

Ultimate DX Trivia: What Was Radio Bobay?

by

Jerry Berg,
Lexington, Mass.
jsberg@rcn.com

I had forgotten all about Radio Bobay, or Radio Bouvet (probably the intended spelling), a station I had heard on December 31, 1981 on 7434 kHz, at around 2330 UTC. But recently I came across it again in a brief segment by the late John Campbell in one of the old Media Network programs posted online at Jonathan Marks's [Media Network Vintage Vault](#). John Campbell was a regular contributor. The "Bobay" program was broadcast on February 11, 1982, and can be found [here](#). John's segment is at :30. Here is what he said:

I don't have any one theme this month, but I do have some pieces of news that may be helpful on three or four different fronts. Firstly, it's always good to acknowledge a good unofficial radio hoax, and I think we've had one in the recent past. North American listeners—and I'd say it's no coincidence that there have been no reports from outside North America—have heard a mysterious station calling itself something like Radio Bobay, broadcasting around 7435 kHz., and also around 14700, and giving the impression of being located in Europe. On New Years Eve it pretended, almost successfully, to be putting out a live transmission of a New Year party from a theater somewhere in Dublin. Well, no one's actually claimed to know for sure that Radio Bobay is a North American radio hoax, but I'd bet a very large amount of money that it's just that. Perhaps if the inventors of Radio Bobay are listening, Jonathan, they'll send us a cassette contribution for Great Radio Hoaxes—Mark II, in case you ever make a new set of unofficial radio tapes for the Handicapped Aid Program.

The station was heard by many shortwave listeners, including several participants in the *Numero Uno* DX newsletter. The reports to NU are shown below. In summary, October 1981 saw an unidentified station that was later thought to have possibly been this one, heard on 7388 and 7395 kHz. after 0600 UTC. In November, what appeared to be the same station was heard on 14725 around 1600. In early December they were on 7426 at 0630. And the New Years Eve program that John Campbell referred to was heard on December 31 from 2230 tune-in on approximately 7435. Here are the entries:

October 24, 1981, pgs. 2 (Dan Robinson (DC), Gerry Dexter (WI), Don Jensen (WI) [ed.] & 4 (Dexter, Jensen):

7383a, unid pirate, not sure if US or European, hrd 10/18, 0635, badly overmodulated. Hrd with "Easy Like Sunday Morning." pops, male dj. Apparently ID at 0635. Hopeless and tuned out at 0639. (Robinson) By phone, Gerry Dexter reports an unid. pirate on or about this area of the band. English accent. I'm sure details will be forthcoming. (ed.)

PIRATES (again) -- 7395, unid. 0609-0931, strong and vry well modulated, professional-sounding operation. British accent, but couldn't be sure of ID. Sounded like "Radio Mohair." Quoting regular freq of 107.9 FM and noting this was an experimental S.I xmsn. Mentioned would be on at 1000, same date, on 14630, but not hrd there. Weaker, lower modulation amnt of some kind by different ancr at 0630 and off a min. later. Intrigued by this. Anyona have any other info on this? (Dexter) May be related to earlier Robinson log on 7388. (ed.)

October 31, 1981 (Dexter):

PIRATES -- 7395, further monitoring of tape on this unid. reveals an ID more as "Radio Boo-vay," possibly with a 3rd syllable in the middle. Also ancg "203 meters." (Dexter)

November 7, 1981 (Dexter, Jensen [ed.], John Campbell (UK)):

7383-95, of R. Mohair unid vry interesting. Same fellow mentioning 107.9 MHz and sounding like R. Bouvet (per last NU, Ger's relistening to tape indicates this closer to the mark than earlier thought Mohair; ed) was hrd in the US on 14715, 1605-1630, 10/18. Perhaps these were both the real ARTO; it's worth asking anyway, and mentioning the 107.9. If not ARTO, then the only plausible alternative is a NAM hoax by somebody who read the ARTO sked in FRENDX. Possibly the fellow (Canadian?) who has been well hrd in Ontario who has operated as Night Hawk Radio near 15 MHz in the past. (Campbell)

December 11, 1981 (Jerry Berg (MA), Dexter [ed.]):

7426 unid EE speaker at 0632. Pretty weak but got bits and pieces, ancr sounded fairly professional.. "right now..listen to you on 107.9.. in the...meter band...we'll be back on the air in two hour's time.. see you then..In the Know Radio...frequencies 107.9.." Then a little "Oh Tannenbaum" and "Deck the Halls". Another ancr 0635 "we'll remain here until...you are listening to, anyhow, rock and roll... music..number one radio.." Then a light vocal, "Maria" I think, short ancr and off 0644. Only thing that's for sure is that 107.9 is the FM freq. listed in past FRENDX for the Aussie pirate, CBN, which is supposedly also on SW below and above 41mb, though not on this freq. That would definitely make staying up late worthwhile! (Berg) Note report of the "Radio Mohair/R. Boovay" a few NIs back, also giving the 107.9 frequency. Somewhat accented. (ed)

