

THE CARL MITCHELL FILES

Early March 2006 I got a phone call from Mrs. Hoodle van Leeuwen in Amsterdam. She told me that she had been searching for me for a long time. Although she found my name sometimes in articles about the history of radio she never knew where I lived. Internet was a thing she never had access to. When Dutch newspaper NRC had an interview with me late 2005 they mentioned that I worked for the University Groningen. To keep things short, she told me that for 36 years she kept the personal belongings from a former RNI deejay from whom she didn't know what became of him after 1971.



Carl Mitchell 1965

I could tell here he worked in Groningen during 1969 and early 1970. Also I could add more about his career as well as the fact that Dave Carmichael died in the early nineties of last century. We know him all as Carl Mitchell, deejay on Caroline International in 1967/1968 as well on RNI in 1970. Weeks later I met Hoodle and her husband Tom at their current house in Amsterdam and it seemed they hired a room to Carl in 1968 up till late 1970 at their former house at the Prinsengracht. When he left them he still had to pay some 800 guilders for rent, left his personal archive and belongings and never came back. As I'm researcher on the history of radio Hoodle thought it was time to give the archive to me.

How Weird Beard became a pirate

M E E T Carl Mitchell, the "Weird Beard" and a m i a b l e American second-in-command of the good ship Mebo II, better known to all as Radio North Sea.

He's a personable young chap, 23 - years - old and full of the spirit of adventure so necessary in a pirate disc-jockey.

He has a funny face with a snub nose, and the "beard" tag really fits. His accent has been dulled by years on the Continent and because of his age he's unlikely to return to the States and face conscription to Vietnam.

Three years ago, nothing was further from Carl's mind than life as a DJ. Having completed four years studying design in America he came to the Continent to work for a public relations firm in Brussels.

"At the time I didn't even like pop music — I was a classical freak and always had been. But I'd heard about all these pirate stations on the North Sea and started to listen out of curiosity.

Radio London was my favourite station and I was actually quite moved to hear their final hour before the Marine Offences Bill forced them off the air. Then I turned over to Caroline and heard Robbie Dale asking for more disc-jockeys. 'Right,' I thought, 'this is for me'."

"I'd told them I was coming for a job, and they said 'You'll be lucky' but I went nevertheless."

Twenty-four hours later and fast-talking Mitchell was on the tender out to the illegal Radio Caroline, the first DJ to join them after the M.O.B.

"The change in me has been amazing. I fell in love with the life and with the music — I'm a music addict now and when Caroline was forced off the air I couldn't bring myself to go back to public relations work again."

On the subject of Radio North Sea, Carl is as enthusiastic as his shipmates.

"It's a great venture," he says, "and we're all determined to make it succeed. I know it will."



Carl: great venture

From the period starting March 1968 there are some documents found: In the Carl Mitchell archive letters can be found sent to 'c/o' in several places. In Amsterdam, Groningen, Haarlem and Amstelveen he had several so called 'hiding' addresses, where people could send in letters and on several occasions also money for his 'prestigious' projects. This was in the period 1968 up till 1971, so after he left RNI. He had all kind of ideas to make money. The first one, I found, were several letters in which Caroline listeners had been asked to send in a card for more information for flats to be rented in Spain. A commercial for that purpose had been produced just days before the last transmission from the MV Mi Amigo of the British East Coast, early March 1968. Letters were coming in up till late March asking for more info and the brochure about the flats. The original Dutch address from Radio Caroline, at Singel 160, was used, as well as one at Bieschbosch in Amstelveen, a place not far away from Amsterdam. Also I found back a bunch of letters, concerning the same issue 'flats to rent in Spain' in an envelope whereby a typed memo was found, written

by Nan Richardson, who - together with her husband Don, were doing the daily running of the office in Amsterdam till the end of March 1968. You can see that the letter was sent to a certain 'Jim'.



Who can tell us more about this 'flat project' as well as Jim? I think it's the same person who once was the personal guard for Ronan O'Rahilly and was on the MV Mi Amigo for some time in the seventies, Jim Houlihan. So I contact another person on Radio Caroline in 1968, Andy Archer, who wrote to me: 'I think you are right about Jim being Houlihan, although he was known as "Jimmy" so it could be someone else but most likely to be Houlihan. I can't think of any other Jims in the Caroline organisation at that time. I know Jimmy was involved in the property business. For a while he was the minder for a guy called Peter Rachman, who was a notorious London landowner. Rachman had hundreds of flats, which he used to let out mostly to immigrants. Jimmy had connections in Spain, in fact he retired years ago and died late 2010. You have to remember that back in 1968, Caroline was desperate for money and they were prepared to try anything to get more money coming in. The revenue from the "plug" records didn't amount to very much money and none of the advertising on the station was being paid for. I didn't know about the Spanish flats, or possibly can't remember such a project'.



Part of the Carl Mitchell belongings

Also Andy added some info about Don and Nan from the Amsterdam office: 'Nan Richardson was a very nice person. I should imagine that both she and Don (The Chief engineer on the Mi Amigo) are both dead. I saw Don very briefly in 1969 on the island of Guernsey; he was working in an amusement arcade looking after the gambling machines. I've been searching death records, but no luck as yet. Hope I have been of some help, Best as ever, Andy'

After reading Andy's answer I asked him if it was true that Jimmy was working for Rachman, as this person died already in 1962 and if Jimmy was also working on the Mi Amigo in 1973? Here's what Andy wrote: 'Jimmy was in London from the late 1950s. He worked for Rachman for a year or two. He was on the Mi Amigo really keeping an eye on things for Ronan. Ronan didn't trust Gerard van Dam so he wanted to know what was going on. Jimmy enjoyed being on the ship. He did a lot of work out there including helping to fit the new mast. Jimmy was also David McWilliam's manager, hence all of the advertisements for the film Gold which included some of McWilliams's music.'

Within the photo collection from Carl Mitchell there were also pictures from a guy called Stevie Gee. In his personal notes Carl wrote down that Stevie was one of his mates in Amsterdam and he had done a short stint on Radio Caroline. Personally I hadn't heard him at all in 1967 or 1968, after the MOA became law. Also in the many tape lists I've seen through the years; never saw a recording from this deejay. Looking for other material in my archive I also found a newspaper cut from April 16th 1968 from the Haarlems Dagblad. With the header 'Ex deejay from Caroline loves to stay here', the story of Stevie Gee was told: 'The 22 years old ex-deejay from the former Radio station Radio Caroline, has really found his place in Amsterdam. For many weeks he plays his records in the local club 'The Sound' and also since two weeks Stevie Gee can be found as deejay some days a week in the local dancing 'Extase' in the village of Bergen. Next to spinning the records Stevie is songwriter as well as singer. On Radio Caroline he did his own show last year and before that he did presentations from artists in England. A year ago, in the summer, he came to Holland. The same happened to other Caroline deejays. However Stevie saw the station go down and decided to quit within days of arrival'. Lucky enough he's a lot of experience to get more clubs to sign a contract with him for spinning the records for a live audience.'



Who has ever heard Stevie on Radio Caroline? As I did send the info to Jon at the Pirate Hall of Fame to, he came back with: 'Hi Hans, Thank you very much for the Stevie Gee cutting. Stevie was heard on Caroline South on the midnight-6am 'graveyard slot', for a short time (a month or six weeks) in September and October 1967. He was only on the ship for one stint. '

When I wrote first about Stevie in the Hans Knot International Radio Report there was one reader, Derek May reflecting with: 'With regard to Stevie Gee, I cannot recall him specifically, but I recall his jingle. On Radio Caroline he used to play the Monkees, 'Wake up Sleepie Jean', from 'Daydream Believer', with the words 'Wake up Stevie Gee, Oh what can it mean, to a daydream believer.....', or was it 'Cheer up Stevie Gee'? But there were more people reflecting on his name, for instant Alan Hamblin from London: 'Dear Hans, just a short note about Stevie Gee on Radio Caroline. He was on board the MV Mi Amigo from Tuesday 29th August 1967 until Tuesday 12th September 1967. For most of the time he was on the air from midnight until 6.00 am.'

