

Chuck Blore, The Early Years

'Great ideas come from people who don't know there's a box'

Feelings.

A kid's face when he first sees Santa, the adrenaline shot that accompanies a hole-in-one, the sickly sensation that crawls across my skin whenever I hear Morris Albert sing. Yuck!

Chuck Blore didn't discover feelings, but he was the first person in radio to understand how universal they are and to apply that understanding to moving product. "His innovative pioneering of emotions as the living center of great radio changed radio advertising forever," says Dick Orkin, creator of Chickenman and a legend in his own right. "Hell, make that all advertising."

As the saying goes, it takes one to know one.

BIBLE SCHOOL

Traveling west on Route 66, you'd have no reason to stop in Kingman, AZ, unless the neon sign flashing "Air-Cooled Rooms" sucked you into the Hotel Beale.

Nearly 50 years ago Chuck Blore left his home in Los Angeles for Kingman, where he sweated through his first radio job for three months, then aimed his car south to Tucson and KTKT, where Gordon McLendon found him.

McLendon, who heard Blore as he was passing through on his way to Dallas, didn't stop to call, and even if he had, Blore wouldn't have known who he was. Instead, when he got home, McLendon instructed Don Keyes, PD of McLendon's new acquisition, KTSA/San Antonio, to offer Blore a job. Blore, truth be told, was in no hurry to leave Tucson, so he played hard to get over the money, but when Keyes offered him \$87.50 a week, Blore caved.

KTSA's new staff gathered in Dallas for McLendon lessons. "His policy book was like a bible," says Blore. Like fundamentalists the world over, McLendon had the last word. "There's nothing more you have to know," he told his disciples. "And nothing less."

At KTSA Blore was troubled by how he sounded ("I've never had the kind of voice that'd put you on the radio"), so, to stand out, he created "little theater pieces, little plays, all 20, 30, 40 seconds long." These vignettes were exclusively his, or so he thought until Keyes told him that McLendon was bicycling them to his other stations.

Blore confronted The Man. "I didn't know you were putting these things on your other stations," he said. "I think I should be paid."

"No," answered McLendon, "you should be a program director."

"I don't want to be a program director," replied Blore. "I'm going to be the greatest DJ ever known to man!"

"No," McLendon said, patiently, "you're going to be a

program director, and I think you've made a wise decision."

And so it was that Blore found himself heading west, toward El Paso and KELP. He remembers thinking that he didn't know the first thing about programming, and he remembers saying to his wife, in the car's darkness, "I only hope when I hear this station, I'll know whether it's good or bad."

DOIN' TIME IN TEXAS

El Paso.

In 1957 the city had eight radio stations — four English, four Spanish — but KELP was the dominant leader when Blore arrived, despite McLendon's dictate: "Play two Glenn Miller records every hour."

Blore executed McLendon's format by the book. In fact, because KELP was the chain's stepchild and Gordon wasn't there enough to break his own rules, the station was probably the purest example of McLendon's ideals.

Six months into Blore's tenure McLendon sold KELP, and with it, Blore's contract. Blore wanted to stay with the McLendon organization, but all Gordon said was, "We'll talk about that later."

They never did, and Blore found himself alone in El Paso.

Blore still thinks that McLendon is the only genius he's ever met, but that doesn't mean that every idea he had was stellar. Case in point: the size of the playlist. "As soon as I was no longer under the McLendon yoke," Blore says, "I stole Todd Storz's music format, and the playlist got very short, very quickly."

With a smaller playlist, KELP got bigger numbers. So big (a mid 70s share) that the day after Thanksgiving 1957 Blore got a call from KFVB/Los Angeles.

"Are you the program director?"

"Yes."

"You have amazing ratings."

"Yes, I do. You're right."

And so, Blore went home to Los Angeles. Though he didn't know it at the time, he wouldn't ever leave again. He was only 28, and KFVB was his second programming job.

COLOR RADIO

KFVB was owned by Crowe-Collier Publishing. In early 1957 it bought the station for \$650,000 and within 10 years sold it to Westinghouse for over \$19 million. But not before Blore took the town by storm. He arrived in Los Angeles on Dec. 1 with plans to launch his version of KFVB by the new year.

First on his list of changes was dropping the 4:30pm

sports block. "No, no, no," pleaded Bob Purcell, the Crowe-Collier guy who'd found Blore in El Paso. "That's \$225,000, a quarter of our billing."

Blore wasn't flexible. "It has to go, or we can't do it," he said. There was also the matter of a 30-minute union show in morning drive. When Purcell agreed to ditch that, too, Blore was convinced they were really going to go with this thing. And him.

Within three months KFVB, "Color Radio, Channel 98," was No. 1 in Los Angeles. What Blore remembers most was the fun of it. "One day Bobby Darin, Paul Anka, The Everly Brothers and Connie Francis were all in my office at the same time," he says. "Bobby Darin said, 'Boy, if a bomb went off in this place, the music business would be over.'"

By 1963 Blore was Crowe-Collier's VP/Programming. Besides KFVB, the group included KEWB/San Francisco and KDWB/Minneapolis, and applications were at the FCC for stations in New York and Washington. What happened next may surprise you.

"Newton Minnow was Chairman of the FCC at the time, and he said, 'No, no, no, we can't have one private corporation talking to that many people,'" Blore recalls.

With expansion plans out, Blore found himself writing memos. The fun was gone. When Crowe-Collier offered him a chance to run an audiovisual start-up, he took it, but once he discovered that the business was cranking out teaching materials, he quit and prepared to sit out an 18-month national noncompete.

A BETTER IDEA

He played golf and drew a comic strip, "Captain Glutz of the Space Command," things he'd always wanted to do. Then one day, between Glutz and putts, Paul Stoddard, a salesman from KFVB, dropped by to ask for help with a car-dealer promotion. Blore, however, had a better idea.

"Don't give away balloons to get them there," Blore advised. "Sell them before they go — do a good commercial." Blore did the spot. He wrote new lyrics for The Playmates hit "Beep, Beep" and called jingle master Johnny Mann to help. Then he forgot about it and went back to golf.

"Then I got this telegram," says Blore. "Congratulations. You've won first place in the Advertising Association of the West."

In the years that followed, Blore and his partner, Don Richman, reinvented radio advertising. But that's a story for another time.

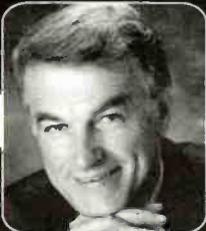
Oh, and did I mention that Blore lunched with the Queen of England? I imagine that she's a pretty nice girl but doesn't have much to say — but then, that's just a feeling.

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Chuck Blore

RADIO AMERICA



Doug Stephan

Doug Stephan's Good Day Morning Show

Doug hosts one of the most listened-to syndicated morning talk programs in America.



Alan Nathan

Battle Line with Alan Nathan

Alan Nathan, the centrist with teeth, advocates a more biting aggressiveness. "Smart and Fast, this show has a great edge." Tony Blankley, McLaughlin Group Panelist, NBC



Blanquita Cullum

The BQ View

BQ has a lively mix of politics, pop culture, personality and listener call-ins with a conservative edge.



Oliver North

Common Sense Radio with Oliver North

Conservative and compelling, this international icon challenges and entertains as no other can.



Rollye James

The Rollye James Show

They don't call her legendary for nothing.