first it was a huge boost to my ego, you know, I really loved that. But after a while it became kind of, I wouldn't say annoying, it just became kind of, umm, not that special when somebody would approach me and want to talk about last night's broadcast. I was never sure if they were going have criticism or if they wanted to compliment. Of course I loved the compliments, but I found the criticisms, the comments that they had, critiquing the placement of my ribbons on my uniform, which was really a big deal, or, you know, something like my hair cut or pronunciation of a word, which was a different dialect than theirs, was actually more helpful. So I ended up looking forward to hearing more critique that would help me be a better broadcaster, and a better forecaster, than looking for compliments, and that's just how it turned out. So after a while, there wasn't any ego left in it, it was more like, please tell me if you found anything wrong, so we can correct it, and make a better broadcast tomorrow night. So that's, that's how that turned out.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Joe Carr, online chat with the author, Bedford, Texas, 26 April 2015.

¹⁸² Breyette, interview.

Yim, and several others interviewed, mentioned the opportunities they had to emcee events on base, teach conversational English, or lend their voice as the English announcer for off-base attractions. These jobs were done in the spirit of promoting good community relations.

I got to emcee a lot of stuff. We always got called in to help out and be the celebrity emcee for things. The best part, too, of course being a Kubasaki graduate, was going back to the campus and being the emcee for the talent shows, and for the senior road show, which is like a tradition on the campus, which is neat.¹⁸³

Creating programs and covering local news for a military audience was a unique experience on Okinawa. Broadcasters had one TV channel and two radio stations to satisfy the needs of everyone from active duty military to their children. The responsibilities meant taking some risks, whether it was trying new ideas for shows or flying out on military missions throughout the Pacific. Being on-air also meant broadcasters were often recognized in public and subject to extra scrutiny as the face of the military branch they represented. They often had to report on military exercises, doing some of the same activities except with a camera in hand, then organize and shoot local programs for children or adults, and then possibly host an event or studio tour as part of community relations work. It was a demanding job that required multiple skill sets to satisfy the military audience.

4.3 Public Service Announcements

Commercials were initially included in the programs for military broadcasters. At the time, shows and their sponsors were recorded live, and the technology to edit them out, which included new introductions and closings sometimes, was still being refined. It was agreed that the commercial spots must be removed for a variety of reasons. For one, as stated previously, AFRS had to honor agreements with program suppliers in order to

¹⁸³ Yim, interview.

receive the programs for free or reduced cost, and secondly, it was thought the troops fighting on the war front would find the commercials in poor taste.¹⁸⁴ Commercials for ice cream, colas, or other treats would only create desire for things soldiers couldn't have, and spots about conservation efforts and scarce materials might fortify the enemy.¹⁸⁵ Shows with sponsors in their titles were edited and changed to remove any advertising, so often new show introductions and closings were recorded. For example, *Camel Caravan* became *Comedy Caravan* when aired on AFRS, and the *Maxwell House Program* became *Fanny Brice-Frank Morgan*.¹⁸⁶ Once the technology had been mastered, there needed to be public service announcements (PSA's), or spots, to take the place of regular commercial breaks.

AFRTS supplied many of the PSA's needed to fill the gaps, but local stations also used the breaks for their own, locally produced command information spots. In the Pacific, for example, it was important for the WWII troops to remember to take anti-malaria pills, so broadcasters used creative ways to remind them. Sgt. Averbach created the *Atabrine Cocktail Hour*, with make-believe locations such as "the fungus-festooned Fern room" and the sounds of a cocktail party as part of its musical theme. This light-hearted program served as a reminder for soldiers to take the anti-malaria tablets in a subtle yet entertaining way.¹⁸⁷ Creative scripts, acting, and editing were often employed to take a dry topic and make it memorable or entertaining. Topics included a variety of geographically or command relevant information, such as tips on contracts, cultural norms, buying supplies at the base commissary, or bicycle safety.¹⁸⁸ Sometimes the

¹⁸⁴ Craig, "American Forces Network," 313.

¹⁸⁵ Department of Defense, *History of AFRTS*, 29.

¹⁸⁶ Brylawski, "Armed Forces Radio Service," 448.

¹⁸⁷ Martin Hadlow, "The Mosquito Network: American Military Radio in the Solomon Islands During World War II," *The Journal of Radio Studies* 11, no. 1 (2004): 73.

¹⁸⁸ Recollection of the author.

focus was on what to do during a typhoon. These spots were important because Okinawa faces several typhoons a year, and FEN Okinawa was the main source for news in English. The public service announcements that stood out for Maness were the ones devoted to the Japanese culture.

I don't remember any PSA in particular. Just drinking and driving, the safety bits and things like that. Always saying like, watch what you're doing and be careful. That's pretty much what I remember. I thought they were all pretty ridiculous, myself. I do remember back then, for some reason I want to say that it was a time where they would speak a Japanese word, and they would tell you it in English and tell you in Japanese and what it meant, and then again. So, I learned how to get around Okinawa and some of the language and the customs. It was very, like I said, you only had the one channel. It was informative. It was creative.¹⁸⁹

Provencher tolerated the public service announcements, but felt they could have had more variety.

