

Ed Craney - From Wikipedia (The free encyclopedia)

Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ed_Craney"

Edmund Blodgett "E.B." "Ed" Craney (February 19, 1905-March 6, 1991) was a true [radio broadcast](#) pioneer in the world of radio in both Washington and Montana. He brought the first radio station to Butte, Montana, in 1929, KGIR, which eventually became apart of his chain of unparalleled radio stations dubbed “The Z-Bar Network.” Craney also had a hand in beginning Montana's first local television station in 1953 that was also located in Butte. Craney founded the Montana Broadcasters Association, while KGIR was the first station to join the National Broadcasters Association. [\[1\]\[2\]](#)

Early life - Craney was born on February 19, 1905, in [Spokane, Washington](#). Craney was born to Lucy Blodgett, who was a schoolteacher, and James Craney, who was a pioneer in the logging industry. Craney's father was a Superintendent of the Great Northern Railroad. His job eventually brought him to Montana as he worked with the Somers Lumber Company in Swan Lake, Montana, while his mother remained a teacher. Craney was raised at the family house at Swan Lake, as were his sisters Emily, Martha, and Cora, and brother Oliver. [\[3\]\[4\]](#) The Craney family lived at Swan Lake on an island that was only accessible by steam boat. [\[5\]](#)

Beginnings in radio - After the family had spent five years at Swan Lake, Craney moved back to Spokane, Washington where he attended North Central High School where he became part of the school's radio club. Although Craney's mother wanted him to become a doctor, the young boy yearned for the world of radio broadcasting—it was his passion. [\[6\]](#) Radio broadcasting was in its primitive stages when young Craney began to work with the then-modern equipment. AM radio was still young at this time with very few stations legally broadcasting. The first licensed radio station in the United States, [KDKA](#), officially went on the air in November 1920. The boom in radio had sparked a young Craney who eventually got his First Class Radio License at a radio school held at a YMCA in Seattle, Washington. [\[7\]](#)

With the help of storeowner Tom Symons, Craney had in a large part contributed to the opening KFDC (later KXLY) in Spokane in 1922. [\[8\]](#) Symons eventually backed Craney when he decided to open a broadcast station in the booming mining town of Butte, Montana.

Building Butte's first radio station

KGIR - The [Federal Radio Commission](#) (FRC), which was the predecessor the [Federal Communications Commission](#) (FCC), issued the license for radio station KGIR, in Butte, in 1928. The station's location was hand picked by Craney and was to be originally located within the Finlen Hotel; however, due to complications, the KGIR studios was built across the street from the hotel on the fourth floor of Shiner's Furniture on Park Street. KGIR officially went on the air on January 31, 1929, an almost full nine months before the [Great Depression](#) of 1929 would hit the United States. The first broadcast sent from station KGIR was heard around the town of Butte and Dillon [\[9\]](#) , and as far away as the Pacific Coast. [\[10\]](#) With radio in the city of Butte, listeners enjoyed what they heard

on the station, including local bands and singers, in addition to religious programming, to live inauguration of President Herbert Hoover, which was heard around the town, and as far away as Ramsay, which is small community just west of Butte.

East Park Street location - The KGIR studios were originally to be located on the roof of Butte's Finlen Hotel, but due to uprisings, the station was not able to assume the hotel as its location. Manager of the Finlen Hotel, Morris Weiss, told Craney the station could not open. It was later found out to be a brush with the politics of The Anaconda Company. In time, talks, and wanting to keep his studios centrally located in the uptown Butte area, Craney began talks with Carl Shiner, of Shiner's Furniture, and was give the go ahead to build his studios on the fourth floor of the furniture store. This location would serve as the home to KGIR for approximately 18 months before a new location was sought.[\[11\]](#)[\[12\]](#)

West Broadway Street location - After tenure of about 18 months, the location of the KGIR studios changed. The station moved to its Broadway Street location in Butte, which at that time was the old office of the Senator William A. Clark.[\[13\]](#) In more recent times, the building was used as the bus depot, and currently houses CCCS, Incorporated. The station remained at this location until property was acquired by Craney and the station was moved west of town.

Nissler Junction location - In 1937, KGIR again moved, however, this time it would be approximately seven miles west of the Butte city limits. Craney would open his new studios just a few miles from the Butte-Anaconda highway with a new transmitter and modern tower.[\[14\]](#) The new location at Nissler Junction not only was the home of the station, but Craney also lived near the studios. Craney lived at Nissler for many years until his health deteriorated.

Expanding operations beyond Butte and The Z-Bar Network - Before Craney had relocated the KGIR studios to Nissler Junction near Butte, he had been acquiring radio stations from around Montana and making them apart of his Z-Bar Network, which was an old Montana Cattle brand. The stations that Craney purchased were KPFA in Helena and KRBM in Bozeman. With the purchase of station KPFA in Helena, when joined together with KGIR, it led to creation Craney's network. Craney then also went to purchase stations in Great Falls and Helena, both in 1947, they were KXLK and KXLL, respectively.[\[15\]](#)[\[16\]](#)[\[17\]](#)

After searching through various radio sources, Craney found that there was a string of call letters that were not in use by the FCC at that time. He found a combination of call letters all containing "XL" letters. Craney then petitioned the FCC to have his Montana stations' call letters changed so that they all have an "XL" sign—a unique identifier. The petition was granted, and thus The Z-Bar Network grew to include the Montana stations KXLF (formerly KGIR), KXLJ (formerly KPFA), KXLQ (formerly KRBM), KXLK, and KXLL. The Z-Bar Network was one of the most successful in Montana history and has left its mark along with Craney's regional broadcast sales office that was also

headquartered in Butte, the Pacific Northwest Broadcasters.[\[18\]](#)[\[19\]](#) All five stations in the Z-Bar Network were affiliates of the National Broadcasting Company ([NBC](#)). Making KGIR successful