Some weeks later Jon Myer from the Pirate Hall of Fame came with a lot of information about Stevie Gee, which he got from him personally after he came in contact with him by Stevie's brother in law, Steve Skinner: Stevie Gee was born as Stephen Hackett in Lewisham, south London, Stevie had a job in a production office in the city after finishing his education, but also worked as a musician on the side. After five years in the same job, he decided to go travelling and, after following a roundabout route, arrived in Amsterdam in 1967. He saw a story in a newspaper that mentioned Radio Caroline was opening an office in the city so he and a friend went to pay them a visit. The friend got work helping out in the office while Stevie was offered a job as a disc-jockey, despite never having done any DJ work before in his life! He joined Caroline South at the end of August 1967 and presented the overnight show, starting at midnight. Stevie can't remember exactly how long he was on board Caroline. For most of the time he was on the air from midnight until 6.00am. Following his time on Caroline, Stevie returned to Amsterdam where he shared a house with fellow broadcasters Carl Mitchell and Alan Clark, and worked as a disco DJ and

musician. He spent five years in Amsterdam, DJ'ing in clubs and, while there, he wrote a number of pop hits. He also appeared on some Caroline roadshows on the continent which he says were much better paid than his time on the ship! In the early seventies he moved to Denmark and was DJ, compere and singer in a large club in Copenhagen called: 'Revolution'. He was a member of a successful Danish band called 'Life' but was forced to return to the UK when his father fell seriously ill and needed Stevie's assistance. Since then he says he has done a "straight nine to five job.'



Alan Clark, Carl Mitchell and Stevie Gee Amsterdam
1970



When studying all these letters of the late Carl Mitchell files I naturally come across many very personal notes not meant for the public but I can tell that I came to the conclusion that Carl Mitchell had a very difficult character. Carl seems to have been a very lonely person that was constantly on the move, still searching for a suitable way of life in foreign countries many miles away from his native country, the USA. He spread his wings from the USA because he would not fight in Vietnam. He also tried to get other nationalities,

which he requested in countries like Canada, Belgium and Austria. He also stayed for some weeks in a psychiatric clinic in England, before working on Radio Caroline.

I suddenly started to learn that there was a big difference between the disk jockey on the wireless set, whom you sometimes adored and the real person 'behind the curtain'. Carl Mitchell obviously didn't respect several laws and developed a bigger burden of debt. He searched for more and more excuses, tried to change his identity desperately playing hide-and-seek. Until the early seventies, he didn't succeed in finding a partner whom he could trust and love. But he loved the radio. In the files were a lot of letters, I think about 800, from which some 600 were never opened. Including there were a lot of people writing to Carl Mitchell when a book and LP, they paid for, would be delivered. Carl had advertised in several musical magazines that such a book would be published and how people could send the money for it. He never wrote a book, either produced an LP. In the archive personal notes were found in which Carl tried to make a line up for the book.

Groningen 5-1-71.

Dear Carl,

I'm still waiting for my book
+ recording of R.N.I.. Can you tell
me when I can expect it or if it's not
available, due to difficulties, so the
offer can't go through. Can you
send me my money f22,- back
on post giro 1691794 f.n.v. A. Harsta
P. Potterstr. 14 Groningen.

Is there still a chance RNI comes
back again? Souvenir book of RNI
is very nice, isn't it

Greetings
AHC

So exclusively I will launch the personal notes of the late Carl Mitchell. His note block has a lot of items, starting with his notes about how they got the news on RNI in 1970. The first thing he wrote down was the meaning of RNI: 'RNI, a radio station which is a means of communicating to a large number of people. 'A means of entertaining them, through music, with transmitters and aerial. RNI, also a radio ship with sailors in storm, attempting Piracy'. RNI is also a commercial radio station and a series of events and an organisation involving people. RNI also is a daily source of entertainment to several million of listeners as a daily part of their lives.'

8.4.70

THIS IS RADIO ~~NORSE~~^{SEA} INTERNATIONAL, EUROPE'S ONLY
ALL DAY MUSIC STATION, BROADCASTING FROM
51 DEGREES, 42 MINS.-30 SECONDS NORTH - 1 DEGREE, 17 MINUTES
EAST, ON ~~219~~²¹⁹ METRES ON THE MEDIUM WAVE BAND.
ALSO BROADCASTING. ~~ON 6.210 MEGACYCLES~~^{ON 6.210 MEGACYCLES}
IN SHORT WAVE ON THE 45 METER BAND - 6.210
MEGACYCLES. AND IN F.M. ON CHANNEL 50 - 102 MEGACYCLES.
ON THE AIR FROM 5:30 A.M. TO 2:00 A.M. - THIS
IS RADIO ~~NORSE~~^{SEA} INTERNATIONAL -

I'll try as much as possible to write this story as penned on the notebook by the late Carl Mitchell himself as well as the many letters from the listeners will be the main subject in the story, for without the enormous amount of letters coming in during those days the sound of RNI wouldn't have been so happy as well all do remember.

'We got an enormous amount of letters during our stay off the Dutch as well as the British coast. A part of them have been read in our programs, others have been opened and enjoyed by the deejays. I had my very first letter from 19 years old Mervyn Martin from Newmarket in Suffolk who wrote: 'Dear Carl, I got so fed up with listening to these childish DJ's on Luxembourg tonight that I

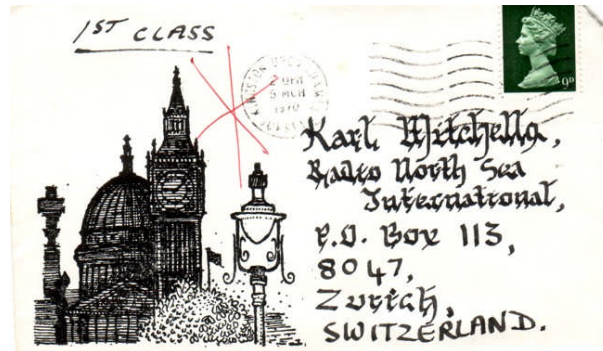
thought I'd try to pick up some foreign stations along the medium wave band, but surprise, surprise as I picked up Radio Northsea International. I say surprise because for weeks I tried to get RNI, but up tonight I've failed. What a fabulous contrast to Radio Luxembourg. RNI sounds just like Caroline and London. I hope you don't mind the comparison. What I'm saying, or trying to say is that RNI is just too much; really great. Could you tell me if you were on Radio London about three years ago? You sound a lot like the bloke who scared me to death with the horror stories around midnight. If so, keep them coming as they were pretty cool, really. Are there going to be any underground shows on RNI in the future, like Kid Jensen had to have on Luxembourg before he went back to home in Canada? I'm converted to the 186 metres medium wave band. Keep up the good work. Best of luck, to all the deejays on the boat. I hope you just can beat the establishment's attempts to have you silenced.'



Free Radio

'When the owners from RNI, Edwin Bollier and Erwin Meister from Switzerland, decided that it was better to transmit off the British Coast the ship went from Scheveningen to the Essex Coast. As a result the station won a lot of British listeners and letters too! For instant the one from Veriti Anne Meldrum, who was 20 years young in 1970. Living in Surbiton in Surrey she wrote on March 4th:

'what a fabulous birthday present to have Free Radio once again (not that I thought for a minute you'd ever gave up) and to have my nights after midnight full again with the weird beard. The thing is the transistor hardly can pick up - so I'm using a powerful radio at the moment, which, I fear, my brother will pinch when he comes home from University and then I'm stuck!' What a nice letter which was sealed in a more marvellous envelope directed to Karl Mitchella.



Harold was mentioned a lot

Going back to Carl's notes: 'Direct after we officially came on air memories were flooding back from the pirate days in the sixties as well a lot of people writing about Harold Wilson like Roz South from Lewes in Sussex: 'Congratulations for bringing back Pirate Radio. I was so overcome when I tuned into RM and found that, after three years of exile, the pirates were back. I got quite hysterical. I was 13 when the law banning the pirates came into being, way back in 1967. And I thought that defeat was inevitable especially when Caroline was finally taken off the air. I remember written countless letters to Harold Wilson. The majority of which weren't answered. The Dreaded Beeb came into being and we were forced to live and love governed by certain deejays on their mid morning shows. We suffered indignity. England was getting like Pepperland when the blue meanies took over. Anyway inspiration is running out and my boss is giving me some very good looks. So I wish you all the best wishes in the world and don't get seasick. Can you get seasick when your anchor is dropped? Au revoir, Love, Peace and Happiness.