There was too damn much military stuff on there. And then they had stuff like "Don't drink and drive on Okinawa, don't do this on Okinawa," how about, don't do this anywhere?¹⁹⁰

Reuss said they did localize some spots to address specific concerns or problems on Okinawa. He remembered a health problem caused by mosquitoes in the waters of the northern training areas.

I think a Marine died as a result of contracting [Japanese] encephalitis, and then another one was in like, a life support situation or something, so medical officials, everyone was trying to figure out what the common denominator was. So we did a full court press of news stories and spots, to educate the audience. You know a lot of the people, typical of the Air Force mentality was, well, this isn't something we need to mess with because we never go to the Northern camps or anything like that. And people are like, but the mosquitoes don't stop at the camp. Mosquitoes fly wherever they want to fly, and so if you go to your rec center at Okuma, you could contract this.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Maness, interview.

¹⁹⁰ Provencher, interview.

¹⁹¹ Reuss, interview.

Tsuyoshi Fukuyama is an Okinawan resident and junior high English teacher. He didn't understand the public service announcements when he was growing up, but now he can see how hearing them repeatedly would be useful to English learners.

I didn't know what the PSA's were about when I was younger, so I was just waiting for the music that I liked. Since then I have learned a lot of words, and listening to the PSA's is more helpful. They have conversation and more regular situations. As an English teacher, it could be good material for English learners. You can listen to the same program over and over again.¹⁹²

Ritsuko Takushi is a lifelong resident of Okinawa and she didn't mind the public service announcements because she didn't understand English at the time and only wanted to listen to the music.

I liked listening to FEN radio, but I didn't know what it said. I remember my friend that came from the states said she didn't really like listening to it, because you know between the programs they have commercials. She said it sounds like propaganda for military. So she said she didn't like it, but I didn't really realize what was said so...¹⁹³

Although service members understood the public service announcements weren't commercials, for dependents growing up on Okinawa, seeing real commercials was eye opening. Almanza remembers how fascinated she was to see commercials when she went to college in the United States.

We didn't get those on Okinawa. Oddly enough, I was surprised because they didn't get all those public service shows, like with Smoky Bear and all those other kinds of public service announcements they had. When I came to the states, it was kind of like, well, how come they don't show those things? We grew up knowing who Smoky the Bear was...because that's the kind of commercials you had, so when people didn't know who Smoky Bear was when I came to the states I was like, are you serious?¹⁹⁴

The public service announcements ranged from the generic spots produced stateside to the locally produced videos that focused on specific needs of the region.

¹⁹² Tsuyoshi Fukuyama, interview by the author, 10 January 2015.

¹⁹³ RitsukoTakushi, interview by the author, 10 January 2015.

¹⁹⁴ Almanza, interview.

They served to give more structure to the programming, and provide information relevant to the military audience.

4.4 Weather

Okinawa is known for its sunny skies, but also frequent typhoons. During a typhoon, personnel on duty at the station would stay on air continuously with regular weather updates until the threat has passed, providing military members with vital safety information. Besides the threat of typhoons, unique situations such as the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines called for special news coverage. Ash from the eruption covered much of Okinawa, and many military members were assigned to humanitarian missions in the area. Video coverage of the conditions gave family members on the island a better idea of the impact it had. The location of Okinawa - isolated, yet close to many areas in the Pacific that may be impacted by natural disasters such as typhoons, earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, or man-made threats such as war - make it busy place for a broadcaster.

Breyette knew that with typhoons, an incorrect forecast could cost lives and millions of dollars, and he worked to make sure his facts and figures were the best information possible for the audience. Most of the time, his forecasts were focused on regular weather days where people would be out enjoying the island, and he approached his recreational forecast with that in mind.

A lot of people depended on it for their recreational needs; there was either a picnic or a ballgame or a hike, or a beach party, or just enjoying outside weather. Or not, based on what I was going to say, people were going to prepare for that or not prepare for that, based on the forecast that I brought up to the TV station and let out. And it made me a little bit more cognizant of the facts and the figures that I was putting into the forecast. A little more careful I should say, of what I was doing. I seldom got any complaints, I mean sometimes I said it would be sunny, and it rained, and what I got was "hey, sunny skies right? Ha-ha!" but I didn't really get any actual complaints that way. I learned you have to be careful and include, "well it'll be mostly sunny just a slim chance of rain showers through the local area, but I think we'll be ok tomorrow." And

that kinda got me off the hook. As long as I could justify that by saying, "See there were little rain showers scattered around on the radar when I came in." But, what I thought of the audience was, everybody needs to know tomorrow's weather. Everybody needs to plan their day accordingly and I was going to be an integral part of that planning. The news was going to be part of preparing for the next day and what came, and the weather was going to be a part of preparing for yourself or for your dependants, your children and so forth for the next day as well, so it was a rather important job, and I'm glad I had a chance to work with that.¹⁹⁵

Typhoon season on Okinawa generally lasts from June 1 to November 30, and there may be several each year. During the worst part of a typhoon, people were advised to stay indoors. One group of military broadcasters would have typhoon duty, staying at the station for the duration of the storm, providing regular updates. Dye took the programming and had his broadcasters work to make it more engaging for the listeners.

