

# History of KBOA

By [Joe Bankhead](#)

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Thursday, October 15th, 2009, marked the day of my retirement from over sixty years of active participation in radio, particularly station [KBOA](#) in Kennett, MO, where it started, to include servicing and supplying over 2,000 stations worldwide from my position with an advertising giant firm in Memphis, TN. Many of my colleagues in radio were almost unanimous in saying, "Joe, your knowledge and association with small town radio, you should write a book!" Hell, I'd never written anything in my life other than correspondence, radio and TV commercials, ad an occasional report for a newspaper or magazine article, but the challenged seemed like something to do to occupy the little time I have left, so here goes.



Just a few days shy of my ninety-second birthday, this tired, old manual Royal typewriter that has been my constant companion and I will see if we can engender a little of the old time magic that has made up our existence for over two-thirds of our lives, and chronicle it for whoever wants to read this hodge-podge of a tired, old man.

Back on July 18th or 19th in 1947, I gathered my little family, wife Katherine, 4-year-old daughter Terry and two-year-old son Jimmy in our post-war 1946 DeSoto coupe down in Dallas, Texas, where I was a pilot for Braniff Airlines, and headed for a visit with my wife's sister, Evelyn Jones, and her husband, Robert Jones, an attorney in Kennett, MO and headed for Missouri's Bootheel. Since I've been a radio junkie all my life, familiar with stations in St. Louis, Chicago San Antonio, Phoenix, and Dallas (places I've lived), my car radio was always on as I traveled. Somewhere in mid-Arkansas my radio picked up at new signal on 830 kilocycles that I was unfamiliar with. It turned out to be a new station emanating from the town of Kennett on its first day of operation as a licensed entity for information and entertainment, and to say the least, I was enthralled. Never before had I heard such a mixture of music, chatter, foreign information such as soil temperatures, weather conditions at the time, hospital admissions and discharges, fire locations, gospel singing and isolated news bits, plus commercials pertaining to local businesses. Needless to say, this conglomeration of information stayed with us all the way into Kennett where we disembarked at the Jones home for our short visit.

An announcer I'd heard on our way identified himself as "Norman Shane" who sounded suspiciously like young podiatrist Dr. Norman Shainberg who we had met on earlier visits. Bob Jones confirmed that Shane was indeed Doc Shainberg in his new role as radio announcer on Kennett's new stations, KBOA. It didn't take me long to head for this new station to visit with Doc and what a sight I encountered! This station I visited in the southwest part of town was a collaboration (sic) of [clapboard bean houses](#) that had been assembled together to offer shelter to a mass of transmitters, headsets control boards, amateurish studios, and about a half dozen

employees milling about, trying to present some semblance of an active radio station in its infancy. [Norman Shane invited me into the studio](#) as he went about conducting his “program” and I was quick to realize that these guys (with the exception of **Bob Conner** the chief engineer and **Ray Van** and **Johnny Mack**, who had prior experience in Blytheville, Ar at KLCN) didn’t know any more about radio than I did. I also learned that the station was looking for a sales person.

Ray Van and [Paul Jones](#), the editor and manager of the local newspaper who had been instrumental in putting together the group that became Kennett Broadcasters Association, had done a good job of selling radio commercials to most of the existing businesses in Kennett, and signed annual contracts that more than made up to (the) initial total investment in the station which was about \$50,000. With this original support from its community, KBOA seemed like a great investment from the start... a sign really born out over the ensuing years. KBOA started as a powerhouse and maintains its position still.

My wife and I had often discussed and agreed that we’d like our kids to grow up in a small town (as we had), to attend local schools, make lifelong friends, be part of the local community, a to have an established home where their lives could have a good measure of stability and security through their formative years. Since we had made many friends during our visits with Bob and Evelyn and were totally impressed with these nice folks, we decided that Kennett might be the place where we’d settle down after the hectic war years and enjoy our small town existence. It’s true that the town itself had several drawbacks, but the nice people (was) the deciding factor. I decided to apply for the KBOA sales job and was soon to encounter station manager and CEO, Paul Jones.

First, let me tell you a few initial observations about the town of [Kennett](#). The town was the County Seat of Dunklin County and was a shopping hub for farm families from a range of thirty or forty miles in every direction. The Kennett Square was the business center of town with a fully-occupied array of businesses such as drug stores, theatres, pool halls, clothing stores for both men and women, a JC Penny outlet, restaurants, a baker, insurance agency or two, auto parts store, a discount shoe and clothing outlet and a couple of department stores... all of which were prosperous catering to the local clientele. The town had originally been planned by city fathers to have the potential growth (of) around four thousand people. In 1947 the city population was already over 8,000 and was suffering with a water supply system, sewer and drainage system, and street layout designed for a much smaller abode so you can imagine the problems the city faced from its explosive growth. At that time there was a proliferation of “outhouses” all over Kennett with all the unpleasant odor and fly infestation that these crappers caused. Over the ensuing years, I’m happy to report that the city council acted to outlaw the outhouses and they were eliminated. The old, sandy, rut-filled residential streets were also paved or hard-surfaced which encouraged the development of many pretty residential communities and the erection of several palatial homes. It was nice to be an observer to all the advancement that Kennett has experienced over the past half century. But let’s get back to my visit with Paul Jones.

Paul had no idea who I was, what I did, my previous work experience, how much I made of what my potential might be as a station employee. I had been an officer in the Army Air Corps all during WW2, emerging as a Lt. Colonel. I had obtained my Airline Transport License while still in

service and was quickly hired by Braniff Airlines when I separated from Active Duty. My airline salary, plus the income I picked up with part-time employment as a real estate agent in Dallas provided us with a handsome income of over \$1,000 monthly which was a helluva good amount in the immediate post-war America.

Paul's offer was a 10% commission on anything I sold. My territory was anywhere outside of Kennett where he and Ray Van would handle sales, and I would receive \$25 per month for car expenses, an amount which would be subtracted from my commission check. Wow! Ten percent! What an opportunity! I countered with the request I be allowed to sell anyone or any business in Kennett that was not now on the air currently, and any new businesses that might start up in town. We agreed on these terms, and since I foresaw an opportunity to greatly expand on my usual \$1,000 per month income, I accepted Paul's offer and was titled "Time Salesman" to start August 1st, 1947. I thus became a member of the original KBOA staff, and now, over 63 years later, am the only surviving member... all the rest having gone to that great radio station in the sky. It's a damn shame that I have so little time before I join them. (Please note that I didn't say I was going to join them in heaven)

Dear reader, please keep in mind that when I started as a time salesman, there was no one to teach me anything. No one in the station had ever had sales experience except Ray Van, who was just an order-taker and used no sales "pitch" whatsoever in his presentation. Ray was a fine announcer with a great radio voice and it turned out a good appreciation to imaginative radio copy which I was quick to provide. I was to sell 60-second spots with a rate card calling for \$2.25 base rate for 260 spots per year, and a 15-minute program rate of \$9.90 for a minimum of 52 programs annually.

