“The Remarkable KRMG”

by Richard S. Boggs

Introduction

In 1970, Richard S. Boggs, while pursuing his master’s degree in journalism at the University of Oklahoma, wrote his thesis on “The Remarkable KRMG”. The paper describes the days leading up to the first day of broadcasting for a station that would become a permanent fixture in the life of Tulsa, Oklahoma. The call letters KRMG represent Senator Robert S. Kerr and oil and gas man Dean A. Mcgee. The driving force behind the construction with the FCC was Sen. Kerr. When he was told he could put a 50,000-watt station in Tulsa, the senator said, “That’s fine, the only thing I want you to do is to guarantee me it will cover both Tulsa and Oklahoma City”.

Richard Boggs grew up in Tulsa, graduating from Edison High School, Oklahoma State University, and the University of Oklahoma. He went on to a career with the wire service, United Press International. He also worked for a 24-hour cable TV news channel, which was a precursor to CNN. Richard is very grateful that his thesis is preserved and made available for public reading.

KRMG began broadcasting on Friday, December 23, 1949, at 7:40 PM, with Program director Perry Ward saying, “This is it, KRMG is on the air.”

University of Oklahoma

"The Remarkable KRMG"

Journalism 311

May 15, 1970

By Richard S. Boggs

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II. IN THE BEGINNING

It takes a long time for a radio station to grow and expand its influence, to flex its muscle and become a community leader; an attribute KRMG has known as a teen-ager.

Today, at 20, KRMG is a vital part of the Port of Tulsa. It is well known as a powerful influence on Tulsans and a station responsive to the wants and needs of its community.

KRMG's list of firsts is impressive:

TABLE 1. The innovative KRMG:

1. First 50 kw. low power consumption transmitter in the nation.
2. The nation's pioneer 50 kw. independent station.
3. First station to use helicopters in measuring the transmitter's radiated power for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) proof of engineering performance.
4. First Oklahoma station to editorialize.

5. First Oklahoma station, and one of the nation's first, to endorse a political candidate.

6. First Oklahoma station to hire a Negro newsman.

7. First Oklahoma station to poll the public on vital issues and air the results.

8. First Tulsa station to broadcast from a mobile studio.

9. First Tulsa station to send newsmen on out-of-state assignments to gather and report the news.

10. First Tulsa station to use "phone forums" with authorities from both sides of a question at the studio, answering telephone questions from the audience.

There were some rough years in KRMG's childhood and they had an influence on the station today, but most important to the quality of Oklahoma's outstanding radio station is its present owner. SWANCO purchased KRMG April 4, 1961,[1] after

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[1]Tulsa Daily World, Tulsa, Oklahoma, various clippings, April 4, 1961.

it had lost money for more than four years,[2] and locked it in on Tulsa's heartbeat.

This is how it happened.

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[2]SWANCO. Personal interview with Ken Greenwood, president, SWANCO, Tulsa, Oklahoma, March 23, 1970.

III. OUR FATHERS

The FCC granted a construction permit to build Tulsa's seventh radio station--KRMG--to United States Senator Robert S. Kerr and Dean A. McGee, but the driving force behind the application was Kerr.

"The senator was the one interested in getting a radio station in Tulsa," said C. B. "Brownie" Akers, the station's first vice president. "And, of course, everything he did he invited McGee to go along with him. He was a great expansionist and very ambitious."[3]

Just how quick the senator's thoughts turned to television has been obscured through the years, but the original plans drawn up by Akers provided some insight. They had provisions for using the Akdar Temple auditorium as a television studio.[4] Their delay probably was to watch the progress of Tulsa's first television station, KOTV, which beat KRMG to the airways by only two months. KRMG was later sold to win

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[3]Personal interview with C. B. "Brownie" Akers, first KRMG vice president, Tulsa, Oklahoma, April 21, 1970.

[4]Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

approval on their application to purchase an interest in KVOO television.

> Senator Kerr had the idea that he was going to have a television station in Tulsa and the original plans, and I've seen some and I've read letters to the manager back in those days showing they wanted to apply for television. Their idea was to use that auditorium as a place where they could do live shows.
>
> Kerr had the idea that television in a political sense might be a more powerful medium than radio was, so when it became evident that the two interests, the Skelly and the Kerr-McGee interests, were not going to be able to both get a television station, he decided to arbitrate those differences. They sold KRMG and took a part interest in KVOO television.[5]

That was in 1953. Kerr, in 1949, however, was chiefly interested in getting KRMG on the air and he put television a few notches down the priority list. He saw his best chance for a station was in Tulsa, but his real hope was to reach as many people in the state as possible and in particular, the population centers.

> When the man said that he could put a 50,000 watt station in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Senator Kerr said, 'That's fine, the only thing I want you to do is to guarantee me it will cover both Tulsa and Oklahoma City.' He had great strength in the rural areas, but not much in the two urban areas and he could see that this would make him a pretty good outlet, I suppose, for his speeches. This is just conjecture on my part.[6]

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[5] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[6] Ibid.

Senator Kerr "was very, very shrewd and had a full knowledge of what radio was capable of doing and a full appreciation of what television was going to be," Greenwood said. "I found, going through the old, old files, some very interesting letters from Senator Kerr addressed to 'Brownie' Akers . . . instructing him that he wanted the speech he delivered in the senate, played right after 'Stop the Music'. Back in those days, ABC on Sunday night, had this real hot radio show . . . where they dial all over the country and give away big quantities of money. And he wanted his speech played right after 'Stop the Music', so this is where it would be used."[7]

Kerr was subtle though, according to Perry Ward, the station's first program director.

"He never interfered with the station in any way. Anything that was done was behind the scenes."[8]

Ward said McGee had nothing to do with station operations, a fact which McGee admits today.

"He was there opening night and I think that was the last time we ever saw him. Kerr was in town occasionally and

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[7] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[8] Personal interview with Perry Ward, first KRMG Program Director, Tulsa, Oklahoma, April 19, 1970.

dropped by whenever he was."[9]

Akers said Kerr had no direct political use of the station in mind, citing the FCC regulations and the equal time provision.[10]

He said Kerr's involvement was strictly a business one.

"The senator thought it would be profitable after talking with an old friend who made money in the radio business--Lyndon Johnson. In fact, he sent me to Austin to see his radio station and to study its operation and [station manager] Bob Jones went, too."[11]

Dean McGee recalled that his concern was more in the station's books than its operation and his ambitions were for investment.

McGee picked out the transmitter site himself by flying around the countryside. Keystone was picked because of its proximity to the urban areas.

> That was the only high flat spot that we had to anchor those tall towers. Of course, we didn't want to go east of Tulsa because we didn't want to get away

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[9]Personal interview with Perry Ward, first KRMG Program Director, Tulsa, Oklahoma, April 19, 1970.

[10]Op. cit. Akers interview.

[11]Ibid.

> from the population centers and Keystone is on the Oklahoma City side. It not only covers Tulsa and Oklahoma City, but all over Oklahoma. It wasn't a question of just Oklahoma City, but of getting as much statewide coverage as we could.[12]

At the time of sign-on, Kerr was near the end of his first year in the United States Senate. He had taken office in January and formerly was Oklahoma's governor from 1942-46. He died New Years Day, 1963.

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[12]KERR-MCGEE. Personal interview with Dean A. McGee, one of KRMG's two principal owners in 1949, Oklahoma City, April 24, 1970.

1. Jim Harts > CBS, National public Telev news anchor
2. Bob Stevens > ESPN anchor sports
3. Bob Losure > CNN anchor
4. Several in broadcasting someplace
5.

IV. CONSTRUCTION

KRMG was built in record time.

The first nail was driven at the Akdar Temple studios August 3, 1949,[13] with sign-on only 142 days later.[14] The official ground breaking was held August 2, 1949.[15]

C. B. "Brownie" Akers was working for Senator Kerr in the summer of 1949 as a liaison officer. He admitted he wasn't too useful because of Kerr's ability to "make his own answers."[16]

"Akers had worked for Video Theaters in Oklahoma, but was working for us when we got permission to go ahead," said Dean McGee. "He really built it for us."[17]

"They called me in the office one day and asked if I knew Tulsa pretty well and I told them yes," Akers recalled. "I had been with Griffith Video Theaters. They asked me if I

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[13] Tulsa Tribune, August 3, 1949.

[14] Op. cit. Tulsa World, December 24, 1949.

[15] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, August 3, 1949.

[16] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[17] Op. cit. McGee interview.

could locate a suitable building for them.[18]

After a few days in the Oil Capitol, Akers zeroed in on the Akdar Temple which was occupied only by a business college at the time. Its owner, Ralph Talbot, was an old friend of the new KRMG vice president and was a long time Tulsa civic leader and theater owner. The four first run theaters belonged to Talbot, the Orpheum, Majestic, Ritz and Rialto, as well as the Akdar which housed a theater seldom used before the building was remodeled as the Cimarron Ballroom.[19]

Talbot was in Paris at the time and Akers made the lease agreement via trans-Atlantic telephone. Talbot said he would provide Akers with a satisfactory lease on his return.

Kerr and McGee had made application for the station about a year earlier and there was a competitive hearing before the FCC. It narrowed down to a decision between Tulsa and Little Rock, and KRMG won.

"They had made application for a station a long time earlier and finally the FCC came through with a construction permit. Even then, they didn't act too quickly until they

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[18] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[19] Ibid.

had to build or give up their permit," said Akers. "That's when they called me in."[20]

The few remaining days of the construction permit caused quite a rush in getting the station on the air. It was build it, or have a good reason for the delay. Therefore, Akers couldn't wait for Talbot to return and secured his permission to "go ahead and take it, remodel, do anything you want,"[21] and work out the details later.

Construction went pretty smoothly but under a lot of pressure. Akers was a decision maker of the first order,[22] yet readily admitted he had no experience in broadcasting. He took it upon himself to hire a first rate staff of professional radio men.

Kerr and McGee already owned WEEK radio in Peoria, Illinois.

As KRMG manager, Akers hired Bob Jones in September, 1949, from their major competitor at Peoria, "to kill two birds with one stone. He ran a tight station there and was giving us a heck of a lot of trouble."[23]

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[20] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Op. cit. McGee interview.

[23] Op. cit. Akers interview.

"I brought our chief engineer [Alden F. Wooster] down from our Peoria station and put him in charge of the technical end, and Jones for the management end of it. He had been in the radio business all of his adult life."[24]

A consulting engineer from RCA was sent from Miami, Florida to Tulsa to supervise transmitter installation and the other technical problems were handled by Wooster and McIntosh and Inglis, a top consulting firm out of Washington, D.C.[25] Tom Seale, chief engineer of Kerr-McGee Oil Corporation, handled most of the design problems at the studio and transmitter shack.[26]

The days of the big studio stations were over and KRMG became one of the first powerful radio stations to be built specifically for a music and news operation, though a single studio was built and available for both recording and live broadcasts.[27]

Akers admitted his biggest problem was getting everyone to agree. He told Dean McGee everyone had good ideas, but

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[24] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[25] Op. cit. Tulsa World, November 28, 1949.

[26] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[27] Ibid.

contrasting opinions on a number of issues.

"Dean said just do it your way and if it's wrong, we'll tear it down and start over. Then he chuckled and said, I've drilled a lot of dry holes."[28]

The only major delay, pushing back the October 1, 1949 target sign-on date, was lack of air conditioning in the studio and more importantly at the transmitter.[29]

The air conditioning problem was not a big one, but a necessary one to solve at the transmitter. The RCA 50,000 watt transmitter, using low power consumption tubes, fully reduced total power consumption by 25 per cent, yet the air that cooled it was warm enough to keep the transmitter building well heated during "the worst winter storm." Warm weather, without air conditioning, would have spelled disaster.[30]

The cooling delay and using the conventional auto and horseback method of conducting field tests, a three month process, would have delayed sign-on until late January or early February of 1950.[31]

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[28] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[29] Op. cit. Tulsa World, October 12, 1949.

