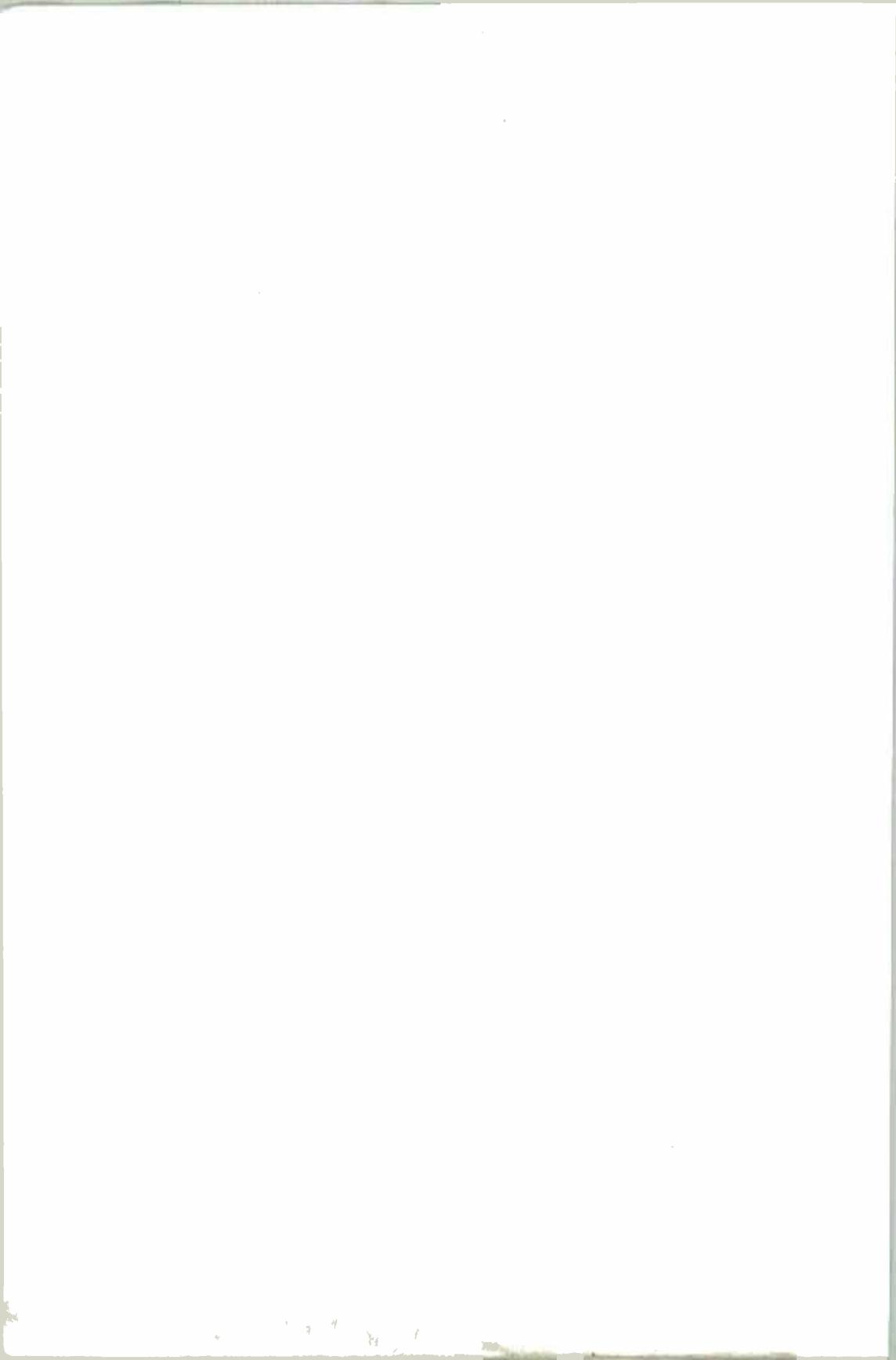




# **We'll Have More Music, Right After the News**

**Herbert Rosenblum aka Don Herbert**



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by

**Herbert Rosenblum  
aka  
Don Herbert**



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DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated, first and foremost to my wonderful wife*

*Linda,*

*my fantastic son, Brian,*

*and my superb daughter,*

*Meredith.*

*Together, they have been a great source of*

*support & inspiration for me*

*and still are.*

*This book is also dedicated to the legions of*

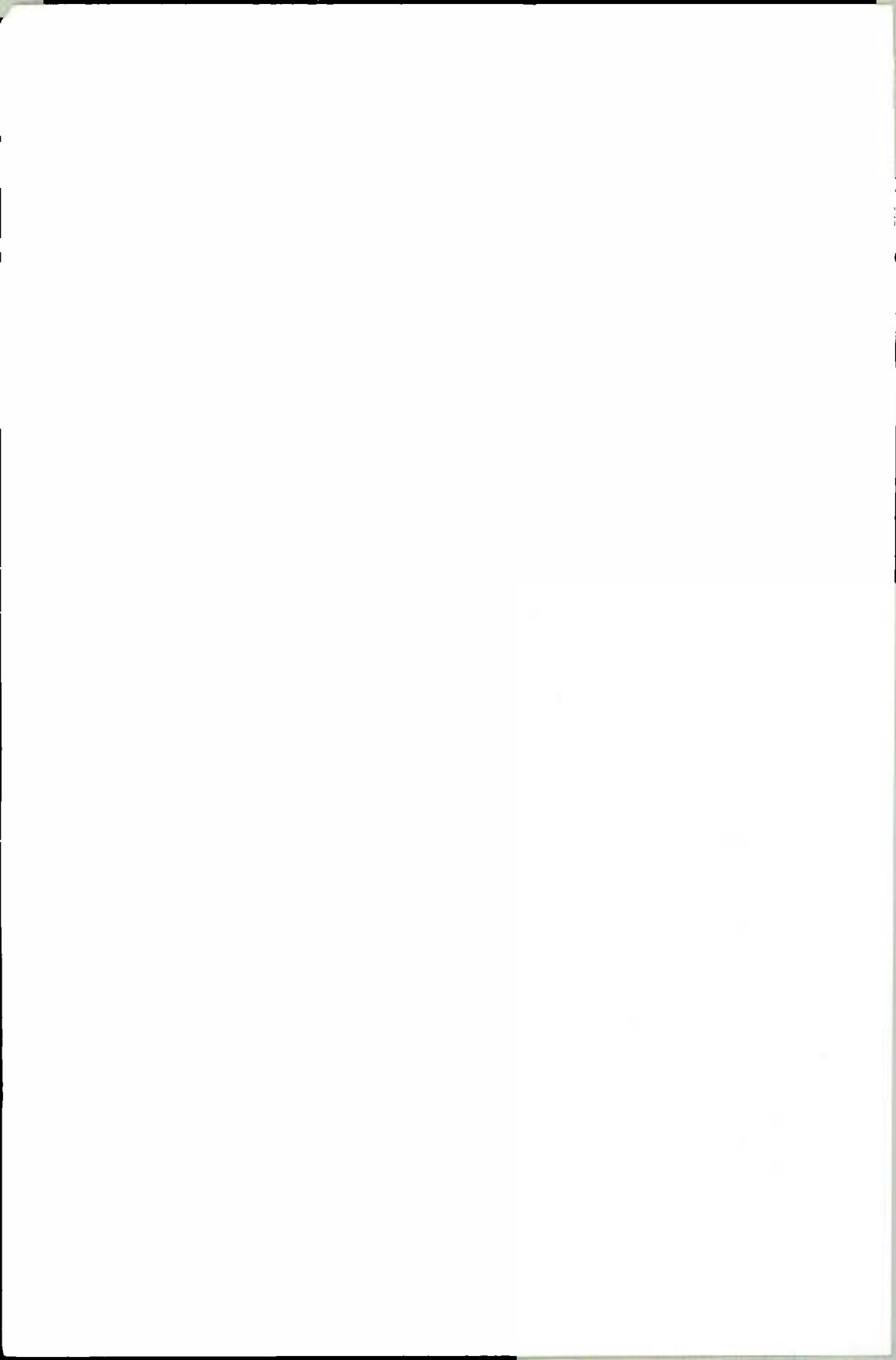
*journalists who have worked at KFWB*

*in the past and those who are there now*

*and finally,*

*to those friends who now staff that great*

*Newsroom in the Sky.*



## KFWB ALL-NEWS IS BORN

“It was a dark and stormy night.....” Whoops! That was Edward George Bulwer- Lytton.

“It was the best of times. It was the worst of times....” Nope. That was Dickens.

“In the Beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth.” Er, I believe that has been used too. Well, back to my original opening line.

“I’ll have more music, right after the news.” Legend has it those were the last words broadcast by the last disc jockey on KFWB as the station changed formats from music and news to All-News in March of 1968. Of course, I created that legend because what really happened was kind of dull. Therefore, I will continue to push the legendary version. Besides, it’s a much better story.

The All News format actually was not a new phenomenon when it debuted in Los Angeles. The Westinghouse Broadcasting Company was already using that format in New York and in Philadelphia but since the Los Angeles staff was decidedly better looking and much

more talented, we will ignore the other two cities and concentrate on L.A. alone.

The All-News format was a true revolution in broadcasting but it raised a lot of questions. What the hell will they talk about? Who the hell can talk that long? And who the hell wants to listen to so much news?

As it turned out, there was a lot to talk about it, a lot of people ready willing and able to do the talking and an even larger number of people ready to listen. In 1967, the wheels began to turn in earnest. The Westinghouse Broadcasting Company went shopping for a vehicle to launch the west coast version of the "All-News" format and they purchased KFWB from Crowell Collier. The studios were located on Hollywood Boulevard, a couple of blocks west of the fabled intersection of Hollywood and Vine. The station was on the second floor above a restaurant called Aldo's, which had a gay bar in the rear. There was another rather unsavory establishment called The Tourist Trap also below the station. To get to the KFWB reception area, you went thru a doorway on Hollywood Blvd. that was almost invisible to passersby and you climbed a long creaky staircase. You then found yourself in a slightly disheveled room with a reception desk and some doors leading God knows where. It was behind those doors that news magic would soon be performed. At the time that Westinghouse purchased the station, All-News was about a year away. The music and news format was in the homestretch. The

planning, the refining and the honing of the new format had begun in New York.

Now, if I may, allow me to digress for a moment. I would like to briefly explain how I came to be connected to KFWB. After college at the University of Alabama, my career path took me to Birmingham and Mobile, Alabama, Little Rock, Arkansas, Palm Beach, Florida, Washington D.C. and finally Los Angeles. Birmingham and Mobile involved my being a disc jockey as well as doing the news. When I got to Little Rock, I made the switch to news full time.

In Los Angeles I was employed by NBC News, first as a writer, then producer but after a year and a half, I got side tracked by a friend and went to work for Chuck Barris, writing questions for the Dating Game, The Newlywed Game and an easily forgettable program called Dream Girl of 67, all for ABC. In mid 1967, technicians at ABC went on strike and the shows shut down production to await the end of the walkout. I took the opportunity to move back to news as a field reporter for KHJ-TV. I stayed with them until January of 1968. It was then that the mavens at KHJ-TV decided to eliminate the entire news department and hire a bunch of gorgeous models, all of whom were just barely able to read, to do their news. This was a major stroke of good luck for me because on the day I was laid off from KHJ-TV, KFWB began hiring its staff for the All-News format.

So, the KHJ-TV news director, Russ Van Arsdale and I quickly put together radio news audition tapes and ran like crazy to the KFWB

studios. One at a time, we met with Assistant News Director Bruce MacDonell who listened to our tapes. We were then introduced to News Director Herb Humphries and within five minutes, we were hired. There were two more people to meet, Executive Editor Frank Georg and General Manager Jim Lightfoot and then it was official. We were in. And what made the timing all the more significant for me was the fact that just a couple of days after being laid off and hired in a single twenty four hour period, I was getting married.

So, now with my job securely in my pocket, off I went to get married to Linda Horowitz of New York City. Following a brief honeymoon in Las Vegas, we moved into the Brentwood section of Los Angeles. As we set up our apartment, I waited anxiously for the telephone call I was promised I would get regarding when and where the All-News training sessions would take place. Late in February, my wife wisely suggested I give the station a call. The receptionist answered the phone and when I asked when training would begin, she said it was already underway and she knew there was someone she forgot to notify and now she knew who it was.

Jumping into my clothes and my car, I raced to the Hollywood Knickerbocker Hotel where in one of the smaller meeting rooms, school was underway. I arrived just in time for lunch. Talk about great timing.

Now, picture this. Here I am out of breath, panting from the run from my car, into the hotel, up to the meeting room, a newlywed,

contemplating this bizarre start to a new career and everybody leaves for lunch. So, what does this young eager newsman do?

He goes to lunch.

I followed everyone to the elevator where our not yet beloved news director Herb Humphries, and about 15 other new colleagues of mine, jammed into an old ornate elevator car. The button to the first floor is pushed. The door slides shut and the elevator begins to move about one or two feet and then grinds to a halt. We are stuck between floors.

At first there are a few nervous laughs. Then we search for the emergency telephone or the emergency button or the emergency escape hatch or the ejector seat or an axe to hack away at the walls. Anything!!!! Just GET US OUTTA THERE!!!! Someone says "Lets rock the car and jar it loose". That suggestion is rejected immediately. Someone else suggests prying the door open. Not bad, but since we have no crow bar, we forget that one too.

Then some third person says, "Lets pray". Since we were between the first and second floor, with only 15 feet of space under us, it was decided to hold off on the prayers for a while. And while we great minds put our heads together to come up with the ultimate solution, the elevator doors slid open. We sauntered out and with sheepish looks on our faces, went to lunch.

When we returned from lunch, we got down to the business of learning what All-News was all about and how we would go about making it a success. But first, New Director Herb Humphries wanted

to make sure everyone was there. So, the roll was called. This was done because it was our first day together as a group and we were not yet sure who everybody was.

The roll was called and as it turned out, one person was not there. Someone called Aaron Shepard. Aaron had been working in Upstate New York when he was hired. So, where was he? No one knew and no one was volunteering to hunt him down, so the All-News Academy continued without him.

School was a two-week affair. The first week was dedicated to learning the philosophy and theory of All News which, simply stated was.... Get it fast, Get it first,

Get it right and get it on the air before anyone else.

In order to do this, we anchors had to become familiar with...the News Wheel.

Actually, the News Wheel was a pie chart, showing how much time in a single hour was devoted to news, how much to sports, weather, commercials and so forth. At first, the news wheel was a complicated visual aid but we came to the conclusion that we could master its intricacies by simply ignoring it. Heck, it just looked like a giant pizza with alphabet soup topping.

I, on the other hand, felt it was essential that we become as one with the wheel. So I memorized it, I chiseled it into my brain and sure enough, by the end of the day, I had sprinkled grated cheese on this paper pizza and was handing out slices to anyone I saw.

But one mystery remained. The burning question: where the heck was Aaron Shepard? Day Two as we called it, dawned bright and cheery and we all gathered at the hotel for another school session. All except Aaron Shepard. This was getting weird. We speculated that aliens from outer space had abducted him? Actually, that thought was never considered seriously. Maybe he just decided not to come to Hollywood. What? And miss the glamour and glitter? Really!!!

Well, onward and upward. Our lectures continued, our luncheons continued and little by little, we came to realize we had no idea what our new bosses were talking about. They did but we didn't.

Finally Week One ended. The lectures were complete, the visuals had been visualized, the theories had been theorized and the philosophies had been, well, you get the idea. It was now time to actually go into the studios at KFWB and begin a week of trial runs. We would put together half hour newscasts and then read them as though we were actually on the air. It would really test our mettle. Well, the mettle of everyone except Aaron Shepard. He was still a no show.

Now, picture the entire staff of the All-News operation jammed into a cramped building already occupied by the full music and news staff. Forget about testing mettle, we were testing deodorant, we were that close. We literally took over. We commandeered the news wire machines, the typewriters, the blank paper, pencils, pens, markers, staplers, paper clips, rubber bands, everything we could lay our hands on. Four anchors would prepare newscasts. Those hired

to be field reporters would go out in the field with tape recorders and actually cover stories and phone them in to the rehearsal hall. And those hired to be editors and writers would do practice runs editing and writing and working to get everything in place by a preset deadline.

For those who were not scheduled to do their practice dry runs that day spent the time watching, listening and learning. I learned how to nap without anyone knowing it.

Then it happened. On the third day of practice runs, in walks a young man almost completely swathed in bandages. His arm is in a sling and a bandage is around his head, smaller Band-Aids everywhere else. It was Aaron Shepard and he looked like an accident going somewhere to happen. Unfortunately for Aaron, the accident had already happened. On the road between New York and California, Aaron's car was creamed but we don't know how and he never called. But at least, he was finally here.

Since time was a critical factor, Aaron could not have the luxury of a week's worth of lectures, so he was thrown into the lion's den, right then and there. Aaron was being asked to do a newscast, complete with commercial breaks and everything and to do it cold, with no practice time. That's a tall and difficult order.

Well sadly, it didn't work out. He just was not even close to having the skills necessary for what was required. Aaron was given the chance to watch several other anchors prepare and do practice newscasts and then it was time for him to show what he could do.

Unfortunately, what he showed was that he could not do it. All that way from New York to Los Angeles, with a car accident in between, and it was all for naught. Within minutes of finishing what was supposed to have been a thirty-minute newscast, the KFWB Executive Editor called him into his office and that was the last anyone ever saw of him.

But, despite his failure, Aaron did leave behind a valuable legacy, the Aaron Shepard Award, a rather decrepit trophy from times gone by, handed out to those who exhibit unusual news judgment. I was the very first recipient. I earned that award for a bonehead move I made during the first week or so of actual on the air newscasts. I wanted to be certain I had enough stories to cover an entire thirty minutes, so I brought in "fill copy". These are stories that have come across the wires but are not scheduled. They are stories to be used only if, for one reason or another, you need more stories. Well, I brought in enough "fill copy" to fill up three newscasts and sure as shootin', I needed them. So I began using them. They included a murder, a robbery, an assault, an explosion, a little girl finds her lost puppy, another murder, more blood and guts. etc, etc.

Why was I given the Aaron Shepard Award? It was for using the story of the girl and her puppy. Not that there was anything wrong with the story but in the interest of something called "news flow", you don't want to sandwich a cutesy nice story in among the blood and guts stories. That's like something you might learn in

Newscasting 101. But I did it, so I made history as the First Aaron Shepard Award winner.

That grungy old trophy was later stolen by future CNN anchor Pat Emory who had been a three-time recipient and believed he was entitled to retire it.

Now we had a new crisis. How do we fill the unexpected hole in the staff due to the departure of Aaron Shepherd? A quick, frantic review of audition tapes and a phone call to the home of applicant Mike Botula solved the problem.

Mike was instructed to get his fanny down to the station as quickly as possible, which he did, along with the rest of his body. He was quickly ushered into the hallowed presence of New Director Herb Humphries and Assistant News director Bruce MacDonnell. Here is how the interview went.

Herb: We are looking for a good reporter. Are you a good reporter?

Mike: Yes.

Herb: You're hired.

You can see the extreme care that was taken to assemble so fabulous a staff. Probing, insightful, in depth interviews. It's the only way.

Well, the news staff of KFVB finally completed its two weeks of training and we were ready to go.

Here is the staff, as it stood the night before Los Angeles was introduced to All News.

Jim Lightfoot.General Manager  
Frank Georg.....Executive Editor  
Herb Humphries.... News Director  
Bruce MacDonell...Assistant News Director.  
Jim Anderson.....Sacramento Bureau Chief  
Andy Park.....Orange County Bureau Chief  
Ken Weinberg.....Editor.  
Robert Allen.....Editor  
Eston McMahon...Editor  
Fred Farrar.....Editor  
Cliff Blackburn....Editor  
Art Laing.....Reporter  
Mike Botula.....Reporter  
Warren Wilson....Reporter  
Hugh Williams....Reporter  
John Marshall.....Reporter  
Vince Williams....Reporter  
Chas. Arlington....Reporter  
Art Blaske.....Anchor  
Bill Angel.....Anchor.  
Harry Birrell.....Anchor  
Hal Goodwin.....Anchor  
George Dvorak....Anchor  
Lloyd Chester.....Anchor  
Don Herbert.....Anchor    Hey, that's me!!!!  
Patrick Emory.....Anchor  
Vern Williams.....Anchor  
John Swaney.....Anchor  
Bill Taylor.....Anchor  
Phil Reed.....Anchor  
David Rogers.....Anchor  
Beach Rogers.....Anchor  
Earl McRoberts....Anchor  
Chuck Walsh.....Anchor

Bill Schubert.....Anchor  
Cleve Hermann....Sports  
Jim Healy.....Sports  
Treesa Drury.....Consumer Affairs  
Carol Phillips.....Writer  
Bill Knittle.....Writer  
Mark Savan.....Writer

Several people stayed on past the demise of the music and news format.

Al Loman,  
Ben Chandler  
Joe Yoakum.

Brian Bastian, who had been doing news while the rest of us trained.

Finally, there was our cracked technical staff, without whom we would have been dead in the water or at least dog paddling like crazy.

Don Parker  
Doc Simmons  
Chas Heimlich  
Bill Ditty  
Patti Klein  
Andy Costello  
Lou Goldowitz,  
Don Taylor  
Joe Primm  
Bob Kyker  
George Munn  
And the unforgettable Kenny Wright.

These were the men who kept the station on the air and to do that, you had to be a super engineer. Each man owned a coveted FCC 1<sup>st</sup> class license. Without one, you were extremely limited as to what you could or could not do, behind the scenes. To make sure these men were completely up to date, there was a special test.

We thought you would like to see the test and maybe try to complete it yourself.

Ready?

1. What is your name?
  - a. Marconi
  - b. Lee DeForest
  - c. Arthur Godfrey
  - d. All of the above.
  
2. Where is the horizontal knob on your radio?
  - a. The left
  - b. The right
  - c. At my grandmother's house.
  
3. If you see a transmission tower lying on its side, you know
  - a. It fell over!
  - b. It has become directional in a new direction.
  - c. The news will be slanted.
  
4. True or False....the letter K before all call letters means KOSHER.
  - a. True
  - b. False
  - c. Some of the above.
  
5. Diodes, Cathodes and Feldbetzers are...
  - a. Things to eat.
  - b. Things to do.
  - c. Things.

6. A transponder is.....
  - a. A bridge across the Sponder River.
  - b. A device for neutering champion Great Danes
  - c. A technical thing.
  
7. When asked to check the two-way, you...
  - a. Look for a guy with nipple rings.
  - b. Cross the street carefully.
  - c. Walk backwards.
  
8. What is a legal Station ID?
  - a. This is KFWB, Los Angeles.
  - b. This is kfwb, los angeles
  - c. This is not KFWB, Los Angeles
  - d. This is KFWB AM FM TV UP IN ID
  
9. A diode usually has a band at one end. This is called...
  - a. Rubber band.
  - b. Brass Band
  - c. Band Aid.
  
10. Most radio station towers are....
  - a. Tall
  - b. Short
  - c. Made of Ivory
  - d. Have an apartment for Rapunsel at the top.
  
11. In the event the station receives a bomb threat
  - a. You soil your pants.
  - b. You run screaming from the building.
  - c. Buy marshmallows
  
12. The FCC no longer requires radio stations to...
  - a. hold garage sales.
  - b. Do their own laundry.
  - c. Broadcast filth
  - d. Some of the above.

13. The best way to check the quality of audio tape is to.....
  - a. hold it up to your ear.
  - b. Look at it.
  - c. Call your broker.
  
14. If you connect a VOP to a diode while the VOM is on a resistance range, you have.....
  - a. confused everyone.
  - b. Committed a pornographic act
  - c. Received a message from outer space.
  
15. To prepare for a career as a radio engineer, it is best to.....
  - a. buy a radio
  - b. listen to a radio
  - c. fake it.

If you have answered at least one or two of the questions, congratulations, you are now a Broadcast engineer. Oh, by the way, that was not the actual test but it was my version of it.

Well, it was now time to actually go on the air with the All-News format and begin the information revolution in Los Angeles.

## **WE SAY GOODBYE TO MUSIC.**

Robert Kennedy & Martin Luther King Jr. Assassinated.

Jacqueline Kennedy Marries Aristotle Onassis.

Richard Nixon is elected President.

Neil Armstrong lands on the moon.

Jimi Hendrix & Janis Joplin die from drugs.

Going on the air for the very first time with a brand new format is much like the maiden voyage of a cruise ship. Every crewmember knows his or her job but there are still kinks to be worked out to make the voyage go smoothly. And they have to do it with all the passengers watching.

So it was with KFWB. On March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1968, we went on the air with Los Angeles listening as we began to make history. Los Angeles was surely the city in which to start something new. It was late sixties and the country was a mixture of extreme agitation over the Vietnam War and extreme ecstasy caused by a plethora of drugs being taken by everyone who thought they were cool. Of course a lot

of that ecstasy faded away when those same “cool” people discovered they were having trouble handling their habit and many deaths were reported. The sixties was also a very revealing decade. Women, in a wonderful protest, stopped wearing bras and many switched to see thru blouses and mini skirts. Men began wearing chains and meaningless medallions around their necks, paisley shirts, plaid pants and shoes that made a five-foot tall shrimp into a six foot three giant. The décor was pure Peter Maxx with giant, pastel colored flowers adorning everything from refrigerators to cars. Folk music or faux folk was the music of choice. The most overused word was “groovy”. The Afro hairdo and the perm for men were just around the corner. It was in that atmosphere that All-News began.

As mentioned, the last disc jockey, at the end of the last music program on KFWB did not actually say “We’ll have more music, right after the news.” The actual changeover was much less dramatic or even less mildly witty. Here’s how it went.

The DeeJay was Gene Weed and on the evening of March 10th, finished up his program with the record “Crying Time” by Nancy Sinatra, followed by Auld Lang Syne. Then he signed off, introduced newsman Charles Morgan who did a five minute newscast and who also signed off. At that point, a special soon to be forgotten program called Flight 98 was played. It ended at midnight when the station went off the air until 530 in the morning.

At 5:30 am, you would expect a big to-do over the new format, brass bands, cheerleaders, celebrities, city officials, the whole

shmeat. Are you kidding? Station General manager Jim Lightfoot, who was to have made a special announcement, overslept and didn't show up until much later that day. So, who were we left with?

News Director Herb Humphries came on the air. He said... Good morning. I'm News Director Herb Humphries and this is our new format." Thus endeth the fanfare. Herb then introduced Anchor Hal Goodwin who proceeded to deliver the very first newscast under the new system.

That was it. No champagne bottle across our bow. No confetti. No streamers. No flag waving and certainly no cheerleaders. But there was coffee, lots of it.

As you can see, that start of the new format was nowhere near as interesting as having the DeeJay say "We'll have more music, right after the news." So despite cold hard facts, I am sticking with the fantasy DeeJay version.

Now we were cookin'. As in any new endeavor, there are slight problems. A major problem for me and several other anchors was not being totally familiar with the names of our new colleagues. Anchor George Dvorak, in the first week of the new format, finished his newscast and was introducing me to the audience when he blanked on my name. He said....."I'm George Dvorak and now, here with more news, Don Schubert." I had to remind him on the air....."George, try Don Herbert."

It may have been the same week or even the same day as I finished my newscast, I attempted to introduce the next anchor, Vern

Williams. It went thusly....."I'm Don Herbert and now, here with more news.....(long pause).....er.....(another pause).....er, I know your face....." With that Vern introduced himself and I began laughing so hard, I could hardly walk out of the studio.

In spite of all of this, one amazing fact shines through. Los Angeles took to us, big time. The first day, we had one commercial account on the air. One....count 'em. By the end of the month, however, we were making money hand over fist. Revenues were building rapidly and our ratings were zooming.

It was about this time, toward the end of March, that General Manager Jim Lightfoot departed KFWB for his new position as GM at WBZ in Boston. We then came to know Art Schreiber. Because he was from the ranks of news, rather than sales, there was a natural affinity between Art and the rest of us and even though we had a few rocky moments, such as a strike in 1971, we were really sorry to see Art leave when he did, a few years later.

Okay, enough history. Now down to the nitty gritty, getting rid of pencils.

All our lives we wrote with pens, pencils, or typewriters. Now, we still had the typewriters but we had something new.....marking pens, Pentels to be exact. These marking pens came in black, blue, green and sometimes, if you were lucky, red. The best part was that management kept buying Pentels and we kept on taking them home and at one point, early on, I discovered I had more Pentels than I could ever use if I wrote constantly for twenty years. In fact,

I bet if I checked my desk, tucked away, in some deep dark recess, I would find one of my original markers, in green, a color everyone just couldn't get enough of. There was another factor about marking pens that I just loved.

With a ballpoint pen, you clicked the top to hide the point, put the pen in your shirt pocket and went about you business. With a marker, there was a cap. If you forgot to put the cap back on the marker, and put that marker in your pocket, within minutes, someone would be sure to inform you that a black, blue, green or red splotch was spreading from your pocket and running down the front of your shirt. Yuck! Scratch one shirt. I scratched enough shirts to open a clothing store.

Our next high tech piece of equipment that many of us had never seen before was the snapout. Historically, until that time, when you typed and needed a copy, you put carbon paper between two pieces of paper and you got a carbon copy. Snapouts were little three, four and five sheet booklets with carbon paper already between them. You typed and you got as many copies as there were sheets. Of course, you needed a magnifying glass to read the last sheets because they were so faint. But, despite this, it was convenient because if the story was important and you were going to use it more than once or twice, you had ample copies. Now, you worked your butt off writing the story and you need one of those copies. You grip one end of the booklet in one hand and snapped the booklet with the other hand and voila, the sheets would separate. But we found or at least I did, that

it was always wise to keep Scotch tape nearby because, every time I snapped, the paper ripped right down the middle.

The final piece of high tech was the Xerox machine. Until 1968, the mimeograph was the workhorse but now, we had a wet paper copier. By wet, we mean a fluid was in the machine, acting as the ink or something and it made the words come out on the paper. But, your original had to be placed inside a clear plastic folder. The copies that came out were not dripping but they were warm and damp. It was also not possible to Xerox your face, your hand or your butt with this machine. Later, we had other, more versatile machines...but that's another story.

So, here we are with markers, snap outs and copiers and its "Hi ho, hi ho, off to work we go". We were a very talented bunch and eager to do the job. Sometimes, we were so eager, the results were amazing.

Because so much was going on that we had to be aware of, other things happened that we were NOT aware of. One example happened early on when news anchor Brian Bastien was introducing a pre-recorded report from our "Comparison Shopper" Treesa Drury. Brian introduced the report thusly, "Now, Treesa Drury answers the burning question about asparagus." Brian never specified what that question was. It's a good thing she was not reporting on radishes or jalapeno peppers.

Reporters in the field were not immune to such occurrences. Art Laing, who hailed from Canada, was reporting on an associate of

then President Lyndon Johnson who had commented on Johnson's decision not to run for re-election. Art reported the man called the act "courageous and shellfish." We assume he meant selfless because shellfish doesn't seem to fit.

One of our reporters, Cleve Hermann, puzzled our listeners with the name of the President of a local college. No one at the venerable institution of higher learning had ever heard of President Emma Ritus. They did have a retired President who was called President Emeritus. Well, Cleve was a sports reporter and when a sports figure retires, they call him "over the hill".

News Anchor Pat Emory, who went on to fame and fortune at CNN, produced a story of great international impact, if not surprise. He said, on the air, that Nigeria had broken off diplomatic relations with Tarzana. Tarzana is an area of Los Angeles' San Fernando Valley, named in honor of Lord Greystoke who swung thru the trees, shouting like Johnny Weissmuller. That's about the only connection Tarzana has with Africa where Tanzania is located.

Occasionally a mistake is made that fortunately does not make it on the air. Writer Mark Savan penned one such intriguing sentence leading into a story of Siamese Twins who were separated through surgery. The line that was intercepted read, "Two infant girls are clinging to life instead of each other, tonight." Phew!

In broadcast news, the bulletin is an important tool in getting people's attention when an important new event occurs. Bulletins must grab your attention and hold it while the Newscaster imparts

the information. This often means the use of bells, whistles, gongs, sirens or electronic sounds.

The very first bulletin delivered under the new All-News format, was delivered by golden throated David Rogers. The form that contained the bulletin information had three different opening lines and three closing lines. David would choose one opening line, one closing line and would insert the bulletin information in the middle.

Simple enough but this was the first time that the new bulletin form was being used and, well, here's how it came out.

SOUND: beep beep beep beep

DAVID: "Here is a KFWB News bulletin. This just in to the KFWB newsroom. This late breaking story....."

(David then reads the bulletin).

(Then he reads.....)

This has been a KFWB News Bulletin. That late breaking story just in to the KFWB Newsroom.

We'll keep a close watch on this story, just in to the KFWB newsroom.

By golly, David read everything in sight including the label on his shorts. But we loved him anyway.

In the early days of the All-News format, the anchors reading the news were also required to read live commercials on the air and there was a book of these commercials in the studio. Most of the commercials were 60-second affairs that involved reading one

minute's worth of copy and that's all. There were however, some commercials that required a bit more than just reading. They required timing and occasionally, a little acting ability. Acting? You have no idea how difficult it can sometimes be to read a question aloud and make it sound authentic. Add the fact that you must read these commercials cold, without any prior rehearsal and you leave yourself open to all sorts of wonderful experiences.

Anchor Art Blaske became the victim of one such commercial. It was a commercial advertising racing at Hollywood Park Racetrack. The commercial was written in what is called Doughnut form. This means...there is a musical jingle at the beginning, space in the middle for the spoken announcement and then, another jingle to close.

The written copy also contained the words of the jingle so the announcer, or in this case, the newscaster, knew exactly where to jump in. But Art, in the middle of a newscast, had no time to rehearse or even give the copy a cursory once over. He did know however that the Jingle came first, then he would speak and then the jingle would play again.

Here's what the audience heard.

MUSIC with chorus:      They're off and running at  
                                  Hollywood Park, at Hollywood Park, at Hollywood  
                                  Park. They're off and running at Hollywood Park,  
                                  at Hollywood Park, At Hollywood Park.

ART:                        They're off and running at Hollywood Park, at  
                                  Hollywood Park, at Hollywood Park. They're off

and running at Hollywood Park, at Hollywood Park, at Hollywood Park.

MUSIC with chorus: They're off and running at Hollywood Park, at Hollywood Park, at Hollywood Park. They're off and running at Hollywood Park, at Hollywood Park at Hollywood Park.

Instead of reading the commercial copy, Art read the words to the jingle. So, if anyone wondered where they were off and running... well, you get the idea.

So far, it appeared to many of us in the KFWB newsroom that we were beginning a grand period of fun and games. The atmosphere was relaxed and casual, our bosses treated us as real people and when we needed to be criticized for something, they didn't destroy our confidence in ourselves. They told us what we did wrong, ground us into dirt on the floor and then resurrected us, telling us we were doing a great jobs and lets all get back to work. You could not ask for a better atmosphere. Management and staff told jokes and after work management and staff sitting at the same table in the bar downstairs, consumed lots of beer. We began to get to know each other better and better. Two staffers got married during that first year but not to each other and we were invited to one wedding and not the other. Well, I was invited to one wedding and not the other. To this day, I have never met the groom. Well, he never met me either.

Being a reporter is not all fun and games. Sometimes it means putting your life on the line to get a story. Sometimes, you are

required to go in harm's way. One of KFWB finest reporters, Andy Park, had to do just that.

One day, while at home, Andy received a call from the station. Andy was being sent to Viet Nam as a six-week replacement for the company reporter who was already there. Andy was told to pack his bags. He was going Friday. Andy, who had been too young for World War 2 but who had served in the Navy during the Korean War, began to fantasize about turning into another Ernie Pyle or Edward R Murrow. Well maybe, but Ernie Pyle and Ed Murrow did not have to run around frantically finding combat boots, getting shots and an emergency passport. But that wasn't all.

When Andy arrived at Tan Son Nhut Air Force Base in Saigon, the reporter he was replacing and who was supposed to meet him, was nowhere in sight. The apartment that he was supposed to use was not available. What to do...what to do? A UPI reporter took pity on Andy and helped him check into a big hotel in Saigon, showed him where the toilet was and helped him get his credentials from the US military. Now...time to face the Viet Cong...or was it the Viet Minh?

Andy's first night out to see the war, he went with two celebrity reporters. Charles Kuralt and Morley Safer, both of CBS. Safer never spoke to Andy but Kuralt did ask him a question....."Whats a KFWB?" Hummpf!!!

After getting squared away, Andy began the reportorial routine. Briefings in Saigon by the military, fifteen minutes of satellite time

to file his reports and then whatever he could find to keep himself busy.

Not satisfied to sit around the hotel lobby, Andy took several trips to the carrier *Intrepid* on Yankee Station, he visited Marines in the rice paddies of I Corps and he went to the Cambodian border on board a B-52 on a bombing mission, and finally, after a diet of military and Vietnamese food, Andy had lost 20 pounds and was ready to come home. And when he did, he told so many war stories, we were ready to send him back.

\* \* \* \* \*

I should point out that it may seem as though I am jumping from one thing to another with no rhyme or reason. You are partially right because in the news business, you never know what is going to happen from one minute to the next. So, prepare yourself for a myriad of verbal u-turns, detours, and the like.

\* \* \* \* \*

One area where the unexpected is truly unexpected is what I fondly call *The Silver Tongue Devils*. These are the wonderful spoken errors made by the anchors and reporters. Lets start with one of my personal favorites.

This occurred during a newscast in which I was attempting to give a weather report.

“The weather for the Los Angeles area, look for mostly sunny skies today and tomorrow with some low clouds and fog tonight and

tomorrow morning. Temperatures will be cooler and we should have a frog free day tomorrow.” Er, make that smog free.

At about that time, anchor Brian Bastien was finishing a newscast in which he told our audience I would have more sports in half an hour. Actually, I had not even done the sports. I was seated next to him, waiting to do the next newscast. So, he introduced me and off I went reading my newscast. Brian then realized his mistake about the sports, laughed, pushed his chair right up against mine. I continued doing the newscast but, at the same time, gently pushed him away. One wheel caught and the chair with Brian in it, went flying. He just lay there, his feet sticking up in the air and he did not move. I tried to continue talking but couldn't. I started laughing and Brian just lay there. So, I broke with tradition, stopped the newscast and with my microphone on, politely said....”Well, get up!” He did and I continued laughing. It took at least two or three minutes before my composure returned. No one said a word about it.

One of our Anchors was Dick Cutting, one of the nicest people you could ever hope to meet. Dick was an actor before becoming a news anchor. One of his big film roles was as the Army Chaplain in the Charlton Heston film “The Private War of Major Benson”. But my favorite was “The Attack Of The Crab Monsters”, where Dick was the first to be eaten by the giant crustaceans.

Dick wrote and delivered one of the most clever but totally meaningless headlines ever to be broadcast on KFWB. In a story that obviously had something to do with the French Government,

Dick said, "In Paris, President Georges Pompidou and Georges Pompidon't." To this day I have no idea what that was supposed to convey to our listeners, but it sure sounded nice.

Anchor Pat Emory produced a medical report that had everyone scratching his or her...well...lets just say, everyone was scratching. He reported on a tornado rash that was sweeping the Middle West. We quickly scratched that story.

News Anchor Cleve Hermann was also a sports anchor and as such received the coveted Aaron Shepard Award for knocking himself out writing a complete newscast and when the time came, going into the studio without it.

It was a good thing we had Cleve doing sports because when anchor Phil Reed reported sports.... well...have any of you ever heard of the Chicago Angels?

The idea of news is to get the information to our audience as fast as possible and as accurately as possible. Anchor Beach Rogers pointed up that need with a story he aired in 1968, about a man arrested for threatening the life of President Kennedy. We are sure Beach must have heard something about what happened in Dallas in 1963.

Reporter John Marshall was spotlighted by news director Herb Humphries for what may have been the most confusing story every broadcast. Here it is... in its entirety.

"A two million, seven hundred thousand, six hundred fifty dollar and 12 cents office building permit for a one million six hundred

and....er..... one million, six hundred thousand four hundred fifty two thousand....er.....one million six hundred thousand four hundred fifty two thousand and 47 cent warehouse, alongside a ten story building in the sixty four hundred block of Sunset Boulevard.” Don’t ask. Just don’t ask. I have no clue what the story was about nor do I care. So there!

Somehow we all survived 1968 with a sold out commercial schedule and soaring ratings.

## WHAT THE HELL ARE WE DOING?

Pentagon Papers are released.

Watergate break-in occurs

Woodstock

18 year olds get the vote.

Before we take a further look at KFWB, lets stop and examine what may have been going thru the minds of everyone at the time.

That KFWB's All-News format debut was a rousing success was obvious. We came flying off the launch pad and immediately began building audience, ratings and income.

The city liked what it heard and kept coming back for more. It was no fluke.

A great deal of thought went into the development of the product but an equal amount of attention was paid to those assigned to bring that format to life.

We hear a lot about “teamwork” and managers of many companies are able to talk a good game but when it comes to actually creating that team, they fall flat on their faces.

Not at KFWB.

When the new staff gathered at the Hollywood Knickerbocker Hotel, in tinsel town, one theme was driven home repeatedly. It was drilled into us that there are no stars and no prima donnas. Everybody hired for the new format was on a par with everyone else. Everyone was capable of doing anyone else’s job and as it turned out, we often did. In addition, even though morning drive time is considered the most important time of the day, if you were not on the air during those hours, it did not mean that you were not as good as the guys who were.

For a while, if I could not make it to work one day for one reason or another or if I had to be somewhere the following week, we were allowed to make our own arrangements for swapping shifts. This allowed the anchors to cooperate with each other and at the same time, without our realizing it, solidify the bonds that were developing.

To avoid problems and to make sure that everyone was aware of the problems faced by others, we would also swap jobs. For instance, one day, I did not go on the air but instead, worked a full shift as an editor. The idea was for me to see the problems editors faced so that hopefully, I would think twice before bitching, moaning or acting like a prima donna later on. Editors, not able to go on the air because

of union constraints, would work as news anchors, writing and preparing the newscasts to see what was involved and what sort of problems we faced so they would not jump all over us, if something went wrong. Writers and dispatchers switched jobs for a day for the same reason. The system worked. It worked because we stayed loose and as far as I can tell, no other swapping went on.

The newsroom was a place where we could laugh and joke around and even get involved in silliness. It was an almost everyday thing to be hard at work, hunched over a typewriter when you are suddenly hit by dozens of paper wads, fired at you from every corner of the newsroom. If you did not suddenly drop what you were doing and fire back, you were considered something akin to a dud.

There was another strange phenomenon in the newsroom. You would suddenly become aware that it was deathly quiet and when you looked up, you would see News Director Herb Humphries at one end of the room and Assistant News Director Bruce MacDonell at the other, facing off like a couple of gunman on Main Street in Dodge City. Their weapons? Rubber bands and paper clips. They would step off a few paces, fire, and then quietly go back into their offices. It was truly bizarre but it was the kind of thing that kept us a happy crew.

But not always.

Being on the air in Los Angeles was big time and it required membership in AFTRA, The American Federation of Television and Radio Artists or as it is more familiarly known, The Union.

Now, we were working under the provisions of a contract agreed upon during the old music and news era. This contract, while fine for disc jockeys, did not address the problems and needs of a news operation. So, we asked that negotiations be reopened to make adjustments but management in Hollywood and at corporate headquarters in New York, had another idea. Simply stated, their idea was...."forget it". So, we bitched and moaned and came up with a new tack.....Federal Labor Laws said we had to have a meal period. We didn't have one and we knew management would not want us to tell anyone, would they? We figured, there was no way on God's Green Earth that they could arrange a meal period for us and still have a smooth running news operation. This would mean they would be forced to reopen the contract.

Well, guess again. They found a way to give us a meal period. I should mention that I was working the overnight shift at that time so my meal period came at 2 in the morning.

Why would anyone want a full meal at 2AM? So, my meal period was spent watching TV. Was it Providence or just coincidence but a news event took place, shortly after the meal periods went into effect that resulted in my engaging in a strange hobby. Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin landed on the moon! What an amazing event! That morning as we were all gathered about the TV set, watching Armstrong take that "one small step for man and one giant leap for mankind" someone in the newsroom brought out a cardboard cutout

of the lunar lander, something I believe he got from the back of a cereal package. He put it together and hung it from the ceiling.

I gazed at that model for a few minutes and thought to myself, "I can do that." I had found something to occupy my time in the middle of the night when I did not want to eat. So, hijacking a packet of yellow manila folders, I began to cut, snip and tape and within 40 minutes or so, I had fashioned my own lunar lander. It looked pretty good. The following night, still in the space mode, I did a rocket ship. It was a mini version of the starship Enterprise from Star Trek.

As the days and weeks went by, I had hand drawn and hand cut dozens of paper models of every form of transportation available, from a simple shoe to a San Francisco cable car. There were cars, trucks, airplanes and even a small aircraft carrier. I even included a garbage truck. It got to the point that every morning, people would enter the newsroom and look to see what model I had hung from the ceiling that night. My final model was an actual flying model of a World War One fighter plane. It was powered by two rubber bands and could really fly. It was my finest hour. At least I thought it was.

After completing the construction of almost 40 paper models, hanging from the ceiling, including the flying model, I came to work the next day and was bowled over by what I saw hanging from the newsroom ceiling.

Editor Fred Farrer, obviously jealous of my model making talents, had spearheaded the construction of one model with an eight foot wing span, a fifteen foot fuselage and a three-foot high tail,

made from yellow cardboard, wire clothing hangers and possibly two or three complete rolls of Scotch tape. It was suspended from the ceiling by string and within ten minutes of my seeing it for the first time, it began to droop and sag and became a pile of junk in an hour.

My models hung from the ceiling for almost three months after my final model was added. The last I heard, station engineer Lou Goldowitz requisitioned those models and has them stored in some deep dark recess of his attic.

Now, let me explain another bit of silliness, also involving editor Fred Farrer,

When an anchor or writer sat down and began writing a newscast, the "copy" he would use would be in a folder, with the name of the story on the tab. "Copy" is a name given to the news wire stories that pour nonstop into the newsroom via teletype or other device. Such copy contains information on almost everything going on in the world. And from the name on the tab of the folder, we knew immediately what stories we would be writing. For instance, in a political year, if we saw DEMS or GOPS in the file tab, we knew the story inside the folder dealt with one or the other of the major political parties. "LA Fatal Fire" was self-explanatory. If the word "kicker" was on the tab, it meant a funny story.

Editor Farrer, of the airplane model episode, had a habit of putting names on the folders that gave no clue as to what the story was about.

An example might be..."Really Bad Guy." Or conversely, "Really Good Guy". How about "Cowboy Wacko!"

One morning, I was in a rather cranky mood and jumped up in the middle of the newsroom and complained about the stupid names on the copy folders. I blathered for about five or ten minutes before sitting down and getting back to work. I knew I must have resembled the wacko described by the label. Well, I clammed up and did not talk to anyone for the rest of my shift. I was more than a bit embarrassed.

The following day, I arrived at work, parked my car and entered the building. I was hardly inside the door when I noticed a sheet of paper on the floor. I picked it up and I immediately knew what was in store for me that day. Editor Farrer, to drive me crazy, had assigned numbers to the copy folders instead of names or words. "DEMS" and "GOPS" had become 1 and 2. "Cowboy Wacko" was 17, etc etc. Someone had accidentally dropped the list that was designed to explain the numbers to everyone but me. So I put the list in my pocket and walked into the newsroom as usual. I never said a word about the numbers and worked the whole shift never giving a hint that I knew what Fred was trying to do. And Fred was crushed for the rest of the day that his elaborate plan, a really good one, I might add, went down to a crushing defeat. I never told him how I came to find out.

Many bizarre events in a radio station occur without the audience ever hearing about them but this one truly takes the trophy as a prize

winner. I hope you will agree with me that it was one of the strangest things ever to happen to a pack of serious, professional newsmen.

As the KFWB staff continued its bonding into a cohesive force for good in the world, we also began to know our jobs so well, we could do them in our sleep. And some of us did. This resulted in the formation of the Saturday Morning Bugs Bunny-Road Runner Club. Every Saturday morning, the local CBS television station, KNXT, at eight o'clock, would air the Bugs Bunny-Road Runner Cartoon show. As soon as we heard the theme music, it was the cue for us to grab our mugs of steaming hot coffee and one of the humungous doughnuts, muffins or Danish that one of us had brought in. We then commandeered chairs and gathered around the TV set to cheer on the roadrunner as he outwitted Wiley Coyote time after time. The Bugs Bunny cartoons were great but the Road Runner was sublime.

This became a weekly ritual.

One week though, something occurred that got us Roadrunner fans in an uproar. As usual, we sat down in front of the newsroom TV set, began slurping our coffee and stuffing our faces with doughnuts, muffins, etc.

We suddenly noticed that something was terribly wrong. The program began with a Barney Bear cartoon. Then Chilly Willy, then Casper, the Friendly Ghost and another Barney. But where was Bugs? More important, where was Roadie and Coyote?

The entire one-hour show had all sorts of cartoons but not one of the ones we were waiting for. Well, this would never do! They

couldn't do that to us! We were professional journalists and when we want a certain cartoon, well they better give it to us. It was time to take drastic action. The Vietnam War was underway, there was crime in the streets, and Watergate was still a couple of years away from becoming a household word.

You can see we had far too much time on our hands. So, we got out the official KFWB letterhead stationary, and news-anchor Chuck Walsh, who called himself the President of the KFWB Bugs Bunny/Roadrunner club, fired off an angry letter to CBS decrying the disgraceful lack of two important cartoon characters on the show.

I signed the letter "Donnie Herbert, Vice President". This would show them we didn't just fall off the turnip truck. In fact, it would show them none of us had ever even been near a turnip truck and I personally had never even seen one.

A week goes by and finally its 8 AM on the morning of the following Saturday. We gathered about the television set to see if our letter had done any good.

The program began with a Bugs Bunny cartoon. Then a Road Runner Cartoon. Then another Road Runner...and another and we were beside ourselves with joy, jumping up and down and cheering with each new cartoon. Then the Piece de Résistance, the final cartoon, another Bugs Bunny cartoon but this was a very special one. Warner Brothers Studios, at one time, owned KFWB and at the same time, owned Looney Tunes. So there often was a tie-in

between the two. The cartoon we saw at the end of the hour on that glorious morning was one of Bugs Bunny, being chased by Elmer Fudd and his ever present hunting rifle, thru the hallways of KFWB. By golly, that last cartoon was a salute to us....the KFWB Bugs Bunny Roadrunner Club. In fact, that entire hour was put together just for us, because of the silliest letter ever written by grown men. But that was not all. About a month later, a truck from CBS pulled up outside the station doors and unloaded a huge, framed poster size picture of Bugs Bunny, standing alongside a KFWB microphone as though he were one of the announcers. It was a marvelous time.

Another extremely unusual event took place over a period of time and to this day, brings a sexy little smirk to the faces of those who remember. When we would sit down to prepare a newscast, we were given a "rundown" sheet that showed us what stories were to be on the newscast and the order in which they were to be placed in the newscast.

Assistant news director Bruce MacDonell had an idea to simplify the process. He had a huge piece of sheet metal mounted on the newsroom wall. It was divided into sections resembling the rundown sheets we would normally get. He then had special magnetic strips made on which the names of individual stories would be written and then slapped on the metal sheet. We would take a blank rundown sheet and copy what was on the wall. That was fine, except when Carol Sobel was serving as editor. The problem was that Carol is short. In fact, Carol was very short and she could not reach the upper

parts of the metal wall, so a stool was provided for her. This made it easier for Carol but she still had to stretch a little. And every time she reached for the top levels of the board, people at the nearby desks suddenly became total maladroits, dropping pencils, pens, erasers, paper and all manner of things. Had we all become totally clumsy? No. It was simply the age of the mini skirt and Carol wore them and just as people wonder about Scotsmen and their kilts, the newsroom wondered about Carol and her minis.

It was not long after the metal board went up than it came down and suddenly nobody was looking for their pens on the floor anymore.

One of the most important abilities a newsman must possess, is the ability to interview a newsmaker at the drop of a hat and on almost any subject. For the anchors, the guys in the studios doing the actual newscasts, this is doubly important because when they are on the air and are informed that in about a minute, they will be interviewing someone important, they must be ready with questions immediately.

In mid-1969, KFWB welcomed two new anchors, Vince Campagna and John McCart.

It was during a McCart newscast that the editor, over the intercom, informed him that Alaska Senator Ted Stevens would be on the line and John would interview him live. To help the anchors, the editor, as a rule, would send in one question, the first one to use in the interview. The anchor would then listen carefully to the answer and

formulate his own follow-up question and ask that plus any others he might come up with.

Senator Stevens was put through to the studio and McCart introduced him to the listening audience and asked the question given him by the editor. Now came the problem. The second question?

John had no second question. Thinking quickly, John asked the one question we hoped he would not ask.

“So Senator, what else is new?”

Needless to say, Senator Stevens was taken aback. He stumbled to give some sort of answer and then it was over. We began giving the anchors two questions after that.

Earlier, I mentioned John McCart’s arrival at KFWB along with another man who stayed on for 29 years before retiring because of his health. Vince Campagna was the consummate news anchor, intelligent, a great voice, and had a wealth of information in his head. Pretty impressive! But his arrival at the studios left a little something to be desired.

Vince was being introduced to all of his new co-workers, so it stood to reason that he and writer Mark Savan would meet. Mark, who had just returned from lunch at an Italian restaurant just off Hollywood Boulevard, shook Vinnie’s hand, looked him straight in the eye and said, “Campagna? Oh yeah. I just had you for lunch.” We didn’t know what that meant then and we still don’t and I don’t plan to find out.

1969 was proving to be a year of awards. We won several for our coverage of the assassinations of Senator Robert F Kennedy and Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. the year before. A couple of local awards, (Golden Mikes) were also sent our way. And the newsroom was painted a shade of blue that was kind of hard to describe. It wasn't sky blue and it wasn't Navy blue and it wasn't baby blue. It was blue. Just blue. Why was it blue? We haven't a clue. But it was blue. We didn't win any awards for that.

KFWB reporter Andy Park to this day has nothing but admiration for then General Manager Art Schreiber. Here is one reason why. The station had just opened its Orange County Bureau, staffed by Andy. One day, Art Schreiber came down to look over the facility and to meet Orange County officials. Later, Andy, Art and the county officials attended a luncheon that Andy had set up. Andy waited for his boss to pick up the check. He didn't. Andy had to pay.

Afterwards, Schreiber explained. He said, "My expense account has to go to New York to be approved. I on the other hand approve YOUR expense account. So, whenever we go out together, you pay!"

As I see it, the most spectacular story of the year 1969 and probably the century was the landing on the moon by Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin. KFWB's Beach Rogers anchored our coverage along with Group W correspondent Jim Slade and it was superb work by both men. But even when history is being made and we are there to watch, little examples of Silver Tongue Deviltry

would occur. When the flight to the moon was completed and the Apollo 11 crew had returned home, I kind of made history of a sort by single handedly changing the schedule of the spacemen.

Here's what I said..."A roaring Texas welcome greeted the Apollo 11 astronauts this morning, upon their return to Houston following their moon landing mission. Some 6000 people, including the space team's families were on hand at Ellington Air Force Base to cheer the moon voyagers. Most of the onlookers failed to get a glimpse of Neil Armstrong, Edwin Aldrin and Michael Collins who were encased in a silvery quarantine trailer where they will stay for the next 16 years....er.....rather 16 days." Good thing I corrected myself. They might still be there today.

But even Beach Rogers, who anchored the space coverage, had occasional problems of his own. Take for example this gem... KFWB newstime 55 degrees and the temperature is cloudy."

I had my own trouble with the weather. First, I had no idea where I was and my ability to read simple numbers had self-destructed. "The temperature in Long Beach is fifty two degrees, in Pasadena its fifty seven and the outlook for San Francisco continued fair tomorrow with variable cloudiness. Today's high in the low 72s." San Francisco??????

And what the heck number is the low 72s?

I was one of those anchor types who would laugh at the slightest thing, especially if they had a double meaning. One story dealt with a man in England who purchased an eight ton theatre organ complete with three keyboards and flashing lights. He needed a huge crane to deliver it. But the line that sent me into gales of uncontrolled laughter?

“The man had to knock down a wall of his home to get his organ inside.”

Sometimes the juxtaposition of sounds can result in silliness and laughter. Anchors were required to do commercials live on the air and this one for Farmer John Pork gave me some trouble. Here is the line that did me in. “Only one Packer, Farmer John provides you with strictly fresh eastern cornped forkers.”

Okay, one more. Time is a critical factor on the radio and sometime, you don't even have time to finish a word. Take this timecheck as I finished a news segment. “KFWB newstime, nine twen.”

Well despite the fluffs and other little mistakes, the ratings showed that KFWB had become the number one station in Los Angeles in the mornings and number two for the entire day. Not bad at all.

## **IF IT AIN'T BROKE, FIX IT ANYWAY.**

Vice-Pres. Spiro Agnew resigns.

Roe v. Wade decision by the U.S. Supreme Court

The Vietnam War ends for us.

The fourth year of the All-News format at KFWB was rather eventful. You must realize that blockbuster news events did not happen every day, or every week for that matter and this is good. It gives the news staff some quiet time to hone its skills, refine its methods and sometimes, figure out how to perform more smoothly and effectively.

There is a wise old saying in the business world... "if it ain't broke, don't fix it". In radio and television however, there is an apparent need among management types to put their brand on everything they touch. This means a series of little changes interspersed among a few big ones, designed to make the product better. Usually, the changes are miniscule for a variety of reasons, chief among them fear of really screwing up by changing too much and not having a

clue as to whether major changes were needed in the first place. This often results in big changes of another sort.

In late 1970, there was a major change in command and KFWB welcomed the arrival of a new executive editor....Reg Laite.

We have all heard of the highly touted Peter Principle, which says a man rises to the level of his incompetence. Now, incompetence is not the appropriate word. Maybe we should amend the Peter Principle to state that a man rises to the level of his misunderstanding. In other words, things are fairly clear until they become complicated and beyond comprehension.

Next, we have another time honored bit of advice. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." The KFWB All-News format was NOT broke, not by a long shot. We were the best game in town. KNX, the CBS outlet a few blocks away was doing its version of the All-News format but they lagged behind us by a mile. As earlier mentioned, there is a need among executives to put their stamp on everything they touch. It is very difficult to admit that all is fine and should be left alone. They must make changes. And so, they do. It shows their bosses they are working their little buns off for the good of the company.

It was soon after Reg Laite's arrival at KFWB that we detected the winds of change. Reg was preparing to engrave his name on the product. It was not going to come in the way we wrote our stories. It was going to come in the way we delivered our stories. In other words, Reg was becoming our vocal coach. One by one, he brought

us into his office to inform us that “the tongue is the paintbrush of the mind.” That’s exactly how he put it.

“The Tongue Is The Paintbrush Of The Mind.” In other words, he wanted us to paint word pictures of our stories to make them easier to see in our mind’s eye.

I thought I understood what he was saying and I attempted to comply. The problem was a feeling something was lacking in the delivery when I attempted using the Reg Laite system of newscasting. I felt I should start each story by saying, “Good morning boys and girls. Once upon a time, etc etc etc.” It sounded like Romper Room.

Several other anchors felt the same way, especially after Reg discovered a new training tool, the newspaper. One by one, he began calling us into his office to read the New York Times out loud. This was a mistake because a newspaper is written in a totally different style than broadcast material. Newspapers use compound sentences and they deal quite differently with attribution. Here’s an example.

RADIO: President Clinton, speaking to reporters at the White House said he was leaving for Europe the next day. (No actual quote)

Or

President Clinton, in a meeting with reporters, said, “I’ll be leaving for Europe tomorrow.”  
(Attribution before the quote.)

NEWSPAPER: “I’ll be leaving for Europe tomorrow.” the

President said as he met with reporters at the White House. (Attribution after the quote.)

The radio version is written for the ear and mirrors the way we speak.

The newspaper version is pure prose for the eye.

