Hans Knot International Radio Report

Special Summer Edition 2026

Radio Caroline Back from inside back to international waters

After Radio Caroline lost its two ships in March 1968 following their seizure by the Wijsmuller company, many believed that this action marked the end of the Caroline organisation. The ships were laid up and were eventually put up for public auction.

The Glasgow Herald 4-3-1968 *OEM*

DUTCH TUGS TOW OFF RADIO SHIPS

Pop ships Radio Caroline North and Radio Caroline South were towed from their moorings yesterday by Dutch tugs.

They were both off the air yesterday and their whereabouts are not known.

Caroline South was the first to be towed away. She left her moorings three and a half miles off Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex, and was later seen by the crew of the lightship 14 miles off the Essex coast being towed in a south-easterly direction by a Dutch tug.

During the past week, one of the ship's disc jockeys announced that Caroline South might be undergoing repairs to a generator. It is thought the ship may be on her way to Holland for this reason.

Caroline North has been anchored four miles off the Isle of Man for three and a half years. She was towed out of Ramsey Bay —on the island's north-east coast, where she has been since July, 1964—by the Dutch ocean-going tug, Utrecht. She left at about 6 p.m., destination unknown, making two knots.

Radio Caroline North was broadcasting as usual on Saturday but she was off the air.all day yesterday.

In 1984, Tom de Munck, Karel Gerbers, Jelle and Hans Knot chronicled the station's twenty-year history in a book written in Dutch. This publication has prompted me to shed light on the events following 1971 in English.

The Caroline (Fredericia) in international waters. Photo: David Kindred

Saturday 30 September 1972 was a landmark day for the Dutch offshore radio scene: First and foremost was Radio Veronica, which changed its wavelength and moved from 192 meters to 538 meters. This had been preceded by a lengthy promotional campaign which had not gone unnoticed by the other offshore radio stations. So when, on 30 September at half past twelve in the afternoon, Radio Veronica ceased broadcasting on 192 meters, rival RNI seized the opportunity to launch a live test broadcast in English and Dutch on a once-popular frequency, under the name RNI 2. This took place alongside RNI's regular broadcasts on 220 meters. Technically not a great success, given the leakage of the '220 signal' into the test broadcast, but a very successful publicity stunt. Meanwhile, Radio Veronica opened at 1 pm on 538 meters.

However, even more surprising was another test broadcast on that same Saturday afternoon. From that same time, half past twelve, a beeping tone could be heard on 1187 kHz (252.7 meters), the well-known Caroline wavelength, after which, at quarter to one, a non-stop music program began – with a complete Ray Connif LP as the first record. The broadcasts originated from a third broadcast ship, the

M.V. Mi Amigo, anchored off the coast of Scheveningen near Veronica's Norderney and RNI's MEBO II.

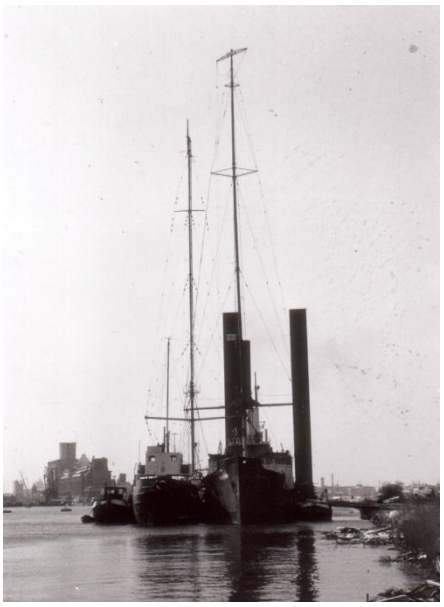
In front Ton van der Linden and Ronan o'Rahilly on the Mi Amigo

Photo: Collection Teun Visser

How had the Mi Amigo suddenly managed to return to sea? After both Caroline ships had been towed to Amsterdam in March 1968 by a swift operation of the Wijsmuller Tug and Salvage Company, and Radio Caroline International thus met an inglorious end, the long wait for its return had begun, as the fans refused to believe that this was truly the end of the 'Caroline era'. The ships, moored in Amsterdam's Houthaven, near Central Station, had received frequent visitors ever since. Mostly uninvited guests; the result was a veritable plundering, but the owners seemed to have lost interest in the ships.

Just over four years after the date of the seizure, an announcement appeared in Dutch newspaper 'De Telegraaf' that a public auction would be held by R.W. Buis N.V., Trading and Engineering Agency. The following goods: 1. 'De Caroline', built in 1930, 702 GRT, dimensions 60.96 x 9.88 x 4.04 meters. 2. 'De Mi Amigo', built in 1921, 274 GRT, dimensions 40.74 x 7.04 x 2.90 meters. Also, broadcasting and studio equipment, including record players, tape

recorders and even boxes of records; were to be put up for auction, as stated in the announcement.



Mi Amigo and the MV Fredericia in Amsterdam

Photo: Rob Olthof

On Monday afternoon, 29 May 1972, the moment had arrived: the curtain fell on both the illustrious radio ships. Scrap dealer Frank Rijsdijk from Hendrik Ido Ambacht bought the Caroline for Dutch guilders 26,500, complete with what remained of the inventory, and ship's agent Hofman bought the Mi Amigo for 20,000 guilders on behalf of a third party whose identity remains unknown to this day. These sums were a fraction of the value the ships had upon their arrival in 1968. Abe Nathan, then the owner of the Peace Ship, wanted at the time to use the Caroline ships for this purpose but would then have had to pay an additional 1,750,000 guilders, which did not happen.

MV Caroline aka Fredericia Photo: Menno Dekker

I can be relatively brief about the Caroline (Fredericia). The ship was sold on to scrap dealer Rinus van de. Marel from Ouwerkerk in Zeeland. He made short work of the radio ship. Its final destination was to be van de Marel's scrapyard, located on the dyke along the Oosterschelde, near Zierikzee. The transmission mast had already been taken down in Amsterdam. The Caroline was transported in early July 1972. Under her own power, she sailed from Amsterdam via the North Sea Canal to the sandbank 'Het Keeten' near Ouwekerk. The 1,350 hp marine engine proved to be still in excellent condition. Throughout July, the Caroline (Fredericia) remained aground on the mudflats in the Oosterschelde, awaiting a tide that would enable van de Marel to bring the transmission ship, which had a considerable draught, via a channel, close to his shipyard.

Fredericia on tow to Ouwerkerk

Photo Jan van Marel

There, work began on the demolition in early August; quite a task given the fact that the Caroline (Fredericia) had been built to be extra sturdy for her original purpose, namely as a ferry in an area where ice was to be expected in winter. First of all, the upper decks, containing the studios, were removed. Subsequently, in order to

remove the insulation materials that had been incorporated throughout the ship, the ship was set alight. During the demolition, Van de Marel also noted that heavy anchor chains had served as ballast in the ship. As a result of the extensive publicity, Van de Marel received many visits from offshore radio fans, who came with a nostalgic look in their eyes to bid farewell to an era. In addition, various parts of the transmitter were sold to RNI technicians. By the end of 1980, the ship had been completely scrapped.

Mi Amigo in Zaandam 1972 Photo: Jan Stolp

The Mi Amigo was spared the fate of her sister ship. Shortly after the auction, a certain Gerard van Dam made his presence felt. It had since emerged that he had purchased the Mi Amigo together with another man, Rob Vermaat. Speaking to journalists, van Dam expressed his intention to convert the Mi Amigo into a pirate museum. The broadcasting ship was therefore towed to Zaandam in early August and was moored there at the Houthavenkade. The restoration of the badly dilapidated broadcasting ship had, in the meantime, begun. Many volunteers worked very hard during that month to get the Mi Amigo outside again.

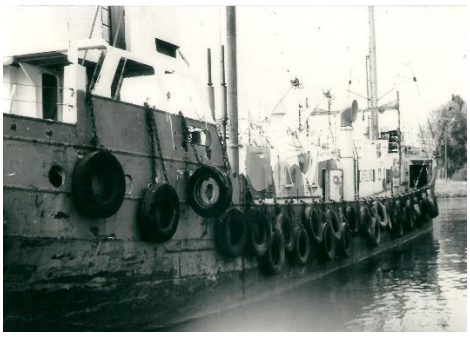
Leaflets were distributed among offshore radio enthusiasts, announcing that the Mi Amigo was open to visitors. Not without a sense of drama and appealing to the sentiments of the offshore radio fans, the leaflet stated that they had succeeded in saving the ship from the scrapyard, at least for a short time. Gerard van Dam had previously stated that work was underway on visitor facilities.

The leaflet mentioned that one could either pay a short visit to the ship (cost f 5, --) or stay on board for 7 days on full board with use of the studios, all under the watchful eye of a well-known DJ (cost 250 guilders). It was even possible to create your own program, according to Gerard van Dam on VPRO radio.

Gerard van Dam Photo: Unknown

For the time being, curious onlookers saw little of what had been promised. However, work was proceeding apace, both on the ship itself and on the generators and the transmission mast. Alongside these ambitious plans, mention was also made of the intention to anchor the Mi Amigo on the open sea, off the English coast, and thus make the pirate museum seem 'lifelike'. The many Caroline fans in England, according to Van Dam, could be counted among the potential visitors to such a museum.

One of the people working in Zaandam was Richard Kinch, who also made a lot of beautiful photos during working there and also when the ship was towed into international waters, remembers some facts after more than half a century: 'Purely we got involved as a result of being in the right place at the right time, as far as I can remember.



Mi Amigo Photo: Rob Olthof

It was almost a ghost ship, and I can only remember Gerard Van Dam who seemed to be running things; I don't remember anyone else there at the time, except some local lads. There were some visitors such as Graham Gill but I can't put a timeframe on that.

Food and drink were provided for us, and my car was used a lot to ferry provisions from local shops. Also we would buy paint and electrical items from a shop called Aurora I think, maybe that was in Amsterdam.

Mi Amigo Photo: Fred Koorman

Yes I was on the Mi Amigo during that voyage into international waters, there are photos which show this. I remember we stocked up with crates of beer in case there were any difficulties with the customs!'

On Friday afternoon, 1 September 1972, the Mi Amigo was unexpectedly towed to IJmuiden by a tugboat from the Iskes company in IJmuiden and, after passing through the locks, anchored 4 miles north-west of the Noordpier. Whether customs formalities ever took place that afternoon will always remain a mystery.

The Iskes tug captain later told a journalist that he had found it rather strange that the crew dared to go to sea in such a vessel; it seemed so unstable to him ..... The crew stated they were waiting for a tugboat to take the Mi Amigo towards the English coast. During the night of Saturday 2nd to Sunday 3rd September, the Mi Amigo set off, assisted by a boat belonging to Koos van Laar, towards Scheveningen, where by morning it found an anchorage 500 meters north of the MEBO II (RNI).