At one point we had a package of old movies that we would typically air during typhoon alerts. So I had the guys do some research on those old films; who the actors were, what the actors would be seen in later, and what happened to them if it was an old historical piece; do some research on the story. So we would do those when we were presenting the movies, and that became popular. When we went on typhoon alert it was all hands on deck. Everybody worked and we had a great time. I would send someone out for pizzas and we would just hold down the fort and get it done.¹⁹⁶

The broadcast station was located on a hill above Rycom Plaza, and during typhoons there may be flooding or other storm damage to contend with. Other times, there may be an opportunity to shoot storm video. Spaulding recalled stepping out during the storm at one point.

I was on the "A" team that stayed at FEN and rode out the typhoons. When they were over, the "B" team would relieve us. One time a lieutenant, can't recall his name, took us up to the roof and we stood out there during the typhoon for about 15 minutes. I was sure someone was gonna get hurt, but no one took flying lessons that day or got hit by flying palm trees!!¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Breyette, interview.

¹⁹⁶ Dye, interview.

¹⁹⁷ Spaulding, interview.

Typhoon duties lasted as long as destructive winds of 50 knots or greater were anticipated within 12 hours, during typhoon condition 1 caution.¹⁹⁸ This could last awhile depending on how fast the storm was moving, so the broadcasters had to be prepared to stay awhile. Carr remembers one time when he decided to take matters into his own hands.

I was still a Marine through and through, you know. I never considered myself a movie star by any means. A typhoon blew in and then kind of turned around and came back; circled the island. And after about two days of this I was like, I gotta get out of this place...we had a lot of combat vets at the station, too, you know, Vietnam vets. So I grabbed this big ol' Navy radio tech we had and I said, "let's go." He said, "where we going?" and I said, "we're going downtown." He said, "you're crazy" and I said, "no I'm not, let's go." And we jumped in my car, and we're heading down the hill, and who do we pass? It's the PMO [Provost Marshal Officer, head of security and law enforcement for Marines] in civilian clothes with a kid in the car. So the PMO was out and I didn't really feel too badly.

But here we are driving downtown, and we went to this bar I go to all the time and we had a few drinks... and then we went to this place to grab something to eat and we walked upstairs and we kicked the door open, and it was like a scene from one of those westerns and they all got quiet and turned around to look and see who was coming in, and it was me and this guy...we grabbed a bag full of chow, we got about four cans of beer...and then we headed back to FEN and reported back to lieutenant Dye, who was very impressed. He said, outstanding mission, outstanding mission. But we always did things like that. We'd go out and do typhoon cable checks; make sure the cables were holding the transmitter. Of course if they'd ever snapped they'd cut us in four pieces.¹⁹⁹

Okinawa's place in the Pacific makes it vulnerable to extreme weather conditions such as typhoons. It was important to stay on the air continuously with updates on radio and television because service members, as well as civilians in the shadow audience, relied on the information to know when it may be safe to go outside or return to work.

¹⁹⁸ Recollection of the author.

¹⁹⁹ Carr, interview.

4.5 Shadow Audience

Television programming is created for a specific audience, but the content may be available to anyone within range of the television broadcast signal. Those people other than the target audience are called the shadow audience. Because there is a shadow audience to consider in countries where military broadcasting takes place, host nation sensitivities have always been a priority. On Okinawa, more than one million island residents could tune into the military radio broadcasts or watch TV channel 8 for a steady stream of American television shows, movies, news, and music. A television schedule from 1956 shows programs such as *Roy Rogers*, *I Love Lucy*, and *Your Hit Parade*.²⁰⁰ Radio programs from the same military paper show programs such as *The Honeymooners*, *Polka Party*, *Perry Como*, and *Grand Ole Opry*.²⁰¹ These programs were some of the earliest available to residents on island, and they portrayed a culture and environment that may have seemed unreal to them, having suffered through the loss of up to 150,000 of their population just eleven years earlier during the final battle of World War II.²⁰²

Japanese listeners would write in to praise shows like *Hit Parade*, saying they enjoyed listening and wanted a copy of the lyrics so they could sing along.²⁰³ Many island residents watched military broadcasts in order to improve their English skills, or asked the broadcasters to teach conversational English.²⁰⁴ Masahide Ota, the governor of Okinawa from 1990 – 1998, watched FEN Okinawa to get a broader perspective of issues important to the military on Okinawa. He did not consider FEN Okinawa as a source of propaganda, saying that because it was in English, it would not have been understood by

²⁰⁰ "Tee Vee," *Ryukyuan Review*, 11 August 1956 (courtesy of Donn Cuson).

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Nelson, "Occupation without End," 829.

²⁰³ Saul, "AFRS 7th Birthday," 13.

²⁰⁴ Recollection of the author.

most of the island population. For those that could speak English, however, it would have been a good way to see the military side of issues. Although FEN did not offer analysis or commentary on Japanese politics, an interview with Ota before his election showed he wanted to work with military officials to resolve base issues.²⁰⁵

We are interested in what U.S. people, military, over here, think about the Okinawan public opinion, also their own military bases...People are very much interested in knowing about America, and other countries, as compared to the Asian countries, you know.

We are always have to be concerned with the military base, military affairs in Okinawa. So without watching the U.S. broadcasting we can't understand, you know.²⁰⁶

Sumako Breyette is an Okinawan resident and wife of Gordi Breyette. She worked on base and would watch FEN Okinawa strictly for the typhoon updates.