[30] Ibid. December 21, 1949.

[31] Ibid. November 28, 1949.

Kerr wouldn't stand for that and for the first time, helicopters were used to make the field measurements.[32]

The Commission required that measurements for the Class 1-B station be made in 22 directions, every 500 feet outward from the six antennas for the first five miles, then every one-half mile thereafter all the way to Canada and Mexico. Using two helicopters, two pilots and eight engineers, the process was trimmed to less than three weeks.[33]

"Our final engineering data arrived in Washington Saturday [December 17, 1949] and we will be ready to go on the air as soon as the Federal Communications Commission puts in final approval of this data," said Jones at the time. "By completing construction in four months, 15 days, we have broken all radio construction records."[34]

True enough, the transmitter was ready and all the equipment to get a signal to it was installed, but workers were still hammering in the next room the night of sign-on, two weeks later.[35]

"We're really rushing so that we can give Tulsa and Oklahoma a Christmas present," said Jones, who admitted working

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[32]Op. cit. Tulsa World, November 28, 1949.

[33]Ibid. [34]Ibid. December 21, 1949. [35]Ibid.

nearly 24 hours a day during December.[36]

"There is little doubt," said consulting engineer Andrew F. Inglis, "that the tuning of the station's day and night pattern in less than two weeks time, lowered by more than one-fourth all previous records made in the tuning of a six tower array."[37]

Thus, by using two rented helicopters from LaFayette, Louisiana, KRMG became a radio pioneer even before its first program penetrated the airways.

The only other engineering problem of any proportion during the pre-sign-on days, was getting the signal from the downtown studio to the transmitter, 18 miles away at Keystone.

Engineers suggested renting the top of the National Bank of Tulsa Building, the tallest structure in town, for a microwave transmitter, but Akers ruled that out as too expensive because it would have required a licensed engineer at the bank building.[38]

"The engineers told me they didn't think it [the signal] would get over the mountains between the station and

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[36] Op. cit. Tulsa World, December 21, 1949.

[37] Ibid. December 18, 1949.

[38] Op. cit. Akers interview.

Keystone.[39] Well, I wanted to find out for myself."[40]

> I had a man climb to the top of our tower out there [Keystone] and flash lights to see if we could see it, but we couldn't. But, I had one man on my side, the guy who sold us the microwave. He wanted to keep us happy, so we put one of the dishes[41] on top of the Akdar Building, and leaned it against the fly loft. We got a signal. It wasn't much, but we refined it and it worked. [42]

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[39]Microwave is a high frequency signal traveling in a straight line.

[40]Op. cit. Akers interview.

[41]Parabolic antennas for microwave are called dishes.

[42]Op. cit. Akers interview.

V. ON THE AIR

"This is it, KRMG is on the air,"[43] proclaimed Program Director Perry Ward at 7:40 P.M., Friday December 23, 1949, giving Oklahomans their first impression of a station which would make its presence known in and for the community and the state.

Tulsa now had its sixth AM radio station and had only recently been introduced to television by KOTV, Channel 6. Earlier stations include:

TABLE 2. Tulsa Stations by sign-on-year: (through 1949)

KVOO,	1925,	Formerly KFRU at Bristow, moved to Tulsa 1927,
KTUL,	1934,	
KOME,	1938	
KFMJ,	1946,	
KAKC,	1946,	
KWGS,	1947,	The University of Tulsa FM station, and
KOTV,	1949,	Television Channel 6.

[43] Op. cit. Ward interview.

KOME had been the outlet for both the American Broadcasting Company, and the Mutual Radio Network until August of 1949, when ABC Vice President Lee Jahnche announced that effective October 1, 1949, KRMG would be the new Tulsa affiliate. He said the network was "very pleased to welcome another 50,000 watt station to ABC."[44]

"KOME had both ABC and Mutual, KTUL was CBS and KVOO was NBC, and KRMG wanted a network and the only one they could get was ABC," said Ward. "ABC wanted a 50,000 watt station in this area so they took it away from KOME and gave it to KRMG. I imagine there was some behind the scenes maneuvering."[45]

KOME, only 250 watts at the time, retained its Mutual affiliation. It had applied for a power increase to 5,000 watts, but the FCC had not acted on the request.

"We went on the air at 7:40 and I made the opening remarks--This is it, KRMG is on the air--then turned the program over to Cal Tinney who was the emcee."[46]

Senator Kerr dedicated the station "To the domestic

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[44]Op. cit. Tulsa World, August 3, 1949.

[45]Op. cit. Ward interview.

[46]Ibid.

civic, social, economic and religious life of the people of this magnificent state," and read the station's creed: "Programs for the rank and file of our people; for those who live on the farm; for those who work in the factories and in the mills."[47]

Tinney, of Broken Arrow, was known as the "teller of tall tales." He introduced the Rev. J. W. Storer, Pastor of the First Baptist Church, who gave the innovation.

Then McGee was introduced; and Glenn Condon told about the station's news programming. Tom P. McDermott, chairman of the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, welcomed the station to the Oil Capitol and "Disc Jockey" Joe Knight began an evening of transcribed music.[48]

Four hours and 20 minutes after sign-on, KRMG's first commercial was aired.

"The first commercial was a national one and we played it at midnight. It was for a movie and they framed the order," said the program director.[49]

Ken Greenwood said the first commercial was for the

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[47]Op. cit. Tulsa World, December 24, 1949.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Op. cit. Ward interview.

picture "High Noon" and was played at midnight Christmas Eve,[50] thus, KRMG aired no commercials on its first day of operation.

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[50] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

VI. OUR GANG

KRMG had an advantage from the beginning--its staff. "Brownie" Akers hired Bob Jones who built one of the most envied staffs in Oklahoma broadcasting.

Program Director Perry Ward started at KVOO in Tulsa in 1931 as an announcer, but left his home town to work at the Pasadena Playhouse in California during the depression years. He returned to Oklahoma to take a $40 per week announcing job at WKY in Oklahoma City.

Ward produced "Spin and Win" which NBC bought in 1940 and wanted him with it. He was off to New York. The show grew quite popular and was broadcast "live" from various Army camps around the country in the pre-war years 1940 and 1941.

> Our contract ended in California and I went to work for CBS and worked for them a couple of years. When Art Linkletter started "House Party," I succeeded him on an afternoon ladies show called "What's Doin' Ladies" on ABC; and did that until I came back to Oklahoma City in the latter part of 1947 to emcee and produce a CBS show out of there called "Oklahoma Roundup." It was a coast-to-coast show.[51]

"That ended about the time Gene Autry was on tour;

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[51] Op. cit. Ward interview.

and I had known Gene for years and he hired me to be his announcer on the Wrigley's show on Sunday.[52] Then Ward went to KRMG, hired directly by Kerr.[53]

Glenn Condon was not only a great newsman, he was one of the most enthusiastic promoters and supporters Oklahoma has ever had. He was KRMG's first news director.

Condon was born October 13, 1891, at Greenfield, Iowa, and moved to Oklahoma City a year later.[54]

He started his enviable news career as a messenger boy for Western Union in Oklahoma City, but had returned to Tulsa in 1907, the year of Oklahoma's statehood.[55]

In a 1964 interview, Condon recalled those days when his news interest was sparked by delivering telegrams to the Oklahoma Times-Journal and Daily Oklahoman with news of the San Francisco earthquake and the assassination of President McKinley. He prided himself as "first on the streets."[56]

Condon's first reporting job was in Tulsa, a city he loved as much as life itself. The Tulsa Democrat saw him through his cub years until 1909 when he was fired for

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[52]Op. cit. Ward interview. [53]Ibid.

[54]Johnny Admire, University of Oklahoma, Journalism 311, "Glenn Condon", April 13, 1964.

[55]Ibid., p. 3. [56]Ibid.

reporting on gambling payoffs and illegal liquor. The truth of his articles was never denied, but they were called exaggerated and another Tulsa paper editorially said Condon had betrayed Tulsa.[57]

Condon was hired in 1911 as a reporter for the Tulsa World, where he stayed until 1917, serving as sports editor, city editor and managing editor.[58]

He was a Marine Sergeant from 1917-1919.[59]

Condon was editor and publisher of Vaudeville News in New York until 1926 when he returned to Tulsa as manager of the Orpheum and Rialto theaters.

While in New York he hired Walter Winchell as a messenger boy. The youth dug out a few backstage stories for the trade magazine and Condon gave him a chance to write and paid him $25 per week. Firing Walter Winchell was one of his favorite stories. "Brownie" Akers related the story as he had personally heard it from Condon:

> Glenn hired Winchell as a runner to pick up news and he would make all the back stages and would pick up ads, too. He wrote some too, and was offered a job after a year or so by the New York Mirror to write a daily

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[57] Op. cit. Admire, p. 18.

[58] Ibid., p. 19.

[59] Ibid., p. 29.

column on show people. He told Glenn about it, but told him he decided not to take it, so Glenn fired him so he would have to take the job. And Winchell stayed there years and years.[60]

In 1927, Condon helped W. G. Skelly set up a public relations department and was its first director. Skelly purchased KFRU later that year and it was Condon that organized it and put it back on a paying basis.[61]

He helped start KOME in 1938.[62]

In 1942, he resigned to become news editor of KTUL, then accepted the Oklahoma and Kansas Radio War News chairmanship. He acted as a news clearing house for the 35 stations under his wing.[63]

The "C" in KAKC stands for Condon. Sam Avery, Bob Kellog and he put it on the air in 1946.[64]

The fourth station he helped found was KRMG.

"Glenn Condon was kind of a father confessor for all the broadcast people around here," said Ward. "When I first started at KVOO, Glenn was public relations director for Skelly, but he didn't really get into radio until he put KOME on the air."[65]

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[60] Op. cit. Akers interview. [61] Ibid., p. 35.

[62] Ibid., p. 36. [63] Ibid.

[64] Op. cit. Ward interview. [65] Ibid.

Condon was hired by Akers at Ward's suggestion. He was known as "Mr. News" and had a great following and Ward wanted them to follow him down the dial to 740.

"Brownie" Akers didn't think "Mr. News" was a good enough title. He thought "Mr. Oklahoma" was better and many people agreed. "He was a great character, brilliant, Mr. Oklahoma." Anyway, the name stuck with him the rest of his life.

At KRMG, he found a home. He found a station that was as vitally interested in the community as he was. He believed that nothing could stop Tulsa's future because Tulsa was and always had been led by imaginative people.[66]

Condon's ability as a newsman brought many honors to KRMG and to himself. He, for example, is the only Oklahoman to have served as president of both the Oklahoma Associated Press Broadcasters and the UPI Broadcasters of Oklahoma.

Frank S. Lane, born May 1, 1905 at Freesboro, Arkansas, got his start in radio at KRFU shortly after it went on the air in 1923. He was paid $50 per month, but got married and was given a raise to $150. When Skelly bought the station and moved it to Tulsa, Lane was hired at $200 per

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[66] Op. cit. Akers interview.

month.[67] Thus began a long career in broadcasting.

He joined the KRMG staff as commercial manager December 5, 1949, at a time when:

"Sales were tough for a new station and people didn't know the salesmen. It took a little while, but in a couple of months, Lane had things pretty well in line."[68]

He was a good business man and found it easy to sell a station he liked. He later became station manager, because of his business ability.