Reg Laite was going to teach us to speak effectively, using patterns of grammar designed for the eye and not the ear.

It was a less than successful endeavor. First, we all felt ridiculous being summoned to his office and told he was going to teach us to read aloud. Almost everyone of us had years of successful announcing and newscasting experience while Laite had none. But, there we were, sitting with the first section of the New York Times in our laps, reading to him. Talk about feeling stupid! Some of the anchors emerged from the room, fuming.

Others were just annoyed. I came out laughing and vowing to retaliate. I got my chance about a month or so later.

I had just emerged from the studio after doing a newscast that I thought had been pretty good. Reg caught me in the hallway and pulled me aside. Then, speaking to me in a sympathetic tone, low enough that no one else could hear, he asked me if I was okay.

I was puzzled and I said, "Yes, I'm fine. Why?" He put his hand on my shoulder as though he were my father and continued, "Your newscast lacked warmth. I felt something was bothering you and I want to help." Oh brother!

I looked him straight in the eye and said, "Listen to the next one. It will be better. I promise!"

He gave me his best fatherly smile that said 'I know you can do it! I am behind you a thousand percent'. I kept a straight face.

An hour went by and I prepared my next newscast and then went into the studio and delivered it exactly as I delivered the previous newscast, with authority and accuracy. As I left the studio, Reg again caught me in the hallway.

"That was much better. Much, much better! You sounded so warm." He beamed at me.

I smiled at him.

"What did you do to get that warmth in your voice?" he asked.

Here it comes, folks!

I stared at him for a moment and then, deadpan, declared, "I set fire to my pants!"

Reg stared back at me and then walked away.

Sessions with the New York Times came to an end a short time later.

1970 was spectacular for me personally. On April 11<sup>th</sup>, I became a father for the first time, with the birth of my son Brian. Even that happy event had its bizarre moments.

I knew the blessed event might happen that day and I told my wife Linda to call me at the station as soon as it was time. Sure enough, late that morning, she called to say contractions had begun and were getting closer. We put our plan into motion. Linda would

call our neighbor and equally pregnant friend Terry who would get her to Cedars Sinai Medical Center.. I, on the other hand, would go directly to the hospital from the station and meet her there, but before I even knew that Linda had called, I had to play “Twenty Questions” with dispatcher Clint Houston, who was fully aware of the call I was anxiously awaiting.

“Hey Don, there’s a call for you.”

“Yeah? Who is it? My wife?”

“Guess.”

“Guess?”

“Yeah, guess.”

I was about to pummel him when he said it was my wife, it was time and get my ass in gear. I shouted to the newsroom that I was about to become a father and bolted from the room.

From the station, it was a short, wild drive at breakneck speed to the hospital and I got there with nary a policeman seeing me. I rushed to the maternity entrance and went inside. Linda was not there yet but I expected that because the station was closer to the hospital than our apartment. So, I began pacing. I paced. I paced some more. The obstetrician arrived and asked me where my wife was. I answered, “Beats me!” He walked off muttering to himself.

Then I got a bright idea. I would begin the paper work at the admitting window while I waited. It surely would save time. I completed the paperwork just as Linda, her friend Terry and Terry’s husband Robbie came rushing in.

What took them so long? Are you ready? It took Linda a while to get moving because she was not about to give birth without her eyelashes on. Then in the car, they almost ran out of gas and had to stop but the pump jockey was taking too long a time filling the tank and Linda's water broke and panic set in and that's why they were late.

So, without further ado, they went into the delivery room and I went to the father's waiting room because I had no Lamaze certificate and a few hours later, Brian arrived.

That night as I was driving home from the hospital, I turned on the station and heard anchors Mike Botula and Pat Emery discussing how I had practiced diapering by enlisting New Director Herb Humphries as the practice dummy.

Okay, now back to the business of news.

Covering news in Southern California often requires the reporter to leave the confines of our palatial studios and go into the field. This may possibly be why reporters are called "field reporters". Now, I don't mean "field" like on a farm or anything. "Field" simply means anywhere away from the station itself. Sometimes, you can go to where the story is and get yourself in very serious trouble. This happened to reporter Brian Bastien.

The brush fire season in 1970 was a particularly bad one. It was very dry all over Southern California and all you had to do was just say the word "fire" and flames would shoot up somewhere. It was in this kind of situation that brushfires of varying sizes were

burning from Ventura County, north of L.A. all the way south to San Diego and the Mexican border. The usually sunny skies were gray with the smoke and the ash of these blazes and down on the ground, hidden away deep inside the blanket of smoke, KFWB reporter Brian Bastien found himself trapped. The winds had shifted and the flames reversed their course and were heading directly toward the spot where Brian was cornered by two approaching walls of fire.

Editor Rich Buhler, who had just received his private pilots license, was up in the air that day, surveying the fire. He gets a two-way radio report that News Director Herb Humphries was racing to the airport with the idea of flying directly to where Brian was trapped.

Now, hold on just a second. Rescue Brian? Of course we would and you better believe we all wanted to but.....how do you land a small plane in a brush fire and be able to take off again. And where do you do that with two of the three men involved being quite big. But this was no laughing matter. Here they were, two large men, stuffed inside a small private plane on a very hot day that would get hotter the closer they moved toward the fire.

Rich gets clearance for a straight out departure and the moment the wheels leave the ground, Herb announced, "You know I don't like to fly don't you?" Rich knew that very well. He had heard stories of how, when required to fly, somewhere, Herb would fortify himself with those cute tiny little airline bottles of booze. But Herb didn't have any with him. He was flying unarmed.

Part of the route carried the plane past the Van Nuys Airport a small but very busy local airport that catered to small single engine propeller planes and corporate jets. To avoid incoming and outgoing traffic at that facility, Rich had to alter his course somewhat.

When the time came, Rich made a very, very slight course correction to the left.

“Don’t do that.” Herb barked.

“Don’t do what?”

Herb stared at Rich.

“Don’t tip the plane like that!”

“Herb, that was not a tip. It was a turn.”

Then Rich put Herb’s mind further at ease.

“Herb, that was not a tip. That was a turn and a pretty shallow one at that.” Rich went on to Herb’s delight, “When I make a real turn its going to be a lot steeper and when we get to the fire, the maneuvers will be steeper still.”

Herb was overjoyed, not at the prospect of make steeper turns but at the news they received as they arrived over the fire. Either wind had shifted or a water drop was particularly effective but Brian Bastien, who, for a while was in danger of becoming a crispy critter, was now thankfully in the clear. This meant that Rich no longer had any excuse for giving Herb Humphries the airplane ride of his life.

All that was left was a leisurely flight back to the San Fernando Valley. During that flight, Rich began extolling the virtues of light planes, how terrific they were and how they worked. At one point,

Rich even convinced Herb to take the controls and gently guide the plane through the wide blue yonder. Last we heard, Herb grasped the yoke with enough tension to turn a piece of coal into a diamond. They did make it safely back to earth where Herb scrunched a fifty mission crush into his fedora and strutted back to his car, singing the Air Force Hymn. Talk about having the Right Stuff!

Stuff? Did I say “stuff?” One hazy, lazy Saturday morning, I blew myself right out of my chair and hopefully entertained my listeners with a story about stuff. Actually it was a story about stuffing. Not the savory stuff you serve with turkey at Thanksgiving but about a British man who just loved to amaze his friends by stuffing ferrets down his pants. This extremely brave adventurer, stuffed two of the nasty little weasels with razor sharp teeth, down his pants for two full minutes while women gasped and fainted, and men shuttered and TV cameras recorded the entire ugly scene for posterity. In the middle of it all, I started to laugh and could not finish the story and fell out of my chair. By the time you finish reading this book, you will discover I fell out of my chair a lot.

There are some times in broadcasting when something is said that is totally unintelligible. It's when the Silver Tongue Devils attack.

Here is an example, as demonstrated by.....me. It was in the middle of a newscast.

“An 18 year old Oklahoma girl has broken the all mage pale boy ranks....er...the all mage.... er....let me start that one again.” In case

you cant figure it out, I was trying to say “all male page boy ranks.”  
Thirty years later and I can finally say it!

Is there now any reason to doubt that I was paying as close attention to what fellow anchor Phil Reed said to me as he completed his newscast.

PHIL:       KFWB News time 9 o'clock. I'm Phil Reed and  
              next with the news is Don Herbert.”

DON:        Thank you Don....er.....Phil....or whoever you  
              are.....!”

Then there was this one, delivered by the lovely Earl McRoberts.  
‘This is KFWB, All News, All The Times with Joe Blaske at the  
editor’s desk.....Joe Blaske?     Who the heck is he? Now, here’s  
more new with Art Blaske.’

Bill Jenkins:     This is KFWB, All News All The Time,  
                      serving Southern California. KFWB News time,  
                      61 degrees.

One of the most unusual examples of silver tongue devilry and  
the one that probably more people remember than any other, came to  
us by news anchor Ed Pyle. It was a commercial for Time Magazine,  
dealing with street urchins who would run amok in Northern Ireland,  
robbing people and avoiding arrest. Here is Ed Pyle’s rendition.

“Bands of Chickens roam the streets at night, defying the  
authority of police, priests and parents...” Two sentences later, Ed  
corrected himself saying those bands of chickens were actually

bands of children but the original impression of angry poultry gangs dominating the streets of Londonderry was amazing.

It was one minute past six o'clock on the morning of February 9, 1971 and Los Angeles began to rock and roll. An earthquake, measuring 6.5 on the Richter scale began to shake up the area. It caused more than half a billion dollars in property damage, including the destruction of two hospitals and it took the lives of 58 people, and it frazzled the nerves of everybody in town.

In the studios at KFWB, Doug Vernon was on the air when the temblor hit and he was bounced on to the floor. His comment? "What the heck was that?" Then a moment later, this understatement. "I think we have just had an earthquake." Yes we did and it was a whopper. But we could not stand around and marvel at how strong it was. We had to get out and cover that story.

At my house, halfway across town, I was surprised at how my son was able to sleep thru the whole thing including a couple of quick aftershocks, even though his crib was flung all around his room. Then, checking to see that my wife and son were okay, I jumped into my clothes and raced to the station.

Reg Laite, the new executive editor, was in charge and when I arrived, was in the process of exiting the newsroom. In the studio, Doug Vernon and Vern Williams were doing their best to report the sketchy information they had while elsewhere, with little direction, staffers, including secretaries, sales people and the like, were calling everywhere trying to get more information. To complicate things

further, Herb Humphries, the man we had grown to depend upon, had left KFWB and was now news director at KABC. The impression we got at the time was akin to being up the river in that boat without the proverbial paddles.

Fellow anchor Chet Douglas arrived at about the same time as I and we noticed that Doug and Vern were getting tired, so we went into the studio and took over. Little did Chet and I know that it was the start of almost ten hours straight on the air with just one break in the early afternoon.

The editor in the newsroom was doing his best in sending reporters to various points in the city but even here we had problems. We had never been in the midst of an earthquake and were not fully aware of what damage such an event could cause. Then someone, bless his heart, had the bright idea.....call Herb. In any other time, this was a major no-no but this was not an average day. The city was depending on us to get them accurate information as soon as possible and if our leader was not in his office, then we would find another leader.

Now, KABC is a talk station and at that time, had a one man news reporting staff. So, news director Herb Humphries, when the call came from us, was surprisingly not too busy and he came to the rescue. Send someone here! Send someone there! Did you do this? Did you do that? Within minutes our efforts began to fall into place, simply because the man who got us going in the very beginning, was once again at the helm and only he and we knew it. This should give

you a good idea of the calibre of the people involved with KFWB. They were a close knit family even after leaving the station and if their help was needed, it was given, without question. To this day, with former staff members scattered about the country, a call for help never goes unanswered or unfulfilled.

The 1971 earthquake was a monster test for all of us and somehow, we managed to pass.

When we talk about people, many KFWB staffers merit special mention. One was Rudy Morgan. Rudy was not a writer or reporter or news anchor. He was not a part of the sales staff but he was, in his own unique way, part of management. Rudy, who, at the time of his retirement, had to be at least 190 years old, was building maintenance manager or building engineer or as some might call him, the janitor.

Rudy had been with KFWB for many years prior to it's becoming the premier All-News radio station in Los Angeles. Cranky and cantankerous, Rudy took no lip from anyone and that included the Vice-President and General Manager. He did things his way and his way was, for him, the only way. Many times, coming to work in the evening, I would be amazed to see Rudy with a bucket of very hot water and a huge mop, mopping the carpets. That's right. Mopping the carpets!

One day, early on, news anchors found themselves bringing more and more tape cartridges into the studio to play on three tape machines provided for us. These cartridges contained the sound

bytes that were essential to our newscasts but carrying them soon became a juggling act and we cried for help. Almost the very next morning, waiting for us were newly crafted tape cartridge carrying cases made from plastic and straps. Rudy had come thru for us again. And if you went to thank him, he would just stomp off muttering to himself about how young people today had no ambition and no sense of respect for their elders.

Rudy may have had issues with young people but on many weekends, you could find him shepherding a group of youngsters thru the station, proudly describing and explaining every nook and cranny of the building. That was probably the only time when I saw Rudy really smile and the kids smiled back. Well, maybe not all kids.

About the time KFWB was transformed into an All-Newser, it was felt that Rudy was getting on in years and needed someone to help him with his work. A teenager was hired. Rudy was not at all happy about this. He loved doing the work by himself. In order to placate him, the General Manager called Rudy to his office to tell him they were making him a department head and the young man would represent his staff. They gave Rudy a box filled with business cards with the Westinghouse logo and the title of Building Services manager under his name. Rudy studied the cards for a moment and asked, "Do I have the power to hire and fire?" He was told that he did indeed. Rudy turned around, left the general manager's office, hunted down his new assistant and promptly fired him. Everything

returned to normal except for one thing. Rudy still had those business cards.

Rudy was also a man of mystery. Everyday, for years, he would drive to work in a shiny black and chrome Ford Thunderbird. It was a huge car, powerful and without one speck of dust anywhere. It was Rudy's pride and joy. The mystery was Rudy's license plates. They were special plates with one name on them. The name was Tonola. Who or what was Tonola?

It took a long time but I finally found out.

Years before joining KFWB, Rudy had been in the movies, in those Tarzan films, the ones starring Jock Mahoney who took over from Johnny Weismuller. Rudy was almost always the tribal warrior, in the lead, chasing Tarzan thru the jungle. Rudy played that part in several of the adventure films and Tonola was his movie name. He was very proud of that name and once, in the mid 70's, on the Merv Griffin TV show, several of the Tarzans were invited to discuss that mythical character and Rudy was there too. It was a real feather in his cap.

Rudy suffered a stroke in 1996 and it was serious enough for him to pack it in as far as work was concerned. It was not an easy decision. Shortly after the stroke, we received a phone call at the station asking if we had heard from Rudy. We said no but about five minutes after hanging up, Rudy strolled into the studio, a little shaky on his feet and a bit confused as to where he was and he began gathering his mops, brooms and vacuums for another night of work.

We called his family and while they were on the way to the station to get him, we made sure he sat down and rested while we all waited.

Rudy was a tough guy to get to know but once you did, he was a treasure.

If 1971 was significant for one thing, it was the AFTRA strike. The strike by all of the air personnel against the company was a hotly fought battle that spanned the length of three very hot months in Hollywood. One reason it was so intense had to do with the fact that it was a ground breaking contract that was being negotiated. We had just ended working under a contract designed for disc jockeys in a music and news format and we were trying to set up a whole new agreement covering an entirely new set of circumstances. There were two existing contracts that could have been used as examples. Our two sister stations, WINS in New York and KYW in Philadelphia were already operating under contracts tailored for the All-News format but we just couldn't convince management to use them as models for us. Everything had to be done from scratch and the company sent a negotiator who, in all likelihood was a clone of Torquemada, the Grand Inquisitor of the Spanish Inquisition. So, after butting heads in conference rooms at the station, at AFTRA offices and at the historic Ambassador Hotel, we decided in a secret vote that there was only one option left to us and that was to take a hike.

No strike is taken lightly and after a date and time was established for our walkout, I was a nervous wreck. I had never been in a strike before and the thought of just getting up and leaving was a mind blower specially with a new wife and an even newer son. But I was determined to go through with it and that morning, when I came to work, you could feel the tension. Staffers who were not on the air and had no idea what was about to happen, were their usual happy selves but the anchors and reporters were tense.

Anchor Chet Douglas was in the middle of a newscast and editor Doug Carlson was on the telephone, ordering his breakfast from Aldo's, the restaurant just below the station on Hollywood Boulevard. Everything was as normal as ever. If you were super sensitive, you would have noticed that there was a high level of tension in the air. People talked to each other but the usual joking was absent. We were ready to do what none of us wanted to do.

Hal Goodwin, the AFTRA shop steward was in the newsroom and at the appointed time, simply said..."Lets go." All of the anchors and reporters stopped with they were doing, grabbed their briefcases and whatever else they wanted to take with them and they filed out the back door to the parking lot.

On the way out, Hal Goodwin tapped on the studio window. Anchor Chet Douglas saw us leaving and promptly turned off his microphone, left the studio and followed the rest of us to the parking lot. In the parking lot, representatives of the Union were there in

force, handing out the picket signs and giving us our instructions. We had done it! We were on strike.

Inside the station, editor Doug Carlson was still ordering his breakfast. One of the engineers got on the intercom and called to him suggesting that he get someone on the air quickly.

Doug responded, "Cant you see I am ordering breakfast? I'll be finished in a minute!" Then the impact of what the engineer had said finally broke through the vision of pancakes, eggs and sausage. He grabbed an audiotape containing a half hour program, put that on the air and jumped to the phones calling management.

Now don't think we caught management entirely flatfooted. In any situation where a strike is imminent, management personnel from other company stations are called in to replace the strikers and some were already in town waiting.

You have heard the old and not necessarily true adage that those who cannot do, teach. In this case it was kind of true. Those who could not do, suddenly were faced with the task of doing and thus, for the next three months, Los Angeles was treated to a display of some of the most inept announcing and reading ability ever heard. Leading the troops was executive editor Reg : "Paintbrush of the mind" Laite. Reg suddenly became commander in chief of a small army of station and corporate personnel who, in large part, had never been active members of any news department and certainly not public speakers or performers. There were time salespeople, technicians, secretaries, and managers. Most were from KFWB and in far too many cases,

if you tuned in, during the strike, it sounded as though they were attending an English as a Second Language course. To be fair, there were some who were quite good and who later found that the strike had opened whole new careers for them. But, I digress.

When the regular staff of KFWB emerged from the building as the strike got underway, they were met by AFTRA executives who were handing out the picket signs and giving out assignments. Also on hand were many other AFTRA members who volunteered to walk the line with us. They included radio and television personalities, both local and national plus television and movie actors and actresses whose strong sense of union solidarity brought them to the scene. Local television stations had been alerted that the strike was underway and the film crews arrived as well, with reporters interviewing other reporters. The strike was indeed underway with great feelings of apprehension on both sides.

The corporate and non-union replacements began showing up, muttering strange and not very friendly sounding phrases under their breaths. All the while, we marched in 2 circles, in front of the building on Hollywood Boulevard where a crowd had gathered to watch, and in the alleyway in back where we paced up and down in puddles of strange black and orange liquids that resembled no earthly concoction. If you have never walked around and around in a circle chanting chants and looking a bit sheepish, you have no idea what it is like and the moment the news cameras left and the crowd dispersed, the circles disintegrated and we just stood around

holding up our signs, talking to passersby explaining the strike and wondering how long we would have to do this.

The walkout lasted three months. Negotiations continued almost non-stop, but we did experience some unusual events.

I am sure you have all heard the story of Uncle Don. Uncle Don was radio host of an extremely popular children's program that originated in New York at the studios of WOR and was broadcast to 18 other states. Uncle Don's real name was Howard Rice but on the air, he was Don Carney.

According to legend, on February 9<sup>th</sup>, 1949, at the very end of the hour, Uncle Don had wrapped up the show and was preparing to leave. An engineer, in the control room forgot to close his mike switch and the audience heard something they were not supposed to hear. They heard Uncle Don utter the career ending words, "I guess that'll hold the little bastards for a while." That was the last we heard of Uncle Don. When I think back to those days, I can remember hearing him say it and Kermit Schafer, the father of Blooper Collections, even had it on tape. But, it never happened. According to Frank Buxton and Bill Owens, in their great book "The Big Broadcast 1920 to 1950"\*<sup>1</sup>, it was a slow newsday in Baltimore, Maryland and a columnist for a local Baltimore paper made up the story, just to fill space in that day's edition. Buxton and Owens indicate the story spread like wildfire. By the way, Uncle Don, at the time, was not broadcast in Baltimore.

Now you may ask, why do I bring up the story of Uncle Don. Well, because we had our own version of Uncle Don during the strike...Uncle Reg.

As has been noted, when the strike got underway, management and non-union people were required to jump in and take over until such time as the strike ended. This meant that executive editor Reg Laite would be going on the air.

In the control room, there is a panel of buttons that light up when pressed. When the light is on, it means that a piece of equipment connected to it was in operation. When the light was off, that piece of equipment was off. This included the button for the microphone. But like Murphy's Law, if something can go wrong, it will go wrong. In this case...the microphone button.

Reg has just finished the first segment of his newscast and went to a commercial. He looked down at the console to turn off his mike and saw that the "ON" light was not on. Reg mistakenly thought that he had been talking to a dead mike all along and that no one had heard him. In reality, his mike had been live, but the teeny bulb inside the mike button has malfunctioned. So, he did not press the mike button again leaving it live and on the air. With the mike "ON", Reg now could hear nothing. He tried talking to the engineer but could not be heard back because his mike was on. A live mike cuts off the studio speakers. There was a very explicit expletive involved in Reg's message to the engineer. The engineer tried talking to Reg but he couldn't be heard. People at home however, could hear Reg get

more and more confused and more and more angry.....because the mike was on. Somewhere along the line, Reg did manage to turn off his mike but the microphone in front of the adjoining anchor position somehow got turned on so nothing at all had changed. The mike was still on and people at home were listening in. Several people from the newsroom rushed to the studio to tell Reg his mike was on. But he had just turned it off. "What do you mean it's on?"

Editor Rich Buhler, realizing that the situation was going absolutely nowhere, raced into the control room and thru the window made a throat cutting motion with his hand. This is the signal to stop talking and turn off your mike. Reg suddenly realized his mike or the other mike or somebody's mike had been on all the time and the folks at home were listening in on a very unusual program. Sort of like a soap opera..."As The World Turns To Crap." Reg shut up and sank into his chair, the blood draining from his face.

Consider the threefold problem that faced him.

1. All of Southern California had heard what happened.
2. The striking AFTRA newsmen, in front of and behind the station, had heard what had happened and were laughing hysterically or just stared at each other in amazement.
3. Management from all over the country were in town, many of them high up in the corporate structure and they also heard and that's not good for career advancement.

In truth, this kind of thing has happened countless numbers of time to to hundreds if not thousands of announcers all around the

globe. Its not an earthshaking crime. It's just an accident. I don't blame Reg at all, especially since there was a mechanical problem involved. But there is a cardinal rule among broadcasters....."When you are in the studio, watch your mouth even when you think the mic may be turned off.."

\* Buxton & Owen, "The Big Broadcast, 1920 to 1950." Viking Press, 1975.

One quickie occurred at about 8 o'clock in the morning. Vince Campagna, Brian Bastian and Phil Reed and I were stationed at the front entrance to the station on Hollywood Boulevard. The door to KFVB was right next to the entrance to one of the sleaziest bars in the city, a disreputable dive called the Tourist Trap. This bar was the starting point in the evening for Hollywood streetwalkers and the place where they returned in the morning to turn over their cash to their pimps. It was not unusual to see a pimp beat up a hooker if she did not hand over enough money. When this happened, you did not butt in because it did not take a rocket scientist to understand these guys were either armed with a gun, a knife or both. They were also very very strong.

This one particular morning, as we stood with our picket signs outside of KFVB, Academy Award winning actor Broderick Crawford approached, his arms laden with two large supermarket bags, filled with groceries. He came to a screeching halt outside the Tourist Trap and we suppose the urge for a quick drink developed.

Crawford gave the street and the entrance to the bar a quick once-over and then went in just as the Ladies of the Night were returning from their appointed rounds. We waited.

Sure enough, about two minutes later, this distinguished actor, star of *All The Kings Men*, and of course, the ever popular Highway Patrol on TV came reeling out of the bar, frantically trying to keep his groceries from spilling on the sidewalk. The look on his face was a mixture of shock, bewilderment and anger.

“What the hell kind of a place is that?” he said in the familiar gruff style of Highway Patrol Chief Dan Matthews. With no '56 Oldsmobile to jump into and roar away, Crawford got a better grip on his groceries and stomped away. We never found out what happened inside.

The Tourist Trap was about as sleazy as they come. In fact, the LAPD said that watering hole was the scene of more arrests than any other similar establishment around the city. Picketing the station mean being outside the front door of that bar between four and five hours and many times, the pimps who launched their girls on their daily rounds and picked them up later, would venture into the sunlight in the late morning or early afternoon. Since we could not ignore them, it was decided that it would be best to become friends of sorts, with them. Actually, we were very surprised because one or two of them turned out to be not so bad at all, despite what they did for a living. One was actually quite creative.

We were finishing our second month on the street when this pimp Alvin showed up one morning with coffee and doughnuts for everyone. And he had all the fixin's with him, sugar, saccharine, milk, cream, the whole megilla. He handed out the coffee and we stood there chatting with him.

"You know", he said, "I could end this strike by this evening!"

"Oh? How could you do that?" we asked.

He got this very thoughtful look on his face, scratched his chin in a manner that would do credit to Albert Einstein and then after a fair amount feigning deep thought, he spoke.

"I would get this stink bomb in my right hand and another stink bomb in my left hand and I would run up the stairs to radio station, shout 'End the strike!' and I would throw those stink bombs. Then an hour later, I would get another stink bomb in this hand and another in my other hand. I would run screaming thru the station 'End the strike!' and I would throw those stink bombs. Then an hour later, I would do it all over again and finally, the boss up there would say, 'uh oh, here come that nut with the stink bombs again! We better end the strike!'"

Well, we were flabbergasted. Our first thought was... "Hey, it could work." And we actually considered it for a while. Finally, we decided, "Naw!"

Participating in a strike is not just walking up and down in a circle, waving a picket sign in the face of people who don't really care why you are walking in a circle waving a picket sign. There

is strategy to be mapped out, secondary targets to be picked and even sleeping accommodations to be made. That's right, sleeping accommodations. Since the radio station was in operation twenty four hours a day, our picketing was also a full 24 hour a day endeavor. But walking in a circle waving a picket sign at two in the morning on Hollywood Boulevard was not safe and not healthy. In fact, it was downright foolhardy. But we were prepared. Anchor Bill Schubert had a trailer and he brought it to the parking lot behind the station. We hooked it up for electricity and a phone line and we were in business.

Our stalwart field reporter Andy Park agreed to take the night picket shift. Now, I cannot swear by this but reports have come to me saying that when Andy was on duty and someone came walking by to go in the station, in the pitch darkness of the alley behind the station, the door to the trailer would crack open just a little, A picket sign would appear and begin waving back and fourth and a crusty voice could be hear yelling, "Unfair! On Strike! Unfair! Boo Hiss, Splat, Braaaaaaaaaacccccckkkkkkkk." Then the sign would disappear and the trailer door would slam shut and peace and quiet would descend over the area once again. The person entering the building could only have been thinking to himself, "What the hell was that?"

In the early days of the strike, we decided that pressure would be put on the companies that advertised on KFWB. We started going thru the trash to see what we could find and sure enough,

we found tons of stuff from the sales department with the names of advertising agencies that had placed commercials on the station. From an empty storefront that AFTRA rented for us, and with a bank of telephones, we began calling these agencies letting them know a strike was on, that the station sounded awful and that it was not a good place to showcase those products. Many of the agencies agreed and commercials were pulled.

It didn't take the station long to figure out that were we trashing them by way of the trash. So, they got a paper shredder. We figured that was no problem. Well, if you have never seen grown men, college graduates, playing with teeny tiny thing strips of paper, trying to put them back as they were before being shredded, it is an amazing sight. However it cannot be done. We decided to give up this effort until we experienced a bit of serendipity. This was before the age of the desk top computer and carbon paper was still a big item. For some reason, the good folks in the station were shredding the white paper but not the sheets of carbon and if you know how to read backwards, carbon paper is just as revealing as white paper.

This resulted in the practice of what we called Carbon Diving, similar to pearl diving.

Each evening after the trash had been dumped and the executives had gone home, we retrieved the carbon paper and continued contacting ad agencies.

Among the management personnel attempting to keep KFVB going as usual was "Scoop" from New York. "Scoop"

was in Hollywood on the basis of his being a news executive with Westinghouse Broadcasting. "Scoop" was given the assignment to be a field reporter. He was to go out and report from the scene of the story, wherever it might be and whatever it might be. A very short time after his arrival, "Scoop" engraved his name in stone on the monument of KFWB legends by allegedly losing a story.

Now, we know "Scoop" was new to Hollywood but armed with a Thomas Brothers Map Book, he should have had no problem getting around the area. With the freeways and everything, Los Angeles is not a difficult city to navigate. Then it happened!

There was an explosion at the Lockheed Tunnel, part of the city's water project, in the hills northwest of L.A. and there were fatalities and injuries. "Scoop" was sent to cover the story. With his tape recorder flapping behind him, we watched from the parking lot as he bolted from the station and roared off. Then using a two-way radio receiver we waited to hear his progress.

Sure enough, about 45 minutes later, "Scoop" reported he was at the Lockheed tunnel and everything was calm. No explosion, no fatalities, not injuries, no damage. No explosion. No explosion? Every other station had reports of carnage. Could they all be wrong? Were they seeing things? No. It seems "Scoop" was at the wrong end of the tunnel.

It was about this time that we noticed new faces going into the building. Many of the executives had to return to their own stations across the country and so, KFWB hired scabs to take our place.

Simply stated a scab is someone with no ethical or moral attitude that would prevent him from taking the job of a man on strike. This meant we had to keep track of everybody who went in or out of the station because when the strike ended and we returned to work, those folks would have to be outta there.

We decided the best method for keeping track was a photo album. We would take a picture of everyone who entered the building to fill in for a striking employee. Anchor Art Blaske was given the photographic assignment. The next morning, Art was armed and ready. He jumped into the dumpster with a small camera, covered himself in paper and waited in ambush.

It wasn't long before Executive Editor Frank Georg came along. Art Blaske was tracking him through a rust hole in the dumpster and when Frank got alongside, Art jumped up and took his picture.

Slowly Frank turned and gazed at Art. "Boo!" he said.

Why, we don't know but Art fell back inside the dumpster and he heard an ominous clang from inside, followed by a low, "Heh heh heh." We decided not to check him out.

Any anchor or reporter, whether they are new to that activity or a veteran, can fall prey to the Silver Tongue Devil. It happened to acting news director Mark Savan and Operations manager Charlie Brailer.

It was during the strike and Charlie was wrapping up his newscast with a story about the discovery of whatever was left of a prehistoric

tribe of people known as Turtle Eaters. We assume they were known as Turtle Eaters because of the many turtle shells had teeth marks.

Charlie finished the story and the format called for a moment's verbal interplay between the outgoing and incoming anchors. The idea that Mark would have to comment on turtle eating cavemen apparently was too much for him and he began to chuckle. Then Charlie tried to pick up the slack and he started to chuckle and before long, both men were practically falling out of their chairs. Listeners were treated to almost 15 minutes of Charlie trying to leave and Mark trying to talk.

Midway thru the strike, KFWB suddenly found itself without a news director. No one is really sure how that happened but it did and the corporate brass were intent on finding a new one.

Also not known is how quickly the bosses came upon a Roger Ripoff (not his real name). Management thought he was the proverbial best thing since sliced bread. He had been a bureau Chief for United Press International in Chicago and he had great stories that he told of his exploits as a reporter and editor. But it wasn't long before the luster wore off and Ripoff became an extremely disliked person. The main bone of contention was Rogers' political philosophy. He was a dyed in the wool, red to the bone communist.

With the Vietnam war well underway, Ripoff spouted off constantly. Now, you must understand that political discussion in a newsroom is not uncommon by a long shot and it can range from wide eyed radical conservatism to bleeding heart liberalism but

Ripoff was an unrepentant Stalinist and in addition to talking up what he believed were the virtues of communism, he also brought to the newsroom his library of books in the apparent hope we would want to borrow them and possibly join the ranks of the proletariat.

Well, management had hired him and the folks in the newsroom had to deal with him that is until a major story occurred.

There was a tragic midair collision between an airliner and a military jet fighter over a section of Los Angeles. Mark Savan, who had been hoping to get the job that Roger Ripoff got, was assigned to cover the story with Rich Buhler assisting. As they did their job, they also discussed Ripoff and his stellar background in news and the way he was using that experience at KFWB. Their conclusion was....this guy is a fraud.

When they got back to the station, a few quick phone calls to the UPI bureau in Chicago told the story. The Windy City reporters considered Ripoff "weird" and many of the jobs he claimed he had held....never even existed.

Before the day was over, Roger Ripoff was gone and never seen again.

As the strike moved into its third month, summer was full upon us and it was hot in Hollywood. In the alleyway and parking lot behind the building, it was especially bad because of frequently malfunctioning drain pipe, filled with methane, the gas that smells like rotten eggs. It got to a point where meteorologically, it became a chore to stay on the picket line. It was AFTRA to the rescue.

We held a picnic in the parking lot. Salad, fruits of all kinds, wonderfully cold drinks and would you believe...circus performers. We had a knife thrower in full Indian headdress, tossing daggers at his scantily clad assistant. There was a cowboy with a whip who would take a cigarette out of your mouth with one swipe, plus celebrity visitors. Husbands, wives and children were invited and passersby who saw the goings on could also wander over, have a hamburger or a couple of hotdogs and a coke and enjoy the show with us. It was a strike event that could only have happened in Hollywood.

The only ones not invited were those who were working inside the station, doing our jobs. Their expressions of envy were quite evident as they arrived or left the building.

It was about that same time that writers and news assistants decided to unionize and they opted no longer to cross out picket line. It was lucky that the strike ended shortly after that because we know these people were victims of circumstance and we didn't want them to suffer.

Three months after the strike began, it ended with a contract agreement and while subsequent contract negotiations became rather nasty at times, there was never another strike.

The day we returned to work, I entered the station and prepared to go to work when a news assistant who had been hired as a scab during the strike, came up to me and told me to go to the deli down the street and get him a sandwich. He gave me a five dollar bill.

I stared at him, told him he was out of his mind and walked away. That was his last day at the station. I gave back his five dollar bill.

With the strike finally over, there would have to be some changes made. Some of those changes were not very welcome ones. Four members of the anchor staff were laid off. We hated that but it's a fact of life. When the position is eliminated, the man who occupied that position also goes.

There was one very unusual result of the strike. It was something we felt could be very good for us. Management in New York suddenly realized the troops were not happy and when you don't have happy troops, the product suffers. What to do? What to do? Hey!! Lets take a survey and find out why the troops are not happy.

And so it began. At great cost, Group W headquarters sent out survey questionnaires, not only to KFWB staffers but to everybody in Group W Broadcasting, regardless of where they worked. By golly, if you were a closet mope, they were going to find you and fix whatever was making you mopey. And this was some big deal. Only a number two pencil could be used. You could sign the questionnaire or you could leave it anonymous. Time was also critical. You had to mail the forms in to New York by a certain date or else. There were 9 thousand, 843 questions, give or take a thousand or to. Most dealt with your feelings toward your immediate supervisor. The rest had to do with your preference...Classic Coke or The New Coke. They were very thorough.

When my questionnaire reached me at home, I sat down and prepared to answer the questions. By the time I reached question fifty, I was no longer a happy camper or even an unhappy camper. I was a raging bull, ready to kill for the slightest reason.

When I completed the questionnaire, I slammed it into its return envelope, slathered my tongue across the flap, sealed it, stamped it and shoved it into a mail box. You could not throw it away. You were too afraid men carrying violin cases would find you and use your knees as marimbas, playing on them with baseball bats.

It was about this time that I began thinking of public opinion survey, Part 2 The Don Herbert version. Since I was already getting a reputation as a mild mannered smartass, another public opinion survey was almost expected from me. So, I wrote one and when I brought it in to the station to distribute, I was advised to put it away and don't let anyone see it because the strike was still a sore spot with some and many executives were super-concerned about finding the cause of the mopiness and dealing with it. Its also nice to be able to say some were afraid I might get fired and they didn't want that to happen.

So, despite all my work, I put the survey away.....until now.

Yes, now, you can be the first on your block to take the public opinion survey Part 2.

Now remember...neatness counts. Don't look at your neighbor's paper. Put your name in the upper right hand corner of the answer

booklet and if you must eat something while answering these probing questions, please, do not dribble on your paper.

Okay, here we go!!!!!!!

## GROUP W/DON HERBERT PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY.

### PART II

Your opinion counts. A special task force of cracked Psychologists is currently locked in a windowless room overlooking fashionable Park Avenue. They have no idea why they are there. Nor do we.

Included in this survey is a whole bunch of questions. Unlike the first part of this survey, known as Part One, where you were required to put little pencil marks inside little circles, here, you will use a single Crayola Crayon, preferably Burnt Sienna, to cross out the letter next to the answer that most coincides with your attitude or something.

Your attitude about these questions counts too. A special task force of cracked psycholo...oh you already know that.

Your answer to these questions will be in the strictest confidence. Only that cracked team of Psychologists and half the population of Tucson, Arizona will get to see the answers. After they have recovered from their bouts of hysterical laughter, they will compile their findings into a publication called "Uncle Billy's Whiz Bang,

Part 2.” These books, bound in luxurious leatherette, will be sold to you at a nominal fee to be determined by me, depending upon how many bills I have to pay.

Take your time answering the questions. Once you are finished, return them immediately to The Muckle Press, Box 109, Omaha, sometime before the start of the millennium.

Be sure to include: Your employee bar code, finger-print, DNA Sample, A lock of your hair, fingernail clipping and a reasonably large amount of money, goes here.

Okay boys and girls. Here we go. Isnt this exciting?

Group W is a.....

- a. Broadcasting Company
- b. A family named Walashinsky
- c. A platoon of alien invaders.
- d. All of the above or None of the above.

Conflict in my work group results in.....

- a. World War Three
- b. Marriage
- c. Uncontrollable bleeding
- d. Peace In our time.

Behind my back, people in this organization....

- a. Snicker
- b. Guffaw
- c. paste "kick me" signs on my back.
- e. How should I know? I can't see them.

I am usually consulted about.....

- a. My job
- b. The contents of my wallet.
- c. Diplomatic ties with Libya.
- d. You have to be kidding.

People in My Unit are Generally Judged on their...

- a. Cologne
- b. Race, Religion and Place of Origin.
- c. Clothing labels.
- d. Tap Dancing ability

In my unit, problem are solved by.....

- a. hiring a hit man.
- b. ground glass in the supervisor's food.
- c. a small inexpensive pocket calculator.
- d. ignoring them.

It is difficult to get my boss to listen to me because...

- a. my phone doesn't work.
- b. He is stone deaf.
- c. He doesn't know me.
- d. I am never there.

I have enough information to.....

- a. Blackmail my supervisor
- b. Recite the days of the week in order.
- c. Keep track of my vacation days
- d. Find my way home at night.

My supervisor is.....

- a. Tall
- b. Dead
- c. Sexy as Hell
- d. An overbearing stupid jerk..

My supervisor helps us give 100% performance by...

- a. using a whip.
- b. Threatening to inform on us.
- c. Offering us his or her body.

When it comes to technical expertise, my supervisor...

- a. doesn't know how to use a shovel.
- b. knows the name of our Vice-President.
- c. still cant complete a Rubic's Cube game.

My supervisor encourages me to.....

- a. run away from home.
- b. Change my socks every day
- c. Defect.

When I do good work, my supervisor.....

- a. takes credit for it.
- b. Is never there.
- c. Gets drunk

My Supervisor treats everyone.....

- a. to a Big Mac.
- b. Like dirt
- c. Like a Munchkin.

My supervisor has enough influence with top brass to.....

- a. accomplish absolutely nothing.
- b. Destroy the organization
- c. Get unlimited use of the water fountain.

My supervisor knows that.....

- a. I want his job.
- b. I am planning to kill him
- c. It gets dark at night,

I consider my supervisor

- a. a moron
- b. a menace to all I hold dear
- c. a slut.

### Individual Attitudes

When I am at work, I am...

- a. a really sweet guy
- b. a really sweet gal
- c. both of the above.

During my time at work, I...

- a. am not at home
- b. am a nervous wreck
- c. lonely

My salary is....

- a. too low
- b. too high
- c. grabbed by my wife who spends it all.

Compared to my fellow workers, I

- a. am the find of the century.
- b. am taller
- c. am Jewish.

My fellow workers....

- a. are an incredibly stupid group.
- b. Are related thru marriage to other people
- c. Are the walking undead.

If I had a magic wand, I'd....

- a. undress all my female co-workers
- b. transport my supervisor to Uranus
- c. take over.

I am glad to be in broadcasting because

- a. I have an IQ of minus 80.
- b. I flunked out of medical school
- c. it was either this or 25 to life at Leavenworth

I get a great sense of accomplishment when I...

- a. get out of bed in the morning
- b. complete a newscast without using profanity.
- c. remember my locker combination.

Within the company, I plan additional training in..

- a. Microwave cooking
- b. tap dancing.
- c. figure skating

### My Job

The following section deals with your view of your in-station activities, whatever they are.

The mental stimulation I get from a day's workequals.....

- a. watching grass grow.
- b. The power generated by rising yeast
- c. Huh?

I can do my job well, because....

- a. I pay someone to do it for me.
- b. I smoke a joint for lunch
- c. I am terrific.

Variety in my job entails.....

- a. freedom to bring the lunch of my choice, to work.
- b. The right to sit or stand
- c. Red, Green Blue or Black felt tip pens.

When I am at work, I really get mad when...

- a. there is something to do.
- b. I'm angry
- c. Someone kicks me in a sensitive part of my body.

I make my work day more pleasant by....

- a. smoking two joints at lunch
- b. hiding in the men's room.
- c. having sex while on the air.

If I had my way....

- a. This building would become a parking lot.
- b. I would fire everyone
- c. I would be very rich.

This completes the personal opinion section of the Group W Public Opinion Survey, Part 2. Did you have fun? Wouldn't you love to do this every week? Well, how about once a month. What if we scrapped the whole idea?

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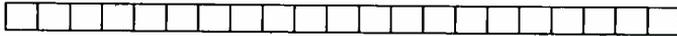
## ONE FINAL NOTE

This public opinion survey is a scientific document. Please, do not use it as a placemat when visiting Burger King or MacDonaldis or some other fast food establishment.

The answers you have given will be of absolutely no use to anyone. Therefore, the answers will be compiled, tabulated and then discarded and we of management shall continue to do as we please as always.

But don't think this was a wasted effort on your part. It was, but don't think it. We all know that if you think about it, we will be forced to invade your home at night and machinegun your tropical fish tank.

Thank you for you time and patience.



There was one final event stemming from the strike. Shop Steward Hal Goodwin, exhausted by all he had to do to keep the strike going, checked into the hospital for an angiogram. It was negative and after two days rest at home, Hal returned to work. Within half an hour of entering the building, Hal collapsed and died. Almost every station in the city sent a representative to his funeral at Forest Lawn Hollywood.

\* \* \* \* \*

Here are a few more Silver Tongue Devil instances.

“I’m Chuck Walsh and at the editor’s desk, Jerry Lewis.....  
er.....Jesse Lewis”

Here’s one of mine in which the sounds got slightly mixed up.....”...less than a day after Raphael was shot as he sat with his girlfriend outside her Hanpark Kark Home....er, make that Hancock Park home.”

Sports anchor Joe Cala, in one sportscast, gave a new twist to name calling. It went like this....”In the Rose Bowl this afternoon, Michigan’s defense kept Washington from scoring a touchdown and tailback Butch Willfuck rushed for....”

Sports anchor Don Wells, went a step beyond Joe Cala in talking about plans by the NBA rules committee would like to change the guidelines determining which team gets the number one draft prick.”

Sports maven Rod Van Hook, in one fell swoop, picked up an entire tennis tournament and moved it across town. He did it this way....”Martina Navratilova stretched her winning streak to 44 matches in a row with a decision over Pascal Peridee in opening round action in a New Jersey Tourist Tenement.”

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## **THESE ARE A FEW OF MY FAVORITE FOLKS**

Nixon Resigns

China's Mao Tse Tung dies of Parkinsons Disease.

Jimmy Carter elected President.

Elvis Presley dies at Graceland in Memphis

Charlie Chaplin & Big Crosby die.

It stands to reason that in 30 plus years of being an all news radio station, there would be many very special people coming through our front doors. These people made a very distinct impression on us while they were there and we continue to think about them years later.

The newscaster we often referred to simply as "Mr. Nice Guy" was Dick Cutting. As mentioned earlier, Dick was indeed about as nice a guy as you could ever hope to meet, with a wonderful voice for use on the radio. Prior to coming to KFVB, Dick was an actor and often was cast as a scientist or a minister because he looked

intelligent and kindly and happily, he was that way in real life. He was a genuine joy to work with but unfortunately, he wasn't with us long enough. Shortly after being hired at the station, Dick became ill and was eventually diagnosed as having stomach cancer. He underwent a series of operations until his stamina gave out and he passed away.

Another on the list of very special people was Vince Williams. If you met Vince for the first time, you would be certain he was a movie actor that you had seen any many times in a whole bunch of films and you would be right. Vince for years had been a fixture on local television news as a field reporter. He would also take small parts in a whole host of films from mysteries to war to science fiction, playing the role of television field reporter.

Vince had a great sense of humor and was ready to joke around at a moments notice. He had a lesser known claim to fame. Vince's sister Kay was Kay Williams Spreckles Gable. She had been married to Spreckles of the Spreckles Sugar Company and then to movie legend Clark Gable. So Clark Gable was Vince Williams' brother-in-law. Shortly after Gable's death, Vince stopped me in the hall at KFWB and made me an offer I could not refuse. He said, "How would you like Clark's clothes?" I said, "Sure." And the next morning, Vince parked his car next to mine and transferred a trunk load of clothing including cowboy shirts, a kimono and a Royal Blue Brocade silk smoking suit with a monogrammed breast pocket.

Vince is also special to us old timers from KFVB for uttering one of our funniest of all Silver Tongue Devils. Trying to say the word "organism", Vince reported that "raw milk from a local dairy was being recalled because of the discovery of Q fever "orgasms" in the milk." Vince is long gone to that radio studio in the sky but we miss him still.

Chances are, you never in your life met anyone like Kenny Wright. Ken, early on in the history of All-News at KFVB, was a technician and quite a good one, but Kenny was also very much his own man. With bright carrot red hair and a thick handlebar mustache to match, Ken exhibited a sense of humor that was totally off the wall and sometimes, it would catch you completely unawares. Allow me to describe Kenny's last day at the station.

I was on the air that fateful day and as I was delivering the newscast, I looked up to see Kenny sitting at the engineer's console, his feet, clad in stained Army combat boots, were propped on the top. Everything seemed normal.

A second later, Kenny got up from his chair and walked across the control room. This time I saw Ken was not wearing a shirt or undershirt but I also noticed that Kenny's feet were still propped on top of his console. And he was walking? "Not possible", I say to myself. Then I realize...it's not his feet. It's just his shoes that were propped up there. At this point that I knew Kenny was planning something and I steeled myself. All this time, I continued reading my newscast on the air.

To the left of the window between the studio and the control room, there was a door that suddenly opened and through the corner of my eye, I see Kenny enter the studio. He was not wearing a stitch of clothing. He was buck naked. I couldn't help but turn and look at him and that's when I totally lost it. I started laughing the moment I saw, tattooed on his butt, a picture of a large horsefly.

Before I had the chance to turn off my microphone and say something, Kenny opened the studio door and walked out into the newsroom. There were both men and women in the newsroom and no one noticed Kenny as he posed seductively by the door. Getting no rise out of anyone, Kenny walked the entire length of the newsroom unnoticed and posed seductively at yet another door. Still no reaction so Kenny cleared his throat loud enough to awaken the dead. Now, they saw him and while the women looked away, laughing as they turned, the men guffawed for several minutes.

I was still in the studio finishing my newscast. When I came out, Kenny was nowhere to be seen and the commotion had settled down. I didn't see Kenny again for at least eight or nine years until I passed him on Hollywood Boulevard. He was fully dressed and he didn't remember me. I will always remember him.

Dan was a very good news writer. I am not using his last name for reasons you will see shortly. For the relatively short time that he was with KFWB, he made his mark but it all ended tragically. Emotionally, Dan was a boiling cauldron but it was a cauldron he

kept out of sight. We mostly thought of Dan as a serious guy who gave us only brief glimpses of a sense of humor.

That seriousness extended to what apparently was a fantasy love affair with a fellow worker. To say that Dan had fallen head over heels for this woman is putting it mildly.

I remember when this lovely woman came to work at the station and everyone watched as she slowly blossomed from a very pretty young lady to a woman of great beauty and style. Almost everyone had a crush on her at one time or another and I never determined if she was aware of this. She treated everyone the same, with great humor and friendship. She obviously was aware of the classic dangers of an affair with someone in the same office. Under other circumstances, it might have worked out but not in the office and she knew it.

Dan, as we heard later, had an extremely difficult time handling rejection and one horrible evening, he trailed the woman to a supermarket where, with her daughter in tow, she was shopping. Confronting her, he allegedly pulled out a gun and fired, hitting her in the leg. Her child was not hurt and Dan ran from the scene.

Police began an area wide search for him and several days later, Dan was found, in a motel room, dead of a self inflicted gunshot wound.

A very talented writer was gone. The lives of a lovely lady and her daughter were changed dramatically and another amazing story is added to the legend of KFWB.

Art Laing was a short man with an awful lot of talent. Art was Canadian by birth and came to us by way of Hamilton and Toronto. In Canada, on TV, Art had made a name for himself as a weatherman and as host of a children's show. When he came to KFVB, it was as a field reporter and Art put a spin on his reports that made him extremely entertaining as well as informative. The Canadian accent helped too, eh.

Art and I along with another anchor, Chet Douglas, glommed a deluxe weekend at a ski resort at Mammoth Mountain on the pretext of Art doing a full weather report from the top of the mountain. Chet would do a report on ski conditions around the west, from the top of the mountain, and I would report on a klutz getting his very first ski lesson, at the bottom of the mountain in the area known as the bunny slopes. What a weekend....deluxe apartment, fully furnished, meals, ski equipment for free and my ski lessons were given by the director of the Mammoth Mountain ski school. Art did his weather report, Chet did his ski conditions report and I fell down on the slopes a lot. Then we rode the gondola to the top of the mountain. Later that night at the rathskeller, we pretended that we were downhill racers. I was almost tempted to buy one of those fake leg casts but I thought...naw that would be too much.

Capping the things that Art Laing did to make him immortal, were two things he did over and over, that made him a KFVB legend. They were marching to bagpipe music around the newsroom and giving change for a dollar.

On quiet days, when nothing special was going on, Art would take out a tape cassette of the Black Watch, featuring the bagpipe band of the British Army and with it playing as loud as possible, Art would simply march around the newsroom as we leaped to our feet to salute the passing parade of one man. It did not matter who was in the newsroom at the time, the mayor, the governor, senators, show biz celebrities. When Art heard the call of the Pipes, he became the March King.

Art put on another kind of show that we thought would get him fired but it never did. If you were standing next to an important person, Art made sure to come over to you and ask for change for a dollar. You were caught. You reached into your pocket, brought out all the change you had and splayed it over your outstretched palm. Art, who already had his hand down the inside of his pants, would open his fly with the other hand, stick his index finger thru the opening and, pushing each coin around on your palm, would check to see if you had the correct change. I cannot begin to describe the looks on people's faces when they thought Art was exposing himself.

Art was a dear man, funny, talented, but most of all, a very good reporter. In the early 80's Art and his wife returned to Canada where a massive stroke ended his career and several years later, his life.

How does one explain John Swaney? Brilliant? Yes. Talented? Yes. Fat? Oh boy!

John Swaney was overweight. not chubby, not husky, just morbidly obese. When he died in 1999, John weighed in the range of 700 pounds. The first day I met John in 1968, the elevator we both rode got stuck between floors because of too much weight.

John came to KFWB from Texas and his contribution to KFWB over the years was an ongoing affair. John had a mind that sopped up all manner of information and he could retrieve it at a moments notice. Now, there were some subjects of which John knew practically nothing and therefore left himself open to jibes by fellow anchors. For instance, in the late 70's anchor Vince Campagna was doing a series of reports about the US World War Two victory over a huge Japanese fleet during the Battle of Midway. A discussion was underway in the newsrooms about the merits of American aircraft when compared to Japanese planes. John Swaney made a comment that the Japanese Zero, a small, fast highly maneuverable little aircraft, was the best in the skies.

Vince jumped up and said, "Sure, the Zero was good, except for one small problem."

We all looked at Vinnie. What problem?

Without bating an eyelash, Vinnie went on. "The Zero was an excellent airplane but it had one problem the designers could never fix, the plane could not turn left." He said, "It could go up, down and to the right but it could not turn left." All the American pilot had to do was to stay to the left of the Japanese pilot and he could shoot it down at his leisure. This of course was total nonsense and Vinnie

continued to maintain a straight face and John Swaney bought every word of it. We teased him about it for years and while he endured the teasing, we could tell, he was getting quite tired of the joke.

John had dignity. Great gobs of dignity and when a rather bizarre joke was played on him, his response can only be termed "regal".

Early in his career with KFWB, a flock of sheep had been killed by a cloud of poison gas that escaped from Army researchers at the Dugway Proving Grounds in Utah. John was assigned find out everything anybody could ever want to know about poison gas and sheep. Everyday, as soon as he was finished doing his regularly scheduled newscasts, John got on the phone and began calling the Army in Utah and Washington and sheep ranchers everywhere. Day in and day out, for weeks, John delved into the tragic deaths of those damn sheep. John was growing to hate those sheep. He also hated the poison gas guys but most of his annoyance was directed at the sheep. One day, he loudly announced that if he saw another story that had anything to do with sheep and if he ever saw a picture of a sheep or if he ever saw lampchops on a restaurant menu, he was going to explode.

Well, we want to see that, so between that moment and the next day, when John came in for work, we located and bought a sheep, complete with a bale of hay and a very healthy digestive system. We tied the sheep to John's desk and sat back and waited as the sheep dropped little pellets all over the place. I assume I don't have to tell you what the pellets were.

Sure enough, John arrived for work on time. This was it. Explosion time! We were sure he was going to hit the ceiling. Nope. John ignored the presence of the sheep, pushed the bale of hay out of the way and gingerly going where only sheep had gone before, sat down at his desk and immediately called Utah and asked to speak to the head sheep person. He never batted an eye.

After a few years, John grew tired of doing news on the radio and unbeknownst to almost all of us, enrolled in law school. Now, if you know anything about Law School, it is no picnic. It is a very rough row to hoe but John did it while working full time. He graduated with his law degree and announced he was leaving the station to go into private practice. And sure enough, he left, joined a law firm. After that, the only times we got to see John were at some party honoring one of us for one reason or another, usually retirement. And each time we saw John, we noticed he was a little bit bigger. Each one of us wanted to run up to him and say something that would convince him to go on a diet. But we couldn't and we didn't and John just got bigger.

In late 1999, we were advised that John had been hospitalized because of breathing problems brought on by his weight. John never emerged from the hospital. We miss John a lot.

Without a doubt, the one person who evokes the greatest response when her name is mentioned is Cecelia Pedroza. Lots of people have lots of opinions about Cecelia but I love the lady. To me,

Cece is kind, gentle, intelligent and fun to be with. Coming from a very prominent Latino family, she knew everyone in East LA and they knew her. Her mother was the operator, with her son Carlos, of a highly successful travel agency. The mother also ran a monthly Town Hall type forum in Los Angeles. One of Cecelia's sisters was a popular local Flamenco dancer and still another was a regular on local television. From a public relations standpoint, Cecelia was a definite plus for KFWB.

To say that Cecelia was eager to do a good job is putting it mildly but sometimes she went overboard. One notable occasion occurred a few days before the gala Cinco De Mayo celebrations. Cecelia was sent to the center of Olvera Street, the thoroughfare still containing buildings from the very early days of the city. Cecelia was assigned to do a brief report on the meaning behind the celebration. In those days, a report from the field took on average, a maximum of a minute and a half to two minutes.

I was in the studio doing a newscast when I was directed to introduce Cecelia and put her on the air. This I did and Cecelia began her report. It went one minute....then a minute and a half, then two minutes. Her report was reaching five minutes when news director Herb Humphries ran to the studio to tell me to cut her off, she was going way too long.

Well I tried but Cecelia was speaking so fast, I could not find a place to cut in smoothly. She was now at ten minutes heading toward fifteen and Herb Humphries was pulling his hair out of his head

and he didn't have that much to lose in the first place. He sat next to me in the studio and we both looked for a space. Finally, at slightly past 20 minutes, Herb said, "Aw fuck it!" He cut Cecelia's mike off. Would you believe it was at the exact end of a sentence and to the listener, it sounded like we had planned it that way all along. A short time later, Cecelia returned all excited, to the studio.

"Hey you guys," she called out, "Did you love my report?"

The only answer emanated from Herb Humphries office.

"Cecelia, could you come in here a moment?"

Cecelia Pedroza, to my way of thinking, will always be one of the greats of KFWB, partially because of stories like her Cinco De Mayo report but also for what we all fondly refer to as Pedroza-isms. Cecelia had a way with words that surprised everyone for getting the message across while still being totally off the wall.

For example.....

Trying to inject irony into one of her stories, she used the expression, "That takes the cake." Well, almost. What she said was "That takes the pie."

Another time, incorporating resignation into a story, Cecelia wanted to use the phrase, "But that's all water under the bridge." What we heard was "that's all water over the bridge." This could have been just as odd as saying "that's all water under the dam."

Then one Christmas season, Cecelia was relating a very nice story about a group of gung ho United States Marine Corps veterans

who were planning a special holiday treat for some kids. Cecelia described the Leathernecks as being “Gunga Din” about it.

The line however that will go down in broadcast history, uttered by Cecelia Pedroza, was a line that was totally correct. There wasn't a thing wrong with it except that it really was not necessary. Here's what happened.

Cecelia was reporting on the discovery of a dead body. She related the facts that the man had been shot and stabbed several times. His eyes were covered with duct tape. Duct tape and rope were used to tie the man's hands and ankles and his body was rolled up inside a carpet which was tied with more duct tape and rope and stuffed into the trunk of a car. The trunk was then locked. Cecelia then reported, “Suicide has been ruled out.”

Cecelia Pedroza is one of my most favorite people.

## **GLITTER AND GLAMOR**

**Jim Jones & followers in mass Guyana suicide tragedy.**

**U.S. opens diplomatic relations with China.**

**Ayatollah Khomeini ousts the Shah of Iran.**

**The Three Mile Island nuclear power plant crisis occurs.**

KFWB, just before the advent of the All-News format and until the mid 70's, was located on Hollywood Boulevard, two blocks from the fabled intersection of Hollywood and Vine. The studios and offices were on the second floor over two rather unusual places of business. One was a restaurant named Aldo's. In the front, the usual hamburgers, soft drinks, sandwiches and a menu filled with things you could buy at almost any eatery along the street. In the back, it was a different matter. Aldo's was, mostly at night, a gay bar.

During the day, it was not unusual for someone from the station to be found at that bar, enjoying a beer or two but after the sun went down and the regular clientele came in, we tended to avoid the place.

Next door to Aldo's was the Tourist Trap, the place Broderick Crawford found so shocking. The Trap was the starting point for Hollywood hookers and the place where they reported back to their pimps the next morning. It was not unusual to look out in the back parking lot and see a pimp beating the daylight out of one of his girls for not making enough money for him. As much as we wanted to help, it was simply one of those things you did not do if you wanted to continue living. Those pimps were slick and very strong and always armed with a knife or a gun or some other lethal weapon.