MEBO II on the go to British Coast with on the left Carl Mitchell

Traitor or not?

I like to mention also the letter from Jean Fluit from Salfords in Surrey. She wrote: 'I was delighted when I heard on the BBC that you had started broadcasting. Soon found you - very clear and good reception. How I've missed the Pirate stations. At least we got a mixed bag of pop standards. I'm a middle aged addict (music, not drugs). My son, I might say, works for the BBC TV as a catering manager. Would I be a traitor? The very best of luck and calm seas!'

Fishermen on RNI track too

In the first week of March we also got a letter which was sent in by D Skandon from Deal in Kent. 'We have been testing your station between myself and two other trawlers for three and four days, and we were very pleased to hear you back on the air. To us it sounds like the old ship Caroline. To get back to the facts, your signal is coming in through 6x6, so a very strong signal and a very good modulation. Our last test on you was on 24/2/70 at 24.00 hrs, when you had a couple of small breaks but still flying strong. Keep up the good work, and don't forget to remember us poor hard working trawler men in our small boats risking our lives to catch your dinner. Please do not mention about us testing your station on the air, as it could get us into trouble with the GPO being that we are licensed by them and they do not like pop pirate stations.' I answered in the program, which was aired on March 4th, late evening around 11.20: 'You said that working on trawlers is a little bit rough and I can understand, basically knowing being here for only a week on RNI in unprotected waters and being a fish lover myself a great hello to all your poor hard working fishermen. I'll play you a lovely tune called 'Instant Karma'.

Leaving my nick name behind

When starting on Caroline and having a beard, way back in the sixties, I gave myself a nick name 'The Weird Beard', which was also used by one of the American top deejays Russ Knight. After coming back on the air on RNI I decided to still use it, but during the first program I dropped the idea to maybe get rid of it. And I had forgotten the opinion of the listeners as they directly reflected with letters. An example is from Andy Douglass in Plymouth: 'I was busy doing decorating a room and staying up until I'd finished. It was during your first program on RNI that you had intended dropping the 'weird beard' image. I think it's a pity. Reconsider it.' But also letters from non weird beard lovers came in: 'I don't find it positively annoying or off putting, but I do think it's a bit silly and using 'the weird beard thing' spoils your presentation.

Worried

During the first weeks RNI used the 186 metres, which was very near to maritime frequencies and the listeners were worried we could become in severe problems. Some really thought we were doing a damn fine job and hoped we would get a lot of advertising. As one listener wrote to us: 'I have two things, which are worrying me. If the station stays on 186 metres, where it clashes with the maritime Morse traffic, it will provoke a militant disapproval, with consequent swift severe action, from the authorities. In addition most trannies can not get 186 metres which is on the very edge of the medium scale. Many of your most ardent potential listeners are youngsters, who have only cheap radios and find their scale does not extended down to 186 metres. In any case the Morse makes listening intolerable. So I must insist that the station should in its own interests move from 186 metres.'

Very early letter

I want to mention a very early letter which was written on February 23rd 1970 in Groningen. This is a place in the North East of Holland, where a lot of offshore admirers lived and I did my gigs regularly in a local discothèque called the Berenkuil. One of the guys, At Harsta, wrote also in the name of his girlfriend Betty Bergsma: 'Today on RNI we heard you were joining the deejay team on the MEBO II and we want to wish you a lot of success at the station. We've often visited your show in the Berenkuil and in the JOK building in Leeuwarden and everytime we enjoyed ourselves very good. If you think about it you will remember us: A girl with short red hair and a tall boy with a little beard, not half as nice as yours (you told so). You once played for us 'Stagger Lee' by Wilson Pickett and we want to ask you if you can play this for us as a kind of request. Well Carl, good luck on the station, don't be seasick and we'll listen when you're on your best and at your worth but remember we think you're the first'.

Leeuwarden 4-7-70.

Hello Carl,

Here's a letter from us in the north of Holland. We're the couple whose letter you answered as one of the first on The station when it was still on the Dutch coast.

I'm studying in Groningen And so we often met you in the Berenkuil. The first time we wrote a letter to you I gave an address in Groningen But now I have holidays and am staying with my parents in Leeuwarden Where you've worked in the "JOK building" which burned down some months ago.

The reason I'm actually writing is that I should like to make a trip to the station with the tender. Because I'm going to write an article about the station in a paper over here and would like to include something about the trip to the ship and the living on the station. I understood the tender leaves Scheveningen every Thursday and now I would like to ask if there is a possibility to go with the tender and at what time it is leaving. Or should I first contact one of the owners in their hotel in Scheveningen? Can you please write me a little note telling me how I can go with the tender, before you are leaving again to the ship this week. For this I enclose a stamp of 25 cent.

Hoping you can understand my English and that you'll write me a little note I'm ending this letter but not I've wished you every success with the station and that the jamming will stop in the very near future.

Yours sincerely,

Ate Harsta

My address:
Ate Harsta
Gerard Terborchstr. 66
Leeuwarden.

Although our postal address in Zürich, where Bollier and Meister originated from, was mentioned a lot in our programmes from the very first week (Radio Northsea International, PO Box 113, 8047 Zürich in Switzerland, people tried to find a faster way. They thought sending it to an address in Holland would save a lot of time as the post had not to be sent first to Switzerland and then back to Holland and with the tender to the radio ship. As both directors stayed a lot of time in the Grand Hotel in Scheveningen, this hotel got a lot of mentioning in the programmes. One day I got a letter from someone in England which was addressed to: 'Carl Mitchell c/o Grand Hotel in Scheveningen. But another one appeared on the ship, which was sent away from Southend on Sea on February 23rd 1970 and received in Amsterdam only four days later. Then it was brought out to the ship. It was sent to: Radio North Sea International, 5, miles off the Dutch Coast, Europe.

German deejays

Next to the English language programs RNI, or Radio Nordsee as I have to say, had some German deejays. Not all the English listeners were happy with this and reflected like: 'There's one thing that bugs me and that is that I cannot understand how, in views of Britains laws against citizens advertising on offshore operators, RNI can hope to get support for a mainly English Service. Surely if you were to run service whereby you played a record; the English deejay spoke giving titles of preceding and following discs, you played another record. The German deejay spoke giving titles and so on in one program. Germany has no Marine Offences Act, I think and so a huge problem will be solved. A similar service with French as well was run by Europe 1. This would truly be an international station.'

Happy people

It was always very nice to get response from the listeners. We were not normal radio people, who were going to work and having done their daily job going home again. We were out in international waters for several weeks and letters were a very welcome diversion in the long hours. In the first weeks letters came in remembering the high days of the sixties offshore radio, where I had also a small spot. Let's go to Michael Gillaert from London who wrote, among other things: 'I feel I must write and tell you how pleased I am to hear you on the air again. I would hardly believe my eyes when I read that the Caroline ship had been towed back to port, never to return. I missed very much the sound of my favourite deejays, but I did not listen to Radio One once!' Well a real lover of offshore radio and of course totally against governmental radio too. Another lady wrote in her letter, dated March 8th, that she even thought she was listening to Steve Young, a former Radio Caroline deejay from the sixties and working under another name: 'I must apologise for thinking such a thing, but you so sound like him. Have you ever heard anything of him at all, at it would be lovely to have to old crew together again? Still I'm satisfied at heaving you, Roger Day and Andy Archer again.'

Dorothy

One day, early March 1970 when we were still off the Dutch coast, singer Dorothy Squires would come out to the ship to be interviewed by Ed Mereno. It was all arranged on forehand by Rodney Collins. With older listeners it was a success as 'letters of thank you' were coming in, like the one from Bobbie Elstere in London: 'Dear Beardie Wierdie. Lovely 1-15 you've just played Dorothy Squires, was wondering after 7.30 Sunday Night her chat with Ed, all way interesting and hope you will have many more artists weekly like her. Let's hear it daily please. More chats and smoochie song, Frankie Laine, Elvis Presley, Tony Bennet, Andy Williams, Brook Benton, Nat King Cole and so on.' Well we made some of Andy's as well as Elvis hits in 1970 as we also had the official 'World Service at one stage in 1970 with a format that reminded many to Radio 390, with Alan West on his best. Coming back to Dorothy it seemed to many listeners, she was aboard the radio ship, just as it was planned. On forehand a stand by interview was recorded on shore in Holland as you never knew how the weather would be. At the end Dorothy didn't want to go out in a small tender to the MEBO II and so the tape was played like it was a live interview with Ed Mereno on one side and Dorothy on the other.

