

York radio station's long and winding road

CHRY: From the laundry room to you

ARTS.

by Ira Nayman

CHRY has come a long way from the basement laundry room at Vanier College.

Back in 1969, CHRY was broadcast as Radio York on cable frequency 107.9. At that time, it had one control board and about 50 records.

In its early days, the station wasn't too politically active. Station Manager Bob Wolfe, in a 1969 interview with *Excalibur*, explained why the station did not have editorial programming: "You can't just mouth off. You have to think about things carefully, and we haven't formulated a policy yet."

The station, which was known as CKRY, CJRY and CTRY before it got its current call letters, "dwindled down" in the 1970s, Broitman said. Its equipment, much of which was donated by commercial stations when Radio York was founded, was allowed to deteriorate, and its budget was uncertain from year to year because it relied on the central student government for funding. According to Mel Broitman, CHRY station manager from 1985 to 1988, this left the station vulnerable to "the usual student politics."

By the mid-'80s, CHRY was reduced to broadcasting on closed circuit, which effectively limited its audience to Central Square, residence common rooms and the lobby of the



André Surojoun

Paul Conroy, current Station Manager of York's community radio station CHRY. "We're definitely an alternative to what people get on other stations," he

says. And, if Paul Conroy, Station Manager of York's community radio station CHRY says it, you know it's got to be true.

station. "I broadcast lots of hockey games that nobody listened to," Broitman admitted.

In a 1988 referendum, York students voted to pay a \$2.00 tuition levy

to support the station (this has since increased to \$4.50). Along with the funds, station manager Jack Cales freed the station from student government control — an important move for any campus media.

But the station's growth really began in 1984, when Broitman and operations director Kaan Yigit researched possibilities for expansion. The station later filed an application with the CRTC (Canadian Radio,

Television and Telecommunications Commission) to get an FM licence, which led to CHRY being awarded the frequency of 105.5 on October 13, 1987. Broitman describes a series of "extremely industrious people" who "deserve a lot of credit" for CHRY's successful licensing.

With a real transmitter, CHRY became a community station. "We're catering to the campus and Downsview area," explained Program Director Herwig Gayer at the time. "This includes so many facets, culturally, musically, politically and so on. The main thing is to reach people."

Broitman, currently senior producer of CBC Radio's *The Inside Track*, says "a lot of people have gained experience [from CHRY] and moved on into the industry." CHRY alumni include John Burke, a former news director currently working for Global TV, Mark Lewis, a broadcast lawyer, Steve Harris, who works for McLean Hunter, and Jamie Crookston, a CFNY voice. Some, like Harris and Crookston, helped CHRY with its license application.

After several years with the CBC, Broitman says he considers experience with volunteer campus media a necessary step in any media career. He says he is "an advocate of practical experience and a liberal education."

Changes taking place at York's radio station

by Ira Nayman

Doing it all night

Insomniacs take note: CHRY is going to a 24-hour schedule in September. According to Program Director Gary Wright, "the amount of [program] proposals we got led me to believe there would be enough good programs" to justify the move.

New programs may include: a show aimed at the Chinese community; a program on university affairs (where students can get advice); and a show called "Music, People and Politics," which would analyze messages in music and discuss trends in the industry.

A program guide outlining the new schedule will be available in September.

Moving on up

Also in September, CHRY will be setting up a second studio and editorial offices in the recently-completed Student Centre.

Station Manager Paul Conroy said most of the station's operations will remain in Vanier College. "Our heart will still be here," Conroy said.

The new offices are located on the fourth floor of the Student Centre, a few doors down from *Excalibur's* suite. The studio has an observation window overlooking the new student government council chambers.

Pumping up the volume

CHRY would also like to increase its power.

Transmitting at only 50 watts (compared to the 15,000 watt signal of CIUT, University of Toronto's community station), its signal is currently lost in much of Metro Toronto, including parts of Scarborough and most places south of Eglinton. Upping the signal would give listeners clear reception in a much wider area.

The problem, according to Conroy, is that a stronger CHRY would block the signals of stations in Kitchener and St. Catharines which are close to it on the dial. The Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) would not allow CHRY to do that, he said.