Since I started to work at the base, it was required for me to watch the weather because of typhoon. So since typhoon season I watch FEN. Other than that I didn't have any purpose to watch FEN. The typhoon condition was a gap between local condition and U.S. military condition, so caution was taken one ahead of local. Since I work for U.S. Forces Japan, I had to follow FEN weather report to go to work.²⁰⁷

Tsuyoshi Fukuyama grew up in Naha and remembers watching FEN for the typhoon conditions, and also the music videos. He said the videos gave him an idyllic view of American life.

Music videos are a little bit exaggerated, but it's kind of ideal image of America. You can ride a car along beach and many ladies are there, and I thought, ah it's cool, and America is freedom country, so you can be a millionaire. I didn't watch the news or other programs. I only watched the TV for typhoon conditions, or the music videos. I remember that even though you didn't connect the cable to the antenna you could watch FEN. I don't know why, maybe the radio wave was strong. And then, when typhoons came you could find TC1 or 2 or 3 in the corner so you could tell how much it was big. I was listening to hip-hop music and rap around that time. I was maybe junior high school student. It was important resource.

²⁰⁵ FEN Okinawa, "Island 8 News," 19 November 1990.

²⁰⁶ Masahide Ota, interview by the author, Okinawa, Japan, 16 January 2015.

²⁰⁷ Sumako Breyette, interview by the author, Okinawa, Japan, 8 January 2015.

You could watch FEN all day long. But at the time, Japanese TV stopped broadcasting at 1am. So from 1 am to 5 am you couldn't watch anything, and you did not know where the Typhoon was. I could not sleep because I was so excited if school is off tomorrow or not. So it was a good thing they were broadcasting all the time.²⁰⁸

Like many teens, Takushi grew up listening to FEN for the music, but as she got older and learned English, she enjoyed listening to shows that presented the diversity in America.

I remember listening to FEN when I was in high school. I just liked listening to it because I could listen to some music. I wasn't really aware at that time that it was for military. So I just liked to listen to some music. That's how I started listening to it, and at that time I didn't really understand what it said in English. My friends were also studying how to speak English, and they liked to listen to English songs.

More recently, I like to listen to NPR programs. When I listen to it I feel there are many diversity in opinion, and I feel that you have freedom of speech or, you know, saying, and [laughs] it's kind of hard to say but, you have diversity, I guess, that's impressive. Like religion or, and you also have programs between race, because here in Japan you only have, we really don't really feel that, because we only have Japanese National and we all look alike, but in the states it's different. So when I listen to that it's kind of interesting.²⁰⁹

Although Almanza's mother was Okinawan and she and her sister could speak Japanese, they grew up listening to FEN Okinawa because their dad was a former Marine and did not speak Japanese. He preferred to watch the English station on TV and the radio. She said if the broadcasts had been restricted to the military audience on base, she wouldn't have had such an American perspective, which probably applied to many of her friends as well.

FEN Okinawa was the only one that had been allowed to broadcast, continue broadcasting, and that was part of whatever agreement made when they gave Okinawa back to Japan. I think it reinforced my feeling of being American, because otherwise, if it was restricted to just the military we wouldn't have been able to see it because my dad wasn't retired, he was just a civilian. You know, I grew up with a lot of people that either

²⁰⁸ Fukuyama, interview.

²⁰⁹ Takushi, interview.

their dad retired from the military and stayed there or like my dad, they got out and stayed. So we were a mix of American and something else, and unless it was broadcast we wouldn't have any other options. Not options, we wouldn't have had an English channel otherwise.

Okinawa is very different from Japan, in that, because there's so many military bases you kind of get two worlds in one, almost. So I think the Okinawan people have grown up a little differently than the Japanese people.²¹⁰

Tokyo Broadcast System did a special documentary about AFRTS stations, airing around the time of Operation Desert Storm at the beginning of 1991. In the report, the Japanese broadcaster points out that FEN Okinawa is the only U.S. military station allowed to broadcast television over Japanese airwaves, because Okinawa used to belong to American occupation forces and so FEN Okinawa was allowed to continue the broadcasts after reversion to Japan. The reporter mentions that ratings show, on average, about 35,000 Japanese people watch at least briefly, and that "FEN is more calm and collected," as compared to American commercial networks, which seemed to inflame or sway communication more about Desert Storm.²¹¹

The shadow audience on Okinawa had a variety of reasons to watch or listen to FEN Okinawa. Local residents often mentioned keeping up with typhoon updates, getting an international perspective, or hearing the latest music. The impact of military broadcasting is seen in many ways throughout Okinawa.

²¹⁰ Almanza, interview.

²¹¹ TBS, "Tokyo Hodo Tokushu," January 1991.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

FEN Okinawa left a lasting impact on the intended military audience as well as the civilian shadow audience, with those listeners interviewed recalling how important the programming was for them. It was important for a variety of reasons, but most of all, it served to fulfill the needs of its audience. The uses and gratifications approach to media consumption assumes an active audience that seeks to fulfill their needs.

