

Donation of the Month

KAMO Shovel

Donor: G. Don Thompson
1999.56.1



In 1954, the City of Rogers welcomed its very own radio station KAMO AM 1390. Started by G. Don Thompson and country musician Leon McAuliffe, the station offered a variety of

programs. The first studio was located in the upstairs of the American National Bank on First Street with the transmitting tower on Highway 71 between Rogers and Bentonville. Radio was big in 1954 it was noted in the KAMO Radio News that factory shipments of radios totaled 2,323,774 in the first six months; and that across the nation there were 106 million radio sets in homes and 27 million in cars.

As the station geared up for its first day of broadcasting they opened the doors of the studio for the public to see. There was a free public street dance on the Bentonville square with music provided by Leon McAuliffe. The first DJ was Smokey Dacus and he soon became the most popular morning DJ on the station. The first broadcast was from the Benton County Fair on September 16, 1954.

Some of the programming offered by the station would be familiar to anyone who listens to the radio today. They offered prizes. For example, a “heaping sack of groceries for free” from Foodtown, all you needed to do was register at the store and listen between 9:50 and 10 am. There were sports updates, stock market updates, programming just for women, and of course music.

In 1960 Don Thompson sold his share of the company to Leon McAuliffe to concentrate on real estate ventures. By 1971 McAuliffe sold the company again. With the new owners KAMO became an FM station broadcasting at 94.3 as well as an AM station. The FM station concentrated on country music, while the AM station played easy listening music from the 1950s -70s. The studio moved near the transmitting tower on Highway 71. Today, the station plays classic country music and is owned by Cumulus Media.