KGIR was successful in many ways, the first in reaching an audience. Butte and the surrounding areas had no local radio station until KGIR went on the air in 1929. It was a new form of entertainment to the people who flooded the studios with messages of thanks and congratulations after its inaugural broadcast. Adding to the success story of KGIR is the fact that the programming was all local until the station became an NBC affiliate on November 28, 1931. After the affiliation, Craney and KGIR continued to run local programming along with network programming. It was through promotions and contests that many listeners were pulled into the shaping of KGIR as many who participated helped with the addition of programming during the Depression year. Listeners were said to have wanted more than just light music and farm reports. [\[20\]](#)

Along with his Z-Bar Network across the state of Montana, Craney also founded The Pacific Northwest Broadcasters, which was an agency to help in assisting the Montana stations with getting advertisement sales from larger cities.[\[21\]](#)

Television audience growing - Craney's venture into radio was a landmark in Montana broadcasting; however, with widening audience of television, Craney brought television to "The Mining City." A man that began the first radio station in Butte, also created Montana's first radio network, went on to create a Butte television station, [KXLF-TV](#), that was Montana's first, and began Montana's first television network, The Skyline Network, which was the predecessor to [The Montana Television Network](#), ran by Joseph Sample. Although [\[22\]](#) did have one competitor when it began in 1953, KOPR-TV, would eventually close after 13 months on the air.[\[23\]](#)

Later life - Craney died in Montpelier, Idaho, on March 6, 1991, leaving behind a loving family, and a legacy in broadcasting that left its mark in Montana's vast history.[\[24\]](#)

References

1. McCormick, Andrea, "KGIR: Blast of Sound Heard 'Round the Town," The Montana Standard, March 11, 1979.
2. Marquand, Ian. "The 100 Most Influential Montanans of the Century: 80. Ed Craney," The Missoulian, 1999.
3. Obituary of Edmund B. Craney, Montpelier, Idaho, April 10, 1991, Idaho State Journal. <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~idbancem/obits/obits/ALSPWO/Craney-Edmund-Ed-10Apr1991.jpg>.
4. guide to the Edmund B. Craney papers, 1916-1979." Montana Historical Society Archives. <http://nwda-db.wsulibs.wsu.edu/print/ark:/80444/xv43438> (accessed February 2, 2009).
5. McCormick, Andrea. "Two Babes Grow Up," The Montana Standard, March 11, 1979.
6. McDonald, C. Howard. Voices in the Big Sky!: A Concise History of Radio and Television in Montana from the 1920's to the Present. Montana: Big M Broadcast Services, 1992
7. McDonald, C. Howard. Voices in the Big Sky!: A Concise History of Radio and Television in Montana from the 1920's to the Present. Montana: Big M Broadcast Services, 1992.

8. McDonald, C. Howard. *Voices in the Big Sky!: A Concise History of Radio and Television in Montana from the 1920's to the Present*. Montana: Big M Broadcast Services, 1992.
9. Dillon Radio Fans Enjoy Butte Program," *The Butte Daily Post*, February 1, 1929
10. KGIR Makes Aerial Bow, Receives Much Applause," *The Butte Daily Post*, February 1, 1929.
11. McCormick, Andrea, "KGIR: Blast of Sound Heard 'Round the Town," *The Montana Standard*, March 11, 1979
12. McDonald, C. Howard. *Voices in the Big Sky!: A Concise History of Radio and Television in Montana from the 1920's to the Present*. Montana: Big M Broadcast Services, 1992.
13. McCormick, Andrea, "KGIR: Blast of Sound Heard 'Round the Town," *The Montana Standard*, March 11, 1979.
14. Ehresman, R. *Going Forward with Radio in the State of Montana Presented by Z: The Montana Network*. Illinois: National Radio Personalities, 1948
15. Ehresman, R. *Going Forward with Radio in the State of Montana Presented by Z: The Montana Network*. Illinois: National Radio Personalities, 1948.
16. McDonald, C. Howard. *Voices in the Big Sky!: A Concise History of Radio and Television in Montana from the 1920's to the Present*. Montana: Big M Broadcast Services, 1992.
17. Richards, Ronald P. "The History of Broadcasting in Montana." Master's thesis, University of Montana, 1963.
18. Richards, Ronald P. "The History of Broadcasting in Montana." Master's thesis, University of Montana, 1963
19. McDonald, C. Howard. *Voices in the Big Sky!: A Concise History of Radio and Television in Montana from the 1920's to the Present*. Montana: Big M Broadcast Services, 1992.
20. Murphy, Mary. "Messenger of the New Age: Station KGIR in Butte." In *Retracing the Past: Readings in the History of the American People*, ed. Gary B. Nash and Ronald Shultz, 154-163. New York: Pearson Longman, 2006.
21. Richards, Ronald P. "The History of Broadcasting in Montana." Master's thesis, University of Montana, 1963.
22. KXLF-TV
23. *Dilley, Raymond G. "Montana's First TV Station." In *A Century of Montana Journalism*, edited by Warren J. Brier and Nathan B. Blumberg, 84-89. Montana: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1971.
24. Obituary of Edmund B. Craney, Montpelier, Idaho, April 10, 1991, *Idaho State Journal*.
<http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~idbancem/obits/obits/ALSPWO/Craney-Edmund-Ed-10Apr1991.jpg>

Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ed_Craney"

Categories: [American broadcasters](#) | [1905 births](#) | [1991 deaths](#)

Hidden categories: [Orphaned articles from June 2009](#) | [All orphaned articles](#)