Initially I had to decide what made a good, effective radio commercial. There were no guidelines. No book of instruction on how to sell, what to sell, or even what to present as a sales proposition. I decided that my commercials would be constructed thusly:

- Attract attention
- Create desire
- Direct action

This was my initial format and one I followed all through my career. Further, I would encourage advertisers to use their own voices for their radio sales pitch. This brings to mind my old friend J. D. "Carload" Faulkner from McCaul Tire and Appliance, who became quite familiar to KBOA listeners in the early years, and who was a regular user of the station facility all the following years of his business life. I would try to develop personalities to stand out in the business community, such as Jim Collier (the "Loan Arranger"); "Overloaded" Baker, the Pontiac dealer; "Striegelized" Used Cars, for Zeke Striegel, the local Plymouth-Dodge dealer; and "Martin's chicks are husky little dudes" for Martin Hatchery in Clarkton. I would try to utilize sing-lines or musical jingles as they became available, and always employ an image-line to tag the commercial. (examples)

- Get rollin' with (local tire dealer)
- Add a little color to your life (for local TV dealer)
- Save with (local dealer) and you'll be savin' sound
- Play it cool this summer with (local air conditioner dealer)

- Deal with the “do it right” dealer (for service department)
- Lawn care’s a snap with Snapper
- We buy big so you can save big
- It’s the dealer not the deal that makes a better buy.
- Don’t call the bank, call the bankers.
- When it comes to value, Semo comes to (local dealer)
- Talk to (local dealer). You can thank him later.

In many cases I would create a sample commercial (based on some observation of a newspaper ad) or simply an observation of a particular business in its location, size, type of inventory, or longevity in the community. With radio, I could offer to deliver a prospective audience measured in thousands of households compared to the few hundred reached by local newspapers, or the even more expensive use of handbills or direct mail.

Back in those early years it was impossible to measure the actual number of listeners that KBOA was reaching regularly. For evidence of the station’s popularity, I could show photographic evidence of the [mountains of cards and letters](#) we received from our listeners, particularly during contests or simply as requests for a particular song.

One of our local entertainers, [Butterball Paige, and Ray Van had a contest](#) to see which one had the most listeners, with the mail each received being the measurement. The loser had to push the winner around the Kennett Square in a wheelbarrow. Ray Van emerged as the winner and when Butterball actually trundled Ray around the courthouse, at least a thousand fans were there to observe the occasion. Needless to say, the business on the Square enjoyed a good day from the crowd that KBOA drew. A wheelbarrow wouldn’t hold all the mail the contest drew.

Please keep in mind that we’re dealing with virgin territory as regards the early days of radio selling and everything was done from scratch. Early on, I had some two-penny postcards printed up which were mailed to a host of outlying businesses in neighboring towns. These cards implied “Mr. Merchant: Are you aware that you can advertise on KBOA for as little as \$2.25 per day? If you’d like to reach our huge responsive audience with your sales message, just call eight-three-oh and ask for Joe.” 8-3-0 was our phone number and, of course, the signature was mine. How many responses did I get? Just one. It was from a country store owner, Denny Mitchell, who had a little mercantile outlet in the Gobler community out on county-line road, east of Kennett. Denny asked me to come out with my proposition. And there begins a great part of the successful history of Radio Station KBOA.

[Gobler Mercantile Company](#) was a weathered building of corrugated tin siding, a gravel parking lot in front, a user-worn front porch and a much larger interior which belied its initial appearance from the road. Denny (Mitchell) had a sizeable inventory of groceries, dry goods, clothing items, shelves of hardware a small refrigerated section for milk, cheese and other dairy products, and aspirations of the giant that his business was to become. As an initial introduction to the station audience, Denny simply wanted to introduce his location, his low-overhead pricing structure, and to designate Gobler Mercantile as “Missouri’s Largest Country Store.”

We started with a schedule of ten spots per day, a number which was unheard of in the short period of KBOA’s existence. Denny initially started with his on copy, read beautifully by Ran Van

and implying “Gobler Mercantile Company located four miles south of Highway 84 on the Pemiscot-Dunklin County line road... Missouri’s largest country store...where prices are made, not followed!” Then would follow a list of items priced appreciably lower than normally offered merchandise by other stores.

Was it effective? Soon, Gobler Mercantile was the talk of southeast Missouri and northeast Arkansas. Families came by the hundreds, then thousands, swallowing Denny Mitchell with a sudden influx of demand for merchandise that soon required 18-wheeler trucks to supply on a regular weekly or even daily basis.

Within a few weeks, Denny decided to expand his radio coverage to a half-hour, then a full hour program which he wanted called “[Old Camp Meeting Time!](#)” This was all new to me, camp-meetings, that is, so I called on Ray Van to accompany me to Gobler to get with Denny and formulate the program that was to become the most popular, talked-about, successful radio program that has ever been witnessed in the midwest. Denny Mitchell was on his way to his “Giant” among country stores.

[The physical store expanded to five or six additional corrugated tin additions](#), enclosing a huge inventory of building supplies, appliances, (including) the new phenomenon, television, plumbing supplies and just about everything that old Sam Walton envisioned in his new idea for WalMart. Denny was so big he owned and operated his own fleet of 18-wheelers, just to supply goods for his giant operation.

Gobler Mercantile also helped establish me as an authority on what radio advertising could affect. Businessmen actually started asking me for suggestions on how KBOA might help them grow and prosper. I was willing to oblige. I might add that within three months of my starting date with Paul Jones, in spite of my meager pauper-like 10% commission, my commission check was in excess of my \$1,000 monthly goal. Denny Mitchell, I loved you, baby!

Of course, Gobler Mercantile was just a small part of the career that evolved. My territory, which I covered weekly, ranged from Poplar Bluff, Dexter, Morehouse, Sikeston, New Madrid, Portageville, Hayti, Caruthersville, Steele, Blytheville, Paragould, Senath, and a growing number of businesses within the Kennett city limits. As our local clients dropped their schedules due to lack of servicing on the part of Ray Van and the super-busy newspaper editor, their reinstatement became my privilege and priority. I was quickly selling, servicing and preparing radio commercials for hundreds of radio advertisers.

As our advertising family grew, I sensed a need to diversify the standard price-and-item format used by many advertisers, and to offer a variety that soon was to become actual entertainment. Along with the growth of our advertising family, we also saw an increase in our family of talented personnel. KBOA soon was employing sixteen or seventeen regular people. We used live talent exclusively with different announcers on two-hour programming segments. Each used his own theme song and each specialized in a particular music style. [Audio: [station jingles](#)]

We were programmed as “middle of the road” in that we offered big band music, country music, gospel music, live bands, gospel quartets, with a short-term offering of duets and individuals that came along with programming ideas that appealed to Ray Van in his capacity as program

director. Among these were **Jack and Norman Luna**, [The Troy Lumpkin Family](#), and a host of single guitar pickers who simply wanted free radio time to peddle local appearances, or to sell such items as prayer cloths or song books. We were never at a loss for these itinerant artists who applied for the huge KBOA listening audience which was now accepted as a gigantic advertising force. We paid them nothing. All performed just for exposure.

As a daytime only radio station, KBOA with its 830 KC location on the dial shared a clear channel with WCCO in Minneapolis, and when we signed off at dark, WCCO was faintly discernable on our frequency. Cardinal baseball was always a favorite among local radio listeners and we longed for a means of carrying the games, particularly at night. By 1948 [we had applied for an FM designation](#) which was an entirely new advancement in radio transmission. All during the baseball season, before FM, KBOA would receive the nightly broadcasts over a wire (telephone line) and [use loud speakers on top of the building to entertain fans who gathered nightly](#) to hear their CARDS in our parking lot. By 1949 KBOA-FM came into existence on 98.9 with a power of around 3000 watts much to the delight of Cardinal fans who rushed to buy the new FM receivers, flaws and all.