Tony Allen reported this in his RNI Skyline show, during which the Mi Amigo was the subject of some disparaging remarks. Among other things, it was said that the ship was empty, and therefore without transmitters. Radio Veronica reported the arrival of the Mi Amigo on Sunday afternoon in its news broadcasts. The Mi Amigo was featured on the NOS TV Journaal on Sunday evening. The skipper, who had sailed to the Mi Amigo with a cameraman, stated that there was a 'bunch of amateur sailors' on board, who had anchored the ship so poorly that it might well drift away. It also transpired that the Mi Amigo was not displaying any position lights. This led to a warning from the Dutch navy, who came to take a look, and shortly afterwards to a report being filed by the Pilotage Service. Later that Sunday afternoon, emergency lighting was put in place.

The first confusion regarding the intentions behind the Mi Amigo arose as early as 4 September. De Telegraaf reported that the Bell

Broadcasting Company Ltd. had purchased the Mi Amigo and that broadcasts would commence towards the end of 1972 or early 1973 under the name Caroline 73 International, on 259 and 270 meters. The transmitter(s)' power would be increased from 50 to 100 kW.

In terms of programming, the two stations were to target their own audiences. The 259-meter frequency would be in English and the 270-metre frequency in Dutch, with adverts being broadcast only on the 259-meter frequency. Rutger Van de Berg presented himself as the commercial director of the new stations. He stated 9 September (or as soon as possible) as the launch date. A few days later, this venture was exposed as a hoax; a practical joke organized by Roel Koenders and Henk Meeuwis, two lads from Amsterdam who presented themselves as labelled them 'radio fanatics'. It was a joke, supposedly to fool their friends, who might apply to a fake pirate station in response to a hoax advertisement in which Bell Broadcasting was seeking DJs. Henk Meeuwis later went on to work for Caroline, and Roel Koeners became a producer at VARA radio.

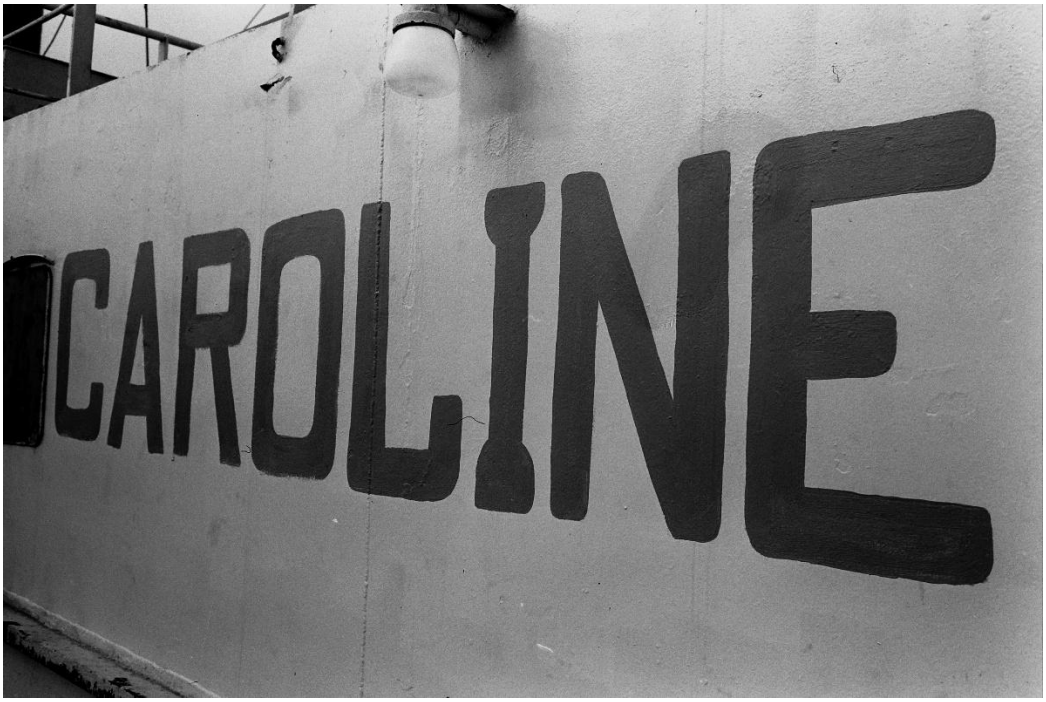


Photo: Menno Dekker

Nevertheless, Gerard van Dam stated, via the Algemeen Dagblad, that he did indeed had plans to launch a new offshore radio station. Details were as yet lacking, and he would not reveal anything about the name or frequency.

On 12 September, it was once again De Telegraaf that reported news regarding the Mi Amigo: the front page featured an aerial photograph of the supply vessel Dolfijn (owned by the Jac Vrolijk shipping company from Scheveningen) refueling the broadcasting

ship. The same newspaper reported on 15 September that the Mi Amigo was not to be a broadcasting ship, but a floating gambling palace, where games such as roulette could be played. This would then take place outside the law in international waters. Speculation regarding this casino venture was fueled by stories from a man from Groningen, Anton Rabbeljee, who presented himself to De Telegraaf as a former RNI and Veronica employee. He claimed that the transmitters had already been removed from the ship in Zaandam. However, nothing could be further from the truth, as would later transpire.

A few days later, on 18 September, Spangles Muldoon announced on his show on RNI (The Kent Request Hour) that he would be leaving the station to 'cross the street', and in case anyone wondered what that meant, he added, 'Just dial 39 on 220'. This was the first public confirmation that radio activities were underway on the Mi Amigo.

Late in the evening of 29 September 1972, a short test broadcast could be heard for the first time from Mi Amigo on 252.7 meters (1187 kHz) with non-stop music. The transmission power was between 5 and 10 kW. The following Saturday afternoon, which coincided with 30 September, brought, as previously mentioned, the test broadcast from half past twelve in the afternoon until around 3 o'clock in the morning. There was no speaking during the broadcast, nor was the station mentioned by name (e.g. through jingles).

However, it was reported from various sources that at that time Andy Archer, Crispian St. John, Peter Chicago and Spangles Muldoon were on board. For example, Robbie Dale, a former Caroline DJ from the 1960s: during his Monday afternoon show on Hilversum 3 (TROS 'JAM'), he dedicated a record to the aforementioned individuals plus 'ROR', whom he stated he had met the previous day. He wished 'ROR' 'Good Luck' with his plans.

Billboard 30-9-1972

Dutch Pirate to Be Back in Business

AMSTERDAM—Radio Caroline the "pirate" radio station will be back in business in less than two months.

This news came from Holland last week just after the old Caroline South ship, the Mi Amigo, was taken from a Dutch harbor to a position about a half mile north of the existing pirate ships, Radio Northsea International and Radio Veronica.

It is understood that the ship is now owned by a company calling itself the Bell Commercial Broadcasting Company which has been registered in Amsterdam, and at the moment the ship is being fitted out in preparation to begin broadcasting on 259 metres in English daily, as well as on 270 metres in the medium wave band with middle-of-the-road music programs in Dutch on 270 metres.

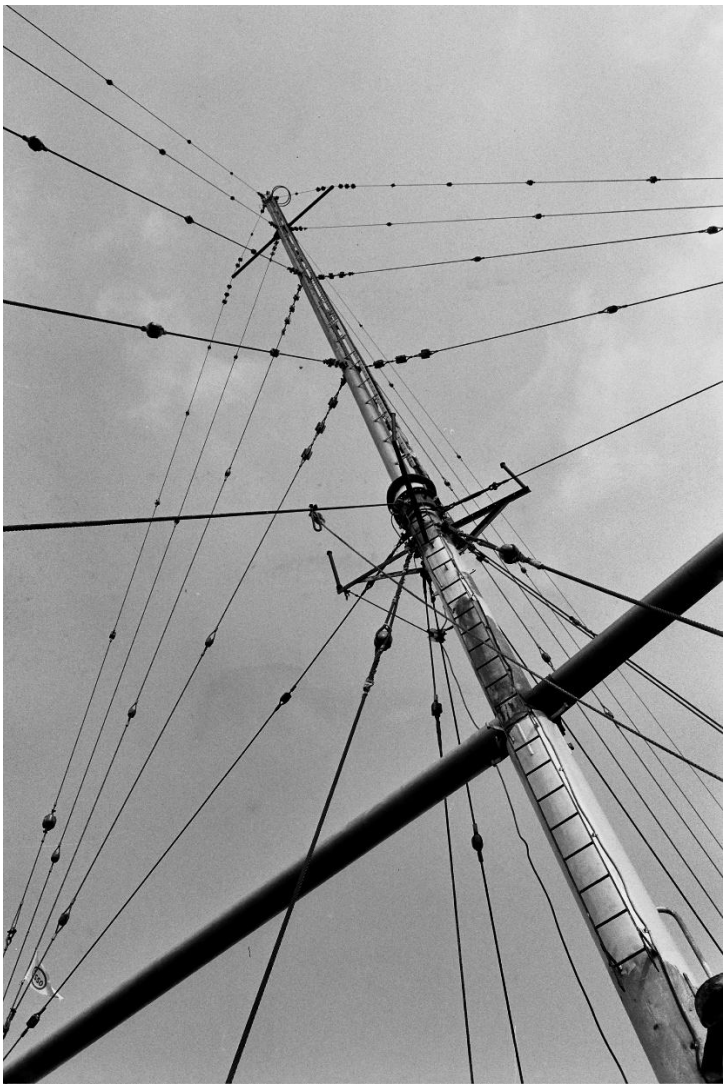
Decoy

The station will broadcast as Radio Caroline International and may well use some of the old Caroline disk jockeys. Our man on the spot says that the ship was fitted out some months ago with the owners telling people that they intended to construct a museum of pirate radio to show the public what life was like on board the pirates in their heyday.

However, this turned out to be a decoy to fool the authorities and the ship was recently towed out to its offshore position—to everybody's surprise.

A spokesman for the British Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications said this week: "Any sort of illegal transmission which would interfere with broadcasts on legal stations will be monitored. If this station starts up we will monitor their broadcasts. That's all we can say at the moment."

After almost a month of silence, test broadcasts resumed on 1187 kHz on the night of 28 October 1972, for an hour during the night. Tests were also carried out on 31 October and 1 November: non-stop music all day long. After a week of silence, further tests followed on 7, 8 and 9 November. At around 2 pm on 9 November, the first voice was heard: Spangles Muldoon conducting a microphone test. That same evening, Andy Archer also made his presence known around 7 pm. He gave a time announcement in two languages.