One lovely spring morning, reporter Joy Nuell was coming to work. She parked her car behind the studios, got out and was walking to the flight of metal steps leading to the station's back door. She suddenly noticed a pimp using both fists to beat the daylight out of one of his girls and before Joy could stop, she shouted, "Why don't you leave her alone?" That was a mistake. The pimp stopped his pounding, the hooker stopped her screaming and crying and they both stared at Joy. Then, shouting obscenities, they chased Joy up the stairs and she was able to get inside the station just in time. As Joy caught her breath, the Pimp and the Hooker, stood at the back door, pounding on it and calling Joy every name in the book including a few that I swear no one ever heard before.

That back door, on one occasion, actually led me to believe I was one of the expendable ones.

It was the middle of the week, around ten o'clock in the morning. I was in the first ten minutes of a 30-minute newscast when I looked up, thru the window to the corridor leading to the back door, I saw members of the sales, business and management offices walking toward the rear door. A couple of minutes later, I saw the newsroom staff headed in the same direction. None of them looked at me or made any effort to tell me where they were going or why. Well, I figured something was happening in the parking lot and I would find out about it when I came out of the studio. But before I had a chance to emerge from the studio, I looked up and there was a fireman. He was followed close behind by a guy in a steel suit of armor. The bomb squad was here. A bomb? Here in the station? Wait a minute! I am here in the station! Nobody told me about any bomb. Or maybe they just decided not to tell me.

As it turned out, there had been a bomb scare and the building had been cleared of everyone but me. It was theorized that most bomb scares are just that, a scare. There rarely was a real bomb. So, why interrupt the flow of newscasts. They would just leave me in the studio, on the air and when the all clear was given, everyone would return and the listeners would never know. It took me three days to finally stop shaking.

It was around this time that a major event occurred in the All-News life of KFWB. We acquired a deathless slogan that the entire world learned and took to its heart.

“YOU GIVE US 22 MINUTES, WE’LL GIVE YOU THE WORLD.”

That slogan was parodied, joked about by average folks and nationally known comedians alike. But it did what it was supposed to do. Whenever you heard those words you immediately thought of KFWB.

Our first reaction to that slogan was.....22 minutes? That would give us a 66-minute hour. How could that be, especially if we, as newscasters were supposed to be accurate? We got our answer..... the number 22 apparently would be remembered more easily than 20 minutes or 25 minutes or 30 minutes. To this day I have not yet figured out how they came to that conclusion but by golly, they were right.

Two days after we started using that slogan, a postcard that we scotch taped to the wall, came from a man who said, “I gave you 22 minutes. You gave me the world. I didn’t like it. I want my 22 minutes back.”

YOU GIVE US 22 MINUTES, WE’LL GIVE YOU THE WORLD. If I had my way, that slogan would be installed in the Promotion Hall of Fame as one of the best slogans ever.

Another of our slogans was...KFWB, someone to turn to. KFWB was always people oriented. We prided ourselves on doing good for the community and one year, we came up with a whopper of a promotional effort that worked like a charm, both for us and the community.

It was the time when green stamps were the big thing. When you bought gas at a filling station, you got stamps. Grocery stores gave them out and you could redeem these stamps for all sorts of wonderful things like luggage, silverware, toys, sporting goods. In fact, one company came out with a catalog showing what you could get for varying numbers of stamp books filled with those little pieces of paper.

It was almost Christmas time and the station came up with a great promotion..."send us your stamps and we will redeem them for gifts for the poor".

Within days envelopes filled with stamps and stamp books began arriving. They came by the hundreds, then by the thousands and yes, even by the hundreds of thousands. One entire room of the station was filled with stamps. We strung stamps from light fixtures in the hall as decorations. They were everywhere. There were so many stamps hanging in the hallways, people almost had to crawl on hands and knees to get in or out of the building. Then it was time to buy the gifts and before we knew it, gift wrapped Christmas gifts filled the station replacing the stamps and we turned them over to the Toys For Tots Program run by the US Marine Corps.

We were pretty sure we had created a great holiday for some kids but we were also 100 percent certain, we had created a great holiday for us.

Talking about wonderful holidays, the management folks at KFWB, for many years made sure that anyone who was going to

have to work on a holiday and possibly miss out on having a holiday dinner with their family would be well fed anyway. On the big holidays of Christmas and Easter, they always provided a huge table filled with wonderful things to eat but it was Thanksgiving when they truly went all out.

There would be sliced turkey, yams, cranberry sauce, stuffing, rolls, cake, coffee soft drinks, veggies, and lots of it. So much so that many staffers invited their families to the station because there was no way the night staff alone could finish it. It was a shame to waste it so, why not make it a family affair.

This went on for many years. It was 1974 however when there was a brief change. We are not sure why, but there it was. Two in the afternoon and the Thanksgiving feast was being delivered for that evening. Our mouths were watering waiting to see what we would be served. Then we saw it.

Kentucky Fried Chicken, cole slaw, mashed potatoes and gravy. Now any day of the week, Kentucky Fried Chicken is great but Thanksgiving is kind of special and chicken would never do. No explanation. No apology, not even a Happy Thanksgiving wish. Just three buckets of chicken, five buckets of mashed potatoes and another five of cole slaw and that was it.

We stared at each other for a few minutes in pure disbelief and then decided that we were going to have a turkey dinner with all the trimmings, despite them.

Half a block from the station was a Hollywood landmark restaurant, The Tick Tock. It had food to die for and honey glazed rolls like you had never tasted before. People used to charter buses from all over southern California to come to dinner at the Tick Tock.

Well, we gave them a call and asked if they were serving a turkey dinner that night. They answered that they sure were and it was a doozie. It had everything you could imagine for only eight dollars. Well, we said send over 15 dinners. They did. We ate. We enjoyed. The buckets of chicken sat unopened, getting cold and stayed that way until Monday when management came in expecting to get kudos for their generosity and instead getting three buckets of cold chicken, five tubs of moldy mashed potatoes and five tubs of shredded dry cabbage. and for the privilege of seeing the looks on their faces, we gave thanks on that Thanksgiving.

The studio facilities for KFWB had a certain flair about them. The building that housed the station had been around since the golden days of Hollywood when the amount of equipment you needed to do just about anything, was low because most of that equipment had not yet been invented.

It was a different matter in the sixties and seventies. Take recording equipment for example. All radio stations used quarter inch tape on reel to reel machines. For music it became a very big advance when eight track cartridges exploded on the scene. Here was an entire album of music on a single cartridge. Then a short time

later, the 8-track became obsolete as the cassette made its debut. These little plastic containers held more tape than the 8-tracks and were easier to use when playing something or recording something. Of course, the folks at home hated it. As soon as they bought the latest new system, a newer new system was introduced and it was back to the stores to buy that. And what made it even worse was the fact that the recording companies stopped making 8-tracks after a while so there was nothing to play on your old system and if you wanted the latest, you had to buy the latest.

It was around this time that a new thought began to circulate through the hollowed Halls of KFWB..."Things will get better when we get in the new building."

KFWB was growing. Its staff was getting larger and its inventory of broadcast equipment was outgrowing the available floor and wall space and we began to think in terms of moving to a new building. This sent a shiver of excitement through everybody. Several buildings were targeted right away for investigation. One was a massive oval shaped building on Wilshire Boulevard on the edge of Beverly Hills. What a magnificent edifice that is. At the time, it was brand spanking new with the newest of everything inside. We began to salivate overtime. The next was the high-rise office building that had just been put up on the grounds of Universal Studios. It too was state of the art and was accessible to the Universal Studios commissary where we could eat with the stars. There were several other buildings that were looked at and later rejected. A few more buildings were

looked at and slowly but surely, talk about a new building subsided a little. We stopped holding our breaths but we continued predictions that “things would be better in the new building.” We just didn’t know when that would be.

A major requirement was accessibility to the freeway system. When covering a story, we often had to move very fast and if we had to battle traffic lights trying to reach the freeways, our competition would beat us each time and besides, getting there fast is what it’s all about.

All of a sudden, we began hearing talk about an available building on Yucca Street, in Hollywood. It was empty. It was a fixer upper and it was half a block from a freeway on ramp. We heard the building had a rather eclectic past, having once been a TV studio and later a supermarket. So, the powers that were at the time, went to take a look and after some hemming and hawing, they said okay. And the work began.

Actually, the stories about the building indicated it was an historic edifice and I don’t mean during the supermarket years. In the early fifties when TV series were first becoming popular, ZIV TV produced what is now considered to be the first medical series on television. Called “Dr Hudson’s Secret Journal” the series was based on the Lloyd C. Douglas book of the same name. There was another popular series, “Rama Of The Jungle”. Both of these series were produced in the studio building that currently houses KFWB.

We are not sure what supermarket occupied the building and frankly we didn't care.

Once the renovation work began, fantasy time took over. What would the building look like when it was done? What things would we have that we did not have in the old building? Would we be the envy of broadcasters all over the country?

We speculated that we would get new, very comfortable chairs, new electric typewriters, all the pens we could ever use. Then our fantasies went into overdrive.

How about a gym and sauna in the basement? What about an announcers lounge? A kitchen where we could prepare hot meals? Yeah right. Well, how about hooks to hang up our coats? How about parking close to the building? How about keys to the building?

As the work began, I made several visits to the site to check on everything, as if I had any idea what I was looking at. Walls were being installed and tubing and piping were being put in and miles and miles of wiring. I walked around giving thumbs up to everybody and luckily no one asked for my help.

Just for the heck of it, I created a fictitious company called Walls-R-Us. These were the guys installing the you-know-what. When they finished, in came the Remnants-R-Us guys. These were the highly trained men from the carpet store and they brought in their remnants and put them everywhere. Then came Doorways-R-Us, Windows-R-Us, Painters-R-Us. In fact, the entire R-Us family was making out like bandits. As the work progressed at the new building, little by

little the contents of the old building were being moved over. This was terrific except for one thing. When we needed something at the old building, chances were very good it had been moved to the new building and this occasionally meant running to the new building to get what we needed and bring it back. It was kind of the corporate version of musical chairs.

One of the more amazing changes was the color scheme. As mentioned earlier, the newsroom at the Hollywood Boulevard studios had been painted a color just a bit lighter than Navy blue. For the new building, we believe that Chief Engineer Richard Rudman, operating under the alias, Tubes Krikey, revisited the Navy paint depot where he got a good deal on battleship gray paint. That's the color the newsroom became and after years of Navy blue we now had battleship gray and we began to salute each other as we passed in the hall. For all you aspiring interior decorators, never use battleship gray walls with carpet remnants that range from gray to taupe, to mauve to green to wombat spitup. To put it mildly, colorwise, the newsroom became an eclectic display of ophthalmic grunge.

Finally, after much painting, carpentry, electrical work, carpet laying and other manly arts, the building was ready and we finally moved in.

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but first...

Silver Tongue Devils.

Vince Campagna, anchor: "George Archer's Record sucking third round has vaulted him onto the Leader Board at the L.A. Open at Rancho Park".

Cleve Herman, Sports caster: At Santa Anita this afternoon, the winner in the third race, Asti Megoesbee. (Actually the horse was "As Time Goes By.")

Julia Chavez Anchor: "Kennedy Library Archivist Megan Desnoyers says the tapes were the last major release of historically important recordings Kennedy made during the last year of his pregnancy."

## **KFWB TO THE RESCUE**

CNN is born.

Ronald Reagan is elected President.

Reagan is wounded.

Prince Charles marries Lady Diana Spencer.

“Aids” is officially termed an epidemic.

One might think that when you are hired to be a newscaster or a street reporter that's all you do all day. At some stations that is indeed the case. At KFWB, we often found that going the extra mile or finding the extra project could often be a feather in your cap. Not many of us walked around with feathers sticking out of our caps but many of us did find projects that had special meaning on the personal level. These also fit in very nicely with what we were doing on the air.

My special project was born after hearing reports that the residents of Seattle, Washington were learning CPR, cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and as a result, were saving lives. I asked

several people at the station and several of my neighbors if they had ever heard of CPR and if so, could they perform it if necessary. The overwhelming majority had no clue what it was. At that moment, "Project Heart Start" was born. I called Seattle and was put in touch with the physician who spearheaded the effort up there and interviewed him. The interview was okay but not very dramatic and I wanted my project filled with excitement, drama, pathos, all the things that would force our listeners to stay tuned for more and perhaps get off their duffs and learn CPR. I of course notified management of what I was doing and they approved. In fact, they contacted the American Red Cross, various hospitals and religious groups and even the school system and got them involved. If we could provide the people, they would offer CPR courses.

I was ecstatic and I jumped head first into the project. My efforts were concentrated in two directions, finding people who had used CPR, to interview them on how they came to know the process and to use it. The other direction was fending off all manner of people at the station who wanted to take credit for the entire project.

First, I found a grandmother who had saved her grandchild after he fell into a backyard swimming pool. I talked to a county lifeguard who used it to save a shark attack victim. One of my most dramatic interviews was with an LAPD officer who had been shot and who survived thru CPR applied by passersby.

Before long, the word got around and the calls started coming in. At the same time, the Red Cross had begun giving the CPR courses at

those hospitals, schools and churches that had volunteered classroom space. The Red Cross even recruited and trained volunteers to give the courses.

Everything was moving ahead at warp speed. I was producing reports as fast as possible, at times, three or four a day, getting them on the air the next day. At KFWB, my colleagues and I all took the course and wouldn't you know it, one of us actually used it. Anchor Vince Campagna was in Las Vegas when a rather portly man, seated at a slot machine, keeled over with a heart attack. Vinnie dropped to his knees and applied CPR and kept the man alive until paramedics arrived.

Two weeks later, that man was on hand at Dodger Stadium where Vinnie was honored by the team, for his heroism.

Within the first two weeks, the Red Cross reported that 34 thousand people had learned CPR and the numbers were growing each day. Even children in elementary school were taught how to apply CPR and it became a regular part of various classes for babysitters. In fact, by the time the campaign which ran for slightly more than a month had ended, over a quarter of a million people had been trained. And we won awards.

Golden Mike statuettes; plaques from the LA Press Club; The Roman Catholic Church's Gabriel Award, plus awards from Associated Press, United Press International and my favorite award, The Harvey Blakesly Award, a national honor from the American Heart Association for Journalistic efforts that made a difference.

There was a five hundred dollar honorarium that went with the certificate that I would have given back to the Heart Association as a donation, but I never saw the check and don't know what happened to it.

That's show biz.

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We have all heard the expression, "No news is good news." In some cases that may be true but in the news business, no news is a disaster. There were two days, separated by a couple of months, in which there was no news and that gave me the opportunity to single-handedly save the Roman Catholic Church.

It was a quiet Sunday afternoon. I was one of the two anchors working that afternoon. Rita Cash, a lovely and extremely talented writer was at the editor's desk.

From the standpoint of news stories we were covering, the day was deadly dull. No adrenaline churning stories had taken place. No murders, robberies or political scandals. There were no Hollywood gossip type stories to make our listeners salivate. There is just no other way to put it. . .it was a very dull day.

I had been chatting with Rita about the lack of good stories and jokingly, she raised her hands toward the sky and prayed for a good solid lead story. Sure enough, in five minutes, the bulletin alarms went off. Not just a buzzer but bells, whistles and sirens. This was

more than just a bulletin. This was a bombshell. There it was. In Rome, Pope Paul had died. We had our big story.

The adrenaline began to race thru our systems as we reached for the phone to call the local Archbishop. We put thru calls to the Vatican office in Washington D.C. and to Rome itself. We got reaction from everybody and his brother. It had become a great news day and the story lasted several days until the College of Cardinals picked a new Pope.

Well, time passes. It is now a month later. I am again one of the Sunday afternoon anchors and Rita Cash is back at the editor's desk and it's another deadly dull day. Nothing at all is taking place anywhere in the world. In desperation, Rita stretches her arms to the sky and shouts, "We need a lead story. Give us a lead story. We need a lead story!" Five minutes later, the Pope dies again. John Paul the First succumbs one month after being installed.

But wait! Could it be...? Was it possible that...? Was there a connection between Rita's prayers and the death of two Popes? Nahhhhh!

Time passes again. It is now one month later. The scene is the same. The cast of characters was the same and the situation likewise. It was deadly dull again. Rita threw up her arms again. This time, however, I leaped from my chair, vaulted over the editor's desk and wrestled Rita to the ground, preventing her from praying for a lead story. I was tired of doing Pope stories. And that's how I saved the Catholic church.

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There is no doubt that KFWB had become a major tool of communication to the people of Los Angeles.

The folks at corporate headquarters have, among other things, a communications function. They must relay to their employees the policies and thinking of those in the ivory tower. They must also allow people in one part of the company know what is being done elsewhere in the corporation.

I mention this to lead into what was, for me, a momentous turn of events. It all began with a memo from what I have often referred to as the palatial headquarters of Mother Westinghouse in New York. The memo instructed the heads of the various radio and TV stations to create inhouse newsletters in which to inform their employees of things they already knew about, having been there when they happened. Things like promotional stunts, campaigns, etc. It was also a chance for employees to get their pictures in the newsletter if they won an award or a promotion or some good thing like that. It would also be the vehicle in which to introduce new employees and to say goodbye to others on all levels of the corporate ladder. In return for us producing those individual newsletters, the brass would produce one of their own tell us the same stuff we told them in our newsletters. In addition, you must know how we hungered to know what folks we wouldn't know if we fell over them, were doing at their stations.

The project got underway with the KFWB promotions office producing a newsletter they cleverly called..."The Newslines". That document ranks among the most boring things I have ever read. There was one interesting article that our building maintenance chief, Rudy Morgan, had once played prominent roles in the Jock Mahoney "Tarzan" movies. The problem was that we already knew that. There was another incredibly exciting article that our General Manager was in New York for a few days..

As you might expect by now, this set me to thinking and I decided to do a full parody of the KFWB Newslines. So I dragged out my battered tripewriter with the ribbon that was almost completely devoid of ink and I pounded out.....THE KFWB NOOSELINE. Its slogan was...Things You Picked Up While Hanging Around KFWB.

The Nooseline was designed to look like it had been typed in a pitch black, dank, damp dungeon by a wild eyed rascal bent on causing trouble. It took the stories of the official Newslines and rewrote them all. The publication was produced at a total cost of zero by me, using my crummy typewriter and the company's Xerox machine. With a non-existent budget, I did the writing and I did the fabulous illustrations. In the art world, those drawings might have been rated one step above a poorly drawn stickman.

The first issue was distributed one day after the Newslines was handed out. Actually, I only printed 30 copies and handed them out

to a select group of people. I didn't want to be handed over to the newsletter police.

The first issue was an instant hit. Most of the hits were around my head and shoulders.

In a few hours, the NOOSELINE had been read by just about everyone. Most of the comments were about the typos and poorly constructed sentences and the atrocious spelling. I explained that it had been produced in a dark, dank, damp dungeon, equipped with a crummy typewriter and a 40 watt lightbulb. They didn't believe me.

One month later and it was time for the station to put out the Newsline again. They did. Right on schedule and just as you might imagine, issue two was as dull as issue one. So, three days later, along comes the NOOSELINE's second issue. This time I made 100 copies. It had the same stories as the official newsletter, written in a style never before seen in polite company.

Another month goes by and this time, there is no Newsline. Did they forget? Did they quit? Was it possible that the Newsline folded in the wake of my fabulous journalistic effort in the NOOSELINE? There was only one way to find out. I put out issue number three, asking where the hell was their issue number 3. I got no answer. To make matters worse, when the promotion director walked thru the studios on his way to or from the parking lot, he never once looked at me and spoke to me. Something was up! Nevertheless, I persevered and a month later, issued my fourth NOOSELINE. This was much

harder to do because I didn't have a Newslite to inspire me. I had to find the stories on my own. But I did, somehow and again, the reception was great. But I was still worried that something was brewing and I didn't know what.

Two days after issue number four was distributed, I was at home and the telephone rang. It was the General Manager's secretary. She asked me to come in early and go straight to the boss's office. Well, as far as I was concerned, my career was now over. I was either fired, suspended with pay or suspended without pay or I was set to face a firing squad. I was frantic. But I kissed my wife and said goodbye as though I were a Green Beret headed for a suicide mission. My hands shook as I drove to the station and reported to the office of General Manager Frank Oxarart. All color had drained from my face long ago. I thought I was going to have a heart attack or at least faint. I just knew that he was furious over the NOOSELINE and now I was going to pay the price. I sat down across the desk. It was deathly quiet in the room. Then Frank told me he had sent copies of the Newslite and the NOOSELINE to New York. He added that the powers that be liked my publication better than the station's newsletter and that, as of that moment, the NOOSELINE was the official in-house newsletter of KFWB. They had to be kidding! The NOOSELINE? Oh my God!

Issue number 5 sported the banner headline: TRASH JOURNALISM TRIUMPHS AGAIN. My lead story was my disgust and horror that someone at headquarters had the nerve, the

gall and a complete lack of good taste to select the NOOSELINE to represent KFWB. I pointed out that the back of a box of Count Chocula chocolate flavored cereal contained more intelligent reading matter than the NOOSELINE. I could not believe that a group of intelligent executives in New York would give me carte blanche to rot the minds of my fellow workers.

Now, my work was really cut out for me. I had to produce a monthly newsletter, poking fun at everybody and everything while giving accurate information to them. I had to do the poking of fun in a manner that avoided the pokie from poking the pokor (sic) in retaliation. I did it by poking fun at myself. To blatantly borrow a copyrighted name, I became the Pokemon of Yucca Street.

Here is how one serious event was treated by the NOOSELINE. The information was there. You just had to hunt for it.

It appeared that street muggers had become a problem in Hollywood and the station wanted its people protected. And so a system was installed in the building that was designed to do the trick. Here's what it entailed.

Mounted on the outside of the building was this box with all kinds of electrical things in it including flashing lights, buzzers, sirens, sleigh-bells, foghorns, a Family of Swiss Bell-Ringers and possibly a ground to air missile launcher. The employees, mainly those who worked at night and would be going to and from their cars after sundown, were given garage door openers. Actually, they only looked like garage door openers. They were remote triggers

that would set off the flashing lights, sirens and the family of bell ringers. I named the devices Mugger Buzzers. The name stuck. Here's how it would work. You are walking across the parking lot to your car when a mugger approaches. He grabs you and says give me all your money. You say "Okay, but first..." You reached into your pocket or purse and pull out your mugger buzzer. The mugger is engulfed in fear, flashing lights and noise from that damn family of bell ringers. The mugger runs away and you are safe. Safe partially because by activating your mugger buzzer, a klaxon horn blares in the newsroom, scaring the daylight out of everyone as they rush to the parking lot to save you. Once there, if the mugger has not yet run, they wrestle him to the ground even though he is packing an Uzi and hold him for the police.

That's the way it is supposed to work. Now, here is how it really worked, based on a true story.

Joe Blow leaves the station and heads for his car and is jumped by a mugger. He manages to trigger his mugger buzzer. The light flash, the siren blares and those bell-ringers go into their act.

Inside, in the newsroom, as our compadre was possibly being beaten to a pulp, this is the reaction.

"Huh?"

"What the hell is that?"

"I don't know."

"What was what? I didn't hear nuttin'"

"Should we look out back?"

“Okay, why don’t you go and check while I make a pot of fresh coffee.”

With a performance like that, reported in the NOOSELINE, the station upgraded the system with a new and exciting feature. If a person is attacked by a mugger, activation of the system causes the box attached to the building to jump down, while all hell is breaking loose, including noise from you know who, the box wrestles the mugger to the ground. We never figured out how that worked because luckily, it was never necessary.

\* \* \* \* \*

Poking fun and disseminating information at the same time could be risky but also lots of fun. On one occasion, News Director Ed Pyle issued a memo telling us to stop using a phrase many of us had used for years. The phrase was....”At the electronic tone, the time will be...” The phrase was used because when the electronic clock in the air studio struck the hour or the half hour, a beep tone would be sounded. We heard it in the studio and our listeners heard it on their radios. But now, in a short, curt, humorless memo, we were told not to use it anymore. So, the cracked writer of the NOOSELINE, namely me, decided to expand on the issue a bit.

In one issue of the NOOSELINE, I printed a slightly enlarged version of Ed Pyle’s memo. In addition to not using the words “electronic tone”, we would also not use the terms gas powered tone or nuclear powered tone. I claimed I discovered that Ed simply did

not like the word “tone”. So I decreed that we would tell time on the air by saying....

“At the noise, the time will be.....”

\* \* \* \* \*

When a station’s promotion department gets in gear and begins working on a project, the aim is twofold. One is to promote an event, an idea, a place but it is also another chance to keep the station’s call letters before the public. If we promote a charity, our call letters are included in the promotional material and we come across as good guys and the public is prone to listen to us.

Because we are an All-News radio station, our credibility is extremely important to us. So engaging in a promotion could not be anywhere close to the zany antics that a rock music station is free to stage. For instance, we could take our mobile studio to the scene of a charity event and broadcast news from the scene. This way the public can watch. the news anchor who could not do his newscast while sitting naked in a vat of Jello. We must be taken seriously at all times. We would lose our audience very fast if they got the idea we were just fooling around. As a result, when we staged an event, it was an important event. Equality for women in the workplace was one such event that KFWB associated itself with for several years. We called it Women’s Equality Day at KFWB.

One day each year for three years, we invited celebrity women from show business, politics, the sciences, from sports and from many

endeavors, to come to the station and for a day, become newscasters. We would write and prepare the newscasts and then accompany the women into the studio where we did the button pushing and they did the reading. We had a former Miss America, a future U.S. Senator, a Presidential daughter, actresses, writers, comedians, models, all tops in their field all doing the news.

For us anchors it was great fun meeting these celebrity women and helping them to do newscasts. Each one was subjected to a crash course on the mechanics of the operation and when they were thoroughly confused, we assured them that we would be with them every step of the way.

Now, I can't say for sure if Women's Equality Day had any major effect on equality for women in the work force but it did wonders for our ratings as the number of adult women listening to us skyrocketed.

As I mentioned, promotional stunts are designed to keep our name in front of the public. Rock stations can do all sorts of wacky things because that's what listeners to those stations enjoy. KFVB could participate in fun events but they had to be "dignified".

At Children's Hospital of Orange County, to the south of Los Angeles, the folks there had an annual fund raiser called the CHOC's Padrinos 10-K Run. The Choc's Padrinos are a group of wonderful hospital volunteers who work at the hospital; and do the fund raising for it. They are the ones who stage the 10-K run. KFVB joined them, to help them in their effort and to promote ourselves at the

same time. It was a time when long distance running was all the rage. Marathons, 10-Ks, 5-K's and you didn't have to actually run. You could skate the distance, walk the distance and even, I suppose, use a pogo stick if you had one. I, of course, had to put my two cents worth in and I announced the first annual 1-K sit, for people who just don't like to move at all.

Now, I knew all about Children's Hospital of Orange County but I had never heard the term CHOC's Padrinos, so when it was announced that we were teaming up with them, I was extremely excited. You see, I got the idea that CHOC's was a candy manufacturer and Padrinos were chocolate covered caramels or something like that. I knew for a fact that when the 10-K race was held, there would be cartons and cartons of free candy for everybody. I pictured the station awash in a sea of candy. It was a couple of days later that I was told that Padrinos were not candies and if I tried biting into one, her husband would probably punch out my lights.

I felt it was my job as editor in chief of the NOOSELINE, to help station people prepare for this event. First, I did not put the day, date and location of the event in the NOOSELINE. Next, I advised my co-workers to buy very expensive running shoes (notice, they are not called sneakers anymore) and run around the block in their neighborhood a few thousand times. And I had a marvelous hint to make their practice runs enjoyable. I said, never cool yourself off by dousing yourself in orange juice, and always run down hill.

Two months later, after a monumental amount of promotion and hoopla, the race was held. There was a winner, but I'll be damned if I can remember who it was. There was also good news and bad news. The good news was that the 10-K run made a lot of money for the CHOC's Patrinos. The bad news was....I had to go buy my own candy.

\* \* \* \* \*

I don't have to point out that modern day radio is extremely high tech. There are items with all sorts of buttons, switches, bells and whistles, designed to put our golden throats on the air. There are however, some people who should never be allowed near anything more complicated than a wheelbarrow.

Dee Gagliardi was the station receptionist. A teeny tiny lady, Dee had an incredibly large and bubbly personality and a never-ending love for the Garfield cartoon strip.

Dee's bailiwick was the large desk at the front entrance to KFWB. It had its own unique collection of equipment. There was of course the telephone system that was a lot more than just a phone. It was a pager, a Public Address system, a message center, and I believe it could prepare breakfast for Dee. Then there were the usual things like the stapler, a computer terminal, file drawers, and an all-important buzzer to allow people to enter the station from the street. She first talked to the person thru a very thick bulletproof window.

If the person passed inspection, Dee pushed the button and the door unlocked.

Dee could operate these items in her sleep but there were times when Dee had to sleep or go home or visit the loo and someone would have to replace her for a bit. Training a replacement could be tricky even if that person would only have to spend a minute or two at the reception desk.

One day, Dee had to leave her desk for a few minutes and she asked a woman from the Sales Department to take over until she got back. Just answer the phones and push that little button to let people enter. But first, check them out thru the security window.

Dee left the reception hall just as the sandwich man arrived with a basket filled with goodies for the staff to buy. So, Dee's replacement pushed the button to let him in. Well, not quite. She accidentally pushed the little button next to it, the one Dee did not tell her about. It was the silent alarm. As the man waited patiently for the door to open, 12 thousand (a slight exaggeration) members of the LAPD arrived, armed with handguns, rifles, machineguns, bazookas, flame throwers, hand grenades, cannons and possibly (another slight exaggeration) a nuclear device.

The situation calmed down quite rapidly when it was determined that it was just the sandwich man waiting to come in. Dee had learned her lesson and was more careful after that. She did however, begin frisking people who entered the building but being as short as she

was, this entailed a lot of feeling up of their kneecaps. She was told to knock it off.

\* \* \* \* \*

It is time now to check in on those instances in which our Silver Tongued air staff tripped over those silver tongues of theirs.

The golden throated tone of anchor Bill Jenkins treated his listeners to this brief bit of station identification. "This is KFWB, Los Angeles, Group W, a Westinghouse Broadcasting station, serving Southern California. KFWB News time 61 degrees.....61degrees? I said it. I said it. 10:59 and the temperature is 61 degrees dummy!"

Anchor Art Blaske showed that the cartoon character Speedy Gonzalez had nothing on the UCLA basketball team,. In a brief stint as a sports anchor, Art broadcast this gem:

"It took a stall by Coach Wooden's fast balling team to seal the win."

Anchor Brian Bastien had a problem with obituaries. Here is what we mean. "Show business has lost another star. This time in Stonington, Connecticut where Dorothy Cummingore has died at the age of 58 degrees."

A reporter's insert in one of Chuck Walsh's newscasts turned into a silly slip of the tongue for reporter Joy Nuell. Joy was reporting on a weather related postponement of a Mercy Mission airlift of

emergency supplies to Central America. "And so, there is a one hour hold. So, for now Mershon Missy...oh Chuck, Mission Mercy is stay."

Missing letters is something that happens quite a lot. Anchor Brian Bastien, who we met a moment ago, delivered this prime example. "Actor Hal March is dead. The veteran actor died this morning at the UCLA Medical Center. He was 47 years old. March was an announcer for such shows as the Jack Benny Show, The Perry Como Show, the Bob Shope Ho..."

## TRUE SILLINESS

First orbital flight of the Space Shuttle is a success.

First successful U.S. heart transplant in Salt Lake City.

AT&T is broken into smaller companies.

When we watch news on television, we see an anchorman who looks very serious but when we listen to news on the radio, we can't see what the newscaster looks like. For the most part, we anchors are serious about the stories we read on the air, the way we read the news and whether the catering truck will still be in the parking lot when we get off the air.

Occasionally, and in my case, frequently, newspeople will go to great lengths to be silly, mostly to relieve pressure and tension. Take, for instance, my SAVE THE OLAY Foundation.

We have all heard of Oil of Olay, a very fine skin preparation. But who ever heard of an Olay? It's not the "Ole!" of the Spanish bullring. So, what the heck is an OLAY? Sounds like a cute woodland creature to me. I got mental pictures of Bambi's friend

Thumper. Then I wondered how they got the oil from these cuddly little animals. I won't describe my next thought but I knew I had to SAVE THE OLAY. So, I created an OLAY Rescue Effort.

The OLAY, according to the flyer I prepared, was a second cousin to the Wombat on his mother's side. There are about three billion OLAYs around the world so they are not exactly on the endangered species list. In fact, they are not on any species list.

How are they caught? OLAY hunters set out cages in the forest and lure the little creatures with their favorite foods, corn dogs and yellow popcorn. Then for hours at a time, they are subjected to listening to the music of John Tesh until they die of the rare malady called Mantovani's Disease. Then the oil is squozen (sic) from their limp little bodies.

I included this information in my KFWB Nooseline and the reaction was truly bizarre. People wanted to know more about the OLAY. What did it look like, was it good with children and could it be paper-trained? The answer to all of those questions was a simple "Huh?"

Now, it was time to "SAVE THE OLAY!"

I came up with a fabulous idea. Lets all "ADOPT AN OLAY". We established a fictional shelter for OLAYs in the hill country north of Los Angeles. In an article that brought tears to the eyes of total morons, we offered these critters for adoption for the amazing price of \$14.83 a piece, not valid in the continental United States or anywhere else for that matter . Along with the offer came instruction

on the care and feeding of the OLAY. Chateaubriand twice a day, accompanied by your finest bottle of whatever was handy. Then, just sit back and spend many hilarious hours watching your OLAY frolic on your carpet or if you adopt a male and female, you can watch them mate and later get sick all over your carpet. I did point out that the gestation period for an OLAY was seven minutes. The response to the campaign was less than overwhelming. In a very short time, the OLAY was history and the little critter became just another entry on the list of species even Darwin never heard of.

\* \* \* \* \*

We all know about Bloopers or as I refer to them...examples of Silver Tongue Deviltry. These are, as you have already determined, slips of the tongue that can be quite humorous and embarrassing for the person uttering them on the air. There are times however when a simple blooper crosses the line into a whole new dimension. This is when the words are more than just a slip of the tongue. This is when they conjure up amazing images that cause people to look at each other and choke as they try to suppress laughter. In March of 1983, Orange County Bureau chief Barbara Reigle committed such a semantic disaster.

While driving on a freeway in Orange County, Barbara noticed a motorist in trouble by the side of the road. She called in the story so that other motorists would be aware of the hazard. Here's what our listeners heard. "I got a motorist in trouble on the Santa Ana

Freeway. He has his hands in his pockets. He has a small car and he is out of it." We were not sure if this was a job for AAA or a family planning clinic or AA. It took us a while to recover.

\* \* \* \* \*

Many building that have no windows often experience the phenomenon of bad air that can make employees sick. This was briefly the case at KFWB, in the "new building". It was decided that because so many people were calling in sick with colds, flu, bronchitis, etc, the solution would be the installation of spray disinfectants in each room, and we would spray ourselves as we came and went. By the end of the day, we all smelled like toilet bowl cleaner. But that's not all. Chief Engineer Dick Rudman and his trusty associate, Tubes Krikey were having a problem with tissue disposal. He did not like the idea of tossing used tissues into open containers like wastebaskets under desks and around the newsroom. What to do? What to do?

As usual, it was the KFWB Nooseline to the rescue. Editor and chief Angus Dernflugle, who will be the subject of a later discussion, issued a set of guidelines for tissue disposal.

1. Continue to use the tissue, both sides, until there are no dry spaces left.
2. Jam the tissues into your shirt or pants pocket or as a last resort, into your desk drawer.

3. At the end of the day, take this now gelatinous mess home with you. Allow them to dry out and you can use them again the next day.
4. If, for any reason you run out of tissues, use your shirtsleeve. As you may well imagine, that plan was not adopted.

\* \* \* \* \*

One of the cardinal rules of reporting is: Don't become a part of the event. Reporter Cecelia Pedroza inadvertently became just that while covering a rather silly story.

Cecelia was to report on the West Hollywood Waiters and Waitress street race. In the race, the food servers from local eateries were to hot-foot it around the streets, carrying a tray, a wine bottle and two glasses. They were supposed to run the course without spilling or breaking anything.

Cecelia was standing on the sidewalk as the race began and somehow, she and a waiter collided. Wine spilled all over Cecelia. The other reporters forgot about the race. They all wanted to suck Cecelia's T-shirt to see if it had a naughty but fruity bouquet. Yeah right!

\* \* \* \* \*

Over my 30 year span, spent at KFWB, I found there was one outside contractor who seemed to have had a running contract with the station.

That was the “R-Us” folks. First, their Rugs-R-Us division came in and re-carpeted the newsroom with remnants from other carpets. Colorblind people and those with inner ear problems were falling on the floor everywhere you looked. Then came Painters-R-Us. They turned a battleship gray and blue newsroom into a Berber white newsroom. I never knew exactly what shade Berber white was but what the heck it looked like white and that’s what counts. I wasn’t even too sure what a Berber looked like.

The R-Us Corporation’s finest hour was when their division called Walls-R-Us went into action. These people could put up walls anywhere and at KFWB we loved to put up walls. If somebody got a promotion, they got an office and that meant walls, floors, doors, windows and a diagram titled YOU ARE HERE. To make this new office, ten or eleven other offices had to undergo modifications.

Writing under the pen name Frank Lloyd Nabbersnacle, Architectural Editor, yours truly described, in the Nooseline, the office being constructed for Sales Department executive Bill Reitz.

“I feel it only right that Bill be informed of the layout of his new office. The existing north wall connects with Rita’s office so we can’t put a door there. The existing south wall connects to Glodean’s office so we can’t put a door there. There is no east wall, at least not yet, so we can’t put a door into a non-existent wall. The west wall will have a door but it will be two and a half feet above the existing floor so we advise Bill not to use it. Therefore, when Bill enters his

office for the first time, he will never be seen again because there will be no walls in his office or something. Good luck Bill.”

This situation is a typical example of why people would often be seen muttering to themselves as they staggered about the building trying to determine who and where they were.

While we may have been staggering around the building muttering to ourselves, we were always concerned about each other. This was especially true during the crime wave. There was a crime wave you know. It wasn't a crime wave as carried out by Al Capone in Chicago. It was a bit more exotic than that. You see, Scarface was concerned about stuff like smuggling booze and loan sharking and one gang trying to take over the territory of another. At KFVB, crime involved little stuff like paper clips, pens, markers, reams of typewriter paper, cartons of computer printout paper and posters, chairs, desks, couches and my car keys.

One day, one of the sexy ladies working in the small, cramped human resources office, showed up at the plush, extravagantly appointed Nooseline publishing office. She told editor and publisher Angus Dernfluge, (yes, that's his name) that her penguin was gone. Her Penguin? Actually it was her poster of a penguin which had been pinned to the posterior wall of her office. Someone had purloined the Penguin and she petitioned to get it back. I told her I would get right on the case. I jumped up, put on my raincoat and ran out. I was back in a minute, having forgotten my wallet. Also, since it wasn't raining I took off the raincoat and went to lunch.

Speaking about lunch, the KFWB crime wave also involved food. People were having their brown paper bags, containing baloney sandwiches, stolen from the refrigerator. Now, that's desperation. But the epitome of chutzpah in the crime wave occurred with me playing the role of the victim. One day, I opened my brown paper bag, containing my yummy tuna fish sandwich, made lovingly by my wife Linda who slaved over it for all of two and a half minutes in our humble abode. What I found was enough to make a grown man say "Huh?" or "What the..?" Someone had unwrapped my sandwich, taken one bite from it and put back the rest. Not only a thief, he was a food critic as well. I never saw that missing sandwich part again and that's probably a good thing.

\* \* \* \* \*

Most companies like to give the impression that they really care for the opinions of their employees. Sometimes, these employees come up with suggestions that can save the company millions of dollars either by increasing efficiency, eliminating waste or just suggesting a new way to do something. Some companies even give prizes to the people making such suggestions. I stress the word "SOME".

At KFWB, a suggestion box was mounted on the wall in our sumptuous lunchroom in the hope that some award winning suggestions would turn up.

We got candy wrappers, saccharine envelopes, yogurt lids and a variety of suggestions on what to do with the suggestion box.

Realizing the need for cooler heads, I stuck my head inside the refrigerator at the station and waited until icicles hung from my nose. I thought to myself, I have half a mind to answer those scalawags. That was just what was needed, someone with half a mind. And so, in the spirit of public service and the good and welfare of the company, I rummaged thru the suggestion box. The first suggestion I found called for the turning off of lights at night. Unless I am wrong, isn't that when you need those lights, when its dark and you cant see?

I responded that its hard enough finding our desks as it is, so the lights will stay on.

An editor complained that the editor's desk was too tall and she needed a higher seat. This was easy. I assigned a committee of three men to handle her seat. She smiled a lot after that.

Two members of the business office complained that the lunchroom was too loud and they wanted a quiet place to eat. So, we tossed them into the parking lot with wooly earmuffs.

Writer Ron Erwin said there was a need for a no hands device at the editor's desk.

Since we had no idea what the hell he was talking about so we ignored him.

There was also a call for more nutritious food in the lunchroom. What's wrong with Twinkies, Fritos and Coke? We ignored that suggestion too.

Finally, the suggestion box contained a threat on my life. So, I came to work, armed to the teeth.

It was not long after that that the suggestion box was ignored and began to gather dust.

\* \* \* \* \*

It was in 1983 that the smoking issue began to raise its ugly smelly head at KFWB. First, we were given smokeless ashtrays. These had little fans which, when turned on, sucked the smoke from the cigarette into a dark grungy chamber where it would not bother anyone. That was the theory. In reality, the dark grungy chambers emitted a darker and grungier smell that made sitting next to them a real ordeal. Then, when the filters in these ashtrays were used up, they eventually clogged up and the internal fans spewed the smoke and ash out onto your desk. To make matters worse, no one ever thought to either clean the filters or get new ones and finally, we tossed the ashtrays into the circular files.

Now, having a smoke filled newsroom is tradition in the news business. Look at any movie or TV show about a newsroom and there is always at least one of two writers and editors with butts hanging from their lips, smoke spiraling its way skyward and ashtrays filled with ancient fossilized butts. It was tradition, it was atmosphere and

it was also torture, since the KFWB newsroom has no windows or exhaust fans.

Now, the plot thickens. Maybe I should say the air thickens. I used to be a smoker and I did my share of polluting the air in the newsroom, but like most of the other smokers, I also smoked in the air booth. This is a totally different ballgame. The air booth being approximately seven feet wide by ten or eleven feet long, a few cigarettes can make the booth look like the London Fog. So a vote was taken. It was decided that cigarettes would not be allowed in the air booth. Smokers also took a vote. They decided that nonsmokers would not be allowed in the air booth. That vote was overturned by management. We smokers voted next that non-smokers could not sit down in the air booth. In desperation, we voted again.... that non-smokers would not be allowed to wear pink paisley slacks in the newsroom. Management caved in on that one and we declared victory.

We were also told the back loading dock outside the building would be the designated smoking area. It had a panoramic view of our dumpsters.

That's the way it is to this day.

\* \* \* \* \*

While the anchors dealt with problems of smoking, management dealt with problem of chairs for the editors. Several editors, Karen Gorbitz Levy chief among them, complained that the chairs were

too low in relation to the desktop. She complained of bumping her chin on her desk a lot.

The station went out and bought telescoping chairs. With a flick of a lever, you could lower or raise the chair to whatever height was best for you. This was wonderful. Now Karen and the other editors could see what they were doing and whom they were working with. However, it wasn't long before the chairs malfunctioned. The lever would activate by itself and the occupant was either plummeted to the floor or be flung like a sack of wheat across the room. So, they fixed the levers. The levers still activated themselves but at a much slower rate and you didn't notice anything until you were actually sitting on the floor.

## SILVER TONGUES

Bill Jenkins, Anchor: "The temperature at the tone is 7 o'clock".

Brian Bastien: "In New York, literary great John Steinbeck is dead at the age of 66 degrees.

Beach Rogers, Anchor: "The weather for the Los Angeles region is clouds tonight and tomorrow with pockets of rain tomorrow night. Clearing and Wednesday on Thursday".

Vice Campagna: "600 miles south of Manila, in a little titty... er.....city called Capobato...."

## **PARTY TIME**

Cellular Phones and Cabbage patch dolls.

U.S. troops invade Grenada.

U.S. loses Americas Cup to Australia.

Hollywood has always been the glamour capital of the world, a truly fun place to be and for KFWB, it provided a treasure trove of stories. Hollywood influences the world, dictating what we wear, eat, listen to, watch and how we will act. The world however, also has an effect on Hollywood. In one instance, an event on the other side of the world affected KFWB in a very personal way.

When militant Iranians overran the US Embassy in Tehran in 1979, taking all those hostages, it was feared that violence could also break out at KFWB. It was theorized that someone might not like the news we were reporting. We might have Iranian sympathizers take us hostage although for the life of me I could not speculate why.

Anyway, it was decided to create "Fortress Westinghouse". Since there was no really strong rear door leading to the engineering

space, one was installed. It was one step above a potato chip in strength and thickness but it had a kick-plate at the bottom. It was later determined an angry man with a butter knife could easily cut his way thru that door.

But there was a steel outer door which was reinforced. A window, located next to it, was outfitted with bulletproof glass capable of stopping a shell from a 105-millimeter Howitzer cannon. Then a special numerical keypad was installed and we all had to memorize a number and punch it in before we could go thru the door to the newsroom. Those who could not memorize very well, had the numbers tattooed on the backs of their hands. It must have been effective because the Iranians never attempted to invade the studios and not a single staff member was ever taken hostage.

\* \* \* \* \*

Over the course of 30 years spent with KFWB, there were some truly wonderful times. Best of all were the parties. Not the birthday observances that seemingly took place every second day with a huge birthday cake for the individual celebrant. In fact, the entire staff put on weight because of all the icing we would consume in the course of a year. That, plus the marvelous cakes and breads that came in just for the heck of it, baked by staffers and the fruit, and candy at Halloween and other observances and we soon became the Chubs Brigade. Well, maybe not everybody but I sure loved those cakes. But I digress.

When I talk about parties, I refer to the officially sanctioned station Christmas parties and the Spring follies.

In the early years, Christmas at KFWB was celebrated in the lobby, near the receptionist's desk. A table was set up with cheese, fruit, and cold veggies, plus wine, champagne and soda. It was nice but not anything to write home about.

Our first big deal Christmas Party, in which we wore suits and the ladies wore dresses and we all looked like real people, was held at a fancy schmancy Backgammon Club in Century City. Good food included tons of iced crab claws. And the backgammon tables were available for those who wanted to play and they even had pong tables, the forerunner of video games, in which you played ping pong with an opponent. Everyone was there and we hated to leave when the time came. Oh yes, those who had to work that night, had a huge dinner brought to them at the station so they would not feel slighted.

The reaction to that first dress up party was so great that a string of fancy Christmas Parties began with staffers, gathering at some posh restaurant or at a hotel ballroom including the Grand Ballroom at the Bel Air Hotel. Talk about fancy...we all dressed to the nines for that one. In fact, station engineer Gale Nobel, who always wore jeans, boots and man tailored shirts and a disaster of a cowgirl hat, even had that hat steamed and blocked just for the party. Now, that's fancy!

One of the most unusual Christmas parties was held at an empty restaurant in West Hollywood. The restaurant had gone out of business but the kitchen was fully equipped and working, so the station took over the venue for the evening. The station General manager, dressed in a Santa Claus outfit, presided over what turned out to be a five hour raffle.

Even as we stuffed our faces with hors d'oeuvres, canapés, snacks, nibbling foods, finger foods, hot foods, cold foods and one or two unidentifiable foods, the GM stood at the roaring fireplace calling out numbers. He gave out VCR's, radios, tape recorders, toys, expensive stuff, cheap stuff, useful stuff, useless stuff, and unidentifiable stuff. It was another gala chance for all of us to get together and discuss station business and talk about things that totally bored our spouses and significant or insignificant others. We drank and ate and drank and ate and then very carefully went to the parking lot, got in our cars and very carefully drove home.

But even as the parties became events we looked forward to, the station went one step further. We had parties in the spring too, for the entire family.

Staffers brought their wives but also their kids too. The first two years of spring gatherings were at a dude ranch in the mountains overlooking the West San Fernando Valley on one side and the Pacific Ocean on the other. A massive cookout was the centerpiece with hot dogs, hamburgers, barbecue chicken, corn, salad, and all the soft drinks anyone could handle. There were games including

the obligatory volleyball and softball games and one of those inflated bouncing thingys where the guys watch the girls as they bounced, to see what else bounced. As Austin Powers might say...Yeah Baby!!!! There was also a swimming pool, horseback riding, basketball, and a gift raffle that beat all previous raffles.

We went to that ranch every spring for two years in a row and then someone suggested something new. The following year, it was picnic at the now defunct Marineland. The station catered the food, we played a few games and then it was off to watch the fish. It was even better than the ranch because you were on your own at the place to see and do what you wanted with fellow workers or by yourself. But best of all, once the kids got tired and cranky, you could leave to go home at any time.

The year following Marineland, the KFWB staffers cavorted at the amusement park called Magic Mountain where again, we stuffed our faces with the usual picnic food and then went off to ride the rides and get the land-locked version of mal de mer..

Finally the spring jaunt came to an end at an old movie ranch in the San Fernando Valley where we ate like pigs again, were given water pistols to shoot each other, wait for the raffle giveaway to end and then we went home.

There were no spring picnics after that and no one ever gave a good explanation why.

Maybe they noticed how many hamburgers I could put away at a single sitting and they got nervous. But those parties were super.

\* \* \* \* \*

Human Resources is a department vital to any corporation and thus it was at KFWB. It handles benefit programs, sees to problems and occasionally will even act as an ombudsman for an employee who has a beef with management. That's how the KFWB human resources department originally got started but along the way, the ombudsman role disappeared and the idea of a benevolent overlord began. Let me explain benevolent overlord.

Benevolent in that it provided medical insurance, life insurance and other benefits to employees. Overlord in that there were times when employees found themselves on the receiving end of ominous warnings as though they had come from top and not middle management. For the most part, the human resource ladies were nice and even caring on occasion. But I digress, which I often do.

The Human Resources department would often send memos to the staff alerting us to the existence of special courses and lectures designed to make our lives better. More money and the immediate departure of certain management types would have sufficed but HR really wanted us to attend these courses.

The courses included.....

“How To Manage Your Temper.”

“Stress Management.”

“Retirement Planning.”

“Career Choices.”

And the ever popular.....

“Taking Care of Your Aging Parents.”

In view of these wonderful courses, I, in my role as publisher of the premiere example of trash journalism, the Nooseline, alerted my fellow employees to the courses I too, was offering. They included.....

“Wealth Thru Arson.”

“Driveway Painting.”

“Hot Weather Carpet Laying.”

“The Exciting Hobby of Fingernail Clipping and Collecting.”

“Jazzercise For People With Two Left Feet.”

“How To Teach Your Banana To Talk.”

Finally.....

“How To Live With The Fact That You Are Scum.”

The lectures were also videotaped for consenting adults to watch in the privacy of their homes.

There were no fees for these lectures, however mandatory donations were happily accepted.

\* \* \* \* \*

I would like to take this brief opportunity to point out to my socially conscious readers that in 30 years of working at KFWB, many fellow workers got married in that time period and I was invited to only one wedding. Do you have any idea the enormous amount of money I saved not having to buy wedding presents?

## STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRMINATION

According to federal regulations, companies are required to make statements of non-discrimination, to show what nice guys they are. In 1984, the Nooseline, being the official in-house newsletter, was given the responsibility making such a declaration.

Here is that declaration, as formulated by beloved Nooseline publisher Angus Dernflugle.

KFWB and Group W, as per law, are obliged not to discriminate on the basis or race, creed, color, national or planetary origin. We shall not discriminate in the areas of hiring, promotion, training and company benefits or cuteness.

Let it be known that according to executive orders 11246, 11375 and 11758, KFWB also will not discriminate against former residents of Indiana, fishermen, chimney sweeps, women with mustaches, high school debate team members, short order cooks, Mahouts, Shiite dentists and U.S.Army First Sergeants. It is okay to discriminate against 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Army sergeants.

Somehow, that disclaimer passed inspection.

\* \* \* \* \*

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## THE 1984 KFWB OLUMPICS

You read it correctly....the 1984 Olumpics. This athletic extravaganza was designed by me to coincide with those other games, the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. The Olumpics, it was hoped, would become the high point of Couch Potatodom. It was for those sports mavens who parked themselves in front of their TV sets, with a six pack and a bag of pretzels and there they stayed from the start of the baseball season, through football, hockey, basketball, bocci ball, La Crosse and Demolition Derby. They watch finely tuned athletes beat their brains out in the quest for medals money or commercial endorsements.

KFWB's 1984 Olumpics were patterned after the 1984 Olympics. We even had an Official sponsor. ....The International Sloth Federation and the Do-It-Later Foundation. The Save The Olay Foundation was too busy.

The following is the Oh-Fish-Hull announcement of the games and the application to be filled out by the ...er.....athletes.

The 1984 Summer Olumpics will be held at a site to be determined later.

Contestants in the Olumpics will vie for medals, trophies, Goofy buttons and bumperstickers reading: The International Olympic Organizing Committee. Here are some of the games already scheduled.: The 100 yard Sit; The Freestyle and Team Beer Can Crush; The fifteen hundred meter high decibel snore; The 400 yd Hurdle stroll and the traditional 1K nap. Banners, clothing and

unbelievably expensive pins for trading will be available. The Committee is authorized to sell these items and keep all the money.

## APPLICATION

-----

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

PLANETARY ORIGIN \_\_\_\_\_ SEX: YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_ MAYBE \_\_\_

BRA SIZE \_\_\_\_\_ DO YOU FOOL AROUND \_\_\_\_\_

CRIMINAL RECORD \_\_\_\_\_ NAMES OF ANYONE \_\_\_\_\_

WHO LIKES YOU \_\_\_\_\_

UNUSUAL HABITS \_\_\_\_\_ REALLY BAD HABITS \_\_\_\_\_

PRO or AMATEUR STATUS \_\_\_ WEIGHT \_\_\_ HEIGHT \_\_\_ EYES \_\_\_

EVENTS YOU ARE TOO TIRED, TOO DISINTERESTED OR  
TOO LAZY TO ENTER \_\_\_\_\_

Signature (AN x WILL DO.)

-----

If you want to become a part of this new tradition of excellence, fill out the above form and send it to me, Angus Dernflugle, Nooseline Editor and Athletic Supporter, along with a cashier's check for \$118.37. In return you will receive an official torn undershirt with a number on it, stenciled in crayon, a pair of used sweat socks and something that appears to be short pants.

\* \* \* \* \*

Editor's note.....The games never got off the ground. People apparently were too lazy to enter. Now what do I do with 900 pairs of torn undershirts and alleged short pants?

\* \* \* \* \*

While the OLUMPIC GAMES never got off the ground, the 1984 Summer Olympic Games did and they were terrific, due in large measure to efforts of KFWB to bring the games to life for KFWB listeners who were too cheap to buy tickets.

First and foremost, the KFWB Nooseline was chosen the official trash and litter of the Olympic Games. This singular honor was accorded us because more Nooselines line the bottoms of birdcages than any other publication. We tried to commission the creation of an official KFWB Nooseline Olympic pin, in the shape of a trash can but no pin company would accept the order and the International Olympic Organizing Committee threatened to put out a contract for a hit on publisher Angus Dernfluge.

KFWB's coverage of the games began with our ongoing reports about the progress of the Olympic torch. Runners who were in great condition, carried the torch through the streets of Los Angeles, followed by KFWB reporters who were panting, sweating, drooling and praying for death as they chased after them. Their reports though, were terrific. We had history making sound bites of people saying... "Wow, here comes the torch!" and "Wow, there goes the torch!" and "I looked away for a moment. Did the torch just go by?"

The assignment of reporters to cover the games was amazing. They included Charlie Sergis, who is known far and wide in sports circles as "Spectator Sergis."

There was also Dan Avey who was widely known as a star of Contact Bridge...er Make that Contract Bridge. Then we had Barbara Reigle who was once a gorgeous show girl and Bob Howard who was given remedial instruction in the difference between boxing and swimming. KFWB anchor Don Herbert was an expert in one Olympic sport but was not assigned to cover the 84 Summer Games for two reasons.....one, figure skating is not part of the summer games and Don did not know the difference between swimming and boxing.

The games went beautifully. Our coverage went beautifully and when it was over, KFWB reporters had left to posterity a few classic examples of silver tongue devilry.

The first example of Silver Tongue Olympic Devilry came with a report by Anchor John North who was informing our listeners about the outcome of various kayaking events.

An athlete who squirms into those little enclosed canoe-like affairs is called a kayaker.

John however hit that word cold and it came out characker. He tried to correct it but his first pronunciation stuck in his head and the correction came out characker again. Then one more time...characker and John wisely decided to go on to another story. A minute of two later, after everyone had forgotten about the charackers in their

kayaks, John remembered the correct pronunciation and gave it. By this time, none of us knew what he was talking about.

One of the major events of the Olympics is the twenty six mile marathon and reporter Bob Howard was assigned to that event which, at one point passed alongside a field where livestock were grazing. Bob made note of that fact as he opened his report on the air thusly," Cows of all people, have gathered here to watch." Cows of all people? When did cows become people? It was a moooving experience.

But the Olympic Gold goes to Silver Tongue Devil Joe Cala, one of KFWB's intrepid sportscasters. Joe was reporting on the rowing events. Those long boats called shells in which rowers numbering eight, four and sometimes one, race along placid calm water with a man in the stern, looking forward, calling the strokes. That man is the Coxswain. The word is pronounced cox-un. Not cox-swain. Can you see what's coming?

Joe began his report and hit the word. He got nervous about saying it on the air and then became unsure of himself but continued, leaving out half the word. As luck would have it, he left out the wrong half. Joe blythely referred to the eight man crew with cox and the cox-less four. Now, we know the word is spelled with an x. Others may have a different spelling in mind and this possibility had people in the newsroom falling out of their chairs laughing, with tears rolling down their cheeks.

It was a true Olympic highlight for us.

It is also a true Olympic achievement by Joe Calla, Don Wells, Bob Howard, John North and everyone else who reported on the games that they were able to wade through a forest of foreign athlete's names and do as well as they did. There were names like Ali Faki, Rudel Obreja, Yifu Wang, Ragnar Skanakar and others. My hat is off to you guys.

The Olympics gave me a wonderful chance to fool around again and in the Nooseline, I inserted a special Olympics sports quiz. No one passed the test. Then again, it's possible no one tried. Here were the questions.

1. What was the color of George Washington's white pommel horse?
2. Who is buried in Grant's swim stadium?
3. Muhammed Ali became the world heavyweight boxing champ in which sport?
4. Mark Spitz performs the backstroke in what sport?
5. Olympic Equestrian events involve what animal?
6. A baseball bat is used in what sport?
7. In football, what body part is used to kick the football?
8. In weightlifting, what do you lift?
9. May horses use water wings in water polo?
10. What did the Olmecs of 1000 BC call their version of basketball?

\* \* \* \* \*

Being on the radio each day in Hollywood can and often does lead to opportunities elsewhere. Since we are right next door to the Motion Picture Industry, it is not unusual for a producer or director or casting person to turn up on the telephone asking for someone who can do a voice over or even an on camera bit for a movie or television show. Many of us decided to go whole hog and we obtained agents who arranged auditions for us. The first person to get such an opportunity was anchor Brian Bastian who won the role of reporter on a Hai Karate After Shave commercial, interviewing some guy who had just sky dived out of a plane. KFWB's Charles Sergis got a small part, with name credit on the Robert Redford film, "The Natural", I got a very nice share of commercial work. These included two national Buick commercials, Goodyear Tires, Firestone Tires, Detroit Gas and Electric, General Telephone Company (GTE), a video game, a dog food, a dish washing detergent, Sea-Doo wave runners, some political campaign spots, a small restaurant chain in Oregon, Mitsui Manufacturers bank, plus, voice over jobs in the movies Clean & Sober; Muhammed Ali, The Greatest; Blind Ambition; Nixon; the remake of the Alfred Hitchcock Presents TV series and the horror film Scarecrows among others.