Joe Knight was the station's chief announcer. Ward hired him by telephone and said he came well recommended.

"Joe Knight was a graduate of OSU [then Oklahoma A & M College] and came to KRMG right out of college. He was a very clever and talented guy," said Ken Greenwood.[69]

Ward said Knight's mother would listen to her son every afternoon on KRMG, from her Amarillo, Texas, home.

Knight "was ahead of his time," Ward recalled. "He was doing some things then a lot of the boys are doing now.

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[67]Edward S. Dumit, University of Oklahoma, Journalism 311, Jan. 1, 1968; Frank S. Lane--for service to broadcasting, p. 10.

[68]Op. cit. Ward interview.

[69]Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

He'd find some commercial with a particular line, then say something that tied in and the answer would come from the commercial. He tied a lot of things together that way. When Jones went to Baltimore to manage a station, he took Joe Knight with him and he's still there.[70]

Glenn Dobbs, All-American Tulsa University football player who later became the school's athletic director, was named sports director.

Alden F. Wooster was chief engineer.

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[70] Op. cit. Ward interview.

VII. THE FIRST FOUR

Senator Kerr took a lot of interest in KRMG, his second radio station, during the rough formation years. In fact, he sold the first local time:

"He sold an hour on Sunday morning from eleven to twelve to the Immanuel Baptist Church, by advising them that he had selected them to be the church that would get prime time on this station."[72]

"Brownie" Akers said the senator questioned him at every opportunity on the station's operations during the early years.[73] While Dean McGee admitted "all I did was watch the financial statements. Akers and Jones ran it."[74]

"KVOO fought KRMG like crazy because KVOO was the only 50,000-watter in town and they didn't want another one,"[75] Perry Ward recalled. And that pressure from the established stations retarded the station's growth.

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[72] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[73] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[74] Op. cit. McGee interview.

[75] Op. cit. Ward interview.

"It took quite a long time to show a profit as I recall," Dean McGee said. "We were making money with it after the first two years, but it didn't start picking up much momentum until about the time or just before we sold it."[76]

There wasn't much of a music format in the early days, before rock and roll, but the station was programmed pretty much to the whims of each announcer. Some towards good music and others preferring more country sounds. The station tried to be everything to everyone.

Ward said KRMG had no remotes during the first 18 months of its operation, except for sports.

"Glenn Dobbs and I were going to do the Oklahoma A & M football games on KRMG and it was a week before they were to start and they had not been sold," said Ward. But Kerr was in town for a day and "he picked up the phone and got us a sponsor."[77]

Ward did color and Dobbs the play-by-play. During 1936 and 1937, Ward had a similar announcing task as color man for the Oklahoma University football broadcasts on WKY. Walter Cronkite did the play-by-play and was WKY news director.[78]

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[76] Op. cit. McGee interview.

[77] Op. cit. Ward interview. [78] Ibid.

Bob Jones fired Ward after 18 months and it was a big play story for both the Tulsa newspapers, but particularly the Tulsa Daily World. Ward said the reason for the "big play" was that Maud Lorton, widow of the World publisher Eugene Lorton, "couldn't stand that old man--Kerr."[79] Ward recalled the incident vividly:

> The manager [Jones] and I clashed from the first day because Kerr hired me and he did not. He had a man he wanted and was looking down my throat constantly.
>
> At the time I was let out by him, it was the time of the McArthur "Old Soldiers Never Die" speech. It was one of those things that we clashed over; I said we should let the newsmen analyze it as in the past and he said we should go back to the commercial schedule.
>
> I made the engineers stay on the net for the analysis and I scheduled it to run again that night for people who could not hear it during the day.
>
> Two days later, I was gone and the papers a day after that said Kerr fired me for running McArthur's speech twice in the same day. Kerr called and wanted to know what we were trying to do to him down here and it all came out then. I made a statement to the paper that the senator had nothing whatsoever to do with it . . . it was a disagreement with the manager.
>
> Later, when I talked with Kerr, he backed me on the whole thing because he thought it was newsworthy and the people should have heard it. It was one of the big speeches of all time.
>
> The papers played the thing up because they fought Kerr and said here's a way we can get back at him.[80]

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[79] Op. cit. Ward interview. [80] Ibid.

Ward was hired by KOTV television, Channel 6, in Tulsa and he remained there until 1956 when he opened his own advertising agency.

Nearly 14 months passed after KRMG went on the air, before the FCC approved a power increase at night. The station had been licensed for 50,000 watts/day and 10,000 watts/night, but was on the air with 50,000 watts/day and 25,000 watts/night from the beginning, on a temporary permit. Engineering studies showed that the increased power did not interfere with stations in Canada or Mexico or the Buffalo, New York, station on the same frequency.[81]

Akers resigned at the station's board of director's meeting April 7, 1952, and Jones, who purchased an interest in the company, replaced him as vice president and general manager. The public announcement was delayed until FCC action approving the transaction.[82]

Akers remained with All-Oklahoma Broadcasting Company, and at this time is a consultant for their station in Oklahoma

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[80] Op. cit. Ward interview.

[81] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, February 13, 1951.

[82] Ibid., May 6, 1952.

City--KOCO television, Channel 5, which is on contract for sale.

Jones bought the interest formerly held by T. W. Fentom, long time associate of Kerr, who died in February, 1951. Terms of the sale were not disclosed. The plan had been considered some months, but was delayed until Fentom's estate could be settled.[83]

Frank Lane, commercial manager, succeeded Jones as manager.

April 28, 1953 it was announced that Jones would leave KRMG to work on television applications for Oklahoma City, Tulsa and Peoria, Illinois, effective June 15. Lane was elevated to the vice presidency, again replacing Jones.[84]

The Tulsa television application had been in the works since July 14, 1952, naming six prominent civic leaders and businessmen and Oklahoma A & M college as shareholders, plus Kerr and McGee. They had applied for Channel 2, with studios to be located in the Akdar Building, a floor above KRMG.[85]

The announcement came just one month after the famous

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[83] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, May 6, 1952.

[84] Ibid., April 28, 1953.

[85] Ibid., July 14, 1952.

television freeze was lifted.

The FCC imposed a freeze on all television applications September 29, 1948, and no licenses were granted for nearly four years. The commission announced it wanted time to plan television channel allocations and limit assignments by geographic areas.[86]

The rule changes were announced April 14, 1952, that assignments were limited to 2,053 in the United States, which seemed excessive at a time when only 108 stations were on the air. With that announcement, it seemed obvious that the freeze would soon be over. It ended June 1, 1952.[87]

Tulsa's first television station, KOTV, had signed on during the freeze by virtue of a construction permit which was granted before the freeze went into effect. It gave them a virtual monopoly and exclusive use of all four television networks for three years. Now, KRMG had its chance to get into the television business:

"This expansion of ownership in KRMG completes long-range plans of Senator Robert S. Kerr and Dean McGee," said

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[86]Sydney W. Head, "Broadcasting in America," Riverside Press, Boston, 1956.

[87]Ibid.

Jones when the application was announced.[88]

"Ever since KRMG went on the air in 1949, it has been our aim to establish and maintain a close identity with Tulsa and northeastern Oklahoma. We feel that we have succeeded," Jones said. But, the addition of television "will enable us to do an even better job."[89]

New stockholders on the application were: Harry Clarke, clothier; Louis W. Grant, president of Home Federal Savings and Loan; P. C. Lauinger, publisher of the Oil and Gas Journal; Floyd E. Stanley, president of Midwestern Constructors, Inc.; Ralph Talbot, owner of the Akdar Building, and C. B. "Brownie" Akers, former KRMG vice president. Grant, Lauinger and Stanley were brought into the KRMG directorate.[90]

The next 18 months saw the greatest fight in the station's history. The young "whipper-snapper" and its backers had squared off with the established KVOO forces and W. G. Skelly's oil money in a fight for the Channel 2 construction permit.

The directors knew they had a good opportunity with KRMG. It was building a good audience and had shown a few

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[88] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, July 14, 1952.

[89] Ibid. [90] Ibid.

more dollars income than expenses. Selling the station was an idea none of them wanted to consider. They were building an empire and did not want to make any sacrifices of their present holdings.

Competition was tough and Washington hearings frequent. It was beginning to look as though either Kerr or Skelly would have the best chance and most competition fell by the wayside. Fred M. Jones, owner of KFMJ, held on the longest and protested loudest, but was finally eliminated when the giants joined forces and KRMG was sacrificed.

"The only reason we sold the station was when Skelly, who owned KVOO in Tulsa, and ourselves applied for a TV permit," said McGee. "We finally got together and filed jointly."[91]

The FCC would not allow a television station to be owned jointly by two radio interests in the same city, so one had to go. In the choice of KVOO or KRMG, the winner was obvious. KVOO was Tulsa's oldest and at that time, most profitable station, far dominate over KRMG.

McGee admitted having some regrets about the sale:

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[91] Op. cit. McGee interview.

> KVOO was the oldest and best known [station] in Tulsa. It nearly broke our hearts to sell just as things were going good. And, we were taking some risk selling it before the TV permit could be granted, but by combining with Mr. Skelly, we at least eliminated our biggest competition and our application jointly looked pretty good.[92]

Exactly four years after sign-on, December 24, 1953, Altus publisher Harrington Wimberly purchased KRMG for $305,000, with $31,500 cash and $25,000 per year until paid. The FCC approved the sale in November to the owner of the Altus Times-Democrat and he had 30 days to complete the transaction, after approval, by terms of his contract with All-Oklahoma Broadcasting Company.[93]

Kerr was well acquainted with Will Harrington Wimberly, who was in Washington during those years as a member of the Federal Power Commission.

"He had asked us about it and shown an interest before we decided to sell," said McGee, adding Wimberly was aware of the application they had made for Channel 2 in Tulsa. "We looked around quite a bit, but he made the best offer. We weren't under a lot of pressure to get rid of it. It takes a long time to get approval for a TV permit.[94]

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[93]Personal interview with Will Harrington Wimberly, former owner of KRMG, Duncan, Oklahoma, May 3, 1970.

[94]Op. cit. McGee interview.

Eighteen months after Kerr's death on New Year's Day, 1963, the Illinois radio and television stations were liquidated to pay the estate taxes.[95]

Wimberly was on the Federal Power Commission until June 22, 1952, and wanted to get back to Oklahoma. He had purchased the Times-Democrat January 1, 1928 and put KWHW on the air with his brother at Altus in 1946.[96] The call letters are his initials.

During Wimberly's seven years and nine months on the power commission, his brother Frank was general manager of both the Altus newspaper and radio station.

"I knew this station would be up for sale, they never did publicize it or anything," recalled Wimberly. "Kerr knew I wanted to come back to Oklahoma and talked with me about it before he made that television application with Mr. Skelly."[97]

"I knew that it offered an excellent opportunity and it did turn out to be a splendid venture on my part.[98]

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[95] Op. cit. McGee interview.

[96] Doug Adams, University of Oklahoma, Journalism 311, "Harrington Wimberly", April 12, 1964.

[97] Op. cit. Wimberly interview.

[98] Ibid.

VIII. THE WIMBERLY YEARS

Harrington Wimberly had planned to return to Oklahoma after his purchase of KRMG, but became involved in other Washington projects which prevented relocation. In his absence, he said, the wisest move he ever made was to put Frank Lane in full control of the station on a salary plus bonus basis:

> I don't think the station had ever shown a profit, but I sensed putting Frank Lane, the manager, in charge with full authority, could make it go.
>
> I turned him loose on a salary and bonus deal on earnings. And, I gave him a large amount of the credit on developing the business. Of course, I gave him all the help I could and I was in and out of Tulsa.[99]

When Wimberly's Western Broadcasting Company took over, there were no staff changes, and few during the next four years, partly because "Frank Lane was such an easy guy to get along with," said Wimberly.[100]

"We did not initiate any program changes," Wimberly recalled, "unless it would have been that we did not fall for the rock-and-roll stuff that was coming in. The programing

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[99] Op. cit. Wimberly interview. [100] Ibid.

was maintained on a very high level." But, so was the programing of their biggest competitor.