Suggestions

In the letters there were nice 'hello and welcomes' but also many of the letters - which mainly were sent in by former Caroline listeners - had suggestions for us on board the radio ship. For instance Philip Coleman from Wigan in Lancashire wrote: 'I have noticed that RNI does not have too many jingles. One of the great things about the pirates - especially Radio Caroline International - was the jingles. They played both between and during records. Radio Veronica has pinched English jingles, why can't you. But I'm not complaining you provide a great service thanks a lot, a true pirate radio fanatic.'

More Veronica

Molly from Croydon was one of the other listeners who wrote in very early and regularly to me on the station: 'I can tune in to 186 metres and the reception is very good during the day, but after dark we get a lot of Morse code which spoils it. Never mind, one can't have all I suppose. There are two people missing of course, gorgeous Robbie Dale and Johnnie Walker. I have heard you saying hello to Robbie and Steve, but not to Johnnie. I hope you still are friends. We don't blame him for joining Radio 1. After all he was never very good unless the wind was in his sails. When he was unhappy, it came over the radio, but with you other deejays it didn't. Remember to visit Robbie when you're in Amsterdam. I loved his show on Radio Veronica and could have cried when I listened to his last program. He has such a lovely voice.' What she didn't know that I was living next to one of the boutiques, which was ran by Robbie's lovely wife Stella at the Prinsengracht in Amsterdam.

First thing was to write in

Amazing to see a 25 year old girl writing to me on the very first time she heard about us being there in a television program. Carole Drake from Newport: 'I saw your ship on television last night and it was the first I knew of the station. I tuned in to listen to you and 12.20 AM. I hadn't tuned in before, as I was watching television with football and wrestling. No, not the BBC TV, but the ITV). Anyway Carl long live RNI, it's a great station. It's just like Caroline with you Roger Twigg Day as well as Andy Archer. Where's Robbie Dale these days. The last I heard of him was that he had his own television show in Amsterdam, and that was ages ago. I know that Dave Lee Travis and Johnnie Walker are now working for the BBC. I was surprised Johnnie went to work there too. I wonder how married life is treating Steve Young, if I remember correctly he went back home to Canada to get married. One thing Ronan O'Rahilly could always boast that he had first class deejays working for him. You were all a terrific bunch of lads on Caroline North and South. I'm sorry I've carried on a lot about Radio

Caroline in this letter Carl, but hearing your voice brought memories flooding back of the good days when she was blasting out over the airwaves."

Warning for government

May Newstead from Cantley in Norwich heard the MEBO II would leave for England, took pencil and paper and warned us: 'You have just told us you are moving nearer to us so we can hear you better, that is great news. But be careful; don't come near enough so our lousy Government can get you. We couldn't bear to lose you all again. You have no idea the difference it has made to us, to have you on the air again.

Off to British coast

In March 1970 the owners decided we have to change our anchor position, which was off the Dutch coast. As selling commercials wasn't successful it was thought we were better off the British coast. So late afternoon March 23rd the anchor was lifted and off we went to the British coast where a new spot was found near Clacton. 'England here we come', we mentioned in the programs and when we arrived everyone thought that better days would come. Very soon the first letters came aboard, in which the British listeners, who did not have a proper own pop station from international waters since March 1968, welcomed us: 'We thank you RNI very much for our Easter Present of bringing the ship to England. We hope soon if you do desire to come 3 miles off Frinton. Please put the wave length up a bit as not so many of us have 186 metres on our radio, so many can not pick you up.' Smashing to hear you, it makes Radio 1 seem like it never existed.' Parts of a letter, written by Michael and Veronica Kerena, from Richmond in Surrey.

Reception reports

A long letter, complete with a warning, came in some time after we went off to the British coast and I will mention some parts of it: 'I live at Southampton and am writing in to give you a reception report from this area. My work is in the marina radio and I hope I won't blind you with technical terms; maybe it will be of some use to you fellows. Reception on the H.F. transmission of 6 Mhz is coming through well, a higher signal strength reading than M.F. but slightly fading, thus making a better quality of reception on M.F.' Further on the sender of the letter gave a warning: 'I am at sea as a radio officer in the merchant navy. It was early March and we were in the Channel after four months away of cruising between Capetown and South American ports. I was on the 8-12 watch the evening before docking in Southampton, when I came across a strange station while I was tuning in to your 'morse opposition'. One of the so called valuable marine services that you are supposed to be interfering with. The final comment I would like to mention is involves the recent statements the

Postmaster General has made on the reasons why RNI shouldn't continue. I find most, false and inaccurate. I can't comment on interference to light ship frequencies, I don't know anything about that. But certainly the claims of interference to distress and safety of shipping is absolute bullshit. It certainly annoys to hear a guy publicly go to the extent of lying in order to achieve public support from people who don't know enough about the subject to know whether they are being told the truth or not. Please don't mention my name, I could loose my job!.' What a luck for the guy we didn't mention his name. It couldn't be mentioned as either on the envelope or in the letter he mentioned his name.

Three typists

Gaynor Hunt, Coleen Dawson and Christine Oliver were three typists from Benfleet writing in to the station: 'We three typists listen to your programme every day in our office, especially between 12 am and 1 pm, and your signal comes through the transistor beautifully. Too well in fact, because the boss keeps complaining. Don't say it too loud when you read our letter on your programme, which we hope you will do, just in case he hears.' With the early letters, the station received in March, were also those from our regular listeners on Radio Caroline

Mary Warner

'Dear Carl, I would like to say how nice it is to hear you again over the air waves, it is really wonderful to have our offshore radio station back again. Makes our days so much more enjoyable listening to the music we like and the friendly chat of you deejays. I enjoyed your lunchtime programme very much yesterday. It was the first time I had the chance to hear you during the day as I go to work at 3pm, I hope you will always has that particular spot whenever you are on board. When Andy Archer played 'Caroline' this morning I could have wept as it brought back so many wonderful memories. I often get my Caroline scrap book out and read some of the letters I received. It is really great, the way you, Andy and Roger, have all been able to get back altogether on our first transmissions for 2 years nearly to the day. '



Mary Warner

Interference mentioned on television

But not everyone was happy about the signal. A girl called Margaret was writing in at the end of that month from Leeds: 'It's great to hear a decent radio station again, after two years of enforced monopoly. The least said about that the better! There seems to be quite a bit about RNI in the papers and on telly at the moment, something about your frequency causing interference. I know it's not directly to do with you, but my friend Carole and I have the idea it has something to do with the boat leaving the Dutch coast for the British and so heading for troubles.'

Advice

After she wrote that the arrival of Britain hadn't improved too much the signal, in the surroundings where she lives, she gave us an advice: 'I've just a great idea about how to improve reception up here in Yorkshire. What about anchoring the MEBO II five miles of Scarborough coast? Another thing: hurry up and start some Frinton Flashing for all the passion wagon people. A pity you don't have jobs for girls out there. I told Caroline I would buy her a pair of waterrings for her birthday, but she didn't seem to keen on a five mile swim. Are there any car stickers and other promotional stuff going yet! I know it's illegal, but who cares. If I get put in jail I don't have to go to school.'

The news on the station

Following the methods used by the offshore stations in the past, RNI received all of its news by monitoring the BBC. We usually recorded their news broadcasts on Radio 2 and sometimes Radio 4, The Home Service, for more comprehensive information. All of our news was prepared on the bridge where we used a large communication receiver and a tape recorder so that we could play it back slowly to type it out. When we first started broadcasting, this type of news, it was read from the large production studio. Later the on-air studio was rewired by Spangles Muldoon and Michael Lindsay, with also another microphone so that all the continuity with jingles and records could be done from there. In the communication room there was a receiver and teleprinters. If RNI had continued, in 1970, there were plans to put this equipment in working order so that we could have received information for news from one of the international wire services. There were also plans to hire a full time news reader if the teletype machine were to be used. However we never received the necessary parts. In the last few months of operation in 1970, as the station was slowly being organised. Alan was given the title of News Director.