Mast Mi Amigo 1972 Photo: Menno Dekker

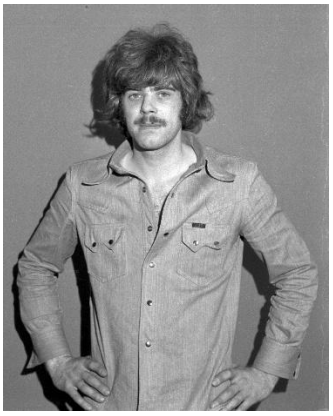
The 10th of November was the day of the 'Never Ending Tape'. A loop tape was played, featuring part of the Ray Conniff song 'People Say We're in love'. This lasted from a quarter to eight until a quarter past ten in the morning. After that, the station disappeared rather abruptly from the airwaves. On the mainland, it had become apparent that the broadcasts from the Mi Amigo were interfering with the Hilversum 3 program, which at that time was being provided by the Evangelical Broadcasting Network (EO). The PTT launched an investigation. It remained unconfirmed whether these events were related.

During the period from 11 to 13 November, a storm of almost unprecedented strength developed in north-western Europe, which

ravaged the Netherlands on 13 November. The Mi Amigo also bore the brunt of the storm: the mast snapped, just above the insulator, and fell overboard. The ship also broke free from its anchor(s) and drifted off course. The crew managed, with the help of a hastily deployed emergency anchor, to save the ship from total loss. Once the weather conditions had improved, a new anchor was installed. However, the sea remained too rough for work on the remainder of the transmission mast.

It was not until the evening of 30 November that testing could resume from the Mi Amigo. A makeshift mast, nicknamed 'Mickey Mouse', had meanwhile been erected on the bow side of the superstructure, and by means of horizontally stretched antenna wires (following the same principle used by the Veronica technicians on the radio ship Norderney), it was possible to come back on air.

The signal was broadcast as follows: first the usual tuning tones, followed by music at around 12 o'clock, after which Spangles Muldoon announced at approximately 1 a.m. that they were monitoring the signal following a test broadcast on 1187 kHz. Listeners were asked to send reception reports to PO Box 2448 in The Hague. Offshore radio connoisseurs among the listeners could recognise the sound of the Caroline bell during the broadcast, though the station's name was not mentioned.



Spangles Muldoon

The following day, 1 December 1972, another test was carried out and, alongside Spangles Muldoon, Crispian St. John could also be

heard. The standard remark was still sufficient: listeners could send reception reports to the above-mentioned PO Box address. Apart from that, only time announcements were made. The DJ team had since been reinforced with Tony Allan, Graham Gill and Alan Clark, but they had not yet been on board. The afternoon broadcast brought the surprise of full DJ sets by Spangles Muldoon, Crispian St. John and the Dutch crew member Jan Troost. It turned out, in hind sight, that they had grown tired of the non-stop music programs. By 8 pm, the station went off the air.

It was still unclear to the outside world who actually formed part of the organisation behind the offshore radio station. Names mentioned included Gerard van Dam, a certain Mr. Baas from The Hague, and FRC-Holland organiser Hans Verbaan was also said to be part of the team as a promoter. The managing director of the whole operation was said to be Gerard van Dam. Regarding the repair of the mast, it was reported from these circles that a completely new mast, of the type that had been on the MEBO II, would be installed on the Mi Amigo. It was also revealed from these circles that the station would be named Radio Caroline and that broadcasts would be in English and later also in Dutch.

Curious listeners had to wait until 17 December before signals from the Mi Amigo could once again be heard on the airwaves, this time on 1520 kHz. (199 meters). During the night, in the non-stop music broadcast, a commercial could be heard for the film 'Gold'; the following morning, the station appeared to have switched to what seemed like normal programming: Crispian St. John took up most of the morning and announced the station as 'Radio 199'. After a transmitter failure, Radio 199 returned early in the afternoon, once again with St. John. He announced that Radio 199 was broadcasting from the Mi Amigo with the English DJs Crispian St. John and Andy Archer, and on the Dutch side Paul Dubois, Meindert (Mike) Storm and Gerard van de Zee. The latter three could be heard that very same afternoon. Mike Storm from 14:00 to 16:00, Gerard van de Zee from 16:00 to 16:45 and from 16:45 to 17:00 Mike Storm. After 17:00, Jan Troost, amongst others, could be heard.

Messroom MV Caroline aka Fredericia. Photo: Menno Dekker

On 19 December, De Telegraaf reported that Radio Caroline was due to officially launch over the (then) upcoming Christmas weekend, broadcasting in English on 259 meters and in Dutch on 199 meters. However, this proved technically unfeasible on board the Mi Amigo (the rough weather was causing considerable problems), so the programs were integrated on 199 meters, the final test wavelength.

Meanwhile, the tests on 199 meters continued on 19, 20 and 21 December. Finally, on Friday morning, 22 December, at 6 o'clock in the morning, the (re)launch of Radio Caroline took place.

From 22 December 1972, it seemed as though Radio Caroline was suddenly back in full swing: normal programming and the gradual introduction of adverts suggested that the station intended to carve out a place for itself alongside RNI and Radio Veronica. Admittedly, the adverts were for local advertisers in Scheveningen and The Hague, mostly in the hospitality sector, but still, a start had been made.

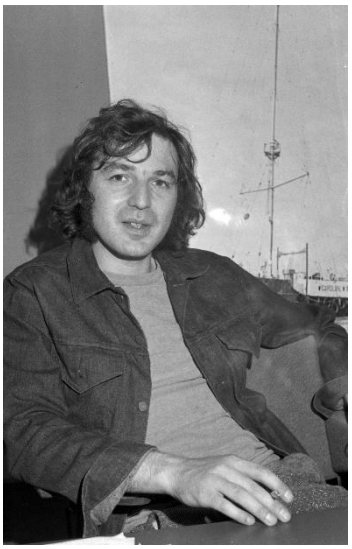
Advertising airtime was offered at prices (around f 2.50 per spot) that were out of all proportion to competitors' rates. Listeners could also send a Christmas message via Radio Caroline for a fee off 2.50. To do so, one had to send the text to Caroline House, which at that time was located in a hotel on the Zeekant in Scheveningen, from where contact was then made via 27 mC with the broadcasting ship, and thus the Christmas greeting was broadcast almost live.

The days around Christmas were, for Caroline, days of 'Love, Peace and Good Music' or 'Happiness', as Crispian St. John said on several occasions. These words would later prove highly influential for the style of radio broadcasting on Radio Caroline, but in the last week of December 1972, those same words took on a somewhat different, more poignant, meaning.

On board the MV Mi Amigo, from 22 December onwards, everyone worked hard to keep the music playing, yet the broadcasts were plagued by an irritating, constantly present whistling tone cutting through the signal. On that first official day of broadcasting, the programs ran until 2 am, but from 7 am on 23 December broadcasting continued non-stop, round the clock, until around midnight on the Second Christmas Day. Dutch and English DJs took turns, making it a truly international event.

On 22 and 23 December, the English side was represented by Crispian St. John, Andy Archer and station technician Peter Chicago. Leon Keezer, Jeremy Bender (whom the seasoned offshore radio listener Pierre van Gent would have recognized from the program RNI goes DX), Paul Dubois, Mike Storm and Gerard van der Zee took charge of the Dutch section on those days. 24, 25, 26 and 27 December were entirely handled by Crispian St. John, Andy Archer, Peter Chicago, Gerard Van der. Zee and Mike Storm; given the number of broadcasting hours on Radio Caroline on those days, it was a veritable DJ relay. On 28 December, alongside Andy Archer and Crispian St. John, Paul Dubois could also be heard again.

During the Christmas show (on the night of 24 to 25 December), presented jointly by Crispian St. John, Andy Archer and Peter Chicago, a link-up was established between 3 and 4 am between the Mi Amigo and the MEBO II, so that Robb Eden of RNI and Andy Archer could be heard together in a single program and could talk back and forth, using a transistor radio. On Boxing Day during the day, whilst the microphone was open in the on-board studio, loud, heavy thumping noises could be clearly heard. Andy Archer mentioned in his afternoon program that work was underway to erect the new transmission mast.



Andy Archer collection Hans Knot

To the unsuspecting listener tuning in to the 199-metre frequency on 27 and 28 December 1972, these seemed like ordinary days with the usual good music on Radio Caroline. On the afternoon of 28 December, however, it became clear that the much-vaunted peace on the Mi Amigo was suddenly in danger of being brutally disrupted, when Andy Archer announced at around 20 minutes to 4: 'We've got visitors and I'm going up on deck now to see who they are'.

He put a record on and afterwards Andy continued: 'There's something going on out there: about 200 metres away from us is a submarine hunter, the D-814, of the Dutch navy; a small launch has been sent out from there and is now alongside us. We don't know

what's happening right now. There seem to be problems, but we're in contact with the crew of the boat, and a little further out there's another ship, called the 'Seanews', carrying a number of Caroline staff. So, for our office in Scheveningen: everything's fine at the moment; if there's any news, we'll bring it up in the program'.

This was followed by another track, after which Andy Archer continued once more with: 'We're having major difficulties here; there's a scuffle going on here on the deck; we may go off air, but until then we'll be playing music'. In the middle of the next track, at 8 minutes to 4, the station went off the air. At around 10 minutes to 6 that same afternoon, Radio Caroline returned to the airwaves and Andy apologised for the interruption, after which the program continued in Dutch with Paul Dubois.

MV Caroline and Mi Amigo in Zaandam. Photo: Luuk Meeuwisse

That was what could be heard on 199 meters, but what had actually happened on and around the Mi Amigo? The following reconstruction provides a good insight into the ups and downs on the broadcast ship.

The promising start in September had given the Caroline project a boost of confidence, but the loss of the transmission mast was a severe financial blow to the organisation: money was suddenly in short supply. As a result, salaries went unpaid, which caused resentment among several staff members. Gerard van Dam, who was regarded as O'Rahilly's representative, was also responsible for the Dutch section of Radio Caroline (Spangles Muldoon was director of the English service) and was therefore almost constantly confronted with these issues, but managed to keep people at bay with vague promises.

A total of 12 men, who worked in shifts on the Mi Amigo, had not seen any money for a long time. For the sake of completeness, it should be noted here that the role of Ronan O'Rahilly will be discussed in more detail at a later moment.

DAILY MIRROR, *Friday, December 29, 1972* PAGE 3

IT'S RADIO PUNCH-UP

RADIO Caroline became Radio Punch-up for two crazy mixed-up hours yesterday.