"You'd have to put K-V-double-O as our biggest competition, one of the first and finest stations in Oklahoma," he said. "Later KAKC went all rock-and-roll and that was pretty stiff competition, too. But Frank dug in and bore down on accounts, so we didn't slip too much."[101]

His plaudits for Lane were almost endless:

"Frank Lane was one of the best pioneer radio men in Oklahoma, a fine man," Wimberly said. "I think that might have been the turning point, when I put it up to Frank."[102]

> As a newspaper publisher, news would have to be one of my interests and, of course, we had Glenn Condon as news director. We didn't need a large news staff with Glenn Condon. There were about six news programs a day from sign-on to sign-off, plus the ABC net.[103]

That ABC affiliation didn't last through the Wimberly years, however. Lane notified ABC October 14, 1955 that effective April 14, 1956, KRMG would terminate its network affiliation, thus becoming the first 50,000 watt independent radio station in the United States, and of course, the most powerful independent in terms of wattage. Condon and his

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[101] Op. cit. Wimberly interview.

[102] Ibid. [103] Ibid.

staff wanted to make it the most powerful in terms of influence, too.[104]

Lane said the sole reason KRMG went independent was "to give our listeners more complete local coverage of news and sports and more programing of all types geared to the area we serve."[105] He said to accomplish the station's goals, it would require six months of hard work, and that is when ABC would be dropped.

Their work paid off.

As an example of the hustle in the KRMG news department, the Associated Press presented KRMG with a national news award February 10, 1957 "for supplying more news stories during the year than any of the other 1,600 AP members." John Aspinwall, the AP national radio news editor presented the award to Condon and Lane personally at Tulsa.[106]

Violent weather is not entirely foreign to Oklahomans, and a good test of the worth of a radio station is during a period of crisis. In the spring of 1957, the Arkansas River pushed 12 to 14 feet out of its banks, flooding homes in Tulsa

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[104] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, October 14, 1955.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Op. cit. Tulsa World, February 11, 1957.

and all along the river to Port Smith, Arkansas.

Newsman Larry Strain went 72 hours without sleep, broadcasting from "Airmobile Unit Number 1," a helicopter which covered the flooded lands all the way to the Arkansas border and advised residents of evacuation problems and congested areas.[107]

From Friday, May 17, through Tuesday, May 21, 1967, the station aired 153 local news broadcasts and carried 10 hours and two minutes of weather forcasts, warnings and flood reports.[108]

The station was community minded, too. Under Wimberly's reign it got the idea of going out and doing things, with plenty of remotes and man-on-the-street interviews. The station promoted civic projects and charities like the Salvation Army Christmas collections and "Toys for Tots", sponsored by local firemen. Wimberly said the station was involved in everything it could be and it showed growth each year during the time he owned it, until it was sold at a good profit,[109] August 26, 1957, with effective transfer date December 1, 1957.[110]

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[107] Op. cit. Dumit, p. 16. [108] Ibid.

[109] Op. cit. Wimberly interview.

[110] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, October 14, 1955.

Lane and his good music programing, Condon's news, a fine staff and a lot of drive increased the worth of the station from $305,000 to $500,000 in the four Wimberly years.

> Meredith seemed to want to buy it. A Meredith lawyer in Washington and I had talked over a period of six to eight months and there were no brokers involved. They were not giving the hard buy and I was sitting back and concluded that they wanted the station and when the time came, they would say so.[111]

Wimberly talked with no one but Meredith Publishing Company, of Des Moines, Iowa, about the sale. They made a good offer, he was satisfied with a nice profit and was interested in the purchase of the Duncan Banner, though it was four years before he made that purchase.

> I closed the deal on the Banner in 1962, so it was a few years later. I had talked with B. L. Abernathy, the owner, who died in 1959. He had been quite inactive over a period of a few years and had a heart attack and a reoccurrence. I talked with him very cautiously and let him know I was interested. After his death, it was at least six months before I talked with his widow. I did not push the deal, but waited until she was ready to sell.[112]

Harrington Wimberly moved to Duncan, his residence today, and Frank continued to manage the Altus newspaper and KWHW, which was sold in the fall of 1969.

There was a smooth transition from Wimberly to Meredith and KRMG retained its complete staff and Lane as manager.

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[111] Op. cit. Wimberly interview. [112] Ibid.

IX. THE MEREDITH YEARS

The purchase of KRMG by Meredith Publishing Company, under the name of Meredith-KRMG, was far from disaster, but it didn't make a nickle for them. It lost money nearly five straight years.[113]

The Des Moines, Iowa, firm published Better Homes and Gardens and Successful Farming magazines. It held radio and television licenses in Syracuse, Kansas City, Omaha and Phoenix before adding KRMG, a station they sold four and one-half years later at the same $500,000 they paid, and lost money all along the way.

There were two basic reasons for KRMG's poor performance, dictatorial group management policies and mish-mash programming.

Meredith inherited a good music station which was doing well at a time of a shift in programming toward rock. The good music policies were exaggerated to the saccharine sound of Mantovani, Percy Faith and Paul Weston. That was at night.

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[113] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

In the morning, from 6:00 to 7:00 A.M., then again from noon until 1:00 P.M., KRMG resounded with the pure country sould of Marvin McCullough. He brought in the best ratings, so Meredith added country throughout the day, but keeping the solid country blocks for Marvin.[114]

KAKC rose to number one in the market aboard the rock-and-roll music wagon, and Meredith, with eyes always open to a good thing, programmed some "chicken rock" in an effort to share the audience. "Chicken rock" is pretty much the same tune, with a more subtle beat and a more conventional group or singer.

Meredith let the night slip into some kind of a big band sound and KRMG sounded like chaos. But, the worst was yet to come.

Meredith was involved in a big play and got CBS affiliations in Kansas City, Phoenix and Omaha," said Greenwood, "Which ultimately, I suppose to sweeten the package, led them to take the CBS affiliation here in Tulsa."[115]

KTUL had dropped CBS and Meredith was quick to add Tulsa to the deal. The announcement came December 22, 1958,

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[114] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[115] Ibid.

and the network contract was effective January 5, 1959.[116]

"We have been happy with our independent status," said manager Frank Lane, "but we have found that our new format has its strengths and weaknesses. CBS will fill in those weaknesses."[117]

So, KRMG added two hours of Arthur Godfrey, Howard Miller and Art Linkletter's "House Party" to its morning schedule. The afternoons rang with the time-tested "soap operas" and Pat Buttram for two hours and the night spots were taken by Lowell Thomas and Edward R. Murrow for 75 minutes. The airways were filled with CBS news.[118]

The local news was still as good or better than anything else in the market with Glenn Condon at the controls, but because of failing health, not as firmly as he had been two years previously.

KRMG had fallen to third in the nation in the Associated Press news awards, still a quite enviable position. The AP presented its 1957 award April 20, 1958, at the Oklahoma AP Broadcasters spring meeting at Western Hills State Lodge, on Lake Fort Gibson, near Wagoner.[119]

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[116] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, December 22, 1958.

[117] Ibid. [118] Ibid.

[119] Op. cit. Tulsa World, April 21, 1958.

"Dock Hull was on the station at night, before he went to KVOO where he made his reputation as the old "Sleep Walker," said Ken Greenwood. And KRMG added the commercial religion shows like Garner Ted Armstrong's "The World Tomorrow."

Programming under Meredith was nearly non-existant. It was another case of trying to please everybody, something which probably will never be achieved. And, what happened to KRMG, the community interest station?

"It didn't have any image in the community," said Greenwood. "People weren't for it or against it, they just wished it would do something."[120]

It might be pointed out, in fairness to Meredith, that having no image in a community is far better than having a bad image, something that KRMG has never had. KRMG did have a few notable accomplishments during Meredith's ownership. It used a mobile studio with a radio link to the main studios for remote broadcasts and it caused quite a stir with its "Mobile Money Time."

The contest idea was not original, but something Lane had picked up at a National Association of Broadcasters

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[120] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

meeting. The KRMG mobile unit would follow a car on some Tulsa street, then broadcast its license number live on the air. If the driver was listening, he stopped and collected a silver dollar. He also got a chance to answer a question for a bigger prize.[121]

Bob Parkhurst began a show called "Day Dreams" from 9:00 until 10:00 A.M. during 1960. It was one of the few shows that continued when Meredith sold to SWANCO, KRMG's present owner. The show lasted until 1962.

Lynn Higbee innovated "Saturday Seminar," from 8:00 until 11:00 A.M. on Saturday morning, a sparce time on most station's ratings. The show, at one time, was quite popular. Higbee talked with the other announcers and newsmen when Milt Haynes or Jim Hartz would wander in. Larry Strain would read a news item, and everyone would put in his two-cents worth.[122]

To say that KRMG was first in Tulsa to program stereophonic music would be a half-truth. The station set up its remote equipment in the television studios of KOTV, Channel 6, and carried the live music of Marvin Law Will's "Townhouse Trio" at 4:00 P.M. for an hour on a Sunday afternoon in 1959.

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[121] Op. cit. Dumit, p. 19. [122] Ibid.

KOTV carried the other half of the sound and the picture. Microphones were placed far enough apart that when a listener would place his radio, tuned to KRMG, about 10 feet from his television set on Channel 6, he could have stereo music in his living room.[123]

The FCC approved a name change from Meredith-KRMG to Meredith Broadcasting Company, April 4, 1961, just seven months before its sale to SWANCO, the frozen food company of Omaha headed by Gilbert Swanson.[124]

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[123] Op. cit. Dumit, p. 19.

[124] Op. cit. Tulsa World, November 8, 1961.

X. SWANCO TO THE RESCUE

SWANCO contracted for KRMG November 8, 1961, and took control February 15th. The devastation of the next two days made KRMG look like an atom bomb cleared the studio:

Frank Lane quit. He was replaced by Johnny Merrill as manager.

Program Director Keith Bretz lost his air control and was made a sales manager. He was replaced by Jay Harmon.

"Hillbilly" programming was immediately canned and with it, Marvin McCullough. And, commercial religion was also taken off the air.

Tulsa Oiler baseball voice Mack Creager went to KVOO.

Announcers Lynn Higbee and Bob Brown left, as did salesman Carl Larson, and sales woman Helen Lewis and continuity writer Martha Stewart.

Glenn Condon's news department, which had helped hold KRMG together during the Meredith years, was untouched. Condon remained news director and newsmen Larry Strain, Dick Evans and Jim Hartz stayed. Condon was also given the title of special events director.

The biggest axe fell on CBS. SWANCO Vice President Ken Greenwood told how:

> We tried to live out the CBS contract that we inherited from Meredith, which is about what we did. It finally got down to the place where we were carrying so little programming from CBS, just barely what our contract said we had to carry, and they finally said, well, forget it if that's what you think about CBS. That was about 14 or 15 months after our company bought KRMG.[125]
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> Our original concept with the station was to use the CBS network and to fit some talk programs around it. We had some telephone talk shows and hired Dock Hull, who was a former radio personality here in Tulsa, and he did a morning show and he did an hour-long talk show from 9:00 until 10:00 A.M. which then fed into Arthur Godfrey.
>
> Our local manager in those days thought that some country-western programming would fit real swell on the station. So, he hired a country-western fellow to be on early in the morning where Marvin McCullough had originally been and also do some noon-time programming.
>
> We had another talk show in the afternoon and one in the evening to fit around CBS.
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> CBS was going through the revolution then of gradually phasing out of daytime programming with the exception of Arthur Godfrey; so, for a while, we had a mixture of country music, talk, CBS news and some popular music.[126]

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[125] Op. cit. Tulsa World, February 17, 1962.