Also complaints from France

Very soon after a series of test programming had stopped, and normal programs started, a lot of mail came in, not only from Great Britain but also from other countries. And this went on in the months to come. Like the one from Alain Cockenpot from Lomme in France, written during the time RNI was on 244 metres. 'Here in France some of my friends have trouble to get RNI on 244 metres because there is a French station 'France Culture Broadcasting' from Carenbou in the North of France. As for me the reception is audible. As France Culture stops at 12 pm after 'Le Marseillaise', the French hymn, please could you broadcast some announcements at this time in French. For example: 'Vous écoutez Radio Nordsee International sur 244 metres ondes moyennes. Radio Nordsee International, premiere station pop Européene. RNI Boxe Postale 113 Zürich 8047 Suisse !' If you don't have a French deejay on board let me know, I will record some announcements in French for RNI.' Nice French letter and as you know we got later in 1970 a special program for listeners abroad and world wide, presented by AJ Beirens, who was multi lingual.

On and off

When off the British coast the authorities thought that we were illegal, although in international waters, and as we were accused of breaking the Marine Offences Act from August 1967, we had to be jammed! Strong transmitters were used to blow our signal on several frequencies away. The Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MPT) commenced the jamming, starting April 15th, from a station in Rochester and using a 9880 c/s tine. So we were one day on 217 metres and the other day on 244 metres. But also we were off the air for a few days. Of course our listeners were not happy with this and wrote several letters.

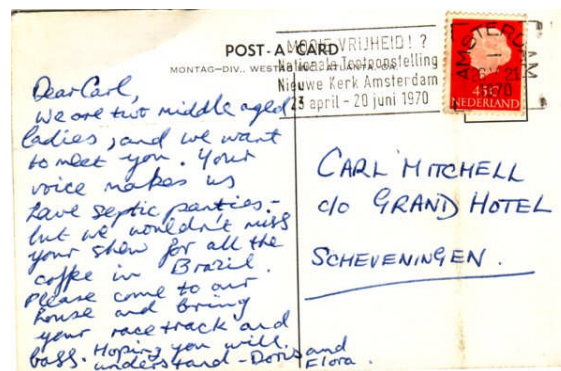
Ellainna Sweeney in Kent

She wrote on May 14th: 'I shall be glad when Nordsee comes on the air again. I was just going to listen to Duncan Johnson when off she went. I expect you can just guess what I would like to do this government, because they are taking our freedom from us. I may be getting on in years, but I have still plenty of fight in me yet, to fight for our rights. I am sending you a photo of the boys that were on Caroline. The four boys at the other end away from the poodle were on the North ship as well the two boys below. The middle one was Steve Young and the other two photos are of Keefers. He was a lovely boy and so thoughtful. He always remembered to play a record for me on my birthday. I'm no 68 years old. If you ever should come to England and not far from my place do try and come to see me. You would be most welcome. Well take care, and I hope you will be soon on the air again. I suppose you will have to get another new frequency. You

were not interfering with anyone on 217 metres. Let me tell you one thing Carl: the Englishman is his own worst enemy!

In Holland the postman had a high IQ

One day I got a card from two ladies, Doris and Elora. They addressed it to Carl Mitchell c/o Grand Hotel in Scheveningen. We did mention on the air - now and then - that our directors stayed in this Hotel and those two ladies just sent the past card off to the Hotel. It arrived safely, but that was not all as they wrote: 'Dear Carl, we are two middle aged ladies, and we want to meet you. Your voice makes us have septic panties, but we wouldn't miss your show for all the coffee in Brazil. Please come to our house and bring your racetrack and boss. Hoping you will understand.'



Not only the middle aged ladies

Next to cards and letters as mentioned above also young ladies wrote in, sometimes with very long letters. For instant Judi Simson, a late night listener from Hertfordshire who made '11 pages' as very normal in 'deejay writing': 'I don't really know what I'm going to write. I think I just feel overemotional. Carl, why is that, that my little dreams collapse when you're on the air. It can't be the lateness of the hour. John Peel's Perfumed Garden never affected me like this, in fact quite the opposite. I never really wrote poetry before I started listening to him. I like my dream you know, it's nice to be famous and brilliant, especially when life seems one dull mess all day every day. So, I ask again, what is that you do to me that collapses my castles in the air so drastically? Please tell me. I don't enjoy spending time without them and yet, I cannot just switch off RNI. In fact I strain to hear your words above the German station next door and the morse code which threaten to swamp you. And just the simple statement of 'don't forget to switch off your radio sets' has me groping half-blinded for a handkerchief.' And that was just one of the 11 pages Judi sent in to RNI.

On the search

Fans from the station could do several things to get a good idea from us like Michael Hind from Manor Park, who wrote one day about his trial to make photos of our radio ship: 'You sure did sound disappointed last Friday when you had to close down on the medium wave. My fiancée and I were sitting in the car on Clacton sea front when you went off. We had driven down hoping that we would be able to see the MEBO II. I had taken my pair of binoculars with us, and we could see the ship. I also took a camera with me, the trouble we had trying to take a picture of the ship through the binoculars, whether it will come out or not is another matter. In the end I finished up by jamming the glasses in between the car window and the top of the car, and then I got the ship in focus and then put the lens of the camera up to one of the eye pieces and took a shoot. A bit weird you might say. Anyway I hope it comes out.'

Election week in England

After six weeks of jamming, election week became another crucial point in the continuation of the station. The attitude of everyone who worked for RNI and our listeners in England was that the Labour Government was directly responsible for this extreme measure to keep us from being heard in England. Consequently, Bollier and Meister reached an agreement with ex Caroline figure Ronan O'Rahilly to head a campaign throughout the country to attempt to turn the election in favour of the Conservatives. The station changed its name to Radio Caroline for one week prior to the election in order to capitalize on old memories. Our link with shore was used to keep us in touch with what was going on. This was especially helpful for the rally held in Hyde Park in London on Saturday June 18th.

On the air reporting

We were able to say over the air exactly how the rally was going, where it was moving and how many people were there. Following the rally we were given instructions by one of Ronan's men who stayed on the ship as to what election districts to concentrate on. Several days before the election Bollier and Meister had passed the word on to us that should the Labour Government retain its power, RNI would either closedown or go back off the Dutch coast. Thus, feelings and emotions were running quite high between all the deejays and Larry Tremaine, the American program director.

Conservatives did win

Most of us believed that the conservatives would lose the election, putting us all out of a job. The public opinion polls favoured Labour painted a glum picture;

however we believed that it just couldn't be possible for that party to gain so fast in the public favour. Often we alluded over the air to the idea that the polls had been rigged to force an election. How knead or far from the truth we were, who knows? Election night was quite a hassle as we were monitoring the results of the television and relaying these figures via a hastily rigged telephone system to the studios below.

Early in the morning

By one o'clock in the morning, everyone felt that the Conservatives would win, the feelings on the boat changed drastically from extreme pessimism to joyous optimism. The ironic part of the whole affair was that we honestly believed the Conservatives Government would cease jamming the station and finally we had a future. The party we had that Friday night with many of our regular visitors from shore was a suburb example of our belief, listener's letters flowed in after that.

Listeners sometimes went too far

Someday we had a good laugh on letters coming in, but it could go too far. Some of the listeners adored us and hated others. Eileen from Finchley in London wrote a very nice letter but ended with some drawing: 'Dear Saints, I just had to write and tell you that I think you're beautiful. I know you'll stay on the air as long as you can. Don't let them stop you. In England, since London and Caroline counted out we have been brainwashed by the BBC. We have been forced to listen to scripted deejays and rubbishy music especially picked for our entertainment. I don't think the brainwashing worked too well on most average intelligence teenagers.'

Great music

'You're music is really great and so are your deejays and your adverts. If there are any records or anything that you are unable to get, please write me and let me know and I will try to get them for you. Also, if any of you are ever in England and you are stuck for someone to stay please feel free to call on me and I am sure we could put you up. Lots of love, and luck, from Eileen.' Nice isn't? Well she did some drawing which I thought broke down all the nice words



Relaxing tension and easing boredom

Imagine 14 - 15 people living together on a boat many of them are non sailors. We aren't used to such little space to move around in and so few things to do to let our excess energy. Although we often feel like picking a fight with someone, because of this tension, when we had to continue to live closely with that person, fights weren't the best way to get the adrenalin flowing in our blood. We did find other ways to relieve that tension. Although it might sound silly and childish, we often felt the better for it afterwards. Take for instance the time when we were all sitting down to dinner and Andy Archer, for no apparent reason, decided to calmly place a bowl of ice-cream upside down Mark Wesley's head. Mark just calmly and deliberately picked up the butter dish and placed it squarely on Andy's face. And so it continued. Before long, the dinning room was in complete turmoil with food flying in every direction until there was virtually nothing left to throw.