It seems that military broadcasting fulfills the four functions of communication as proposed by Lasswell and Wright. Lasswell proposed that communication serves as surveillance of the environment, correlation of the parts of society in responding to the environment, and cultural transmission. Wright added the function of entertainment.²¹² For military members and their families, getting orders to a foreign country and unfamiliar culture, FEN Okinawa would support the surveillance function of their environment, allowing them to determine the threats and opportunities within it. There would be a need to understand how to secure the basic necessities, and beyond that, how to connect with each other and find purpose in their work. Fulfilling these needs is essential to morale, which is the main mission of AFRTS. The function of correlation would refer to the media's interpretation of events or organizations and how to respond to them. For military broadcasters on Okinawa, this meant that cultural events and news were reported with respect to host nation sensitivities, and military activities were presented in a positive light when the facts supported it. Given the shadow audience, it seems the cultural transmission function is amply present on an intercultural level, and the function of entertainment makes of most of the broadcast programming at FEN Okinawa.

²¹² Charles R. Wright, "Functional Analysis and Mass Communication," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (Winter, 1960): 608.

Dye's efforts to localize the radio and TV programs boosted engagement with the station and expanded FEN Okinawa's ability to support the four functions of communication. As he recalled, local public affairs offices were cooperating with them to get more coverage of base activities, Japanese broadcasters were providing footage of cultural events, and the phone calls and mail increased. It served as a morale boost to the teenage dependents on island like Fleming, who said listening to the radio at FEN Okinawa helped her feel she was "not forgotten" and still part of the American community. For teens like Almanza, who lived off base and had fewer military ties, it helped reinforce her American identity and sense of place in the world. Children found familiar faces in the studio audience each week in the *Kiddie Kapers* show. This program not only entertained them with funny skits, craft projects, and birthday announcements, but also let them know what events were available on the island for them.²¹³ Military members turned to the station to request music or television shows, get typhoon updates, and learn more about the island. When asked, they may not have said, "I watch FEN for the morale boost," but service members like Maness, who rarely watched TV or listened to the radio at the "forced entertainment network," still recalled how the PSA's about the Okinawan culture and language helped him navigate the island, fulfilling his need for orientation in a foreign country. This would be a morale boost, even if it weren't directly attributed as such.

For the shadow audience of more than a million people, it exposed them to military concerns and the American way of life, becoming part of their own rituals as they turned to the military broadcasts for typhoon updates and popular music. Tsuyoshi remembered how important it was for him to be able to watch FEN Okinawa at night during a typhoon, because none of the Japanese stations were broadcasting. Sumako

²¹³ Gilbert, "Oki FEN's Own Menagerie," 9.

and Ritsuko also mentioned how important the typhoon forecasts were, and it seems the American music was popular with almost everyone interviewed for this study. For Okinawans that could speak English, they were able to see the issues that were important to the military on their island. For Masahide Ota, this was an important resource for getting the American perspective on base issues, as well their viewpoints on Okinawa. Almanza noted that the FEN Okinawa was unique because it broadcast radio and television to the whole island, transmitting the American culture and ideology to anyone that tuned in. In this way, Almanza's identity as an American was reinforced. The westernization of the island can also be seen in the music choices, employment opportunities, and cultural perspective of the islanders. According to Ota, throughout Japan, Okinawa had the most residents educated in the United States during the occupation period. He said that if the military bases were to withdraw, he proposed that Okinawa could boost its economy by establishing an international city.²¹⁴

For the broadcasters that worked at the station it helped foster exploration and awareness of the island and its people through coverage of cultural events, and it offered opportunities for personal and professional growth through the experience of creating programming for the unique needs of a military audience. Wilson's experience with touring the island and getting to know the Okinawan people led her to produce the documentary *Typhoon of Steel*. Yim applied the skills he learned during his high school work-study program to a career as a broadcaster in the Navy and later as a civilian.

FEN Okinawa fostered an in-depth immersion in broadcast techniques and technology that was not available to civilian broadcasters. The nature of military service meant that broadcasters were expected to be cross-trained in a variety of jobs and not limited to one segment of the industry as would be expected in civilian broadcasting.

²¹⁴ Ota, interview.

Working at FEN Okinawa was an equal opportunity occupation, where jobs weren't reserved for those with network connections, beautiful faces, natural talent, or larger-than-life personalities. Military broadcasters had the opportunity to do what they were trained for and volunteer for extra duties as allowed, which resulted in a richer experience for the broadcasters and a more diverse presentation for the audience. This is uniquely different from the civilian broadcast industry, which has become increasingly homogenized. Carr talked about the diversity of broadcast opportunities he had as a Marine broadcaster. He was able to provide play-by-play sports reporting, and in the same week use his skills in theater to help produce the *Kiddie Kapers* show. The opportunity to take part in a variety of military missions around the world and report on the experience first hand is a unique benefit that Reuss recalled when discussing his participation in the military exercise in the Philippines, and his trip on a submarine.