[126] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

Ken Greenwood was named manager of KRMG June 25, 1963[127] and was made president of SWANCO in December, 1966.



Another service that was axed by SWANCO was the Associated Press; it was done, however, much more reluctantly than the others.

> We discontinued the AP when we picked up UPI audio, because in those days you didn't know what was coming down the audio wire unless you had the regular news wire to "billboard" for you. So, we dropped AP. We had been talking to AP for almost two years, asking them when they were going to put an audio service in, and they kept dilly-dallying around and never got around to it. So, we just dropped AP in a lot of our markets as some contracts expired. It just so happened that we went to UPI at about the time we dropped CBS.[128]

SWANCO wanted KRMG to get involved in the community, to do more than just sit back and watch and report the news.

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[127] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, June 25, 1963.

[128] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

So, it became one of the first stations in the United States to endorse a political candidate. Some local office seekers won KRMG's approval and Page Belcher received the station's nod in his re-election bid for U. S. Congress. He won. Henry Bellmon won support when he ran and was elected to the governor's office and then later, he was elected as a Republican to the U. S. Senate against veteran Democrat A. S. "Mike" Monroney.[129]

And the station got involved editorially, becoming the first station in the state to editorialize. Greenwood told how:

> Initially Glenn [Condon] wrote all the editorials. Glenn wrote and delivered the editorials until he got to a place where he couldn't do that sort of thing, and then he wrote them and I delivered them. And, when he couldn't write anymore I took on the job of both writing and delivering them.[130]

KRMG broke the racial barrier in broadcasting, becoming the first station in the state to hire a black newsman. Don Ross, who does a lot of free lance work, was sent to Kansas City in May of 1968, when the city was under pressure from racial unrest. Veteran newsman David Stanford was also on the scene for KRMG, and the two of them reported their findings to KRMG and Tulsa Mayor James Hewgley after returning from

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[129] Op. cit. Greenwood interview. [130] Ibid.

the five-day trip. The disturbance was during the time of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King.

The report blamed the indiscretion of the Kansas City police, the lack of sensitivity of the school board and "Black Hoodlumism" as responsible immediately for the confrontation.[131]

As underlying causes, some frustrations similar to those in other cities, allegations of police brutality, poor quality housing for blacks and low quality education for Negroes.[132] But KRMG carried this one step farther.

KRMG studied the causes of the Kansas City disorder then informed Tulsa about it so "our citizens would be more inclined to involve themselves in steps to eliminate underlying causes of riot in Tulsa; and being aware of immediate causes of the flare-up, guard against the presence of those factors in Tulsa."[133]

"We've been the first station in this area that has arranged what we call 'phone forums' where we let people come in; and the people that come in are the authorities, and listeners call in and ask questions to both sides,"[134] said Greenwood.

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[131]"KRMG Kansas City Report", 1968. [132]Ibid.

[133]Ibid. [134]Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

KRMG has received quite a lot of commendation for the "phone forums" and they have been on a number of vital issues, such as: the right to work, port bonds, drugs, open housing and the Kansas City problem.

Panelists on the KRMG "phone forum" Saturday May 18, 1968, were The Honorable James M. Hewgley, Jr., Mayor of Tulsa; The Honorable Curtis Lawson, State Representative, District 73; Dr. Girard T. Bryany, Metropolitan Junior College, Kansas City, Missouri; Tulsa Police Chief Jack Purdie; Mr. C. L. Robinson, a citizen; KRMG Newsman David Stanford and Moderator Vic Bastien, KRMG news director.[135]

Greenwood said it is a chain policy to"let people sound off," because there are many sides to an issue.[136]

KRMG's community involvement wasn't a selfish motivation to bring them up from the zero ratings, shortly after the SWANCO take-over, to their present position of leadership, but it helped.

> KVOO was a very dominant station in the community at that time. They had NBC and a very fine reputation. They were regarded as the pillar of radio.
>
> Not that KRMG had a bad reputation, but when I first came to town, people used to say I'm glad to

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[135] Op. cit. "Kansas City Report."

[136] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

> see somebody finally is going to do something with KRMG. So, we had a lot of people rooting for us. They just seemed to think here was a station that had great coverage and a great potential for the Tulsa market. Because, if you can get people to listen to you throughout the state, obviously you're going to help pull business into the community, so they were rootin' for KRMG to do that.[137]

Meredith had only two personalities on his staff, Glenn Condon and Marvin McCullough; and Marvin was out the door the first week SWANCO took control.

Greenwood said SWANCO felt Tulsa would buy personality. "They had in the past and we felt if we put good personality in the market, they would buy it," he said. "The justification for this theory has been proven, because today we have the top radio personalities in the market."[138]

"I think more people could name the guys on our staff than they could any other station in the market," Greenwood continued. Chuck "Adams is very strong in the morning and Johnny Martin very strong at night. Fred Campbell has a good following now. These guys spend a lot of time in the community working on various projects and doing a lot of things which make quite a contribution."[139]

Community contribution is another SWANCO chain policy

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[137] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[138] Ibid. [139] Ibid.

sworn to by all four radio stations: KQEO, Albuquerque, and KLEO, Wichita, both contemporary sounds; and KBAT, San Antonio, like KRMG, a 50,000 watt middle of the road station with what Greenwood calls an "Independent better music format."[140]

SWANCO also owns two FM radio stations, one in New Orleans and KRMG-FM, Tulsa.

"We'll continue to grow if we can find good properties," said Greenwood. "We're not a big company and we're not a stock company. If we go in, we have to play with our own money, and that makes a big difference."[141]

KIHI FM was purchased June 15, 1964, by SWANCO, with take over in September.

"The adoption of FM to our KRMG-AM operation will enable us to widen the scope of our programming," said Greenwood in a Tulsa Tribune story at the time. "We have what we believe to be interesting plans for the FM operation, both in the field of music and public affairs."[142]

The call letters were changed to KRMG-FM.

The FCC approved assignment of KRMG from SWANCO to Texas Star Broadcasting Company, Inc., of San Antonio, Texas,

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[140] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[141] Ibid. [142] Ibid.

November 11, 1967.[143]

SWANCO is no longer connected with Swanson Foods, which was sold several years ago to Campbell Foods Company; but it is the Swanson sons who have the radio business-Gery Swanson, who lives in Tulsa, and Clarke Swanson of Fort Meyers, Florida.[144] Clarke runs a cable television operation owned by both brothers and Greenwood.[145]

Texas Star Broadcasters is a corporate name that SWANCO inherited when they purchased KBAT, and it is owned 100 per cent by SWANCO. Greenwood said there was once a SWANCO of Oklahoma, a SWANCO of Kansas and a SWANCO of New Mexico, which are now merged under the name Texas Star. They will be eventually merged under the name SWANCO.[146]

Chuck Adams, who had worked for KRMG three years as the early man, was named program director September 20, 1967, replacing Dick Jones. Sales Manager Ron Blue became general manager. Several other staff changes were announced:

Lew Jones was brought to Tulsa from Albuquerque to pull the 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. shift; and Dick Jones left

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[143] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, June 15, 1964.

[144] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[145] Ibid. [146] Ibid.

that time slot, transferring to the SWANCO outlet in San Antonio KBAT.

Jones was followed by Fred Campbell from 2:00 to 6:00 P.M., then came Don Cummings from 6:00 to 8:00 P.M. and Johnny Martin until 1:00 A.M. Adams retained the morning slot.

The program "Quiet Zone" bit the dust at the same time. It had been two straight hours of music only.[147]

The Martin show was simulcast on the FM station.

Sunday, December 31, 1968, KRMG began a popular program "The Word--and Music" at 7:00 A.M., a time when few stations can claim a great audience. Somewhere in Ohio a minister had devised a way to present controversial moral questions to an audience and spark their imagination. The non-denominational program covers in music and script such subjects as money and marriage, accidental nuclear war, parenthood, the aged, working mothers, the church in the next century, mental illness, adult dishonesty and leisure time.

It met with great success, even at that hour.

Adams said the show fits into the KRMG weekend programming and has a special appeal to the young people.[148]

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[147] Op. cit. Tulsa World, September 20, 1967.

[148] Ibid. February 10, 1968.

KRMG dubbed itself "The Friendly Giant," and became promotion happy. Things began to happen.

KRMG sponsored a Herb Alpert concert in the Tulsa Assembly Center; 10,000 people showed up to see the appearance of the "Great Pumpkin," to win prizes on a scavenger hunt and generally have a good time; "Operation Amigo" brought in 30,000 cans of food, weighing seven tons, which was flown to the victims of Hurricane Beulah of south Texas, and attracted over 9,000 persons to a Henry Mancini-Andy Williams concert at the Tulsa Assembly Center. That was the largest crowd ever to attend an Assembly Center event, despite "nippy weather."[149]

And, they don't call it "Award-winning KRMG" for nothing.

KRMG has won more awards in the last five years than any other Oklahoma radio station, and more than all Tulsa radio stations combined. UPI news awards are almost "matter of fact" at annual presentations. They earn them for coverage and special results like the "Kansas City Report" or "The Tulsa Drug Scene."

KRMG is the only Tulsa station with a full-time news correspondent in Washington, D. C., Malvinia Stephenson. She

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[149]Various KRMG promotion flyers.

was first to break the news that Secretary of Defense McNamara would resign, and first on the resignation of Chief Justice Earl Warren.

The editorials on KRMG collect awards, too. The Oklahoma Association of Secondary Schools presented its "Marshall Gregory Award" to KRMG for 28 broadcast editorials promoting greater understanding between schools and the general public.

Radio stations seldom win awards in competition with newspapers and television stations, but KRMG does. For example, last year KRMG won the Oklahoma Wildlife Federation trophy--"The Conservation Communications Award of the Year."[150]

> We say award winning, and people say, well what have you done? We won the conservation award from the Wildlife Federation for the editorials we did on conservation, and not just the editorials, but a lot of other activities. We've given a lot of support, financial and editorial-wise to the Scenic Rivers Bill which has just been passed.
>
> We've been harping on bad law enforcement around our lakes and it looks like finally something will be done on that. We sent a newsman out into the field and [Ed] Brocksmith spent a whole week talking and taping the stories people told him. He talked to sheriffs and talked to the highway patrolmen and all of these people, and we put the tape all together and we gave it to the senate and the house and the governor. We gave them a report on tape of people actually telling of some of the conditions around our lakes. That still hasn't reached any culmination, but I think it will.

---

[150]Various KRMG promotion flyers.

> We've been honored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and to the best of my knowledge, one of the few stations in the country so honored. It was for our stands on open housing and some work we have done inside to give the black community some voice in this city, and that's one of the reasons I think Tulsa is a peaceful town today, by comparison. It's not all peaceful, but at least it hasn't gone up in flames.
>
> We've played call shot. Not to be wise or smart or know-it-all, that's not the point, but just to get things out in the open because we believe that people will talk about things and if you can dispell the rumors, you can do an awful lot, and if you can keep people talking to each other, you can do an awful lot to create an area of good understanding. This is what we've tried to do.[151]

KRMG has been quick to spot issues before they become problems. For example, it noticed there was only a slight minority representation in Tulsa's labor unions. They were not letting in either blacks or Indians, and KRMG took the editorial opinion that a union man should not be upset when people do something to him, if he turns right around and does it to someone else, Greenwood said.