Water for the cleaning

You can't help but laugh when you see someone covered from head to food with anything that stuck. Then, like a bunch of naughty kids, we hastily cleaned up before the captain came in who wasn't very keen on such activity. Just when you think well, that's all over with and didn't every one look silly with great globbs of rice and apple mouse, sticking to their hair, I just couldn't resist the urge to pour a large bucket of water we were using to clean up over Kurt, the Swiss engineer. And it all happens over again. Lucky enough water is much easier to clean. By that time, we had split up roughly into two teams. One was using a lancet in the toilet on the deck and the other one putting buckets over the side of the ship, hauling them back up full, on ropes. No one escapes a drenching. Even the captain, mistakenly on purpose, was soaked when he came out of the bridge and Steve Ladd was waiting up on the roof with a couple of full buckets.

Alcohol

It was a good laugh all around and everyone felt a bit better for it. After it was all over and cleaned the dining room was cleaner than when we mostly begun. After walking into the showers with all of our clothes on to wash off the mess,

everyone could go back to their routines with something to talk about feeling slightly better by having some good clean fun. Sometime everyone was feeling quite merry and it restarted when someone spoiled a drink over someone else. Instead of leading to a fight, the alcohol really started to flow. Over people, over furniture, the walls and the floor. Koos, the cook, sought refuge in the kitchen where he found a large supply of eggs. He came back into the captain's lounge with a handful and just threw them in any direction. Others soon found out where the eggs were stored and before long the ship looked totally like a giant egg had exploded over and in it.

Even between the sheets

Some clever sailor had even planned for the future, for when I went to bed that night. I distinctly heard a crunching sound when I lay down. Eggs between the sheets and that was not a very comfortable feeling either. Steve Ladd was rudely awakened when the chief machinist came into his cabin and broke two eggs over his head as expertly he was just about to make an omelette. Even we did run short of eggs later on, it was good fun while it lasted. Even more, it released a lot of the tension between us all, even bringing us closer together.

Name check

At one stage I got a letter from a guy in Southwick, near Brighton, who wrote: 'This is a genuine 'weird beard' here, so you can see by my signature, and I must say that, I'm really proud to know that the best Pirate Radio Station on the air, has a deejay associated with my name!' Well the letter was indeed signed by Mr., S. Beard.

Sneaking into England in a rubber boat

In the summer of 1970, when we were off the British Coast, a large rubber boat with an outboard motor was sent out to the ship. It was to be used in case of emergency. Should anyone become extremely sick, they could be taken off to land immediately. As it turned out we often went for 'joy rides', over to the Barrow Deep light vessel located 2 miles away or just to get away from the MEBO for a while. One warm day, late in June, we had been making arrangements to discuss with Larry Tremaine (in England) over the ship-to-shore link, some new programming ideas. He was to come down to Frinton where the band receiver was located. Being a nice day and feeling somewhat adventures, we decided to go ashore to talk with him. I went along with the captain, the chief machinist and Kurt, the only engineer on the ship at the time.

Loss of a motor boat

As often happened on nice days, boats would come out from shore to pay us a visit. Some lads from Frinton, who were regulars, came out one day in a small speed boat. While they were on the MEBO II, the weather worsened and it became impossible for them to return. The crew decided it was the best to hail their boat up on deck but while doing this, the rope snapped and off the speed boat drifted into the distance. By this time, the sea had become quite rough. All the same, the captain decided to put a lifeboat over the side to go off in pursuit of the other craft. Three Dutch crewmembers, including the chief and steward, were hurriedly joined by Larry Tremaine, who was on the spot with his camera and Bermuda shorts.

Never seen the photos

Larry was urged to join the others - 'there might be some good photo's in it for you Larry.' - It's quite possible that some of us were secretly thinking he might fell overboard. Those thoughts were not far from what actually happened. From the moment the boat was lowered into the water, they had to fight against large waves and a strong current. It was also starting to get dark as this took place in the evening. We watched them row like mad until they passed beyond the site of our binocularly. It was then that we thought they wouldn't be able to return to the radio ship as the current was very strong. Our believes were confirmed when a red flare lit the sky about 3 or 4 miles south our position. There was not much we could do as they had the only lifeboat. Some had the brilliant idea of setting off our own flare to acknowledge that we had seen theirs. One was sent off and fell into the sea before the flare exploded. It was quite a sight to see a red fire burning under the sea, but hardly helpful for the stranded lads in the lifeboat.

Coastguard

As a last resort, we contacted the coast guard who sounded quite perturbed about the whole situation. To complicate matters a German freighter in the area had been observing this whole episode and turned from its course towards Harwich to give chase. As it happened they reached the life boat and attempted to tow it back to the MEBO II. Apparently, it was like trying to tow a half drowned duck as our lifeboat had been mysteriously taking in water. Some water was washing in over the sides from the High Sea, but most of it was flowing in from a bungles bunghole. Somebody had obviously forgotten to replace it when the lifeboat had last been drained.

Official warning

And the comedy-farce continued. The German vessel, seeing that they were obviously drowning the poor buggers by towing them and at the same time half

pulling the boat under the sea, stopped to haul them aboard. While they were drying out and gulping down stiff drinks, the lifeboat from Walton on the Naze arrived on the scene, took the lads back on board and proceeded to take them and the lifeboat back to the MEBO II. Such a sight you would not believe. Four bedraggled, half naked creatures were handed over to us with a stern warning from the Lifeboat Institute men not to let it happen again.

Storms and more storms

Weather wise, the beginning and the end of the station saw the worse weather. Both times we were located off the Dutch coast. Ideally, it was better off Frinton as the area was protected by a series of sand banks further out to sea. Storms had little effect there. Off the Dutch coast, with its unprotected waters, the boat hardly stopped moving. Even the swell on a relatively calm day was enough to keep us in motion. The worse storm I ever went through was a gale force 9 in the beginning of September 1970. At one time I was on the bridge where there is a meter showing the degree of slant the boat is at. As we were broadside to the direction of the waves, we were going through the worst part of the storm which had lasted for some three days. Suddenly there was the sharp lurch. Everything that wasn't attached fell to the floor. A glance at the meter showed that we were over to one side by 32 degrees. It wasn't so bad when you consider that it takes a good 45 degrees slant before the ship doesn't bother to stand upright again. The condition of the bridge was usually the case throughout the ship. Records were everywhere, but where they should have been? Cabins looked like a tornado had passed through them. And no one really had the energy to tidy things up as they fell down again.

Walking and walking

You tried to walk around for several days swaying from side to side at that sort of angle and see how you feel. Nevertheless we tried to put out our programs. And if we talked about it often, you could hardly blame us. As on the bridge, anything not lashed down in the studios soon fell down, sometimes choosing a turntable which was in operation at the time. If we went on the air, usually we would be found in bed during the storm. It was both comfortable and calmed many a gusty stomach. We very rarely were actually sea-sick. I was one of the lucky ones with a not working stomach during stormy times. However, there were many times when it felt like I was in hell and prayed for calmer weather.

Reception in a special way

One day I got a very long letter from Joyce Crutcher, from Titchfield Common, in which she wrote a lot about herself, the love for RNI as well as how to improve the reception of the signals, which RNI was broadcasting on several

frequencies: 'Carl, could you tell Chicago, whom I wrote a reception report last week, that I have improved RNI shortwave 49 metres reception by earthing the earth wire in a beautifully flowering potted pink geranium? I still get some interference. I had been seeking some way to earth it then came up with that stroke of simply genius. It looks as though the radio is plugged into a potted plant. My brother in law came in this afternoon, to collect the kids who I look after my sister is going to work and him going home, and looked and took another look and said: "You've got the radio plugged into a plant". I sat on the settee and rocked I don't mind telling you and explained. He then reckoned I'm mad. Mind you there's some truth in that, in fact some more than that.'

