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May 12, 1967.

Mr. Fred Landau III
Business Manager
WVU
Villanova University
Villanova, Penna. 19085

Dear Mr. Landau:

Please forgive my unconscionable delay in replying to your letter concerning the early days of WVIL. Perhaps I can clear up some of the confusion surrounding the early days of radio at Villanova, as best I remember them.

As I recall, the idea of a college radio station started with a small group of electrical engineers. On their own time, and with their own money, they constructed some basic equipment toward the end of the 1946-47 school year. Having built the equipment they started playing some records. This was on a rather haphazard basis and was done without any organization or sanction.

After the start of the new school year in September, 1947, an effort was made to create a college radio station as a regular college function. Father McKee was Vice President and in charge of all activities at that time and he was approached for permission. He was quite enthusiastic about the idea and remained a constant booster of the radio station. With Father McKee's approval a group was organized and Father Handran was appointed as Moderator. I guess the thought was that we would play music primarily and Father Handran was the Moderator and director of the Glee Club and Band.

One of those who had been most instrumental in building the original equipment was an electrical engineering student named John Kane who lived in Cynwood. I think he really put up all of the money and time into it. The earliest of the disk jockeys was Matt Kearney who had done some work during the summers at a small station in Camden. Matt however, was involved in a number of other extra-curricular activities and did not have time for the organizational chores and so I became station manager.

Our first problem was to locate a place from which we could broadcast. We first suggested the attic at Alumni Hall. However, the fire department would not permit that area to be used. We then had to scrounge for a spot. You must remember that this was at the time when the post-war boom had just set in and every inch of available space was being used for residences or class rooms. In fact, in 1946, before the barracks were constructed they had bunks set up in the swimming pool of the field house and resident students lived there.

Finally the only empty space we could find was a windowless el shaped room on the third floor of Austin Hall that had been used as a linen closet by the maids. We prevailed upon the housekeeper to double up in another closet and we obtained permission to begin operations from there. The room, at its widest parts measured approximately 10 feet by 8 feet. The photographs that appear in the 1948 Belle Air were taken there. As you can see there were no creature comforts or attempts at style. The turntable was mounted in an unpainted piece of plywood. The console wasn't even in a casing. The engineer and announcer played "kneesy" all night. And believe me after two or three hours in that windowless room, it smelled more like a locker room than a radio station.

We began to broadcast as WVIL with the school's approval on December 9, 1947. The opening ceremonies were conducted by Father Grimes who was the college Chaplain. We broadcast for $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours a night, from 7:30 P.M. until 11:00 P.M. When we started we had the administration's blessing but that's all...no money. We supplied our own records, spare parts, etc.

However, the station was very well received by the student even from the beginning. The administration also looked on it very favorably. I recall one incident quite early in our existence when one of the students was rushed to Bryn Mawr hospital for immediate surgery and needed a substantial amount of blood. Father F. Boyle, the infirmarian came up to the "studio" and an appeal was made for blood donors. Within a few minutes they had more than enough.

As I mentioned, the administration quickly came to our aid. In the spring of 1948 Father McKee advised us that we would be included in the regular extra-curricular budget for the 1948-49 school year. At that time they were concluding the construction of the NROTC building, the Chemical Engineering building and the library. The contractors had built two frame buildings to serve as offices during the construction and during the summer they were moved to a location between St. Mary's Hall and C. & F. I believe that one of them is still in use as a theater. We were advised that one of these buildings would be used for the Pie Shop (which previously had