Probably the most unusual example of Hollywood coming to call involved anchor Jim Burson. Jim had a rather unusual role in a movie and he didn't even know it. Here is how it was discovered, by me.

Before the advent of full blown cable tv, there was a service called ON-TV. Lots of movies, some good, some bad, and some beyond

description. One night, I was home alone, my wife out playing cards at a friends house, so it was my night to control the remote and I turned on ON-TV and son of a gun, it was a porno movie! So, while the cats away the mice will play. I settled back and watched. There was this rather attractive but totally untalented actress doing some rather amazing things to her co-star, a rather hairy, and equally untalented guy. The dialogue included such deathless words as Oh, Oh Yeah, Oh Yeah Baby, Do it baby, Oh yeah, etc etc etc. This went on for about fifteen minutes until they mercifully stopped. The guy rolled over and went to sleep. The girl lit a cigarette and turned on a radio on a nightstand next to the bed. From the radio came the dulcet tones of our own Jim Burson doing the news, sports and weather and mentioning KFWB. The producers had simply recorded the station when Jim was on the air and inserted the tape into the film, in a manner reminiscent of the way other things were inserted in that film.

For lack of a better term, I was blown away by this strange turn of event. I took down the name of the film, the producer and the following day, came to work to congratulate Jim on his cinematic triumph. Jim was equally amazed and immediately called our union to complain. Within a short time, it was revealed that rather than face a lawsuit, the producers took the film to the editing room and Jim's acting career was nipped in the bud, so to speak.

That's show biz.

\* \* \* \* \*

One of the major jobs in any news organization is the coverage of local and national elections. To do it right, requires knowledge of the electoral process and the issues and candidates being decided upon. It also requires lots of people. You need anchors to put it all together, reporters in the field to conduct an endless line of interviews and someone who is familiar with arithmetic, to decipher the numerical information, namely the vote totals. Finally, you need commentators who are arrogant enough to believe they know what it all means and you don't. This means lots of people. Most radio stations don't have massive news departments and often bring in all types of employees and volunteers to do the various jobs. You have people from the sales staff working extra hours on election night and even disc jockeys are dragged screaming from their beds to help with work in the field and the local News Director volunteers to be the anchor.

This was not the case with KFVB. We had a huge newsroom with lots of people so doing an outstanding job was an everyday occurrence and Election Day was just another big news day. Such was the state of affairs at KFVB on November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1984, the year of Big Brother and the year Ronald Reagan won his second term.

It was truly a Red Letter Day. It started off with a letter. "Dear Boris, How are things at the Kremlin?" Whoops! Wrong Red Letter. It was a red letter day because we were all set for a major news story.

In the newsroom, Executive Editor Fred Walters had marshaled his forces. Everybody was working that day. We had our assignments.

We had studied the issues and the candidates. In fact we even had an election manual but since no one could figure out in which election Manual was a candidate, we discarded the publication.

Anchor Charlie Brailer was given the anchor assignment based on his question, "Who is running?" Commentator Cleve Hermann was given the job of doing color reports. This was an interesting bit of casting inasmuch as Cleve wore a patch over one eye and I heard he was color blind in the other. Then were had a platoon of people working as outside reporters. They included Dan Avey, Julia Chavez, Bob Howard, Bill Schubert and Barbara Reigle, names that will live in infamy. They would report on stuff that happened outside the studios. They would be the ones who would interview people at candidate headquarters and ask how they felt that their man or woman was trailing by ten million votes. They would also talk to people on the streets and ask questions like how does it feel that their candidate is losing by ten million votes?

While these people were prowling the streets, another platoon of people was inside the studios, writing their little fingers to the bone. There were statisticians, pediatricians, electricians, and relief people who relieved those people in need of being relieved. As for me, I was the guy who jumped in every once in a while and gave reports on the other stuff happening around the nation and the world. It was not a hard job.

Finally, the networks did their computer projections and declared Reagan the winner, and it was time to pack it all in. Our coverage

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had gone very smoothly. The candidates were now either elected or homeward bound, the polls were closed, the bars were open, the tide went out, and the people gather round and they all begin to shout... "Hey Hey Uncle Dud, it's a treat to beat your feet in the....." Well, you know how it goes.

Slightly less than two months later, 1984 ended on schedule

## “CAN WE TALK?”

Joan rivers

Apple Computer is born.

Madonna has first big hit, “Like a virgin.”

Journalism is the art of communication. It is taking world and local events and using words to convey the information to everyone in a clear, concise and hopefully understandable manner. This means knowing how to write. You must be a master of the King’s English or Polish, Farsi, Lvrit, Islensku, Esperanto or the ever popular Bahasa Melayu. In short, instead of being politically correct, you must be grammatically correct.

Spelling counts too.

For those members of the Journalistic community who work for newspapers and magazines, they write for the eye. In television, they write for the eye and the ear.

In radio, the writing is strictly for the ear. You know of course that you can’t show pictures on the radio, so one line you should never

hear on a radio broadcast is, "Look at this." So writing correctly for radio is ultra important. You write as you speak.

You would never say, "you look pretty today," my father told my mother." You would say "My father told my mother she looks pretty today". You might also say "My father said 'You look pretty today.'" Attribution, in speech is generally at the beginning. You can place attribution in the middle of a sentence if it is a long one. "You look pretty today," my father said, "and your facelift was really worth the money we shelled out."

Of course, if your mother is not all that pretty, you might never say any of those lines, but that's another story.

At KFWB, there was an ongoing effort from 1968 on to make sure all of our writers, reporters, anchors and anyone else involved in writing, wrote correctly. So, a series of books on writing for radio, were handed out periodically but this soon became an expensive proposition. So, in the 1980's, a locally prepared writing "style guide" was prepared just for KFWB employees. It told us everything we ever wanted to know about grammar, spelling, punctuation, dangling participles, compound sentences and a long list of etceteras. It was wonderful. Each one of us took it home, put it in our bookshelves and that's where it stayed. There were addendums, appendixes, indexes, inserts, deletions and a whole bunch of other things in the subsequent years until finally yours truly became inspired.

It was time for the publisher of the KFWB Nooseline to fling himself with total abandon into the breach and write the definitive

RADIO WRITING STYLE GUIDE. Heck, a new century and a new millenium were approaching and this meant a new fresh start. It possibly signaled a new way of doing things. It also may have signaled a move by yours truly into an area where he had no business going. Naw! Not possible. I'm too cute.

Therefore, on a dark and stormy night, I sat down at my computer and my fingers began to fly over my keyboard. I wasn't writing anything. I was just trying to ease the arthritis in my hands.

Now it was time to write something. Pursing my lips, squinting my eyes, mussing my hair, disheveling my clothing, I attempted to look like a writer. I even smoked a pipe. That was a waste of time, so I got down to the business at hand. I produced a writing style guide that answered every question you could ever ask about writing news. Now people like Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite might not approve of my Guide but the good folks at KFWB lapped it up with wild abandon.

I present to you the KFWB WRITERS STYLE GUIDE.

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# THE KFWB WRITERS STYLE GUIDE

COMPILED BY

THE CRACKED TEAM OF KFWB STYLE GUIDE WRITERS

MILLENNIUM EDITION

IMPORTANT

*Two the KFWB staff*

This is your copy of the KFWB Style Guide, Millennium edition.

This guide is assembled in three sections, one, two and three, in that exact order. We, of the Style Guide Editorial Board selected this system because they are the first numbers we could think of and they appear in that exact order.

Section One comes before section two. Section two comes after section one but before section three. That is called STYLE. It is also called

## COUNTING.

In section One, you will find material that will curl your hair, assuming you have hair to curl. In section Two, you will find information to enlighten and entertain and maybe even inform. If you do find such information let us know immediately. In section Three, there will be other stuff plus room for autographs.

We, the members of the Style Guide Editorial Board, expect you to be fully familiar with this guide. Therefore, ignore the old adage "familiarity breeds contempt."

CAUTION: when leaving the building, do NOT take this style guide with you. This is pretty secret stuff and in the wrong hands, it could trigger WW3.

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9. Footlines
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11. Other Stuff

## CARDINAL RULE

It is your responsibility to tell the story fully, completely and accurately, intelligently, correctly, clearly, strangely, uniquely, judgementally, sincerely, trustworthy, loyally, helpfully, friendly, courteously, kindly, obediently, cheerfully, thriftily, bravely, cleanly and reverently without malice aforethought.

Therefore, the cardinal rule of news writing is.....

NEVER START A STORY WITH THE LINE...

“Once upon a time.....”

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## NEWS BALANCE

You newscast must be balanced. Therefore, when going into the Studio, carry your newscast on your head. An unbalanced newscast will fall to the floor, scattering pages everywhere and you will have a heck of a time picking it all up. There was a time that NBC's Chet Huntley once dropped his newscast but that's another story.

When deciding how to write a story, ask your self the question, "Who Cares?" There are the possible answers:

1. Everyone
2. No one.
3. My Mother.
4. The President
5. My Boss.
6. My Barber
7. I give up. Who?

If after all this, you still have no answer, forget it and go do something else.

## RULES AND REGULATIONS

Every employee of KFWB must be aware of the rules and regulations.

There are rules and regulations for everything. Some areas have rules but no regulations and vice versa. (Vice Versa = pornographic poetry.)

If you are not sure that a situation is covered by a rule or a regulation or both, call you immediate supervisor. They have a book that separates rules from regulations.

Remember, following a rule when a regulation is required may be grounds for dismissal, dismemberment or discussion. It may also be grounds for coffee.

Here are some rules and regulations.

**REBROADCAST:** Never rebroadcast anything without prior approval. In subsequent guides, we will attempt to figure that out.

**LOGGING:** Save The Redwoods.

**CONSENT:** You must be over 18 to follow these rules. Anyone under 18 can do what they want.

**ETOAIN SHRDLU:** We have no idea what this means.  
Disregard it.

## GENERAL NEWS POLICY

When doing a story about a General, always salute first.

We do not stage news stories, except when the story involves the legitimate or musical stage or on days that are dull, dull, dull.

We do not buy information. We can borrow it, or steal it but we never buy it. If we come into some extra money, this rule may change.

We do not broadcast live violence. Dead violence is okay at anytime of the day or night. Judicious live violence is okay but only at the noon or evening meal periods.

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We do not identify anyone under the age of 18 who is accused of a crime, unless that person really ticks us off.

## VIOLENCE IN THE NEWSROOM

We do not allow violence in the newsroom.

If you have a complaint about an editor, writer, anchor or reporter, do not, I repeat, do not walk up to that person and kick him in the La Bonza.

Notify your supervisor who is authorized to kick La Bonzas at will.

If you have a complaint about management, forget it. You won't win.

## PRIVILEGE

If you can prove direct lineage to the Royal House of Windsor, you will be considered to be privileged. As such, you will be given the private telephone numbers of Britain's Prince Andrew's Orthodontist or his bookie.

If you cannot prove such lineage, special privilege cards are available for a nominal fee of \$483.77 at my office.

## INVASION OF PRIVACY

When gathering news, never go into anyone's house unannounced, unless you intend to steal something.

Do not call them out of bed in the middle of the night. They might fall down.

Do not sneak up on them while they are showering or brushing their teeth.

If you get an un-controllable urge to violate someone's privacy, call for help. The number for "INVADERS ANONYMOUS" is posted at the back door.

## REPORTING RACE, NATIONAL ORIGIN AND SEX

We do not give race results over the phone. Back Alleys maybe, but never on the phone.

As for National origin, only mention emerging nation's who crave publicity. All other nations don't really care.

## SEX

This is a touchy subject. That was an unfortunate choice of words.

We shall pass on this subject for now but keep your eyes peeled. We plan a whole new manual on this issue. It will be called.....'

## THE KFWB SEX STYLE GUIDE

It will answer all your questions and will contain graphic pictures.

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## LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

If any of you are called into court to answer for something you may have done or said on the air or in the studios of KFVB, you're on your own kiddo. We don't mess with that kind of stuff. Ta ta!!!

## ATTRIBUTION

On this subject, the rule of thumb is...blame the other guy.

## KFVB WRITING

At all times, remember, you are to use gooder grammar than usual to impress people, namely the boss. Remember, speling is impotent two.

Always use good punctuation marks. This will make it appear that we really know what we are doing. Don't forget semi-colons & ampersands.

I don't know what an ampersand is but don't forget it anyway.

The first sentence in any story is of critical importance. You cannot start any story without a first sentence. So, always use a first sentence.

When using a first sentence, be careful what sentence you use. Never start with..."Hey, get a load of this!!!" or "This will knock you on your keister!!!"

Use simple sentences: ie.....The war has started.

War is bad.

Everybody faw down.

Or

Duck!!!

Familiarize yourself with the differences between an ellipse, an eclipse, a colon, a comma, a coma, a quotation mark, a question mark, a birth mark, a period, a semi-colon and a plimsol line. You will be tested later.

When writing about large numbers of things or people, use exact terms. Terms such as “Whole bunch, Gobs, A Truckload, a sh-tpotfull are not acceptable, except on weekend when things are slow.

Phonetic spelling....this is allowed only when writing stories about Phoenicians.

Neatness counts. We don't know why.

Every story must have a slug line...for example...”The woman slugged her husband.” Or “The man slugged the little puppy.”

To help anchors decipher your writing, use the following codes.

NL ..... Night Lead ..... or .. National League.

NLON.....Night Lead Overnight.... or...Nurses League of Nebraska

DL ..... Day Lead..... or .. Dorothy Lamour

VC ..... Voice Cut ..... or .. Viet Cong

VC:23 ..... 23 sec voice cut..... or .. Viet Cong Platoon.

LOCKOUT..complete recorded report ... or I lost my keys.

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## VERB TENSE

Verbs should not be tense. When writing verbs, stay calm. I suggest you always use the Present Perfect Tense in place of the past tense because what is perfect is past and I hope you wrote that down perfectly. In the case of things that have already happened in times past, ie: "He done did it yesterday", you will have to do it over. This is mandated by the term "done did" which stems from the Latin Did= an action and Done=over. We will attempt to avoid Latin in subsequent sections, unless you plan to enter the Priesthood.

## NEWS SOURCES

Those of us from the east prefer Hollandaise Source while westerners go for Barbecue Source.

News sources come from everywhere, the man on the street, the woman in the office, the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker. Don't expect too much though, from candlestick makers as they rarely talk to reporters.

Our best sources are the news wires but don't trust them because they mostly hire kids just out of Journalism school who don't know the first thing about radio.

You can also develop your own news sources, but this involves slinking around scummy alleys, paying out money and doing things only reporters in movies do.

## WRITING VITALITY

If the news business intends to educate and inform the younger generation, then we must write youthfully. We must relate to youth. We must learn their idiom and we must do it without sounding like a bunch of stupid idioms.

It is important we do not Rap the news as real rappers may look askance at us and say...."Huh?" as rappers often do. We should guard against commenting on stories. i.e.: "They caught the crook... groovey." Other examples of end of story comments not to be used include, ""Right on!" "Way to Go!", "Word to your Mother!" and of course...."Yeah, right."

Good show and Hear Hear are also out, but it is permissible to laugh at the end of a funny story. Make sure the laugh is dignified and that you do not fall out of your chair. Do not laugh during sad stories.

## THE LINEUP

The lineup means the order in which stories will be broadcast on the air. It does not mean lining up the reporters and anchors according to height.

## FILL STORIES

"Fill" stories are stories about a guy named Fill, or Phil if you have this need to be accurate. Fill stories come from everywhere. These are stories the editor has decided not to use but you sneak

them into the studio under your shirt or blouse anyway. The best fill stories comes from California plus any of the other States, Europe, Asia, South America, Central America, North America, Africa and anywhere in the Eastern or Western Hemispheres. Do not use fill stories from any other location.

## BULLETINS

Bulletins are news stories that just happened and must get on the air before the competition can put them on the air and thus have bragging rights. Start each bulletin thusly...

1. Here is a bulletin from the KFVB Newsroom
2. Here is a bulletin on a late breaking story.
3. Holy Mackerel, wait till you hear this!!!!!!

Then read the story.

Then read it again.

IMPORTANT: Make sure you read the story aloud so that your listeners can hear it too.

At the end of the story, say...

1. We are keeping a close watch on this story and will have further details as they come in.
2. KFVB reporters are on their way to the scene of this story and will report in shortly.
3. Now, isn't that a crock?

As always, if you screw up a bulletin, the News Director will deny any knowledge of you and you will self destruct in five minutes.

## RECAP

This is either when you recapitulate the story, or put your hat on twice.

## UPDATES

Updates are usually at midnight when the date changes.

## LIVE REPORTS

Only live reports are used on the air. Dead reports are never used.

When putting a live report on the air, try to have a brief question and answer period with the field reporters. But never ask a reporter a question he cannot answer and make sure the question has something to do with the story being reported. Ie: In a story about a murder, never ask the reporter to explain Einstein's theory of relativity. It is best to ask simple questions. Questions such as...

1. How are you?
2. Where is the restroom?
3. Is that my aunt's pen on the table?
4. Does the number 12 bus stop here?
5. What does ie mean?

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## SOUND

There are many sounds in a newsroom. Here are a few...

Clickety

Whooooooooooooooooooooo

Bang

Clank

Thud

Arghhhhhhhhhhhhhhh

Wheeze

Chugga Chugga

Boinggggggggggg

It is important to guard against bad sound. This is sound that does not sound good. If you come across some bad sound, say..."bad sound, bad sound". Do not say that to good sound.

## SPORTS

In radio news parlance, sports is defined as,

Baseball	Basketball
Football	Soccer
Golf	Tennis
Horse Racing	Hockey
Demolition Derby	

If you believe that other sports such as water polo, lawn hockey, volleyball, synchronized swimming, and bowling are sports, you are wrong.

Anyone who wears a pastel colored shirt with a store name on the back and rolls a ball while chugging a can of beer is no athlete and is to be ignored.

## PROMOTION

Remember to always promote KFWB and all the things it does. Do not promote yourself. It is too expensive. KFWB employees are discouraged from buying their own billboards, utilizing skywriting or other means of tooting their own horns. Blowing horns is permissible but not in hospital zones. Horns may be obtained in the promotions off but only on the night before you intend to use them.

## PERSONALITIES

It is always nice to have a nice personality. When someone smiles at you, smile back. Do not smile at people who do not smile at you. Do not smile at men with bags of candy, near schoolyards.

When you meet someone new, say, "How do you do?" Then you may smile at them. When you do this, people will say, "My, what a nice personality you have." Never smile at people who start sentences with the word "My,"

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## COMMERCIALS

Commercials are the means by which the station makes money to pay your salary. The more commercials there are, the better off you are. Commercials are brought to the station by members of the cracked KFWB Sales Team. Kiss their feet. Make nice on them and they may say..."My, what a nice personality you have."

If we have a commercial running about Spud Soap and then a news story comes in saying Spud Soap will kill you, what should you do? Remember, truth is our greatest weapon. Use that truth and kill the news story.

In the event of an air crash, kill all airline commercials, kill all air fresehener commercials, kill all commercials about fresh air, kill air pollution stories, Kill all stories about air breathing mammals, This leaves us free to use stories about fish, dirt and rocks.

In the event of an assassination, we must refer to the victim in the past tense. We have no idea how this pertains to commercials.

## TIMING

Timing is the essence of putting together a newscast. The newscast must begin on time and end on time. Also remember the old adage, neatness counts. It is okay to dump stories in the interest of time. It is okay to shortern stories in the interest of time. It is okay to give seventy thousand time checks during the course of an hour in the interest of time. Also, in the interest of time, I will move on to something else.

## PROGRAM INTERRUPTIONS

It is never okay to say "We interrupt this program in order to bring you another program." When you start a program, finish it. If we lose power for some reason and the auxiliary power generator does not kick in, it is the duty of the anchor to continue reading even though no one hears him. This gives the listener the impression that it was not the station that screwed up but it was his being too cheap to buy a better quality radio.

Should the building blow up, the anchor is not required to continue reading.

**WARNING:** Always read your newscast aloud.

## MOBILE UNITS

The station mobile units consist of several clearly marked cars and a redesigned motor home. Both contain lots of sophisticated equipment.

**Caution:** Do not try cooking in the motor home. It has no stove.

## GENERAL STANDARDS

In order to come up thru the ranks of the corporate structure, there are some things to remember.

1. Keep your nose clean.
2. Don't get caught.

3. Make only local calls.
4. In hostage situations, stick out your tongue at the man with the gun.
5. A clean mind and a clean body.
6. Other stuff.

## SPECIFIC RULES

1. Thou shalt not steal.
2. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's stapler.
3. Thou shalt not kill people who can help your career.
4. Thou shalt not do a whole bunch of other stuff that Mother Westinghouse would frown upon.

## BASIC PHILOSOPHY

Cogito Ergo Sum. This is our basic philosophy. It used to be In Hoc Signo Vincet. Since we all stopped smoking, our philosophy has changed.

We have no idea what Cogito Ergo Sum means but we suspect it means I want to count all my Ergos.

We are a very important radio station in Southern California. We deliver news to the public and this requires great skill, patience and a working Xerox machine. But this is more than a business. It is a conglomerate. It may be the biggest conglomerate anywhere and we

love it. We are part of one of America's largest corporations. Nay, it may be the largest in the world and then, WE TAKE OVER!!!!!!!!!!!!

(Editor's note) When you talk about philosophy, you have to use words like "nay" and "hitherto". Actually, I have never used hitherto in a sentence.

We must remember that a rolling stone gathers no moss. But, is it enough to say that? Nay (see!) Nay I say.

The ancient philosopher Marvin once said (yes, there was a philosopher named Marvin), he once said, "Huh?" And we are trying to answer that question with a sentence that begins with the word AND.

But, first we ask these questions.

1. How high is up?
2. Is it worth it?
3. Does the number 12 bus stop here?

We know that in our lifetime, we may not figure out all the questions but gee, one or two would be good. We must put our noses to the grindstone, our shoulders to the wheel our ears to the ground, our minds to the task and in no time, we will all look totally ridiculous.

As General William Tecumsah Sherman said, as he approached Atlanta, "Hey, there's Atlanta!" So, lets face the dawn of a new day, keep a stiff upper lip, mind our manners, step on a crack, break your mother's back and remember that behind every grey cloud, there is another grey cloud.

This is our philosophy, our creed, our Sacred Trust. We can do no more. And that too is a good thing.

## AUTOGRAPHS

Now here is an example of why accurate writing is so terribly important.

Keep in mind that in an All-News operation, we are literally belching out news non-stop. This means the writers are pounding their typewriter or computer keyboards so fast, steam often rises from inside. It's a time when the writer must be absolutely accurate in what he writes, how he writes it and how he spells it. This is because the news anchor often reads news copy on the air that is totally new to him. He has no time to "woodshed" the copy. This means to familiarize himself with it and correct any typos. He is reading it cold. This next is probably the definitive classic example.

It was in the early 70's when former News Director Herb Humphries returned to the station as an anchor, working the evening shift. Anchor Charlie Brailer was doing a program in which newsworthy people were interviewed and Herb would do short newscasts at designated points in the hour.

In one newscast, written in part by excellent writer Eric Williams, there was a story Herb had not seen beforehand and it contained a sentence that was not too clear as to its meaning. Herb hit that sentence head on and became totally confused. He attempted to rework the sentence to make it clearer to the listeners but the

complexity of the sentence and the fact that Herb was still a bit unnerved for having gotten thrown off track in the first place, caused the sentence to become even less intelligible. He finally got thru the newscast with no other problems and returned to the newsroom. Almost immediately, the phone rang and it was Executive editor Reg Laite. Reg asked what happened and Herb explained that he tried to adlib his way out of a confusing sentence in an attempt to make it more understandable. It was the kind of thing a responsible veteran newscaster would do, without having to be told. Reg Laite however was not impressed with Herb's ingenuity and told him to just read the copy the way it is written and don't try to change anything.

Herb protested saying the sentence was confusing and he had to try to make it clear for the listeners.

Reg said, "Read it as it is written!"

"But....." countered Herb.

"Read it as it is written. Final, period, case closed."

"Read it as it is written?" Herb asked to be absolutely sure of his instructions.

"Read it as it is written!" said Reg.

"Okay." said Herb as he hung up the phone.

The very next newscast and Herb entered the studio prepared to read it as it is. Sure enough, there it was, a story about the budget battle going on in Washington. Herb plunged into the story and got thru it with no problems at all until the final sentence.

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Herb steeled himself and read, "and that's the latest on the Federal Buh-doooge."

It was spelled Bduge. How would you read it? Herb read it according to instructions from his leader. It said Bduge so by golly, it was Bduge.

And that's how he read it.

When Herb emerged from the studio, the phone was ringing. It was Reg Laite. He said to Herb, "Okay, you son of a bitch, you win." I don't think Reg ever called Herb again.

## **CHANGING OF THE GUARD**

Mikhail Gorbachev takes control in Moscow.

Prosecutors target John Gotti, the "Teflon Don."

Les Miz premieres in London

One of the great things about the news business is that nothing ever stays the same. Just as the news changes from day to day, so do the rules and regulations, the environment and the conditions under which we work. A major reason for this constant change is the constant change in management, each new one seeking to put its own distinct mark on the product.

For instance, in 1985, a change came along that very few people understood, much less thought about. It was announced that Sales Manager Erle Younker was named the Station Manager. Now, managers are named every day of the week in just about every company in the country. But we already had a station manager, Vice President and General Manager Dave Graves. Did this mean Dave was going and Erle was coming, or had Erle caught up with Dave

and it was a tie? Maybe Erle was passing Dave or Dave was waving him on. Whatever the reason, we can now report that no one fell over in a dead faint. In fact, hardly anyone noticed the change or cared.

New management had become a way of life for us at KFWB, especially around the Holidays. We assume that giving executives their walking papers around Christmas time was actually a favor, because now they had more time to spend shopping for Christmas presents to make it truly a merry holiday season. Uh huh!

A new GM was just a minor change for the news staff because we did our work in the newsroom and the front office people did their work in the front office and we never talked to each other until the Christmas Parties when we greeted each other like long lost family members. We had actually learned a trick to determine who was leaving and who was staying. First, peek in their office to see if the stuff that was on their shelves yesterday was still there today. Then watch to see how much stuff they downloaded from their computers. For some executive editors, the clue was their assignment. If they were given the task of preparing for FCC license renewal, it would soon be bye-bye for them. License renewal was a lengthy process that had nothing to do with the day-to-day presentation of news. It was the kiss of death because once the license renewal forms were all filled out and all the pertinent information had been gathered there was nothing more to do and the News Director was now in charge so, goodbye executive editor. You could also tell if an executive had suddenly been told that he was history by the way he would walk

the halls muttering to himself and saying things like, "Those dirty rotten & % \$ # @ \* ^ & % of \* # \$ @ ^ % \$ ." Another clue was if he came to work in his gardening clothes in the middle of the week. If it was holiday time, Christmas or New Years, it was a cinch.

A major personnel change signaled the regular invasion of those wonderful guys, Walls-R-Us, Painters-are-Us and Remnants-R-Us. That band of highly skilled noise and odor makers was always around, tearing down walls, putting up walls, hammering things, screwing things, laying things, painting things, wiring things and causing four secretaries to be lost for two weeks amid the clutter. This constant re-modeling and re-designing, re-carpeting, and re-painting and re-everything else, was due to the periodic arrival and departure of other staffers from and to other stations. In fact, the station conference room, the third biggest room, was located in three different locations in the building and once, in the late 90's, it was in another building altogether.

Smoking was also becoming a big issue and this caused some consternation among staffers. Those who smoked believed they had a right to puff away wherever and whenever they pleased. Those who did not smoke said they had a right to breathe smoke free air.

The first ruling involving smoking was actually not a restriction. It was the purchase of so-called smokeless ashtrays. These battery-operated marvels had fans that were supposed to draw the smoke directly from the cigarette and into a compartment where they would be rendered harmless or some such thing. Well, they worked great

for about a day or two but no one told anyone that these things had to be cleaned on a regular basis and before long, they were drawing in the smoke and promptly spewing it back into the room in the form of ashes that got on your scripts, your clothes, your desk, everywhere.

We also had large plastic and rubber waste baskets in the newsroom and reporters, living up to their time honored reputation as hard drinking and hard smoking, always had a can of Coke or Cactus Cooler on our desks and a lit cigarette balanced on the edge of those containers. Needless to say, we often had fires or near fires in the newsroom as our lit butts fell in among discarded script pages.

In the studio, where we also smoked, there were times when the smoke got so thick, we could not see our microphones. Well, that's a bit of an exaggeration but it did get very smoky in that small room and many times anchors would come out with sore throats after breathing in that contaminated air.

So, it was time to crack down. No more Mr. Nice guy. The word came down that smoking was now a no-no. To coincide with the laws being enacted in the city, smoking was banned in certain parts of the station. In fact, only one area was still a smoking area...out on the back landing, facing the parking lot where nobody could see us puffing away like fiends.

According to the station edict, you could now no longer smoke in.....

1. Restrooms

2. Kitchen and Eating areas
3. Hallways
4. The basement
5. The air studio
6. The Direct Sales office (we apparently did not care about the Indirect Sales People.

But always being socially unconscious, I felt that smoking rules had to be expanded further and so, I put forth an additional set of directives.

1. No smoking while walking.
2. No smoking while sitting down but stand up smoking is okay.
3. Do not walk with a lit cigarette. You may walk with an unlit ciggie.
4. You may walk with a cigarette in your pocket but be sure it is not lit.

In addition, I inserted a few more healthy suggestions:

5. No blowing your nose in a restroom, kitchen or air studio while the mike is on.
6. To blow your nose, use your bus pass to Elysian Park, go behind Dodger Stadium where you may blow your nose.

7. Do not walk and blow your nose.
8. Do not blow your nose with a lit cigarette in your mouth.

After issuing that edict, I felt I had done my fellow workers a great public service and I walked about with a smug grin on my face for a month.

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Changes do occur, especially when considering our product... the news and the way we deliver it. We had a device called the News Wheel. The news wheel actually is a pie chart that encompassing one full hour. Each slice of the pie represented something our audience would be listening to for a specific period of time.

Headlines would be at the top of the hour, at 20 minutes after and again at forty minutes after the hour.. Headlines include sports, weather, stocks and traffic. Sports news was at fifteen minutes and 45 minutes after the hour.

News and commercial time filled up the rest of the hour. As the years went by, there were modifications to the wheel including traffic reports every ten minutes and weather reports that varied in length from full forecasts to simply local temperatures.

The wheel however, basically remained the same throughout the years.

One day, we received a memo that the news was..."New and Improved" just like a dishwashing liquid. We were going to change the way things were being done with the biggest change being the

cutting of the news wheel in half. Instead of doing full hour newscasts as we had been doing, we would now be doing half hour newscasts. Why you ask? I have no clue unless it was to have a greater variety of voices on the air throughout the day. But with the advent of half hour newscasts, we had a bunch of other changes to deal with and they gave rise to a bizarre translation in the Nooseline.

I am sure you all remember how the nation was amazed at a statement by President Bill Clinton, while defending himself against the then Monica Lewinsky allegations. He said, "It all depend on what the definition of the word "is" is." Well, at KFWB, we didn't care what the definition of the word "is" was because we simply outlawed the word. It was in relation to giving time checks on the air. We could no longer say, "KFWB Newstime is 5 O'Clock." We now had to say, "KFWB Newstime...5 o'clock." The KFWB Nooseline took note of the fact that while the word "is" was verboten, the words are, am, be and were were not. Therefore, I assumed that it was okay to say, "KFWB Newstime are 5 o'clock." Or "KFWB Newstime be 5 o'clock"

Another time honored feature of KFWB was affected by the changes. Our station jingle, over the years, had become a fixture in the minds of Los Angeles radio listeners. In the fifties, brilliant radio programmer Chuck Blore created what came to be known as "Color Radio". I assume it was to compete with the advent of Color Television.

The station Identification jingle was simple .....”KFWB, Color Radio, Color Radio!” There was also “KFWB Channel 98.” Those jingles bore their way into our brains just as “LSMFT“ or “Call For Philip Morris” or “J-E-L-L-O” did in the 30’s and 40’s. When KFWB, in 1968, changed its format to All-News, the jingle also changed. It became “KFWB, News 98”. It played several times an hour and it too became imbedded in our subconscious. So, what kind of change suddenly occurred? The Jingle on the hour was as it had always been...”KFWB News 98.,” with singers. The jingle at the half hour was the same. At the quarter hour marks, :15 and :45 there was no Norman Nabbersnacle Choir to sing our call letters. What happened at 20 after the hour when a new newscast began or at 40 after the hour? You realize this is giving me a monumental headache.

Now, for something totally different.

They also changed the wheel a little. That cute little pie chart denoting where everything that goes on the air goes and how long it stays there.

Let me lay a little groundwork. When a news anchor enters the studio and prepares to do his newscast, he has more than just news to be concerned with. First and foremost, there is a panel of buttons in front of him and he must be familiar with each and every one. He must know what they do and when they are supposed to do it. He must also know where they are just as a typist knows where all the keys are. One button turns the microphone on and another turns it

off. One button starts commercials playing. Another can stop the commercial if necessary. There are buttons to bring in the voices of reporters in the field while still other buttons put telephone calls on the air. There are also buttons that control the tape cartridge machines that contain the sound bytes that go with the news stories themselves.

Now, if that were not enough, the anchor also has to be aware of what is on the air, what comes next, what he has already played and what he can move or delay if the situation requires. And finally, there is a log to be concerned with. This schedule sheet contains the list of commercials and promotional announcements (promos) to be played in any half hour period, the order they will be played and which are fair game to be dropped if necessary.

Oh, there is also the news script that must be kept in sequence and the anchor must know which stories must not be dropped under any circumstances, which can be moved and which may be deleted.

In short, the anchor job, to a degree is the ability to walk and juggle chain saws at the same time. After a period of time, all the little factors pertaining to the mechanics of the newscast become second nature to the anchor. He can almost do his newscast with his eyes shut. I did several that way. It was not a pretty sight. The anchor can reach for the correct button without looking, he can calculate his timing of the newscast while reading a story on the air and not make a mistake with any of it and on some rare occasions, he can do it on

automatic pilot and come out of the studio and not be able to tell you of a single story he read. It can become routine.

BUT....and it's a big but, there are those times when everything is running smoothly, someone in some ivory tower office decides the wheel needs alterations, changes, freshening up, renovation, etc etc etc. Instead of hour-long newscasts, the news was going to be presented in two different ways. One system would be forty-minute newscasts. This would entail a newscast starting at the top of the hour and going for forty minutes. In other words, two twenty minute newscasts. Then the next man would take over and do two twenty minute newscasts until twenty after the hour and the first guy would come back and go from twenty after the hour to the top of the hour again. Three twenty minute segments being done by two anchors. That was during the daylight hours. At night, there would be the same twenty minute newscasts, three per hour, each anchor doing one full segment and half of the next or the last ten minutes of one newscast and the full twenty minutes of the next. This means each anchor will be on the air 30 minutes doing a newscast and a half or half a newscast and a newscast. Are you following me? If you are, you are a better man than I am, Gunga Din.

Why not make the newscasts thirty minutes each? I don't know. Actually, I do know. By having three twenty minute newscasts, you get to report the top stories of the hour three times an hour instead of two. This is good. But we had our very popular slogan running... "You Give Us Twenty Two Minutes, We'll Give You the World." For

all you mathematics majors, that means a 66 minute hour. Three 22 minutes newscasts an hour? So, what's an extra six minutes among friends? If you won't tell, I won't tell. Now, by having the newscasters return to the studio so often, we had a residual problem....dizziness. We used to fall down a lot.

Is this the full extent of the change? *Au contraire!* Remember I said that anchors have to concern themselves with what stories were used and which could be deleted? Well, instead of it being a hit or miss situation, they decided to make the choices for us. There would be "A" stories, "B" stories and "C" stories. "A" stories would be the most important and were not droppable. "A" stories led off every twenty minute newscast. "B" stories were less important and did not appear three times an hour....they appeared twice and were droppable only if an earthquake occurred and Los Angeles fell into the sea. "C" stories were the least important and could be dropped at any time. This was basically the same system we had already been using but now, we had letters attached. So, if you were an anchor not familiar with the alphabet, you had a problem. There were to have been D E and F stories but somebody got bored and they were never developed.

Until all the anchors became familiar with the same old system but in new packaging, we decided the best thing to do was to concentrate on doing the news accurately and worry about the alphabet later.

There is one aspect of working for KFWB that is wonderful... the fact that there is no dress code. In summer we could wear shorts.

We had one lovely writer, Pat Larson, who had a pair of shorts that looked like the American flag. When Pat wore them to work, all the male members of the newsroom rose and saluted as they walked by. We loved Pat. T-shirts were okay as were halters, jeans, sneakers, tank tops and the like. Of course that was fine for those who did not go into the streets where they could be seen by real people. In other words, anchors, writers and editors were free to look like accidents going somewhere to happen.

For those KFWB staffers who emerged into the sunlight, their appearance was another matter. So, the human resources people wanted to make sure that when the staffers encountered regular folks, those regular folks did not pass out from fright. So, they presented a seminar on "Dressing For Success."

For the women, proper dress was pretty specific. The female executive was sartorially prepared if she owned a black suit, a beige suit, a burgundy suit, a cream colored blouse, a turquoise blouse, a red blouse, and a tan dress. Also, you needed black pump shoes, taupe pumps, six pairs of neutral hosiery, 3 silk scarves, a good quality briefcase, or purse and a partridge in a pear tree. Then you needed an all weather coat, a purple ball gown, crinoline hoops were optional, flowered pedal pushers, Miss Piggy running shoes, hip boots, a Merino wool hunting vest, bib overalls, work gloves and that same lousy partridge in a pear tree. The cost of this collection of couture was such that you already had to be a success in business to afford it. In fact, you might have had to be the CEO of a major world

conglomerate. The KFWB Nooseline did find that a little creative shopping at a discounter could accomplish the same thing for eleven dollars and 37 cents.

Human resources would have conducted a seminar of dressing for success for men if its human resources comparison shopper had not been arrested for peeking into the men's dressing room at Sears. But, she did find out one important fact about mens fashion necessities. She discovered the most important factor in a man's climb up the corporate ladder is clean underwear. Just ask your mother if she is right or wrong.

In the course of this tome on the history of KFWB, as seen by me, I have mentioned the R-Us Corporation on several occasions. This is because the folks at R-US played so large a recurring role in our lives. There was hardly ever a time when one of them was not in the hollowed halls of KFWB banging, hammering, sawing, bashing, pasting, painting or scotch taping something. They even did asphalt repairs in our parking lot. Then they painted lines in the parking lot and stuff like that. When they were finished, they ripped the heck out of the front doors of the building and forced every one to use the back door until they were finished with the front doors.

The most amazing projects ever carried out by the R-US guys involved carpeting. The newsroom had the most foot traffic so the carpets wore out more quickly. It may also be that the carpet guys bring remnants that did not always match the patch job next to it. It is also a great treat to walk across the room where carpeting is

fastened with duct tape, especially duct tape that isn't even close to the color of the carpeting. Green carpets with blue duct tape insured that the newsroom would never be featured in *Architectural Digest*. But the best part was when a section of green carpeting wore out and they brought a swatch of brown carpeting they did change the blue duct tape. They used silver instead. Silver and brown? That works. Doesn't it?

When the R-Us Painters would show up, we were faced with a new problem. It wasn't the smell and it wasn't the possibility of it being lead based paint. It was the edict that always followed a paint job. No folding, spindling or mutilating anything or anyone in the building and no hanging anything on the newly painted walls... therefore, no nails, no tacks, and no scotch tape or duct tape. We did try stapling some items to studio windows but it didn't work.

A memo following one R-US renovation project almost caused world war three. The memo said, "The women's restroom is now open for public viewing". Male staffers were threatened with death if they even vaguely entertained the thought.

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The inside of a radio station, as you might imagine, is high tech heaven. If you have that kind of imagination about KFWB, dream on. One of the most vital pieces of equipment in any kind of news operation is the telephone. It allows you to talk to people in some other building even if they are far away but you already knew that.

The needs of an All News radio station place that instrument at the top of the “vital” list. In fact, one general manager fired the entire staff of field reporters on the assumption that two or three people on the telephone could do the job more efficiently and more cheaply. The key word was cheaply. That didn’t last long. But I digress, which I usually do but that’s another story.

Well, lets get back to the phones. KFWB in 1985 was in a period of change, changing the carpets, the walls, the news wheel and finally the way we made and answered telephone calls. The News Director at that time was Jeri Love and she decided that a review of our phone etiquette was in order. We apparently were acting like boors or was that boobs and by golly, that was going to stop. So, a directive was issued, altered somewhat by the telephone mavens at the KFWB Nooseline, designed to make everything wonderful. Here were some of the suggestions for proper phone etiquette.

1. When the phone rings, do not say hello until you lift the receiver. The caller can’t hear you.
2. If, when making a call, a woman answers, bow from the waist. It is impossible to bow from the knees.
3. If, when making a call a man answers, hang up.
4. Gwen Cheltenham will keep a log of calls. Any caller requesting one of Gwen’s logs, will be put on hold while Gwen goes out back, chops down a tree and sends him a log.

5. When using the hotline, wear gloves as it is very hot.
6. No hotline number should be allowed to ring more than five times. If it rings more, it gets tired.
7. Do not leave a caller on hold for more than 60 seconds. If you cannot get back to him on time, hang up and when he calls back, say, "Gee, I don't know what happened. We must have been cut off."
8. We must standardize the way we answer phones. When the phone rings, pick up the phone, just the receiver, not the base unit. Say, "Hello This is (give your name) in the KFWB newsroom, I'm (give your name.) It is important to give your correct name. No one will believe you of the say "Hello, this is the KFWB newsroom, I'm Abraham Lincoln.
9. If you are not a newsroom staffer, just answer the phone this way: "KFWB Newsroom." or "KFWB Sales" or "KFWB Men's room." Just pick one. It is not necessary to say them all.
10. When ending a phone call, say "Goodbye." It is not necessary to Wave bye bye. You will look stupid.

## **IS EVERYBODY HAPPY?**

The Space Shuttle Challenger explodes on launch.

Reagan Admin. is rocked by Iran-Contra Scandal.

Nintendo is introduced to the world.

We have all heard the line, “testing, testing, 1 2 3.” It’s an engineering line used to check that microphones are working and that the signal is being broadcast smoothly, with no static, to radios everywhere. It was no different at KFWB, except when the testing was for a totally different reason.

The key to a smoothly working radio station or any other business for that matter is the health of the staff and Westinghouse was always concerned about our health. Human Resources distributed health pamphlets dealing with such critical issues as plantars warts, zits, post-nasal drip, itching in embarrassing areas of the body and other life affirming maladies.

The company also loved to send us questionnaires dealing with how we felt, how we looked and how long it took for us to realize

that they never really read our answers. One such questionnaire was slightly modified by The KFWB Nooseline. The questionnaire was designed to help us determine just how healthy we were but instead, it demonstrated just how ill was the Nooseline staff. It went like this.

1. SMOKING

I avoid smoking in.....

- a. bed
- b. the shower
- c. an ammunition dump
- d. while snorkeling.

I smoke:

- a. low tar cigarettes
- b. high tar cigarettes
- c. anyone's cigarettes
- d. ham.

2. ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

Drinking alcohol:

- a. prevents worms
- b. makes me throw up.
- c. Is easier than chewing it
- d. Dumb.

I avoid alcohol when:

- a. lighting a match
- b. walking a tightrope
- c. there's no one around.

Drugs are:

- a. Nothing to laugh at.
- b. Nothing to fool with.
- c. Nothing but trouble.
- d. All of the above.

### 3. EATING HABITS

Eating chewy, sticky food:

- a. results in caramel on my teeth.
- b. Messes up my pants pockets
- c. Is none of your business

When I eat, I:

- a. sit down.
- b. Burp.
- c. Get fat
- d. Spill stuff all over me.

### 4. EXERCIZE AND FITNESS

When I exercise:

- a. I get a charley horse.
- b. The Angels rejoice.
- c. I throw something out of whack.

To me, exercise is:

- a. torture
- b. impossible
- c. an eight letter word.
- d. my life

Exercise is for:

- a. weaklings
- b. Arnold Schwarzenegger
- c. Jane Fonda look-alikes.

### 5. STRESS CONTROL

I control stress through:

- a. drugs
- b. booze
- c. punching my neighbor
- d. driving real fast.

To avoid stress, I:

- a. Close my eyes
- b. Write to Dear Abby
- c. Hide in a dark closet.

## 6. SAFETY

To really feel safe, I:

- a. use deodorant
- b. stay out of S & M bars.
- c. Use a safety net.
- d. Arm myself with a Smith and Wesson revolver.

To make others feel safe, I:

- a. never perform surgery
- b. never J walk
- c. look both ways
- d. stay off the streets at night.

To rate yourself on this test, add up all the “yes” and “no” answers. If you suddenly realize there were no “yes” or “no” questions, you are doing fine. Next, take all the answers to all the questions and throw them out. Then lock yourself in a dark, quiet room. Be sure you have no sharp instruments and just rest. Remember, this test has no socially redeeming value but wasn't it fun wasting all that time?

\* \* \* \* \*

Exactly one month later, the good folks at Westinghouse Broadcasting became concerned that quite possibly, we were not following the guidelines from the previous questionnaire. Of course, there were no guidelines from the previous questionnaire, but they apparently like to worry just for the sake of worrying. So, we prepared another questionnaire. And the KFWB Nooseline went

right to work trying to make head or tail out of the newest batch of rather personal questions. Here's what we came up with:

**FOR MEN ONLY:**

Which best describes your physical activity in the course of an average week?

- a. I sit like a lump.
- b. I watch sports on TV a lot
- c. I am a Greek God with a Godlike body.

To me, exercise represents:

- a. Meeting chicks at the gym.
- b. Spending a fortune on designer leotards
- c. Wheezing

I use seatbelts when I:

- a. Sit at home.
- b. When I stand while driving.
- c. When I can't find my suspenders.

How often do you drink alcohol?

- a. All the time.
- b. All the time.
- c. What was the question?

Do you ever take mood altering drugs or other medication?

- a. Tee Hee
- b. I refuse to answer on 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment grounds.
- c. What?

**FOR WOMEN ONLY**

Would you submit to a full physical by an amateur MD?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. For a fee.

Have you ever done anything so dirty, hair grew on your elbows?

- a. Don't ask.
- b. That's for me to know and you to find out.
- c. Yes

Do you have any of the following conditions:

- a. Washerwoman's elbow
- b. Nasal Bone Spurs
- c. A prehensile tail
- d. 11 fingers
- e. Tattoos
- f. A listing in the psycho sexual section of the Guinness Book of World Records.

FOR ALL EMPLOYEES:

After taking this survey, I want to:

- a. Throw up.
- b. Rush to my analyst
- c. Marry you.
- d. Defect to a foreign country.
- e. Go on a pilgrimage to the birthplace of Regis Toomey.
- f. Suck my toes.

Our next survey will cover the heartbreak of hairy palms, multi-colored warts and what not to do to get them.

\* \* \* \* \*

The news business to some may simply be a form of show business with concern about ratings, commercial sales or voice quality. But for those of us who take the business seriously, it is much more. It is a vital means of linking our listeners to the rest of the world and

to do so requires not only the ability to write clearly and to speak effectively but also to be accurate, to be correct.

There were times when I was asked how does a person prepare for a career in broadcast journalism, especially if they have not attended classes at the Journalism School of their neighborhood university. My standard answer was "read". Read everything you can get your hands on including the newspaper from cover to cover and the various news magazines. Become conversant in as many subjects as possible including music, science, history and government among others. You don't have to be an expert but familiarity with as much as possible is important because you never know what subject matter you will be dealing with at any time of the day or night. You will notice that many radio and TV stations do not use certain of their anchors for important interviews or stories. There is a strong possibility the anchor is nothing more than a news reader. He sounds great, looks great and he reads well but that may be as far as it goes. The anchor simply may not be qualified to do any heavy duty interviews or in depth stories.

It was at about the halfway point in my thirty years at KFWB that I began looking around at my fellow staffers, wondering if they had the required information reservoir that is needed. So, in my vaunted position as Editor and Publisher of the foremost example of trash journalism, I devised a test that was inserted with much fanfare and official looking documentation into the KFWB Nooseline. I called it.....

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“THE NATIONAL BROADCASTERS EXAMINATION.”

WARNING:

Read each question carefully. You will have four hours to complete the test with breaks to carry out chores at home which if not carried out, could result in your wife or significant other inflicting serious bodily harm on your person. Cheating is not allowed so don't read your neighbor's paper in case he or she is taking the test in your home. Begin.

RELIGION

Outline the development of Ancient Zoroastrianism through use of the new math.

BIOLOGY

Create an alien life form and describe how you did it without maniacal laughter.

ARTS & CRAFTS

Knit a car. You may use steel wool.

PHYSICS

Discuss the nature of matter and conversely explain what is the matter with nature.

PHILOSOPHY

Think of something.

MUSIC

Compose a concerto for Harpsichord and Kazoo suitable for a marching band. Play it.

**PHYSIOLOGY**

Explain where you lap goes when you stand up.

**MEDICINE**

Explain the benefits of a pimple transplant. Be brief.

As it turned out, no one paid any attention to this test so we cannot tell you the results, which is just as well.

\* \* \* \* \*

But, enough of broadcast testing. Lets turn to one of the scariest late night moments at KFWB.

It should not be any surprise to those who work the so-called graveyard shift that it can be a wonderful time to work, assuming you like to be up all night. Since I did like those kinds of hours, I very often came to work at nine o'clock and went home at five in the morning. The shift was good in that you could do your work in peace without crowds of people rushing back and forth and managers looking over your shoulder. It was quiet, peaceful and you could concentrate on what you were doing. It could also be quite exciting because with Los Angeles on the west coast, we are three hours behind New York and Washington DC and even further behind London, Paris and Rome and if something major happened in one of those cities, we would be the ones to put it on the air first.

Now, the eerie haunting saga of "The Great Tapioca Attack". It was late at night. Almost 11 PM. Anchor Bill Schubert was on the air while I was in the newsroom preparing my newscast set to begin at

1130PM. Editor Ken Grimwood was manning the editor's desk and writer Eric Williams was at the writer's desk preparing to go home.

Suddenly, from the back of the building, we heard a frantic pounding on the back door. Were we being invaded? Was there a crazed killer attempting to break in and shoot all of us? We sent Eric Williams to investigate. Slowly, Eric rose from his chair and moved catlike toward the rear of the building, silently disappearing into the corridor. Editor Grimwood and I stared down that corridor, stunned to have watched Eric walk catlike. He had never done that before. There was silence. Suddenly the pounding resumed and Grimwood and I knew we had to do something so we discussed locking ourselves in the men's room but decided instead to investigate the pounding.

We moved catlike toward the back door, fully expecting to see our friend Eric, sprawled on the floor, ripped apart by some maniac who was crouched waiting to pounce on us. The hairs on the back of our necks stood up. Ken had more hair so more of his hair stood up.

We made the turn in the corridor and confronted Eric at the four inch thick bulletproof window, his hands on his chin looking out into the dark. Ken and I craned our necks and also looked outside. There, dressed in a tuxedo and looking totally frazzled, was reporter Cleve Hermann. Was he in trouble? Was he sick? Had he been mugged? Quickly, we opened the door.

"I dropped my pudding." Ken and I stared at Cleve.

"What?" we asked in unison.

Cleve explained he had just returned from a dinner honoring Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa. In order to get back to the station to prepare his reports for the morning, he took his pudding in a doggie bag. Just as he arrived at the KFWB back door Cleve dropped his pudding.

Without saying a word, we turned and went back to work, leaving Cleve with pudding on his shoes.

As they say, there are a million stories in the naked city. That was one of the sillier ones.

\* \* \* \* \*

If there is one thing most people don't like, its change. They like to get comfortable with things they know and blithely skip down the garden path, whistling a happy tune.

I was one of those un-changelings. It took me twelve years to figure out what that rubber thing on the end of a pencil was for and I had just found and memorized the location of the back spacer on my typewriter when the big announcement was made. The VDT's had arrived. The age of high tech electronics had dawned in the hollowed halls of KFWB.

Instead of typewriters, we would be using computer terminals. Everything we could ever want or need would be right inside out computer terminals. The reaction was one of three exclamations... "Yay!!!!!!", "Huh???????" and "Argghhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!" KFWB's sports anchor Don Wells threatened to chain himself to

his desk, proclaiming that he and his typewriter would not be taken alive! How did management react to our expression of fear and fright? They began to rewire the newsroom. They also tried to cheer us up telling us of the thrill of holding in our hands an RS-232C interface cable and being able to say, "This is my own RS-232C interface cable." Hell, I didn't even know what the word Interface meant. To this day, I am still not sure.

What excitement! General Manager Steve Fisher (yes, we had another new General Manager), issued a memo proclaiming 1986 as the Year of the Electronic Newsroom.

In the ensuing weeks, a horde of nerdy looking computer people from San Francisco descended on the KFWB Newsroom armed with monitors, keyboards, wires, terminals, switches and a whole bunch of strange items that defy description.

In the meantime, the KFWB staffers would gather around our old, reliable clickety clack wire machines that had been spewing miles and miles of news copy on countless thousands of rolls of paper year after year, and we would shed a tear. Some even hugged their wire machines.

A strange thing happened regarding the tiny room where our wire machines had lived those many years. An air conditioner was installed. Now, this was not your average air conditioning unit that you might have in your home or even your neighborhood store. This was heavy duty. It turned that room into an icebox where you could easily store meat. You see, the main frame for the computer system

had to be kept cool, really cool. As a matter of fact, it had to be kept cold. So cold that a jacket and gloves hung on a hook in that room for anyone who had to go in. Those of us who brought frozen dinners to work, stored them there too. It was that cold.

Then they started wiring up our desks. It was fun to try to write a news story while a nerdy guy crawled under you desk doing God knows what with a lot of wires. The only blessing was it was not a plumber so there was not a butt crack to be seen for miles. Computer nerds never display butt cracks.

The time was growing short for the arrival of the terminals we would use on a day-to-day basis. News Director Bill Yeager (yes, we had a new News Director) told us these would be friendly computers. They would talk to us. They would be our friends. I wasn't sure I was ready to be buddies with Robby The Robot. Then Yeager told us not to touch the computers under penalty of death. That certainly put us at ease..

Then began training. We would go into the conference room where we saw about eight terminals on the conference table. It was here that we began learning about bits, bytes, DOS, cursors, input, drawers, passwords, split screens and other stuff. I was amazed but I actually understood what was being force-fed to me.

We found out who would get the terminals.....the editor, the writers, the anchors, the reporters, the desk assistants desk, the assignment desk, the correlators desk, the sports desk, the executive editor's desk, the news director's desk, the chief engineer's desk, the

tape editing room desks, the recording studio desks, the production studio desk and two terminals would go into the air studio, one for each anchor position.

In view of all the new equipment that was coming into the station, we also discovered we were getting new desk chairs.

When the training was finally over, many staffers had pithy things to say.

Sue Stiles, when asked if she had fun learning the computer said, "Yes, No, Yes, Maybe, No." Anchor Charlie Brailer was quoted as saying, "You give me twenty two minutes, I'll turn on my machine." I was quoted as saying, "Here's how to turn on you machine. Just say, I love you machine." Writer Ron Erwin was heard to say, "Huh?" Newsroom secretary Linda Rader announced, "Hello, I will be your computer bunny." Editor Ken Grimwood was more practical. He said, "You will love your computer, or else." Bill Schubert is reputed to have uttered this reaction, "Well..." Morning anchor Dan Avey simply said, "Don't talk to me." And Anchor Suzanne Reynolds said simply, "Arghhhhhhh!!!!"

A month after the big announcement, the computers went on line and soon, the expressions of horror and fear left our faces. Instead, there was great joy as we saw the high speed printers reproduce our copy exactly as we wrote them, typographical errors and all. The system had no spell checker so we had to be extra careful. But there was a bonus. Just as PC owners can do, we were able to send e-mails to people sitting three feet away from us. We could save

recipes and really stupid stories that we would print out later or pass around electronically. There were some who figured out how to send messages anonymously and at least one person got in trouble for sending sexually explicit messages to others in the newsroom.

The best thing? Carbon paper snapouts, those multi sheeted books of blank paper with carbon paper sheets between, for typing stories, became history and no one went home with carbon residue on their fingers ever again.

Downside. The introduction of the computer system was supposed to, in part, eliminate the tons of paper that floated about the newsroom. Now, when we made a mistake, just delete the mistake and continue on. But when we finished the typing the newscast, we would have to print it on paper to be carried into the studio. Each newscast contained anywhere from 25 to 40 sheets of paper. That's a lot of paper. To make things worse, we could store the newscasts in the computer system for a while but they also established a script morgue where old scripts were stored for a month just in case someone had to look up something and surprisingly, it was easier to find things in the paper morgue than in the electronic file cabinet. But that meant a desk assistant, usually a young lady, being forced to wrestle a heavy load of 36 to 48 scripts used in a single day to find something like President Clinton's middle name (its Jefferson) or whether a murder took place that day in the City of Bell or the City of Bellflower. That meant an awful lot of paper still present in the newsroom. What was even more present in the newsroom

were the strips of perforated paper that were on each and every sheet that went thru any newsroom printer. These strips, about three quarters of an inch wide, were there to help the printer pull the paper smoothly thru the machine, delivering it neatly to a basket at the other end. Sometimes, there was no basket so the sheets of paper were deposited messily on the floor in back of the printer, creating a brief waste of time while the anchor retrieved it. But I digress, as I usually do. No one dragged those skinny strips of paper into the studio. We tore them off and dumped them in a waste bin next to the printer. Somehow, those strips, which were very long at times, managed to find their way out of the bin and onto the floor where they multiplied. The strips, whole or just scraps were everywhere. In fact, if all the strips in that first month of computer use, had been strung together, we seriously believed that could reach one quarter of the way to the moon. Now, that's a lot of strips.

Before we depart from the issue of things that accumulated in the newsroom, consider this. Each and every piece of sound that goes on the air on KFVB, with the exception of the anchor and reporter voices, are recorded on tape housed in plastic cartridges the size of the old eight track music cartridges that were briefly in vogue prior to the arrival of cassettes. Each cartridge had a paper label containing information about that particular piece of sound. It told you who was speaking, how long the sound byte was and, if it was a news cartridge, the last words spoken on the tape so the anchor can jump in when it finished. Well, these cartridges could be used over

and over. Erase the previous sound and record new sound on the same cartridge. But those labels could only be used once and when the sound was dead, so was the label.

In one of the small sound editing rooms, there was a ball made up of used cartridge labels. Every label ever used in the newsroom was in that ball. It grew and it grew until it weighed about one hundred pounds but one day, somehow, a member of the night cleaning crew threw it out. We were devastated. We loved that ball. We nurtured it and tended to it and made sure it was fed more labels every day. We wanted to see how big we could get it. Even the General Manager would stop buy to check its growth and then with a shrug, would retreat to his office.

Well, when that ball was trashed, we began again and in no time, that ball was the size of a basketball, then a medicine ball, then a small weather balloon. It appeared it might reach the size of a Sherman Tank. It may still be growing today.

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Lets now take a look at those examples of Silver Tongued Deviltry, exhibited by our glib staff.

One young lady who made only a brief appearance at KFWB, informed our listeners that publicly funded boarding schools for underprivileged children were “crapping up all over the country.”

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Another staffer, Luis Ramirez demonstrated his concern for Mother Nature's creations. He reported on the discovery of "the body of a woman in some bushes which showed no sign of trauma". This is good as we all hate to see bushes damaged.

In Los Angeles, a traffic problem is often referred to as a "sig-alert". When broadcast, radio listeners pay more attention to such sig-alerts as they can really screw up traffic on our freeway system and even our surface streets. So you can imagine their confusion when traffic reporter Tom Story told our listeners that there was a 20 hour "cigarette" in Hacienda Heights.

Michael Schoen is a fine writer and a fine reporter but when doing a report on Science Fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke, Mike referred to Clarke's most famous work as, "2001, A Space Oddity."