This research showed that military broadcasting could support the framework for international mass media advanced by Clark and Christie.²¹⁵ The categories of Survival, Countering Disinformation, and Facilitative were all used to varying degrees. Typical military broadcasting at FEN Okinawa that would fall under the survival category included typhoon warnings, security alerts, and health advice such as Reuss described when Japanese encephalitis was a danger to the troops. Facilitative communication at FEN Okinawa included popular music, sports programs, radio remotes, local newscasts, and participation in cultural events. Countering disinformation is a category that has the weakest support. As Carr and Dye both stated, the policy at FEN Okinawa was not to get involved in Japanese politics or policies, but simply report events that affected the military audience, without personal commentary. Whatever information may be distributed by Japanese civilian broadcasters, FEN Okinawa's response could be to present the facts

²¹⁵ Clark and Christie, "Ready...Ready...Drop!" 142.

as they know it. Wilson's documentary, *Typhoon of Steel*, may be one example of countering disinformation. A more inclusive description of this category, better suited for military broadcasting, may simply be "Information."

When the number one goal of an organization is to promote morale, facts and figures alone do not reveal the process. It is understood through the stories of those who lived it, and these stories reflect many ways in which facilitative broadcasting at FEN Okinawa left the most impact on listeners and the broadcasters that served them. Programming designed to help with safety and survival was important at the time, and command information was necessary and tolerated, but it was the entertainment programming that was most effective at boosting morale and providing the American perspective through the fun and friendly atmosphere at radio remotes, the music and TV programs, and the focus on local events and news.

5.1 Future Research and Limitations

Despite the personal interest and connections, the research was not without problems. Time spent with Setsuko was cut short due to a family emergency she had to attend to, and new arrangements had to be made immediately for transportation and housing. A visit to the military broadcast station was not possible at the time because it was under renovation and any archives were locked away in storage. The station was operating in temporary quarters and going through a command change, so there was no availability for interviews from current staff. Future research could include a visit to the station on island, which may reveal new information about local audience surveys, as well as archival photos and videos. Interviews from staffers in the very early years of FEN Okinawa, either in person or through stories in print archives, would provide more context for the culture of station at the time. One limitation was that interviews were only conducted with English speakers. Interviews conducted in Japanese and then translated

would provide a balanced perspective and more opportunities to collect oral histories. Interviews with the civilians that worked at FEN continuously for many years would be a valuable perspective to the research here, which only included the military veterans that worked with them. Additionally, more interviews with the military audience and their families that listened to or watched FEN Okinawa during the first 50 years would provide more details about the impact on the intended audience.

Rapidly changing broadcast technology meant there was always something new to learn, and new consequences from those changes. The broadcasters at FEN Okinawa were on the front lines of this battle, forging ahead with new ways to serve the military members while dodging the assaults of Mother Nature and bureaucracy. For the first 40 years or so, technology expanded the role that broadcasters played. Radio expanded to include live remote broadcasting, and then television offered a brand new visual dimension to the field. There needed to be camera operators, stage managers, lighting experts, carpenters, set designers, and the technicians to incorporate all the new technology. Once satellite television became available the workload at local stations like on Okinawa diminished, and with the flip of a switch, shows from across the globe were available 24 hours a day. Staffing levels and original programming decreased. Carr reflected on the constantly evolving work environment and what it meant to him.

As you get older in life, like me, you look back a little further, you have a little more time to reflect, and you realize just how important of a job that was at that time. That'll never happen again. With modern technology it's not ever going to be the human element that does all that, it'll be the electronic element.²¹⁶

The lives that came together for a time to create a welcoming atmosphere for American service members and their families on Okinawa represented everyone. They weren't the most beautiful or well connected. They were as diverse as the audience they

²¹⁶ Carr, interview.

served. It was a unique period in time and a unique part of broadcasting that is slipping away to a world made much smaller by the Internet and the rapid evolution of communication technology.

Appendix A
Archival Documents



Figure A.1, FEN Okinawa front entrance, 1989



Figure A.2, Commander AFRS - Thomas H. A. Lewis

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TAB A

PROPOSED LATIN AMERICAN PROGRAM BLOCK:

(From TWX Message from AFRTS, LA, 10 August 1960)

- Program 1: 15-minute Female Vocalist Program.**
This program to be purely Latin American music with a vocalist of South American origin. Vocalist is also her own announcer so that empathy between her and listener is created. No mention made of U. S. or democracy on program; however, she does conclude each program with suggestion that the audience remain tuned to program #3.
- Program 2: 15-minute Anti-Communist Drama.**
This drama to be in serial form to hold listener from day to day. Can be adaptation from a book, such as "I Spied for Stalin," by Nora Kurschenko Murray, Willfred Funk of New York Publisher.
- Program 3: 15-minute Disc-Jockey Program.**
This program combines the use of Latin American and United States music and demonstrates how both types are enjoyed by all peoples of the Western Hemisphere. DJ should be a recognized expert in his field and be of high cultural caliber.
- Program 4: 10-minute Sports Program.**
This is a sports "Answer Man" program using a South American who has succeeded in sports in the U. S., such as Luis Aparico of Venezuela and the Chicago White Sox. This is a "Mail Pull" program and should conclude with the statement that the audience stay tuned for Program 13.
- Program 5: 5-minute News Program.**
To conclude with statement that audience can hear a more detailed newscast one hour later.