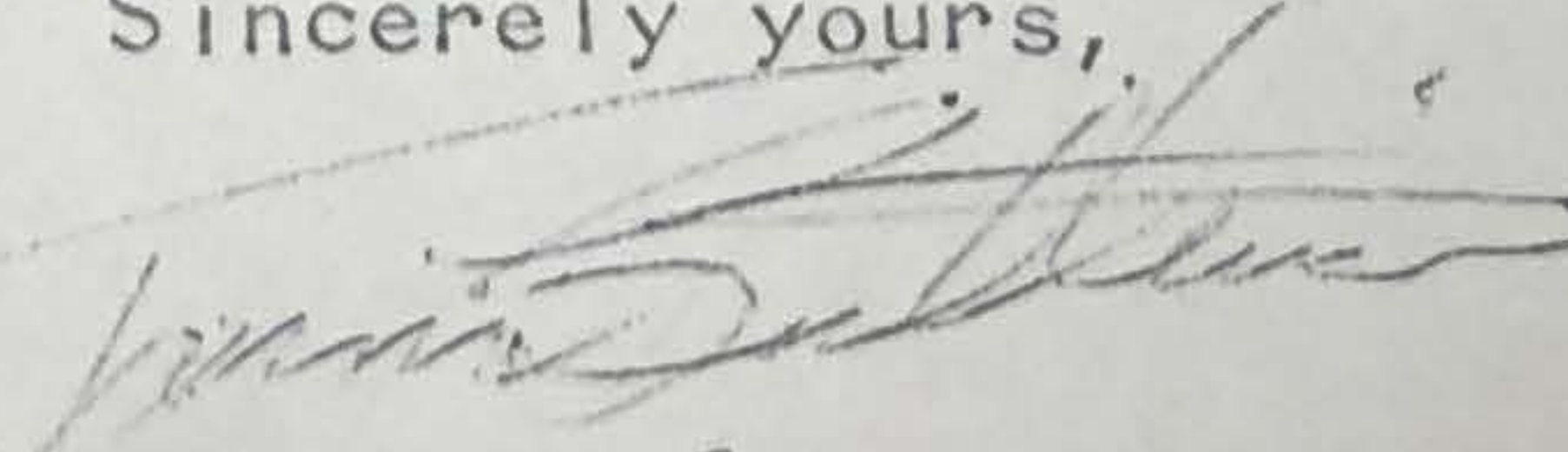
been in the basement of Mendel Hall) and that one third of the other one would be used for the barbershop. We were given the remaining two-thirds of that building. More importantly we were allocated \$1,000 of school funds for the operation of the station and equipment. The college also divided up the available area according to our specifications, creating one control room approximately 12 feet square and two studios, one 12 feet square and one approximately 24 by 20. They did all of the studing, wiring and heating. Out of the \$1,000 we purchased the accoustical tile and the staff of the station installed it and did all of the finishing inside, painting, etc. To improve our reception throughout the campus and to permit us to broadcast from the new location we also blew wires from the transmitter through the underground conduit system used for lighting.

We began our first full year of operations in September 1948 from our new studios. Our first broadcast of that season was done as a remote from the field house and featured the dance band, the glee club and several singers both from Villanova and Rosemont. We had really gone big time. With the new facilities our hourse were extended and we were able to produce a much wider variety of programming. Although we still depended heavily on records, we did do some dramatic work with girls from Rosemont, panel type discussions and started improving sports coverage. Our "rating" increased accordingly. Our survey techniques, incidentally were quite pragmatic. We'd walk down the halls of the residence buildings and listen to how many rooms had us on.

You asked for the names of some of the "pioneer" members of the staff. In addition to Kane and Kearney, there were also Ted Doyle who I believe is still in radio in the Boston area, Richard "Doc" Eidam who when last I knew was doing a radio show around Detroit, John Siano who is teaching school somewhere in Pennsylvania, Bob Powers who is now a detail man with a drug firm in Michigan and who apparantly has gone in for frre-lance producing - he has 10 children, and Brian McLarnen who was living in Florida the last I knew.

I saw your present facilities a year ago and it is wonderful. They are a far cry from our very humble beginning. The last 20 years have been good to WVIL/WWVU. I hope that the next 20 will be even better and that in 1987 the present members of the staff can look back with the fond memories of those who started the station in 1947.

Sincerely yours,


Tom Sullivan

(see Bell's 1948 p. 182)