And nearly everyone aboard the pop pirate ship joined in the fight.

Even the duty disc jockey deserted his microphone to see what was going on.

He told listeners that a "mutiny" had broken out on board Radio Caroline, which broadcasts from the 347-ton ship Mi Amigo—Spanish for "my friend."

Then, after saying he was going to see what was happening, the DJ signed off.

The music ended abruptly and it was two hours before normal service was resumed.

Then another DJ came on the air and started the discs rolling again with the words: "Peace on Earth to all men of good will."

But there wasn't much peace or good will aboard Radio Caroline during

From DENNIS NEWSON in Brussels

yesterday's mini - mutiny.

Trouble flared after six Dutch crew members left the ship, which is anchored five miles off the Dutch coast, complaining that they had not been paid.

While they were away, the skipper, Captain Will van der Kamp, 46, radioed for help and said that British disc jockeys had tried to seize the ship.

The big punch-up started when the Dutchmen came back on board.

They swarmed over the rail and waded into action with spanners and pieces of wood.

Later, a boarding party from a Dutch Navy frigate went aboard, but by then the mutiny on the Caroline was over.

Radio Caroline boss Ronan O'Rahilly, who flew to Holland last night to investigate the row, said:

These sort of things happen sometimes when people are confined in a small space such as a ship.

"Tempers are short, someone's drunk all the beer or something like that, and before you know it, the whole thing gets out of hand."

He added: "As regards allegations that people have not been paid, that has all been sorted out."

"I have been told of a running battle on board, but as far as I am concerned it was all a storm in a teacup."

Trickles of advertising revenue and the announcement that the (Ronan-produced) film 'Gold' would be promoted raised the suspicion that money was indeed available, but that the Dutch crew (DJs and sailors) would not see any of it. The resignation of the Englishmen on

board, who seemed easily satisfied financially, did nothing to improve the mood on the Mi Amigo either. Andy Archer would later state: 'Ah, we're just getting started, so it's not exactly a cash cow.'

Moreover, there was also a conflict over the way in which Radio Caroline should present itself musically. The NRC Handelsblad would later summarise the whole issue as follows: 'The sound business acumen of the Dutch, who wanted to see money on the table, as opposed to the "nostalgic view of Radio Caroline" held by the English: the latter would be content with playing records on board and making do with a bag of chips when on shore leave'.

Just how acute the shortage of funds was within the organisation was evident from the debt of over 20,000 guilders owed to the suppliers of the broadcasting ship (the firm Vrolijk from Scheveningen). Reportedly, in desperation, the crew had at one point collected 100 guilders and bought provisions for Christmas themselves at a cash-and-carry store.

There were also difficulties amongst the crew members; something was brewing and tensions were running high. Wednesday night, 27 December, was the deadline for the Dutch crew: if no money was on the table by then, they would take action. This was probably why a grumpy, disgruntled Dutch engineer, late that evening, destroyed an oil pipe leading to the generator and disabled the lighting on the aft deck. Tension on board reached fever pitch and by midnight the six Dutch crew members left the Mi Amigo to settle the score with those in charge of the organisation in Scheveningen.

A Scheveningen fishing boat that happened to be passing by came alongside and took the six ashore. Captain Willem van der Kamp (43), who had been in command of the broadcast ship for two months and had previously worked on the MEBO II, was left alone with the Englishmen: Andy Archer, Crispian St. John and Peter Chicago, and the Dutchman Paul Dubois.

Van der Kamp felt uncomfortable in the company of the Englishmen and locked himself in the bridge, armed with a shotgun. Van der Kamp

would later state that, following the departure of the Dutch crew, the Englishmen had adopted a threatening attitude towards him and claimed control of the radio vessel: they had spent the night restarting the generator, which was situated under the bridge. In doing so, they had made intimidating remarks directed at the captain, namely that they had made contact with the shore and that a gang of friends from England was on its way to the ship to restore order on board.

That had been reason enough for Van der Kamp to barricade himself on the bridge. He would later deny possessing the shotgun, but in press photographs and newsreel footage such a weapon was unmistakably visible.

Van der Kamp felt isolated: he had no radio equipment with which to contact the shore (office) or call Scheveningen Radio. At his wits' end, at 10.05 am on Thursday morning, 28 December, he fired five flares to attract attention and thus make his plight clear to the outside world. This was seen by Dick Roos, owner of the shipping company Trip, RNI's supplier. He raised the alarm and immediately ordered the tugboat Eurotrip to set course for the Mi Amigo.

The lifeboat 'Bernard van Leer' was also directed to the broadcasting ship following the alarm. It was remarkable that Radio Caroline's 'own' supplier, the recreational fishing company Jac. Vrolijk, was unable to send a ship to assist Captain van der Kamp: for the time being, all the loggers were still at sea due to the fine weather and the large number of holidaymakers, according to information from the Vrolijk company.

Van der Kamp told his story to the captain of the tugboat, who came alongside the Mi Amigo at around 11 o'clock. It must have been to the effect that van der Kamp no longer had control of the radio vessel and that a mutiny had effectively broken out on the Mi Amigo. Via the tugboat, van der Kamp made it known that he demanded the radio vessel be towed to Scheveningen harbour because it could not be considered seaworthy. However, the harbour authorities refused

to allow the ship to enter (partly due to the issue of payment of harbour dues).

Consequently, the Eurotrip and the Bernard van Leer returned to Scheveningen empty-handed. At the Caroline office, the firing of the flares and the technical problems were dismissed by Chris Cary with the statement: 'All dirty lies, there's nothing wrong. The broadcasting ship is still transmitting as normal, isn't it? They just had some difficulties with a generator early this morning. The flares, too, had no particular significance'.

Scheveningen harbour

The report by the Trip shipping company to the authorities did, however, result in the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy ordering the naval vessel 'Limburg', the D-814, to investigate the radio ship Mi Amigo and determine its nationality and home port. The Limburg was at that time the 'ship of the day' and was patrolling the North Sea off the Dutch coast. Early in the afternoon, around 2 o'clock, it arrived in the vicinity of the Mi Amigo.

From the air, a Neptune from the Naval Air Service kept a watchful eye on the situation. The commander of the submarine hunter Limburg sent out two launches shortly after 2 o'clock, each with nine men on board, to ascertain the actual situation on the Mi Amigo. An

officer in the launch, who was the first to reach the radio ship, then spoke with Van der Kamp, who was still on the bridge. Intervention proved unnecessary for the time being.

Van der Kamp later stated: 'If real difficulties were to arise, they would step in. They stayed nearby. I felt safe'. When asked about the nationality and home port of the broadcasting ship, van der Kamp replied: 'Panama and Panama City'. Van der Kamp also indicated that he would like the crew, who had left the Mi Amigo the day before, back on board to restore order.

At around 3 o'clock in the afternoon, the ship 'Seanews' set sail from Scheveningen, with Gerard van Dam and five of the six dismissed crew members on board. He had persuaded them to resume work on the Mi Amigo, partly by pointing to a major advertising contract that had just been secured. At a quarter to 4, the Seanews came alongside the broadcasting ship and, after a brief skirmish, 'order was restored'. The ship had been recaptured; hammers and iron bars had been wielded, but no one had been injured. Nevertheless, the station went off the air because one of the Englishmen (reportedly St. John) managed to remove the crystal and had hidden it. Studio equipment was also thrown overboard. After some tinkering by the – until recently rebellious – radio technician Peter Chicago, Radio Caroline was back on air by 6 o'clock.

Early in the afternoon, the press had got wind of the difficulties at Radio Caroline and from that moment on, the Hilversum stations reported almost hourly on the situation surrounding the Mi Amigo, and the print media were also on the scene. With a ship chartered in haste, the 'Trip tender', they set sail in the afternoon and witnessed the recapture of the broadcasting ship live.

The NOS TV Journaal that evening showed dramatic footage of threatening and fighting Radio Caroline staff, with the Royal Navy in the background, watching impassively. Immediately after the incident, Gerard van Dam, Captain van der Kamp and also the three rebellious Englishmen rushed to explain that it hadn't been all that serious and that they wanted to put the brawl behind them as quickly

as possible. Van der Kamp attributed the difficulties to 'a policy issue' and Andy Archer felt the matter had been 'greatly exaggerated'.

The newspapers were full of reports on the events surrounding the Mi Amigo. The N.R.C. Handelsblad even described the whole incident on the North Sea as: 'an operetta-style mutiny'. The three Englishmen were therefore, after the recapture, walking about freely, and Andy Archer could be heard again on the station the following night, between 1 and 4 am. Gerard van Dam, however, sent Crispian St. John ashore 'for a cooling-off period', as well as the engineer who had caused the damage. Captain van der Kamp also left the broadcast ship that evening.

The following morning, 29 December, Leon Keezer, Gerard van de Zee and Andy Archer were back on air and the programmes resumed as listeners had been accustomed to since 22 December. That evening, a tender brought in a new DJ, Ron Dolman, who was also on air almost immediately – specifically from 2 to 3 am – assisted by Chicago and Archer. At the end of the program, Chicago announced that Radio Caroline would be changing its wavelength (from 199 back to 259 meters) and that the station would be off the air for two days due to the work involved. After the station tune 'Caroline' by the Fortunes had finished playing, the station disappeared from the airwaves, but returned immediately shortly afterwards.

There was great alarm on the Mi Amigo when, immediately after the station went off air, the tugboat Eurotrip came alongside with nine men on board, including Captain van der Kamp – who immediately ordered his crew to cut the anchor and secure the tugboat to the broadcasting ship. One of the DJs, presumably Ron Dolman, made a desperate attempt via the reactivated station to send out a 'Mayday call' (SOS message) on the 199-meter band, but it was to no avail .....

So Van der Kamp had come back, but why? Let's go back to Thursday evening, 29 December. After the commotion, Captain van der Kamp left the Mi Amigo and went home to Scheveningen to sleep it off and get some clarity on the 'chances of survival' for Radio Caroline and,

linked to that, the salaries of his crew and himself. He consulted with Gerard van Dam and later that day also with Ronan, who had rushed back from England that very Thursday evening.

Upon arriving in the Netherlands, Ronan's first reaction was that 'All the fuss surrounding the Mi Amigo was merely a storm in a teacup.' He also said of the alleged mutiny: 'I've been told there was a full-blown battle on board, but I wasn't there so I can't say for sure. These sorts of things happen from time to time when people have to stay together in a small space — like on a ship. People get very quick-tempered. Someone drinks all the beer or something like that, and before you know it, things get out of hand. As for the claims that the crew haven't been paid and haven't been given proper food, that will all be investigated.' He added that, since his arrival, the situation was back under control.