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Figure A.3, Proposed Program Blocks for Phase III AFRS operations

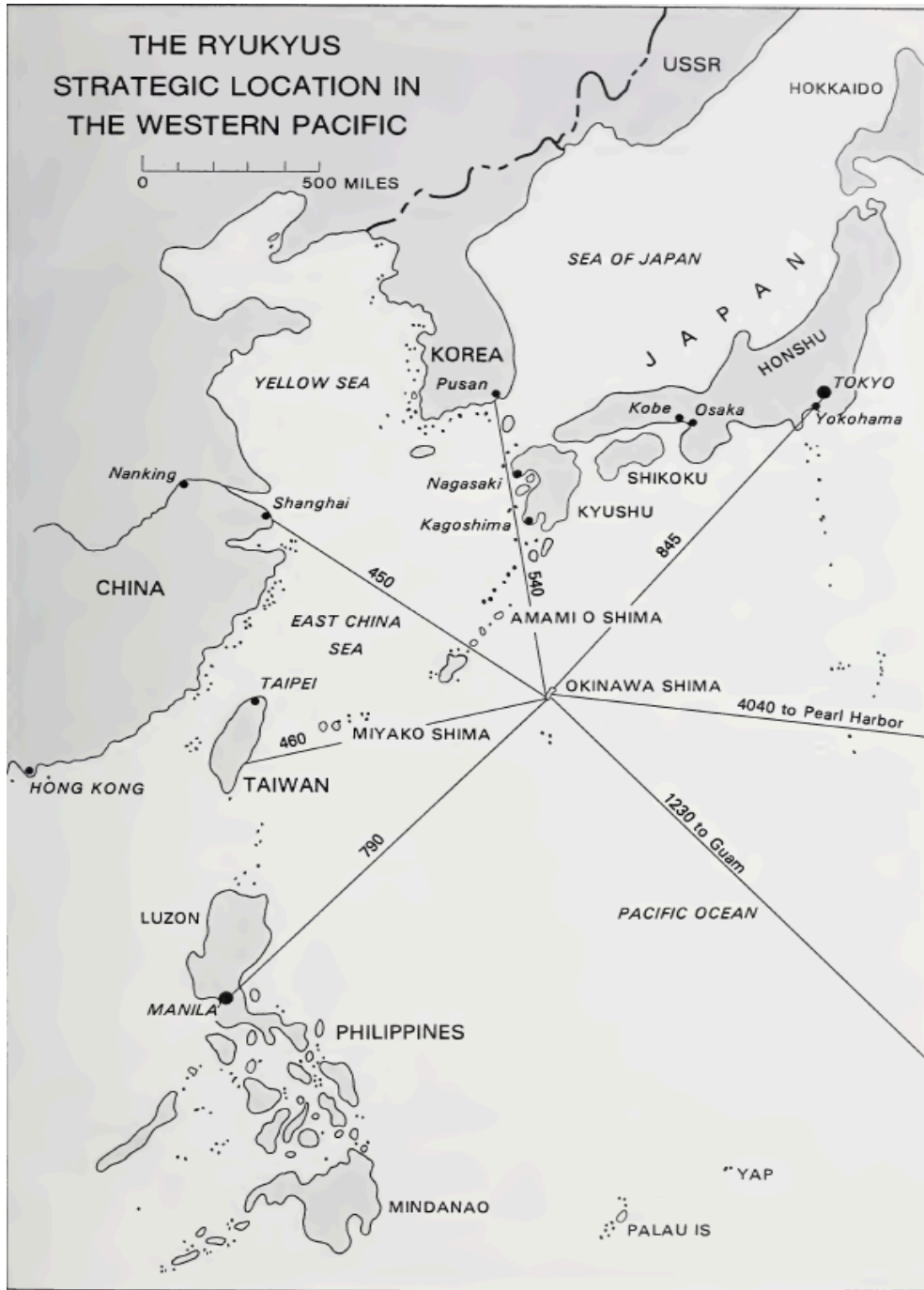


Figure A.4, Department of Defense, *The Ryukyus, Strategic Location in the Western Pacific*



**CNCT Neg. No. 247 20 May 1945 Dedication
of WXLH; Gen. Buckner & Maj. Gen. Wallace**

Figure A.5, Dedication of WXLH

JAP BOMBS AND RYUKYUS TYPHOON FAILED TO HALT OUTPUT OF JIVE AND JOKES FROM RADIO OKINAWA

Ranking perhaps next in importance to a letter from home is the part radio plays in the everyday life of a soldier, particularly the soldier overseas.

The radio brings him a diversity of entertainment from the world of music and sports and keeps him abreast of current events as they occur in other parts of the universe.

Radio's popularity and its influence on military personnel were manifested in the early days of the bloody campaign of Okinawa. For weeks after the arrival of troops on this island, American soldiers were cut off from communication with the outside world.

Mail was slow in arriving; there was little entertainment aside from an occasional movie; and for thousands of soldiers whose duties kept them behind the lines, time hung heavily.

Cognizant of the importance of maintaining morale among the personnel, military officials of this base established Radio Station WXLH. The station, a unit of the widespread Armed Forces Radio Service, went into operation 49 days after I Day.

Of necessity during the days when the war was all around us here on



Radio Okinawa staff in front of the scene of their earliest operations.



Corporal Eddie Lyons of the Marine Corps checks up on his sports dope.

To bring a homey touch to their work the staff of Radio Okinawa, all of whom are professional radio technicians with plenty of experience, originated three programs.

These programs were quick to

iment of each "platter."