Early FM transmissions tended to drift from assigned frequencies and the station suffered from many complaints. We were quick to realize that it wasn't the transmitter that caused the drift... it was the receiver, and those early FM receivers caused us a heap of trouble before they worked it out. Just think how FM has taken over radio in the past fifty years or so!

With our influx of new talent, we were now capable of producing a variety of commercials. Our array of awesome talent included good old [Charlie B. Watson](#), the comedic talent of [Mr. Rudy](#) (Rudy Pylant), the big-time skill of our **Bob Miles** and a host of others including [Harry Fairchild](#), [Ray Rust](#), **Lucky Watkins**, [Charlie Harrison](#), and our old stand-by and station original announcer, Tom Reeder, known on the air as [Johnny Mack](#). We used each of these guys regularly for specific advertisers. Bob Miles, for instance, was capable of giving us many of the voices we called for whether it was a grandma, a grandpa, a happy housewife, a gruff old redneck, or even a child when the copy called for one. Our old buddy, [John Mays](#), was always entertaining when called upon to imitate the voice of Liberace, which I liked to use on many occasions. [Audio: [commercials 1](#), [commercials 2](#)]

Our FM audience was greatly limited due to the absence of FM radios among our audience. But those who did listen received real treats over 98.9. I remember Lucky Watkins who originated his make-believe ballroom on the shores of "beautiful Lake Missouri." Lucky would feature a famous, well-known band nightly incorporating the band's theme song for authenticity, then follow up with a full hour of that band's recorded music. Each selection would be followed by applause sound effects with Lucky making song intros as if he were actually in "the ballroom."

We had a never-ending supply of recordings from all the major bands since I believe we were on the mailing lists of every record producer in existence. Our record library was jammed with thousands of those old 78 rpm discs by every artist on every label and we threw nothing away. We employed a young lady full-time just to file, catalog and keep track of our ever-expanding glut of records. When we'd decide to "clean house," we'd bundle packages of ten records -- no particular music style indicated -- take them down to the courthouse lobby and sell them for

\$1.00 per package. Of course, we'd use the station to let folks when records were (going to be) sold. We'd sell out in just a few hours.

From its onset, [KBOA was dedicated to the promotion of Kennett, Missouri](#), as an attractive and active shopping center for the midwest and midsouth. This was the plan of the original founders and investors, and has been carried out to this day, although KBOA is now accepted as more of a "regional" station.

Business usually slowed down in Missouri's Bootheel during February while we waited for the new crop year to begin. Everything revolved around farm income, and we singled out February as being the month most in need of promotion. In the early years we developed city-wide sales during which each participating merchant would offer a better-than-usual value for sale, and offer an entry for purchasers to register for a cash prize (usually \$1,000) to be awarded by drawing at the end of the month. These sales drew many folks to town and culminated with a huge throng on the day of the drawing, since attendance of entrants was necessary to claim the prize. These drawings were probably illegal but were never contested by the Prosecuting Attorney.

We also inaugurated a new idea, the annual "Sidewalk Sale" with each participating merchant actually placing his sale merchandise in front of his (business) for the one or two days we designate. For these events, we'd like up Johnny Mack, traffic sound effects along with crowd noises, and create commercials as if Johnny Mack was actually in front of the merchant's business, telling about the various bargains being offered. We'd have store employee listening to the broadcasts and going out front to see if Johnny Mack was actually in front of the store.

Other city-wide sales we'd use in February were the "Cascade of Coupons" where we'd purchase a full page in the local paper and insert coupons for each merchant with a different bargain each week for the month and which was used by the entrant as an entry for the \$1,000 drawing at month's end. Another was the "Shop Free In February" promotion where purchasers saved their sales slips from participating merchants all month, filled entry blanks at time of purchase for the drawing and could win the total of their purchases from participating merchants (not to exceed \$1,000) at month's end. Participants were not restricted to businesses on the Square alone, but numbered many of the businesses apart from downtown. We could count on almost 100% participation from local businesses since each recognized the promotions depended on joint action. KBOA would sell the month-long package for \$150 or \$200, giving each merchant \$150 or \$200 in advertising time, and then furnishing the \$1,000 cash prize. Whenever Kennett would conduct these month-long promotions, we'd be deluged by inquiries from stations in other towns about our mechanics and how they could develop their own sales. In many cases we could oblige if the station wasn't considered direct competition. I could never accept other radio stations as competition anyway. If they took away my business it meant they had a better idea than I did. It was up to me to have a better idea than they had to win my business back. My competition for the advertising dollar was the newspaper, handbills, outdoor advertising, direct mail and, eventually, television. Sixty years ago, radio was king of them all.

You know, as I go back and read all this crap I've been putting on paper, I'm taken by the frequency of the least important word in the English language, i.e. "I", and for this I apologize. The success of KBOA was due to the efforts of all employees from the general manager to the

caretaker and their dedication in developing a broadcasting icon. “I” was just a small part of it but, hell, “I” is the only one I can speak for since the sales effort was all of my doing.

Recollections are slow in coming after all these years, and details in this 92-year-old mind are somewhat fuzzy, but they are still enjoyable as they are conjure up. Happy to recall how **Wilcoxson Furniture** grew from a small store in Gideon, Missouri, to the giant installation it now occupies in Wilcoxson Center on Kennett’s south bypass. Glenn and Bill Wilcoxson were dear friends and I’m so proud of the expertise their boys are now showing.

I’m happy how **McCaul Tire and Appliance** has evolved due to the efforts of my buddy, “Carload” Faulkner, how his business acumen grew into national prominence in the tire industry, and how the store and his descendants continue to use the station. It’s fun to recall how Rodney Riggs was overwhelmed with customers when he advertised his sale on basketballs at **Skeeter Kell Sporting Goods** back in the early years. It’s sad that Layton Pickard isn’t around to remember how we promoted a one-day clearance of his used car inventory via radio and how he was selling cars faster than he could fill out the paperwork.

**John McClain** can still tell you about how we developed the Big John theme for his Chevy-Cadillac-Olds agency and its astounding success. I put Edwin Harris and his **H&H Tractor Company** in its fixed-position at noon, Monday through Friday, and that schedule was continued without interruption until his untimely passing. **Terrell Baker** maintained the nickname “Poor Boy” long after he ended his grocery career and became successful in the insurance field. [John and Sam Hamra](#) aren’t with us to attest the attention we engendered with his “Should bring, Sam wants” pricing line for **Sam’s Factory Outlet**, or how we enabled John to enlarge his store from the single Kennett location to stores in seven adjoining southeast Missouri towns. If we could go back, I’m sure we’d have the testimony from **Fox Furniture** in Morehouse, Missouri, on how KBOA helped Fox become a powerhouse in the home furnishings field. **Oldham’s Sausage**, **KAS Potato Chips**, and **Hart’s Bread** are names familiar to KBOA’s earlier listeners, who became consumers of their quality products due to the promptings of Radio KBOA. The list of successful promotions goes on and on.