Later, on behalf of Ronan, it was announced that in 14 days' time an English crew, led by Chris Cary, would also be starting work. Meanwhile, on Friday morning, the Algemeen Dagblad published an interview with Van der Kamp, in which he stated unequivocally that the Mi Amigo was not registered anywhere, in other words, was stateless. He described the Caroline organisation as 'gangsters' and found Van Dam 'a nice bloke, but far too young'. Regarding the ship's papers, he said: 'The required certificate of registry and certificate of tonnage are missing on board. I have been too trusting for too long: I was told that the ship's papers were in order and I believed it.' According to van der Kamp, it was pure 'cunning' on van Dam's part that had enabled the ship to leave IJmuiden in August.

Regarding the technical equipment and seaworthiness of the Mi Amigo, he said: 'The ship has no means of propulsion of its own; it is so old that it leaks through the propeller shaft sleeve. The water had to be pumped out regularly. The anchor chain's fastening is far too weak for the North Sea. The required lifesaving equipment is either missing or in a pitiful state.' Thus, in an emergency, the ten crew members would have to make do with a single borrowed rubber dinghy.

Van Dam's role also became clearer: 'After working for a while as a courier for Radio Noordzee, he thought he knew everything there was to know about radio ships. That Irish financier fell for it too'. The issue of the ship's papers had remained unclear even at a diplomatic level: the Panamanian Consul-General Eduardo Isaza, based in Amsterdam, had already been asked by the Royal Netherlands Navy to investigate the alleged Panamanian origin of the Mi Amigo. The Consul-General was unable to provide an answer, and that is why the commander of H.M. Limburg sent a launch to the Mi Amigo on Thursday afternoon to ask the captain himself what the situation was. Later, Isaza was able to report that the radio vessel had been struck from the Panamanian ship register once it became clear that it was a radio ship. Whether or not the Mi Amigo was stateless was significant insofar as, if the ship was indeed stateless, the Royal Netherlands Navy would be able to seize it. A rule of international law states, namely, that no country may act as protector of a stateless ship.

Whether the seizure of the Mi Amigo would also be politically feasible (in other words, whether the Netherlands was keen to get involved in such delicate matters) is quite another question. Should the ship indeed be Panamanian, then Panama could request the Netherlands to restore order on board.

Het Parool reported that the Mi Amigo was indeed listed as Panamanian in Lloyd's Register. Despite all the confusion, everything seemed to indicate that the Mi Amigo was not officially registered anywhere. Nevertheless, the Dutch government did not consider the situation to be such that intervention was necessary and left the Mi Amigo unmolested. When asked whether the Mi Amigo could not be seized, the Ministry of Justice gave the following wise and diplomatic reply: 'Even with people without nationality, you cannot do as you please'. Undeniably, the Netherlands could do without the Mi Amigo like a toothache.

Thus, on Friday 30 December, the broadcast ship remained where it was, namely outside territorial waters. All of Van der Kamp's claims

must be viewed in the light of his efforts to extract money from the Caroline organisation. The Dutch authorities were therefore not coming to his aid, and simply waiting and talking served little purpose. The ship — that was where the money was. Meanwhile, in the North Sea, the H.M. Zeeland, which had taken over the watch on the Mi Amigo from the H.M. Limburg, had resumed its normal patrol duties. In this vacuum, van der Kamp must have seen his own opportunities: the negotiations had stalled and they wanted to put Ronan under pressure.

The Observer 31-12-1972

Police called to Caroline

from SUE MASTERMAN

THE HAGUE, 30 December

RADIO Caroline has been silenced. The Mi Amigo, the ship from which the pirate radio station has been broadcasting round the clock, is now moored in Amsterdam harbour and police are investigating accusations of piracy, mutiny and violence on board.

'There are so many contradictory statements that it is going to take us a while to get to the bottom of the affair,' said a police spokesman tonight.

Mr Ronan O'Rahilly, Radio Caroline's Irish owner, failed to persuade the Dutch police to arrest the ship's Dutch captain, Willem van der Kampf, and crew, and allow the Mi Amigo to be towed back to sea. Mr O'Rahilly had sacked the crew several hours earlier.

'They have stolen my ship. They are nothing but pirates,' he said in Ijmuiden, where the ship was held up for an hour on its way to Amsterdam while the police made inquiries.

The captain and crew had sailed out to the Mi Amigo during the night, armed with revolvers and iron bars. They cut the anchor and ordered a tug to take the ship to the nearest port. The crew were protesting because they claim they have not been paid for two months.

Amsterdam harbour officials refused to admit the Mi Amigo before they had found a guarantor for the port dues. The guarantee was given by Trip Scheepvaart, of Scheveningen, a salvage company which also towed the Mi Amigo away from its moorings. This company provides service and supplies for Radio Noordzee International, a rival Swiss-owned pirate radio station.

This morning, one of the Swiss owners of Noordzee, M. Edwin Bollier, rang Radio Caroline's office in The Hague and asked Mr O'Rahilly to contact him 'if he needed help.'

When the Mi Amigo entered Dutch territorial waters its transmissions had to stop—for the second time this week.

The station went off the air on Thursday when a fight broke out between the British and Dutch disc jockeys on board and the crew.

For several weeks the Dutch crew have been threatening to 'confiscate' the ship and its equipment to raise the £5,000 for their back pay.

That is why, late in the evening of 30 December 1972, the tug 'Eurotrip' set sail with van der Kamp and a few supporters on board. Immediately after Radio Caroline went off air, they came alongside the Mi Amigo and immediately set about towing the ship away. Any resistance from the DJs present (two Englishmen and five Dutchmen, including Gerard van Dam) was swiftly quashed. The N.O.S. News later showed footage of a desperate Peter Chicago, who tried to jump overboard. However, colleagues were able to stop him. Early on Saturday morning, the tow arrived off IJmuiden, but was not allowed into the harbour because guarantees regarding the payment of harbour dues had not been provided.

Mi Amigo in IJmuiden Photo: Rob Olthof

The Mi Amigo lay off the harbour piers and the alerted O'Rahilly and his program director Chris Cary tried, from the shore, to do everything in their power to keep the Mi Amigo offshore. Meanwhile, once again, the H.M. Zeeland kept a watchful eye on things. Ronan chartered a fishing boat, the Dolfijn, and sailed towards the broadcast ship. However, the firm Trip had guaranteed payment of

the port dues, and so the tow was able to proceed towards the harbour, escorted by vessels from the Port Authority and the National Police on the water.

Ronan still tried to persuade the National Police officers to arrest Van der Kamp on charges of piracy. To no avail. Gerard van Dam, Ronan O'Rahilly's agent, suddenly found himself in agreement with van der Kamp, which sent O'Rahilly into a rage; he dismissed van Dam on the spot, on the high seas!, as his agent.

Upon reaching the harbour mouth, a vessel from the Port Authority took over the tow of the Eurotrip. Eventually, the Mi Amigo arrived in Amsterdam at 4 o'clock in the afternoon and was moored at the 'Stenen Hoofd', behind Central Station. The Public Prosecutor's Office had requested this in connection with the investigation: so much had been claimed about again, documents were not to hand, that everything simply had to be thoroughly investigated.

MV Mi Amigo at the Steenen Hoofd Amsterdam. Photo collection SMC

In retrospect, there was much commentary on the events. Andy Archer spoke of a 'group of people who had arrived on a yacht and were armed with pistols and iron bars'. Adjutant Dolman, commander of the Seaport Investigation Unit in Amsterdam, later shed more

light on the matter. Ronan's demand was rejected because the police authorities regarded Van der Kamp as the captain, and he had, after all, given the order to tow the vessel in. 'We advised O'Rahilly, the captain, and Gerard van Dam to talk to one each other and thus resolve the matter.'

O'Rahilly later came on board the Mi Amigo in Amsterdam; there were intense discussions, but nothing was disclosed to the outside world. The R.C.D. also came on board, but seized nothing, because the transmitter had been rendered inoperable to such an extent that the installation was no longer a transmitter within the meaning of the law.

Robbie Dale also showed on the quayside near the Mi Amigo on Sunday evening 31st of December 1972. According to rumours, he had provided funds to cover at least the towing costs.

Chris Cary, finally, said he was convinced that the entire operation had been paid for by Radio Noordzee or Radio Veronica, because they did not want Caroline as a competitor. Owner Bollier, of Radio Northsea International, later dismissed this accusation as 'nonsense'. O'Rahilly is said to have embellished Cary's story somewhat later in an interview with the Joint Press Service:

In September, the 'well-dressed' Swiss man Bollier have offered the 'long-haired pop apostle' O'Rahilly a substantial sum to silence Radio Caroline. This is said to have taken place at a meeting in the Amsterdam Hilton Hotel.

In an adjoining room, Mr. Bordewijk, Radio Veronica's lawyer, is said to have eavesdropped on them. John de Mol, director of the Dutch RNI service, admitted that this conversation had taken place: 'We only offered scrap value for the ship, because we want peace and quiet'. However, it was replied to Bollier that the amount offered was not enough to buy off his ideals! Radio Veronica also appeared to be aware of the conversation, but Bordewijk was reportedly not

present. RNI categorically denied that Bollier was now conspiring again to silence Radio Caroline.

It remained highly remarkable, however, that the RNI tender Eurotrip had been deployed to tow the Mi Amigo and that the firm Trip, normally suppliers to RNI, had guaranteed the port dues, and that Bollier, as he told Crispian St. John had contacted the Caroline office several times by telephone, with the message that all Caroline staff could come and work at RNI for generous salaries, but they had to make up their minds before 1 January!

And so night fell on the Mi Amigo in the port of Amsterdam. What were the debts now? Around f30,000 was claimed by the crew, and a large number of Caroline's suppliers had not yet been paid either. Yet the reason the Mi Amigo was in Amsterdam was purely criminal: the police wanted to investigate.

That the creditors had not yet taken any measures to secure their 'booty' was, on reflection, strange, but understandable: they believed that the police had the Caroline organisation and its broadcasting ship under their control. However, formally speaking, neither the police nor the RCD had seized the vessel. So the tireless Ronan was once again able to seek a surprising solution: evading both creditors and the police seemed to be the best and easiest solution.

Imagine then the surprise when, in the morning – it was now 1 January 1973 – the Mi Amigo was towed by two tugs from the Goedkoop company towards IJmuiden. The convoy arrived at the sea locks around eight o'clock in the evening, passed through them, but the Mi Amigo was directed by the Shipping Inspectorate to the fishing harbour for inspection: something still needed repairing at the stern and the Inspectorate wanted to satisfy itself of the soundness of that repair. Freedom beckoned; they were almost in the open sea, the locks having already been passed as the final obstacle.