## PROMOTIONS

Iran-Contra hearings on Capital Hill.

Ex-Nazi Klaus Barbie is convicted.

War between Zulus and ANC begins in South Africa.

If you were a visitor to Earth from another planet, you might not know that radio, just like television, newspapers, magazines and all the rest, is a medium of communications. But since you are not a Martian or a Venusian or even a Jovian (a guy from Jupiter) you already know this. What you may not know is that while radio can provide entertainment and information, it cannot do it if the folks at home don't know you exist. Therefore, in order to inform and entertain, radio stations reach out to potential listeners with catchy slogans, giveaways, contests to convince them that their lives will be so great if only they would listen to us all the time.

In 1968, when KFWB began its All News programming, it was already one of the best known radio stations in the country, for music and news but mostly for music. But now, music had been dropped

and the word went out that there would be only news. As a result, the listeners took off for parts unknown and we had to bring them back, kicking and screaming if necessary.

Our first big pitch was the slogan, "Set The Center Button On Your AM Dial to KFWB, All News, All The Time." Car radios in 1968 had five buttons for programming stations....five for AM and five for FM. People remembered that slogan because we repeated it over and over and over until it became engraved on their foreheads. The audience listened and did what we asked. Our numbers grew at a marvelous rate. But you can only use a slogan so long before it becomes a pain in the neck. So, we needed something else. It happened however that 1968 was a year of big stories. Biggest among them were the assassinations of Martin Luther King Junior and Senator Robert F. Kennedy. People tuned to us for those and other stories and our demographics continued to grow but big news stories and slogans are still not enough to build and keep an audience. You have to continue bombarding the audience with reminders that we are there for them. We used billboards.

Former KFWB promotion director Bruce Marr is a genius and around Christmas time, he produced a billboard that stands out in my mind as one of the most brilliant I had ever seen. Using just two words, he conveyed two great messages. He wished our listeners a Merry Christmas and at the same time, assured them they would become smarter by listening to us. The two words were....."KNOW WELL." Surrounded by mistletoe, those two words, in red gothic

style, sat in a bare green field. The name KFWB, News 98 was in smaller letters at the bottom. We used billboards after that but times had changed and the message had changed and they never came up to the calibre of "KNOW WELL".

Promotion can take many forms but for some reason, one promotional gimmick was used only once. When you listen to the radio, you hear those beautiful voices and you wonder if the face that goes with the voice is just as beautiful. You might imagine what the newscaster looks like but you never really know. There are only a few whose faces match the voice. Take me for example. Well, okay, don't take me. See if I care.

Suffice it to say, the big booming voice could come from the throat of a pimply shrimp with bad breath, body odor and unruly hair. The powers that were at KFWB in addition to deciding that certain products such as Hemorrhoid medicines would never advertise on the station, also decided that they would not publicize pictures of the air staff. Do you get the sneaking suspicion that we were being considered comparable to hemorrhoids? I refuse to speculate. Anyway, it was decided that no one was to know what we looked like. It went that way until shortly after our strike in 1971 that the Voice Squad was created. It was an intense campaign that featured a full page newspaper ad, plus little plastic badge folders. The badge that was imprinted in gold on the plastic, looked like an LAPD badge but it said KFWB Voice Squad on it. The full page ad was a production and a half. The anchor and field reporting staffs

were told to report at varying times to the studios of a photographer in Hollywood. In his studio was one of our mobile unit radio cars. We were put into groups of four or five and positioned alongside the car, on top of the car, in front of the car and behind the car. These pictures were planned out perfectly because when put together, it looked like all of us were there at the same time.

Because I was such a raving beauty, I was placed at the very front of the car. When the picture was printed, I looked like a 14 year old kid.

We were never told how the picture would be used but about a week later, my lovely wife Linda and I took our son Brian for a weekend in Palm Springs. At the hotel Sunday morning, I went down to the coffee shop to buy coffee and Danish and as I was returning to the room, a man, sitting with his family in a booth in the coffeeshop reached out to me and asked if that was me in the picture in his newspaper. I looked and there was the big, full page ad. Yes it was me. I was a celebrity! I had been recognized by face instead of voice and I floated off the ground for about two or three hours. Life was good, very good.

Whatever the reason, the Voice Squad promotion didn't last very long. The big picture appeared in the paper only once and we all went back to anonymity. Promotional events included the CHOC's Padrino ten-K run described earlier; participation in various health fairs and once we had a booth at a chili cook-off. We actually won something. I think it was a year's supply of anti-acid. For the most

part, KFWB sponsored a series of billboards around the city and suburbs reminding folks of where we were on the dial, when we broadcast traffic reports and other program notes. But our faces were relegated to the Publicity catacombs where they were never seen again until years later when a station internet website was established.

Promotion does not only involve ads in newspapers or magazines. It also involves clothing, lots and lots of clothing. Over the years KFWB commissioned the production of many items to enhance our wardrobe. Our first item was a t-shirt and sun hat. These were holdovers from the pre-All News days. It showed the letters KFW and then a picture of a cute little bee. Get it? Huh? Huh? Huh? KFWBee. The shirts were mostly children's sizes and on the back were the words..."Today, The News Is Covering Me."

The second was a t-shirt distributed at the first of the summer picnics. It used the great slogan "You Give Us 22 Minutes, We'll Give You The World." Those words, still in use today, surrounded a blue globe of the world.

Then began a procession of t-shirts, polo style shirts, sweat suits, pullover sweater-shirts and two different jackets, all had the station call letters, KFWB on the front or on the back and in varying sizes.

I cannot begin to tell you how much money I saved by wearing station clothing. Now if there had also been suits, winter coats and shoes, I have been completely outfitted.

Why all this clothing? To make us into walking billboards, of course. People see us. They read our shirts and hopefully rush right home to begin listening. Yeah, right.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now, from sartorial splendor to mondo bizarro.

By now, you hopefully have realized that denizens of the newsroom can be as strange as anyone else. This maybe because of the nature of the material we deal with. Not a day goes by that we don't report on some horror, some crisis, some example of man's inhumanity to man. Murders, rapes, robberies, abuse of all sorts, the list goes on and on and a steady diet of this has proven upsetting to many a journalist. As a result, over the years, a bizarre sense of humor has developed. It's not because journalists are ghouls but its simply a way of releasing tension. We might make joking comments about a story that is far from being a funny story but probably the most bizarre practice is...the Ghoul Pool.

The Ghoul Pool is similar to an office football or baseball pool only we are not picking the winner of any game. We are picking a time of death. Brrrrrrr!

A perfect example of a ghoul pool involved Francisco Franco, the Fascist dictator of Spain. The man lay dying for a protracted period of time and when we came to work each day, we would ask if Franco had died yet. When he did die, we were ready with all sorts of reports outlining his life, his policies, etc. His death took so long

that the ghoulish pool was established. Those who participated, kicked in a dollar, or five dollars, whatever the going rate was and then they selected a date and time for Franco to go to wherever dictators go after death. Such a selection would go like this. If today were March first, you might pick March 4<sup>th</sup> at 8 AM Los Angeles time. Someone else might say March 5<sup>th</sup> at 9 PM and still someone else might pick the same day but a different time. Then we would wait for Franco to die. The news wires would give the exact hour and sometimes, the exact minute that he left this mortal coil. The person picking the date and time closest to the actual date and time, won the pool.

One pool involved former Alabama Governor Lurleen Wallace, the wife of George Wallace. Lurleen, who had succeeded her husband as Governor of Alabama, was diagnosed with terminal cancer in 1966 and she endured a long and excruciatingly painful journey to the end of the line. A ghoulish pool was established. Dates and times were picked. But she didn't die and the final date picked in the pool came and went with Lurleen still among the living. It was the only time that I had ever seen when the first pool was declared null and void and everyone had to pick new dates. Then on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 1968, she died. The winner was paid and for several years, we had no ghoulish pool. I can tell you that for those who participate in such pools, there is as much tension as at the crap tables in Las Vegas and winning can be just as much fun, despite the fact that someone has to die. In the early days of the All News format, newsroom secretary Judy Barrett, according to former news director Herb Humphries, was

the winner of one of the pools. When the news was flashed that the person involved had died and when the time of death was given, Judy knew immediately that she had won. She also happened to be in the perfect spot to shout that she had won. She was in a casino in Las Vegas.

Finally, ghoulish pools became politically incorrect and as far as I know, are no longer established.

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As earlier mentioned, each administration at the station sees as its mission the obligation to put its mark on the air product by changing the way we do something. This of course shows headquarters that our leader's inspire work, work, work. You can't change something every single day. If you did, no one would know from one day to the next what the hell they were doing or not doing. So, on those days when nothing is being changed, the honchos (bosses), turn to teaching us. They feel that as bosses, they are considerably more learned about the various skills of broadcasting than those of us who perform those skills on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, they send around memos that describe the courses they will teach in the hopes that we will knock ourselves out to rush and sit at their feet, soaking up such knowledge.

Executive Editor Dave Foreman announced the formation of what was called KFWB Career Tech, where we, the novices, would

be exposed to the “big picture” and thus become more capable of climbing the corporate ladder to success.

The courses included:

1. 4/14 - 1 PM - Theories and Philosophy. Professor Dave Graves, General Manager
2. 4/14 - 2 PM - The Product. Professor Dan Mitchell, some guy.
3. 4/21 - 1 PM - Style and Sound. Professor Dave Graves, Our Leader.
4. 4/21 - 2 PM News Writing For Radio. Professor Fred Walters, Our other leader.
5. 4/28 - 1 PM Editing. Professor: TBA
6. 4/28 - 2 PM News Writing For Radio, Part 2. Professor: Fred Walters.
7. 4/29 - 1 PM Newsroom Organization. Professor: TBA
8. 4/29 - 2 PM Anchoring...The End Result. Professors: J Burson, D Avey, D. Herbert, V Campagna. Plus The Ritz Brothers, Simon and Garfunkel, Manny Moe and Jack, et al.

The staff of the KFWB Nooseline thought this idea was so radical and wonderful, we announced a second semester with courses such as:

1. Your Stapler, Be Good To It and It Will Be Good To You.

2. Sexy Editorial Assistants and Self Control.
3. Five Part Snapouts and You.
4. How To Ask For A Raise While On Sabbatical Leave.
5. Finding The Restroom in a Hurry.
6. Speling and Grammer.

As usual, no one signed up but management nonetheless continued its quest to better educate us. A series of memos from the engineering department either instructed us on some issue or advised us to check in with the technical types to learn the proper operation of one piece of machinery or another.

One memo was of extreme importance. It had to do with watching what we say in the newsroom. The engineers were installing a microphone in the newsroom itself for use by reporters who would do news inserts from the so-called "Special Events Desk".

This would involve a reporter sitting in front of that mike and going on the air live to do his report. It would also allow our audience to get a dose of "news room ambiance" and that's where the danger lay. You see, in almost any newsroom in any city, at a radio station, television station, newspaper or magazine, there is going to be some degree of salty language. Reporters like to think of themselves as tough guys and tough guys talk tough, especially to each other. Placing a live microphone in their midst is like lighting a cigarette in a dynamite bunker. Therefore, in addition to learning how and when to use the mike, instructions were also given to everybody else how to behave when the mike was in use.

In short, any words saltier than heck, darn, rats and poo poo were not allowed. I am sure you understand why.

There were other instructional memos from the engineering department. The commercials that you hear on the air, were pre-recorded on cartridges that were placed inside what was called the InstaCart machine or as we lovingly dubbed it “Hal” after the cranky computer in the movie 2001, A Space Odyssey.

Once in the InstaCart machine, those commercials were programmed to play on the air in a set order according to the time of the day and how many times in a day the commercial was scheduled to play. But as they say, if something CAN go wrong, it WILL go wrong.

A panic button was installed in the studio so that if a commercial did play out of sequence, the Anchor hopefully would notice this and push the button. This would stop the commercial and would alert a technician to come and reset everything. This did not work as well as hoped, partially because technicians were always being interrupted while doing one thing, to rush and do another. Therefore...as they say in advertising...a “NEW AND IMPROVED” panic button was installed. Instead of turning off the commercial, it took it off the air but allowed the cartridge to continue running until it re-set itself and was ready to play again, while at the same time cycling the machine over to play the next commercial when the play button was pushed. Now, couple this with the EOM light and you have lots of fun. EOM stands for “End Of Message”. It comes on during the last

five or ten seconds of a commercial so that the anchor is prepared to begin speaking as soon as the commercial ends. That's the way it is supposed to work but just a few days after the NEW AND IMPROVED panic button was installed, the EOM button began lighting up any damn time it wanted to, during commercial, at the beginning of commercials and even when commercials were not playing. This got very annoying, so it meant the technicians would have to fix it and when they did, we would get a memo instructing us what to do with the EOM light. We sent a few suggestions of our own back to the engineering department telling them what they could do with the light..

Talking about engineers, these guys can send out staff memos that mean absolutely nothing to most of us. In May of 1986, this gem came to us from Executive Editor Dave Foreman by way of Chief Engineer Dick Rudman and his trusty sidekick, Tubes Krikey.

It went like this.....

"The SFX in your Sennheisers are hotter than ever before. This is because the teletype has been re-equalized and the effect on the monitors exaggerated when compared to the actual air sounds on the vast majority of AM radios. Of Course you know what this means."

Of course? Of Course what? I had no clue what the whole thing meant. I had no clue what an SFX was. I did know a Sennheiser is a brand name for a microphone but I never knew a Sennheiser had an SFX. Is an SFX anything like a BVD or a COD or even an NBC? And how does one go about re-equalizing a teletype? And why

wasn't the first equalization good enough? Who was responsible? Find a scapegoat! This must not be allowed to continue! Do you have the feeling I still have no clue what that was all about?

\* \* \* \* \*

Now, broadcasting is an industry that benefits greatly from advances in technology. Once AM radio was the only thing. Now FM appears to be king because of improvements in transmission doohickies. I use the technical term "doohicky" to demonstrate my grasp of the subject. Microphones became more sophisticated, especially those with SFX's in them and they made us sound much much better over the years. Recording machinery became more dependable and reproduced sound more accurately.

Transmitters were improved, phone lines were more available and new advances came in almost every field. In short, radio had become high tech and our tech was getting higher by the day. Finally, even our low tech items got a touch of high tech.

In 1968, when the All News format was instituted at KFWB, a dozen tall, gray trashcans were introduced to the newsroom. These cans, made of rubber and plastic receptacles did their job admirably over the years. They became the temporary final resting places for countless chicken bones, crumpled paper, candy wrappers, carbon paper, wet cigarette butts and hundreds of other items. These cans were also used as ash trays and lit cigarettes and even an occasional cigar or two, was balanced on the three quarter inch wide top rim.

More times than you could imagine, these lit butts fell into the trashcans and started little wisps of smoke wafting around the room and sometimes, they started full fires. But we survived them all due to the coffee drinking habits of the newsroom staff. Every desk position had one and sometimes two cups of stale coffee just sitting there, cold and forgotten. When fire broke out in one of the cans, we newsmen sprang to action and doused the fire with coffee. In fact, you might almost call it a symbiotic relationship....fire and cold coffee.

As we all know, time flies and attitudes change. America became ecology conscious and this meant not only no smoking inside the building, it mean recycling. No more could we lump together our half eaten tuna sandwiches with perfectly recyclable paper and stuff. So, it was out with the old and in with the new. Maybe that should be....in with the new, shove aside the old.

Management showed up one day with half trashcans. The old trashcans were circular, 360 degree affairs. The half cans were half circular, 180 degrees. Sort of like the capitol letter D. Why? I have no clue except that the flat side could fit neatly against your desk and I suppose someone thought that was pretty slick. Anyway, a memo came along with those cans. Here was the deal. The half cans were recycling cans. Paper, cardboard, carbons, dry stuff like that would go into the half cans. Later, the half cans would be emptied into trash bags and tossed into the recycling bin in the parking lot. The old, trusty round cans were for yucky stuff including lunch

leftovers, birthday cake boxes with remnants of icing inside, cold pizza no one wanted, half gnawed doughnuts, and projectile vomit along with other things. The memo ended by urging all of us to be careful where we threw our trash. Heaven help anyone who tried to recycle a pizza.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now, talking about ecology and the environment, weather is a major part of the All News format. There once was a time when to check the weather, the announcer ran to a window and looked out. He noted when it was raining, snowing, sunny or dark. He read the temperature from a thermometer attached to the outside of the window. That was about it. Now, we no longer give the weather. We give meteorological forecasts. Sky conditions, wind direction and speed, humidity, barometric pressure, sun rise, sun set, high temperatures for the day, low temperatures at night, and of course, approaching storms as well as five day forecasts.

Now, if we were all real meteorologists, our reports in all likelihood would be dull as dishwater. Therefore, we tried to make our forecasts listener friendly. I always wanted to do a weather cast that would say simply, "Dark, followed by widely scattered light." It's too bad that I never got the chance.

We were instructed to turn our forecasts into conversational English. In other words, avoid short sentences. For example..."We're in for rain, temperatures in the low fifties and windy." That is not

conversational. Management wanted it to sound like we were old codgers sittin' around a pot bellied stove in the general store. The "Howdy" boys. In other words, this kind of forecast.

If the weather called for cloudy and cool tonight, followed by sunny and warm tomorrow, we were to say something like this. "Hi guys, big puffy clumps of grey stuff are holdin' a meetin' over us but that's okay cause there ain't nothin' to see at night anyways. But tomorra, that's a whole different ballgame. Mother Nature is gonna go berserk with that big yeller ball in the sky. Warm like mama's apple pie just outta' the oven, winds making the wash flutter on the clothes line and smellin' as good as your best girl's toilet water. Mmmmm Mmmmm!!!" Well, that may be an exaggeration, but they wanted us to be friendly, conversational. I tried it once. But that's another story.

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How does one react when the entire field of meteorology is turned on its ear by a single sentence? The sentence came from anchor Lyle Kilgore who told our audience, "It will be sunny tonight." Well, there's a whole night's sleep, shot to hell.

Reporter Michael Shappee created a new Hollywood landmark when he reported on "The Chinese Man Theatre." It's really Mann's Chinese Theatre, for those who don't know.

I contributed this gem. "The space shuttle has returned to earthy following a highly reproductive mission." I guess it returned with more astronauts then when it left. Besides, Cloning may indeed be underway. Ya think?

We had a traffic report announcing that "everything was clear on Orange County Fleaways." Well, doggone!

On this report, just the facts with no comments. We don't know if it was a sports team made up of Los Angeles police officers or something totally different but in a report about L.A.P.D. recruiting efforts, our anchor referred to recruiters for the L.A. Peters.

## **CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'**

George Bush beats Michael Dukakis for Presidency.  
Ayatollah Khomeini calls for death of Salman Rushdie.

We have looked at the various promotions devised by the station to attract listeners. There were many kinds of promotions available to us and KFWB often got involved in several of them and we staffers got dragged kicking and screaming right along, despite the fact that often we had no idea what they were about.

“California Dreamin'” was one such promotion that was born in the cavernous mind of executive editor Dave Foreman. The name of course, comes from the song by the Mamas and The Papas and the stated purpose was to explore the hopes and dreams of Californians. We went everywhere in L.A. and we found the people to talk to. They were the actors, actresses, politicians, businessmen, some of our journalism colleagues and other people who were very famous at the time. In fact, we had more celebrities participating in California Dreamin' than showed up at the last Post Academy Award Party

given by super agent Swifty Lazar in 1987. It was a name dropper's paradise and everybody who was anybody and even those who were almost somebodies and a few who used to be somebodies were on the list. Here they are in no particular order. Lucille Ball, Producer David L. Wolper, Rich Little, Tawney Little, Rutger Hauer, Mary Frann, Donald O'Conner, Wayne Rogers, Alan Hale, Jr, Martin Sheen, Ed Asner, Mary Hart, Mayor Tom Bradley, Billy Barty, Rene Enriquez, Ernest Borgnine, Steve Lundquist, William Windom, Ross Becker, Bubba Smith, John Ratzenberger, Tony Danza, Robert Wise, Charlotte Rae, Roxie Roker, Sidney Sheldon, Morgan Brittany, Pat O'Brien, Kelly Lange, Barbara Billingsley, Tony Dow, George Takai, Movie Critic David Sheehan, Robert Walden, Sally Struthers, Ken Kercheval, Wolfgang Puck, Timothy Leary, David Horowitz, Paul Krepple, Police Chief Daryl Gates, Tippi Hedron, Leslie Charleson, Frank Bonner, Stephen Furst, Attorney Gloria Allred, James Keach, Ted Dawson, Jackie Joyner Kersee, Julia Duffy, Bob Hope, Tom Brokaw, U.S. Senator Pete Wilson, Gene Autry, Richard Simmons, Dodger Manager Tommy Lasorda, George Burns, Archbishop Roger Mahoney, Harlan Ellison, Victoria Principal, Maureen McGovern, Dick Clark, Willard Scott, Peter Scolari, Joe Piscopo, Pat Haden, Jill Ireland, Jerry Mathers, Ed Begley, Kris Kristofferson, Catherine Bach, Jim Hill, Harvey Korman, Ali McGraw, Rue McClanahan, Henry Winkler, Tom Poston, Pam Dawber, The Reverend Robert Schuller, Bill Honig, David Naughton, Debbie Reynolds, Joan Rivers, Ed MacMahon, Anna Marie Horsford, Gary Collins, Leeza

Gibbons, Dennis Weaver, Caesar Romero, Jan Karl, Chuck Henry, Melody Rogers, L.A. Fire Chief Manning, James Caan and a cast of thousands.

This veritable Who's Who of Los Angeles expressed their hopes and dreams for the future....clean air, clean water, pure food, blue skies, warm weather, a sitcom or a starring role in a blockbuster movie, good schools, a nice house in a safe neighborhood and of course, world peace. Some of the celebrities actually came down to the station to voice their hopes and dreams in person while others were contacted by phone. For those among the KFWB staff who were star struck, it was great seeing our idols, even those cynical, hardened, seasoned newsmen who are not supposed to have idols. I for one followed Mary Frann of the second Bob Newhart Show around like a puppy dog.

Anyway, when it was over and everyone had gone home, we staffers basked in the glory of a very, very, very expensive day and we didn't want it to end. So, as you might expect, I, in my never ending quest to get involved in absolutely everything, came up with a list of followup events.

1. For the next ten months, we would feature "The Best Of California Dreamin'"
2. California Dreamin', The Movie.
3. TV sitcom: "Gidget Goes California Dreamin'"

4. Original Soundtrack Album, "California Dreamin' Sing Along"
5. The Love Theme From California Dreamin'" wins Academy Award.
6. Video: "California Dreamin' with Run DMC."
7. PBS Health Series: "Safe California Dreamin' starring Dr. Art Ulene, MD.

None of the suggestions were ever implemented and they all died a quiet death in my back pocket.

Another of our Be Nice To Los Angeles days was "SAFETY DAY" How to be safe at home, at work or at play was something someone decided we had to make a big deal about especially since we live in Earthquake Country. The emphasis was on how to survive if "the big one" was to hit. The "big one" of course being a monster quake that would be so destructive, you could buy beachfront property in Las Vegas. So, we gave out tips. Here's one. If you are in bed when the quake hits, throw a cover over your head so you are not hit by flying furniture. Of course I have never seen a flying dresser but, should one get airborne, you are all set. Here's another. If you are on the freeway in your car when the earthquake hits, don't get out and stand between the bouncing cars. One could bounce on you. This is also good advice even when there is no earthquake but if there is no earthquake, there probably won't be any bouncing cars either, unless one falls from an overpass.

Safety Day also advised us to store food and water in case the quake hits and you can't get to the supermarket. What kind of food? Well, not fresh fruits and vegetables and certainly not those gallon containers of milk or liter bottle of soft drink. Milk is awful after it turns sour and some colas that have gone flat are worse. So, what to store away? You get canned foods and store them with a can opener. Its tough to open a can with your teeth. Even better is survivalist food, that dried crap that lasts forever. Hardtack, beans, crackers, and nothing perishable. And don't worry about putting them in a freezer. If the quake hits, trust me, your freezer will defrost.

We at the station also got instruction on how to use a fire extinguisher. That was a kick, but they wouldn't allow us to set a real fire to try out our new skill. So, you see, SAFETY DAY for our listeners and for us was terrific. But we were given little Safety Days all the time by the technical staff. We were told that in Southern California, venomous snakes can be found anywhere. In Hollywood? Well maybe theatrical agents but slithery, creepy crawlies? Since General Manager Steve Fisher, was bitten by a snake while puttering around his garden one weekend, I devised the Anti-Snakebite Suit. It looked strangely enough like those suits of armor worn by knights in the days of King Arthur but mine only cost 438 dollars. No one bought one.

Safety regarding KFWB vehicles was of Paramount importance. It was also of importance at Warner Brothers as well. That's another story. It seems some field reporters were allowing the batteries of

the vans and mobile units to die down and operations manager Ed Dorsey issued a memo outlining what to do and not to do.

He suggested that if you are driving with your headlights on, when you stop the vehicle and get out, look in front of the vehicle to see that you have turned off the lights. However, it was further suggested that you not stand in front of the vehicle, especially if it was still moving.

Some of the reporters were not bothering to close and lock the sliding doors of the van, so Ed suggested checking to see if the doors were closed, but again, wait until the vehicle has come to a full stop. He also urged the staffers to be sure to check to see that the doors and closed and locked but get out of the van first.

It is obvious to see that our people were on the ball, all the time.

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One of the major events put on by the city of Los Angeles each year is the L.A. Marathon, 26 miles of running thru the city, from downtown, through Hollywood to the Wilshire District and back downtown. World class runners came from around the globe to participate. Some came to win, other ran just to say they did and still others came so they could get free t-shirts. KFWB had its own world class runner. Orange County reporter Sharon Katchen has participated in several marathons before coming to work with us and now she was going to do something unheard of. She was

going to run while carrying broadcast equipment on her back and report live on the air several times during the course of the race. It was sensational. There she was with more than four pounds of equipment strapped to her back, running right along with the best of them. Sharon didn't win and she didn't place but most importantly, she finished the race. She ran the entire 26+ miles and crossed the finish line in great shape.

That day, when she went home, she fell face first on her bed and did not get up for 4.3 days. It is no wonder Sharon Katchen is my idol. Since that time, Sharon experienced the equally exhilarating experience of motherhood and I don't believe she is doing as much running as she used to or maybe more with a kid to follow around.

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Generally speaking the news business is typified by the phrase "Go, go, go!" There is always something to report. Something is always happening somewhere around the world. These events may not be earthshaking but they can be important and you have a need to know. But every once in a while, nothing happens. Because Los Angeles is hours behind New York and many more behind Europe, things get quiet when its midnite in L.A. These are the times when we anchors, writers and editors relaxed somewhat and the newsroom became a sports palace.

Sports anchor Joe Cala is an avid golfer and always had a three iron under his desk.

When things got totally slow, he would whip out his club, take a few practice swings in the newsroom and then begin to smack paper wads around. Then when he was fully warmed up, out came the wiffle practice balls. The ping pong sized golf balls with holes in them whizzed all over the place. They didn't go far and they didn't fly fast and if you got hit with one, it was no big deal. So try to imagine yourself writing a newscast on the first tee at the Masters in Augusta, Georgia.

Our next athletic event was the newsroom marathon. Let me explain. The KFWB studios were designed as a bizarre letter O. If you began to walk down the main hallway and began taking a series of right turns you would arrive back at your starting point. If you were to then turn around and do the same thing with only left turns, well, you get the picture.

The newsroom races were designed to see who could fast-walk around the building in the shortest time. Running was strictly forbidden. We all participated and the world record for the KFWB Building Walk was just under two minutes. My fastest time was about 2 minutes and ten seconds.

Now, you could only do the building walk so many times before you either got bored or exhausted. That's when things got silly and we would resort to paper wad fights and even water fights.

As mentioned earlier, newsmen are supposed to be very serious, straight-laced and concerned with the world's problems. That's the image people have of us, so it is no surprise that we often had visitors

at night. The building security guard let these visitors in because they were members of the LAPD, The L.A. Sheriff's Office and the California Highway Patrol. If they were having quiet time, they would stop in to watch us work, to chat, have coffee and use our restrooms. So, try to imagine what they must have thought when confronted by us highly trained and highly educated professionals running around the newsroom throwing sopping wads of toilet paper at each other. Sometimes, to jolt the man on the air, we would throw the wet wads at the studio window. The wads would go SPLUT against the pane of glass and we would be in hysterics watching it slowly slide down due to the weight of the water. Suddenly, a story of some importance would come in and we would have to get serious instantaneously and get back to work. It was an amazing thing to watch.

Now, the issue of visitors to the KFWB studios was always a touchy issue. The cops who showed up were allowed in. This is because none of us had any urge to argue with a man with a gun. So the cops were okay but there were other incidents in Los Angeles and elsewhere that made management nervous about letting strangers into the building.

The most obvious incident was the taking over of the US Embassy in Tehran, Iran. Now, we didn't think the KFWB studios would be invaded by a bunch of Iranians but we were worried that one guy might get in and cause trouble. Therefore, security measures were instituted. A special key for the outer back door, and a keypad with numbers for the inner were made. And next to the inner steel door

with the numbers keypad, there was a hollow core plywood door leading to the engineering workspace. An angry horsefly could have battered its way through that one. In the front of the building, there was a door that weighed a ton and was connected to an alarm system that could wake the dead. There was also a bullet-proof window for the receptionist to look out to see who was at the door.

A list of regulations regarding visitors was drawn up.

1. A visitor is defined as anyone who is not a Group W Westinghouse employee.
2. Family members may enter the building with you but they must be members of YOUR family.
3. Former employees of KFWB are to be considered visitors. However if, after leaving KFWB, they moved to another city, where they died, don't worry about them.
4. Never leave building door unattended and propped open. Bad guys and flies, dust dirt and a drum and bugle corps can get in.
5. Never let a visitor explore the station on his or her own. Escort the visitor or call one of those Hollywood Escort services. Heh, Heh, Heh!
6. If a visitor manages to penetrate the outer defense, the editor will notify management, the LAPD SWAT TEAM, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division and the Strategic Air Command.

7. Never allow visitors to picnic in carpeted areas unless they offer you food (or money).
8. If you have any questions, keep them to yourselves. We are too busy to answer questions.

By now, you can tell that even while making KFWB a secure place to work, they also made KFWB into a place with lots and lots of regulations, guidelines, requirements and other stuff.

Take vacation requests, for example. Everybody in the world wants the holiday weeks off. Christmas, New Years, Easter, Thanksgiving, Arbor Day and Saint Swithen's Day are the most sought after times in which to go on vacation. Now, everybody can't go on vacation at once or there would be nobody to go on the air.

In order to be fair to everyone, those with the greatest seniority get to choose first. They can make their selections anytime between the first of the year and the first of April. Then, it is time for everybody else to make their choices. But even among the senior employees, as well as the newcomers, there were rules to abide by. No two anchors from the same shift could go on vacation at the same time. The number of field reporters on vacation at one time would depend upon how many field reporters we had and if those not on vacation, could fill the gap. Being one of the most senior staffers and working overnight, I had my pick of any week I wanted.

Other rules we had to follow included:

1. The company will not pay your airfare to Hawaii no matter how sweetly you ask.
2. Married staffers must be accompanied by their wives. Unmarried staffers may bring any slut or sleazeball they want.
3. You may not select two weeks in a row between December 23<sup>rd</sup> and January 2<sup>nd</sup>. Why? Because we said so, that's why.
4. While on vacation, do not embarrass yourself, your boss or the company.
5. Do not read the KFWB Nooseline while on vacation. It will rot your mind.
6. Do not \_\_\_\_\_ fill in the blank \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Vacations are to have fun. Have fun. Or Else.

\* \* \* \* \*

Line of succession. This is a critical issue at a major radio station because so often, the Vice-President and General Manager must travel to corporate headquarters in New York or Pittsburgh or some other city to confer with his fellow Vice-Presidents and General Managers. This means that someone must be designated to watch the store while he is away. Therefore, just as the Vice-President in Washington is vaguely in charge at home while the President is away, at KFWB, we had a similar line of succession.

If the Vice-President and General Manager goes on one of those corporate junkets, then the General Sales Manager takes over until the GM gets back. If the General Sales Manager goes with the General Manager to headquarters, then the Executive Editor is in charge.

Are you following this? Better write down as you will be tested later.

Now, lets assume the Executive editor is in charge but is abducted by aliens and taken to another planet, then the news director steps in. But the News director comes down with terminal postnasal drip. Now it is the job of the Operations Manager to fill the gap.

You didn't know it was this complicated.

If for some un-Godly reason, the Operations Manager is unable to fulfill his duties as interim Vice President and General Manager, someone from the Sales Department is then drafted. Near the bottom of the succession ladder, news anchors step in when the salesman screws up. Anchors are followed by field reporters, then technicians, and finally, at the very bottom of the list, a waitress at Starbucks who listens to the radio a lot.

So, when the KFWB Vice-President and General Manager says, "I've got it covered." you know what he means.

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Every four years at KFWB is tense time for the on air staff and the writers. Its time for contract negotiations and if you have ever

sweated that situation, you have some sort of idea of the tensions that are present. People who basically like everyone walk around snarling at each other. Strange people arrive from headquarters in New York and they later turn up at the negotiating table telling us they are dead broke and cant give us any kind of raise when we know the company is swimming in money. We ask for additional vacation time and they counter saying life in Southern California is just like being on vacation. We tell them they are full of baloney and they tell us we are full of something else and before you know it, people get up from the table and march out of the room muttering something about strike votes.

I don't want you to think that contract negotiations are always like that. Sometimes, we actually come to blows. Naw. I'm kidding. We don't but we often think about poking one of them in the puss. But we don't actually do it because we are such nice guys and gals.

One of the tricks of successful negotiating is to ask for the sky so you have room to maneuver. You demand certain things that you really don't want but you put them on the table only to pull them back later, demonstrating how reasonable you are being and how miserly they are. These demands are often silly things and everybody knows it but you play the game. When we demand discount tickets each year to the Semi-Precious Gem Show at the County fairgrounds, we all know, we will not go on strike if we don't get them. Besides, the folks who put on the Semi-Precious Gem Show have been sending us discount tickets for years and we never used them. There are some

other demands however that could be serious demands and maybe not. See if you can spot the serious demands.

1. Elimination of bags of Trail Mix from the candy machine, replacing them with Walnettos.
2. Complimentary dry cleaning twice a month.
3. Terry cloth computer paper for staffers who have washed their hands of the whole mess.
4. Autograph copies of my book, "Three Things To Do with Belly Button Lint."
5. A surprise gift party every Arbor Day.
6. Free Five Day Deodorant Pads.
7. A new pencil sharpener.
8. Candid Photos of Mother Westinghouse, in the nude.
9. The unexpurgated film Rambo of "Sunnybrook Farm."

Okay now. Which was the real contract demand? Well? I really wanted that pencil sharpener.

\* \* \* \* \*

Those of us old enough to remember, the fictional detective Charlie Chan was played by actor Warner Oland, who was not Asian. Anchor Vicky Cox believed that another famous actor also portrayed Chan. Ever hear of "Charlie Cheen?"

In the "King And I" there is a song called "Getting To Know You". The song points up the need to know who you are dealing with, like the guy seated next to you in the studio. This was the exchange between me and sports anchor Bob Harvey:

"Now, KFWB sports with.....(turns off the mike)....I cant remember your name!"

"Bob Harvey."

"Now KFWB sports with Bob Harvey."

There are some things you should never say on the radio. Our other sports anchor Howard Leff said..."Look at this!" On the radio?

Anchor John Leischer apparently was not an aficionado of silent movies. John was reporting on the death at the age of 88 of actress Alice Terry Ingram. John said, "Alice Terry Ingram starred with Rudolph Valentino in the 1921 film classic, "The Four Freshman Of The Apocalypse." You remember that silent film don't you? It was a musical.

Miriam Bjerre, a wonderful part time anchor, repeated the gaff committed a month before. She said, while giving the weather forecast that Los Angeles was in for "Hazy Overnight Sunshine."

## 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

Soviet Union begins coming apart at the seams.

U.S. invades Panama. Arrests Manuel Noriega.

Exxon Valdez runs aground in Alaska.

10 million gallons of oil is spilled.

1988 marked a significant milestone for KFWB. It was two decades earlier that All News radio began in Los Angeles and specifically at KFWB and it gave us all a chance to look back and marvel at what we had accomplished. The numbers were staggering. Of course those numbers have changed quite a bit since then but in 1988, I did some calculating and came up with some very interesting numbers.

First, I tried to estimate how many people had passed through our hollowed halls as employees since day one. To tell the truth, I had a tough time remembering them all. All? I had a tough time remembering one third of them. There were so many but I estimated that at least two thousand names would be on an employees list

covering the years between 1968 and 1988. Therefore, I shall not attempt to name them all. I know you are happy about that.

I was however able to make exact or at least educated guesses about other aspects of our history.

1. From 6 AM on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1968 to 6 AM on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1988, KFWB delivered 175, 584 hours of news. The numbers today are far beyond that.
2. Based on the 24 hour day, KFWB told you what time it was about 4 million, 214 thousand 016 times.
3. The twenty years included 87 thousand 792 sports casts, two per hour.
4. Weather forecasts? 55,000.
5. Based on about ten per day, 73, 160 pots of coffee were brewed.
6. During the twenty years, we occupied 2 different building.
7. Now don't jump on me about this one...it's just an estimated guess: based on a reading speed of 120 words per minute, we broadcast about 1, 386, 560, 714 individual words.
8. Based on 18 commercial minutes per hour, with a sold out log, we broadcast well over 2 million, 850 thousand commercials.

9. Based on 30 times per hour, we repeated our call letters, KFWB on the air about 5,530,570 times.
  10. Our reporters wore out the tires on 30 different mobile units.
  11. Based on one sheet of paper per minute, for newscasts only, we read from 10,535,040 pages of script.
  12. KFWB staffers evacuated the building twice because of bomb threats. (They left me behind during one evacuation.)
  13. At least 15 fires broke out in trashcans because of still lit cigarette butts being tossed away.
  14. New Carpeting: Never in the old building. 4 times in the new building.
  15. Paint Jobs: Old building: once indoors. New building: twice outdoors and three times in doors.
  16. New walls installed: 5 times.
  17. Relocation of General Manager's office: 4 times.
  18. Xerox machines replaced: 8 times.
  19. Honors and awards: Hundreds.
  20. Honors received by the KFWB Nooseline: None.
- An amazing legacy.

The observance of the twentieth anniversary of the KFWB All-News format did not consist solely of me putting together some spurious statistics. We also had a party to end all parties. It was amazing. The setting for the gala was just as amazing. It was held at the Griffith Park Observatory, the spot, high in the hills over Hollywood where, scenes from the James Dean movie "Rebel Without A Cause" were filmed.

Everybody who was anybody was at that party. Just about everyone from KFWB was there. Since we had to stay on the air a skeleton staff was back at the studios broadcasting and hoping that nothing major would happen while the rest of us were feeding our faces, boozing it up and telling each other how terrific we were.

The prime setting for the party was a humungous tent that was set up for the celebrants to cavort in the brisk March night air. Inside the tent, food tables at the four corners, loaded with wonderful delicacies such as tiny "pig in a blanket" hotdogs, lobster claws, vegetable platters, mountains of bread and rolls, tables dispensing soft drinks and booze. Gastronomically, it was like parading down the yellow brick road from one table to another while all the time, a remote control miniature flying saucer hovered overhead. None of us had any idea why it was there but it was and it was interesting to watch.

As my lovely wife Linda and I strolled about the tent, we rubbed shoulders with people we had rubbed shoulders with before, our fellow KFWB staffers, but there were others there who were

strangers to us. Management types from New York and from Westinghouse Corporate headquarters in Pittsburgh. The Mayor of L.A., Tom Bradley was there and several city council members and state politicians and lots and lots of potential advertising clients who were introduced to us. We, in turn were to make them feel so comfortable they would be eager to become associated with us. So, I talked with them about how we covered the news and how good it would be for them to advertise with us.

Inside the dome of the observatory, they showed a videotape over and over, giving the guests a glimpse at what we did and how we did it. I, who was one of the original members of the All-News staff, was not in that film and it left me crushed but what the heck. Besides, to watch the film, you had to sit on one of those incredibly hard planetarium seats with your head craned all the way back and twisted to see the pictures. I would hate to have been the cause of someone rushing the next day to a chiropractor's office to get their twisted back back into shape.

During the ceremony, they also unveiled a plaque that later was hung on a wall in the station, out of sight of any visitors that might wander through. It contained the names of the employees who had been with the station for the entire first twenty years.

The names included Rudy Morgan, the head of Building Services, who invented the art of carpet mopping; Cleve Hermann, bon vivant, raconteur and developer of the snake pit system of filing; Don Taylor, engineer, private plane pilot and developer of the electric

fork; Don Herbert (me) Anchor, Editor in Chief of the Nooseline and developer of absolutely nothing. Next came Andy Costello, engineer extraordinaire, bicyclist, and composer of Lutonian sea chanties; Bill Schubert, Anchor, Vitamin salesman in his spare time and the last person west of the Rockies to stop getting a butch haircut; and finally Don Parker, engineering chief and developer of strange and mysterious things in his basement laboratory. So the party went on into the wee hours of the night and then everybody went home. It was quite a party.

In the Ben Hecht drama "Front Page", both on stage and on the silver screen, reporters rush in and out of the city room of a major newspaper, their press cards in the band of their fedoras, shouting, "Stop the presses!" and "Hold the front page!" and "This story will blow this town wide open!" Every minute is a crisis and every story is a scoop. Well, it really doesn't happen that way.

In a real newsroom, such as the KFWB operations center, days could go by without a single reporter shouting, "Stop the presses." This may be because we had no presses to stop and no front page to hold but mostly it was because nothing major was happening.

Oh, we had stuff going on in Washington and the Middle East and Europe and of course Los Angeles had its share of stories like robberies, murders, celebrity hi-jinks, sports and weather but nothing that would prompt generations of people to ask, "Where were you when such and such happened?"

These were the times that test the mettle of the reporter and anchor, not to mention the news writer. Could you keep your enthusiasm at a high level? Could you remain sharp? Could you maintain the high energy levels needed to hold the attention of your listeners?

It could be a tough assignment. But we came through like pros and a good deal of the credit goes to the maintenance of good humor in the newsroom. Unlike the other news station a few blocks away, where everyone had their own cubicle that required them to sit with their backs to everyone else, we could see each other and call to each other and laugh at jokes told on the other side of the room and when something silly happened to the guy on the air, we could all join in making fun of him.

One such bit of silliness was the accidental juxtaposition of news stories and commercials. Commercial air-time is sold to advertisers by members of the Sales Staff. The Traffic Department assigns slots in the log. This means, the exact minute of the day when the commercial will play on the air, is determined. The log is the daily list of all commercials and their scheduled airtimes. Sometime, the commercial will play on either side of the sports report or the weather or traffic but most often, they play within the body of the newscast where the actual news stories are located. This often makes for strange bedfellows when one story ends and a commercial begins. In the month of October of 1988, there were three outstanding examples of this.

Anchor Jack Popejoy has a fast, free-swinging delivery style that makes the listener believe he is not reading but adlibbing the news. Jack had just finished a story about a magazine issue that was rejected by some distributors because each contained free sample condom. Jack pushed the commercial play button and the first thing he heard was....."The USC Trojans....."

Anchor Ken Jeffries also became a victim of the juxtaposition devil. His story was about the intense manhunt for two cop killers. The commercial that began as soon as that story was over was one seeking recruits for the Los Angeles Police Department.

The third example, and my favorite happened to me. I had just ended a story about a man who had been arrested by the subway cops in New York City for fondling women on the crowded station platforms and in the subway cars as they hurtled thru the tunnels.

I finished the story and pushed the commercial button and there was Ella Fitzgerald for the Phone Company, singing..."Reach out, Reach out and touch someone." It was a very funny moment.

Then something amazing happened. Our Human Resources lady decided it was time to do something about our walls, again. You see, when the walls of the building were constructed, a memo was issued saying there would be no hanging of pictures on those new walls. You see, management did not want little nail holes in the wall. We pointed out that technology had truly moved ahead and that there were ways to hang pictures that required no pounding of nails into the lath and plaster. We should only be so lucky to have had such

high-class material. A few old newspapers, some Scotch tape and we had ourselves a wall. Actually I jest. It was more than just Scotch tape. It was duct tape. You see, our motto was, "If you can't do it the right way, duck it." Yeah, I know its spelled d-u-c-t.

Anyway, to make a short story even shorter, we wanted pictures or other stuff on the walls. We were tired of standing around admiring paint. I personally found it emotionally stimulating to look at a bare painted wall, but the others were not crazy about it. Over the years, when something had to be posted in the newsroom, we had a dilapidated cork bulletin board with an equally crappy chalkboard on the other side. This affair was mounted on a stand and it was here that important memos, critical to our future were posted. Sometimes however, memos, football pool lists, and other nonsense were posted on the glass walls behind which junior and senior executives sat and looked out at the newsroom, wishing they had something to do. When we would look at items posted on the glass, we also looked further into the room to their desks and reading upside down and backwards, we hoped to see other memos critical to our future. Usually we didn't because no body wrote memos to these people.

Finally, Human Resources lady, Jill Press issued a memo announcing the formation of a committee that would look into the problem of improving the looks of the building. Believe it or not, the committee okayed the hanging of "proper" pictures. Now I know what you are going to ask. What is a proper picture? Well, the Mona Lisa would be proper. The Last Supper would be proper. Christina's

World would also pass muster, as would the works of Michelangelo, Degas, Monet, Titian, and all those other guys. Modern day artists would also do well on our walls.....Mondrian, Chagall, and even Andy Warhol would be okay. So, what did we get? We got a picture of Executive editor Bill Yeager posing in a group picture with the L.A. Fire Chief. There was also a plaque on the wall, presented to us by an animal rescue group. There was a bulletin board with Federal Equal Opportunity Employment documents that we were required to post and a locked glass cabinet containing Polaroid pictures of the news staff taken by a secretary who was not a great photographer. But there we were in all our glory. Not exactly a high class photographic exhibit but if you just had to know what we looked like, but it served its purpose.

Another move to beautify the newsroom was the placement of plants around the room.

Huge plants were positioned along the wall from the entrance to the newsroom to the executive editor's office. One was in a huge metal drum. Other plants were in pots. They died shortly after their arrival. No one watered them. These were replaced with plastic plants. Those they watered.

Another improvement was the installation of new mailboxes. For years we dealt with a rickety metal affair but now, we would bask in the luxury of much larger mailbox cubicles, with storage space along the floor. Keep in mind that the station had provided the news staff with lockers in which to keep our valuables as though they were all

items thieves would love to grab. But there were not enough lockers to go around and the powers that be were not of a mind to buy more, so instead, we got new wide mailboxes.

These mailboxes were wide enough to allow an 8 X 10 memo to lie flat. In fact, each individual box was so large, staffers began storing coffee mugs, their lunch, running shoes, supplies of candy, miscellaneous dishes, knives, forks and spoons, folding chairs and umbrellas and occasionally, a small car. In some instances it got so, there was no room for mail so some staffers, when the opportunity arose, confiscated an additional box, one for mail and the other for personal belongings.

To give you an idea of how large the entire mailbox complex was, the lowest boxes were about a foot off the floor. The highest were close enough to the ceiling that even the tallest staffers had to stand on tiptoes to reach inside. And there was a shelf on top of all of it that no one could reach. Now, the boxes were assigned alphabetically, meaning that the letters A, B and C were the topmost mailboxes while X, Y and Z were the lowest. This was bad news for any staffer under five feet tall whose last name was Adams or Baker or something like that. They would never get any mail at KFWB. In fact, try to imagine Tom Brokaw or Walter Cronkite hippity hopping up and down trying to grab their mail in the brief moment that they were airborne. That just would not do. So, we instituted a new rule.....KFWB would no longer hire short people. That rule was killed pretty quickly. Short people with names like Xerses, Younker

and Zyzzyx had it made in the shade. They could get their mail without having to bend over. So, finally, after much gyrating, we got the mailbox situation straightened out. This left only one other problem.

Finding mail that was worth reading.

Memos can be extremely intriguing. Sometimes they present us with a mystery to be solved such as this one, for instance.

On 1/12/88, copies of this memo were placed in our mail boxes.

TO: ALL EMPLOYEES

Please be advised that when you send mail or other correspondence to Jill Parker (Sales Account Executive), or to me, remember to use our full name and department.

Hopefully, this will alleviate any further confusion with mail delivery.

Thank you.

Jill.

Jill? Jill who? Jill Parker? No it was Jill Press, Human resources lady forgetting the advice she just gave us.

\* \* \* \* \*

Deciphering memos was not the only type mystery facing KFWB staffers. There was the perplexing placement of a men's restroom mirror that had people buzzing. Now, for those of you who are not familiar with the contents of a men's room, there basically are three types of porcelain facilities available, one where you stand up, one

where you sit down and one where you wash your hands. Now, mirrors in the men's room generally are placed over the sinks so if you plan on combing your hair or straightening your tie, you can see what you are doing. Never, never, never have I ever seen a mirror mounted anywhere in the vicinity of the standing up facility or the sitting down one for that matter.

One day, we walked into the men's room at KFWB and there on the metal partition separating the stand up from the sit down, was a one foot square mirror. What the hell was it doing there?

Most of us were too tall to easily look at ourselves in the mirror and bending down would make our other activity in that room a bit awkward. Besides, the mirror was to the left and it's very difficult to bend down and look at our profile. It couldn't have been a one-way mirror hiding a secret agent who was watching us because we would have seen his feet under the metal partition. So, why was the mirror there and who put it there. We had no clue. For weeks we entered the room and cast glances at the mirror but all we could see were our ties, shirts and belt buckles.

Well, there was only one person who could have put it there, building maintenance supervisor Rudy Morgan. So, that evening I approached Rudy and asked him, "Rudy, why is there a new mirror in the men's room?"

Rudy chuckled. It seems someone had scratched a rather obnoxious phrase regarding our latest General Manager and the scratch was so deep, a paint job could not completely hide the words

so, the mirror was placed there to cover it up. To this day, that mirror is there and people still wonder about it.

There was another mystery that year. "The Mystery of the Rotating Billboards". Earlier, I explained the value of billboards in building audiences. Now, I shall explain the mystery that I cannot explain.

KFWB erected a billboard on one busy intersection, Exposition Boulevard and Vermont Avenue. A couple of nights later, it was raining and while no one was looking, it looked as though someone snatched our billboard and took it to Hollywood Boulevard and Orange Street. Then a few nights later, it moved to La Brea and Edgewood, then Lankershim and Blix, followed by Ventura and Tujunga, Ventura and Tampa, Victory and Reseda, Santa Monica and Centinella and finally Sunset Boulevard and Larabee. Then it disappeared. Was there a billboard fiend prowling the streets at night moving signs? Where would he strike next? Maybe your street or was it possible that KFWB paid for one sign to be moved periodically around the city, so everyone could see it? Nah! That would be too easy.

\* \* \* \* \*

In May of 1988, Human resources announced a series of lectures or classes or seminars or whatever dealing with health education, self-improvement and other really exciting stuff. That of course was

the cue for the KFWB Nooseline to offer its own series of courses that were infinitely more interesting and exciting.

1. How to Stop Biting Other People's Fingernails.
2. Creative Temper Tantrums.
3. Doing Unto Others Before They Do Unto You.
4. Dealing With A Promiscuous Canary.
5. Marital Problems Involving You, Your Wife And A 4 LB wedge of of Cheese.
6. Menopause and Careers in the Military.
7. How To Smoke Without Exhaling.
8. Creative Excuses For Not Going To The Gym.
9. How To Knit A Car Using Steel Wool, Part two.
10. Dance Lessons From Kathryn And Arthur Murray.

Number five was a big hit.

\* \* \* \* \*

KFWB loved to stage "special days" in the newsroom. We had Women's Equality Day, Ask The Expert Day, Bring Your Kid To Work Day, etc, etc. We also had "Rotten Odor Day". It wasn't really a celebration. It was more of a complaint. A rather noxious odor wafted thru the halls of the station and we had no idea where it came from. I thought it might be a playful skunk that could have wandered

into our basement from the rather woodsy church grounds across the street. That was not the case. The odor came from something that had been dropped down the drain of the sink in our lunchroom. It was fine, with no odor until someone smelled a faint whiff of something and poured a drain cleaner down the pipe. That's when the chemical reaction occurred and the cloud formed and we started gagging and of course, some anchors began playing like they were dying and ought to be allowed to evacuate the building and go home for the day.

Station Comptroller Steve Reisig, who for some reason was made Noxious Cloud Monitor, issued a memo following the crisis. Steve pointed out that the majority of KFWB staffers did not want foul odors in the building. Did that mean there were some that did? He said if there is anyone who wants foul odors, that person is not to be talked to.

He reminded us to dispose of food not eaten in the trash bins in the kitchen. Who in the world eats in a trash bin? If the bins are full, keep the food in your pockets, attaché cases and bras until you get home. Then dispose of them safely. This does not include leaky cartons of chocolate milk.

Finally, if you see anyone break the rules, form a posse, hunt him down, capture him, throw him to the ground and pummel him. Remember what Smoky Bear says. We couldn't remember, so we dropped the whole thing.

\* \* \* \* \*

I am not exactly sure who they were but this utterance by yours truly qualified for inclusion in the Silver Tongue Devil's column. I referred, in one story, to the Duke and Duchess of New York. That may have been the famous Duke of Erl.

In politics, slogans are everything. In the KFWB studios, slogans are often nothing. Inland Empire reporter Myrna Roberts reported on the arrival of the Jesse Jackson campaign. She reported their slogan as being..."Down with Hope. Up with Dope." I don't believe that was the exact wording.

When the Los Angeles Lakers are in their best form, you want the world to know. Sports Anchor Mike Kaufman, was attempting to report on the "league leading Lakers" but instead, he did a story on the "league leaking Lakers".

Anchor Jack Popejoy is as glib as they come but in one report, on a Sunday afternoon, he reported on the appearance of then Attorney General Edwin Meece on the NBC program "Meet The Pest".

Being a news anchor does not require that you be a medical expert or a weatherman. I mention this because of a story related by anchor Bob Howard, in which he referred to a "rain swollen liver".

## **EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

Germany Reunited.

Nelson Mandela Freed in South Africa

Syria invades Lebanon; Iraq invades Kuwait.

For some strange reason, 1989 was a big year for the KFWB Engineering staff. They issued memos like they were going out of style about the stuff they had completed, were planning to do and the stuff they were doing at the time. It's good to focus in on the engineers because they are the madcap bunch that keeps the station on the air. These guys, with a complete set of small screwdrivers in their shirt pocket protectors, enter the newsroom from one door, place their hands on their hips and mutter, "Hmmm." Then they disappear through another door, not to be seen for at least a week. But they get the work done and I salute them. The major project in 1989 was redesigning the air studio. I am not sure why they felt this was necessary but they did and as a result, when they were finished, we had new buttons to push, new uncomfortable chairs to sit on

while doing our newscasts. New lights were also installed, rear view mirrors so we could stare back at people who were staring at us, new carpeting and carpet covers.

While all this sawing and nailing and wiring was underway, we broadcast from the auxiliary studio. Sportscaster Joe Cala and I held the record for going into the wrong studio the most times. In fact, for Joe, arrows were scotch-taped to the floor so he wouldn't get lost trying to find the studio and I asked management if it would be okay to do my entire newscast from my desk so I couldn't have to go anywhere. They said "No". So, we all settled back and waited for the work to be finished. When it was almost finished, we all went into the new studio and in chorus, said, "Ooooooh!" But there was still some work to be done.

Management asked which way we would like to face. Would like to face the control room as we had for the past twenty years or would be like to face the newsroom? If we faced the control room, we could see the engineers making faces at us. If we face the newsroom, we could see everybody else making faces at us. Then some people wanted to be able to do their newscasts standing up if they so desired and others wanted more knee room. I wanted facilities so I could cook a meal. And what about a shower, cable TV and a wet bar? Believe it or not, we got the cable TV.

Well, they got back to work and when it was all finished, the desks in the studios basically faced each other but at a slight angle. This way we would face each other, face the control room and still

see out into the newsroom. People could now make faces at us from every direction. Weather, commercial and TV monitors were on the tops of each console, so with the push of a button, we could see weather information, a listing of the commercials that had been played, those that were next and those that would come later. To our right, there was a bank of four cartridge players. These were used for the cartridges containing sound bytes and full reports that were used within the body of the newscast. Now, the buttons for these cartridge players had a features that puzzles me to this day. The start button on each was covered with Velcro. There was really no reason for the Velcro since we would just push the button and that would be that. There was no other use for the button than to start the cartridges. Well, we mulled that one over for a while and decided it was to make the button feel different than all the others so, without looking at the machine, we could find and push the start button while still concentrating on our scripts. That seemed reasonable so that's the story we agreed upon.

The new lighting was another issue altogether. They were too big and too bright and too hot. So, we had them changed.

Just as the state of the art equipment was of primary importance to our technical mavens, so was building security. So, we got a memo.

Engineer Dick Rudman and his able and lovely assistant Tubes Krikey, issued a directive outlining the do's and don'ts of security. It was inspiring.

1. Never leave outside doors open and unattended, even for lunch trucks. These lunch trucks are not allowed in the building as they leave tire marks on the carpets.
2. Never leave the basement delivery door open, except when accepting a delivery. It is difficult to get a package thru a closed door.
3. Never let people into the building until they have been identified. As soon as you identify them as actual people, you can let them in.
4. If a visitor comes to the building to see someone, don't let them in until the person they came to see has been identified.
5. Do not allow former employees into the building unless they are cleared by their former department heads and then only after the department head and the visitor have submitted to a full frisking. Lots will be drawn each month to determine the frisker of the month.
6. If the night guard is not guarding properly, report him. Then, execute him.
7. If you notice a safety problem, duck. Or blame someone else.

See? Truly inspiring!

But the guys in engineering were working overtime to keep us safe. Another memo was issued cautioning staffers not to use certain appliances in the control rooms. It seems that plugging them in to the power supply in the control room could short circuit something,

start a fire, cause an explosion or result in the engineer's dinner being cooked too fast.

Well, being the technical mavens that we were, we had no clue what they were talking about and our answer to the memo was, "Huh?" So, leaping into action, I did some quick research and came up with the list of items not to be used in Master Control. The items included Cuisinarts, Hair Curlers, Toasters, Marital Aids, Industrial Strength Steam Irons, Heating Pads, The K-Tel Ricer-Dicer, Electric Woks, Popcorn makers and Lionel Electric Train sets. I am proud to say that at no time were any of those items used in Master Control.

Still on the issue of technical stuff at KFWB, the telephone is a critical piece of equipment and while you would not have any problem using one under normal circumstances, you might have a problem if they kept changing the system. Once you had become comfortable using one phone system, they'd change it because they would find a system that can do more. This means you have to go to a special class to learn how to use the darn things. Well, the engineers found a new and improved system available to us by a provider we were already using, so, we said okay and in it came.

The system was one of those things that allows the caller to do all the things we depended upon operators to do. We could transfer calls, make conference calls, dial long distance, speed dial, slow dial, reverse dial, flap our arms and fly. We took the training class and came out just as confused as when we went in. So, guess who came to the rescue?

Me!

I knew there were certain aspects of making calls on the new system that were either ignored or inadequately covered, so, using the Nooseline, I filled in the blanks.

**ANSWERING A CALL.** When the phone rings and you pick up the receiver, just saying "Newsroom" or "Hello" may not be enough. To make us seem much more high tech, you must now answer, "Waddya Want?" or, "Not Now, I'm Busy." Or "Sorry, you have dialed the wrong number. Now take a flying leap." Or, before the caller has a chance to say anything, jump in and ask, "Hello, Is Bernie there?" Then let him try to figure out who called whom.

**TAKING A MESSAGE:** Taking a message is a critical function of a phone answerer.

When taking a message, write the information carefully to make sure you get it correctly. Then ask the caller, "What is you name? Where do you live? What is your bra size? Do you fool around?" It's very impressive.