**Sinkers Cottonseed** and its acid-delinting process comes to mind. **Stevenson Furniture** and Velma’s regular use of our station to promote her furniture company in Paragould comes to mind, as does **Lester Furniture** in Portageville, good old **Sam Hamra** in Steele, Missouri, **Shainberg’s Department Store** in New Madrid and Stovall’s in Malden. All were early and regular customers, now long gone.

Penny Jack Hall and his **Globe Shoe Service** in Hayti, along with **Joy Theater** in Hayti and the **Richmond Theater** in Senath. These are just a few of the customers, and friends, I encountered during the early years. Reminiscing is fun, but let’s get back to the development of KBOA as an advertising source to be reckoned with.

With the advancement we enjoyed and the acclaim we gained with acceptance by local advertisers, it wasn’t long before we began to attract the attention of larger, regional accounts such as [Hart’s Bakery](#) in Blytheville. L. S. “Hart” Hartzog was the owner and operator of Arkansas Bakery and he summoned me to inquire about how KBOA could assist in promoting



his quality loaf. On my trip back to Kennett, my mind was active in trying to conjure up a singing jingle I'd ask **Chuck Harding** to help develop. Perhaps you remember the lyrics:

*When you go to do your shopping at your grocery store  
Don't say bread, say "Hart's"  
It's always so delicious, so fresh and nutritious  
Don't say bread, say "Hart's"  
It stays fresher longer than any bread on earth.  
Every time you ask for Hart's you get your money's worth  
It's wrapped up so you'll know it. The hearts are there to show it.  
Don't say bread, say "Hart's"  
Ask your grocer for delicious Hart's Bread*

Chuck composed the music background, sang solo on the taped presentation and the next day I was back in Blytheville with one of the original jingles of its time and which delighted our prospect, to the tune of ten spots per day, seven days a week, plus a thirty-minute program at noon, Monday through Friday, featuring [Chuck Harding and His Colorado Cowhands](#). That I went on to develop and advertising agency in Memphis, serving Hart's Bakeries, **Bunny Bread Bakery** in Anna, Illinois, **City Finance** in Memphis and **American Bakery Cooperatives** in Teaneck, New Jersey, is inconsequential at this point.

Selling radio was what I was hired to do, but I quickly found out that it was "servicing" the account that was more important. After he's bought, the customer doesn't like to feel like he's been forgotten. He likes, and deserves, attendant attention. After I put a client on the air, I would go back regularly, most often weekly, to see if we were getting results. If his ad failed to produce expected results, I might suggest changing the ad entirely, rearranging the schedule, lowering any prices mentioned, or even delaying his schedule to coincide with his local factory's payday, or a time of year when farm income was higher and consumer response more likely. In any event, I let my advertiser know that I was concerned and that I would exercise any effort to make him satisfied with his advertising schedule. Servicing accounts was what made KBOA advertisers regular customers, day after day, month after month, and year after year. Back originally, I asked customers to sign annual contracts as the requirement of the station. It wasn't long before I was dealing on a handshake basis, taking the word of my advertiser, and myself, as agreement enough to get and keep business.

Due to its ever-expanding popularity, KBOA was all-too-often saturated with one-minute commercials, especially in the weeks preceding Christmas, when everyone wanted on the air. It was not unusual to air twenty-nine, one-minute commercials in a thirty minute period, making us entirely devoid of any musical entertainment. It therefore became the duty for [the commercials themselves to be entertaining](#). During this glut period, we would schedule "straight voice" copy using a male voice, followed with a female voice. Then we'd insert a musical jingle like the aforementioned Hart's Bread jingle. Then might come a comedy spot like Mr. Rudy and his corn pone redneck delivery, imploring someone to buy "sump'n as slick as a calf's nose that's just been to the waterin' trough!" This ad placement kept the thirty minute period as entertaining as we could make it. Diversity in our ads was always prominent and apparent.

The salesman assigned to introduce KAS Potato Chips to the Kennett area stopped by the station, saying, "I never heard a station that did as much selling!" When asked for an introductory schedule, he informed me that it required approval from the home office and he'd be happy to pass along our proposal. Thereupon I envisioned a new idea for selling chips. It was to use the sound of chips being chewed as the selling proposition, to popularize freshness. Johnny Mack came up with the idea of crinkling paper to mimic the sound of chips being chewed. I think that's when I came up with the idea of teeth complaining about their inability to sleep while their outer person was chewing those dratted, noisy KAS potato chips. We developed three or four ads using the "sound" idea. The salesman took them up to the home office (and) the KAS owner was so delighted they not only bought our proposed inaugural schedule, but asked permission to use the ads on other stations in their territory. I was only (too) happy to oblige since it gave further evidence of KBOA's acceptance as an advertising force.

Another one that dropped in out of the blue was Charlie Oldham, who was in town introducing his **Oldham's Whole Hog Sausage** to local grocers. Upon Charlie's inquiry about an introductory promotion, we came up with the idea of young pigs discussing how, when they grew up, they wanted to become Oldham's Sausage so everyone would love them. Bob Miles and his pig-like delivery over pigsty sound effects gave us the ammunition needed to land a nice schedule from Oldham's Sausage and a prepaid annual contract. I subsequently enjoyed a long and cordial relationship with Charlie Oldham and visited his plant whenever I was in Kansas City vicinity. He used our spots on several Missouri stations to promote his quality product.

There were three dominant signals in southeast Missouri in the late forties. KLCN in Blytheville, Arkansas; KWOC in Poplar Bluff, Missouri; and now KBOA in Kennett. Our 830 frequency afforded us a strong contention for listeners in competition (with) the other strong signals on 910 and 940. It was only later that new stations came along in Paragould (AR), Caruthersville, Sikeston, Malden, Portageville (all MO) and even little Piggott, across the Arkansas state line. The success of KBOA was strong motivation for new investors to apply for new station licenses. For this we were proud.

I started this effort yesterday morning and after eight solid hours of trying to remember things as they happened, six or so decades ago. I finally took the night off. It's now day #2 and I'm questioning where to begin today's installment. It might as well be "servicing accounts."

When I could come up with a good idea for a commercial, I would just as soon use it for a low-budget account as for the high dollar boys. Our sales philosophy was to always give the little fellow the same attention, creativity, and support that we would afford the bigger advertiser. We never knew when that "little fellow" would emerge as an advertising and/or merchandising giant. Witness: The Gobler Mercantile story.

Speaking again about Gobler Mercantile, our little country store kept expanding until it comprised nearly three acres of sales space under one roof. Its customer base kept growing day after day, while all this was taking its toll on Denny Mitchell. This one man, trying to keep his finger on such a myriad of different departments and locations was overwhelming. Denny's health began deteriorating. His store was so big that customers could drive their trucks directly to the loading docks of outlying departments, load up with high-priced items, pay the department manager or employee on the spot, and drive off. Of course, the employee would pocket the

money and Denny would be totally unaware of the transaction. Remember, this was long before the days of computers and technological inventory control, so huge thefts could go unnoticed.

Denny reached close to the breaking point before the whole operation went up in a ball of smoke and Goble Mercantile burned to the ground. Denny moved the business into Kennett, opened a small convenience store near our "West Y" and went about resting and restoring his health. Soon after, he moved to California and the last we heard he was selling on the floor of a big California appliance dealer. Like the majority of my former friends and acquaintances, I'm sure Denny has gone to meet his Maker.