Van der Kamp received an alarming phone call in Scheveningen and set off in great haste for IJmuiden. It became a race against the clock: would Ronan manage to complete the repairs in time and then quickly set sail with the Mi Amigo, or would Van der Kamp, who still had no certainty regarding his claim, be able to persuade the judicial authorities on Monday evening to allow him to seize the vessel?

Van der Kamp arrived in Haarlem and, with the permission of the President of the District Court of Haarlem, managed to persuade the relentless bailiff H. ter Hoeve to seize the broadcasting vessel in the dead of night. At quarter to midnight, the bailiff boarded the broadcasting vessel, accompanied by personnel from the Royal Marechaussee.

Van der Kamp had won the first round: on the Mi Amigo, welding was still in full swing on the ship's hull. He commented: 'Rahilly will pay, and if he has no money, he'll just have to sell the ship; the scrap value is perhaps 20 thousand guilders, and the transmitting equipment is also worth something to an enthusiast'. Then the great tug-of-war over the money began. Mr. Heukels, lawyer for the captain and his crew, announced at around 1 am that the demanded f32,000 would be forthcoming. A man calling himself an 'accountant' disembarked at that moment to fetch the money. This had been preceded by feverish discussions in the wheelhouse.

At ten to seven on Monday morning, 1st January, the Mi Amigo left the port of IJmuiden, towed by a fishing boat. On board were a new crew and a few English DJs. There was no reason for the police to detain the ship, as there was, after all, no transmitter 'within the meaning of the law' on board. The ship's papers were no longer discussed... It was 8 min after three in the afternoon normal programs were heard again on the 259 metres.

Decades later it was Norman Barrington who wrote to me more about Robbie Dale's visit to the Mi Amigo on December 31st 1972: 'Robbie

was there, in the West doc with black briefcase, offering to bail Ronan out, in effect to buy the ship. I was standing there, seeing my Caroline future potentially go up in smoke. I know nothing about any offers he may have made at any other time. I also wondered about Robbie's source of money. It could simply be an inheritance. However he was a consummate businessman, and knew exactly what he was doing as time did tell.'

He also remembered: 'I was officially employed on 26th of December 1972 and was due to go out on the 30th, but on that day went to Amsterdam instead of the North Sea. I heard that allegedly RNI had paid Van der Kamp, who incidentally was a drag queen when on land, to tell the crew that the English were being paid, whilst the Dutch were not. Of course none were being paid. The intention was to galvanise to crew into hijacking the ship, and of course resulting in alienating the Dutch from the English. The Dutch crew were unaware that Van der Kamp had been handed a fat envelope. 'Norman Barrington is writing a parallel personal account for Offshore Echos Magazine'. But he has no reason to doubt RNI's involvement.'

HAPPY NEW YEAR, BUT: WHAT ABOUT THE MONEY?

1973 had got off to a good start for Ronan and his crew: the new year was barely two days old and the Mi Amigo was already back on the high seas; it could all have ended much worse. O'Rahilly had played his cards cleverly, but how he'd managed it was still unclear. One of the clever man's final moves had been to have an 'accountant' present a cheque to the crew during the night-time meeting on board the Mi Amigo in IJmuiden's Haringhaven; this was not accepted, however, because 0'Rahilly was in every respect considered not a penny trustworthy (i.e. creditworthy).

Finally, later that night, cash did appear on the table after Caroline staff had persuaded local business owners and advertisers in The Hague to grant loans over the phone to Caroline. And so, by 5 o'clock in the morning, the seizure could be lifted after all. The Hague lenders had managed to deliver enough cash to IJmuiden. Another

creditor, namely the towage company Trip, had also attempted that same night, at around 4 a.m., to hastily have the broadcasting ship seized, but this could no longer be carried out in time.

Mr Heukels (who also represented van der Kamp) no longer considered it appropriate to wake the president of the court at that hour. The rumour that Robbie Dale had provided funds a few days earlier to pay the towing costs was thus dispelled.

Immediately after the Mi Amigo had set sail for the open sea again, numerous news reports concerning the debts accumulated by the Caroline organisation began to appear in the news bulletins on various radio stations and, a day later, in the newspapers. It transpired that this involved not only the crew members, who were owed around 30,000 guilders, but also a similar amount owed to external creditors.

For instance, on 2 January 1973, the *Nieuwe Leidsche Courant* reported that the crew under his command were still owed 32,000 guilders, whilst the *Leeuwarder Courant* reported on the same day that various suppliers to Radio Caroline were seeking payment of several tens of thousands of guilders.

The Leidsche Courant reported in its evening edition that the Irishman Ronan O'Rahilly was prepared to pay 30,000 guilders to the external creditors, which would be arranged through a number of advertisers. The evening edition of *Het Parool* that day reported that a similar sum had been transferred via a law firm, thereby lifting the suspension of payments. This payment was made through the law firm R.L. Heukels in Amsterdam.

On 3 January, the *Limburgs Dagblad* reported that a number of advertisers had been found willing to pay part of the debts owed to third parties in exchange for adverts on Radio Caroline. It was reported that the majority of the amount in question had been donated by the fashion house Inca. It should be made clear that this was not the amount owed to the crew at the time, but rather the sum that had been handed over to the solicitor in Amsterdam.

However, other newspapers also put forward figures: the NRC Handelsblad cited 50 to 60 thousand guilders, whilst the following day the Volkskrant went a step further and put the figure at 80,000.

As for the amount owed to the crew, there is no evidence to suggest that this was ever paid out. The fact that the vessel left the port of IJmuiden secretly and quickly appears to be evidence that they wished to prevent a second seizure of the broadcasting ship by Van der Kamp and his associates. Rumours circulated at the time that Van der Kamp, in his first action – which resulted in the broadcasting ship being towed in – had done so in return for payment from Radio Noordzee. However, no evidence can be provided for this either.

Even though the flag, registration certificates, tonnage certificate, sea certificate, crew list, title deeds and the certificate of discharge were missing, the Mi Amigo was permitted to Maritime Inspectorate and the Royal Water Police were concerned. The RCD saw no objection either: the steering tube and crystal sets were missing from the transmitter, the antenna had been disconnected and the wiring was damaged. In fact, it was almost exactly as it had been in August 1972: almost unbelievable, but true. Just as well for Ronan and his friends.

On board on Monday morning were Captain H. Staal from Scheveningen, nicknamed IJzeren Hein, a new crew of sailors and DJs, and Ronan O'Rahilly himself. They proverbially waved goodbye to the unpaid suppliers. The Mi Amigo was returned to her 'old' anchorage by the 'Dolfijn' captained by Van Laar from IJmuiden. On board the broadcasting ship, they hoped to resume broadcasts as soon as possible. Undoubtedly, the vital transmitter components were still somewhere on board or would be brought in soon.

From half past one in the afternoon, a test tone could be heard on 259 m, and at eight past three, normal broadcasts resumed. DJ Gerard van der Zee (pseudonym of Gerard van Dam, the sacked manager) opened the program after the traditional track 'Caroline' by the Fortunes with the words: 'We're back, unexpectedly and at

full strength – isn't that fantastic? We hope you'll continue to support us for what we are and what we hope to become.'

Norman Barrington about what happened January 1st: I am not aware Ronan actually paid anything. We slipped out on the morning of the 1st, and were barely onto IJkanaal when Hilversum news headline was that we had left Amsterdam. We were horrified. It seemed a lifetime just to get passed Hoogovens, with ANP giving updates on where we were. But remember in was a bank holiday, and legal beagles were closed too.

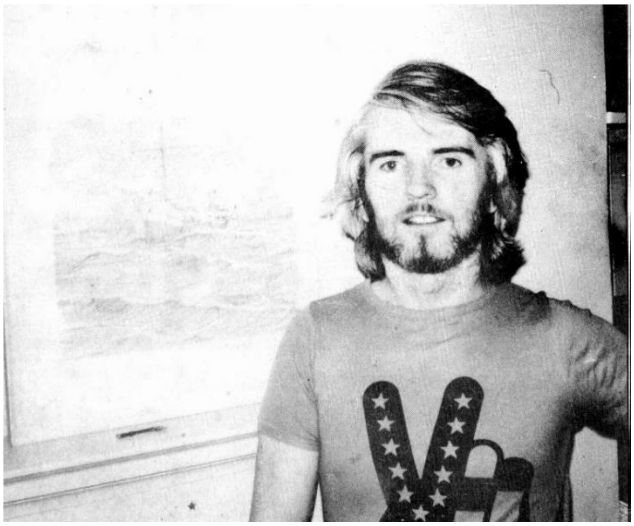
Van der Kamp and Co raced to IJmuiden whilst we were welding up the hole. Not in the fishing dock, but still along the IJ. Nail biting moments, Kate in floods of tears due to the tension. We pulled away Just as Van der Kamp and several cars pulled up. I saw them at the end of the pier, waving fists at us, as we passed into open sea. We were back at anchor that very day, and I did my first show early on 2nd'.

Gerard van de Zee also thanked all the official Dutch authorities for their smooth cooperation in facilitating the return of Radio Caroline. Onshore, there was still uncertainty regarding the financial situation. Quite a few suppliers had been left empty-handed. Dick Roos of Rederij Trip, spokesperson for several creditors, spoke of 50,000 to 60,000 guilders. They now intended to attempt to seize the (potential) advertising revenue of the reborn Radio Caroline. Some suppliers also immediately ceased their services to the Caroline organisation. Rederij Vrolijk, which had been supplying the Mi Amigo for some time, announced that it was ceasing to do so. An Antwerp-based firm, which was due to supply a new mast to Caroline for 40,000 guilders, also removed on Tuesday afternoon the sections of the mast that were already lying on the quay in Scheveningen, as a precaution

The amount collected overnight by the Caroline team amounted, according to the Algemeen Dagblad, to approximately f 65,000. Mrs. J. van den Boom-IJzendoorn had contributed the largest share of this. Her aim was to use this to advertise her business, the clothing

company Inca, with branches in The Hague and Amsterdam. She sold Nappa and suede clothing in her shops. 'The best form of selling is advertising. Radio Caroline is the best option for small business owners,' said Mrs. van den Boom-IJzendoorn. According to her, she had become a co-owner of the broadcasting vessel and had a say in programming policy.

Advertising manager H. Hunt was very enthusiastic about the campaign among advertisers: 'It went fantastically well; the money came in despite the fact that the banks were closed. We have improved the way we run the business and reorganised it. We now have proper accounts, which will settle the other debts as soon as possible and things are certainly set to go well from here on. We're now in the global news. What happened was a tit-for-tat commercial stunt. We couldn't have come up with anything better ourselves'.



