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New morning plans blowing in the WIND

Two years after making a highly publicized but unsuccessful run at husband-and-wife team Don and Roma Wade, Salem Communications is getting serious again about launching a local morning show on news/talk WIND-AM (560).

This time, Salem is going after Big John Howell, veteran morning personality at country WUSN-FM (99.5), and Cisco Cotto, news anchor and reporter at news/talk WLS-AM (890).

Frustrated by low ratings for Salem Radio Network's Washington-based morning show hosted by Bill Bennett, bosses of the conservative talk station hope the team of Howell and Cotto will help breathe a little life into WIND.

Dave Santrella, vice president and general manager of WIND, declined to comment on his plans Tuesday.

But sources confirmed that Cotto has resigned from WLS to accept the co-host position, and that serious negotiations were under way with Howell, whose contract expires this week at CBS Radio's US-99.5. If everything works out, both could be on the air by the end of the month.

In October 2004, Santrella made what insiders called a "great offer" to lure the Wades from WLS. But the couple eventually chose to renew with the ABC-owned station.

In the latest Arbitron quarterly survey, WIND ranked 30th in mornings with a 1.0 percent audience share.

Tracking: Sirott moves up

◆ After nine months as weekend news anchor at WMAQ-Channel 5, **Bob Sirott** is moving up to Monday-through-Friday status at the NBC-owned station. Under a deal negotiated by agent **Steve Mandell**, Sirott will anchor a new 4 p.m. weekday newscast with **Marion Brooks**, debuting later this month.

The syndicated magazine show "Extra," which now airs at 4 p.m., will move to 4:30 p.m.

Channel 5 bosses also are finalizing plans for a news realignment that will put main anchors **Warner Saunders** and **Allison Rosati** on at 5, 6 and 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday — and at 10 p.m. Sunday (following NBC's NFL football broadcasts).

◆ WBBM-Channel 2 has established its latest news partnership with the Aurora Beacon News. Reporter **Mike Puccinelli**, west suburban bureau chief for the CBS-owned station, will divide his time between the offices of the Beacon News and the Naperville Sun.

◆ **Ginger Zee**, a meteorologist from WOOD-TV in Grand Rapids, Mich., has been hired as weekend weather forecaster at Channel 5. She's a native of Rockford and graduate of Valparaiso University.

Starting in mid-October, Zee replaces **Tammie Souza**, who left the NBC-owned station to join Fox-owned WFLD-Channel 32 as morning weather forecaster.

◆ A memorial service will be held tonight in west suburban River Forest

for **Lon Grahnke**, whose nearly three decades at the Sun-Times included eight years as television critic in the 1990s. He died Friday of complications from Alzheimer's disease at age 56.

A lifelong Chicagoan, Mr. Grahnke was a treasured colleague who approached his job as TV critic with the same commitment to thoroughness, accuracy and fairness he embodied as a tireless editor and reporter.

Dialing: Kudos for Cody

◆ **John Cody**, a 30-year veteran of CBS Radio all-news WBBM-AM (780) and one of the best reporters in the business, will be honored as Chicago Journalist of the Year at a dinner Sept. 15.

The event, hosted by the Chicago Journalists Association at the Holiday Inn Mart Center, will be emceed by **Dick Kay**, retired political editor of Channel 5. **Jill Carroll**, the Christian Science Monitor reporter who was kidnapped in Iraq, will be presented the organization's Daniel Pearl Award.

For information and reservations, call: (312) 458-9792.

◆ **Nina Chantele**, former weekend host at Crawford Broadcasting's urban contemporary WPWX-FM (92.3), returns to the market today as afternoon personality at WKSC-FM (103.5), the Clear Channel Radio Top 40 station known as Kiss FM. She replaces **Mark "Tic Tak" Allen** from 4 to 8 p.m. weekdays.

The Chicago native most recently was afternoon personality and music



Big John Howell

coordinator at KZZA-FM in Dallas. She previously worked at WMIB-FM in Miami and KXBT-FM in Austin, Texas.

◆ **Jerry Riles**, producer of **Cliff Kelley's** morning show at WVON-AM (1450), has been promoted to program director of the Midway Broadcasting African-American talk station. The appointment comes just two weeks before WVON moves up the dial to 1690 AM and expands to 24-hour broadcasting.

Riles previously was an executive producer at CBS Radio sports/talk WSCR-AM (670) and a reporter for Shadow Broadcast Services in Milwaukee.

◆ **Steve Scott**, who's resigning as

news director of WLS to become afternoon news anchor at WCBS-AM in New York, insists his move has absolutely nothing to do with the impending sale of the ABC news/talk station here.

But his timing couldn't be better.

◆ Congratulations to Radio Hall of Famer **Wally Phillips**, former king of morning radio in Chicago, and his wife, **Barbara**. They'll be the proud parents of the bride when daughter **Jennifer** marries **Nick Tzitzon** this weekend in Lake Geneva, Wis.

The bride is communications manager for the American Beverage Association, and the groom is chief of staff for the U.S. Department of Justice. They live in Washington, D.C.