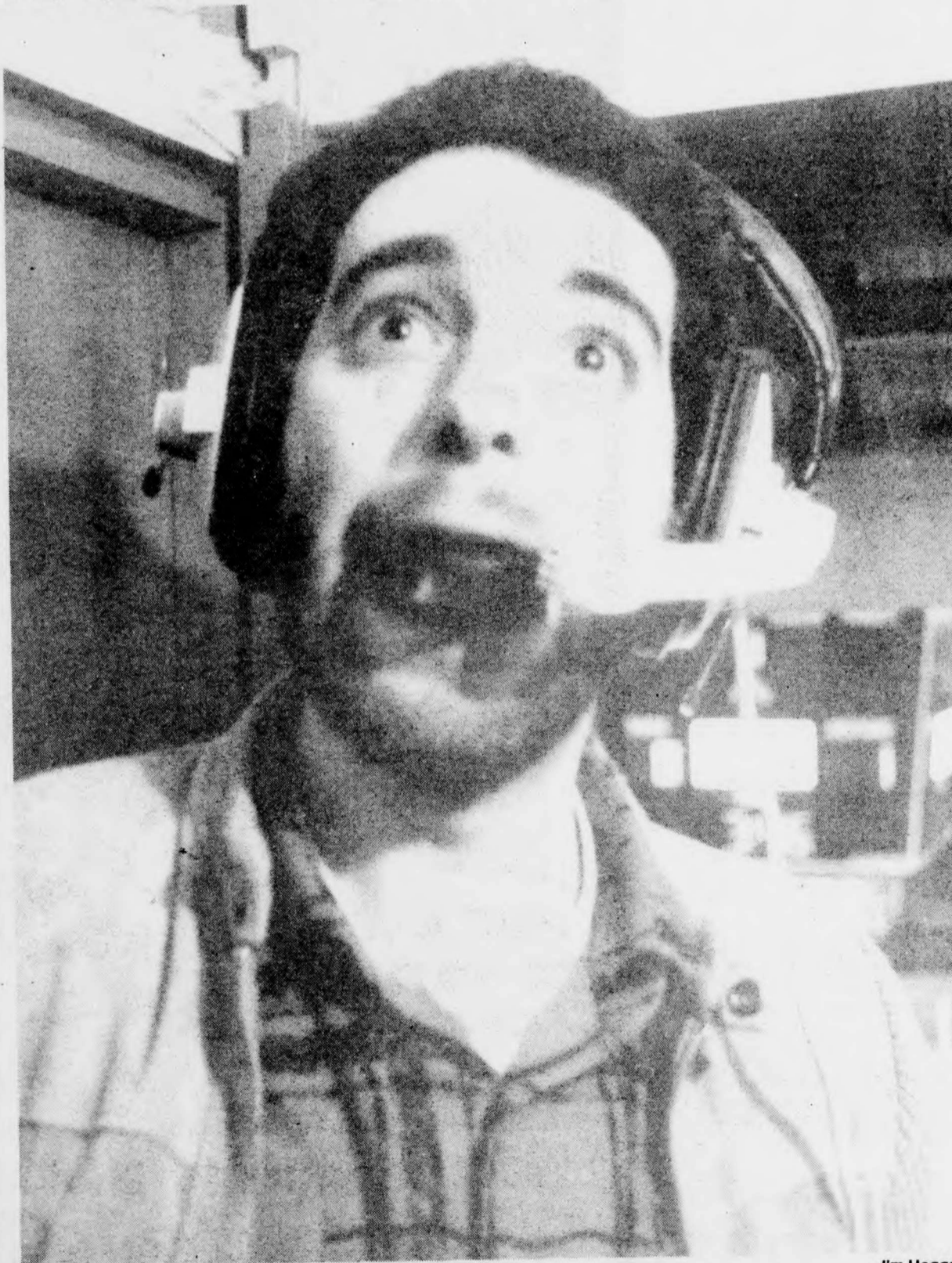
To increase its signal, CHRY would have to do one of two things: change frequencies or use a directional transmitter.

Changing frequencies is unlikely because the FM dial is already full. "The problem with Toronto is the dial is plugged solid," Conroy observed. "You don't get a lot of options."

The only frequency which might be available, CKO's former all-news station, will be "hotly contested," Conroy added. Commercial stations competing for the licence have a "huge advantage" because of their greater financial resources.

A directional antenna would allow CHRY to up its wattage on 105.5. The antenna would not broadcast south, so the signal would not conflict with commercial stations.

This change, which has the potential to increase CHRY's audience, is still in the planning stages. But, according to Conroy, increasing the signal power is CHRY's ultimate long-term goal.



Jim Hoggett

Former CHRY Station Manager and sportcaster Mel Broitman illustrates the old joke, "Is that a hockey puck in your mouth, or are you just glad to see me?"

"I broadcast lots of games nobody listened to," Broitman admitted. And, if Mel Broitman said it, you know it's got to be true.