

HCJB 70 Years

by Anker Petersen

HCJB – Heralding Christ Jesus’ Blessings – had its inaugural broadcast on Christmas Day 1931 from a 200 watt transmitter in the capital of Ecuador, Quito which is located in the high mountains 2,850 meters above sealevel. Broadcasts were in Spanish and English, but at that time there were just six radio receivers in Ecuador!

In 1937 the station got a 1000 watt transmitter and the broadcasts in other languages like Swedish began with Ellen Campaña as host. The station quickly developed and in 1940 the President of Ecuador inaugurated a new 10 kW transmitter which gave improved coverage overseas. It was located on the slopes of the 4,794 metres tall Pichincha volcano just west of the city. This unique, high site just 20 kilometres south of the Equator gave special propagation possibilities. By the way, the Pichincha became alive last year and had big eruptions, but fortunately without much damage on the city.

The station continued to expand, and in 1951 an area for a much larger transmittersite was purchased at Pifo, some 80 kilometres east of Quito across the Valle de los Chillos. Here the engineers of HCJB designed and constructed their own, efficient antennas to transmitters up to 500 kW of power (in 1980).

In order to have their own electricity supply, HCJB in 1965 established a large power plant in the mountains near Pifo at Papallacta. its capacity is so big that it is able to supply not only the transmitter site, but also the local population with electricity.

As early as 1960 HCJB started its TV-station which became the first in Ecuador and the first Christian TV-station in the World.

But HCJB is not only a broadcast station. It provides social care to the native Indian population in Ecuador, and since 1949 HCJB has provided medical care. Today HCJB runs two large hospitals – one at its compounds in northern Quito, and one at Shell on the border of the Amazone rainforest.

During the past ten years HCJB has expanded further by using transmissions via satellite to other countries and is now in cooperation with other partners broadcasting through local stations in more than 100 languages and dialects in CIS, Asia, the Pacific, the Middle East, Africa and South America! Thus HCJB follows the general trend of supplementing Shortwave broadcasts with local broadcasts. But HCJB is also broadcasting on shortwave from the UK, and is going to build a 100 kW transmitter in Australia to cover the Pacific and Southeast Asia with the first tests maybe from the end of 2001.

Quito has also expanded a lot during these 70 years, and the international airport, which is just a couple of kilometres north of the HCJB compound is now surrounded by bungalows. Several aircraft have crashed into houses there during the past years, and the Government has decided to build a new airport so close to Pifo that HCJB has to close down its transmitter site in the near future.

Because of this HCJB in 1999 purchased an area near the Pacific Sea west of the city Guayaquil where a new shortwave transmitter site is going to be established to cover North and South America. This was the only location in Ecuador from where all parts of Brazil could be covered and that is considered important.

I had the pleasure to visit HCJB in January 1996 where I particularly met Swedish Sonja Persson and Canadian DX-editor Richard McVikar. In former days Sonja amongst Christian programs also had a program called "Radiorond" where she visited various local radiostations, and this was highly appreciated by Scandinavian DX-ers. Now she was about to close the Scandinavian Section of HCJB. Rich kindly showed me around, including the HCJB compound in Quito and the Pifo and Papallacta sites.

Today both have left Quito, Sonja has retired after 40 years at HCJB and now lives in Sweden, and Rich works at a radiostation in the eastern U.S.A. The popular DX-Partyline has been taken over by Allen Graham from the U.S.A. whom I met i Oaxaca, Mexico in August 2000.

The DSWCI congratulates the HCJB with 70 successful years and invites our members to send your wishes with a reception report to this DX-friendly shortwavestation in the high Andes.