Ronan O'rahilly Photo: Archive Radio Monthly

O'Rahilly had decided to stay in the Netherlands for the time being to personally oversee matters: Van Dam had been relieved of his duties and was now demoted to DJ. O'Rahilly admitted that in recent months his originally allocated budget had been poorly managed: thousands of guilders had been squandered via figures from shady circles in The Hague. Money for which the Dutch agent, Van Dam, was responsible. Regarding the campaign among advertisers, the manager still wanted to add: 'Give us eight weeks to get into shape

and we'll make it work. We connect with the public; we simply have better taste.'

Van der Kamp's campaign to secure the Mi Amigo was described by him in the following positive terms: 'It was an expensive business, of course, but it was worth it. Thanks to that campaign to put Radio Caroline out of business, everyone now knows who we are.' On board the Mi Amigo and at Caroline House, people were understandably very delighted with the successful outcome of events. Radio Caroline's programs were organised as follows: Gerard van der Zee hosted a show until 4.00 pm. Next up was newcomer Tony Allan, who presented his program from 4.00 pm to 6.00 pm. This was followed from 6.00 pm to 8.00 pm by Ron Dolman, from 8.00 pm to 11.00 pm by Crispian St. John, and from 11.00 pm to midnight it was Gerard van der Zee again, and from midnight to 1.00 am Tony Allan once more. The night-time programs were then taken over by Andy Archer, from 1.00 am too 3.00 am, by Norman Barrington Smythe from 3.00 am to 5.00 am and from 5.00 am by Steve England. The latter two were also newcomers.

After 2 January 1973, things happened at breakneck speed: an advertising agency was set up in The Hague, 'MA Productions', run by Chris and Kate Cary, and on 6 January it was announced that the Caroline Club would be revived. Membership cost 10 guilders, for which members would receive photographs of the broadcasting ship and the DJs; a book on the history of Radio Caroline would also be published. Furthermore, members would receive a club card and a badge. On Sunday afternoons, a special Caroline Club program would also be broadcast.

It later transpired that the entire Caroline Club was a (financially) bottomless pit. The money would in all likely hood have gone towards the station's operations. There appeared to be no member services whatsoever. Despite all this, by 27 February 1973 it was already reported that the thousand-member mark had been surpassed.

On 10 January, news broadcasts were included in Radio Caroline's schedule for the first time. The newsreaders were Bill Stones (who

would later call himself Will van der Steen) and Dik Trom. Newcomers on board in January, alongside those already mentioned, were: Peter Brian (who would later take the name Peter van Dam), Jos Mulder, Bert Bennett, Leo de Later, Jolly J Rodgers, Dick Palmer, Robin Adcroft and Debbie England (Steve's then wife).

Peter Brian, collection Gerard van der Spek

In terms of programming, Radio Caroline clearly became a 'Top 40 station', which led to the launch of the Caroline Countdown of Sound, which was first presented on 10 February by Ron Dolman. The name of this chart had already been used by Caroline in the 1960s. The Caroline Sure-shot was also reintroduced.

Let us now return briefly to early January: on Thursday 4 January, a commercial was broadcast during the day from the NCRV's radio current affairs programme 'Hier en Nu', calling on listeners to tune in to a 'Hier en Nu' broadcast on Hilversum 2, which would devote extensive coverage to the Caroline affair. Strangely enough, the NCRV broadcast argued that the Netherlands should ratify the Strasbourg Convention as soon as possible, in order to rid the country of the 'plague' of pirate stations such as Caroline. Viewed in isolation, the action taken by 'Hier en Nu' was a unique event in the (legal) history of Dutch broadcasting.

On 9 January, a walkie-talkie was seized at the Caroline office, which had been used to maintain contact with the broadcasting ship. A 50-year-old man from The Hague, the owner of a hotel on Scheveningen's Zeekant, where Caroline had its offices at the time. The man was also wanted by the police for a sentence he still had to serve for fraud.

By mid-January, it also became clear that the Dutch government was determined to implement the so-called 'Anti-Veronica Act' (the amendment of the Dutch Telegraph and Telephone Act of 1904 and to bring it into line with the Strasbourg Convention), as was communicated to the House of Representatives. Many newspaper commentaries emphasized that the bill would undoubtedly pass through Parliament, given the majority held by the governing parties in the House of Representatives.

The Algemeen Dagblad added to this: 'Although Radio Veronica and Radio Noordzee in particular have for a long time met a need that was neglected by others in our country, there have been too many incidents involving pirate stations to be able to protect them. To the uninitiated citizen, it will be a mystery why pirate stations, initially left unmolested for years, are now suddenly no longer acceptable. That is a rather unedifying example of opportunism'.

Radio Caroline continued to struggle with technical problems in January and February: although a new generator was brought into service in mid-January, the power supply remained problematic. On several occasions, listeners could hear during broadcasts that the turntables were not running at the correct speed. Power cuts also caused transmission disruptions. Due to problems with the Antwerp antenna company, they were still reliant on the 'Mickey Mouse' emergency mast.

Furthermore, on 18 January, a fire broke out in the engine room. On 26 February at 11.05 am, Radio Caroline went off the air for an extended period. And so it was March. On the eleventh of that month, at the start of the NOS Studio Sport broadcast, presenter Marga van Arnhem announced that Peter Zonneveld, who was staying

on board the radio broadcast ship Mi Amigo, had become the father of a daughter. This was the only way to make contact with the ship. Editor-in-chief Herman Kuiphof had no objection to the request from Peter Zonneveld's family.

Peter Zonneveld

The NOS program management did, however, but that was only afterwards. In a commentary, the message was described as 'incorrect' and 'inappropriate'. On board the Mi Amigo, however, it had turned into a huge celebration.

From mid-March onwards, alongside the evangelist Johan Maasbach, a regular program by radio pastor Rev. Toornvliet from Bloemendaal could also be heard. Furthermore, there was a constant coming and going of DJs on Radio Caroline: new arrivals included Joop Verhoof and Graham Gill. Paul Dubois and Dennis King left as DJs.

Dennis King Photo: Hans Knot

On 26 March 1973, technical problems brought Radio Caroline to its knees: the station went off the air until early April. Meanwhile, on shore, rumours that Caroline was on the verge of financial ruin.

Stories about new sponsors (such as Levi Strauss jeans and Marlboro cigarettes) that were supposed to breathe new life into the station turned out to be nothing more than the crew of the Mi Amigo being supplied with clothing and cigarettes in exchange for advertising. Rumours also surfaced that all the Caroline Club's money had been used to secure supplies for the broadcasting ship.

Consequently, Caroline's ninth anniversary turned out to be a meagre affair: the money was almost gone, the station was off the air, and confidence in Caroline had plummeted to almost zero. At such a time, any financial rescue was welcome. This would not be long in coming.

So it was quiet on the 'Caroline' 2-5-9 meter wavelength. Behind the scenes frantic efforts were being made to keep the Caroline organisation running. O'Rahilly spoke again in London with representatives of the Antwerp antenna company, which was to supply a 62-metre transmission mast to Caroline. Only then could the transmitter finally be used at full power. (50 kilowatts). Funds seemed to be available after all, as a contract was signed and construction of the mast could begin in early April. The work was carried out by staff from the Caroline organisation. It was hoped the job would be finished by mid-May.

Radio Caroline had meanwhile settled in Van Hoogendorpstraat, at number 16, which was declared 'Caroline House'. Problems with the PTT ensued as a result of this move, as the postal service found the address used by Radio Caroline to be incomplete. The post was even held up for some time. In the building on Van Hoogendorpstraat, work began on constructing several studios in the attic floor.

This rendered the location that Andy Archer and a few others in Amsterdam had been using for recording programs redundant. Previously, recordings had been made at the record shop 'Record World' (owned by R. Sluik) on Nieuwe Zijds Voorburgwal. A studio had been built there, right in the middle of the shop. Shoppers could thus enjoy the Caroline programs in studio quality via the speakers provided. Moreover, the studio space was largely constructed of glass. Mr. Sluik said of the agreement, which he had since

terminated: 'In recent weeks, the DJs simply stopped turning up'. The rent for the space and the equipment was, according to 'paid' with a series of free advertisements for the record company, via Radio Caroline.

In early April, the Radio Caroline Racing Team was also presented. The station had put itself forward as a sponsor of the team 'Den Haag Racing Productions'. The team consisted of: Harry Rico, Rien Rijnders, Henk Wagenaar Hummeling and Henny Teeuw. The team was led by D.J. Rijnders. Their fleet included Simca's and a Cooper.

Yet Radio Caroline was still not on air. Various publications stated that the broadcast ship and equipment were expected to be operational again by 12 April. In the meantime, work on the transmission mast was in full swing. No small amount of surprise took hold of the Netherlands, a nation fond of offshore radio stations, when it was announced in early April that Radio Caroline was to broadcast a special sex program.

'Radio Caroline on a sex tour', reported De Telegraaf. Earlier, in mid-March, an agreement had been signed between Radio Caroline and Candy (a popular Dutch sex/porn magazine) published by Peter Muller: Radio Caroline would broadcast a show produced by Candy every week, on Friday nights between midnight and 3 am, entitled: 'It's getting hotter on the airwaves'. The first broadcast was scheduled for 13 April 1973. Muller had already paid Caroline 4,000 guilders for this.

Peter Muller Candy left on deck Mi Amigo.

Photo collection Wil van der Steen

The programme was to address readers' sexual problems, feature a sex quiz called 'Candy or Not', see staff member Lindenboom chatting with girls and women, and read out personal ads on the Peer Mullens Show. Muller on his motives: 'It's the first time something like this will be broadcast. It will be a program aimed at the whole family. We don't want to turn it into hardcore porn.

Indirectly, we are helping Radio Caroline, but the broadcasts are also very important to us, because Radio Caroline can be received in Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands. Belgium is particularly interesting to us, because our magazine is banned in Belgium.' Muller went on to say that he had taken advantage of the precarious financial situation at Radio Caroline and secured a favourable contract.

Peter Muller with a special 'Caroline Candy'. Photo SMC Archive

'Everything is officially sorted. It's a lot of money, but it's worth it. It's all going to be a bit like Radio Candy.' The April issue of Candy included a short report on a visit Peter Muller paid to the Mi Amigo. It proudly reported that Peter Muller was warmly welcomed by the Dutch and English DJs, who were over the moon with the stack of new Candy magazines that Peter had brought from the mainland. The accompanying photos showed, among others: Peter van Dam, Joop Verhoof, Bert Bennett, Wil van der Steen and Chris Cary.

