

Dave Croninger ("When I was on in prime time, I used David Cherrington Croninger") is the youthful new president of Metromedia Radio. At the risk of offending some of his television colleagues, he makes his enthusiasm clear: "All the good folks in the broadcasting business are really radio people. They may just be dislocated."

The man who manages six AM and six FM stations plus the new Metromedia Radio news service strongly believes in radio as a creative medium and is eager to talk about it. "There aren't really that many hidebound rules within which we have to operate," he says. A good broadcaster, asserts Mr. Croninger, is constantly re-evaluating programing. "Just because it worked last year doesn't mean it's going to work next year. That's where the creativity comes in," he points out. "All broadcasters have the same ingredients—the same news, the same records."

In a good-humored cuff at the opposition, he adds: "We don't buy a product, throw a switch and there it is." Creative radio, he suggests, programs daily, and with a community awareness.

If Mr. Croninger occasionally lapses into a sales pitch for his favorite medium, it is because his varied career has led him into all corners of the radio business, including sales as well as programing, on-the-air work, and administration. "Engineering is the only thing I have to stay away from. I don't know ohms from kilocycles," he adds. But his sales philosophy is that the fellow most capable of selling a product is the one who is most familiar with it, and he is often the fellow who created it.

Mr. Croninger confesses that he is the only broadcaster he knows who decided in high school he wanted to manage a radio station. He was born in Miami—pronounced Miam-uh by locals—in Oklahoma on "April 15, 1931, Aries." His father is still a practicing lawyer in Miami.

Speaking in a voice that after broadcast training is free of the regionalisms of his Oklahoma origins, but with a sense of humor that is definitely not Eastern, he quips: "I had a lot of fun when I lived in Florida. People asked me if I was a native and I said yes."

His family encouraged him to go to college—if he could figure a way to finance it. Mr. Croninger applied for a scholarship at the University of Tulsa. failed to win it, but was so impressed with the head of the broadcasting department that he managed to get his schooling anyway.

While studying at Tulsa, he began his radio career as part-time announcer for Tulsa stations KOME (now KCNW), KTUL (now KELI) and KRMG. In 1952 he graduated with a bachelor of arts degree, having majored in radio-tele-

Executive with an enthusiastic bias toward radio

vision production and programing and minored in business administration.

Subsequently, Mr. Croninger enrolled in law school, three times. "Each time, after about four weeks, after buying all the books, I'd win some audition to do commercials at night, and I needed the money."

In 1953, Mr. Croninger moved to Kansas City, Mo., where he served for two years as an announcer at KCMO. KCMO-TV was then a new station. "This was at the time people were sounding the death knell for radio," relates Mr. Croninger. Television-station licenses were going largely to the owners of radio stations and many of the radio

operations "were left to flounder." Mr. Croninger started on KCMO radio "to let one of the old-timers go into TV," but it was only a few months before he was moved into television.

It was at KCMO that Mr. Croninger first met Todd Storz, a "brilliant" broadcaster for whom he developed a lasting admiration. But the man who founded Storz Stations and who developed the top-40 format made a singularly poor first impression on Dave Croninger.

"He was about four feet, 16 inches tall and not a very imposing man," Mr. Croninger remembers jokingly "When I departed I said 'good luck' because I thought he was an announcer looking for a job."

Initial meeting notwithstanding, Mr. Croninger soon joined Todd Storz's WHB in Kansas City, Mo. as an on-the-air radio personality. His first job as a program director followed in 1955 at Storz' WTIX New Orleans. When Storz took over WQAM Miami, Mr. Croninger was named program director at that station. "I haven't been on the air since," he adds.

In 1956, the Croninger family made another big move, this time to Chicago, where he joined Westinghouse Broadcasting Co. as program director of WIND.

In 1958, Dave Croninger "got together with a man who had a little bit of money, and I convinced him I had a little bit of smarts" and he bought WTAC Flint, Mich. It was in Flint that Mr. Croninger acquired one of his more favorite hobbies, flying.

Mr. Croninger joined Metromedia in 1961 when he opened the company's Detroit sales office, which subsequently became part of Metro Radio Sales. Later in 1961 he was named vice president and general manager of KMBC Kansas City, Mo. (now KMBZ), when the AM station was acquired by Metromedia. The following year he established KMBC-FM (now KMBR[FM]).

In January 1965, Mr. Croninger was transferred by Metromedia Radio to WIP Philadelphia where he was vice president and general manager until 1968, when he joined WNEW New York in the same capacity.

A man with little spare time but a remarkable number of spare-time activities, Mr. Croninger plays squash "when I can find a partner," golfs, scuba dives "though it's difficult to scuba dive around here," and skis. The Croningers are currently planning a vacation trip to Aspen, Colo., for skiing, a sport they enjoy as a family.

The Croningers now live in Greenwich, Conn. Eleven-year-old Kimberly Croninger is as good a skier as her father, but without all the lessons, he says with mock resentment. Everyone calls her "Kim," says Mr. Croninger, but he calls her "Berly."

WeeksProfile



David Cherrington Croninger—president of Metromedia Radio division; b. April 15, 1931 Miami, Okla.; on-the-air personality, WHB Kansas City, Mo., 1954; program director, WTIX New Orleans, 1955; program director, WQAM Miami, Fla., 1956; program director, WIND Chicago, 1956-58; owned and operated WTAC Flint, Mich., 1958-1961; opened Metromedia sales office in Detroit, 1961, named vice president and general manager, KMBC Kansas City, Mo. (now KMBZ), also in 1961; established KMBC-FM 1962 (now KMBR [FM]); vice president and general manager, WIP Philadelphia, 1965-68; vice president and general manager, WNEW New York, 1968-69; named president, Metromedia Radio, 1969; m. Kathleen Westerman of Tulsa, Okla., March 26, 1954; children—Kimberly, 11.