> Well, they didn't like that very well. But, we said it, then some other people hitched their britches up and they said it. The result is that today there's minority representation in every union in the Tulsa crafts. It's still not as much as it could be or should be, but we're making progress.[152]

The FM station does not use the editorials, but

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[151] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[152] Ibid.

approaches the issues from both viewpoints, citing both sides. It says this is a pertinent issue and if you, the listener, want to say something about it, it's time to write or call--then they direct the listener to the right person. The editorials are run on weekends.

XI. A PHYSICAL OF KRMG

KRMG is a maximum power amplitude modulated commercial broadcast radio station, Class 1-B, operating on 740 kcs. Its power output is 50,000 watts/daytime and 25,000 watts/night, from a transmitter located five miles southeast of Keystone, Oklahoma, on a 100-acre tract of land.[153]

Its original license provided for 10,000 watts power at night, but the FCC granted a temporary permit for the increased power from the station's inception.[154]

KRMG and KRMG-FM studios are located on the 23rd floor of the Liberty Towers Building, 1502 South Boulder Avenue, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74119. The 6,100 watt frequency modulated transmitter is also at that location, with its 295-foot antenna on top of the building. It operates on a frequency of 95.5 mcs. Also on the roof is a parabolic dish to microwave programming to the AM transmitter.

The Radio Corporation of America (RCA) transmitter, the first ever built with low power consumption tubes, was

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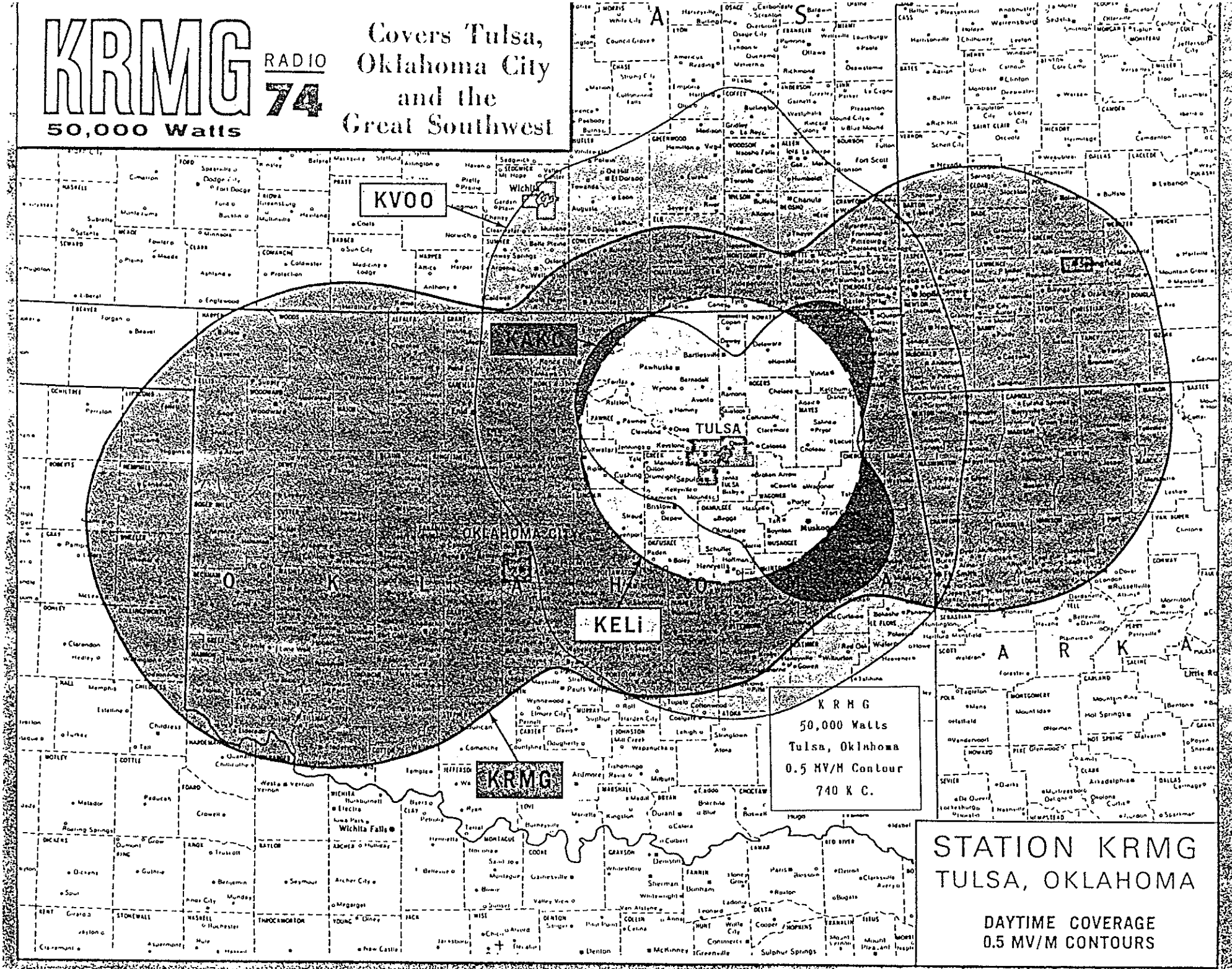
[153] Op. cit. Tulsa World, October 12, 1949.

[154] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, February 13, 1951.

KRMG RADIO 74

50,000 Watts

Covers Tulsa, Oklahoma City and the Great Southwest



built in Miami, Florida, in an 11 month period beginning in September of 1948.[155] An RCA field engineer supervised its installation which was completed within a month.

The original transmitter, now over 20 years old, remains in 24 hour operation daily.

"The transmitter is air conditioned and equipped for emergency broadcasting," said Ken R. Greenwood, President of Swanco Broadcasting which purchased the station February 16, 1961.[156]

Its array of six antennas, each reaching skyward 270 feet from a base of 1,000 foot msl.,[157] are necessary to protect stations in Canada, Mexico and New York. The multiple towers each are phased with a percentage of the total signal to provide directional radiation.

The transmitter is located 18 miles west of Tulsa, allowing two primary lobes over both Oklahoma City and Tulsa.[158]

"The pattern runs on a line from Springfield, Missouri, to out past Amarillo, [Texas] on the backbone--U.S. 66--right

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[155] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, August 2, 1949.

[156] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[157] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, October 12, 1949.

[158] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

down the middle. At night it pulls into a bow tie to protect Canada and Mexico."[159]

More than 25 miles of control cable is in use at the transmitter location and its hugh grounding system uses 80 miles of copper wire in a wagon wheel pattern around each of the towers.[160]

Original studios were on the ground floor of the three-story Akdar Temple[161] at 4th and Denver Streets in downtown Tulsa. Construction began August 3, 1949, and was nearly complete by the sign-on, 20 weeks later.[162]

The building had been constructed in 1925 at a cost of $750,000[163] and was occupied only by a business college at the time a lease was secured by C. B. Akers.[164] Prior to obtaining the studios for KRMG, the building's second floor had been used for experimental television[165] and the station's lease provided

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[159] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[160] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, October 12, 1949.

[161] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[162] Op. cit. Tulsa World, December 24, 1949.

[163] Ibid. June 4, 1925.

[164] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[165] Op. cit. Ward interview.

an option on that floor, which it never needed.[166]

Swanco purchased KIHI-FM June 15, 1964,[167] and changed its call letters to KRMG-FM.

The original studios were kept until "one awfully hot August,"[168] of 1966, said Greenwood, who became president of the parent company four months after the move.

"Everybody was moving out of the old Akdar Building and we were having a lot of trouble with vandalism and theft because there was no other tenant in the building," he said. "Most tenants had moved out because of the vandalism."

"The Liberty Towers planners came to us and asked if we'd like to move in here," said Greenwood. "We were already thinking about moving a little bit, so we got to remodel our studios before there were any partitions put in or anything. We put together a very compact and very modern radio station. Later, we moved the FM in here and later we moved the whole management company to Tulsa."[169]

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[166] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[167] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, June 16, 1964.

[168] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[169] Ibid.

XII. TODAY

Some battles are never won. Twenty years ago, when KRMG went on the air, some of its roughest battles were with W. G. Skelly and KVOO and those battles continue, though KRMG is fighting from a much improved position--the top of the pile.

"I think our primary competitor is KVOO," said Ken Greenwood recently. "They're a 50,000 watt station and their programs on Tuesday are a lot like ours are on Monday. I'd guess they are our primary competition, but obviously KAKC gives us a lot of competition, too."[170]

He said KAKC's ratings in the summer reverse themselves from the winter. The change directly corresponds to the school term and KAKC collects the greatest audience in the summer months when it has a 35 per cent or 38 per cent share of audience.

An advertiser purchasing KRMG and KAKC would have about 65 per cent of the audience; while KELI, which claims to be a cross between the adult programming of KRMG and the rock and popular sound of KAKC, shows up with a 10 per cent share

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[170] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

in the morning, a nine at mid-day and an eight at night. But, KRMG does not sell ratings.

"From a sales philosophy standpoint, we won't sell by ratings," said Greenwood. "Our salesmen do not use ratings. Once and a while someone will ask to look at the ratings and if they ask for them, we show the ratings. But, unless they ask, we don't show them."[171]

When asked how KRMG sells itself, Greenwood replied: "We use a lot of success. Often times our advertisers will tell other advertisers. The last Hooper, we had a 36 per cent share in the morning and 32 per cent in the middle of the day. By afternoon, we were down to 20."

The 36 per cent morning "drive-time" share of audience figure means that KRMG, which shares the market with 10 other rated stations, has the best rating during a time when there are more people listening. The sets-in-use figure for the morning was 22 per cent, or slightly more than one of every five radios in Tulsa was playing during that time period.

"I think FM has a finger in this thing," said Greenwood about the relatively high sets-in-use figure. "I think some people are listening who had been watching TV in the morning.

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[171] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

They are starting to listen to AM radio or FM radio, which made the sets-in-use figure go up."[172]

The KRMG coverage pounds Oklahoma City harder than some places north of Tulsa, but KRMG does not sell in that market.

"We've got all we can say grace over here in town," said Greenwood. "We call on agencies in Oklahoma City and show up on ratings over there, but we don't sell there. We don't claim a big audience over there. I think the last ARB showed us with 3,500."[173]

"I think we're fifth, but don't sell that fact unless we are trying to sell Tulsa. We sell primarily Tulsa, with some area coverage. But," said Greenwood, "we don't happen to think that KRMG is going to be a real strong station in the area on its day-to-day programming, because too many of the stations in the small towns duplicate the news and the information and the special features we have on, but the music is duplicated in the small markets, whereas the contemporary or the country is not."[174]

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[172] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[173] Ibid. [174] Ibid.

"We don't play any music that isn't recognizable, very recognizable," Greenwood said. "I tell the guys that we're the Lawrence Welk of the radio business. We don't offend anybody."[175]

> I doubt that a real jazz buff, oh, he might listen to [Johnny] Martin some evenings when Martin gets off on Kenton or Ellington or some of those things, but, if you really analyze the music, it's pretty square. It's done tastefully and we stay away from wild arrangements and anything that would offend people.
>
> Consequently, the music becomes very bland, and if there were no other programming on this radio station, then the music would be very bland. But, we want it bland, because what we put in and on top and around that music is what's important. That is where we put all the information.
>
> I tell the guys not to play Nancy Wilson. After she gets done singing and 64 trombones and 400 trumpets have played the last of it, the announcer tries to introduce the next record and he can't say anything. You can't top her when she gets done singing. There's no encore for that sort of thing, so we play a much simpler arrangement.[176]

Award-winning KRMG presents an award of its own which has come into high esteem in recent years--The KRMG "Pat on the Back." Tulsa's civic leadership, from the mayor to the blood donor or the fellow who volunteers his Sunday afternoons to help young baseballers at the Tulsa Boys' Home, is eligible for this honor. A certificate is awarded in recognition of those who build Tulsa and their honor is read on the station for all to hear.