**PICKING UP THE WRONG LINE:** If you inadvertently pick up the wrong line and a reporter is already there interviewing some important person, simply say, "Get the hell off the line. I am answering the phone." This way, you'll make big points with everyone.

**IMPORTANT HINT:** When picking up the phone, it is not necessary to pick up the whole damn thing. Just the receiver is enough and make sure the part for listening goes against your ear

and the mouthpiece goes in front of your mouth. If you get this part wrong, you will end up talking to yourself.

**TRANSFERRING A CALL:** If you cannot figure which buttons to push to transfer a call, just rip the sucker from the wall and carry it to the other desk.

**FINALLY:** as we always point out, when saying goodbye and hanging up, do not wave good-bye.

Just in case the new phone system did not do what it was supposed to do, we began raising a flock of carrier pigeons in the basement.

Engineers are very proud of their achievements. They put out memos when they do something great. They also, we suspect, have gala parties in their “Shop” in celebration. I suspect this because none of us have ever been invited to an engineering party.

As part of their pride, engineers like to put together tests to see how much we non-technical types know about what they are doing and then they go back to their “shop” to chortle over the results. Someone was always chortling in “shop”. One test was designed for production assistants, those young broadcast hopefuls whose job was both technical and non-technical. Now, working undercover, I was not able to get my hands on a “production assistant test” but I did manage to make off with the answer sheet. Here they are.

1. To take transmitter readings, you must know where you are taking them and have something to carry them in.

2. The Potomac Logger is the guy who chopped down George Washington's Cherry Tree.
3. The Moseley Logger is a broadcast device that has not been invented yet.
4. KFVB's Antenna Current value is about \$3.47.
5. A rough log is a piece of wood that cannot get along with its neighbors.
6. The difference between a Megahertz, a gigahertz, a kilohertz and a femto-Hertz is none of your business.
7. True or False: answers sometimes used on tests.
8. To monitor EBS (Emergency Broadcast System) we normally listen to our mothers because they know best.
9. The Emergency Air Monitor lets us know when we are running out of air and we will all die.
10. ACK, NAK and GAK are sounds made by a News anchor who gets a lemon drop caught in his throat.
11. If, after changing transmitters, you do not hear the anchor's voice, it means he is not there.
12. The Orange EBS Book is that color because purple didn't look good.

As you can see, these engineers are a fun bunch of guys. You can also tell that engineers seem to have a language all their own. Well, newsroom personnel have the same thing or at least we were given some new words to learn in a memo entitled NOMENCLATURE.

The executive editor apparently had a problem knowing who did what around the newsroom and therefore decided to change their job titles. Now stay with me.

As of July 1989, Desk Assistants would no longer be called Desk Assistants because the name did not delineate just which desk they were assisting. So, the Desk assistants, if they worked primarily in the newsroom would be called Editorial Assistants and those who worked in Master Control would be called Production Assistants. See how that worked out? Well, not to cause any jealousy in other parts of the building, we told Sales Assistants that they were going to be called Sales Assistants. Then we realized they were already called Sales Assistants, we slunk out of their offices.

Going from the sublime to the ridiculous, we decided that Executive Editor Bill Yeager would be called Tom Yeager or Chuck Yeager if he so desired. Now, the PA's and EA's would report to operations manager (OM) Ed Dorsey who would be called every hour on the hour. Production manager Tom Ditty was to be called the PM in the AM. After noon, no one spoke to him anyway so there was no need for PM in the PM. Rick Reece was his assistant so it was decided he would be the APM. He worked with the PM and the PAs. The Chief Engineer would not be called CE. He would be called EM for Engineering Manager. Now, the immediate supervisor of the EAs was the E. And if the EA or the PA was fortunate enough to have an assistant, that person would be the APM or the AEA. On weekends, the EA's and the PA's jobs would be combined, making them PEAs.

Now if the Editorial Assistant needs to work in a news production room, he automatically becomes a NEAP. What did they call me? My name was mud. You never knew it was this complicated, did you? Well, there's more.

We told you earlier in this book about A stories, B stories and C stories, how the As were most important, Bs were secondary and Cs were funny kickers or stories that could be dropped if there was no time for them. Well, the Executive Editor, Chuck Yeager....er.... Tom Yea.....whatever... he decided there would have to be a more decisive way of designating stories. So, we got the HOT-A and the SOFT A. Hold on now. A HOT-A is a really really hot story. A SOFT-A is a hot story but not as hot as a HOT-A. Now, A HOT-B can replace a SOFT-A. Now a Tepid-L, whatever that was, would never displace a Hot-B or a SOFT-A When we started figuring out which As were HOT and which were SOFT, each of us let out a painful low moan in the newsroom and disregarded the entire system, except for a few editors who were suck-ups anyway.

\* \* \* \* \*

Just like any other good American citizen, the news anchor or reporter or writer, in fact anyone in the newsroom, had one piece of news they all dreaded. Jury Duty! Since the folks at KFWB were so patriotic, they encouraged our participation in the Judicial System and so, there was no way out of it. In fact, in my years at KFWB, I served on jury duty five times, once for an entire month. You see, the

length of time spent on a jury depended upon the type of trial. Civil accident cases were short trial. 4 to 5 days at most. Misdemeanor criminal trials lasted about ten days, especially when you have an unreasonable jerk as a fellow juror. Felony Criminal trial can go on and on and on. Remember OJ Simpson? These cases can last anywhere from four days to several months. And there are other trials that can last forever.

Now the folks at the KFWB Newsroom are a highly trained, highly intelligent bunch of medium to high achievers. The idea of sitting in a Jury room waiting to be called for a trial or actually being part of a jury in an exceedingly boring case is not our idea of fun. And the pay for jury duty was the pits. In 1989, it was five dollars a day. But you went when called and when you finally got to the courthouse, you were sworn in and sent to the Jury Assembly room where you waited and waited. You watched somebody's granny knit an afghan for her grandchild in Utah or you read 7 month old magazines, many of them about motorcycles or embroidery. You were lucky if you found an old Readers Digest.

You also had the option of trying your hand at five thousand piece jigsaw puzzles where two hundred seventy three of the pieces were missing. All the puzzles had pictures of puppies and kittens or an old farmhouse in Vermont. You can read the incredibly ugly bulletin board or eavesdrop in the hallway as lawyers discussed their cases or finally, you could sit and chat with people who, when they hear you work for KFWB, think you are some kind of show business celebrity

and they ask for your autograph. It's no wonder we are all so happy when jury duty is over and we can return to work reporting on trials in courtrooms where we were rejected by the lawyers involved.

In the year 1989, the beloved KFWB Nooseline was confronted by something new.....competition. It came in the form of a newsletter put out by KFWB's latest promotion mogul, Jan Cromartie. When the news came out that Jan, obviously green with envy over the success of the Nooseline, decided to put us out of business with her own brand of newsletter. She called it: "KFWB, What's News?" or "KFWB, What's New?" or something like that.

Well, we were delighted to have the competition. It would be fun going head to head with a new publication. We had no idea what would be in the new publication but we heard it was going to be professionally printed, not Xeroxed Nooseline style. Wow!

Would the style be wacko like the Nooseline? Would there be drawings and silliness? Would real news be hidden inside insane articles? Or would Jan go right for the throat with serious articles. Since we had no clue, the staff of the KFWB Nooseline, namely me, decided to hunt and search in all the nooks and crannies of the building to see what we could find out. One month later, we had all we needed. The KFWB What's News? The first issue was very nice. It had large print for the hard of seeing. It had a nice article about everything you ever wanted to know about the Business Office. It didn't say they use calculators instead of an abacus, and no longer count on their fingers. Actually, the new newsletter covered none of

the news that was of real vital interest to us. It never explained the huge stash of hard candy in Business Manager (BM) Steve Reisig's desk. It never talked about the plans of a business office staffer who won one hundred thousand dollars in the lottery and it certainly never mentioned that another staffer, Henry Soto was a direct descendant of the conquistador Hernan De Soto, inventor of one of the Chrysler Corporation cars and that in his days off, he prowls the streets of La Mirada, hunting for the fabled Seven Lost Cities of Zinc. Now, as I sit in my plush study in my palatial mansion, I think back and cannot recall if there was ever a second issue of the "KFWB What's News?" newsletter. It's a cutthroat business!

Now, we have mentioned several times that the people working at KFWB are a stellar brand of people. We are highly educated, highly motivated and extremely good-looking. With this in mind, it is difficult to accept the fact that some of us were called to serve on the KFWB Potty Panel. Now this Panel was not patterned after particularly picky panels that place petunias and poesies in the personal partitioned places of professional perusal of peaceful pursuits. In other word...they formed a bathroom beautification committee. Since the eighties was always considered the "ME" decade, you can see why having a pleasant looking restroom might have been important to some people. A place where they could go and primp and preen and turn themselves back into the gorgeous creatures they were when they left for work earlier that morning.

Now nobody really knows who was on the Potty Panel and no one ever made any educated guesses but within a very short while of learning that there was such a panel in the first place, they unveiled their work. New wallpaper and scales. That was it. Wallpaper and scales. Gosh how that made us want to spend so much more time there, looking at the walls and discovering just how porky we were getting.

One of the reasons we were getting Porky was the fact that California always presented us with a plethora of big stories. Let me explain.

In 1989, in November, a major earthquake took the city of San Francisco and gave it a rather nasty shaking. This caused KFVB staffers to put on extra poundage. Our reporters were everywhere. Sports guy Joe Cala happened to be in the Bay Area and was reporting in no time at all. Crack reporter Pete Demetriou was racing to Northern California at speeds that would make NASCAR drivers jealous. At home KFVB's Special Events Desk was activated and in one corner of the newsroom, they brought in food for us hard working individuals. Breakfast, lunch and dinner, over and over for the many days that the story was number one. To give you an example what a KFVB crisis breakfast consisted of, there were eggs, ham, bacon, hash browns, sausage, waffles, rolls, bread, real butter, syrup, coffee by the gallon, milk, soft drinks, cookies, cake, Danish, sugar and even French toast. That was every day for at least a week. Lunch consisted of whatever was left from breakfast, plus

those six-foot submarine sandwiches with potato chips, potato salad, coleslaw, pickles and sliced corned beef, pastrami and occasionally, salami. This of course meant loaves of rye bread, pots of mustard and mayonnaise for those barbarians who have no clue about making corned beef or pastrami sandwiches. This meant there were also trays of lettuce and tomatoes, pickles and thankfully, no gherkins. For dinner, there was pizza and more pizza, cheese pizza, pepperoni pizza, Hawaiian pizza with pineapple for God's Sake, Mushroom toppings, plus soda and coffee and of course someone, usually the lovely Sue Stiles, one of our super writers would bring in icing covered chocolate cake decorated with M&Ms. Now, that was just for times when there was a crisis.

When there was no crisis, just eliminate the Hawaiian Pizza. Executive editor Bill Yeager seemed intent upon drumming up business for Weight Watchers and he would order meals for us at the drop of a hat. If we covered a story in a particularly professional manner, we got fed. If it was raining very hard, we got fed. If he felt happy, we got fed. We got fed to celebrate Tuesdays and sometimes Fridays. If it was a holiday, we got fed or a birthday or Arbor Day, anything was an excuse to eat. Any meeting of the Sales Department was also an excuse to eat and it was also an excuse for the newsroom guys to saunter into the sales area and mooch food. We loved the gastronomic attention being paid to everyone. There was only one person who was not thrilled. Rudy Morgan, our venerable building maintenance supervisor. When we ate, it was a sure thing that the

next morning, Rudy would show up, grumbling under his breath about what slobs we were, leaving trays of cole slaw drippings and wilted lettuce. But we loved Rudy and we loved the food and we hated getting fat.

One of the reasons we hated getting fat was that it put our chances of being on television in jeopardy. You may have noticed how the network news operations often team up with some other television cable network. ABC News often presents news magazine stories that were first seen on Court TV or CBS would do something in conjunction with the History Channel and of course, NBC has its own cable channel.

Well, we at KFVB decided to team up with a local TV station so that we could bring instant news to their viewers while they were gearing up to send reporters and cameramen into the streets. This was especially good for catastrophe reporting. earthquakes, major fires, floods, heavy rains, tornadoes, etc.

One day, without notice, we came to work to find a large steel post mounted on the platform just behind the editor's desk. We were told it is a camera platform. We nod our heads and say, "Okay." Sure enough, about a week later, it arrives. A rather large TV camera has been mounted on the post and its lens faces right at the windows of our studio and the angle is wide enough so that viewers could see who ever was in the studio at the time, regardless of which seat he was using. Wow! We really were going to be on TV. Of course the morning crew thought they would be the charmed ones so they

began wearing suits, ties and blue shirts to work even before the technicians had finished hooking up the camera. Well, they did some test runs with the camera setup and there were some problems to be worked out and they were and we sat back and waited.

After waiting several months, nothing happened that warranted a TV report from us and one day.....the camera was gone. We must have felt like those people who make sitcom pilots that are never sold. Well, that's show biz.

There is an old saying that goes..."Those who can't do, teach." Maybe that should be modified to read, "Those who can't do, report on those who (forgive me) do do."

This was surely the case among KFWB staffers who, year after year, participated in the Advertising Softball League. This league was made of softball teams put together by the various Los Angeles based ad agencies and a few radio stations. The teams consisted of employees of those companies, plus a few ringers here and there. It wasn't head to head competition and reputations did not depend upon the outcome of the games. They were simply fun games, designed to create a camaraderie within the advertising industry. But as in almost every endeavor, some folks are a tad more competitive than others and tend to take these games quite seriously.

At KFWB, I always got the impression we took a casual approach to the games. Many time, in a Friday, I would hear, "Are we playing this week?" "Where are we playing?" "What are we playing?" and finally, "Am I still on the team?"

I should point out that the KFWB team was a rather eclectic group of people, including news anchors, one or two writers, an editor or two, a couple of engineers, one boss, plus sales execs and secretaries from all over the building.

Did they know how to play softball? Well, a few could look at our equipment and identify the ball, or the bat or the glove. Several claimed to be right handed batters but when they took their turn at bat, the bat was over their left shoulder.

Could they catch a ball? A few. Run the bases? A few. The girls had this habit, if they got a hit, to run from home plate to first base where they stopped and every girl on the field jumped up and down in place squealing with delight. Some of the guys did the same thing. Throw the ball? Yes, they could throw the ball but sometimes the ball did not go where the thrower wanted it to go.

Anyway, we posted a sheet on the newsroom bulletin board for people to sign up for the team. Sure enough, about a week later, the sheet was covered with names. Some of them even worked at KFWB. We had Mickey Mantle, Babe Ruth, Hank Aaron, Ty Cobb...you get the idea. But we did have enough KFWBers to field a team and have a few substitutes too. Then we discovered their handwriting was so bad, we still didn't know who was on the team. So we decided everyone would come to the field and we would take names later.

Now, how did we do in the actual games? Let me put it this way.

Golfers know that they lower their score the better golfer you are. Not so in baseball. The KFWB Softball team's point total was so low, we could easily have qualified for the Master's Golf Tournament in Augusta Georgia.

Here's how the standings looked after 13 weeks of play.

	W	L	Tie	Total points.
KTLA-TV	9	3		18
Della Femina Agency	6	6	1	13
EJL Agency	6	6		12
McCann Erickson Agency	6	7		12
Asher/Gould Agency	5	5		10
KCBS-TV	5	6		10
Patrick Media Agency	4	6		8
KFWB/Westinghouse	1	12		2
Metro Traffic	0	2		0

Not long after statistics like that were compiled, KFWB received a challenge from Metro Traffic. The winner of the game would meet Miss Winkle's 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Class at the Honeywinkle Elementary School, in the recess yard for a game of punch ball.

I might also point out that tickets to watch the game were available just for the asking. No one ever asked.

Now, don't get the idea that because of one lousy season of softball, we gave up sports. Nuh uh. Not us. We never gave up.

Directly on the heels of our unbelievable softball season, we plunged headlong into beach volleyball.

The results here were amazing. Three cases of serious sunburn, one case of heat prostration, two lost balls (How the hell does one lose a volleyball?) plus three players received offers to endorse a brand of senior citizen undergarments.

While we are on the subject of outdoor activities, KFWB staffers still could not understand the system for granting vacation time. So executive editor Bill Yeager was forced to issue another set of guidelines.

1. All requests must be in writing. All request will be answered in writing. Do not use crayon.
2. All requests must be submitted by March 1<sup>st</sup>. All decisions will be made by April 1st.
3. The decision of the judges will be final. In case of a duplicate request, the cutest staffer wins.
4. Vacation requests not involving major holidays, must be submitted three weeks in advance. We don't know why.
5. AFTRA personnel may use seniority in choosing their vacation time.
6. AFTRANS over the age of 90 are exempt but must sit quietly in the corner.

7. No more than one anchor per shift on vacation at one time. Premium Holiday will allow 2. Only one fulltime editor may be on vacation at any one time, so they don't congregate on street corner pitching pennies.
8. Only two editorial assistant on vacation at the same time. Those teenage marriages never work.
9. Time off because of a death in the family will be granted however, the excuse can only be used once, for each grandparent or other sickly relative. In other words... Granny can only die once.
10. Emergency vacation time to Hawaii will not be allowed. Same for Acapulco.
11. If you are arrested and incarcerated for a long time, you may request a sabbatical.

We hoped that would clear up the confusion but it didn't and the rules had to be re-posted every year. But you must remember, when you deal with issue of war, famine, politics and crime, vacation time is a precious commodity and our choice of vacation time is critical.

Another item of critical importance to the newsroom staff is knowing exactly what your job entails. After so many years of doing the All News format, it was assumed that everyone knew exactly what their assignments were. This was not always the case. In far too many instances, new young employees were hired and in all likelihood, they had never worked for an all news station before.

This meant the periodic reminding everyone just what they were supposed to be doing. In addition, as the years went by, the various jobs underwent changes brought on by new equipment, thinking and personnel, including management. So, the brass sat down, thought of new changes, made them and then spread the word to the rest of us.

For editorial and production assistants, it was fairly easy. They were to record all news feeds into the station from the network, from our own reporters, from callers on the telephone and from those we called. They would also transfer sound bites to cartridges for use within the body of the newscast. The trickiest part of their job was deleting dated or unwarranted material. Editing tape is a skill that comes with practice and time. It enables the editor to get rid of false starts, mistakes, incorrect statements and even totally wrong information. The skilled editor can delete material and still make the report sound flawless.

The job description for the editor is a bit more complicated. The editor hopefully has a lot of experience, good rapport with the people on his shift and most of all, a keen awareness of what is going on, inside the building and around the world. He must know the names of everybody, know what country is fighting against which other country and in short, he must know more than a little bit about a whole lot of things.

The editor must also know what he is supposed to be doing when he is at the editor's desk. He decides what news will be included

on the newscasts but hopefully reading everything that comes thru on the wires. He will decide the importance of the stories and their position within the newscast. He will not have to write news stories but he can if he so desires. He may not dance on the desk, but he can if he so desires. We had an editor once who did just that. And also, if he wants, he can distribute money, preferably tens and twenties to the anchors. This rarely happened but he could if he wanted to. He just rarely wanted to. In fact, he never wanted to.

The news anchor is mostly likely the most important element in the All-News format as we are the people the audience hears most and trusts most and reveres as though we were godlike. (Yeah, right!) But we do serve as representatives of the station. Being members of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA), we are as such, authorized to go on the air. The anchor is the main voice on the newscast. Other voices include the sports guy, the weather guy, the traffic guy, the field reporter guy, the voices on commercials, voices on tape as part of news stories.....in fact, when you get right down to it, if we get three minutes of air time, that's a lot. But we do a lot more than just talk. We write a good deal of our newscasts, unless of course we are prima donnas. We record stories for use by other anchors, we read commercial copy and sometimes, we actually have to act like real people. Its not easy on a commercial to convince someone to open a bank account, buy a car, eat a thirty pound hamburger, all in the space of one minute and sound sincere

at the same time. Simply put, in news, you must sound authoritative. In a commercial, we must sound sincere and convincing.

News anchors must also be humble. I have no idea why.

Next to the news anchor, the field reporter is of prime importance. He's the guy who ventures out to where the story is taking place. They know the story can at time, be dangerous. They are aware that there may be stories where bullets are flying, buildings are burning or a Little League game is being played. Therefore, reporters do well be be prepared and have the proper equipment. In addition to pad and pencil, the well equipped reporter carries with him or her a crash helmet, a Kevlar vest, an AK-47, handgrenades and a flamethrower. They will be sure to make friends with policemen, firemen, sheriff's deputies, bureaucrat, politicians, the Mayor, a U.S. Senator, Congressman and even a President or two. Close friendships like these will come in handy when the reporter needs to interview someone, and if your list of friends and contacts is international in scope, all the better.

Reporters know they are on call 24/7. He must be ready to go no matter what time of day and their destination could be local or it could be halfway around the world. If however, it is Hawaii or Tahiti or the Bahamas, be prepared for you wife, girlfriend or significant other not to talk to you for month.

Writers at KFWB are also members of AFTRA and can go on the air if necessary but their primary job is to write, write, write. These folks are masters at taking a very long story, originally written for

a newspaper and condense it down so that the entire story can be told within 30 to 60 seconds. They pull off this trick every day with nary a mistake. Well almost no mistakes but despite it all, they are wonderful and we could not do without them.

Then we have newsroom employees who are not union members or part of the production staff. Its their job to deal with secretarial or clerical chores, supplies, errands or whatever the editor needs. They are those unsung heroes we hear about so often. Never heard or seen but vital to the operation. These are the ones who pay homage to those on the air, aspire to be like us and pay us money for the privilege of working with us. This never happens. It could.....but it doesn't.

Once everyone knows their job, things just hum right along.

News, on a daily basis is not all that glamorous and it certainly does not involve earthshaking events every five minutes. And nobody runs around yelling "Stop The Presses!" That's because we don't have a press to stop. We don't get daily earthquakes. Actually we do but most you never feel. We also don't have daily brush or forest fires, nor, thankfully do planes crash every time you turn around. The adrenaline in our bodies is allowed to settle down and we breathe easy.

The LA Times is the number one newspaper in town. The Los Angeles Daily News is number two. At one point, the Daily News hired a columnist to cover radio in Southern California. He was

going to report on the monster stations with the fifty thousand watt transmitters all the way down to those tiny stations powered by a chipmunk with a treadmill in his cage. He was going to talk about L.A. Radio and tell it like it is. And he did.....rock and roll, classical, country, jazz, Salsa, Blues and oldies but goodies.

Now, we all know that music is very big. But we were also in an era where all-news and talkradio was big too. But nary a word was written about us. He discussed the venerable deejay, Dr. Demento. He went on about The Deadhead Hour and something called Gumbo Ya ya. He even mentioned KNX, our prime competition but not about news. He wrote about their broadcasting old radio dramas every Sunday night. As for us, KFWB, the ratings giant there was not a word.

So, we all sent him nasty letters and ignored him ever after.

Over the years, KFWB has had a continuous stream of really fine reporters working with us. Pete Demetriou is one of them. Pete has established an enviable record and a marvelous rapport with law enforcement in the Los Angeles area.

Every cop from Chief and Sheriff on down, calls him by his first name. Pete made himself an expert on police methods and procedures and when there is a news conference, its Pete whose questions cut to the chase before everyone else. And the cops respect him. Here's an example.

Back around 1990, I was pulled to the side by a motorcycle officer who noticed that I had neglected to fasten my seatbelt. He started writing me a ticket when he noticed a KFWB sticker on my car. He asked if I worked there and I said yes and he asked if I knew Pete. I said yes and the cop told me that had he known, he would not have written the ticket at all. Pete is a good guy to know.

One of the classiest anchors during my 30 years at KFWB, was Jayne Bower. Jayne was and is extremely talented. She has a great voice, a great sense of what news is all about and she is genteel to say the least. In view of this, one wonders what the fates had in mind when they brought Jayne face to face.....er.....well, face to....she was confronted by a denizon of the back alleys of Hollywood, namely, a flasher.

Jayne was on her way to work one morning and apparently stopped off at a small convenience store on Sunset Boulevard when this gentleman approached. Jayne didn't pay any attention to him until he whipped open his incredibly filthy trench coat to display his obvious shortcomings.

Did Jayne panic? Not for a second. Did she scream, holler. faint? Nope. She just stood there for a second, looked the man in the eye and said..."Now I have seen everything!" She then walked away to her car.

Wow! Imagine, until that very moment, Jayne had not seen everything.

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NOW ITS TIME ONCE AGAIN FOR THE  
SILVER TONGUE DEVILS.

Newscasters at KFWB are professionals but every once in a while, they sound like rank amateurs. The bits of Silver Tongue Devilry are priceless and cause for great laughter in the newsroom.

Los Angeles often becomes the target for the Mexican Fruitfly and it fights back by spraying a substance called Malathion. One afternoon, just hours before the start if spraying operations, I told my audience that the city was in for another night of mutilation spraying. That same evening I referred to those very same flies as Mexican Flute Flies.

One must never mispronounce the name of the company that owns your station. KFWB reporter Tony Cox did when he referred to Westinghouse as Westinghoose.

Not knowing the name of a very very famous person and then mistaking his gender is a definite no-no. Traffic reporter Rick Brown was heard to report on a traffic accident at the Harbor Freeway near the Martin Luther Queen overpass.

Anchor Stan Bohrman created a whole new country music star. In a story about Willie Nelson, and his battles with the IRS, Stan called him, "Willie Nelson Mandela."

You must also refer to the local sports teams by their correct names. It was when we all started laughing that anchor Pete Parson discovered the L.A. Clippers are not the L.A. Clappers. But we gave him a big hand anyway.

On that same day, reporter Steve Kindred told our listeners that Los Angeles had a 10 percent chance of precip....precip...precip... rain.

Timing is a factor in our newscasts especially when it comes to story content. Anchor Vicki Cox, reporting on the passing of movie legend Greta Garbo, related how she had been cremated the day before her death.

When reading a script, one must take notice of the need for punctuation marks. In a story about a missing child, anchor John Leischer described the little girl as "having brown hair and eyes weighing 45 pounds".

Never try to embarrass people involved in news stories. KFVB Anchor Michael Shappee reported on a couple of newly-weds who were robbed of everything, right after the reception. Michael told our listeners the bride and groom were still in their clothes when the robbery took place. Well, REALLY!!!!

Religion is in the news a lot but rarely does religion share space with a motorcycle. Reporter Mary Ellen Geist was broadcasting a

story of a protest being staged by a group of Jewish people outside their own synagogue. Mary Ellen made it a point to tell our listeners that the male protestors were wearing traditional Yamahas on their heads.

Anchor Lyly Kilgore proved himself a silver tongued devil when, in a story about the Magellan spacecraft, bound for Venus, was now taking pictures of Venice. Now, that's some zoom lens!

Weather is often the spark that sets off garbled speech. KFWB's Vince Campagna broadcast a rather unusual forecast. He said, "We are due for some low clouds and drivvel."

Every once in a while, a sports anchor does a regular newscast and in this instance, Joe Cala was introducing reporter Bill Cooper in the mobile unit known as Car 98. Joe announced, "Now, here's Bill Carper in Coop 98."

When a big story is developing on the air, the anchor must let the listeners know that there will be more on the story and that they should stay tuned. Anchor Dan Avey was doing just that. There was another crisis in the Middle East and Dan said, "The next report at any time. The next scheduled report in 8 months."

There are lots of words we use on an everyday basis that become the wrong words depending on the circumstance. KFWB's Ken Jeffries was reporting on a plane crash where the pilot has been doing

aerobatic maneuvers. Ken said the pilot has been doing aerobics just before the crash.

Sometimes, anchors become totally unintelligible. We are not sure exactly who said it but one anchor, trying to say "Paranoid Schizophrenic" came out with this gem..."Paranoidskinopritzia." Beats me what it means.

Anchor Vicki Cox was relating a story about the death of a heart transplant patient. It must have been a rather unusual transplant because Vicki said the recipient had been given a "heat and organ." No harmonica?

I am not immune to silver tongued devilry. In fact, over the years, I may have been the worst offender. In a sports headline that I read on the air, I said...The L.A. Kings blanked the Blankhawks.

#### NOW, SOME SILVED PENNED DEVILTRY.

In 1990, I began keeping track of written goofs committed by the writers, anchors and others. Here are a few.

A report by writer Eric Williams included a statement by Lee Hazelwood, Captain of the illfated oil tanker, the Exxon Valdez. This must mean that Nancy Sinatra was first mate. You see, the captain was Joseph Hazelwood.

In one of those tragic murder suicide stories, writer Sue Stiles wrote that the husband of an Anaheim couple “fatally shot himself and then turned the gun on his wife.” We assume the wife waited patiently until the husband finished fatally shooting himself before shooting her.

Reporter Shelly Lash wrote, in one of her reports that in Orange County, the new John Wayne Airport Terminal Building finally got off the ground!

Reporter Sharon Katchen, dictated a lead-in to one of her reports about an “infant psychiatrist.”

An intro to a report by a network correspondent had an unusual natural phenomenon take place. It read....”Its being called a flawless liftoff. Corresspondent Jay Barbree was on hand when the Space Shuttle Atlantis, turned day into night.” How did it do that? Turn off the sun?

## SO, WHERE IS BOB HOPE?

Desert Storm.

The Warsaw Pact dissolves. USSR too.

Apartheid abolished in South Africa

Cannibal killer Jeffrey Dahmer arrested in Milkwaukee.

Broadcast journalists, reporters and anchors for almost every station in the nation, I would wager, regard themselves as following in the footsteps of such great pioneers as Edward R. Murrow, Walter Cronkite, and William L. Shirer, not to mention Ernie Pyle. These were men who went in harm's way to bring news of global conflict into our living rooms. As it turns out, not many reporters get to play the role of war correspondent. Fewer still actually go into battle with the troops and file reports while bullets whiz about their heads. At KFWB, Andy Park went to Vietnam for a few weeks and then the opportunity for such duty faded away until 1991. **Operation Desert Shield** followed a short time later by **Operation Desert Storm**. It was time for the Gulf War and while most radio stations relied on the

networks and wire services to bring them the news, KFWB actually went to war.

Now there were no troopships to board, no Red Cross Nurses to kiss us goodbye and give our people doughnuts and coffee and no bands playing patriotic songs. Our reporters just packed their bags, got on the planes and left.

First to embark was reporter Steve Kindred, headed for the Middle East to report on the refugees pouring out of Kuwait while Saddam Hussein set up shop in that tiny nation.

A short time later, anchor John Brooks was part of the entourage following then Vice-President Dan Quayle, a veteran of the National Guard, who was going to inspect the troops in Saudi Arabia. And finally, KFWB's own version of G.I. Joe, Pete Demetriou left for the Persian Gulf where he became pool reporter aboard the U.S.S. Tripoli., a carrier escort designated CVE-64. Our team, plus reporters from CNN, ABC, CBS, NBC and the Associated Press, arrived in the Persian Gulf area, set up shop and waited for the hostilities to begin.

On the home front, those of us who were resigned to reporting from the safety of the newsroom, were also manning our battle stations. Remembering the warnings from an earlier war, "Loose Lips Sink Ships" we leaped to the task of implementing our own wartime pre-cautions.

So as not to give vital strategic information to Saddam, we stopped giving the weather forecast for Saudi Arabia. We assume, because of this, Saddam stopped listening to us.

We also instituted other security measures. All brown bag lunches were searched for bombs, weapons and hot pastrami sandwiches on white bread with lettuce, tomato and mayonnaise. The codes to get into our computer system were changed to Arabic words so even we could not get in. That was a coup. All visitors to KFWB were stripped searched. Some twice.

In the interest of clarity, we were instructed to pronounce Iraq as eh-rak rather than ee-rak or eye-rak. We were also told not to refer to Saddam as the Thief of Baghdad. And Saddam was to be pronounced suh-dahm instead of sa-dahm or sa-dim or sah-dumb. Nor were we to refer to his policies as Sah-damy.

In wartime, there is often much mis-information and we were honor bound to clear up such instances. Since Israelis military forces were using extreme restraint in not responding to the SCUD missiles Saddam sent their way, we had to dispel the rumor that Israel's national bird had become the Duck.

We also had to deep six the rumor that Saddam had a nuclear bomb that was launched from an ox-cart. Another rumor was that Saddam's bomb shelter was so deep, Satan was considering using him as a shield. Unfortunately we could not adequately explain with a straight face why we felt 6 feet would have been deep enough.

Well, the war finally got underway and we all know what happened. Saddam's Mother of All Battles turned into a rout with the Iraqi army sent scurrying back home. Military historians and analysts will study the battle and highlight the mistakes and the victories but two secret weapons used in the war, helped us to win at home and abroad and it was totally hush hush.

The first secret weapon was the KFWB Nooseline. That example of true trash journalism was distributed to all Iraqi soldiers who promptly surrendered. The second weapon was the KFWB Special Events Desk. When Iraqi spies listened in and heard all the information we had at our fingertips, they knew that we knew how bad they were doing. They didn't know they were doing that bad and figured, "aw, the heck with it".

By Golly, we did our part in that glorious quest.

The troops came home to parades, bands, flag waving and a myriad of other celebrations. And our reporters also come home to be greeted by us.

KFWB's Steve Kindred returned from the middle east without a single souvenir of the war except for some warm ripe sand in his shoes.

Anchor John Brooks also came back after his junket with Vice-President Quayle and he was awarded the medal known as the Order of the Dromedary Hump.

Finally, Pete Demetriou returned home to the sighs of relief of America's top military leaders. You see, while Pete was assigned

as pool reporter aboard the USS Tripoli, the vessel struck a floating mine. When he went to Dahrain or Bahrain or some such place and a SCUD missile hit a US barracks building. This prompted the soldiers and airmen to end the war quickly before Pete had a chance to go anywhere else.

When all the dust had settled, the reaction to KFWB's coverage of the war was outstanding. We even won a few awards later in the year. Now, when you are riding a wave of love and adoration from your listeners and your peers, it was determined that we should give ourselves a new look. The easiest new look would be a slogan. Now of course, we had been using the time honored and time tested slogan....."You Give Us Twenty Two Minutes, We'll Give You The World". That slogan was so effective, comedians had begun using versions of it in their standup routines.

There is the old adage...."If it ain't broken, don't fix it." The "You Give Us....." slogan was doing just fine but someone in the front office decided it was time for something new. So, they took a poll. The poll apparently agreed with the front office executive that a new slogan was needed. So, he issued a memo asking for slogan suggestions from the staff. We were to post our suggestions on the kitchen bulletin board. This way, everyone could see them and comment. Now you know by now that KFWB staffers, me in particular, regarded in-house matters with somewhat less than true concern. Therefore, asking us to make suggestions for slogans was like asking Mrs. Lincoln how she liked the play. But we did post

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suggestions and after reading them, you will understand why we decided to remain with "You Give Us Twenty Two etc etc etc."

1. You Give Us Twenty Two Minutes or Else."
2. Don't Listen To KNX, They Lie".
3. All Nudes, All The Time.
4. If It Happens Here, It's News To Us.
5. KFWB, Noise 98
6. Listen To Us Or Die!
7. KFWB News 98. Stick That In Your Ear."
8. Nine Out Of Ten Dentists Recommend KFWB To Their Patients Who Listen To News.
9. Get Yesterday's News Tomorrow.
10. If We Don't Have the Story, We Make One Up!

It should be self evident by now that things do not always go smoothly for a reporter who is covering some story somewhere. There are times when the story just doesn't pan out. Either people involved don't show up or the story is not what it was touted to be. Sometimes, on more serious occasions, reporters have been hurt on the job. But mostly, it's a case of little silly things like mispronouncing a word or two.

Our audience will often call us just to let us know what happened, as if we didn't already know. This is good because it shows they are listening.

There is one more thing that can and does happen to reporters, they cannot find their story. Now this is a dilemma. Here's what happened.

Our reporter was covering a protest march in South Central Los Angeles. It was a rather sizeable protest march, complete with signs, slogans and lots of noise. Our reporter called in to the station on his car phone. When he turned around, the parade had passed him by. Not only had the parade passed him by, the parade completely disappeared.

Everyone was gone along with their signs and slogans. Our reporter looked up the street and down the street and around corners, up trees, in doorways, everywhere but not a marcher was to be seen. So what did our intrepid reporter do? Did he give up and leave? Nope. Did he sit on the curb and cry? Nope. What he did was this. He saw some kids selling lemonade on a street corner. He interviewed them and bought a drink.

To this day, we have no clue what happened to the parade or where those lemonade kids came from. In fact, we don't even know if the lemonade was any good.

You have all heard the old expression..."Its news to me!" Sometimes we come across news stories we didn't even know we

had until some listener calls in wanting further information. In one instance, the story was as bizarre as they come. It was a Sunday morning and one of our young reporters picked up the phone. It was a listener. She wanted more information on a story she had heard on KFWB the previous Thursday regarding a jar filled with penises. That's right. Penises!

Now Sunday mornings are usually peaceful periods when not much is going on but this request was a bit unsettling to our reporter. She told the caller she would check the story and if the woman would call back, she would give her what information she had.

Sure enough, the woman called back half an hour later and our reporter told her she was mistaken, it was not penises. The story was about the discovery of a jar filled with fetuses that had been disposed of by a medical school. Well, the woman was not at all satisfied. She said she heard the word penis, not fetus.

So, our reporter told the woman to call back again. About half an hour, she was back asking about her jar of penises. Why was this woman so intent on hearing the story, one she said she first heard while eating. So, back to the archives went our reporter and after rummaging thru the files, sure enough came up with a story about a high school teacher, accused of molestation, who was found in possession of a jar containing what the woman was asking about. She called back and we gave her the information. We never heard from her again which is just as well, because who knows what body part she would ask about next.

In Los Angeles, wherever food is served, prepared or sold, health inspectors come to the place of business, inspect the premises and issue a placard with the letter A, B, C or D. A means your place is as clean as a whistle. B through D indicate lesser states of cleanliness. I believe if they give you an F, a man comes in with a flamethrower and vaporizes the building.

That system was not in place in 1991 and so memos were constantly being issued reminding us to clean up. The main problem area, surprisingly, was not the sink where the disposal did not work. It was the refrigerator where bags of food sat festering since the Dark Ages. There were bottles of grey orange juice, lumps of cheese with real penicillin growing on it, bags containing substances that moved by themselves and bottles of cola so old, the brown color had settled to the bottom. This was not a happy situation.

Management decided to solve the problem with a memo. They issued tough new rules for use of the refrigerator. We were told not to bring our lunch in huge bags because they take up far too much room in the frig. The following bags were declared verboten: plastic trash can bags; army duffle bags; saddle bags; handbags; baggy pants; bag ladies and all supermarket bags that say "Have a nice day".

If something spills, clean it up with a paper towel. We were cautioned not to use a rubber towel; a garden trowel; shovel, unless you are really sloppy; a backhoe; or a paper towel someone used earlier to blow their nose.

Perishable items were to be disposed of every Friday afternoon unless labeled with your name. If you put your name on the item, it will be allowed to remain in the refrigerator until they turn green and make noise.

Most important, eat your own food. Do not chomp someone's sandwich, rewrap it and put it back. And if someone is in the kitchen eating, don't grab the food from his or her mouth claiming it's yours. Now that's really not nice.

The year 1991 was a great year for Silver Tongue and Silver Pen Devilry. So, let's see just what your favorite news-people did to make themselves look silly.

We start out with news from anchor Jack Popejoy that composer Aaron Copeland had died at the age of 90 degrees.

Anchor Michael Shapee, reporting on the start of an around the world hot air balloon trip, referred to the book *Around The World In 80 Days*. Mike reported that Felonius Phogg would have been jealous of the modern day balloon. I bet Phineas Phogg would have felt the same.

Saying the obvious. Reporter Rik Espinosa reporting on a memorial service that was supposed to have been the Bar Mitzvah of Billionaire Armond Hammer. Rik told our audience that "since he had died two days earlier, Hammer obviously could not attend".

Anchor Vicki Cox got a bit personal while discussing on the air, Einstein's Theory of Relatives.

One of our nameless traffic guys reported that over the mountains, white snow was falling. That's sure better than yellow.

The tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena is one of the world's most famous parades but not to Pete Demetriou. He referred to it as the Tournament of Raisins Parade. We don't know why.

In a political story, anchor Vicki Cox indicated they were having a gay old time in Washington. She talked about the Butch Administration. Er, that's George Herbert Walker Butch. Not Dubya.

Just to let you know that I was not immune to making mistakes. I was reporting an on environmental threat to a small fish called the Unarmored Threespine Stickleback. Well, I created a whole new species, the Unadorned Threespine Picklepack.

Reporter Steve Kindred delivered an intriguing report about a bombing at Number 10 Downing Street, in London, the home of the British Prime Minister. The bombs, three of them, went off behind the building. Steve reported that the bombs were aimed at the Prime Minister's rear.

Police officers have been known at times, as "pigs". In Los Angeles, police headquarters is known as Parker Center. Reporter Mary Ellen Geist put them together in a report dealing with Porker Center.

Sports guys are usually quite glib and speak rapidly without making mistakes but not always. KFWB sports guy, Randy Kerdoon in a sad story about the untimely death of a colleague, reported that the man died just before he made his debut on ESPN.

Because we are in California, we covered landings of the space shuttle at Edwards Air Force Base. Reporter Pete Demetriou had this rather unusual report which said the shuttle "wind land on the dry lake run bed". Despite this, the shuttle landed safely.

Sometimes, mistakes are made that leave us speechless. In Long Beach, home of the Long Beach Gran Prix, they were holding a drinking contest. The idea was to see who could drink the most. Anchor Ken Jeffries, in relating the story, referred to the Long Beach Grand Pee. When you think about it, it may have been rather appropriate.

When high winds hit Southern California, it makes driving quite difficult, especially for high profile vehicles and fruit trucks.. It was during one such wind storm that traffic lady Molly Page reported that condition were unfavorable for campers and fig rigs.

In the world of business news, we had a network report that said...."Socks are dropping on the London Exchange."

As you can see, we had a bumper crop of Silver Tongue Devils in 1991 so hold on, we are not finished yet.

In sports reporting, 1991 saw the World Cup in Soccer played at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena. In reporting on how roads in and out of the area around the Rose Bowl were congested, Reporter Michael Shappee offered our listeners this bit of information. He said soccer is the world's most watched sport. Why, just two years ago, the World Cup was watched by more than 26 people." That's a lot.

We all know that Hollywood is a friendly place. Here's an example of just how friendly. Anchor Judy Ford reported that by midmorning, the fog should dissipate in Howdy-wood.

I once gave a time check as....KFWB newstime....nine twen. Fellow anchor Charlie Brailer also gave unusual time checks. "KFWB News time 7-0h-new."

Don't ask me!. He was the guy with the wrist watch.

Medical news is rather specialized so you can understand when anchor Vince Campagna was reporting on one form of arthritis, he referred to it as Hemorrhoid Arthritis. Oh, that must hurt a lot.!

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Talking about medical conditions, reporter Howard Leff, while filling in for a sports anchor, reported on a football game where an un-named player fumbled the bowel.

Still on the subject of medicine, anchor Stan Bohrman, in reporting the death of actor Fred MacMurray, stated that the man died of Pomona.

And finally, anchor Michael Shappee was working the special events desk at the time of the release of two American hostages in the middle east. As he ended his report, he had this advice for listeners....."Stay Tood To Nudes 98."

## **THOSE WHO CAN'T DO, TEACH.**

Bill Clinton elected President

The Internet is born. Web surfing begins.

It is not difficult to understand why the ability to communicate, both with the written and the spoken word, is of paramount importance in Broadcast Journalism. If we can't get the message across in the least amount of time, using a minimum of words, we are not doing our job. That is why news directors, executive editors, editors and writers are so concerned about the product.

Earlier in this book, we spent considerable time discussing the rules of writing as seen by me. Now, let's take a look at some instances where the boss put out his own rules of writing.

It is taken for granted that by the time you reach a major radio station in a major market, you already possess the basic skills of spelling, grammar and hopefully, a modicum of style. This does not stop the news director from issuing memos in which he or she attempts to change our style and the way we approach the stories we

handle. For example, one memo that arrived from News Director Scott Gorbitz, instructed us on the need for brevity. We were using too many words. The solution? Ban some words. Not just dirty words or profanity, but regular words. Here were the words that were banned: Officials; Authorities; Spokesman; Spokeswoman; Spokesperson. We don't know why those words were banned but if they wanted those words banned, then by golly, we would ban them, along with a few other words that we selected. They included Groovey, Kazango, Feldvebble, and Gademptifleish. It was very effective. To this day, those four words have never been used in any KFWB news story.

In the very same memo, we were told that our news stories are not news. They are stories and therefore we are storytellers but, at the ends of our newscasts, we were not to give writing credits to the Brothers Grimm, two other storytellers of note.

In the news business, we are continually giving attribution to real people. This means if someone says something, we say he said it and we identify that person. Quite often the person being identified is a cop. Now in Los Angeles, a cop is a member of the Los Angeles Police Department, the LAPD. Our news director pointed out that not every cop is a member of the LAPD. Some are Sheriff's deputies, highway patrolmen, or members of the force of a smaller suburban police department. So, we were told to refrain from using the word "cop" when referring to the man with a badge. We could of course use the term "police" or "policeman", but here too, there were also alternatives.

It was okay to use officer, patrolman, officer of the law, constable, deputy, deppity, bluecoat, copper, beat pounder, flat foot, fuzz, John Law, the heat, bull, speed cop, Smokey, pig, Porky, G-man, T-man, The Man, Sheriff, screw, bailiff, narc, dick, and if you happen to be getting a ticket at the time, sir.

Since we are looking at writing, lets take a look at some of the examples of writing that should not have occurred.

The author is unknown but in a story dealing with the financial problems of TWA, one version mentioned a spokesman for Continental Airlines, Nerd Walker. In all likelihood, the man's name was Ned.

I suffered a rather revealing lapse while typing an introduction to a story about Mexico. It went thusly..."When you think of Mexico, you think of sun drenched beaches, guys diving off cliffs and buff fights". Buff fights must mean exhibitions by naked toreadors.

This next example caused the anchor, who had to read it, to fall out of his chair.

The author is to this day, unknown. It was a story about a high school prank in Virginia. "The boys dumped a prescription heart drug that causes urination into a teacher's creamer." Now, was the drug poured into the creamer or did the drug cause someone to pee into a creamer? We'll never know.

Sometimes, the typo can result from the mistaken use of the wrong word. One writer of ours wrote of a man who was yelling a homosexual epitaph. The word should have been...epithet.

We are not sure which of these you should not do if you are going to die any time soon, get new teeth or get married. In writing about the sudden and tragic death of comedian Sam Kinnison, writer Eric William wrote about Kinnison's bride of less than a week. The word was supposed to have been "bride".

Did you know that bandleader Lawrence Welk, at the time of his death, was the King of Campaign Music? Who was the candidate?

We all know that in some sports, competition can be bloody but in Scrabble?

Anchor Dixie Alexander wrote that in a Scrabble competition, one contestant was left playing ketchup, in vein.

One letter can change the entire meaning of a sentence and prove that politics can indeed make strange bedfellows. A report on the campaign trail referred to the Clinton-Gore-Bush-Tour. Bush campaigning with Clinton? Or were the campaigners simply riding a BUS. We may never know.

Writing about a subject you know little about can be dangerous. Anchor John North wrote a story about some football players facing criminal charges. What team were they on? Why the Cincinnati Bagels. Oy!

Time to move on.....

"Why Can't We Just Get Along?" That plaintive question from a rather battered Rodney King, marked a low point for Los Angeles and a high point for KFWB. The trial of four LAPD officers who had been videotaped beating King, ended in an acquittal for each

defendant. A sizeable percentage of people in Los Angeles reacted angrily and before you knew it, a full scale riot had broken out. People were being beaten on the streets, some were even pulled from cars and trucks to find themselves set upon by rioters. Some stores were looted while others were set on fire and things rapidly went from bad to worse. Every police officer, every sheriff's deputy, every firefighter was called in and at KFWB, every reporter was also working.

KFWB had people in all parts of the city, reporting on the disturbances and on the arrival of National Guardsmen from around the state. The situation had become so bad the Governor mobilized the Guard who responded from as far away as north of San Francisco. One unit, from Palo Alto was assigned to the studios of KFWB and for some, the sight of fully armed men, M-16s hanging from their shoulders, webbing festooned with grenades and ammo clips, was a bit un-nerving.

My assignment was fairly easy. When not on the air doing a newscast, I was assigned to handling reports for out-of-state stations. It meant adlibbing the information. There was no time to write scripts for each station. Stations in foreign countries phoned us for reports. England, Ireland, Australia, Canada, and Sweden. In doing one report for the BBC, I found myself as a panelist on a talk show. That was bizarre because instead of asking me questions about the rioting and fires, they were more interested in the thinking of Americans that could prompt them to acquit the police officers. Having not been

told that was the topic, resulted in some fancy footwork on my part to rearrange my own thinking so that I would not make a fool of myself on the BBC. It was a hairy half hour but I survived somehow and several days later, received a very nice letter from the producer of that British program, thanking me for my insight.

I should point out that when things settled down and peace had returned to the riot torn neighborhoods, a period of reflection began in Los Angeles. People wanted to know the hows and whys of the riots. That meant meetings all over the city and as might be expected, KFWB reporters and anchors were asked to appear and speak about the impressions they got in the streets during the height of the disturbances.

I was asked to appear before a meeting of the Los Angeles chapter of the International Association of Supermarket Tabloid readers. My topic was "How Outer Space Aliens Invaded My Body During the Riots and Forced Me to Loot My Pants."

There was a fascinating question and answer session afterwards.

Thankfully, the city soon settled back into its usual laidback lifestyle. Plans were made to insure that the riots did not re-occur. High sounding pledges were everywhere to address the problems in the city and in answer to Rodney King, we all vowed to "just get along." As of this writing, so far so good.

On a lighter note, as if this book were just a wasteland of dismal, dreary thoughts, I should point out at this time that food again played a major role in life at KFWB.

During the riots, there was always pizza, soda and doughnuts available. Once, we even had that yuppie Hawaiian Pizza with pineapple chunks all over it. Chef Boyardi must have been spinning. You already heard about the Thanksgiving debacle with fried chicken instead of turkey and dressing. Food was always available. In the mornings, executive director, Bill Yeager, whenever he was feeling good, or whenever he thought someone had done something noteworthy, would order breakfast for everyone.

It included scrambled eggs, sausages, bacon, potatoes, French toast, Danish, juice and coffee. Morning like those did wonders for our morale, not to mention our waistlines.

Probably the food we loved the best was the food that was made available to us for birthdays. This meant cake and more cake and still more cake. There were always about 125 people on staff at KFWB, in the news department, sales, management and engineering. This meant that every few weeks and in certain months every few days, someone was having a birthday. This resulted in the station buying a huge birthday cake large enough for everyone to have a slice. This also meant millions upon million of unnecessary but thoroughly enjoyable calories being consumed on a regular basis by almost all of us. I say "almost all" because some of us had great willpower and did not partake of the cake. This, of course, allowed others of us to

have our icing calories and eat theirs too. I assure you, every cake was fully consumed by the end of the day. Day?

Heck, there were times cakes would be fully consumed in minutes. After a while, we found that we were having birthday cake almost everyday. This would never do. The first attempt at cutting down was when anchors Chet Douglas, Charlie Brailer and I celebrated our birthdays on alternating days. This meant the station would order cakes on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Instead, they ordered one cake that said Happy Birthday to the three of us. This was good. Then they went a step further and ordered one cake a month for everybody who had a birthday that month. That was also good. We were really cutting down. But it was too good to be true.

Writer Sue Stiles loved to bake and there was hardly a week in which she did not whip up one of her yummy chocolate cakes with her M & M's embedded in the rich icing. Then Sue often made theme cakes. White cakes with pink icing and little hearts for Valentines day. Once in a while we simply got a cake to celebrate Tuesday. It soon became a ritual that when you came to work, the first place you looked, when entering the newsroom was the top of the Sports Desk where all the cakes were deposited, just to see what was available today.

Sue's efforts had the effect of not only expanding our waistlines, but also of inspiring other amateur bakers. Soon, we were getting cookies of every sort, chocolate chips, sugar cookies, Tollhouse Cookies, etc. This led to the non-bakers chiming in and before long,

we were bombarded with Girl Scout Cookies, supermarket cookies, and finally, those killers of all time, doughnuts and or bagels. People would stop off on their way to work and in the spirit of sharing, would buy two and three dozen donuts or bagels at a time and lay them out for all to have. In fact, there were so many, it became commonplace to see a reporter rushing to a story carrying a recorder, note pad, microphone and pencil, with a bagel and cream cheese lodged between his teeth.

Yes, it was gastronomic heaven but it was also good for the economy. Tailors found themselves with more work letting out seams and clothing stores were selling more pairs of slacks than ever before, all because of a dozen doughnuts. Now, remember, we were an intelligent group. We knew that gorging on doughnuts could be hazardous to our health, so we demanded healthy stuff too. Quite often, there was a huge bag of oranges or lemons to choose from. These came from trees in the backyards of staffer's homes. We were, at times, able to choose from loquats, avocados, grapefruit and once, from a bag of the strangest looking apples we had ever seen.

The oddest of all food selections at KFWB came from engineer Gayle Noble. Despite living in the city, Gayle loved the rural lifestyle and we would often hear stories of the ducks, geese and other critters that inhabited her home in the San Fernando Valley. One day, Gayle came to work carrying a huge bag, filled with duck and goose eggs. Mostly brownish in color, these eggs were larger, smaller or about

the same size as chicken eggs. Gayle said they cooked up just like chicken eggs and we should feel free to take home a few.

This was the weekend and fully aware of the old saying, when the cats away, the mice will play, we mice decided to play...with the eggs.....a decidedly bad move. What better game to play than a game of catch. Yes, with goose eggs whose actual age and condition was unknown? Well, we began tossing eggs back and forth around the newsroom and guess what? One of us dropped the egg and it broke. Does the word STENCH have any meaning for you? That egg may have been around since Mother Goose was a chick. The smell that emanated from that shell, while the interior "stuff" began to stain our incredibly cheap carpets, was indescribable. It smelled as though something much larger than a goose had died sometime ago. Then we looked a little closer and we found it was something that had died some time ago. It had been a fertilized egg. A chick embryo had been developing but for some reason, it died, we estimated, back around the time that Lindbergh flew the Atlantic. So here is this dead goose emanating dead goose smells and depositing goose stains on the carpets and we wisely decided, we had better clean this up real good or *OUR* geese would be cooked.

So, we grabbed mops, paper towels, anything we could get our hands on and began cleaning up. Then it happened. We were putting this gunk in the bag containing the other goose eggs. One of us bumped into the bag and broke three more goose eggs and the stench got worse. I mean gas masks were called for. We wanted to evacuate

the building. But, for some reason, just as quickly as it formed, the cloud of goose fumes dissipated and we were able to hide most of the damage. When the crisis was over, all of us sophisticated, college trained journalists went back to work.

Of course, when you have a lot of food around, you also have a lot of something else.

Bugs. Now, most of you would guess that we had more than our share of cockroaches or ants and under normal circumstances you would be right. At KFWB, we had occasional small armies of ants invade the newsroom and once in a while, roach recon units were spotted scurrying across the carpet-remnants in the newsroom. In September of 1992, we had another invasion. This time it was gnats, those itty bitty little flying beasties who had a talent for getting themselves sucked up your nose, trapped deep in your ear canals and they even flew into your open mouth. It was not pleasant. These little buggers were everywhere, hiding inside your keyboard, under your terminal monitor, under desks, inside desks and I swear one even crawled out of the inside of my ball point pen. It was terrible. It was like dockside in Liverpool, people waving their arms back and forth as though saying goodbye to loved ones on the Titanic. They were swatting at these damnable little pests.

It got so bad, the station was forced to call an exterminator who arrived and decided the culprit was our half moon shaped trash baskets with fossilized remnants of lunches long past, still adhering to the sides. It was determined that a good spraying of

insecticide was needed and out came the huge drum of malathion or some such chemical. A cloud of spray was unleashed that had people everywhere believing Saddam Hussein was outside with his chemical bombs. I have no clue where they came from but people suddenly were wearing surgical masks and you would have thought we were part of an old Marcus Welby MD episode.

Finally, the cloud went away and lo and behold.....the bugs were still there. Those suckers had survived and were fluttering around the room, happy as clams. We needed a new tack.

Someone suggested sticky bug strips and before long, those really tacky devices were hanging everywhere, covered in little half-dead bugs crying, "Help me! Help Me!" But those were just the sick and the elderly bugs. The young vibrant insects were still all over the newsroom, buzzing, attacking, annoying and getting into, under and around everything.

Now it was full and open warfare. It was the U.S. Marines storming Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima, it was Teddy Roosevelt storming San Juan Hill, it was General Patton tearing thru Sicily. It was John Brooks tearing thru the back door of KFWB, his arms filled with every size and type fly swatter imaginable. This was it! The final assault! KFWB staffers, crazed looks on their faces, grabbed fly swatters and open fired. Whap!

Whap! The crack of the swatters was everywhere. Bam! Bam! If you listened closely, you could hear the little gnats crying, "Medic! Medic! Tell my mother I love her! Arghhhhh!"

An aging Bob Hope showed up with a teeny tiny USO troupe to entertain us. War Bonds went on sale and the whapping and bamming continued until finally, it was over.

A last gnat, carrying a teeny tiny white flag, marched across my desk. I squashed it with my thumb. The war was over.

But something was still rotten in Denmark as the saying goes. At least we believed something was rotten because there were some pretty potent smells wafting through the newsroom and some of us did not like it. It wasn't the trashcans. It wasn't the inside of the staff refrigerator. It was us. We smelled. Actually we reeked. Before you start with smart aleck remarks like "take a bath or use deodorants" consider this.....we did take baths and we did use deodorants. We also used after shave, men's cologne, eau de toilette and perfumes. In fact, some of us used perfume so heavily, we often were surrounded by a pastel purple cloud. It was colorful but overwhelming. In fact, it was found that on some occasions, we were triggering allergic reactions in buildings several blocks away. So the word was sent from on high.....cool it on the fragrances. First and foremost, no more Jungle Gardenia. I understand that stuff is strong enough to peel paint off a battleship. No more atomizing while walking. Also no more men's cologne designed to remind you of sailing ships, rowboats, cowboy outfits, or a fresh pine forest. And certainly no use of perfume or colognes advertised by scrawny anorexic young people who, in TV commercials, look like they are the walking dead.

I of course saw a golden opportunity and leapt to my feet. I offered a line of fragrances to my fellow workers that made a statement. That statement was..."This person has no class and no sense of smell." All they had to do was sent a check for \$23.87 to the KFWB Nooseline, along with a note that said "I want to smell to high heaven."

My selection included:

Eau de Locker Room.

Eau de Sweat Sock

Eau de County Dump.

Eau de Methane.

Eau de Smell is Killing Me.

My perfumes came with a guarantee that they were hypo-allergenic. This meant that you could wear it around anyone and while they might faint, they would not die. This probably was a good thing.

In covering news stories, you sometimes need equipment that can stay on the scene for long periods of time, sometimes several days. Our reporters had great staying power but even they had to take a break every once in a while. The realization of this brought about the arrival of RV-98.

RV-98 was an old, battered crate once owned by one of our sister stations back east. They obviously had no use for it anymore

so we either bought it or inherited it but whatever the reason, one day, it showed up in the parking lot of KFWB. It was all white and definitely had seen better days. It was kind of white in color on the outside with no markings to give us any clue as to its background or lifestyle. It was just there.

The idea was to use RV-98 as a mobile broadcast studio at special events and also a public relations gimmick to allow the public to get a close up view of what we sometimes do. Inside RV-98, as Chief Engineer Dick Rudman has named it, there was a steering wheel, the usual driving dials and gauges and a seat for the driver. In the rear, there was some sort of couch arrangement. There were closets, cabinets and a table that at one time served as an announcers position. All the broadcast equipment had been removed from the vehicle so we knew that major modifications were soon to begin. We would buy new equipment, or revitalize old stuff we had in the attic, install it and make that baby sing again. But first.....first things first. We needed a name for it. RV-98 just would not do. We needed a new and fancier name. An eye catching name, a throat catching name, a gut grabbing name.....in short.....we wanted to be cutsey. So a contest was started in the newsroom. A list was posted on the bulletin board for staffer to suggest names for the RV. Here are the suggested names.