Joop Verhoof Photo Hans Knot

However, the station on the Mi Amigo remained silent in every language. Work was still in full swing. During the night of Monday 2nd to Tuesday 3rd April, a storm raged across the North Sea, which was not without consequences. All radio ships were off the air on Tuesday morning: Radio Caroline was silent due to technical problems, RNI was off the air due to heavy seas forced to cease broadcasts because incoming water threatened to cause a short circuit on the antenna; and Radio Veronica ran aground on the beach, just south of the Scheveningen harbor entrance.

A heavy blow for the popular offshore radio station. The ship was sitting high and dry on the beach on Tuesday morning and salvage workers from the firm Smit and van der Tak said they would have a tough job on getting the ship afloat. It was double bad luck for Radio Veronica, on April 18 the hearing regarding the continued existence of offshore radio stations in the House of Representatives was planned. Radio Veronica wanted to mobilize the whole of the Netherlands, both the listeners and the record artists. This plan was now cruelly thwarted.

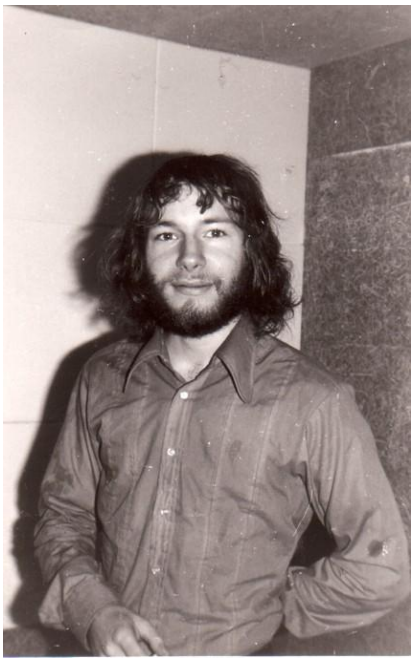
Radio Veronica was crippled, even though The Hague Public Prosecutor, Mr. Rosingh, stated that the Justice Department would leave the broadcasting ship Norderney untouched because it was a force majeure situation'. Suddenly, everyone was at Radio Veronica's

service. Offers to broadcast a Veronica Day on Hilversum 3 or to declare the second medium-wave frequency of Radio Noordzee as Radio Veronica were politely but firmly rejected. They even considered the RNI offer 'a cheap stunt', not without personal gain.

The attempts by the salvagers to tow the ship back to sea, initially, remained unsuccessful. Meanwhile, Radio Veronica was losing approximately 15,000 guilders a day in advertising revenue, according to the NRC. Once again, O'Rahilly saw possibilities. He, too, offered Radio Veronica his broadcasting ship, and Radio Veronica held this offer under consideration, but ultimately agreed. On Monday evening, April 9, a contract was signed between the managements of both radio stations: initially, they would rent airtime for one month.

The intention was to start the replacement broadcasts as soon as possible. However, this could only happen at the earliest on Wednesday, April 11, at 12 noon. Ronan on his proposal: 'It would be a shame if this station, which has written so much radio history, could not go on the air now, precisely when the matter is becoming so urgent. After all, Caroline owes its existence to Veronica.' When we started broadcasting off the coast of England back then, our commercial station was entirely based on the Veronica base.

The broadcasts would, however, have to take place on the Caroline wavelength 2-5-9, instead of Veronica's 5-3-8. Rob Out commented on this: 'We had to do something. Of course, we would have preferred to use our old 5-3-8 frequency, but there was no other option. Converting the Caroline transmitter to that wavelength was no longer feasible. As soon as we can, we will be back on 5-3-8.' After a lot of technical maneuvering, the Radio Veronica program could thus be listened to again on Wednesday afternoons, albeit in an adapted form.



Norman Barrington 1973 Photo: Hans Knot

Newsreader Freek Simon and DJ Tom Collins could be heard live on board, assisted by Norman Barrington from Radio Caroline. Undoubtedly, despite the primitive conditions, they had a lot of fun; the programs certainly had atmosphere. The financial injection from Radio Veronica was undoubtedly very welcome to O'Rahilly. Reportedly, Veronica supplied studio equipment to bring the broadcasts to a technically acceptable standard, something that had often been lacking at Caroline.

Norman Barrington reminds about the equipment: 'They did give us two Revox A77 recorders to keep, which I always wanted, and perhaps help with the generator, but nothing else. Juul Geleick, technician from Veronica, thought they gave us the Garrard 401 turntables since Veronica's were the same, but we already had those from the start. Our D202 microphone came from Radio Brighton.

All our gear was ready to go using the Mickey Mouse aerial unmodified, and arguably better on 259 than Veronica's 538. When Tom Collins and the News guys arrived onboard, they didn't even think of bringing the News jingle carts!'

Norman arriving in late December 1972 with Caroline had a lot of jingle demo-tapes with him, which could be of help by producing spots and more: 'I had to search my collection, forgetting where Odyssey '70 sounder was, so I used my own copy of the Veronica edit of Dragnet/Rawhide but then remembered where the current Pepper Tanner news sounder was, and carted it up, top and tail. However they never sent the morse news breakers. So you see they may have given Ronan a lot of money but very little to us!' Of course it has to be remembered that tendering during the Veronica period with food, water, oil and more was financed too by the company in Hilversum.

Someone who was certainly not cheering was Candyman Peter Muller in Haarlem. The planned broadcast of April 13th had now become virtually impossible; Muller said about this on Wednesday, April 11th: 'I have spoken with my lawyer, Mr. Korrel from Hoofddorp. He believes that this constitutes a breach of contract. We are now going to talk to Caroline.' 'If they do not fulfill their obligations towards me, we will file summary proceedings. We will decide that this afternoon.'

Those summary proceedings did eventually take place, namely on April 18. They were heard before the President of the District Court of The Hague, Mr. J. Slotemaker. The lawyer for the sex magazine demanded compliance with the agreement, subject to a penalty of f50,000. The opposing party had not appeared. The President was to deliver a ruling the following day at 1 o'clock. At that hearing, Caroline's lawyer, Mr. Keizer, stated that the Candy program could indeed be broadcast on Friday, April 20. 'The broadcast cannot proceed this Friday, because Caroline has not yet received the program and first wishes to exercise her right to censor it. Given Caroline's assurances, Candy's counsel decided not to insist on a ruling from the president. The president was therefore able to adjourn the case indefinitely.

On that same April 18, the Norderney was refloated; which, in a very coincidental manner, coincided with the hearing in the House of

Representatives. The demonstration, for the preservation of Radio Veronica and the other offshore stations, attracted a record number of one hundred and fifty thousand people. Radio Veronica resumed its broadcasts from the Norderney on the very same day; Mi Amigo became a relay station.

On April 20, Radio Veronica's broadcasts via the Mi Amigo transmitter were terminated. Caroline's promise to Candy was not fulfilled, as Radio Caroline went off the air almost immediately after Radio Veronica 'was back on its own broadcasting ship'. Nevertheless, work on the transmission mast continued steadily. In the first days of May, the work could be completed. Thus, on Ascension Day, May 8, testing could be resumed for the first time, but now via the new transmission mast. The expectation remained that the Candy sex show would now be broadcast very soon. However, Radio Caroline announced that no decision had yet been made. They wanted to await the advice of Mr. Keizer.

He had listened to the tape recordings because they had reserved the right to reject program segments that were too shocking or too unaesthetic. At his office, they did report that the advice would be to broadcast the program, 'but the final decision rests with Caroline itself.' Mr. Korrel regarding the potential broadcast: 'I do not expect it in the short term. That is why I have written another letter and demanded July 6 as the first broadcast date.' Then they, and we, will have plenty of time to announce the program. If Caroline doesn't respond to it, well, then we'll just quietly start another summary proceeding.' What became of it has never become clear, but the sexshow was never broadcast.

The Candy programs were produced by Bil Stones and late one evening Dennis King phoned me to let me hear the first minutes. Some days later it became known that Ronan O'Rahilly had made a final decision: the shows would never be on air. Decades later, in the late nineties, Bill Stones did send me copies of the two recorded shows for our archive. In those days it would be a sensation,

nowadays airing the Candy shows would give a lot of problems due to the contents of the program.

And within the Caroline family they were happy for the decision. Norman Barrington: 'I knew little about Candy, since I was on the ship, but in my own OEM account I felt the less said about it, the better. We all hated the idea. The promo we did put out in which a common sounding English woman says in a seductive voice "My name is Susie, they call me 'The girl with the kettings (which she pronounced Cottinges!). Because I like rings through my nipples and ....." unfortunately Debbie England's parents were listening and thought it was her. They were appalled, as were we.'

Debbie and Steve England. Photo: Collection Hans Knot

After the test broadcast on May 8, further testing was conducted on the 13th of that month on 388 meters (773 kHz) with a power of 10 kW., on May 14 Ron Dolman and Norman Barrington could be heard on what was announced as 3-8-9 and finally, testing was conducted on May 15 on 1187 kHz (259 meters). At the end of the month, the tests were expanded to both wavelengths simultaneously, with different programming under the names Caroline 1 (389) and Caroline 2 (259). The first had a power of 10 kW, the second 50 kW. Finally, the official launch took place on June 3. The DJs on Caroline 2 were: Joost Verhoeven (program director), Ad Petersen, Mike Storm, Joop Verhoof and Bert Bennett. The English service Caroline 2 was staffed by: Paul Alexander, Andy Archer, Spangles Muldoon, Robin Adcroft, Norman Berrington, and Dick Palmer. Newsreaders were Leo de Later and Henk Meeuwis. The Dutch service was broadcast partially on tape and could only be listened to until early in the

evening; after that, from 9 o'clock, they broadcast the Radio Caroline 1 program.

Norman Barrington on the Mi Amigo. Collection: Norman Barrington

It soon became clear that a distinct sound was developing on the 3-8-9: they played what was called better music and were otherwise quite limited in the announcements. The whole thing was interspersed with a large quantity of 'new' jingles.

Once again, the major advertisers stayed away, and difficulties arose once more with suppliers: Shipowner and supplier Jac. Vrolijk called it quits again. In addition, there was a constant coming and going of DJs. Newcomers during the month were: Steve England, Johnny Jason, Roger Day, Mike Lindsay, and Mike the Poet. Despite the many changes, Caroline 1 remained a cohesive whole and became popular due to its personal style of radio broadcasting.

Steve England Photo: Collection Hans Knot

Later in the month, problems with the generators arose again; for the first time, the transmitter went off several times on June 23 and 24. On June 26, the generator failed at about a quarter to six in the afternoon. Caroline fell silent once again. Another time more about this hectic period for Radio Caroline in the seventies of last century.

Hans Knot Summer 2026