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[175] Op. cit. Greenwood interview. [176] Ibid.

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS

_____

having offered of himself in the service of others:
having served his community beyond call;
and, having contributed generously to the welfare
of the City of Tulsa and State of Oklahoma . . . . .
therefore has been proclaimed a worthy candidate for the

KRMG

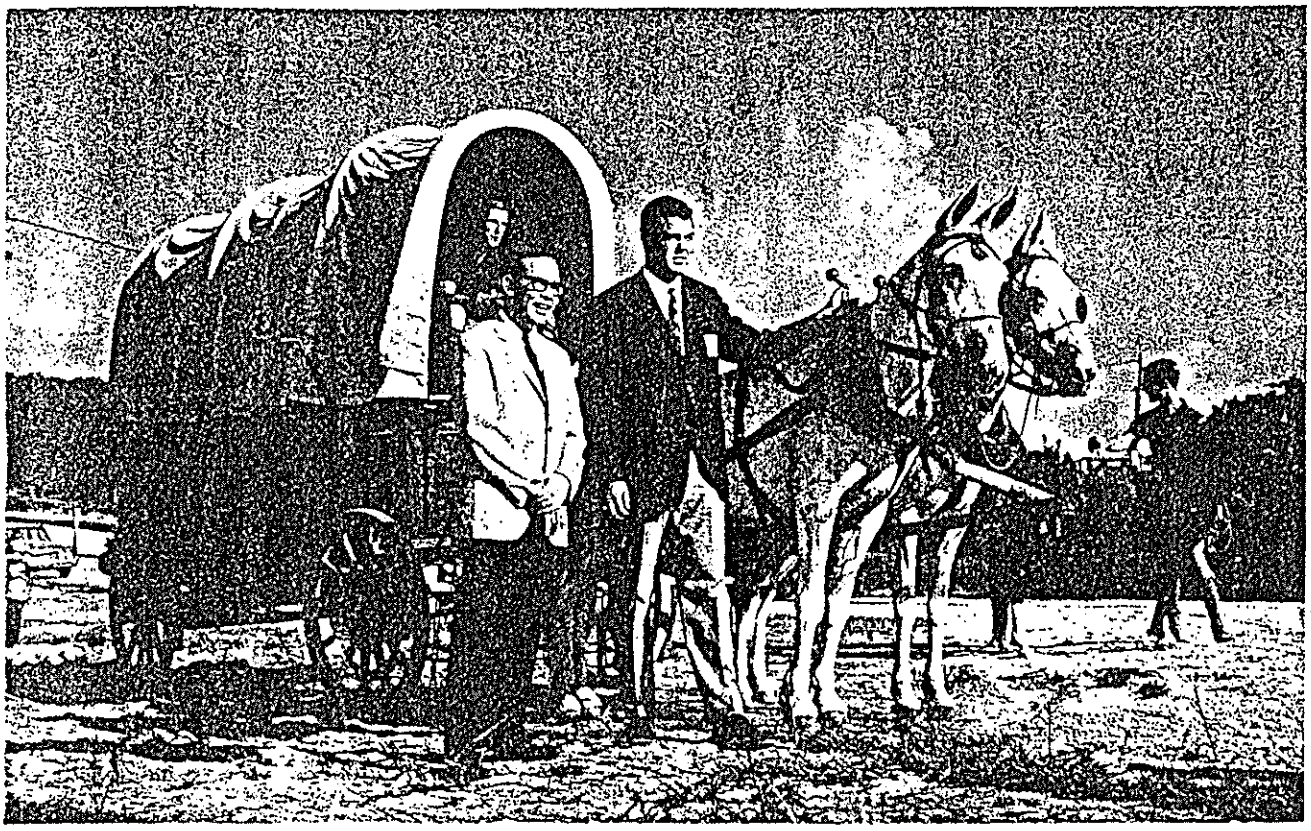
"PAT ON THE BACK"

Dated _____

Witnessth _____

Signed _____
Officer of KRMG Radio

People listen to KRMG because it does something for them. KRMG tries to touch as many people as possible and does it with a lot of zaney things, or things that seem on the surface to be zaney. Recently, the station gave six seals to the zoo. That sounds like a silly thing for a radio station to do, but the zoo didn't have any seals. Greenwood said the next promotion may help them get some penguins. He said they could have a lot of fun with it, and certainly it helps the community. And, what other radio station has a team of albino mules:



DAVID STANFORD (L) RON BLUE (R)

Not everything KRMG does for Tulsa is zaney. They innovated the research idea to find out about the drug problem in the Oil Capitol, analyzed their statistics and told the public:

> Our newsmen went out and supervised a poll that was taken. We first surveyed better than a thousand people at the Tulsa State Fair [September, 1969] and got the idea what the adult viewpoint was on drugs. Then we contacted the superintendent of schools, Dr. Gordon Kwalti, and said people ought to know what young people were thinking about drugs. He let us go into all the high schools and actually helped us develop the questions that we used because he wanted to find out some things.
>
> We talked to over 2,500 students and we did this as a news story which was released and we also have made reprints available and I guess the idea of the project has now been picked up by a dozen high schools over the state of Oklahoma.
>
> It's a very painless way to let the adults in the city, who don't really want to believe what people tell them, know about drugs. It's a painless way to let them know what the kids are really thinking and in many instances, what the kids are really doing.[177]

KRMG sat on the drug story in Tulsa for almost 14 months.

"We had names, which we gave to the police department and they asked us to sit on them," said Greenwood. "Not very long ago, when the heroin story was finally divulged, we got a three hour break on that particular story."[178]

Program Director Chuck Adams heads an all-star

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[177] Op. cit. Greenwood interview. [178] Ibid.

professional staff on KRMG in 1970. At 34, he is still the witty, young-at-heart early morning disc jockey that can warm the frost off your windshield on a winter's morning. He is one of the most popular and in-demand radio personalities to ever chat with the public on Tulsa airways.



Adam's friendly jokes during the morning drive-time, his singing of the school lunch menu, his bright pearls of wisdom and humor from Mother Adams, who just called-in, are part of his trademark, and welcomed with the first yawn of morning by many sleepy Tulsans. And what's even better, he loves Tulsa and Tulsans as much as they love him.

TABLE 3. KRMG on-air personalities:

Chuck Adams, program director,	6 a.m. to 10 a.m.
Jerry Vaughn	10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Fred Campbell	2 p.m. to 5 p.m.
Dick Ford	5 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Johnny Martin	8 p.m. to 1 a.m.
Greg Austin	1 a.m. to 6 a.m.
Vic Bastien, news director	
Ed Brocksmith	
Norm Colwell	
Dennie Eckert	
David Stanford	

The "Remarkable KRMG" is the only logo or slogan used, though it can be worked into a million lines. The "Friendly Giant" outlived its usefulness.

When SWANCO took over KRMG, advertising rates were based on the rating for the lowest person on the staff. They have been raised eight times since then and are the highest in Tulsa and comparable to that of WKY in Oklahoma City.

It only costs a few cents more to buy the very best--KRMG.

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University of Oklahoma

"The Remarkable KRMG"

Journalism 311

May 15, 1970

By Richard S. Boggs

cy - For your files
CB

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II. IN THE BEGINNING

It takes a long time for a radio station to grow and expand its influence, to flex its muscle and become a community leader; an attribute KRMG has known as a teen-ager.

Today, at 20, KRMG is a vital part of the Port of Tulsa. It is well known as a powerful influence on Tulsans and a station responsive to the wants and needs of its community.

KRMG's list of firsts is impressive:

TABLE 1. The innovative KRMG:

1. First 50 kw. low power consumption transmitter in the nation.
2. The nation's pioneer 50 kw. independent station.
3. First station to use helicopters in measuring the transmitter's radiated power for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) proof of engineering performance.
4. First Oklahoma station to editorialize.

5. First Oklahoma station, and one of the nation's first, to endorse a political candidate.

6. First Oklahoma station to hire a Negro newsman.

7. First Oklahoma station to poll the public on vital issues and air the results.

8. First Tulsa station to broadcast from a mobile studio.

9. First Tulsa station to send newsmen on out-of-state assignments to gather and report the news.

10. First Tulsa station to use "phone forums" with authorities from both sides of a question at the studio, answering telephone questions from the audience.

There were some rough years in KRMG's childhood and they had an influence on the station today, but most important to the quality of Oklahoma's outstanding radio station is its present owner. SWANCO purchased KRMG April 4, 1961,[1] after

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[1]Tulsa Daily World, Tulsa, Oklahoma, various clippings, April 4, 1961.

it had lost money for more than four years,[2] and locked it in on Tulsa's heartbeat.

This is how it happened.

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[2]SWANCO. Personal interview with Ken Greenwood, president, SWANCO, Tulsa, Oklahoma, March 23, 1970.

III. OUR FATHERS

The FCC granted a construction permit to build Tulsa's seventh radio station--KRMG--to United States Senator Robert S. Kerr and Dean A. McGee, but the driving force behind the application was Kerr.

"The senator was the one interested in getting a radio station in Tulsa," said C. B. "Brownie" Akers, the station's first vice president. "And, of course, everything he did he invited McGee to go along with him. He was a great expansionist and very ambitious."[3]

Just how quick the senator's thoughts turned to television has been obscured through the years, but the original plans drawn up by Akers provided some insight. They had provisions for using the Akdar Temple auditorium as a television studio.[4] Their delay probably was to watch the progress of Tulsa's first television station, KOTV, which beat KRMG to the airways by only two months. KRMG was later sold to win

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[3]Personal interview with C. B. "Brownie" Akers, first KRMG vice president, Tulsa, Oklahoma, April 21, 1970.

[4]Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

approval on their application to purchase an interest in KVOO television.

> Senator Kerr had the idea that he was going to have a television station in Tulsa and the original plans, and I've seen some and I've read letters to the manager back in those days showing they wanted to apply for television. Their idea was to use that auditorium as a place where they could do live shows.
>
> Kerr had the idea that television in a political sense might be a more powerful medium than radio was, so when it became evident that the two interests, the Skelly and the Kerr-McGee interests, were not going to be able to both get a television station, he decided to arbitrate those differences. They sold KRMG and took a part interest in KVOO television.[5]

That was in 1953. Kerr, in 1949, however, was chiefly interested in getting KRMG on the air and he put television a few notches down the priority list. He saw his best chance for a station was in Tulsa, but his real hope was to reach as many people in the state as possible and in particular, the population centers.

> When the man said that he could put a 50,000 watt station in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Senator Kerr said, 'That's fine, the only thing I want you to do is to guarantee me it will cover both Tulsa and Oklahoma City.' He had great strength in the rural areas, but not much in the two urban areas and he could see that this would make him a pretty good outlet, I suppose, for his speeches. This is just conjecture on my part.[6]

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[5] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[6] Ibid.