This brings to mind the **James Kahn** story, as it relates to KBOA. James would never spend a dime with us. Each time we approached him to participate in a city-wide promotion, he would decline, saying, "Go ahead. Bring the crowd to town. I'll get my share without any expense at all." And we'd see James Kahn's ad in the local paper, announcing a special sale on the day of the promotion give-away, when the crowd would mass up on Square. Naturally, I forbid any member of my family spending money with James although he handled the finest quality clothing lines available at the time. When James passed away and the store was taken over by his nephews, Jack and Sol Astrachan, the boys were quick to utilize KBOA's vast audience and placed regular schedules. Likewise, my family became regular customers and still, to this day, I'm wearing clothing purchased from that store, many years ago. Some say our local Walmart did it but the Kennett economy changed so drastically, the boys decided to retire and close Kennett's pioneer department store. After years of abandonment and neglect, the historic James Kahn building is currently being remodeled, rebuilt, redesigned and who knows what the new owner has in mind for the old building. I hope it's something that will revitalize our tired, old, long-suffering downtown Square area.

Now, let's discuss some of the old live talent that the station boasted in the (early) days. First, there was [Tommy Paige, known as "Butterball" Paige](#) and his swinging group of country artists who entertained weekdays on a regular program. From KBOA, Butterball went on to become a member of the famous Roy Acuff group in Nashville.

Next, there came [the Wilburn Family](#), a group of talented kids exploited religiously by old Pop Wilburn, who acted as their manager. There was Lester on bass; Leslie on guitar; Doyle and Teddy on vocals; and pretty young Geraldine as an added attraction. The Wilburns had a regular early morning program and, on many occasions, I would have to hustle young Teddy from the studio to school so he wouldn't be tardy. All these kids were my close friends, and I followed their careers long into their growing fame as country TV entertainers from Nashville. Doyle and Teddy are now gone. I don't know the fate of Lester and Leslie. Both were backup studio musicians in Nashville the last I heard.

Another prolific group of entertainers we featured regularly was [Curly Hickson and the Rhythm Busters](#). Curly had some of the finest musicians around, one being our local Billy Springer a slide guitar genius. Curly's band sounded as near "rock" as anything on the air in those days and he was booked regularly.

Another group, headed by Charlie Crawford, enjoyed a KBOA program and Charlie later emerged with a gospel singing group of his own, from Senath.

Speaking of gospel brings to mind the [McDonald Brothers](#), possibly one of the most talented groups in gospel music history. It's just unfortunate that these men didn't enjoy being recorded and distributed nationally. They were that good. There was Harold (who kind of led the group), Alvin, Ralph and Carl. Each accomplished soloists but sensational when singing in harmony. The McDonald Boys made personal appearances almost nightly all over southeast Missouri and northeast Arkansas, and their regular KBOA exposure kept their audience aware of each appearance. The McDonald quartet was a strong contributor to the early success of our station and received the star treatment from all of us. They were truly "big time."

As (mentioned previously), we must have been on a circuit for the itinerant musicians who travelled the country, looking for radio exposure so they could sell their song books or quack (medicine). We'd give time to a great many of them who would appear long enough to attract attention, receive money from their radio offers, then leave. I can't even begin to recall any of their names, only that we had new voices, new singers or new talent coming from out of nowhere almost weekly. All this diversity in programming made for a unique, amateurish format back when we were striving to build a successful operation Ray Van, as program director, was partial to anything remotely resembling "Gospel" or "religious" whether it be singing or simply reciting a poem. In fact, Ran Van's poem reading became a regular feature during his stint as announcer on Gohler's "Old Camp Meetin' Time."

I've got to tell you about **Miss Martha Turner**. Martha was a clean cut black lady from Hayti who purchased a 15-minute segment to be aired each Saturday morning. On her program she would sing an a cappella song and read all the cards and letters she would receive during the week. She'd arrive at the station three or four hours before her airtime and type out her dialogue (word for word) that she'd recite while on the air I kept a copy of Martha's script on hand for years and I'm sorry I can't provide it for you now. That it was unique and entertaining is a huge understatement. Miss Martha Turner deserves her spot in the history of KBOA. I don't recall her ever trying to sell anything, or ask for donations from listeners. It appears she just wanted to be on the air and accommodate her fans by reading their letters.

I think now's a good time to switch over and talk about FM and its immediate incorporation into our growing operation. FM (frequency modulation) was hyped to be static-free, line-of-sight transmission which was designed to accommodate many new radio permits since actual coverage was to be so limited. While our AM signal suffered from static during lightning attacks or thunderstorms, the FM signal -- though limited in range -- remained static-free.

We had applied for an FM permit solely to accommodate our Cardinal baseball fans with nighttime coverage, but the lack of FM receivers from local merchants was a huge drawback. You needed a special radio to receive the FM transmission. About this time I learned of a company that supplied FM radios for a reasonable price of around \$25.00. Immediately ordered 100 of them for a promotion. When they arrived, I'd take a dozen or so radios to merchants normally selling radios and electronics and leave the FM receivers on consignment The merchants paid nothing. I would advertise the sets being available at a merchant's location. The merchant would sell the radio for \$25, keep \$5 or \$10 as his profit and return the balance to KBOA. Of course we lost a little money on each sale but that was a minor problem. It seems these low-priced radios tended to break down quickly. Customers started returning to the

merchant, complaining of the faulty FM receiver and asking for money back. It was our problem. If we couldn't satisfy the customer with a replacement radio, then we'd return the money and suffer the loss. Our introduction to FM radio was nothing short of troublesome.

Aside from the receiver problem, our trouble with FM extended to lack of sponsors, small audience, and near give-away rate card. In addition to the nightly Cardinal games, we used FM for all our high school athletic broadcasts. We sold entire basketball games for \$25, which included line charges, talent fees for our game broadcaster, the "color man" and my meager commission. The \$25 didn't net the station enough to make FM worthwhile, but we persisted since our KBOA revenue was sufficient to carry both stations. FM car radios were practically non-existent. Initial attempts at FM audience surveys (we hired people to make 100 local calls, asking if folks had an FM radio and whether they were listening to FM at the time) were always disappointing. As people became more familiar with FM, as the number of receivers increased, and as cars started coming equipped with FM receivers, and when KBOA-FM became designated KTMO, our signal gained in acceptability. FM was on its way.

As KBOA and KTMO Sales Manager (I had long since been increased to the usual 15% on sales, been afforded a station car for sales calls, and given commission for our entire monthly gross) and not enjoying the recognition given on-air personalities, I had to rely on self-promotion to establish myself as a KBOA-KTMO representative. In making out-of-town sales calls, I wanted people to know that the KBOA sales rep was in town, and for this I started driving Cadillacs. I wanted a merchant to see that car parked in front of his store and think, "Hey, this kid is driving that big car. He probably knows what he's talking about. We'd better listen!" On other occasions I would make calls in the black 1957 Thunderbird I'd bought from Nub Cater and Peck Romines, or -- more probably -- in the station-provided red Stingray which was a staple all during the early 1960's. At other times I would make a sales call with a small pocket-size radio turned on within my coat. As we'd talk, the merchant would inevitably say, "I'm hearin' a radio somewhere!" Whereupon I'd reply, "Man, you can't get away from radio. It's everywhere!" Then I would reveal the small (transistor) radio he'd been hearing. At other times, I'd make a sales call with my "calf weaner." I had Doyle Webb make me a small contraption out of little metal rods (see drawing). As we would be talking I would have my arm in the circular end, twirling it to attract his attention. "What's that?" he'd ask. "A calf weaner," I'd reply. "How's it work?"