1. Supercruiser 98
2. Dude Mobile
3. The Make Out Mobile

4. Party Wagon 98
5. The Aluminum Wonder
6. The Thing No One Is Sure What To Do With.
7. Mobile Command Station 98.
8. Hand Me Down.
9. Barbie's Funtime RV
10. The Big One
11. The Wacko Wagon.
12. The Reporter Transporter
13. Greystoke 1
14. USS Mother W
15. USS Westinghouse
16. Starship Westinghouse
17. The Pink Panther.

The winner? RV-98. That shows you how creative we were. But RV-98 has done us proud. With the equipment installed, it aided us in coverage of such events as the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, The Hollywood Christmas Parade, The Los Angeles Marathon plus a myriad of other events.

Our abilities to construct colorful prose remained as sharp as ever. Here are some examples complete with creative spelling.

Even as the nation fights to improve the air we breathe, reporter Mary Ellen Geist prepared this intro for an anchor....."An effort is underway at City Hall to increase city coughers."

One night, as I worked long and weary, a story came in about the death of Singer Eddie Kendricks of the Temptations. I wrote that he died of Lunch Cancer.

But probably the most outstanding example of bonehead typing came from anchor Jim Burson who made it a point to tell me about his own mistake. It was a story about problems at the picnic grounds at Yosemite National Park. Jim wrote, "One of My Favorite Pinis Spots on the floor of Yosemite." Jim not only typed that but was not even aware he had when he read the story on the air. He was a bit of a wreck when he emerged from the studio. I think he meant picnic.

\* \* \* \* \*

It's not often that mistakes in writing get on the air. Most writers and anchors catch them ahead of time and make corrections. But things do happen in the studio and you have no control or ability to head them off. Here's another batch of Silver Tongue Deviltry from 1992.

A sig-alert is a term used by traffic reporters to denote a serious accident or roadway problem. Thus we wondered out loud what our traffic lady meant when she reported the forth cigarette of the day.

WE also wondered what Vince Campagna meant when, while doing the weather, reported on the "relative humility."

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Also regarding weather, anchor Stan Bohrman told our listeners that winds were “westerly and gusterly.”

Anchor Robert M Howard also was no weather maven. He reported that the relative humidity was 85 miles per hour.

As for me, everyone just wondered when I reported that... “Bombs went off in Mondon Lunday”. I didn’t wonder. I knew. Oh God, I knew..

Former Anchor Sheri Inglis must take credit for these two slips.....calling Idaho’s Lieutenant Governor Butch Otter...Butt Otter and for renaming the Southern California town of Placentia... Placenta.

Some mistakes are obvious, sometimes not. For Instance Paul Lowe had us guessing when, in a story about the demise of the Soviet Union, referred to foiled “clue potters”.

It took a while but we finally figured it meant foiled coup plotters.

KFWB’s eye in the sky, Jeff Baugh must have felt sheepish reporting that he was over Woolen Hills. That’s somewhere near Woodland Hills.

Sports anchor Rod Van Hook is one of those guys who rarely if ever makes a mistake but he made a beauty in reporting that a certain baseball player was known as a great klutz hitter.

Are you ready? In a report on the aftermath of the Annual Grammy awards, anchor Ken Jeffries is reported to have referred to D.J. Jazzy Jeff and The Fresh Prince as DJ Jazzy Jeff and the Fresh Piss.

Imagine yourself driving along a southland freeway listening to KFWB's Vicki Cox reminding you to be careful because there was meat shettle all over the road. That's almost as bad as sheet metal all over the road.

Sports anchor Randy Kerdoon had some problems with a headline about the Denver Nuggets beating the Orlando Magic. It came out...."Niggets Nux.....er.....Nuxxets Nix.....er.....The Nuggets Nix Orlando. Later that month, he reported in hockey.....

Calgary Clobbers the Clappers. Who?

Dead bodies often inspire Silver Tongue Devilry. Traffic Reporter Jeff Rollins told our listeners that police on the I-5 were talking to a suicide victim. Anchor Steve Kindred reported on the discovery of a body under a railroad trellis.

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Finally, reporter/anchor Michael Shappee reported from the Yucca Valley on the cleanup after twin earthquakes. Mike said he was in the devastated town of Landers....in the Yucky Valley.

## STUFF

Terrorists bomb the NYC World Trade Center.

Feds raid Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas.

Buckingham Palace is opened for tours by the public.

We have all experienced the minor “trauma” of having our favorite television show cancelled because of poor ratings. Not enough people watch a show and the network gets nervous and before you know it the show is relegated to sitcom heaven. Eventually it may come back in syndication if there are enough episodes to make it worthwhile but production on new episodes is over. The lights go out, the cameras are put away and the actors go home. You might say having good ratings is like being blessed by God.

In radio, ratings are extremely important too because the better they are, the more a station may charge for commercial time. So, when it is ratings time, we all “smarten” up and do our best. The promotion department gets busy, the news director gets busy, everybody gets busy because by golly we want to sound our best.

Now, nobody was really worried about losing their jobs if the ratings were not good. Disc Jockeys have to worry about that sort of thing and so do talk show hosts but in an All-News radio station, ratings have a twofold mission. First, they give us a good indication of how many people are listening at any point in the day, week or month. Secondly, if the ratings were not good, we could see what time slot was having trouble and we could work to fix things so the next time the numbers are counted, they hopefully will have improved. Ratings companies use various methods for keeping track of listening habits. First, they group the designated listeners into groups according to age, sex, ethnic background, planetary origin, height, weight and whether or not they are deaf. Categories are then further narrowed into groups who have or do not have electric can openers and/or gas powered radios. You can see it all gets very sophisticated.

Then there are computation categories called cumes and quarter hours. Cumes mean cumulative or what everybody regardless of category is listening to. Quarter Hours means what is being listened to in any 15 minute segment around the clock. Then you have male cumes, female cumes, kid cumes, old fogey cumes, middle age cumes and quarter hour numbers for each of those categories. After a while, it gets very confusing. You see, its not confusing for me, because I am a professional. Do not try this at home.

Now, each station has its own designated competition. For KFWB, it is first KNX, the other news station. After that come the

talk stations. We never worry about the music stations unless it is determined that people are tapping their toes to our newscasts or singing along..

So, here is what a ratings report looks like. These are not real ratings!

Males 18-55	8.2	Mornings	12.3	Holidays	5.1
Females 18-55	7.1	Afternoons	6.12	Non-Holidays	3.7
Maiden Aunts	3.1	Evenings	2.0	Rainy Days	0
Deceased	1.4	Dead Of Night	0.4	Earthquakes	

In one ratings period, we were found to be number one in the city among Bocci Ball players, children who did not live at home and those who hate succotash. This allowed us to jump around shouting "We're number 1!" But eight other stations also found an excuse to claim the same thing. So as we all claimed to be number one, the station that was really number one just went about its business building audience as we all built volume. But what got us hyped and jumping was any ratings book in which we beat the pants off KNX. That made it all worthwhile. Now that you completely understand ratings, lets go on to something else.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the mid 70's KFWB moved into a new building and we were happy as clams. In slightly less than 15 years later, there was talk of another new buildings. Why, you may ask would we need a new building? Well, Westinghouse had been on a buying spree and one of

its purchases was another radio station in Los Angeles, KTWV. The idea was to move both staffs into one building to save money. This could be done because about one third of our building sat empty. It was once the offices of a record company that went belly up.

Well, Architects-R-Us came and studied the building we were in and said, there could only be a partial merging of the staffs. There was room to bring in the KTWV sales staff and management but the actual studios would not fit. So, that's what they did. The disc jockeys and engineers stayed in another building a few blocks away while the sales folks moved in with us. It was okay but there sure were a lot of people milling about at all times of the day none of whom we knew.

In the minds of management however, there lurked the dream of getting everybody, including the air staffs of KFWB and KTWV into the same building at the same time. This way, twice as many management types could make life hectic for twice as many employees. So, for the second time in almost thirty years, the search for a new building began again.

Knowing how long it took for them to find the building we were presently in, we did not hold our breaths waiting for a new selection to be made. Well what to our wondrous eyes did appear but a memo telling us about a building in the San Fernando Valley with its own parking, near to all-important freeway on and off ramps, near good restaurants and in a relatively crime safe neighborhood. It was in

Sherman Oaks, a prestigious address for homeowners and maybe most important of all, near a major enclosed shopping mall.

Wow, this was class. An all glass enclosed medium height structure. The memo did say that five buildings were being considered but since they described only one of them, we felt this was the frontrunner. So, as you might expect, that was the last time we heard about that building or the search for a new location. So, as they say...that was that.

\* \* \* \* \*

Well, we didn't get the spiffy new, all glass building but the thoughts of spiffiness continued to reverberate through our hollowed halls. It was in May of 1993 that staffers suddenly discovered through a bizarre series of memos that KFWB had held a striped shirt day and most of us had missed it. In a station filled with about 125 people, only eight of them wore striped shirts on striped shirt day. What kind of event is it that is held without the knowledge of the people who are supposed to participate? I had a striped shirt. Lots of my fellow co-workers had striped shirts. Some of us also had striped pants but we don't talk about that. Anyway, to make a long story even longer, Executive Director Greg Tantum agreed to hold another striped shirt day the following month. Well, they lied. The following month they held Hawaiian Shirt day. Yes, those pastel monstrosities with pictures of huge tropical flowers, birds, and outrigger canoes on them. What a success that was! Two people came to work in

Hawaiian shirts including our sports anchor who got embarrassed and changed to a grungy t-shirt after about 15 minutes or so. We later heard that the following month, we would all have to dress like Pilgrims, with buckle shoes and everything. As you can tell, we surely were a fun group at that time.

Now, why should I dwell on two special dress-up events that fell flat on their haute couture? It is because after twenty-five years, KFWB suddenly presented us with a dress code. Somebody was not happy with the way we dressed. Our field reporters who were always being seen by the public while covering various and sundry stories, were always dressed properly. Maybe they didn't dress like a CEO or a Maitre 'd, or even a bridegroom but they looked just fine and when a shirt and tie was required, they wore them. The anchors, who were rarely seen by the public because the public almost always never entered the building, were also fine. Wearing slacks, jean, polo shirts, blouses, they wouldn't be on the cover of GQ or Elle, but we all looked presentable, almost to the point of looking businesslike. Of course our sales staff always looked like they had just finished another shopping spree.

The dress code was a simple one. During regular business hours, both men and women were to wear acceptable clothes. After hours, we can relax. We assumed that this meant our practice of wearing thong bathing suits, string bikinis and boxer shorts with pictures of little rocket ships or Batman on them were out. No leotards or Japanese kimonos and certainly no "Flashdance" sweatshirts. This

of course forces us to ask the question: Which is better, a secretary in a skirt and middy blouse or a secretary in a thong?

So, we just continued wearing what we always wore and the subject was dropped.

Now, when people go shopping for clothes, they often buy items they will wear on their upcoming vacations. Vacation and holiday time was very special to us. While we loved the excitement of covering news and informing people of what is taking place around the world, we also could not wait to get away. Sometimes, we would take long awaited voyages to far off exotic places with our spouses or significant others or even with some stranger we might have just met. Other times, our vacations involved sitting in our own backyards or apartment balconies just vegetating. Mostly it was something in between.

The KFWB Nooseline had instituted a much-loved monthly service, listing a rather unusual menu of things to do in the coming month. This gave our co-workers a chance to plan ahead. Here is a composite list provided for the various months between January and December of 1993..

1. New Years Day & Fenton P. Pickwick Hangover Recuperation day.
2. Re-Enactment of the Day Helga Bratwurst Discovered She Was Really Morton Nussbaum.
3. Autogyro Day.
4. National Wear Baggy Knickers Day.

5. Aldo Fetzer's Annual Obedience Trials For Effeminate Dogs.
6. Geraldo Rivera Opens Al Capone's Zipper.
7. Reunion of Sissy Witches in Cleveland.
8. The Mistaken Briss of Danko L. Thrunk, now known as Whoops Day.
9. Anniversary of the Day The Garden Weasel Was Judged to be An Effective Tool in the Fight Against Tooth Decay.
10. Recreation of the Day Aldo Nern Lost An Ear, Trying To Find Out What a Hyena Was Laughing At.
11. National Stamp Out Things That Need Stamping Out Day.
12. Anniversary of the First Pimple Transplant, in Whatchamacallit, Texas.
13. Andrew "Wheezer" Gherkin Annual Tone Deaf Karaoke Contest in Huh?, Idaho.
14. Gadzooks Day in Ohio.
15. Festival of the Chocolate Abalone
16. Lecture: Is There Really A Hog Heaven? Tonight at the Pismo Shores Bowling Alley in New Jersey.
17. Recital by the Tennessee Tootsies All Girl Comb and Tissue Paper Band.
18. Say Boo to a Gnu at the Zoo Day.
19. World Championship Fish Calling Contest in Yazoo City, Alabama.

20. Birthday of William L. Necker, The Man Who Invented Making Out in the Back Seat of a Plymouth.
21. Anniversary of the 1951 Sighting Of The First Outer Space Unidentified Flying Cup and Saucer.
22. Last Day Of Women's Geography Day.
23. Re-enactment of the deadly Punchout at the Oakey Dokey Corral.
24. Anniversary of the Warren Commission Report on What They Did Last Summer.
25. Lake Edna Fishing For Cats Contest. In Buffy Montana.
26. Anniversary Of The Evening Mathila Corning Discovered that Big Ben Was a Clock.
27. 700<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Twig Ericson, the twin brother of Lief, who Discovered He was lost.
28. Anniversary of the Day Sigried Nerf Tried To Celebrate Bun Day and Broke An Important Part of his Body.
29. St. Louis Convention of the Amateur Dentists Association.
30. KFWB Seminar: 12 Things To Do With A Belgian Waffle When You Are Not Hungry.
31. Lecture: Making A Fashion Statement With Whale Blubber.

As you can see, the list of holidays was just plain old silliness but people enjoyed reading it and some poor souls actually looked forward to it. There were ten holidays that the company officially recognized as legitimate days off but we didn't pay any attention to those..

Taking a day off when you were sick was a legitimate reason for time off. The problem was determining who was sick and who was not. One news director, early on at KFWB received a call from an engineer who said he was sick. For whatever reason, the news director didn't believe him and actually drove to his home and waited in the car. Sure enough, the engineer came out, got in his silver Porsche sports car and drove off. The news director followed the engineer as he went to a supermarket and the dry cleaners. The News Director had seen enough. He drove back to the station.

The next day, the news director confronted the engineer and demanded he explain why he was out shopping that day. He thought he had nailed a slacker. The engineer said he called his doctor who phoned the drugstore with a prescription. Since it would take an hour to fill the prescription, the engineer, at his wife's urging, made two quick stops before going to the pharmacy. The News Director just said, "Oh" and went back into his office.

But excuses for days off got to be quite creative. All manner of diseases and conditions afflicted us. In fact, if we really were that sick, chances are, many of us might have died early. Talking about dying early, one staffer buried his grandmother three times and his grandfather twice to get days off. We also met relatives coming to Los Angeles on more flights than the airlines ever thought of scheduling. We wrecked our cars which miraculously were whole again when we came back to work the next day. One staffer thought he had used up all his sick days and to call in sick would be suspicious, so he

called in dead. We were a creative bunch and it's a wonder that with all the time we would take off, all that work actually got done.

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As we have pointed out, members of the news team are highly educated, aware people. We can recite state capitals, we know who our representatives are in Congress and we know a myriad of number combinations that include our social security numbers, addresses, phone numbers, zip codes and some of us even know our drivers license numbers. Unfortunately, despite all this knowledge, many of us are technically challenged. A Phillips screwdriver is regarded as high tech by some of us while a computer is a confusing tool of the devil.

It is with those thoughts in mind that we became the recipients of a rather unusual memo from a member of our highly technical management staff. It was a reminder of how to perform a simple task at the station. The task was loading new computer paper into either of two high speed printers. Now the paper comes in extremely heavy 8X10X12 cardboard boxes. Each sheet, with those perforated strips that we discussed earlier, are attached to each other and are fed into the printer from a compartment in the lower half of the machine. To lift that box is a job and a half for a guy and for most girls, almost impossible. I mention the weight of the carton as a lead-in to the way most of us would open a new box and feed the paper. We would take off the cover and cut the carton in half so that half the contents were folded but not restrained by the box. We then fed the lead sheets into

the printer. When the supply reached the point where the box had been cut, the paper continued to feed itself...most of the time.

Sometimes the paper might get hung up on the ragged edge of the carton. This might damaged the perforated strips and the paper would then get jammed inside the machine. Does any of this make any sense? Good.

Management, in its great wisdom, sent us a memo tell us to take all of the paper out of the box first, before loading it, to prevent its getting hung up by the box. Sounds reasonable, But the first time I did that, I discovered how unreasonable it could be. I gingerly lifted the fifty pounds of paper out of the box and was moving it carefully to the lower compartment of the high speed printer when, suddenly the entire load of computer paper flew from my hands and unraveled in one incredibly long string of attached sheets. It was everywhere, like tinsel on a Christmas tree. The worst thing was that the neat folds had come undone. Those blankety blank perforated strips were okay and that meant one thing...I had to refold all of it in accordion pleats and then install it. A short time later, I completed the low tech job of computer paper origami, to the applause of my fellow workers. I smiled, bowed and acknowledged their praise while silently praying that a large tropical bird fly over their heads and do some unspeakably gross thing to them. The bird never showed.

In the weeks that followed, some memos circulated with other labor saving bits of advice. One suggested that when using a ball point pen always touch the pointy end of the pen to the paper before

attempting to move the pen. It makes reading the message a whole lot easier. Another memo advised that when sitting in the new chairs in the newsroom, always sit on the wide horizontal portion of the chair. It's much more comfortable than trying to perch on the upright section of the seat. There were lots of relieved smiles after that one. The final memo solved a long running problem in the building. Male staff members would hereafter be required to use the door marked "Men" while female staffers would use the door marked "Women".

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Its Silver Penned Devil time again and we present more sterling examples of bizarre writing at KFWB. Let's start off with our Executive Editor, Greg Tantum.

The L.A. Riots of 1992 involved a series of so-called flashpoints. One of them was the intersection of Florence and Normandie Avenues where a trucker was pulled from the cab of his semi, and beaten senseless. Executive Editor Greg Tantum, was planning how KFWB would react and in the process scandalized the star of the TV series "The Brady Bunch". Greg, in a memo to the staff, outlined how we should react if there was a recurrence of violence at the intersection of Florence and Henderson.

Another example was found on a metal bulletin board where technical problems were noted in hopes they would be fixed. A tape machine in one of the production studios was not functioning and

the person who noticed the problem wrote, "Reporter in Production Room One does not work well." The reporter or the recorder?

Reporter Paul Lowe put a whole new slant on an international story involving the arrests of some Sudanese diplomats. He says they were accused of illegally providing "diplomatic license plants".

In one weathercast that I wrote, I inadvertently included a rather delectable item. I said there would be a pattern of clouds and figs in the morning.

In 1993, there were not that many writing mistakes but going long periods of time without them, made going into the studio a true adventure.

The real adventure was going into the studio and wondering just what silliness was accidentally going to emanate from your mouth in the form of Silver Tongue Deviltry.

The following are the 1993 contributions.

This first is an utterance of my own. I reported that in Cincinnati, Ohio, the Ku Klux Klan was planning to replace a cross that was torn down, shortly before it was put up. To this day, I still have no clue what the hell I was talking about.

Sports maven Randy Kerdoon created a new category of television viewer. Team coaches. He referred to them as coach potatoes.

In the field of traffic reporting, its amazing the kinds of situations that can screw up traffic. Lin Derling, our traffic guy, reported on a mock and rudd slide. You seen those signs that say Caution, Falling Mocks, haven't you?

Another of our traffic people, Steve Hansen, reported on a new uniform for member of the California Highway Patrol. He described one officer as being involved in a high-speed suit.

Another report from the master of motoring minions said that two cars on a southland freeway, had rear-ended each other. This apparently means that first one was in front and then they switched places.

Also from the wacky world of Traffic, a report that on a local freeway, traffic was slow because of a flat tire in need of a battery. Huh?

Murder investigations can be gruesome affairs and reporting on them can be hazardous. In one instance, anchor Ken Jeffries reported on the fact that police had located the remains of two baseball bats and bloodstained paints.

Anchor Michael Shappee had an unusual police story to report. A man wielding a toy pistol, had been shot by police but Michael described the incident this way. "The man went for his weapon

when he was confronted by police in his waistband." What a place to hide!

The mixing of sounds often results in silly words being broadcast. Those children, suffering from weakened or non-existent immune systems, are often described as bubble babies, because they live in a germ free bubble. Well, I, as a highly educated news anchor should know how to pronounce such simple words as baby and bubble. So you can understand why I started giggling when I told the world the child had Bable Bubby Disease.

But that's not the only boner I made involving medicine. Following the conviction of a woman who shot her boyfriend who had molested her son, I told the world that she was next scheduled for a sanitary hearing.

Medicine can be a major roadblock to clear speech. Anchor Charlie Brailer did a report on the surgery called "Breast restriction" This was followed by Anchor Michael Shappee who reported that actor Fred Gwynne, star of the Munsters, had died of Patriotic Cancer.

In the sport of sky diving, there are some things you do and some things you don't do. We simulcast a report from a local television news department about a paraplegic skydiver who did the unthinkable. The report said the man strapped on his gear and took a leak into space. Do they allow that?

Here is something they don't allow. Anchor Charlie Brailer, in a story about a killer on death row, said the man would soon take a "walk from his cell to the gas station".

In the world of Religion, one of our anchors, reporting on a visit by the Pope to Denver Colorado, said..."When the Poop arrives....." and yet another reporting on a religious conference, tried to say that the delegates called for peace and condemned aggression and hatred. It came out that "the delegates called for Peace, condoms, hatred and aggression".

Lets wrap this up with two goodies from anchor Michael Shappee and one more from me. In one very descriptive report about southland fires, Micheal reported thusly..."I am looking at what I am looking at." We still don't know what he was looking at.

In a later report, that left us scratching our heads. Michael reported that a lot of people were being harassed.

Talking about not having a clue as to what was being said, I did a station identification that was totally from left field. "This is KFVB, 980 on your Indian Dial." I don't know!

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## WHOLE LOTTA SHAKIN' GOIN' ON

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis dies.

Paula Jones accuses Pres. Clinton of sexual harassment.

Tunnel under the English Channel is completed.

Skater Nancy Kerrigan attacked by Skater Tanya Harding.

In the news business, you can go for weeks with no monster stories occurring and then suddenly, the dam bursts and you have more than your share of major events to deal with. 1994 started off with a super BIG BANG. The infamous 6.6 Northridge Earthquake struck just before sunrise on January 7<sup>th</sup> and it kept us hopping for weeks. Death, injury and widespread damage served to make Los Angeles look like a war zone.

At KFWB, everybody and his brother became reporters, on the phone or out in the field. They reported on an entire apartment complex that collapsed straight down, causing the first floor to literally disappear with people inside. Sections of the L.A. Freeway system collapsed, streets buckled, and rescue teams were stretched to

the limit. But by golly, we did what had to be done and Los Angeles survived. KFWB performed magnificently, on the air constantly, bringing our listeners vital emergency information on where to go, what to do and how to arrange for help. We were on the telephone to just about every city, county and state office, from the Governor down to the Dog Catcher.

Yes, the Dog Catcher. You can't imagine how many pet dogs, cats, hamsters, birds, horses, llamas and other sundry creatures were panicked by the quake and ran for their lives. We got information on how and where to find your pet, on what to do if a water main burst in front of your house or your sewer pipes disintegrated. We got information on missing people, emergency shelters, emergency food and clothing. We were terrific.

We did have one staffer who was hit hard by the quake. Operations Director Ed Dorsey's home was destroyed by the quake and because we were who we were and could go and do things the average guy could not, we rode herd on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to make sure Ed's efforts to recoup and rebuild went smoothly.

In the midst of all that, there was humor to be found. When the quake struck, our anchor got on the air to declare...."I believe that was an earthquake!" I assume he figured that out when the building itself bent 90 degrees to the south and then twanged itself straight again. The radio was on in the KFWB Newsroom so we listened to the reaction of our competition, KNX. From what we could tell,

their regular programming suddenly stopped because something fell over in their unattended Master Control and at the same time, the microphone in their traffic room was mysteriously turned on. So while listeners to KFWB were hearing real breaking news about the quake, KNX listeners were treated to a display of extraneous sounds of people saying, "What the hell was that?" and "Oh my God!" and "Mommy!"

One staffer who shined brightly during the aftermath of the quake was Pete Demetriou. Pete was our catastrophe reporter and he was everywhere at once. He knew every cop, every fireman, and sheriff's deputy and they all beat a path to Pete to be interviewed. An article was written in the free newspaper *The L.A. Weekly*, about Pete and his earthquake exploits. That newspaper, being a bit off the wall, headlined the story about Pete thusly, "The Shit Is Always Hitting The Fan." The first quote from Pete inside the body of the article was "Mother Nature is a bitch." In the piece about him, Pete let it be known that he is prepared for all emergencies including, fire, flood, riots, war, invasions from Mars, Godzilla and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. His equipment, Pete said, consisted of helmets, gas masks, body armor, flamethrowers, grenades, a 105 mm Howitzer, and a host of other items a small dictator would dearly love to get his hands on.

Now you might get the idea that Pete is Robo-Reporter. He's not. Pete is a very tall person with a booming voice, the vibrations of which could start a quake of his own, but he is a pussycat. He enjoys

people, cares for them and considers them when he works. When a catastrophe does strike, Pete is just a good guy to have around.

When it comes to ratings, something like an earthquake can do wonders. A check of Southern California listeners, during the quake showed that we snagged a 40 share. Our competition KNX had a 7.5. That was right after the quake, a few hours later, when things settled down and people were breathing easier, our share dropped to 19 and theirs climbed to 9.

The quake was a boon for us and for the Velcro industry. Within a few days of the quake, Velcro tie-downs were in place everywhere to keep things from falling or flying across the room if another quake hits. Computer terminals were tied down, files were tied to walls, and I couldn't get out of my chair for a week.

Now, there are big stories that capture the imagination of people around the world, and then there are big stories that are big only to us. This is one of them. The great moustache caper!!!

Executive editor Greg Tantum, at the time, sported a mustache that could have doubled as a push broom, it was thick and bushy and dark brown. Reporter Bill Cooper also sported a mustache that was not as thick, not as bushy and not as dark brown but it was there. We could see it. One day, both men arrived for work and we all knew something was terribly wrong. Their upper lips were NAKED!!! On exactly the same day, those dark hairy growths had disappeared from the vast nooks and crannies south of their noses. After seeing them everyday for years with hair seemingly emanating from their

nostrils, this was most unsettling. In fact it was upsetting. It was bizarre, strange and eerie. Did some apparition steal into their bedrooms at night while they slept and shave them? Maybe there was a deep, dark gothic pact between the two men that caused them to denude their faces. There was only one thing to do. Ask them. So, I did.

Tantum claimed he looked great without the growth. We responded that we would be the judge of that. Cooper claimed he lost his in Canada. He did not explain and we were kind of glad he didn't. We did learn later that he had a rendezvous with an aging Kodiak dancing bear in Calgary who is no longer bald. But that may be another story altogether.

We asked other members of the newsroom staff if they had any reaction to what had happened to those mustaches. These are their responses:

1. They were ordered to shave by the Surgeon General, for health reasons.
2. Speculation that with nothing underneath, their noses would slide off their faces.
3. Speculation that Greg Tantum was actually the president of the Hair Club For Men and was just airing out his face.
4. They each looked like one half a baby's tush.
5. They didn't shave them off....they used an eraser.

6. They fell victim to a Mustache Eating Bacteria.
7. They're gone?
8. They were shedding their winter coats for the summer.
9. They now knew why they wore mustaches in the first place.
10. They were father and son caterpillars that became butterflies and flew away.
11. It was part of a corporate wide cutback.
12. An ant bit them and their lips swelled up and absorbed the hair.
13. The mustaches are still there. Their Noses just got bigger.
14. They were abducted by bald aliens.
15. They no longer have a place to hide their jellybeans.

This mystery absorbed the members of the KFWB staff for weeks. It intensified the following month when our Chief Engineer entered the building wearing what looked very suspiciously like the missing mustaches. But like all things, we finally got bored with the mustache caper and let the whole issue drop, until one day both men entered the building and their mustaches were back. We just yawned and went back to work. This episode shows that sometimes the advice "Get a life" is quite appropriate.

Some of you may have noticed that there has not been a lot written about our Sales Department. This may be because we,

in the newsroom, wouldn't know them if we fell over them. A good salesperson does not spent a lot of time around the station schmoozing with the rest of us. A good salesperson is out pounding the pavement, telling everyone from corporate CEO's to owners of small neighborhood stores why it would be such a terrific thing for them to advertise on KFWB. That's why we hardly knew the sales staff and they hardly knew us. So when something of major importance happened in the Sales Dept. we in news often never heard about it. We did however hear that two members of the KFWB sales staff had been included among those designated by Mother Westinghouse as "Salespersons of the Year". Those honor is bestowed on those who bring in the greatest gobs of advertising revenue This was exciting to everybody because they were going to get what the rest of us rarely if ever get . They each got special corporate certificates in a beautiful leatherette binder suitable for framing. They of course would not get to take the certificates home because the were hung on the wall in the Sales Department where they were to serve as inspiration to other sales staff members who might one day want to have a corporate certificate in a beautiful leatherette binder, suitable for framing but not to be taken home. We in the newsroom did not get leatherette binders containing corporate certificates. We got Golden Mikes, the radio version of the Academy Awards and we could take ours home. But we were nonetheless very happy for the leatherette recipients and each time they walked thru the newsroom, we waved and said "Yay!"

Each one of us has something that we consider to be a personal treasure, something that holds special meaning for us and that we would never part with. My treasures, which include a pair of Bermuda shorts my wife has been trying to get rid of for years, also include the letters K F W B. They are special to me not only because I worked for that station for thirty years but because they are a Los Angeles City Treasure. I don't mean just the letters KFWB. I mean the giant electric letters and two accompanying microphones that have adorned the outside of the KFWB studios for decades. At least seven or eight feet tall, with fluorescent lights, these four letters have served as a beacon in Hollywood and may be as well known as the big HOLLYWOOD sign. When I arrived in California, the letters were just above the old KFWB studios on Hollywood Boulevard.

When we moved to the new building, one block off the fabled Boulevard, the letters also moved. They were attached to the south-side of the building, where they can still be seen by strollers east of the famous intersection of Hollywood and Vine.

In 1994, we got the upsetting news that those huge letters would no longer be a beacon in the night sky but were headed for a museum about Hollywood. Museum schmuseum, we wanted our letters to stay right where they were. We heard that the letters would be mounted on the outside of the museum building, still visible to strollers in the street. Still, this was not good enough for us. Oh, we didn't make a fuss because the letters belonged to the company and not us, but we surely did not exhibit any enthusiasm when told of the

plan. That must have worked, because today, those big letters are still on the south-side of the KFWB building nestled between two giant microphones. As for the Hollywood Museum, it is still a plan on somebody's drawing board.

Still on the subject of letters, radio stations always get letters from listeners. Some letters praise us, some damn us and others damn us with slight praise. A great many letters to the station are from people who have taken a liking to one or another of the anchors or reporters. They hear us so often, we are considered old friends to some and members of the family to others. These are the folks who really need to get a life. But the bulk of letters to the staff consist of requests for information. A woman will write that four months ago she heard an anchor do a story about some product, the name of which she cannot remember. Okay, well what does the product do? Is it a medicine, a bug spray, a laundry detergent, a food....what? She can't remember but she remembers hearing about it and now she wants to buy it. She wants us to dig up the old story from months back about something she remembers hearing about but doesn't know its name or what it does. Yikes! Now, if the woman gives us something, anything to work with, we will try to find the information, promising to call her back. Sort of like we did with that jar of penises a woman was interested in. If however she and we are clueless about what she is talking about, we promise to make a search. We take down her phone number, which is immediately deposited in the circular file and we go about our business. If the person calls back, we tell them

we searched till we were blue in the face but just couldn't find it. They then think we were wonderful devoting so much time to her. They sigh and hang up and hopefully go their merry way.

These callers can also be very quick on the trigger. In one instance, an earthquake occurred. Not a big one but strong enough to bounce us around a little. Before the first tremor had ended, this woman was on the phone demanding magnitude and location of the epicenter. It takes time for the folks at Cal Tech, who do such calculations to figure out where it was and how strong, but this woman wanted it NOW. We tried explaining to her how it works but she wouldn't listen. Writer Sue Stiles got on the phone with the woman and did some fancy verbal footwork and kept the woman entertained and occupied until the information finally arrived and the woman went away as happy as a clam.

There are some calls which we cannot answer for the simple reason, we don't know the answer and cannot obtain the information. One such call was received regarding CNN correspondent John Holliman. John had just done a story about one of our nation's astronauts being promoted from Major to Lieutenant Colonel while in space. We received a call from a woman who said, she had just heard a story on our air about a Lt. Colonel John Holliman who had died a long time ago. This woman wanted to know how long John Holliman had been a reporter and if he knew her Lt. Colonel Holliman. We gave her the telephone number of CNN.

We all agree that people who speak on radio and television are some of the most glib people in the world. They have an entire vocabulary on the tips of their tongues and many speak two or more languages increasing their value even more. We have the correct words for everything, well almost everything.

There are times when a story comes along and the content is so bizarre that we are stumped. We actually find ourselves at a loss for words but words are our stock and trade so we better find acceptable words rather quickly.

In 1994, a young lady named Lorena Bobbitt went on trial for castrating her allegedly abusive husband and then tossing the detached member into the high grass from her car window a short time later. Police later found it and brought it to the hospital where it was reattached and it resumed its role in the life of John Wayne Bobbitt. This kind of story doesn't happen every day thank goodness so interest in it was extremely high. People wanted to know everything about the case. They wanted to hear the testimony. In short, it was the topic of the day for quite a while. As you might imagine the word "penis" was used a lot. For many older members of the news profession, we remembers the days when that and many similar words were verboten on the air and now that it was okay to use it, there were some who felt a bit uncomfortable with it. Add to that the fact that using that same word over and over in a single story can be monotonous. Therefore, a search for similies began. Roget's Thesaurus and the Webster's New World Thesaurus were

of no help. Roget and Webster must have had their own hangups about the word. So, we had to improvise. We couldn't say penis, penis, penis over and over and over. We needed other words to help us paint our word picture. Here's what we came up with proving that even educated people need time off to rest. Member...genital...love pointer...ding dong...wee wee...Willy...Pride 'n' Joy...Wank plus a plethora of words I am sure you can guess about, including Johnson.. How did we solve the problem? We were told to be judicious in the way we wrote our stories and to remember that children also listen to news. With those instructions, many of us became totally tongue tied so it was lucky that the trial was quick and it faded from view in a very short time.

Reporters always report on crime. Actually, in my view, they are some of the easier stories to cover unless they become complicated like the crimes on TV detective shows where real deductive thinking is involved. In real crime stories, reporters get to say all those slick police words like perpetrator or Perp for short, flash bang grenades, trajectory, spike strips, Kevlar vests, body armor, Tech-9 and coroner. We sound like we are so knowledgeable about police matters. But when the crime hits close to home, well we just sit and stare.

In what was probably one of the most bizarre event in the history of KFWB All-News, an event that may or may not have been a crime, General Sales Manager Tim Pohlman lost his pants. Maybe they were stolen. Maybe Martians abducted them. Maybe he took them off at the station and couldn't remember where. That's something

to think about. Actually, according to reports, Tim took off those trousers in one of the stalls in the tastefully appointed KFWB men's room. Now, most men, when in those stalls, do not take them all off. They just lower them. (I can't believe I am giving a lesson in restroom procedure.) Tim, according to reports reaching me, took them all off and we assume hung them on the hook in the stall. Why he took them all off, we decline to speculate but it seems that a minute later, the trousers were gone. Vanished.

Who could have taken them? Everyone was able to account for his or her whereabouts. It was indeed a puzzlement. It was also a draft for Tim. Consider this, Tim is tall, very tall. In fact, he may be eight feet 23 inches tall. That's an exaggeration but he is tall. Very tall. In fact, he m...wait, I already wrote that. Why do I bring up Tim's height? Well, anyone wearing his pants would tighten the belt over his head and have to peer out through the fly to see where he was going. Despite this fact, we went around the sales department demanding that they all show us their pants. For some reason, all the female staffers refused. To this day, as far as we know, Tim's pants are still at large or extra large. But there is a good side to this story. We learned a valuable lesson. Officer Bob of the KFWB fashion police says, "Its okay to walk in someone else's shoes but to walk in his pants is icky." Words to live by. By the way, we never figured how he got from the men's room to his office without his pants on and not being seen by anyone.

Now, words not to live by. It's time once again for the Silver Penned Deviltry of our glib staffers. Anchor Sue Marquez had an intriguing story of "a severed head, found by some children, playing in an alley." We wondered what game the head was playing.

Did you know there are no Christopher Columbus laws in this country. We checked following a story written for us that Russia wanted to give the United States a 311 foot statute of Columbus.

When Holly Hunter and Anna Paquin both won Oscars for their roles in the movie *The Piano*, anchor Vince Campagna must have believed the story was about tennis balls or belly button lint. He wrote, "What was all the fuzz about?"

New cars have lots of wonderful new extras. Writer Bubs Hopper wrote in a crime story that "a moving taxicab allegedly pointed a gun at a pedestrian."

Anchor Jim Burson truly has a way with words. In one headline, he wrote, "one fourth of girls drooping out of schools are pregnant."

Now, I know a lot of people these days think reporters are just a lot of hot air but not in a literal sense. One young editorial assistant wrote this introduction to a report about a Hot Air Balloon festival, "Shelley Lash rises to the occasion at the Hot Air Balloon Festival."

With all the writing and all the talking on KFWB, we rarely if ever run out of what I call Silver Tongue Devilry.

We begin with the day Sportscaster Rod Van Hook suddenly turned Irish. It was a report of football scores and Rod referred to the San Francisco Forty Niners as the Farty Niners. That caused quite a stink in the newsroom.

In Seattle Washington, there is a group that calls itself the Cacophony Society, a group we assume to be a bunch of very noisy guys. That's pronounced Ca-Cahf-foe-nee. Anchor Michael Shapee had a slightly different pronunciation.....cocka-phoney.

In the news business, the members are usually familiar with famous people, but not always. The problem arises when people from one area of news find themselves involved in another area. Former President Clinton loved playing golf. In one story about a golfing trip, sports maven Joe Cala reported on President Nixon and his wife Hilary. Was this a scandal we somehow missed?

Talking about Richard Nixon, I kind of put a whole new slant on American History at the time of the Nixon funeral when I said the rites would be attended by former Presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan and George Burns.

In the area of traffic, KFWB created a "Mobile Phone Force". This group of listeners would call in to our traffic people whenever

they encountered a freeway problem. We didn't know it but Mobile Phone Force is a tongue twister. We found out however when Traffic lady Sharone Rosen referred to our listener as Mobile Bone Forcer.

We, in the news business realize that the slightest mistake can totally change the meaning of what is being said. Traffic helicopter guy Jeff Baugh reported that a worker, along the freeway had been "freed from what he was trapped in, described as a large hopper that mixes flour made from heavy metal." That's some kind of flour!

Sometimes, you hit a word that you are not familiar with, try to pronounce it, fail and try again. Other times you just give up. Anchor Lyle Kilgore had this experience when he read "Bosnian officials say the Serb agreement to lift the siege of Gree-dazh...er...gr....gra...gree...heh heh heh...that town in Bosnia...!"

KFWB occasionally uses the services of reporters from TV stations. During the murder trial of O.J.Simpson, TV reporter Sylvia Lopez reported that the Heisman Trophy winner was not going to plead "insomnia". That would be insanity.

## O. J. SIMPSON

Oklahoma Federal Building destroyed by terrorist bomb.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin assassinated.

Singer Dean Martin dies.

It should come as no surprise to anyone by now that all manner of hijinks occurred in the KFWB Newsroom over the years and they could happen at any time of the day or night. The reason is obvious. It was our way of insulating ourselves against the horrors of some of the stories. At the other end of the spectrum was the boredom of some periods when few newsworthy events happened. The humor in the newsroom ranged from outright silliness to various shades of dark humor. This was especially true when we were faced with one major story that seemed to go on forever. The perfect example is the OJ Simpson saga.

The tragic murder story began the night of June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1994 and traveled a twisted, bizarre path that extended until May 10<sup>th</sup> 1999. Of course the verdict in the first trial came on October 3, 1995 and we

thought we were finished but, the second trial, in civil court, began almost one year later and it all continued until 1999 when OJ and his former in-laws negotiated a custody agreement for his kids.

During that amazingly long murder trial, reporters were born, grew up, married, had children, retired and died. It was that long or at least it seemed to be. We reporters found ourselves becoming experts in a whole list of subjects including the law, how a trial is conducted and how to wait outside a courthouse and wait and wait and wait. The one subject most of us tried to master but failed was that of DNA evidence. Oh, we had an inkling of what it involved but it was so boring a subject, most of us zoned out when it was discussed. To keep our interest fresh, we joked about OJ, Cato Kaelin, the slow Freeway Chase and Detective Mark Fuhrman. Some of the jokes were pretty funny while others were not but thankfully, they were all forgettable.

Now, during the trial, our competition, KNX instituted an unusual way to cover it. Since it was on television, they plunked a reporter down in front of a TV set. She described what was happening every time a lawyer got up or sat down, walked to the left or walked to the right or held up a glove. When the lawyer spoke, or the witness spoke, the reporter stopped speaking and then picked up later with her exciting descriptions. The KNX reporter actually did a credible job. She used a minimum of adjectives and similies which was good as it kept it from becoming a Harlequin Romance Novel.

KFWB, on the other hand, blanketed the courthouse with reporters inside and out. They were everywhere, interviewing

anyone or anything that moved. At the station, our staff of cracked writers pounded out one story after another. Inside-reporters (that's a job classification for reporters who do not go out in the field) were telephoning everyone they could think of who had a phone. We asked such probing questions as...

"Well, what do you think?" or "Who do you believe?" or "Is there a sandwich shop nearby?"

News anchors were busy trying to write new innovative and exciting headlines for aspects of the case that were in no way exciting. Debate over legal points was often sleep inducing and DNA discussions did absolutely nothing to get a person's adrenaline flowing even a little. So, while the trial was historic in one aspect, it was not always a rip-roaring barnburner and the search for a lead and an exciting headline was often a daunting exercise. There were of course many instances when we were jolted into rapt attention. The infamous glove incident, the testimony by Cato Kailin and Mark Fuhrman and the verbal jousting of prosecutors Marcia Clark and Chris Darden against Defense lawyers Johnnie Cochran, Robert Baker and Barry Sheck were high among them. But high points did not occur every day.

I was working the overnight shift and as such, you would think that it was a cinch. Court action was over for the day. The assessments had been made and everybody was waiting for the next day's activity. All I would have to do was a series of recaps. Not quite. For me, the O.J. Simpson trial became a repeat of my activities during the recent L.A. riots. At various times of the morning, while Los Angeles slept,

the rest of the world was awake or preparing to awaken. Stations from around the country and around the world, wanted first hand reports from Los Angeles and they called us. Since I was the only anchor on duty during those hours, it fell to me to report to places like New York, Boston, Toronto, Montreal, New Zealand, Australia, France, Rio De Janeiro, Dublin, London, etc. All of a sudden, I was as busy or busier than my daytime counterparts. Calls were coming in from everywhere and no sooner had I finished a report to Toronto that a call came in from Wellington, New Zealand or Sydney, Australia and I was off again. Radio Ireland and the BBC called every night and I also felt as though I were a salaried employee of those companies. I knew what time they would call and I had developed a rapport with their people and twice it was arranged that I would be a panelist on a British radio version of Meet The Press. A Montreal Canada station, which broadcasts exclusively in French, would switch to English to accommodate me who spoke no French. But there was one station that called more than any other. It was a station in Buffalo, New York that had a particular interest in the trial. It was the station that broadcast Buffalo Bills football games and since OJ spent most of his professional football career in Buffalo, they had an emotional interest in the trial. They would ask me to do two and three reports for them to broadcast throughout the day and the next night, they would be back for more.

One might think I would be annoyed at the interruptions but I wasn't. It was a serendipitous chance to be heard around the world. In other words, it was food for my ego and I reveled in it.

Following months of wrangling, negotiating and motion making, the trial of the former football great got under way in January of 1995. It came to an amazing end in October of that year. It was over. We had heard the last of O.J. Simpson. Right? Wrong.

Twenty days after the criminal trial ended, the civil trial began and ran until February of 1997. That was a lot of OJ. The adrenaline stopped running in the newsroom and we all just lay back and relaxed.

The long awaited newsroom television camera installation, that we mentioned earlier, was finally completed and an air of excitement was evident in the newsroom. Soon, we would all be television stars on one of the local TV stations, KTLA, Channel 5. It would happen when things like earthquakes, riots, major fires, and other bad stuff occurred. Since radio was always able to gear up faster than television, we would be providing Channel 5 with the initial reports on the story, whatever it might be. This meant that our audience would finally, after many years of broadcasting without showing our faces, our audience would get a chance to look at our mugs. Housewives would falls madly in love with us. Businessmen would see our female reporters and gets the hots for them. As for me, working overnight, I would be the king of the denizens of the dark, including truckers, waitresses at diners, cops, firemen, security guards, winos, druggies and heaven knows who else. It also meant we would have to start wearing real shirts and ties and look like real

people. We speculated that we might also have to wear makeup and increase the size of our fabulous wardrobes.

Well, as it turned out, nothing happened to warrant the turning on of the TV camera on the pole in the newsroom and one day, we came to work and the camera was gone. There went our TV careers down the tubes. The dress code returned to t-shirts, polos and tank and tube tops in the summer.

Even as the TV camera faded into history, the KFWB weather station came into being. It was a very high tech weather prognostication center. We needed it. You see, in Southern California where temperatures are fairly constant for months at a time, weather is very important. If it is warm and sunny one day, its possible someone may not realize that it will be warm and sunny the next day, and the day after that and so on and so on and so on. As a result, someone might dress for winter when it will be sweltering. So, weather is very important. Actually our forecasts came to us electronically through our computers but if the weather center that provides us with weather data has a problem and that data stops coming, we have to improvise.

How does one improvise weather? Well, lets take a usual sunny day, temperatures are in the 90's and there is no breeze. Well, we could tell our audience that it is sunny, temperatures are in the 90s and there is no breeze. Or we can improvise. We can say, "Boy is it sunny and hot, and how about that breeze?" or we could say, "It's really hot out there." Or if we are really creative, we could say, "Remember what it was like yesterday? It will be like that again

today." Well, just as the same weather forecast gets pretty old after a while, the same old forecast can also get old. What to do?

After a brainstorming session, we decided to establish our own meteorological center. I volunteered to buy the equipment but later they told me a rectal thermometer was not what they had in mind. Nor did they want forehead fever strips. What did they want? They wanted a kitchen thermometer that was glued to the outside wall of the station in the back, facing the parking lot. We were told that when we came to work, we were to check the temperature and tell everyone in the newsroom. I tried to be precise. I told the guys it was 98.6 but for me, that's normal.

Sanitation is always a problem at KFWB, whether it involved dropping lunch leftovers in paper recycling bins or allowing food in the staff refrigerator to mature to the point where it grew legs and could move on its own, all the way to tips on ways to stay healthy.

In the air studio where the newscasts were delivered, one practice became standard with us. To keep from catching colds, we would spray the microphones with an antiseptic to kill whatever germs the guy before us might have left.

In the newsroom it was a different matter. There were only four microphones...two for the editor and production assistant to talk to reporters in the field, another at the Special Events desk for reports on the air from the newsroom and finally, the microphone at the sports desk. There were also four microphones in the small production rooms where we produced reports for use on the air at a

later time. Other than that, what was there to spray? The telephone, that's what.

Whether it's the newsroom or anywhere else for that matter, what else do we all practically swallow when we use it? The telephone mouthpiece, that's what. Germs from the mouth of one user will remain alive and active for a considerable amount of time and when we go to use that same telephone, those little buggers can leap into our mouths and if their degree of nastiness is rather high, then we have problems and so does the next user and the next, ad nauseum.

As we became aware of the problem, we took steps to counter it, namely use of an antiseptic spray on every phone in the newsroom. We apparently didn't care about phones in the sales, and executive offices. Those guys were on their own. Of course the usual list of instructions was distributed.

1. Spray the antiseptic on a tissue and wipe off the receiver.
2. There is a can of some bizarre orange colored stuff at the editor's desk. Use it. It has a label that says, "Bizarre Orange Stuff."
3. If the Orange stuff is not available, a good two or three minute squirt from the the nearest fire extinguisher will do.
4. If there is no working fire extinguisher nearby, you might want to try a surplus U.S. Army flamethrower from WW2.
5. As a last resort, just rip the disease ridden phone from the wall, dispose of it safely in a haz-mat can and buy a new phone.

Of course, germs flying about the newsroom were not the only health problem we faced. We also had to contend with that old bugaboo, allergies.

It's difficult to think of big husky guys like us being downed by allergies, especially when those allergies are triggered by, of all things, perfume, aftershave, cologne, eau de toilette, spray on deodorant, DDT, Agent Orange and other airborne defoliants.

So the call went out to the staff to hold back on those personal clouds of aromatic substances that engulfed so many of us and affected so many others.

The KFWB Nooseline, as always, was right there with a new line of natural organic fragrances that we felt would solve the problem. The included:

1. Jungle Asparagus. \$14.00 a quart.
2. Romance Rutabaga. \$23.95 a bushel. Keep one in your pocket for a night on the town.
3. Soap On A Rope.
4. Elizabeth Taylor's Pearl Onion.
5. For men: Galloping Sweat Socks

That was the last we heard of that problem.

As you have undoubtedly discovered, at KFWB we loved lists. We had memos containing lists for everything. Advice lists.

Warning lists. Informational Lists. Silliness Lists. Lists of awards we had won. Lists of awards we had not won. Lists of awards we never heard of. Lists of things management was doing for us. List of things management was doing for itself. Lists of lists. But, there was one special list we did not have. It was a list of things management got us excited about but didn't follow through on. We have all heard of Television's Sweeps Weeks when the networks throw in really big programs to increase audience size and hopefully to increase the sale of advertising time. Radio has that same kind of thing except its called, "The Rating Period". There are four rating periods a year, corresponding with the four seasons. In conjunction with the ratings period, there is also a day called "The Designated News Day". On this day, stations pull out all the stops and put their best foot forward. The idea being to impress the audience so much, they completely abandon the idea of listening to any other radio station for the rest of their lives. On "Designated News Days", we would broadcast interviews with very important people, go all out on the coverage of important stories, air fascinating features that had been set aside for just such times. In short, we knocked ourselves out to sound as good as it was possible for us to sound. It was time to un-leash our A material.

It was with this in mind that our Executive Editor came up with a super contest. A prize of three hundred dollars would be awarded to the anchor who wrote the best set of headlines ever heard on any radio station in the Los Angeles area. By best, we mean deathless

prose that would live on thru the years alongside the works of such great writers as William Shakespeare, John Steinbeck, Will and Ariel Durant, Shelley, Keats, and Mickey Spillane. One must keep in mind that on radio and television and even in newspapers, a headline is just a tease designed to make you want to hear, see or read the whole story. There are guidelines for writing a headline. Keep it short, keep it exciting and don't give it all away in that one sentence. Save the details for the main body of the story. This way your audience stays with you longer.

The problem facing the KFWB anchors, the ones who do the headline writing, was how to think up such deathless prose and still meet our ever-constant deadlines.

Some anchors are super-fast writers while others take their time but in either case, you write your headlines as fast as you can in order to get into the studio on time.

Winning a contest sponsored by your boss is always good for your ego and job security. So, I leaped into action and submitted the following set of outstanding headlines.

1. Japanese Bomb Pearl Harbor
2. Gold Is Discovered At Sutter's Mill.
3. Still no Sign of Judge Crater
4. British Liner Titanic, Overdue in New York.
5. OJ Simpson, Not Guilty.

6. In Sports, Nothing Happened Today

7. In Business, Nothing Happened Today

8. In Traffic, All The Cars Have Disappeared.

Now, that was one heck of a set of headlines. Terse. Exciting. Suspenseful. True, they were not all true or current events but truth or timeliness were not part of the rules.

Then anchors from all dayparts submitted their headlines. Who won? No one won.

Management studiously ignored the contest entries and never spoke of the matter again despite our protests. That's show biz!!!!

Contests similar to the headline writing debacle, I assume, are designed to boost enthusiasm among workers. When it starts to flag, the powers that be attempt to instill renewed drive and vigor, and we are supposed to respond like thoroughbreds champing at the bit just before the running of the Kentucky Derby.

As KFWB entered the final quarter of 1995, the O.J. Simpson trial was coming to a conclusion and we were tired. Tired of that story, tired of the people involved and emotionally drained by the pressure. It was then that News Director Scott Gorbitz decided it was time for a verbal adrenaline shot.

One day, as we arrived for work, we were confronted by a huge banner across one wall, above the doorways to various rooms. The banner read:

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“TO SELL THE DRAMA AND WIN, COMMUNICATE EXCITEMENT!

“BREAK IT ON THE RADIO!”

Break what on the radio? That was some slogan! The problem with the slogan was that not everybody understood the message. Well, we kind of understood it but it was worded in such a way that we didn't understand it. Understand? So, in typical KFWB fashion, we ignored it. We agreed however that we really did need a slogan so we contributed a few of our own.

1. “If At First You Don't Succeed, Do Something Else.”
2. “Hang By Your Thumbs.”
3. “Remember The Ala...Er...Whatever.”

The expression “Whazzup?” was still few years in the future so we didn't suggest that. The banner stayed up for months until the thumbtacks gave way and it fell off the wall.

It was during this time period that major changes were taking place in the broadcast industry. The key was no longer “excellence”. It was “bottom line”.

The so-called bean counters were moving into all the positions of power and in the process they shoved aside all others. In a news operation, the professional newsmen were, to a great extent expendable talking heads each of which could be replaced by an inexperienced newcomer, willing to work for peanuts. Of course, changes had been coming all along and we all knew it but we didn't

have to admit it openly. The powers that be gave lip service to the ideals of journalism and this placated us from time to time.

But now it was a time when various broadcast empires were swallowing smaller empires and thus becoming bigger empires. They continued buying and merging and consolidating and leveraging and soon it was our turn.

Remember how, in the movie "Close Encounters Of The Third Kind" people were getting various hints of something coming. For Richard Dreyfus, it started with a bowl of mashed potatoes and soon became a mini-mountain inside his home. For KFWB folks it was word that Westinghouse Broadcasting was casting an amorous eye at our competition CBS. It seemed to many that a new slogan was being coined.

"If you cant beat 'em, buy 'em". The word was getting out that Mother W was casing the joint at CBS. We would own CBS? That's what it looked like. That's what it smelled like. And by golly, that's what it was. But before it came true, there was still a lot of talking to do so, while the suits talked in New York, we talked in Hollywood and speculation was rampant. But we still did our jobs and did them well.

Most of the time!

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SILVER PENNED DEVILTRY was still alive and well in the newsroom.

New reporter Sid Garcia reported on some seemingly important agricultural negotiations underway inside a former Soviet Puppet regime. He reported that in Chechnya, while Russian troops continued moving in, "Peach Talks" were underway.

Anchor Bob Howard came through with an amazing statement in the lead to his recorded report on a murder. "Scientific evidence indicates \_\_\_\_\_ was alive when she was murdered by \_\_\_\_\_." Cant argue with that!

Our Orange County reporter Sharon Katchen, writing in another crime story called the suspect "an excused child killer". Who excused him?

Now, when writing about action in the courtroom, you have to be careful of how you use legal terminology. Reporter Steve Kindred, in an introduction to one of his pre-recorded stories typed, "Prosecutors battle in their briefs to strip \_\_\_\_\_."

Remember the "Gulf War Syndrome"? Anchor Jim Burson made it a bit more serious than it already was. He wrote..."165 percent of the cases were still undiagnosed". That's a lot!

An off-the-air bit of creative writing by Executive Editor Greg Tantum was apparently a parody of the saying... "Nothing is certain but death and taxes." In a memo to the staff, Greg wrote that "Tax Time is Just Around The Coroner."

Anchor Jim Burson returns to the fray with a written report in which he wrote... "Nevada Re-Do's its Anti Smoking Bill".

Many times a mistyped word or even a wrong word can throw an anchor, especially if he did not actually write that word. In an intro written for an anchor, Editor Jeff Yoncich referred to the state of Texas as the Long Horn State. Now we know it's the Lone Star State but Long Horn cattle are associated with Texas so, for a brief second it sounded okay but when you realize it is not okay and you try to correct it and you get into big trouble.

Even a single letter can throw you. Anchor Sheri Inglis wrote about a bizarre incident that she called a Bazaar incident. There was trouble for the person who inherited that piece of copy. Guess who that was! Me.

While we are on the subject of the single letter minefield, Anchor Jody Adler wrote the name of John Salvi, the man who reportedly shot two Birth Control Clinic workers in Boston as John Saliva. Guess what happened when the next guy used that story.

When using two dissimilar phrases in a single sentence, juxtaposition is critical.

One reporter wrote an introduction to be read by the anchor in the studio. Here's how the introduction should have been written...  
...”Worried faces, and the sounds of sirens...” But the intro said, “The sounds of sirens and worried faces...” What does a worried face sound like?

\* \* \* \* \*

The one column that most KFWB staffers waited for in the Nooseline was the listing of the little goofs by the anchors and reporters, the Silver Tongue Devils.

In the real world, when a person is shot, there is a fairly strong chance that person will die but KFWB reporter Shelley Lash had details on a murder victim who refused to stay dead. Her self-contained report included this line, “Police in Long Beach are hunting for the killer of a 55 year old man who was shot to death several times.”

Apparently, as a public service Anchor Ken Jeffries, during one particularly rainy day gave out a bathroom warning. He told out listeners that the weather bureau had issued a “flush flood warning.” Now, that's scary!

Now, there are times when a single letter, if misread or ignored or deleted, can change the entire meaning of the story. There is a medical journal called "The Annals Of Medicine". It is quite a prestigious publication but anchor Jody Adler took it down a few pegs by eliminating one letter "n" from the name.

But Jody was not the only one. Sports anchor Rod Van Hook in a story about Phillies hero Mike Schmidt, eliminated the "m" and the "d".

Traffic Lady Sharone Rosen, is a perfect example of being obvious. She told our listeners....."There is a problem on the 605 freeway but you'll be okay if you stay conscious."

Did you know that reporting traffic can be done in either direction. Traffic lady Ariana Ortiz told our listeners "the southbound fine is five." Huh?

One unknown KFWB traffic maven reported that a freeway accident victim died while waiting for the coroner. Don't you have to die first before they call him?

There are times when one must not try to adapt a time honored phrase to a situation where it does not really fit. During the OJ Simpson trial, reporter Steve Kindred's attempt to apply such a phrase to a line about a witness. Steve described the "light at the end of Dennis Fung's Tunnel". We didn't know Dennis had a tunnel.

I bet you didn't know that radio detectives were involved in the Oklahoma City bombing case. Anchor Lyle Kilgore told our listeners that KFBI agents were on the scene.

Our Business reporter, Jim Newman rarely made mistakes and when he did, it was super. In one report, Jim informed our listeners that competition in the airline package delivery industry was getting pretty scary. His report included this...."United Parcel Service is moving ahead with its plan to buy five Boeing 757 fighter jets."

Sometimes a long and complicated sentence can get you in big trouble. Reporter Pete Demetrious had this convoluted example of passing the buck. "A Rabbi from New York is charged with sexual assault on a teenager by a Grand Jury."