Since Elliott joined the ranks of "Short-timers," his work has passed to Tec 4 Blaine Cornwell, who currently is putting out those fantastic sales talks on the beauties and modern conveniences of Okinawa.

Figure A.6, Newspaper Headline in *Weekly Okinawan*, 28 November 1945

		"RADIO OKINAWA" - WXLH			
		Program Schedule			
		For SUNDAY, 3 June 1945			
0800	Music For Sunday			1800	Jack Benny
0830	Moment Musicale			1830	Charlie McCarthy
0900	NEWS			1900	NEWS
0905	Lynn Murray			1915	Concert Hall
0930	This is The Story			1930	Suspense
1000	John Charles Thomas	1400	Information Please	2000	Command Perform.
1030	Mildred Bailey	1430	Xavier Cugat	2030	Hour of Charm
1100	NEWS	1455	NEWS	2100	NEWS
1105	Singing Strings	1500	Your Radio Theatre	2115	Hymns From Home
1115	Guess Who	1600	Great Gildersleeve	2130	Sign Off
1130	Alan Young Show	1630	Jump Junction	News for THE NEW OKINAWAN is furnished by Primary- & Secondary MCU, and ONS & ANS	
1200	Human Adventure	1700	NEWS		
1230	Andre Kostelanetz	1705	Bing Crosby		
1300	NEWS	1715	Band Wagon		
1305	N.Y. Philharmonic	1730	Sammy Kaye		

Figure A.7, Radio Okinawa WXLH Program Schedule



Figure A.8, WXLH 1st Anniversary Celebration



Figure A.9, Quarterly Inspection



Figure A.10, FEN Okinawa Radio Remote Trailer

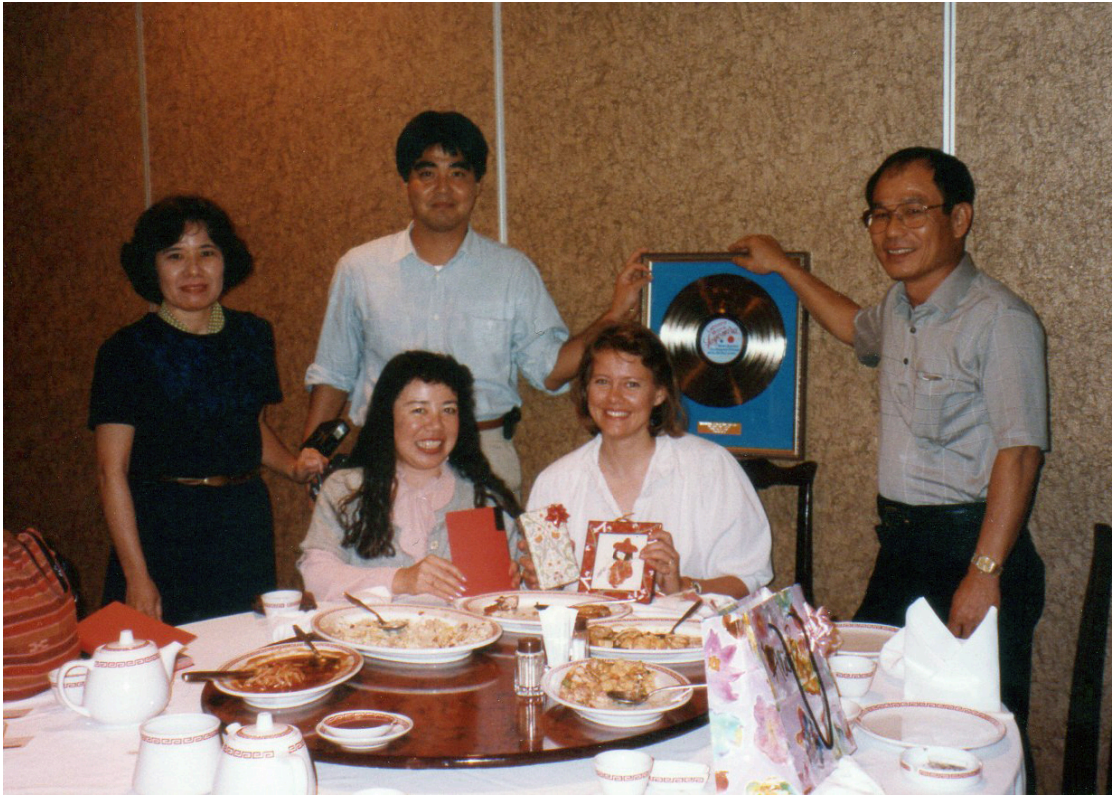


Figure A.11, Presentation of Sayonara Record



Figure A.12, Record-Breaker Booth



Figure A.13, Set of *Kiddie Kapers*

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Biographical Information

LaDonna Aiken completed her Bachelor of Arts in Broadcast Communication at the University of Texas at Arlington, graduating *summa cum laude*. She continued her education at UTA, graduating with her Masters in Communication in May 2015. Previously, she spent 2 ½ years on Okinawa as a Marine broadcaster, from 1989 – 1991, and she continued her work in video production as a civilian. She currently lives in Texas with her husband, Michael, and her two children. Her research interests include military history, Asian studies, mass communication, and social media.