Then I'd explain, "First, you stick the pointed end in the calf's you-know-what, then hook the circular end over a fence post. That'll wean that calf every time!" I'd have trouble living that one down. None of these gags and attempts at recognition were as effective as our reputation for service to our advertisers and the results that our advertising could bring our radio customers. That's what paid off in the end.

Let me break in here and recall a particular commercial we did for McCaul Tire and Appliance Store. "Carload" Faulkner was on the air every day and one time he had a sale on B.F. Goodrich Tires which coincided with a rocket launch, where NASA sent a monkey aloft to circle the earth. Our spot, which aired while the monkey was in flight, "relayed communication" between NASA headquarters and the rocket. The spot opened with the monkey screeching at the top of his lungs. When our announcer inquired about what the monkey was hollering about, the "interpreter" said "the monkey's saying get him down out of here! I need to get to that sale at

McCaul's on Goodrich Tires. My chariot needs a new set of ground pads!" Just an example of radio timing into current events.

Production aids were scarce in the early years. Sometime in the early fifties, a young man named Bill Tanner came by selling a Creative Sales Service production library produced by Pepper Sound Studios in Memphis. It seemed that John Pepper and Bert Ferguson owned a small drug company that wanted to popularize their hair straightener for black ladies. Bill Tanner was hired to call on area radio stations to sell the library for a little cash and time credit on the station so the hair product could be promoted. We were attracted to the library which contained sound effects, generic singing jingles for different business (categories), sales jingles, musical beds and (seasonal) jingles. As a subscriber we were to receive one new disc each month. Of course, we didn't give the time credit, but we did offer the cash figure and Bill Tanner made the sale on our terms. With the new Pepper library we could greatly amplify our production capability, adding musical commercials for our clients and having sound effects in abundance. Pepper even supplied us with singing station ID's (singing call letters) which we use to this day. The KBOA-KTMO sound took on a new life. Consequently, Bill Tanner became so successful building Pepper's "spot bank" that they couldn't use all the spots and started selling them to other advertisers at a great discount. Bill bought into [Pepper Sound Studios](#), changing the name to Pepper-Tanner and, ultimately, to the William B. Tanner Company, soon to become the world's largest producer of radio and television sales aids. I joined Bill Tanner when I left KBOA and Kennett in 1965.

Now, back to KBOA and programming. We've mentioned that our chief, Paul Jones, ran the local paper. As such, he had a local newsman come to the station each morning and write up some local news items which we broadcast under the heading "[Hometown News](#)." Johnny Mack was our news announcer and he became known as the voice behind Hometown News which became our most popular single program. Everyone tuned into 830 or 98.9 FM at 9:00 a.m. each morning to hear what was happening. I had a great saleable program, but you know what? I couldn't interest a single local advertiser in becoming a Hometown News sponsor. It was out of town merchants, exclusively, that became sponsors for our local news program. Among these were Hezzie Highfill and Opie Clevenger, who were joint owners of the Piggly-Wiggly Supermarket in Senath, Missouri. Hezzie and Opie sponsored Hometown News a couple of times each week for years and years. Both became very close friends, and like so many of my old friends, both are gone. With the popularity that Hometown News enjoys today, under the capable direction of News Director [Charles Isbell](#), it seems ironic that in its infancy, no Kennett merchant would accept this news program for his advertising dollar.

Among KBOA's earliest employees were a group of pretty young ladies who deserve mention. Paul Jones must have admired beauty because he gave us a handsome bevy of them. First, there was station secretary **Donna Ray Ford**. Then came **Bernice Davis**, who later became Mrs. Rudy Pylant. We enjoyed **Marcie Lester** as record librarian, **Doris Smith** as secretary, Wanda Young as receptionist, and beautiful **Ogareeda Bryan**, whose brother was international recording star [Narvel Felts](#). At one time along the way, we enjoyed the service of **Millie Armstrong**, a local young lady who went on to become the mother of some fellow named Rush Limbaugh. I think Millie is still in Cape Girardeau, the ancestral home of the Limbaugh clan.

Our bookkeeper was [Bill Jones](#), another relative of Paul's who came out daily to record receipts, make journal entries, and handle pay-outs and payroll. Our engineer, [Bob Conner](#), built the station originally and was with us until his tragic death. [John Abercrombie](#) was our faithful groundskeeper for several years and I can still see him sweating back and forth over that huge front lawn, mowing with his hand-pushed Big Wheel Yazoo. All were part of KBOA in its infancy and each contributed in many ways to the success we all attained.

Among other individuals who were prominent in our early success were the entertainers **Carl and Ola Denny**, a brother/sister act who graced our morning programming. Carl Denny would stand in the studio playing his ragtime fiddle and tap-dance to his own accompaniment. Ola provided the vocal backup. Then there was banjo pickin' **Chuck Grey and His Rhythm Makers**. These fellows all depended on personal appearances for their livelihood and used KBOA to promote and announce their show dates. After his stint at entertaining, Chuck Grey went religious on us and moved to Corning, Arkansas, where he went into the ministry and even founded his own church with a sizable line of followers. We mention [Gaylon Watson](#), a talented young announcer who later went on to radio station ownership in Piedmont, Missouri, and the last I heard was mayor of that little hill town.

At one time we had an energetic young man, [Jimmy Haggett](#), employed as an announcer. Jimmy also had his own band of entertainers, made appearances all over this area, and was also a booking agent for several of the nightclubs around the Bootheel. Most notable of his accomplishments in this field was his [bringing a young Memphis artist, Elvis Presley, to the B & B Clube out near Gobler, Missouri](#). I've heard Elvis made the trip up and performed for a meager \$50. This is according to Jimmy Haggett.

I must mention a great radio voice, a great music writer, piano virtuoso, recording engineer, and softball pitcher instructor... our own **Joe Keene** who still operates his own studio in Kennett. In addition to all his other talents, Joe Keene is the author of several well-written books which have enjoyed great success. Joe and his wife, Donna, both list KBOA as an employer on their resumes. Joe Keene and I have collaborated many times on musical production material.

I'm sorry not to have given John Mays more prominence before this. [John Mays](#) was a long-time capable and dependable announcer for us, later becoming farm director for the station. John and his wife, Evelyn, were parents of two fine young sons: Steve Mays, who followed dad's footsteps in becoming radio-affiliated, and young Blane, who entered the Baptist ministry. Steve has gone on to become a high ranking official in the Missouri Broadcasting Network (Missourinet) in Jefferson City, Missouri.