But the conditions were sometimes good for fishing

Lucky enough we had also nice weather so we could go out to deck a bit. Some of us had the need to do a little fishing. There was no fishing at all off the British Coast. We were told it had to do with regulations and such legal considerations. However off Holland we fished a lot, basically because it was something else to do. We had two good fishing reels and often had contests to see who could catch the most. Spangles Muldoon and I once had a go at this. I can't really see how people can find much enjoyment in this sport fishing at sea when the herring virtually beg you to be caught. I believe the score in the space of 15 minutes was Spangles 11 and myself 9. There is one consolation, friendly caught fish tastes great.

Next to fishing: swimming

Swimming was quite possible one of the most dangerous things to do off the ship. Not only was the water deep and never very warm, but there was but for once during the day, a very strong current running along the ship. Even the strongest of swimmers would have found it difficult to battle against this current. Spangles Muldoon, Mark Wesley and Dave Gregory went for a swim one day during August and before he knew it, Spangles was swept away from the ship and more than 500 metres away before the life raft was lowered to pull him in. Since that time, the captain forbade us to go swimming. A few weeks later and a lovely day while the captain was supposedly asleep, we just couldn't resist. Splash! Up come the captain and a 100 guilders fine. Don't think I ever paid it so it was worth it.

Dreaming about listeners

Although an accurate survey was never taken on how many listeners RNI had, various indications, such as mail and response to the papers, showed a figure of five millions listeners. RNI, to me, for eight months, it was my work, my friends, my ups and downs, my life. To some five million listeners, it was a source of

entertainment, a friendly voice, music to work to and music to have fun by, a part of their life. For many of those five million listeners, RNI was very close to their way of life. Many of those five million listeners generated an intense interest in the behind the scenes people and events which went into making RNI what it was. I know that RNI was unique, that we could communicate our way, or life to so many people. The only difference that might exist is of what you might have thought we were doing and what actually was happening.

More and more Dutch music

As I had worked in Discotheques in Holland I was used to play music from Dutch groups. Around the time we were on the air in 1970 it was the Dutch Group Shocking Blue with the lovely Mariska Veres, which topped the Billboard Hot 100. So we played also a lot of real good Dutch groups including Focus, Golden Earring and Tee Set. The listeners were also happy with that, which was mentioned in their letters. I remember for instant the one which came in from Alan Farmer in Surrey: 'I am also glad to hear that you are playing quite a few records by Dutch groups, as I think a lot of these are as good, and in some cases better than a lot of English ones.'

Listening to Veronica

'Since Radio Caroline picked up a couple of years ago, I have listened to Radio Veronica a lot and have heard a lot of Dutch records. There are many good groups from Holland such as Shocking Blue, the Cats, Golden Earring, Bintangs, Shoies, Tee Set and Earth and Fire; just to name a few. I particularly like records by the Golden Earring and have several LP's by them. Please could you play a track of them? I know you have their single 'Another 45 miles' on the station. Please make it on an evening programme as I'm working during daytime. And please keep playing Dutch records and maybe people over here will start buying them as they did with 'Venus' and consequently more will be released in England.'

Visitors

During summer of 1970 a lot of visitors came out to the ship. For instant family from Larry Tremaine came on board the MEBO II. And from other deejays on the ship, as well as fan from the station took a visit. Afterwards they were very thankful. I found back a letter from Maureen living in Colchester. She wrote me on September 11th, 1970: 'Just a line to say how nice it was meeting you on Monday night on the MEBO II. We really enjoyed ourselves and it was lovely meeting you all. It was very nice of Captain Tom bringing us out there and it really made our holiday. Thank you very much for the LP's, it was really very sweet of you and I'm

sure we will enjoy listening to them as it will remind us of all the nice people on RNI. Love from Maureen.'

Kees Manders case

The most dramatic moment in the history of RNI regarding 1970, even more so than the closedown in September that year, must have been the attempted take over by the Dutch millionaire club owner, Kees Manders. Here are the facts as we, on the ship, know them leading up to the confrontation. Mr. Manders had approached the owners of RNI with an offer that he claimed would have made the station a financial success. He claimed to have represented a large number of business men who would invest advertising in the station should he made, in some way, a director. He was told by Bollier and Meister to return to them with a precise offer in the form of a contract.

Before discussions

Even before Meister and Bollier had a chance to discuss this contract, Mr. Manders had placed some large advertisements in various Dutch papers proclaiming him the new director of RNI. This was enough for the owners to reject his bid when the contract was finally brought around. Even more, so as the contract made him virtual owner of the station for a nominal sum to the actual directors. Quite obviously stung by this rejection, Mr. Manders started legal proceedings against RNI. First a writ was placed on the tender, MEBO I, so this could not be used and secondly, he passed information on to the police that the station owners had an illegal transceiver for communication to their ship in the room of the Grand Hotel in Scheveningen. This, along with several miniaturized 'bugging' devices, which their firm in Zürich confiscated by Dutch Post Office Originals.

Heerema

Apparently seeing this would not hinder the station from continued operation, Mr. Manders, along with a certain Mr. Heerema, approached the ship on a Saturday in August in Mr. Heerema's launch the MV Viking. What connection there was between these two men remains to be seen. However it had been rumoured that Mr. Heerema had likewise attempted to put money and control into the station. The launch pulled along side the MEBO II with a large tug boat standing off about 200 yards away. Captain Onnes of the MEBO II would only allow one person aboard, this being Mr. Manders. Both of them closeted themselves in a closed meeting in the captain's quarters where later we were told Mr. Manders said he had official confirmation from Meister and Bollier that the boat was to be towed into harbour for alterations and to sail out a week later under authority of Mr. Manders.

Nothing to show

However as he had no official document confirming this order, Mr. Manders was ordered to leave the MEBO II. Then action began. The tug boat met with the launch and a meeting obviously took place for further instructions. They separated, both boats circling the MEBO II at a very close range. It was about this time that we started to appeal for help over the air. Andy Archer made the first announcement: "This is Andy Archer, sorry for the interruption of the Spangles Muldoon Show, but we have a very special announcement for our office in Zürich." Whereupon he named the two boats and men involved in the incident and requested listeners to inform the owners both in Zürich and at the Grand Hotel in Scheveningen. According the reports, later, both exchanges broke down because they couldn't handle the large volume of telephone calls.

Ready to fight

Everyone on the MEBO II prepared for battle. The captain stood on deck wielding a rather large red axe. The ships engines were started. Hatches were shut bolted tight. Doors were locked. And everyone armed themselves with anything which came in handy. The apparent aim of the men on the tugboat was to cut our anchor chain in order to tow us away. On their deck, an oxy-acetylene torch had been lit and grappling hooks were displayed. Several times they tacked in toward the bow terminal of the anchor chain, each time retreating in the face of our opposition. The most dangerous moment of the entire episode was when they tested a water canon in an obvious attempt to scare us away from the bow of the MEBO II. In the middle of all activity, a woman and a small child were observed on the deck of the tug. We immediately used this fact in our appeal for help. If they had turned the water canon on our boat, the high voltage of all the aerals would have most likely shorted back to their tug, electrocuting everyone on it.

September

When September started no one aboard knew it would become the last months in our first year of the station. The response from listeners to our programmes was still very good and we got a lot of mail from fans in surrounding countries. Lot's of interesting mail, for instant from Scarborough from I Williams. He wrote: 'When listening to RNI recently I have noticed the following arrangement of records in an hour: 1: Top 10, 2 Hitbound, 3 Top 30, 4 LP, 5 Oldie, 6 Top 30, 7 Hitbound, 8 LP, 9 Continental, 10 Hitbound, 11 Top 10, 12 LP, 13 Continental, 14 Hitbound, 15 Oldie, 16 Top 30, 17 LP and 18 Hitbound. Why is such an arrangement necessary? Last week the deejays seemed to be ignoring it and

programmes were much more interesting, but when you know what sort of record is coming up next the shows are boring and all sound much the same.

Midnight

Your midnight shows is usually very good, but when you're on from 3 - 6 pm why does you drop progressive material? The deejays have often told us how free they are to play what they want to play, so why was this rigid, crippling record arrangement? Another point which for me presents RNI from being totally enjoyable is the Top 30. Earlier you used a typical commercial radio Top 40 which was not based closely on the National Chart and was much more fast-moving. The Top 30, however, seems to be just slight variation on Britain's very slow moving Top 30. And therefore is not suitable for a go-ahead, fast moving station. We all get fed up with hearing records after they have been in the charts for over six weeks when they are played so much, so why not return to the very speedy sort of Top 40 Radio London and Radio 270 used to use in the past? On the other hand congratulations on giving us an excellent set of programmes on Sundays. With a return of the old RNI Top 40 (or Nifty Fifty), Sunday will be perfect, and if everyday could have some of Sunday's specials, RNI in general would be perfect too.