Getting your sounds mixed up can result in some amusing phrases, such as this one, uttered by anchor Sheri Inglis. "There was brisk trading of soaks on the Stockio Exchange."

Slurring your sounds together can make things even worse. Sports reporter Scott Coletti uttered this amazing line...."Six Yankee pitchers combined for a six shit shutout".

Talk about minimizing a problem, I reported on a lawsuit involving a Southern California sweatshop but my line, as read on the air was...."A lawsuit has been filed against the owners of an El Monte Sweatsuit".

During the war in Bosnia, a major push was mounted to achieve a ceasefire. I however, in a report said...."The long awaited grease fire did not materialize." That's lucky.

Weather is always good for a laugh. Anchor Michael Shoen told our listeners to look out for "low cows and fog".

Talk about weather, reporter Bob Roberts, a CNN correspondent told our audience that in the brutal Chicago heat wave "those who had died are already dead."

## OUR OWN TWILIGHT ZONE

Gene Kelly & Ella Fitzgerald die.

TWA flight 800 explodes. 230 die.

Child Beauty Queen Jon Benet Ramsey is murdered.

Twenty-eight years after the start of the All-News format at KFWB and things were humming along quite nicely. Everyone knew their jobs and performed them with a high degree of proficiency. Management style had changed quite a bit as the faces at corporate headquarters changed. Nonetheless, for the most part we were a happy bunch of people with complaints screwing up only about 30 percent of our day. There was one scary thing taking place.... the country was going ballistic over fears of Y2K. There were predictions that the world as we knew it was going to come to an end, militia groups would roam the streets and those hand-held Pokemon toys would be the only things that would work. I personally was not too worried about Y2K. My problem was learning how to spell it.

In the newsroom, mention of Y2K brought only mild chuckles and nervous tittering.

You see we had a real problem that needed solving fast. Coffee is the life-blood of any news operation and our coffee machine had at last, given up the ghost. We needed a new efficient machine that made good coffee. Our first coffeemaker was a rather simple affair. A pre-measured pouch of coffee grounds plus a filter and a pot full of hot water. It did not take a rocket scientist to make coffee. Then they replaced that with a coffeemaker that worked exactly the same as the first one except it provided its own hot water. We did not have to fill up a pot and pour it in and wait for it to heat up. We still however had to pour the coffee into the filter, put the filter into a plastic filter holder and slide it into a slot. Then, we would push a button and within seconds, the steaming hot coffee would come dribbling from some opening that we could not see and tasted like boiling crankcase fluid. It was this machine that died.

Well, the powers that be did some research and one day, we walked into the staff kitchen and there it was...seven feet tall, a yard wide with buttons all over it. It was our new coffee machine and this was some machine! You could get coffee with or without sugar, with or without milk or cream, foamy, non foamy, frothy, non frothy, iced coffee, coffee mocha, hot chocolate, cold chocolate, lukewarm dark looking stuff, plain water, fancy water or just hot water for those who brought instant coffee from home or teabags. It offered more choices than a man ought to deal with in a single day

and it was so ominous looking, you didn't dare walk past it without choosing something. There was a real fear that if you ignored the machine, mechanical arms would reach out, grab you by the throat and pummel you to the floor. In fact, there were some who thought the machine was alive. Once, I believe I heard it plotting with the soda and candy machines about staging a coup d'etat. So, we gave it a name, genuflected whenever we walked past the damn thing and drank lots and lots of coffee.

There is one piece of equipment in the newsroom that is used more than any other and this is true for every office in the land.... the chair. We all had desks and we all needed chairs to sit in and so, as might be expected, those chairs were used everyday by everyone and they wore out quite rapidly. . Our chairs came to us in a variety of ways. The first chairs we sat on in 1968 were carry-overs from the days when the station played music. Then, when the station decided to get new chairs for the conference room, the old conference room chairs were rolled into the newsroom and the old newsroom chairs were rolled into the alley for pickup. This was musical chairs in its purest form. When we moved into our new building, we still had our old chairs but the new conference room got new chairs. The old conference room chairs somehow found their way to the myriad of little offices for the sales department. Most amazingly, those same chairs, over the next few months, began finding their way into the newsroom and were added to the ones we already had. They were

in reasonable condition. But some of our really old chairs were becoming threadbare and you could feel the inner springs more distinctly in your derriere. What broke out next was a case of chair marauders. I worked late at night so I had my choice of chairs. I just rolled it to my desk from behind whatever desk it was at.

Now, when it was around the time that the morning crew was coming in, I had to be on extra alert. You see, some morning folks preferred the same chair that I liked and while I was in the studio, they would go to my desk, take the chair and leave behind some broken down rickety affair that was barely able to stand up. I would then have to lay in wait and as soon as they went to get coffee or something, I would rescue my chair and return it to its rightful desk leaving in its place, that old rickety rack. In the course of a single morning, every chair in the room would have been moved to every desk in the room at least four times.

Editors had a different situation regarding their chairs. They were on a slightly raised and carpeted platform with those annoying plastic mats on the floor to allow their chairs to roll about. They were using the same chairs that we were using and most were so low the editors appeared to disappear below the top of the desk. In addition the editor's chairs were as threadbare as ours so it was determined they needed new chairs and they got them. They were like standard stenographers chairs but they had something akin to hydraulic lifts. Flick a switch or lever and the chair went up or down depending on what you wanted. This was pretty cool but there was a problem. Any

sudden motion by the person sitting in the chair caused the lever to be tripped and the chair changed altitude rather quickly. Quite often, we could be engrossed in a story that we were writing when we heard a thud from above. The chair had let go and the editor dropped about five inches or so. Then, looking sheepish, the editor readjusted the chair and carefully sat down again. No one was ever hurt by the hurtling chairs but that's not what I worried about. I was concerned that the chairs might go in reverse and fling the editor across the room. But my worry was in vain. No one was ever twanged into space, at least not while I was there.

In 1996, the sales staff from our sister station KTWV moved into our building and took up lots of space. So much space was taken up, that we ran into a rather unusual problem. Our building, still considered by us to be the "new" building, had only one Men's Room and one Ladies Room. That caused intermittent traffic problems for those who love coffee and bran muffins on the way to work. If three men or two women needed to us the facilities at the same time, someone was going to have to wait out side, grimacing and pacing. So, we had to institute a set of rules. It was designed to alleviate the traffic jams that frequently occurred outside those rooms.

In my never-ending quest to butt into things that were not my business, I came up with

RTP

RTP stands for Restroom Trip Policy. RTP was basically an accounting program that would keep track of a person's restroom usage. Since we were an equal opportunity employer, each employee and manager started out with an equal amount of access credits. Let's say 20 credits per person. This means twenty trips to the loo a month. Each time you visit the facility, you lose a credit. Rest room doors would be equipped with personnel identification apparatus including thumb and voice print devices. The installation of the voice print machine would necessitate the submission of two audio tapes from each employee....one where the employee speaks in a normal tone and the other in which he is under great stress. The two detectors would record each visit. When the employee had used up all his credits, the doors would no longer open to him until the following month.

Paper dispensers would dole out three sheets each time. Nine sheets per visit. If the employee stayed in the cubicle more than three minutes, an alarm would sound. The paper roll would retract into the wall, the flush mechanism would be activated, the cubicle door would swing open and your picture would be taken and posted under the caption: "Don't Dilly Dally". Three such postings and you would lose restroom privileges permanently.

When word of the plan was released thru the KFWB Nooseline, I received numerous threats of murder and mayhem and the idea was abandoned.

After 28 years of the All-News format, one might take for granted that all the employees of KFWB knew how to correctly pronounce our call letters. This however was not the case. If one took the time to truly listen, you would hear our name pronounced in a myriad of ways. It got to the point that Executive Editor Greg Tantum had to issue a memo. In it, he explains that KFWB is pronounced KAY-EFF-DOUBLE U-BEE. One might think that with such a highly educated bunch of newsmen, that lesson would be unnecessary but alas, it was not to be. Here are just a few of the ways KFWB was pronounced.

KAY-EFF-DUB-BEE

KAY-EFF-DUH-BEE

KAY-EFF-BEE

KAY-EFF-DUB-YA-BEE

And my favorite.....

KEFF-DUB-YA-BEE.

If we had been east of the Mississippi River, where most station call letters begin with the letter W, we would have been in big trouble.

One problem in the KFWB newsroom that never seemed to go away was printer malfunctions. Printers, being the temperamental monsters they are, can develop problems at the drop of a hat. The most common problem is the printer running out of paper. The carton containing the twelve miles of perforated 8 X 10 sheets weighs two tons and no one wanted the job of dragging a new box to the printer,

ripping it open and reloading the machine. The next big problem was the paper jamming itself in the machine. This meant turning off the printer and digging around in the bowels of the beast to extract the shreds and then threading the pagers thru the machine once again. This often meant that your hands came in contact with the ribbon and left you looking as though you spent eight hours in a West Virginia coal mine. There was also the situation where the ribbon ran dry and you had to replace it. This was a rather simple procedure. Un-wrap the ribbon, take the old one out of the machine and drop on the new one. But the worst situation was when the printer simply would not print and you had no clue why.

Our high speed printers often went kablooi and we technical types shrugged our shoulders, hung an out of order sign on it and waited for someone else to do something about it. In due time, our technical mavens arrived and studied the problem. They looked at the printer. They took the casing off the printer. They clucked and some went "Hmmm!" One even employed the age-old remedy of giving it a quick kick when no one was looking. The printer just sat there showing no signs of life. Maybe it died. Maybe it could be repaired. How long would that take? How much would it cost? What if we bought a new one? Do you have any idea how much these suckers cost? These were some of the issues we debated. Finally the problem was solved. Someone asked, "Is it plugged in?" What? Plugged in? Don't be silly. Of course it's plugged in! We checked. It wasn't plugged in. Case closed.

No sooner had one baffling mystery been solved in the newsroom that another popped up and this was a whopper. We lost an entire room. That's right, we lost our conference room, the second biggest room in the KFWB studio compound. One minute it was there and the next minute it was gone. First, we thought that the disappearance of the conference room might have had something to do with the last event to be held there.....the wedding shower for our Human Resources lady. It was your usual wedding shower, filled with tittering, giggling ladies all of whom oooed and ahhed over the gaily wrapped and very thoughtful gifts. What was the connection? Well at showers and the wedding itself, the guests often take home little gifts given them by the bride to be or centerpieces from the tables at the wedding reception. Maybe there were no gifts so they just took the room. We discounted that because to pull that off, they would have to carry large sections of wall thru the newsroom and there is a strong likelihood someone might have noticed.

Our next theory was the room was not missing at all. Maybe it was still there but in disguise. We could figure out how or why anyone would do that but a short time later, we discovered we were not that far off. Actually, the room was still there but had been subdivided to make room for the sales people from our sister station KTWV. So, where would conferences be held now? It didn't take long to find out. A memo was issued saying a meeting was to be held in the "new" conference room on the third floor of the office building diagonally across the street from our building. Across the street!!!!!!

Yep! They rented a large room in an office building across the street and it became our conference room. So, when the time came, we all schlepped across the street for the conference. Luckily, no one got a ticket for jaywalking.

Broadcasters are party people as I am sure you have discovered by now. We love a good soiree and look forward eagerly to each one. At KFVB, we attended a string of marvelous parties from huge affairs celebrating some major milestone like our first anniversary and our twentieth. Then there was a seemingly endless string of Christmas parties and Spring picnics. These were all wonderful get-togethers where we discussed the same stuff we talked about at work, except that our wives, husbands and children were with us. But as happens far too often, things change. The big parties became smaller parties. Springtime picnics disappeared altogether and what were we left with?

Pizza in the alley.

That's right, pizza in the alley. Whenever something was to be observed...a birthday, a huge sale of air time, Arbor Day, even Ground Hog Day, those who were there and could attend, retired to the alley near our dumpsters where patio tables and umbrellas were set up. There, we dined on lukewarm mushroom pizza and cola. Under the noonday sun, the party goers discussed the same things we discussed inside the building. The only difference was the proximity of the dumpsters. Sometimes parties had a theme. One party at the home of writer Sue Stiles featured Hawaiian shirts. No

one had a clue why they were wearing Hawaiian shirts but there they were, gussied up in shirts featuring flowers and tropical birds. And there was a cake with blue icing. I didn't eat any because you must never eat food colored blue. Actually the party was a going away party for our news director Scott Gorbitz who was moving to the Islands. Sue was the official KFWB cake baker so her parties were always triumphs of yummy cake, without a dumpster in sight.

But our alley soirees were always the most notable. We even had famous visitors to these affairs. The ubiquitous Gary Franklin, former reporter and movie critic showed up at one alley barbecue. At another, Olympic legend Rafer Johnson was a guest. I am not sure if there is a connection between dumpster district burgers and the fact that Gary and Rafer have never been seen at KFWB since that day. Talking about never being seen at KFWB again, I did not know at that time that my days were also numbered at the station.

We will dwell on that later.

By 1996, the KFWB Nooseline had become a beloved fixture, eagerly awaited each month by staffers intent on rotting their brains. They had to read the Nooseline because it was the only game in town. When the merger with CBS took place, the Westinghouse Newspaper, cleverly called Group W News, suddenly disappeared. No longer would we read fascinating articles about people at other Group W stations who we did not know and cared about even less. But when you are CBS, there has to be a company-wide newspaper

and we got two, count 'em, two publications from New York. One was called CBS Update. Now you might say, that sounds like news talk and we would read articles about Dan Rather and other members of the national CBS news team. Nope. It was about show business and celebrity types and who was doing what to whom on the different shows. It also gave us vital statics like the ratings for the Nanny sitcom and entertainment news. The second publication was called Columbine. It was the newspaper that gave us vital information about people at other CBS stations whom we did not know and cared about even less. As a result, the KFWB Nooseline continued to sail merrily along spreading hither and yon its hopefully amusing journalistic trash. The part that truly amazed me was that I sent a copy of my Nooseline to the inhouse newsletter mavens in New York and they didn't respond. My assessment of that omission on their part was that if you did not live in New York, you can't possibly know what you are doing and you certainly did not matter. When Westinghouse was running the show, I jokingly offered subscriptions to the Nooseline at a cost of \$12.37 and the crumpled wrapper from a package of Virginia Slims cigarettes. This was back when smoking was still socially okay. Well, you can't imagine how many packs of Virginia Slims wrappers I got from the guys at Corporate headquarters. No cash, just wrappers but it showed they had a sense of humor. Not so the suits at CBS. Well, that's show biz.

In New York, there is a strong possibility that the public relations events we participated in, would not work. I mean, could you see them blocking off all streets leading to 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue to make way for a health fair? In LA, we could stage such an event in a parking lot but in New York, if you eliminate parking space, you might start world war three. In 1996, KFWB staged its "Well and Aware" program in the part of Universal Studios called City Walk. Booths were set up and thousands upon thousands of people showed up to hear hints on how to stay healthy. You know, things like dieting and exercise and meditation, humming mantras and stuff like that. It was a gorgeous sunny day and to make things even more inviting, there were celebrities in the crowd. Cathy Rigby, Mark Spitz and Rafer Johnson, and Marylou Henner. Wow. A star studded affair.

As a result of that event, people became so healthy it was amazing. I am sure you know by now where this is leading.

Because of the success of Well and Aware, I notified the news and sales staff of yet another event called Well Underwear. It was a gathering of strange people who would teach us all how to insure that our jockeys, boxers and thongs continued performing up to speed for a long time without riding up. We sought to get volunteers to work the event and as an inducement, we were having special KFWB outfits made for them to wear and keep. When news was leaked that the outfits had been designed by a company similar to Frederick's of Hollywood, no one volunteered and the project went down in flames. Does anyone get the feeling that I didn't take the station promotions

too seriously? Actually, you are correct. Consider the next event that KFWB got involved with.

It was called "A Taste Of Orange County". It was a major event put on by the fine gastronomic establishments located in the county to the south that when it came to fine dining, Orange County was not just yellow popcorn, corndogs and barbecue sauce. Chefs from the fancy shmancy restaurants were on hand at the El Toro Marine Air Station where they prepared the dishes they were famous for and everybody got a chance to sample the efforts of all of them. We were there but I have no clue why. Our idea of fine dining was takeout pizza in our parking lot but you already know that. There was also live entertainment provided by our sister station KTWV. They also gave out water bottles. We gave out refrigerator magnets. I mean, was this a big event or what?

Now, talking about clever leadins to another topic, how is this for clever?

The key to a successful career in the news business is the ability to know how to use words to their maximum effectiveness. Words inform, entertain, teach and make us feel good. They can also make us angry. They can spur us to action or cause us to refrain from actions. Everything we do, say, think, write, etc, involve words. In the news business, when words are used particularly well, we sit up and take notice. The Bible, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, Shakespearean plays and sonnets are but a few examples.

Now, a headline for one of the KFWB newscasts should not be considered to be in the same class as Shakespeare but every once in a while, a headline is composed that causes us to stop and think. What we think is another matter.

Here are two headlines that stopped us in our tracks and we marveled at what we heard. The first came from Anchor Sheri Inglis. There was a story of a man in England claiming to be the composer and developer of the children's song and dance "The Hokey Pokey". His claims were being contested as being quite Hokey and that the man ought to be in the Pokey. Unfortunately the man died before his case could be heard in court. Sheri, in her headline wrote..."Is There a Touch of Hanky Panky In The Hokey Pokey?" That is a great headline! No matter what, you are going to stay tuned to hear that story. In fact it was on a par with the 1968 headline by the late Dick Cutting who wrote about the French Premier..."Georges Pompidou and George Pompidon't". You had no clue what it meant, but by golly you were going to hang around to find out.

The second headline, by veteran newsman Ron Kilgore was supposed to be straightforward and informative but the absence of a couple of words gave it that special something it needed to make us all go "Huh?" Writing his tease headline for the story about Dr. Jack Kervorkian, Ron typed out this traffic stopper..."A Jury of Nine Men and Seven Women Has Been Seated for Jack Kervorkian's Third Assisted Suicide". Think about it for a minute. Would they witness another suicide? Were they there to rate the Doctor on his

performance as Olympic athletes are rated or was it a trial in court? Whatever it was, it was a very memorable line.

Now, those lines were intentional. Here come the traffic stoppers that were not.

First, we have some wonderful examples of Silver Pen Deviltry where the KFWB wordsmiths ran amok. We lead off with one of mine. I was writing a story about a man from Bari, Italy, who was returning home after receiving multiple organs in a transplant operation. I wrote that the man was warmly received in his hometown of Barfi. It must be the food.

Anchor Vince Campagna, in one set of headlines, indicated a single man was protecting the town of Portland Oregon against flooding. He wrote "A Levy, the last line of Defense between the City of Portland and rain swollen rivers. Three lines later, Vince wrote..."Police in Long Beach are Getting Phone Calls from potential victims of a stamp thief."

Not to be outdone, Anchor Dan Avey wrote this puzzler..."a Malibu area wildlife rescue organization that operated the only Dolphin equipped rescue van in...."

To NASA officials, the orbital docking of two spacecrafts is tricky business. For Ron Kilgore, it was...well...you decide what

it was. Ron wrote, "The crew was practicing safe docking of two space farts."

In a story about the Pentagon attempting to cut costs, I wrote this stellar headline....

"A congressional Agency suggests the Pentagon scrap a major weapons development program, the F-18 Super Horney."

Anchor Jim Burson who is a very careful writer, in a headline, described a major brushfire thusly: "The area burping is North of Taos, New Mexico". It must have been a gas fire.

Even editors can write some beauties. Since it was written during a shift change, I won't attribute it to anyone but the introduction to a network report read: "A Key House Committee has approved legislation making English the official English language". As opposed to making French the official English language.

Here's another of mine. "Actress Model Margaux Hemingway is found dead in her Santa Monica apartment. Authorities say there is no evidence of fowl play". Chickens are rarely found in Santa Monica apartments.

Finally, lets take a look at some of the utterances made by anchors and reporters on KFWB during 1996.

The year started off with a story by Pete Parsons on the ascension of Kwasi Mifune to the head of the NAACP. Pete however turned Mifune into a jock, reporting that there is a new chief of the N-C-double A. He must have been P'ed off.

Anchorette Sheri Inglis has no respect for lawyers. In one news story, Sheri said a study showed that "women compromise 23 percent of the legal profession".

Anchor John Brooks had a story about a fire in a retirement facility, a fire that should have sparked an investigation. John told our listeners that about "twenty people lived in the rest room".

Sheri Inglis surfaces again with her report on a new Jewish perfume. Sheri called it Oy De Toilet.

Anchor Sue Marquez gave our audience a rather humble weather report for Los Angeles. She reported: "The temperature will be 68 degrees, and the relative humility 91 percent."

Did you ever hear of recreational drugs for ducks? Anchorette Vicki Cox did and told all about it in her report on "quack cocaine".

An Earthquake can shake up anybody including Anchor Bob Howard who had a super report on the temblor in Mexico Shitty.

Michael Shappee had a medical miracle on his hands when he reported on a touching reunion between a woman and her long lost daughter whom she had given up for abortion. How do you do that?

Sports anchor Joe Cala had this unusual line in his report on baseball scores. He said..."The Dodgers both win." No, I don't know what that means and don't ask me again.

Pete Demetrio, KFVB's crack crime and fire reporter, was telling us about a major brushfire when he informed us that on the firelines "it's going to be a dark night tonight."

Isn't it usually dark at night?

Anchor Ron Kilgore, in a story about Doctor Jack Kevorkian, the physician who helped people commit suicide. Reporting on how the case had gone to the United States Supreme Court, Ron told our listeners that "the court would rule on whether a doctor may administer life ending drugs to a person who no longer wants to work."

Reporter Michael Shappee, in a political report had us scratching our heads when he related how "President Clinton, in Florida, had come a long way to woo wooters."

Finally, the lovely Lyle Kilgore ended the year with a report on the mega mall that opened in Ontario California. The mall, called The Ontario Mills, is described as a 'shop till you drop mall'. But

Lyle gave it that extra little something by described the place as a “drop dead till you shop” mall.

Onward and upward.

## MY PERSONAL SWAN SONG

Princess Diana dies in Paris auto accident.

O.J.Simpson Loses the Civil Lawsuit Against Him.

39 Heaven's Gate Cult members commit suicide.

### AND I RETIRE

1997 dawned bright and clear on January 1<sup>st</sup> as New Years always tends to do and I looked forward to yet another year at KFWB. There was no way for me to know that my life would, in a few months, take a totally unexpected turn so I just moved on doing what I had been doing for almost 30 years.

In broadcast journalism, accuracy is of paramount importance, followed by clarity and speed. Also important is the need to make your words as interesting as possible, even though the news you are reporting might be as dull as dishwater. Therefore, management at KFWB pressed forward with an unusual way of spicing up the newscasts. FACTOIDS. These were little known facts about stuff

we rarely think about, told quickly with the aim of causing people to say, "Gee, I didn't know that." The idea was to insert these factoids into the newscast, once every ten minutes or so to coax our listeners to stay with us because the next factoid might be really interesting or exciting. Factoids could also be used to separate commercials and promotional announcements. They could bracket the weather, sports or business reports. There were many ways to employ the Factoid and many places where they could be used. The problem was finding enough fascinating factoids. These little story snippets could be on almost any subject but we had to find our own. I concentrated on medical and dental factoids and other health subjects. Here are examples of factoids as used by me.

1. "Here is a KFWB factoid. Covering your mouth when you sneeze goes a long way in preventing the spread of your germs to other people." Short, informative and about as exciting as a snail drag race.
2. "Here is a KFWB Factoid. Your next-door neighbor could be a Vampire. A medical condition called Erythropoietic Protoporphyrria can cause a victim to take on a Dracula-like appearance and actually drink blood. It can be treated and no, they don't fly like bats." Now, that's a factoid to end all factoids. Fascinating and most likely something you never knew.

Finding factoids for use on the newscasts became a never-ending search by anchors and as might have been expected, I tried to help by publishing a list of factoids free for the taking. They included:

1. Styrofoam is not made from kittens.
2. The word Cheese is not funny.
3. Lyndon Johnson was not the voice of Yosemite Sam.
4. Roy Rogers is not buried inside his horse.
5. Universities are not hotbeds of anything.
6. Cats do not eventually turn into dogs.
7. Bullets do not bounce off people.
8. The Flesh Eating Virus does not hide inside ice cream.
9. V-8 Juice is not 1/8 gasoline.
10. The bug on your TV screen can see into your house.

Now, if you heard one of those on a newscast, admit it, you would hang around to see what else you might learn. Despite this, none of my fellow anchors saw fit to use any of those factoids. So, later in the year, I decided to get serious and give them some really real factoids. I found them on the web.

1. It would take 23 hours for all the soda ever produced by Coca Cola, to flow over Niagara Falls.
2. The inventor of the Twinkie, in his lifetime, ate 40,177 of the little cream filled cakes..

3. There are no Betty Rubble tablets in a bottle of Flintstone Vitamins.
4. In the course of a year, French people eat the legs from 200 million frogs.
5. Enola Gay was the name of the WW2 Hiroshima atom bomb plane. Bock's Car was the name of the Nagasaki aircraft.
6. The letters YKK on your zipper tab stand for Yoshida Kogyo Kabushibaisha.
7. When he died, Elvis weighed 230 pounds.
8. When you kiss you burn 26 calories.
9. There are 25 calories in a Hershey's Kiss.
10. Andy Warhol's 3 addresses in Pittsburgh were  
73 Orr Street  
55 Beeler Street  
3452 Dawson Street.

So there you have ten fascinating factoids that my colleagues also chose not to use.

Therefore, I stopped helping them.

During the entire history of KFWB, including that period before it was an all news radio station, there was a serious problem. KFWB broadcast over a 5000 watt transmitter. Now 5000 watts is nothing

to sneeze at but 50 thousand watts is a heck of a lot better. With five thousand watts, we were heard as far north as Santa Barbara if we were lucky. To the south, we could be heard in San Diego and occasionally across the border in Mexico. To the west was just ocean and I personally never heard our signal past West Covina to the east. Even inside Los Angeles city limits there were places where we could not be heard. These were sort of radio dead zones. You might drive along and suddenly, for about 50 feet, the signal dies out and just as quickly comes back and it happens every time you drive that stretch of road.

Our goal, our dream, our Holy Grail was permission from the FCC to broadcast using a 50 thousand watt transmitter. With one of those suckers, we would boom out like champs. We could be heard all over the place, as far away as Chicago, St Louis, Finland, South America. Our voices would travel with fifty thousand bone crunching, teeth shattering, ear drum destroying, mind numbing watts of pure pristine power.

Well, in July of 1997, we got the okay from the FCC. This was it! P-Day was upon us. Power Day. Zoweeeeee! We would celebrate with cake and spiked punch (heh heh) and chief Engineer Dick Rudman and his trusted crew of tube testers would begin preparing our new monster transmitter. This was our chance to be the true mouth of the south. So far, as of this writing, no boom, no bone crunching, no mind numbing and most important, no 50,000 watts have shown up. Well, maybe, by the time you read this, Anchor Ken Jeffries will be heard in Finland, but to do that now, he has to go there.

In all the years that I was with KFWB, only two times did our listeners get a chance to see what we looked like. One was in the Mid-70s when the station produced a full-page ad in which we were called the Voice Squad. The ad was in the L.A. Times once, never to be seen again. That ought to give you some idea how gorgeous we were.

The second time was when an official KFWB internet website was established and all of our pictures were in it. The billboards we once anticipated, never materialized. But in 1997, someone came up with the idea that if the audience couldn't see us, they could at least get an earful about us. We would be featured on a series of promos to be played on the station. On them, we would talk about ourselves or someone else would. The subject matter would be our personal news philosophy or we could wax poetic about our families or reminisce about high points in our careers or just be real people. Management decided to circulate a form in which we would write down these little personal insights.

Now, I am not sure if everybody else got the same form as I did but the questions were somewhat unusual.

1. What is your favorite color?
2. When did you learn to tie your shoelaces?
3. Do you get emotional when you see a tractor?
4. Is Mother W a real person to you?

5. Do you sleep nekkid?
6. Do you have any idea where you are?
7. Do You Care?

I answered as best I could. They never did a profile on me. I guess they didn't like my answer about tractors.

Memo writing is an art and knowing how to pronounce the name of a foreign dignitary is either an art or a skill. There are some members of the management team who are either artists or skilled craftsmen when it comes to writing memos. In the news business, you often come across names that are either difficult or impossible to pronounce, especially if you have no clue about the language spoken by the subject. To make matters worse, that name or names may pop up more than just once in a story and if you don't know how to pronounce it, you might be in big trouble. One anchor came up against the name of former African leader Joseph Kasavubu. Now that's really not a difficult name to say. Kah-sah-voo-boo. The anchor however did not pre-read his script and when he came upon the name, he uttered, "Joseph Kasabubee." Wrong. Asian names, particularly those from Thailand can be real challenges.

What, you may ask, is the connection between names and memos? Allow me to explain. In mainland China, the leader at the time was Deng Xiaoping. If you are at all familiar with phonetic Chinese.... Xiao is pronounced Shouw (rhymes with how.) Well most of us got

it correctly. It was on the name Deng that we blew it. We called it as we saw it...DENG. Well, we were wrong and News Director Crys Quimby sent us a classic memo correcting us. It read simply.....

## DENG IS DUNG.

As you all know, it is the job of the boss to correct his staff when they make mistakes. This is a good thing because it helps to maintain the high quality of our product. We accept such correction and we appreciate it. After so many years of an All-News format, even our audience felt they had the right to correct us and we would often get letters and post cards from our listeners, pointing out gleefully I might add, little violations of semantic law. One letter from a listener was so on the mark that it embedded itself in my brain and I share it with you now. This young man pointed out six instances of what he believed were gross mistakes on our part.

1. Question by a reporter at a fire: "Are any of these dwellings homes?" All dwellings are homes.
2. Another fire: "Several out-dwellings were lost." No such thing as Out-dwellings. Outbuildings do exist. They are barns, sheds, potties, etc.
3. "Two cars have collided together." As opposed to colliding alone?
4. "The car exited off the freeway." As opposed to exiting onto the freeway. When you exit, you exit, period.

5. "A cachet of arms." A cachet is part of a document but you can have a cache of arms.
6. "The alleged shooting victim...." He had four bullets in him but we just allege that he was shot? Is it possible he inserted the bullets by hand?

We wish all our listeners were such careful listeners, except when we make mistakes. Of course, in order to prevent such letters in the future, I came across a list of grammatical do's and don'ts and I passed them along to my fellow orators.

1. No sentence fragments.
2. It behooves us to avoid archaisms.
3. Also avoid awkward or affected alliterations.
4. Don't use no double negatives.
5. If I told you once I told you a billion times...resist hyperbole.
6. Avoid, commas, they are, not needed.
7. Verbs has to agree with their subjects.
8. Avoid trendy locutions that sound flakey.
9. Kill all exclamation points!!!!!!
10. Never use a long word when a diminutive one will do.
11. Take the bull by the hands and avoid mixing metaphors.

12. Writing carefully, dangling participles should not be used.
13. Don't verb nouns.
14. Never never never use repetitive redundancies.
15. Avoid clichés like the plague.

Remember these rules and you can write or speak gooder than the guys at KFWB.

Now, the writers at KFWB and the anchors, reporters and others, were still fighting the good fight regarding our work environment. Remnants of earlier meals being left around was still a problem and to deal with the problem, staffers were given three options:

1. No eating in the newsroom.
2. Eat but be sure to clean up afterwards.
3. Eat and later adopt the ants on your desk as pets.

On top of all that, the newsroom staffers were asked to vote on those alternatives. The idea being that a simple majority would rule and whichever alternative received the most votes would become the law of the land. By now, you may have guessed how that was received. It was determined that we actually needed more alternatives. So, the list was expanded by yours truly.

4. Eating is okay but swallowing is not.
5. Do not spill anything.
6. Do not dribble or drool over your shirt or blouse.

7. Hunting and preparing wild game in the newsroom is banned.
8. No open cook fires in the newsroom unless you are cooking for everyone.

Eating and cleaning up your own mess was the winner. You didn't really think any of the others would win, did you?

Another environmental problem was the proliferation of styrofoam cups. They were everywhere and as we all know, Styrofoam cups are forever. So, management put out a memo banning Styrofoam cups. Well, that makes drinking coffee and other liquids a bit difficult. I, of course, would pour steaming hot coffee into my cupped hands but that made writing, shaking hands, typing and other chores including earwax cleaning, almost impossible. But management came to the rescue. They issued a second memo saying we should bring personal coffee cups from home. If that was not possible, use one of the cups from the lower cabinet in the station lunchroom. THOSE CUPS? Those cups had been under the cabinets for so long, that spores dating back to the days of Nero and ancient Rome had set up colonies in and around them. Over the centuries they developed communities with schools, churches and shopping malls. How could we wash those cups and wipe out so many cute little spores that never bothered us because we never bothered them? It would be like Godzilla tramping through Tokyo. And what about bringing our own cups from home? What would we have to bring next? Paper? Pencils? Toilet tissue?

As always, it was management to the rescue again. They issued a third memo that suggested we use Styrofoam cups. Wow, what a concept!

In the Navy, when a new ship is launched, headquarters makes a big deal out of it with full christening ceremonies. Navy Brass show up for the event, along with shipbuilding executives, workers and the president's wife. The First Lady then proceeds to waste a perfectly good bottle of champagne by smashing it against the bow of the vessel. All this so the ship can be called the USS Wilbur Winkle or something like that. At KFWB, we tried to be just as fully ceremonial as the Navy regarding RV 98. The big old RV that had been fitted out with broadcast equipment had already been used for such events as the Los Angeles Marathon and the Hollywood Boulevard Christmas Lane Parade and now, again, they wanted to give it a name. Just calling it RV-98 was not sexy enough or even macho. As a result, the word went out a second time, for everybody to submit a name and the station's technical staff, primarily chief engineer Dick Rudman, would pick the winner. Well, we thought and we pondered, and we mulled it over and submitted some some great names. They included: Jerome; Juggernaut; The Rudman Racer; Battlestar Galactica; The News Bus; Herby The Love Bug; Edsel; Some of the above; None of the above. Well Rudman thought and he pondered and he mulled it over. What did he pick? RV-98. Why?

Why not? That's why.

1997 saw an event take place that was a magnificent first for KFWB and which served as a model for other stations to copy. We had a reunion.

The idea was born out of a suggestion I made to fellow anchor Vince Campagna. I asked if he and his wife Jean wanted to come over one Saturday or Sunday for a barbecue and pool party in my backyard. Vince said sure and why not invite a couple of other couples. I said sure and we picked a few names and started making plans. Before we had turned around, the potential guest list had grown to ten and then fifteen couples and it kept growing. Well my backyard could only hold so many people and we decided to see who had a larger yard. Meanwhile, the list kept growing and then we came up with a new idea.....how about inviting some folks we hadn't seen in a few long years? Like the guys we worked with during the first five years of KFWB's All-News format. Let's have a reunion! By this time, one of those co-workers who was on the invite list, former Editor Rich Buhler got involved. Rich took the ball and ran with it and by the time he and Carolyn Brailer, the wife of former anchor Charlie Brailer, were finished, it appeared that half the civilized world was on the invite list and there would be food for everyone. Now these people were not just in Los Angeles. We started getting acceptances from our friends in New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, Nevada, from all points east, west, north and south. Some were still in broadcasting

while others were not but we were all connected because of the time we spent together at KFWB in the late sixties and early seventies.

The location for the shindig was now the backyard at sports anchor Joe Cala's house.

Besides having a very large yard that could accommodate everyone, there was an elementary school across the street where Joe's wife worked and the gates were left open for off-street parking. Since it was summer the weather was superb and we all showed up as promised. Leading the list was our first General Manager Art Shreiber, our first news director Herb Humphries, first assistant news director Bruce MacDonell, former promotion director Bruce Marr. Anchor Chet Douglas, fresh from a bone marrow transplant that almost prevented his being there, was there from Scottsdale Arizona. There were people who worked in our sales department, in the front office, in engineering. It was fantastic and what made it more exciting was that the bonds that had been formed as much as 29 years earlier, were still there and everybody greeted everybody else like long lost family members. It was as though no time had passed at all. Sure we looked older or fatter or skinnier and some had less hair than they once had but we knew each other immediately.

We ate and we drank and we schmoozed and we showed pictures and we all had one thing in common, a sense that our time at KFWB was something very, very special that we would carry with us always. Maybe I was over-dramatizing it but I felt that connection had indeed made us a family with Mother Westinghouse as the Matriarch.

That day was and will always be a highlight in my life and I would not have missed it for the world. It was also kind of a sad time because, as it turned out, it was the last time that I saw some of those folks. Far too many former colleagues have gone to that newsroom in the sky but the time I shared with them is priceless.

\* \* \* \* \*

Lets look at the Silver Tongue and Silver Penned Devils now. The reason will become evident.

First, lets check the performances of the KFWB wordsmiths in both 1997.

In writing an introduction of a live report from reporter Shelley Lash Cooper on the 1995 Hollywood Lane Parade, production assistant Jay Jaramillo made a rather obvious booboo when he wrote an introduction to a live report from Reporter Shelley Lash Cooper. He wrote: "Here's the story from KFWB's Shelley Lash in Tinkletown."

Editor Don Fair had a similar mistake when he wrote a promotional story about how you go about getting tickets for the golf tournament known as the Bob Hope Dessert Classic. I guess with each ticket you get a cookie.

Writer Diane Dray exhibited the dangers of being distracted while dealing with a crime story. She wrote, "He speculated an arrest could follow the results of additional results."

Anchor Michael Shappee, in writing a story for his own newscast, typed this intriguing line about a Hollywood celebrity: "Raquel Welch is expanding, ditching one home for another." Well, that's one way to get a new house.

Jodi Adler, in preparing for one of her newscasts had a double whammy. She wrote: "Today's highs in the 70's and 70's." She also had this anatomical shocker: "The girl was found unconscious in a filthy pubic housing stairwell."

Anchor Vince Campagna in his story about a fire, added a casualty when there was none. He wrote: "A smoky warehouse fire spread to a neighboring Ho on West Adams Boulevard."

I was able to contribute this bit of nonsense. "The rate of new inmates entertaining American prisons continues to go up."

Have you ever heard of an anti-chicken helmet? There must be one because a story turned up in a newscast that contained this line: "The officer is expected to live because the helmet he was wearing prevented the pullet from penetrating his skull."

As we know, written mistakes are actually not as common as oral mistakes. The Silver Tongue Devils of 1997 were in fine form as they uttered these words, which will live in infamy.

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We start off with a time check by anchor Andi Marshall: "KFWB Newstime, eight oh ten."

My turn. I announced to my audience that Hollywood apparently was making a new concerted effort to make "smot poking" groovey again. Don't laugh if you've never poked a smot!

Talking about dope, Anchor Vince Campagna had a wonderful story about the arrest of some men for selling "crock cocaine". That fits, I think.

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Anchor Michael Shappee, in a story about the man convicted of murdering the son of comedian Bill Cosby, said "he was born in Russia but his subsequent births were elsewhere. Talk about being Born Again!

Anchor Tammy Trujillo, who is also a sports reporter, had an amazing story about the "Callous Cowboys". We forget what it dealt with.

The world of weather got a new phenomenon when anchor Jodi Adler predicted that we were in for some scattered "thunderstones."

Anchor Dan Avey, reporting on the wild weather that had just occurred in Canada, said "There is tap water but it's not safe to eat." Well, who wants to chew water anyway.

Now, most newsmen are up to date on lots of subjects but for anchor Lyle Kilgore, Rap Music was not one of them. If he had been, Lyle would not have referred to a slain Rap singer as Snoopy Dog Dog.

Sports is apparently what you make of it. Van Earle Wright, who came to us from CNN is reported to have ended his sportscast with this: "I'm Van Earle Wright at the sports dick."

Another of our sports mavens, Eric Tracy, in a report on the purchase of the Los Angeles Dodgers by Media Mogul Rupert Murdoch, said..."The Ts have been crossed and the dyes otted." Wow, that must really make it final.

\* \* \* \* \*

In late September of 1997, while engaged in doing a newscast, something happened that was the first indication my life was about to change. My jaws clenched and I couldn't speak. The condition lasted about five seconds and went away. So, I forgot about it. The following evening it happened again, three times but each time disappeared in seconds. I was becoming concerned. This went on for about a week with me playing commercials or promotional announcements to allow my mouth to rest. But I was very worried. Rather than wait for someone to say something, I decided to go on extended sick leave

until my doctor could find out what was happening. That began an ordeal that lasted for about three months.

I visited my own doctor who thought it might be stress and sent me to a psychologist. She couldn't diagnose it so I went to her husband, a noted cardiologist and all his tests were negative. Then it was off to an Ear, Nose and Throat man. Still, no diagnosis. By this time, new symptoms were showing up. My eyebrows drooped as did my entire head. My hands lost strength and I could not pick up anything heavy. I couldn't swallow and almost choked several times. I underwent an MRI, two CAT scans and a bunch of other tests.

Finally, I went to a Neurologist who gave me the mother of all blood tests, checking me for every disease know to man, including the really bad ones like Lou Gehrig's Disease, MS, MD, Alzheimers and a bunch of others. And then we knew. I had developed Myasthenia Gravis. It's an autoimmune disease. It's not fatal nor is it curable. But it is controllable and that's what we did. A regimen of drugs and in a short time, the symptoms went away and I began thinking about returning to work.

It was then that my co-worker, Vince Campagna, who was like a brother to me, died following cancer surgery. I was so upset that my symptoms returned and had to be shoved back into remission.

Since Vinnie had been urging me to retire early, as he was doing, I gave it serious thought. I found I was eligible for total disability and I made my decision. But first, I wanted to convince myself. So I went to the station, printed out a newscast and went into a studio

to see how well I could do. It went well except for the fact that my jaws began to get tight if I talked longer than ten minutes. It became apparent I was not ready to return and my doctors thought it was iffy that I would be.

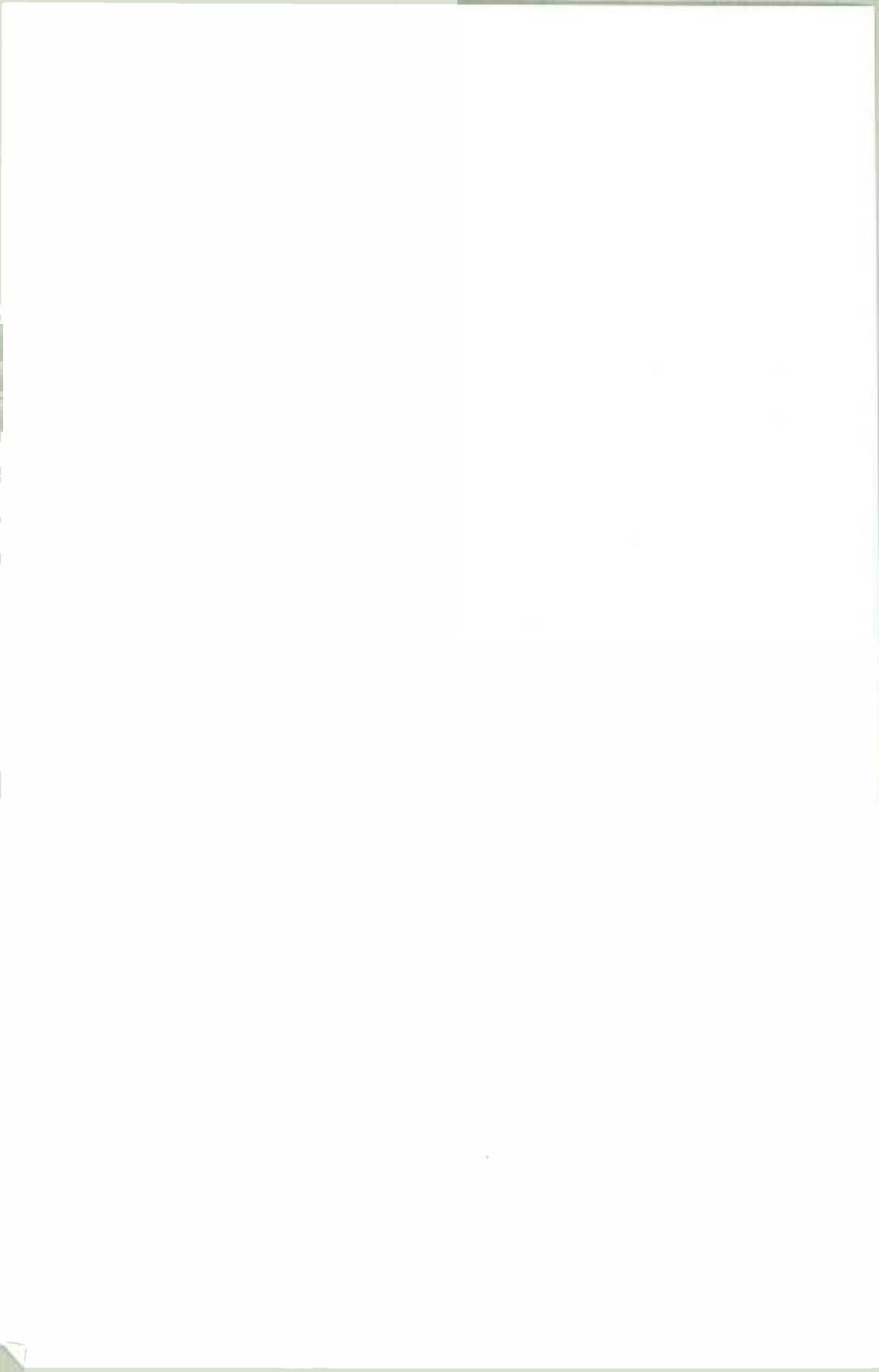
In April of 1998, I called the station and told them I was retiring on disability. After 30 years of faithful service, I figured now comes the pomp and circumstance, the full color guard and accolades from my colleagues. Not quite. Here's how it worked. They mailed my gold watch to my home. I was then invited to the station one Spring afternoon when a barbecue lunch was being held for members of the sales staff, in the parking lot, next to the dumpsters. When I arrived at the station, there they were, the sales staff most of whom I did not know. There were no anchors, no reporters and no writers, no one I worked closely with, out there to greet me. I was given a can of coke, a slice of lukewarm mushroom pizza and an envelope holding about a hundred dollars worth of scrip for a weekend at an aging Palm Springs Hotel. Then I left with those people waving goodbye from in front of the dumpsters. There was one final episode a couple of months later. CBS was honoring its long time employees with service gifts. Before I got sick, and in preparation for my thirtieth anniversary, I had selected an onyx pinky ring as my service award but I never got it. CBS would be giving those gifts to the employees at a reception at CBS Television City. I reminded the station that I had not received my 30 year award and that I wanted to go to the reception. They said they would check on it.

The next day I was told I couldn't come to the reception because I was no longer a CBS employee. I told them in return that I had a close friend who was an editor at the L.A. Times and he would love to hear all about that. The following day I was invited to the reception. I got my ring, a CBS lapel pin and a hearty handshake from an executive I didn't know. Then I left, went home and began writing this book with visions of the parking lot dumpsters dancing in my head.

\* \* \* \* \*

During my thirty years at KFVB, I worked with some of the finest people I have ever known. They made a very distinct impact on my life and I love them all for it. Even though this book concentrates on the silly side of All-News Radio, these folks helped to bring about great changes in how news is covered and they did it with competence and style. I am honored and grateful for having had the opportunity to work alongside each one.

Thanks.

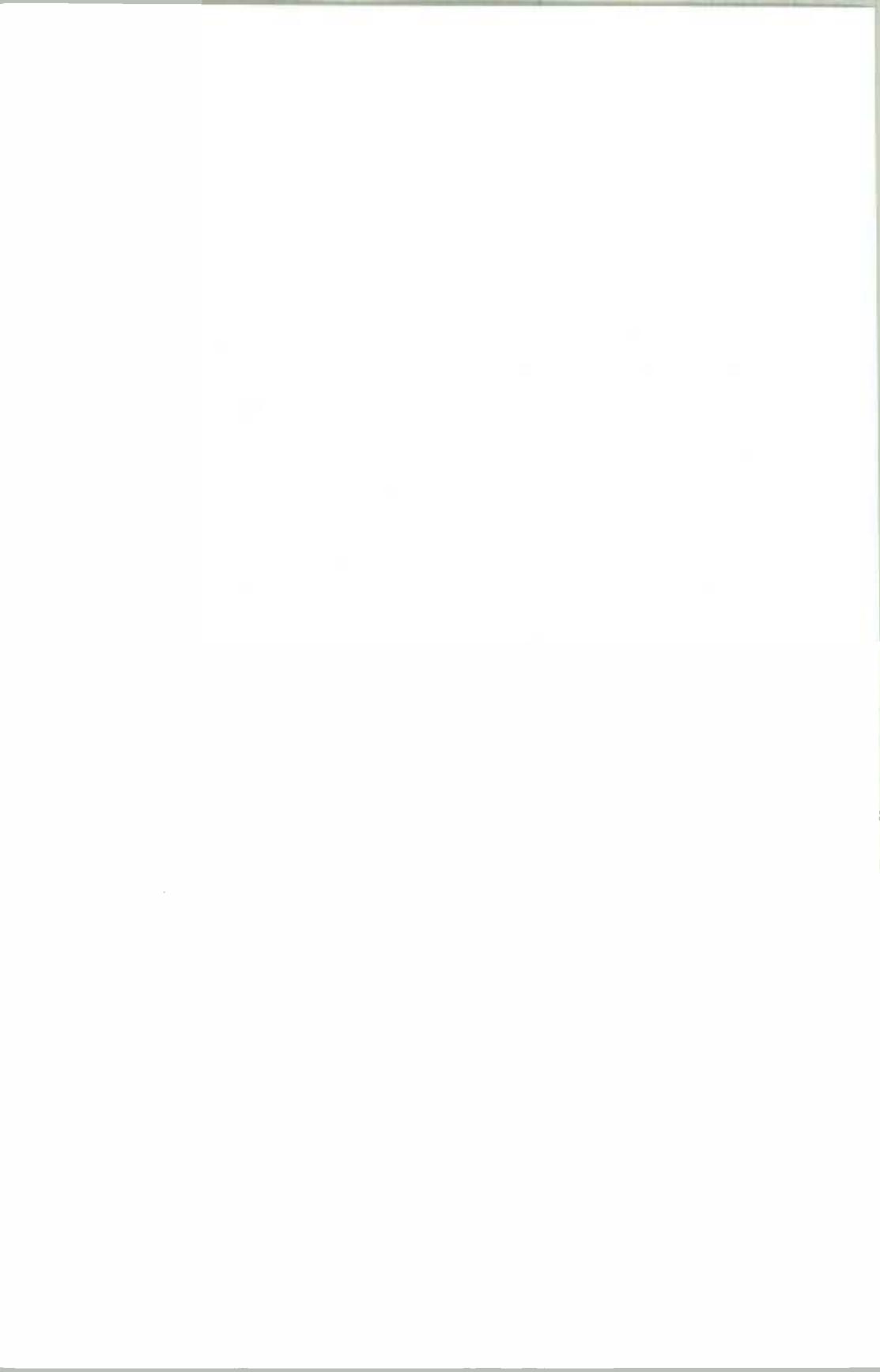


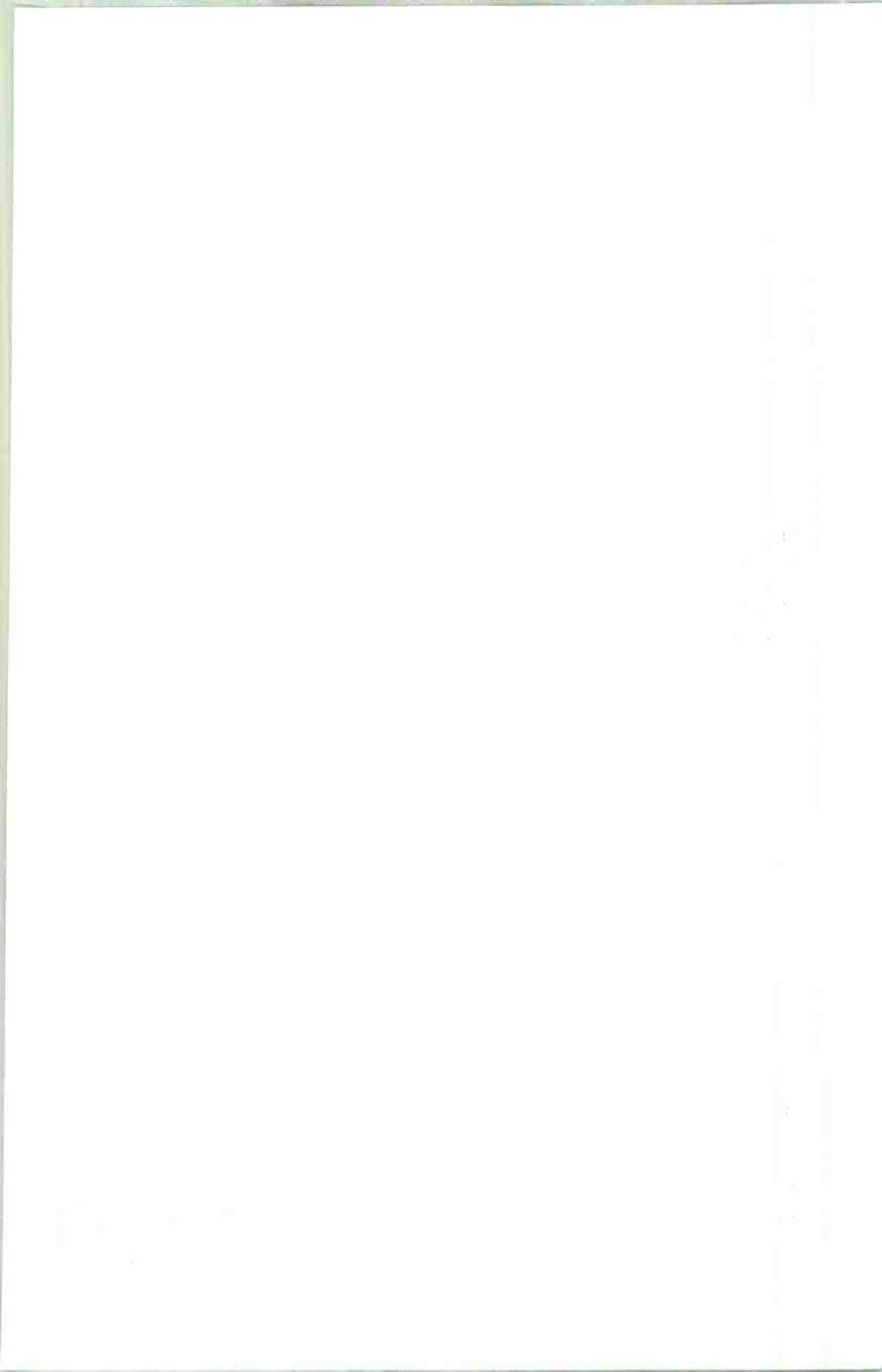
## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Born in Brooklyn, N.Y. in 1935, Herb Rosenblum attended The New York City school system and later, majored in Broadcasting at the University of Alabama. His broadcast career began in Alabama at some very small radio stations with television entering the picture in Little Rock Arkansas. On TV, Herb, also known as Don Herbert, has been a news reporter, anchor, writer, and producer. His career also includes TV weatherman, children's show host, and writer for Chuck Barris and his game shows.

Herb joined KFWB in Hollywood, California in 1968 when it became an All-News station. He stayed there for 30 years. He considers his finest achievement was Operation Heart Start in which, thru his series of reports, over a quarter of a million people became trained in CPR. Herb has covered major stories ranging from war to assassinations to earthquakes. He has also appeared on many radio and TV commercials and has done voice-over roles in movies and television shows.

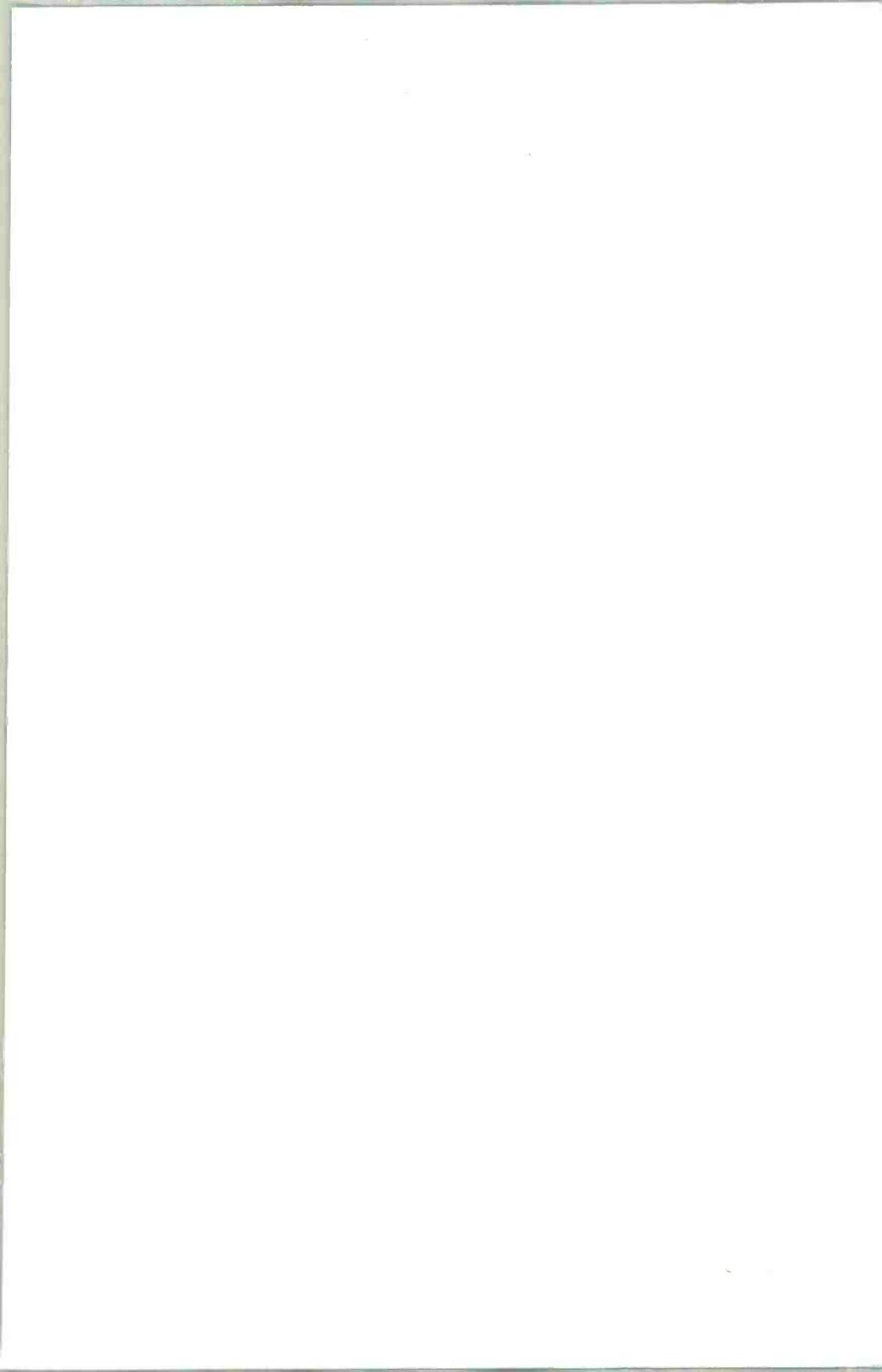
Married to Linda and with two grown children, Brian and Meredith, Herb lives in the San Fernando Valley along with three dogs and a cat.





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## NOW, EVERYTHING YOU NEVER KNEW YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT ALL-NEWS RADIO

Enjoy this behind the scenes tour of one of the nation's foremost all-news radio stations, KFVB, in Hollywood, Ca. Your tour guide, Herb Rosenblum aka Don Herbert, broadcast from KFVB from the very first day of All-News In 1968 until he retired 30 years later.

This book demonstrates in off-the-wall style, how Herb and his colleagues handled the constant pressures of rapid deadlines involving local, national and world events while maintaining sanity and a sense of humor.



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