There are dozens and dozens of other nice young people associated with the station in the early years, but most of them came after my tenure which ended in 1965. (But that's misleading) because even after my move to Director of Libraries for Pepper Sound Studios in Memphis, I still patterned my earliest productions in the Creative Sales Service library around productions we had needed, and asked for repeatedly while I was a KBOA. I also patterned my bulletin of monthly sales tips, sent to thousands of stations all over the globe, to experiences (I had) at KBOA. My active association with the station resumed when I retired in Memphis in 1980 so, actually, my association with KBOA was uninterrupted. But let's not drift into a personal biography of Joe Bankhead. Let's keep this focused on the development of KBOA and KTMO.

KBOA was (the) brainchild of businessmen making up the Kennett Chamber of Commerce, with Democrat Editor [Paul Jones](#) as initial instigator. A plan was put together to raise \$50,000 by the sale of stock in Kennett Broadcasting Corporation and to apply for an FCC permit with Paul Jones doing the majority of the work. Among these early stockholders were: Elmo Blakemore, Julius Kahn, T. M. McCaul, Hal McHaney, E. K. "Zeke" Striegel, Paul Jones, and possibly Dolph Riggs and a few others I'm not aware of. After the permit was granted, Bob Conner from Blytheville was hired to build the new facility which received the call letters KBOA. (Note: a contest was held early on to determine what K-B-O-A actually stood for and local insurance agent Judge Pickard won with "Kennett's Best Others Attest") I always liked "Kennett Best Of All."

As the "bean houses" were being assembled and equipment ordered, Ray Van, a young veteran from KLCN came up to be program director and to join Paul Jones in procuring contracts with local merchants to buy time to inaugurate Kennett's new venture. Johnny Mack (Tom Reeder from Blytheville) was a pioneer employee as an announcer, as was Norman Shainberg, a local foot doctor who desired to branch over into a radio career. With Donna Ray Ford as the original secretary and me, a couple of weeks later, the Voice of Southeast Missouri was off and running.

Random thoughts flood this old mind as I wander back over sixty years. I recall the Cardinal Baseball Network having a contest among network stations to bring a contestant to the St. Louis ballpark so they could pick a "Network Queen." The winner of the KBOA contest was a beautiful young lady, Charlotte, the daughter of Tommy and Ollie Shields of Kennett. Charlie Harrison took this young beauty to St. Louis and our Charlotte Shields was chosen "Miss Cardinal Network Queen" hands down!

I recall our **local IGA grocer, George McDowell**, a promotion-minded young man who was way before his time. George used four or five spots daily on the station, but had dreams of a full saturation schedule. Almost single-handedly George contacted a dozen or so other IGA stores within the KBOA listening area, sold each on the idea of joining an advertising group for about \$50 per month, and using the total to buy spots on KBOA. Since they all had identical inventories from a single supplier, and since their pricing structure was similar, we soon were on the air with "Your IGA Supermarkets in Kennett, Malden, Dexter, Sikeston, Portageville, Caruthersville, Hayti, etc etc" to the tune of about fifteen commercials per day. This schedule became the envy of local grocers all over the area who wished they had had a similar co-op idea.

Paul Jobe was the area's salesman for Malone and Hyde from Memphis, serving their **Big Star Food Stores** and a host of other small town, locally-owned grocers. There weren't enough Big Stars at that time for a joint effort so, at Paul's request, I asked **Bill Walsh**, the local M&H dealer, to call a meeting at his store, inviting around ten independent grocers (all M&H) from around this area.

Sitting inside Bill's (store) I noticed a proliferation of canned goods bearing the Jack Sprat label. Naturally, when I made my sales pitch for a joint schedule for these independent grocers we would call them the Jack Sprat Food Stores. I further proposed we erect permanent metal signs in each town, using the Jack Sprat logo and identifying the local grocery as the Jack Sprat Food



Store. They all bought the idea, including Bill Walsh. Jack Sprat Food Stores was born. I even ordered, designed and paid for the metal signs myself, then adding a small monthly repayment amount to the individual statements (for) each grocer. I got my money back regularly and completely. The Jack Sprat name joined IGA as an advertising chain on KBOA and Paul Jobe went on to become Malone and Hyde salesman of the year. He wound up as branch manager of a huge installation in Sikeston, Missouri, and to this day has never said “thanks.”

Next comes **Par-Value Food Stores**. When Gobler Mercantile burned down and sponsorship of Old Camp Meetin’ Time was discontinued, **Bud Parr** (Parr’s Grocery) took over using Denny’s regular format. By this time I had asked for Rudy Pylant’s assistance in the sales department so he could augment his announcer salary, and since Rudy was then the Old Camp Meetin’ Time voice, we had Bud Parr establish a meeting with a half-dozen other independent grocers with the idea of developing the Par-Value Food Stores. Rudy and I made the presentation, sold the scheduling idea, and Bud Parr had his relief from (sponsoring) the hour-long program. The group soon encountered a hardship. Since they all met weekly to agree on prices and items to be advertise for that week. These guys didn’t suffer the price competition that Bud Parr faced in Kennett and wanted to use higher grocery prices, which Bud had to join in announcing. The group became a drawback for Budd and he had to add expensive additional coverage in the local paper with his own, lower-than-advertised prices. This group didn’t last long but Bud Parr became successful in the Kennett business community. He was still sponsoring Old Camp Meetin’ Time when I left for Memphis.

Other random flashbacks include many old friends and old businesses which have now fallen by the wayside. I knew many of these owners and operators personally, and was saddened by their going out of business or dying. Among these are Hank Watson and the Watson-Weber Dairy in Malden, Missouri; Far Better Feeds in Malden; Wallace Buchanan Appliance Store in Caruthersville, Missouri; Townsend Furniture in New Madrid with manager D. Lee Hampton; my old buddy Sam Hamra at the Sam Hamra Store in Steele, Missouri (along with sons Jerry and Sam Jr); Westbrook Clothing Store in Blytheville, Arkansas; Gideon-Anderson Store in Gideon, Missouri; Jones Oil Company, Kennett; Joe Camp’s famous store in Senath; and his brother-in-law’s Phil Miller Clothing (right across the street). Chester Wilson of Senath Hardware brings back memories, along with Roy and Troy Blackwood of Blackwood Furniture in Senath. I have to mention Dudie and Opie from the D & O Supermarket and J.C. with Edmonston Hardware Store in Hornersville, Missouri. These characters have a special, reserved section of my memory.

I’ve got to mention some of the stand-out characters I met. **Joe Hefner** from Qulin, Missouri. Joe was unlike any person I’d ever met before or since. He had a couple of big stores in the little town of Qulin, with furniture and appliances in one and groceries, clothing and dry-goods in the other. Joe got in touch and wanted to advertise as Missouri’s “largest country store.” I told him this was impossible since Denny Mitchell had been so designating Gobler Mercantile for years and we weren’t about to antagonize Denny Mitchell! Joe Hefner then suggested, and agreed to (position) the Joe Hefner Store as “Missouri’s Largest Country Store North of the Bootheel,” which we laughingly used to inaugurate the Hefner schedule on KBOA. Joe was with us for years and finally moved his operation to Poplar Bluff where his son, Slug, still operates the monstrous Joe Hefner Furniture Store. Joe passed away a few years back.

