

Suggest to Bud Armstrong that radio still might be a great place to turn a fast buck and you've just made yourself an enemy.

As executive vice president of the Storz Stations and general manager of WHB Kansas City, Mo., Mr. Armstrong may be considered one of the new generation in broadcasting, but he's a veteran fighter for responsible radio.

Nothing turns this genial and informal young man into a bear with a bite as quickly as the huckster stigma in broadcasting. He reacts rapidly to any view that radio needs some sort of apology, that programing ranks second to sales, that manipulation of rates is smart competition or that all "modern" stations can be lumped together as one big whistle-blowing, siren-screaming, rock-'n'-rolling hunk of chaos.

Local Touch ■ Some Storz outlets may play music that is a bit more "hard" than others, in reflection of local taste differences, but the group dislikes anything "raucous" and absolutely forbids any music or commentary that is offensive or suggestive, Mr. Armstrong holds. Air personalities must be mature and have untarnished personal and professional records, he adds.

"We believe in strong local management of stations and we feel each community we are in is separate and distinct," he explains. There is no regimented format imposed by central authority; no central bookkeeping. Mr. Armstrong believes in competent people, well paid, with everyone able to compete for management positions.

Radio is a profession, not merely a business, in Mr. Armstrong's book, and it demands people who are in it for the long haul. "If it isn't your total career," he feels, "if you don't have heart for the business, you can't do a good job."

The late Todd Storz, "a very persuasive young man," induced Mr. Armstrong to forget plans to study law and give full attention to his second love, radio. The time was 1949 and the place KOWH Omaha, the original Storz station (sold in 1957). Here they were to creatively experiment in all types of programing and commercial concepts, pioneering a style of radio that Mr. Armstrong dubbed "top 40" for want of a better description.

Challenge ■ Mr. Armstrong still relishes the zeal of those early days at KOWH. "We were so enamored of the fervor of the new radio I didn't pay any attention to TV," he recalls. "We were going to take on the giants, make them sit up and take notice of 'these young kids who are playing radio' and someday we were going to be number one."

Radio is due "all the respect that television gets, or *Fortune* magazine or the *New York Times*," Mr. Armstrong contends. His cross: trying to convince

Make it sound good and sell it high

radio people they "should all behave that way." Now a member of the boards of both the National Association of Broadcasters and Radio Advertising Bureau, he hopes to expand this crusade.

Mr. Armstrong, however, declines personal credit in this effort. "Any strength that I've got," he contends, "is the strength of our company. I think it has been in demonstrating that you can run a pretty damn clean business on sound business principles, without resorting to cheap theatrics to get your audience or cheap sales techniques to get

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George W. (Bud) Armstrong—Executive VP of Storz Stations (WHB Kansas City, Mo.; WDGY Minneapolis; WTIX New Orleans; WQAM Miami; KOMA Oklahoma City, and KXOK St. Louis) and gen. mgr. of WHB; b. Chicago, Sept. 25, 1927; attended public schools Chicago and Omaha and graduated Creighton Prep School 1945; U. S. Navy 1945-46; BS 1950 Creighton U.; parttime radio work during latter high school and also during college, chiefly at KOWH Omaha as announcer, shifting to KOWH sales staff mid-1949 when it was acquired by Storz group; made VP-gen. mgr. WTIX Sept. 1953 and VP-gen. mgr. WHB June 1954; became executive VP of all Storz operations in 1958; newly elected to boards of both NAB and RAB; since 1958 vice chairman of All-Industry Music Licensing Committee; m. Katherine McDevitt of Omaha, Aug. 14, 1951; children—George Jr., 11; Robert, 10; Sharon Anne, 9; Katherine M., 8; Mary Susan, 7; James T., 2, and Timothy E., 5 mos.; hobbies—golf, football and baseball.

business, and still be successful and well thought of."

Good radio today, Mr. Armstrong says, calls for a broad base of popular music—"like the stock in the soup"—plus strong personalities and entertaining contests or promotions.

These, combined with good taste and professional skill, become wholesome fun for all, he says, explaining that Storz plays music proved popular and doesn't try to make music popular by playing it.

Served with ample portions of news, farm and sports reports, as well as religion, public service and educational or serious discussion shows like WHB's *Night Beat* open-line program, the product, he believes, is a balanced diet appetizing to the whole range of community tastes. Crisp production lends the final touch.

"Our basic thesis has always been that if we deliver the product that the public will listen to, wants to listen to, then the revenue will come our way," Mr. Armstrong says.

Dollar Sign ■ But he is no easy mark on the money side of the ledger. "I'm a tough, hard, competitive guy," Mr. Armstrong admits, and when a salesman doesn't come home with the business "I want to know why." Still, he explains, "we don't want any piece of business so badly that we have to compromise our programing or commercial practices."

At WHB he has set an example of rigid commercial policies and is especially recognized for his firm, yet clear, distinction as to who qualifies for the local retail rate vs. national. He is also proud of the fact that the Storz stations, based on tests of commercial effectiveness levels at KOWH, had adopted policies by at least 1955 predating and more strict than the NAB code.

"Overcommercialization in our view is a cardinal sin," he says, "not because somebody at the FCC might object or you might get a complaint, but because we don't think it's good programing."

In Mr. Armstrong's philosophy there is no way you can drive business out of radio, because the medium is so inherently potent when properly used. Radio is underselling itself and some station rates are ridiculously low, he argues, citing that "we believe in the highest rates imaginable."

Top Money ■ Any time "you have a station that is sold out, whether for a day or a week," he says, "your rates are too low." He prefers two spots an hour at \$100 each to 20 for \$10.

His theory for building a solid radio market is for the leading station to "push that rate right to the hilt, then the other stations don't have to cut their rates as far." They can be competitive by "ratio" pricing according to their market share.