Andy Archer left

September 5th we saw a 'goodbye and farewell' program from Andy Archer, who was with the station from the early period on. He officially said goodbye to the listeners and it was the smaller tender, the MV Redder, which was used a lot in the first year, which came out from Scheveningen harbour to transfer him and some other colleagues to shore. No one knew at the time if Andy Archer would ever return to the station. But there were listeners who had their doubts, for instant Dolly Harris from Buntingford in Herts. 'Dear Carl, what a windy day on your first afternoon show. Well it's great to have you on the MEBO II again. I have listened to some of your evening shows, but in between I used to doze off. Well Andy's farewell does it really mean we shall have him back for good or just another break on land sometime. I hope not that he will be leaving us, as it won't be so good listening without him.'

Again Mary Warner

In the sixties and seventies an avid listener to the Offshore Radio stations was a British lady called 'Mary Warner'. Her name was mentioned a lot on several radio stations and nobody knew who she really was until a letter was sent including a photograph of the lady. It was sent out to RNI's International Service and went as follows: 'Thought you might like to know how pleased I am you are going to be on the 3-6 PM show for a while. It seems such a long time

since we had the pleasure of having you doing a daytime slot. Listening to Steven Ladd this morning I had the feeling that he will become a hit with all the housewives if he is allowed to stay on the morning show while Andy is off. He has the gift of the gab, so to speak, flattery will get him everywhere. I can't begin to tell you how delighted I was to hear Andy announce that he decided to stay after all. I gather from all your tributes to him that he gets on reasonably well with all of you. I have farewell program as well as all your tributes on tape, but they all seem rather senseless now.' And the letter went on some more pages and in the end Mary decided to enclose a photograph of her. Can't find out, who made the remarks at the top of the letter, must have been some in the staff of the station, who wrote the line: 'Feast your eyes on the dreaded Mary Warner, but make sure you are insured first.' I think 36 years after writing this, the person involved has to be punished by never be on the radio again. Also elderly listeners were listeners to be proud of.

Opening once again some of the letters I found some which were sent to Carl form Thornton Heath in Surrey. They were written by one of his former shipmates on the MEBO II as the sender wrote: 'Meant to write you before. I've been very busy since my return. No problems at immigration, but hours after my arrival home police called in connection with an unpaid fine. 'Further on in the letter the sender wrote some lines about 'Ampex equipment' 'As I told you the equipment is no longer in production and there will be a difficulty in obtaining a motor. The price I was quoted was 100 Pounds, this probably being higher than the original price because the supply demand situation. I also inquired about scrap equipment, but they were unable to suggest anything.'

Also the writer comes back to the topic of the piece of equipment by advising to sell the 'machine' for less than 40 Pounds as he's interested to buy it for that: 'I'm slowly collecting studio equipment and either of my own or perhaps with Spangles it could perhaps be put in well use. The most recent acquisition is a pair of RCA Microphones.' The sender has also good memories to Hoodle as he wrote: 'Give my love to Betty (which is Hoodle's original name), whom I meant to see before I departed. As usual my decision to return was made on the spur of a moment, when I was feeling somewhat depressed and not quite my irresponsible self. '

Deep thinking who it could be writing the letter undated to Carl and some envelopes later again the same person writing to Carl. This time I could mention that it was written on October 21st 1970. One of the lines was: 'I've tested the mixer and it's working OK. Also I had a look at the Spotmaster that plays back but it's not recording. I want to ask Spangles what he knows about the machines.'

Well strange lines but mentioning Spangles and the equipment gave me the ideas the writer was mentioning equipment which was formerly on one of the Caroline ships which were caught by the Wijsmuller Company in 1968 and were in Amsterdam harbour and later Zaandam. It's known to me and many other people that some former Caroline deejays and technicians were so clever to visit both ships to get equipment from the ships for use when a comeback was possible. And the letters were sent in by Peter Murpha, better known as Peter Chicago.



When digging into the letters and other documents from David Carmichael aka Carl Mitchell many surprises can be found. He left Groningen town, where he lived in an apartment at the Oude Ebbingestreet, early March 1970. At the same time he also has an address at the Bieschbosch in Amstelveen as well as he lived now and then at the Prinssengracht 504 in Amsterdam. Last address was the one where also other Caroline deejays stayed sometimes as well as Tom and Hoodle van Leeuwen. It was in Groningen - my hometown- that Carl Mitchell worked in the Discotheque Berenkuil. One day he crossed the street from his apartment and went to the special shop from S. van der Woude. Office equipment could be bought or hired there and Carl went for hiring a typewriter on October 4th 1969. With Mr. Van der Woude he arranged that he paid one month hire on forehand and would come back the next month to pay more. He lent the machine on his personal name David A Carmichael.



Dhr. D.A.Carmichael
Prinsengracht 504
Amsterdam.

Groningen, 14 mei 1970

Gechte Heer,

In den vervolge op ons schrijven dd. 19-2 jl delen wij U mede, dat wij hierop nog steeds geen antwoord van U hebben ontvangen.

Hierin deelden wij U mede, dat de machine, welke U op 4 oct van ons huurde en waarover U 1 maand huur betaalde, **bij niet betalen van de huur**, per omgaande geretourneerd moest worden.

Inmiddels zijn weer 3 maanden verstreken.

De nu nog te betalen huur, bedraagt 7 x f.16,50= f.115,50.

Wij verzoeken U de machine nu per omgaande te retourneren, en het bedrag aan ons over te maken.

De machine werd U indertijd verhuurd op referentie van Dhr. Homan van rest. Bern.

U zult begrijpen, dat wanneer wij nu weer niets van U horen, dit voer hem en ons een onaangename zaak wordt.

Hoogachtend,

S. van der Woude sold his shop some 15 years ago to Henk Boonstra, a former class mate of mine. Yes, the world is filled with surprises. First a memory letter was sent to Carl at his Groningen address in December 1969 and then a next one was sent to Amsterdam in February 1970. In the third one, dated May 14th 1970, they reminded him about the hiring license and that the amount of money to be paid was already 115.50 Dutch Guilders (remember we're talking about 1970 and so a lot of money). The owner, Van der Woude, warned Carl in his February letter that not paying the bill and bringing back the typewriter would be giving problems not only for Carl Mitchell, but also for Mr. Homan owner of restaurant Bern, who recommended Carl to the shop owner.

I also found a letter in which Van der Woude had contacted a debt collector. This was the 'Algemene Friese Informatiedienst' from Leeuwarden. They warned several times Carl to pay the bill and bring back the machine. On October 27th 1970 it was officially announced that if the bill wasn't paid on November 7th Carl his name and address would be placed officially on the black list and that a court case would be held against David A. Carmichael. This was the last letter which was in the boxes I found in March 2006 in Amsterdam.



Carl at the Berenkuil Groningen

At that time in November 1970 Mitchell had already left Amsterdam on the hide for debt collectors and maybe himself. Strange enough I did find also a photograph of the interior of his room in Amsterdam at the Prinsengracht, which tells you more.



Carl Mitchell next moved to Denmark. A hospital stay interrupted his career but he continued to work in clubs in that country and in Norway, before returning to the United States. At that time he lost touch with his radio colleagues in Europe.

In March 2004 Roger Day was planning Caroline's fortieth birthday DJ reunion. He started to make enquiries about Carl, hoping to invite his old ship-mate to the party. Unfortunately he discovered some sad news. Carl had passed away some years before. Roger told The Pirate Radio Hall of Fame what he had found out: "Carl returned to New York and resumed his broadcasting career under the name 'Steve Michaels'. He also wrote human interest stories for the local newspaper and was a local candidate for city hall. In the eighties he organised a Future Fuels Challenge rally, featuring alternative energy vehicles racing cross country. About this time he was seriously injured in a head on collision. He moved

to Florida then Ohio where he opened up a restaurant. In 1991 he passed away after a long illness and spent his final months at his sister's in Monticello, NY. Carl was a genuinely nice guy with a wicked sense of humour and we are all better for knowing him."



Carl Mitchell at stage

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