January 1, 1982, p. 3 (Dexter [ed.]) & p. 5 (Ralph Perry (NJ), Bob Foxworth (NY), Campbell, Jensen):

PIRATES -(misc. cont.) - 7435 "Radio Bouvay" again, 12/31 from 2252 kHz. Very strong, 75% readable, with live broadcast from Trinity College Theater, city of Dublin. Said 300-400 people on hand, invited people to come on down. Ancng 107.9, 203 meters and also on SW. Countdown to NY with music (live?) by the Clancy Brothers. Ancr, whose name I never was able to get, mentioned that another staff member, Peter Jones, had just left. Still seems suspiciously strong to be direct Irish reception and if this was live, hard to believe a relay by a US station and if a hoax, an elaborately constructed one. How do the Irish pronounce "Nova"? (ed)

7433.8, the strange R. Bovey, or whatever, noted thanks to Ger's call, about 2305 to past 000, 12/31. Fair strength. Seemingly a rather elaborate hoax, claiming a live New Year's Eve count-down to midnight GMT, supposedly from Trinity College in Dublin. Vaguely British accents. Mix of mx and live crowd sounds. Gave FM, MW and "shortwave 40 meter" freqs., as reported previously. At 2345, a "return" to the studio for promo for "regional news" the following morning and "Sunrise" program. Sounded quite legit (though Ralph pointed out that the sirens sounded at 0000 were American sounding, rather than European/Continental/British/Irish). Signals poorer ECNA per Ralph and Foxworth. Foxy called Campbell to discover that stn apparently not located across the Atlantic. Somebody went to a lot of work for this hoax, it seems. (dnj)

January 9, 1982 (Foxworth, Berg, Perry):

PIRATES (Miscellaneous) -- 7433.5, 12/31-1/1 the R. Bouvet or whatever hrd, fair to decent with "countdown to midnight." Called John Campbell and he reported no sign of it there, only a weak Russian at or near that freq. (Foxworth)
7434, same New Yrs Eve show. Sounds phonetically like R. BOE-bay. Vry professional. Accent sounds more British than Irish -- apologies, John. (Berg) Not as smooth pgning as real Irish semi-pro stns. (Ralphus)

I had made a recording of the New Years Eve broadcast, as heard around 2330 UTC, 7434 kHz. You can hear it [here](#). IDs are at 2:09, 2:24, 4:11, 4:21 and 4:35. As Don Jensen observed in his January 1 entry above, it sounded legit. And those were the days when Europirates could often be heard at this hour, especially on the North American east coast.

So who/what/where was Radio Bobay? The mystery was solved thanks to contributors to Glenn Hauser's "Listeners Notebook" column and Tom Alleman's "Update" column in *FRENDX*, the monthly bulletin of the North American Shortwave Club, during the period November 1981 to

May 1982. The station was reported heard at various times by reporters in New Jersey, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Michigan, Connecticut, and Toronto, Ontario, on 7390, 7395, 7435, 14650, 14715, and 14850 kHz. Attempts to nail down the name yielded many variations: Radio Bombay, Radio Bouvet, Radio Bobay, Radio Bowlbathe, Radio Brovo.

It became obvious that it was a pirate, a conclusion made inescapable by some on-air references to names conflated from those of several well-known hobbyists (at 3:06 in the recording: “This is Don Perry . . . you need Ralph Jensen’s smoking stick tuning oil to help you . . .”). One Ontario listener observed that it was the same station as an otherwise-unidentified Radio Caravelle (see below). Another Ontarian had an Ontario address for the station. And while the station was unheard in Europe, a powerhouse signal was reported in Toronto.

In May the mystery was more or less solved when a New York listener, seemingly in the know, reported that an individual whose home address had been given for the station but who knew nothing about it believed the organizers to be former members of a shortwave club who had been expelled for obnoxious behavior, including submitting fake logs under a fictitious name.

John Campbell, writing (with his usual erudition) in the February 1982 “Unofficial Radio” column which he edited for *Short-Wave News*, the bulletin of the Danish Shortwave Clubs International, concluded that the station “was a genuine 24-carat fake.” But, said he, “the general quality of this hoax is rather good. Congratulations, fellows! I’ll bet you didn’t know that it was Admiral [François Joseph] Bouvet who was mainly responsible for fouling up the plans for the Irish revolution of 1798 and delaying Irish independence for over 120 years. Or did you?”



We will likely never know.

P.S. on Radio Caravelle

They were another Canadian pirate (see above), and Rich McVicar of Navarino, New York, QSLed them in 1981 when he lived in Prescott, Ontario. *Thanks for sending along the QSL, Rich.*