Now I've got to tell you about the Kennett Car Dealers Association. Back in the fifties, KBOA was sending out a powerful signal that reached easily 100 miles or more in every direction, and it wasn't long before listeners all over this part of the country were familiar with Kennett, Missouri the "Voice of Southeast Missouri" and "Interstate Eight Three Oh." Kennett was also a red-hot new and used automobile and truck market with more than thirty dealers strung from north Independence Avenue, through town, and out west St. Francis Street, giving us about a three mile stretch crowded with independent car dealers. Many of them, particularly new car dealers, had their own schedules on radio, but the majority of the used car dealers depended on inventory and day-to-day traffic to attract buyers.

I came up with the idea of forming a group effort and promoting Kennett as "The Car Capital of the Midwest." I approached every dealer with the idea, suggesting a meager \$10 per month charge ad grouping a \$300 per month schedule. Thirty of the thirty-one dealers jumped at the idea, new car dealers even added the \$10 to their regular monthly advertising. Soon we were extolling the benefits of coming to Kennett "for that new or different set of wheels." Kennett had cars "from \$25 up or \$25 down". "Thirty dealers along a three mile stretch". The "automotive Miracle Mile". Cars both "news and used but never abused"

Kennett, Missouri, was the "car capital of the Midwest" and now thousands and thousand of prospective buyers were made aware of it daily via 830 on the radio dial. I won't identify the sole abstainer from the original group but his son is still in business and now uses radio almost exclusively. The big trouble with the promotion was running down many of these hip-pocket operators and getting that \$10 per month. We did well enough to keep Kennett Car Dealers on the air for quite a long time.

The radio salesman today faces an entirely different set of circumstances than I did fifty or sixty years ago. Back then almost all local businesses were owned and operated by local people. You could make a sales call and talk to the person who could make the buying decision on the spot, give you the information you needed to develop the commercial, and be approached to pick up that monthly check, if necessary. Today many stores have absentee owners; they're franchised operations; or require buying approval from a home office. Delays in closing a sale are discouraging, even to the most ambitious sales person, and I'm glad I didn't have this obstacle.

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*Note for author: Have you ever encountered such a messed up, disorganized mass of confused facts? Not titles or insets. No separate paragraphs. No chapters. No breaks of any kind to allow the reader to head for the can to relieve him or herself. At the outset I told you I was not a writer.*

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Earlier I mentioned the big group of IGA supermarkets assembled and headed by our buddy, George McDowell. Sometime around the middle fifties, the talk all over the country was flying saucers. Their source, their purpose, and their threat to national security. I had an idea. Why not print up a huge number paper plates carrying the logo of each IGA along with a sensational sale item available to anyone returning the plate to the local store. Then, dropping a bunch of these plates over that merchant's location from a low-flying plane. I had plates printed up for each IGA supermarket, bundled them separately, and loaded into my hired aircraft. Our schedule was worked out to the second so upon our announcement (on the air) that "Flying saucers are being reported over Portageville-Hayti at this moment!" the plane, in radio contact with the station,

would toss out the plates to those who'd heard the announcement and were outside to witness the momentous phenomenon. The promotion worked great! Plates scattered all over each town. People scrambled to retrieve them and take advantage of the offer by their local IGA store. There was only one hitch. My pilot forgot to untie one group of plates, tossed the entire bundle which landed -- still tied -- in someone's front yard. Needless to say, this fellow had a heap of plates to take to his local grocery outlet. This promotion was in addition to the regular saturation spot schedule of the IGA group and was widely heralded at the time.

Another introductory effort to promote our young station, Ray Van and I collaborated on a plan to take KBOA live entertainment to neighboring towns and present a live show on scheduled Saturday mornings. The idea was to further KBOA's popularity and to draw a crowd of shoppers for local merchants. The idea was easy to sell since local merchants welcomed the added business these live shows would attract and they were also receptive to the low charge we'd ask for participation. If there were at least ten participants (advertisers) in our chosen towns, we'd sell the package for as little as \$25 per merchant. We'd announce the live show coming to individual towns at specified times (usually between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m.); assemble a makeshift stage in the business area, and Ray Van and the entertainers (probably Chuck Harding and His Colorado Cowhands) would perform for the full hour which was carried remotely on the station. Weather permitting, we would schedule these appearances week after week in all our neighboring communities and it was apparent KBOA was accepted as the radio station that cared about their little town. Our listenership grew steadily.

On another occasion I had little four-inch circular pieces of paper printed bearing the single word "TUIT" and sent these to prospective area merchants under our letterhead. On follow-up sales calls the merchant would invariably inquire, "I received this little piece of paper with TUIT printed on it. What's this all about?" I'd inform him "we thought maybe you'd start an advertising schedule on KBOA as soon as you got a round TUIT." This generated a profitable amount of talk and proved a successful selling ploy.

Subject matter is coming much slower and it's about time to end this narrative but before I go, I'd like to say something to all the kids who are beginning or contemplate getting into radio selling. The success of any selling venture is to "sell the difference" and advantages of radio as an advertising medium. You should never neglect to point out radio's immediacy. If your prospect wants to start a sale within a couple of hours, radio is the only way to do it. You can call the station, have copy prepared in minutes, ad be on the air all within an hour. This is even possible today with the plethora of satellite programming and computer-generated commercials. All that's required is a live interruption.

You should sell the advantages of saturation. I always used the logic that one spot per day reaches a specific number of listeners, two spots per day would reach twice as many and by adding a third spot daily, you'd reach five times as many prospective buyers. On our daytime station, I'd use the ten spots per day schedule as reaching every listener in every time period. In my long selling career, I never had this refuted or questioned.

You should point out how radio can penetrate every demographic. You have programming to reach the housewife. You can arrange schedules to reach the farm audience. A young audience

can be reached with after-school scheduling and there's always drive-time to reach that huge captive audience of drivers. No other advertising outlet offers this advantage.

Point out how radio utilizes the selling power of the human voice. What merchant wouldn't admit that he'd rather talk to customers than have them read a printed message, whether a newspaper ad, direct mail or a handbill. While these are acceptable to augment a radio schedule, they're secondary to the initial impact.

There's no possible way to measure radio's total reach. While newspapers are limited to current subscribers and newsstand sales; outdoor signs to drive-by traffic; and direct mail require expensive (postage), radio can reach prospects within a hundred miles or so, depending on your (station's coverage). Not everyone will be listening to your station at a given time, but your advertising message is still there and how many people are going to dismiss your newspaper ad or billboard? Radio is the way to reach every prospective purchaser you have for your products or services. In fact, with fresh milk, a loaf of bread and a TV set, radios are the item most found in every American home.

And don't forget "cost" in our presentation. A full page ad in the local newspaper might cost \$600. Now show what that \$600 would buy in radio time. Where \$600 in the paper might reach into four or five thousand homes, that same figure on radio would reach into THOUSANDS OF HOMES with an infinitesimal cost per buy.

If your prospect declares that "nobody listens to the radio anymore," just ask if he'd mind if you broadcast that he's going out of business or that he's going to close his store. He damned well knows he can't afford the risk. He can measure radio's effect by results and if you can't get them for him, he can always take credit for having tried.

Thank you for staying with me this far, dear reader. I have no idea who my readers might be, how this report might be used, nor how long it might last. To those who asked me to undertake this project I say, "Okay, buddy, here it is."

The old man has spoken for the last time.

Kennett, MO  
October 22, 2009

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[Audio of Joe Bankhead talking about the early days of KBOA](#) (12 min) Recorded in 1982.