Senator Kerr "was very, very shrewd and had a full knowledge of what radio was capable of doing and a full appreciation of what television was going to be," Greenwood said. "I found, going through the old, old files, some very interesting letters from Senator Kerr addressed to 'Brownie' Akers . . . instructing him that he wanted the speech he delivered in the senate, played right after 'Stop the Music'. Back in those days, ABC on Sunday night, had this real hot radio show . . . where they dial all over the country and give away big quantities of money. And he wanted his speech played right after 'Stop the Music', so this is where it would be used."[7]

Kerr was subtle though, according to Perry Ward, the station's first program director.

"He never interfered with the station in any way. Anything that was done was behind the scenes."[8]

Ward said McGee had nothing to do with station operations, a fact which McGee admits today.

"He was there opening night and I think that was the last time we ever saw him. Kerr was in town occasionally and

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[7] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[8] Personal interview with Perry Ward, first KRMG Program Director, Tulsa, Oklahoma, April 19, 1970.

dropped by whenever he was."[9]

Akers said Kerr had no direct political use of the station in mind, citing the FCC regulations and the equal time provision.[10]

He said Kerr's involvement was strictly a business one.

"The senator thought it would be profitable after talking with an old friend who made money in the radio business--Lyndon Johnson. In fact, he sent me to Austin to see his radio station and to study its operation and [station manager] Bob Jones went, too."[11]

Dean McGee recalled that his concern was more in the station's books than its operation and his ambitions were for investment.

McGee picked out the transmitter site himself by flying around the countryside. Keystone was picked because of its proximity to the urban areas.

> That was the only high flat spot that we had to anchor those tall towers. Of course, we didn't want to go east of Tulsa because we didn't want to get away

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[9]Personal interview with Perry Ward, first KRMG Program Director, Tulsa, Oklahoma, April 19, 1970.

[10]Op. cit. Akers interview.

[11]Ibid.

from the population centers and Keystone is on the Oklahoma City side. It not only covers Tulsa and Oklahoma City, but all over Oklahoma. It wasn't a question of just Oklahoma City, but of getting as much statewide coverage as we could.[12]

At the time of sign-on, Kerr was near the end of his first year in the United States Senate. He had taken office in January and formerly was Oklahoma's governor from 1942-46. He died New Years Day, 1963.

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[12]KERR-MCGEE. Personal interview with Dean A. McGee, one of KRMG's two principal owners in 1949, Oklahoma City, April 24, 1970.

1. Jim Harts > CBS, National public Telev news anchor
2. Bob Stevens > ESPN anchor sports
3. Bob Losure > CNN anchor
4. Several in broadcasting someplace
5

IV. CONSTRUCTION

KRMG was built in record time.

The first nail was driven at the Akdar Temple studios August 3, 1949,[13] with sign-on only 142 days later.[14] The official ground breaking was held August 2, 1949.[15]

C. B. "Brownie" Akers was working for Senator Kerr in the summer of 1949 as a liaison officer. He admitted he wasn't too useful because of Kerr's ability to "make his own answers."[16]

"Akers had worked for Video Theaters in Oklahoma, but was working for us when we got permission to go ahead," said Dean McGee. "He really built it for us."[17]

"They called me in the office one day and asked if I knew Tulsa pretty well and I told them yes," Akers recalled. "I had been with Griffith Video Theaters. They asked me if I

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[13] Tulsa Tribune, August 3, 1949.

[14] Op. cit. Tulsa World, December 24, 1949.

[15] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, August 3, 1949.

[16] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[17] Op. cit. McGee interview.

could locate a suitable building for them.[18]

After a few days in the Oil Capitol, Akers zeroed in on the Akdar Temple which was occupied only by a business college at the time. Its owner, Ralph Talbot, was an old friend of the new KRMG vice president and was a long time Tulsa civic leader and theater owner. The four first run theaters belonged to Talbot, the Orpheum, Majestic, Ritz and Rialto, as well as the Akdar which housed a theater seldom used before the building was remodeled as the Cimarron Ballroom.[19]

Talbot was in Paris at the time and Akers made the lease agreement via trans-Atlantic telephone. Talbot said he would provide Akers with a satisfactory lease on his return.

Kerr and McGee had made application for the station about a year earlier and there was a competitive hearing before the FCC. It narrowed down to a decision between Tulsa and Little Rock, and KRMG won.

"They had made application for a station a long time earlier and finally the FCC came through with a construction permit. Even then, they didn't act too quickly until they

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[18] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[19] Ibid.

had to build or give up their permit," said Akers. "That's when they called me in."[20]

The few remaining days of the construction permit caused quite a rush in getting the station on the air. It was build it, or have a good reason for the delay. Therefore, Akers couldn't wait for Talbot to return and secured his permission to "go ahead and take it, remodel, do anything you want,"[21] and work out the details later.

Construction went pretty smoothly but under a lot of pressure. Akers was a decision maker of the first order,[22] yet readily admitted he had no experience in broadcasting. He took it upon himself to hire a first rate staff of professional radio men.

Kerr and McGee already owned WEEK radio in Peoria, Illinois.

As KRMG manager, Akers hired Bob Jones in September, 1949, from their major competitor at Peoria, "to kill two birds with one stone. He ran a tight station there and was giving us a heck of a lot of trouble."[23]

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[20] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Op. cit. McGee interview.

[23] Op. cit. Akers interview.

"I brought our chief engineer [Alden F. Wooster] down from our Peoria station and put him in charge of the technical end, and Jones for the management end of it. He had been in the radio business all of his adult life."[24]

A consulting engineer from RCA was sent from Miami, Florida to Tulsa to supervise transmitter installation and the other technical problems were handled by Wooster and McIntosh and Inglis, a top consulting firm out of Washington, D.C.[25] Tom Seale, chief engineer of Kerr-McGee Oil Corporation, handled most of the design problems at the studio and transmitter shack.[26]

The days of the big studio stations were over and KRMG became one of the first powerful radio stations to be built specifically for a music and news operation, though a single studio was built and available for both recording and live broadcasts.[27]

Akers admitted his biggest problem was getting everyone to agree. He told Dean McGee everyone had good ideas, but

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[24] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[25] Op. cit. Tulsa World, November 28, 1949.

[26] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[27] Ibid.

contrasting opinions on a number of issues.

"Dean said just do it your way and if it's wrong, we'll tear it down and start over. Then he chuckled and said, I've drilled a lot of dry holes."[28]

The only major delay, pushing back the October 1, 1949 target sign-on date, was lack of air conditioning in the studio and more importantly at the transmitter.[29]

The air conditioning problem was not a big one, but a necessary one to solve at the transmitter. The RCA 50,000 watt transmitter, using low power consumption tubes, fully reduced total power consumption by 25 per cent, yet the air that cooled it was warm enough to keep the transmitter building well heated during "the worst winter storm." Warm weather, without air conditioning, would have spelled disaster.[30]

The cooling delay and using the conventional auto and horseback method of conducting field tests, a three month process, would have delayed sign-on until late January or early February of 1950.[31]

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[28] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[29] Op. cit. Tulsa World, October 12, 1949.

[30] Ibid. December 21, 1949.

[31] Ibid. November 28, 1949.

Kerr wouldn't stand for that and for the first time, helicopters were used to make the field measurements.[32]

The Commission required that measurements for the Class 1-B station be made in 22 directions, every 500 feet outward from the six antennas for the first five miles, then every one-half mile thereafter all the way to Canada and Mexico. Using two helicopters, two pilots and eight engineers, the process was trimmed to less than three weeks.[33]

"Our final engineering data arrived in Washington Saturday [December 17, 1949] and we will be ready to go on the air as soon as the Federal Communications Commission puts in final approval of this data," said Jones at the time. "By completing construction in four months, 15 days, we have broken all radio construction records."[34]

True enough, the transmitter was ready and all the equipment to get a signal to it was installed, but workers were still hammering in the next room the night of sign-on, two weeks later.[35]

"We're really rushing so that we can give Tulsa and Oklahoma a Christmas present," said Jones, who admitted working

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[32]Op. cit. Tulsa World, November 28, 1949.

[33]Ibid. [34]Ibid. December 21, 1949. [35]Ibid.

nearly 24 hours a day during December.[36]

"There is little doubt," said consulting engineer Andrew F. Inglis, "that the tuning of the station's day and night pattern in less than two weeks time, lowered by more than one-fourth all previous records made in the tuning of a six tower array."[37]

Thus, by using two rented helicopters from LaFayette, Louisiana, KRMG became a radio pioneer even before its first program penetrated the airways.

The only other engineering problem of any proportion during the pre-sign-on days, was getting the signal from the downtown studio to the transmitter, 18 miles away at Keystone.

Engineers suggested renting the top of the National Bank of Tulsa Building, the tallest structure in town, for a microwave transmitter, but Akers ruled that out as too expensive because it would have required a licensed engineer at the bank building.[38]

"The engineers told me they didn't think it [the signal] would get over the mountains between the station and

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[36] Op. cit. Tulsa World, December 21, 1949.

[37] Ibid. December 18, 1949.

[38] Op. cit. Akers interview.

Keystone.[39] Well, I wanted to find out for myself."[40]

> I had a man climb to the top of our tower out there [Keystone] and flash lights to see if we could see it, but we couldn't. But, I had one man on my side, the guy who sold us the microwave. He wanted to keep us happy, so we put one of the dishes[41] on top of the Akdar Building, and leaned it against the fly loft. We got a signal. It wasn't much, but we refined it and it worked. [42]

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[39]Microwave is a high frequency signal traveling in a straight line.

[40]Op. cit. Akers interview.

[41]Parabolic antennas for microwave are called dishes.

[42]Op. cit. Akers interview.

V. ON THE AIR

"This is it, KRMG is on the air,"[43] proclaimed Program Director Perry Ward at 7:40 P.M., Friday December 23, 1949, giving Oklahomans their first impression of a station which would make its presence known in and for the community and the state.

Tulsa now had its sixth AM radio station and had only recently been introduced to television by KOTV, Channel 6. Earlier stations include:

TABLE 2. Tulsa Stations by sign-on-year: (through 1949)

KVOO,	1925,	Formerly KFRU at Bristow, moved to Tulsa 1927,
KTUL,	1934,	
KOME,	1938	
KFMJ,	1946,	
KAKC,	1946,	
KWGS,	1947,	The University of Tulsa FM station, and
KOTV,	1949,	Television Channel 6.

[43] Op. cit. Ward interview.

KOME had been the outlet for both the American Broadcasting Company, and the Mutual Radio Network until August of 1949, when ABC Vice President Lee Jahnche announced that effective October 1, 1949, KRMG would be the new Tulsa affiliate. He said the network was "very pleased to welcome another 50,000 watt station to ABC."[44]

"KOME had both ABC and Mutual, KTUL was CBS and KVOO was NBC, and KRMG wanted a network and the only one they could get was ABC," said Ward. "ABC wanted a 50,000 watt station in this area so they took it away from KOME and gave it to KRMG. I imagine there was some behind the scenes maneuvering."[45]

KOME, only 250 watts at the time, retained its Mutual affiliation. It had applied for a power increase to 5,000 watts, but the FCC had not acted on the request.

"We went on the air at 7:40 and I made the opening remarks--This is it, KRMG is on the air--then turned the program over to Cal Tinney who was the emcee."[46]

Senator Kerr dedicated the station "To the domestic

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[44] Op. cit. Tulsa World, August 3, 1949.

[45] Op. cit. Ward interview.

[46] Ibid.

civic, social, economic and religious life of the people of this magnificent state," and read the station's creed: "Programs for the rank and file of our people; for those who live on the farm; for those who work in the factories and in the mills."[47]

Tinney, of Broken Arrow, was known as the "teller of tall tales." He introduced the Rev. J. W. Storer, Pastor of the First Baptist Church, who gave the innovation.

Then McGee was introduced; and Glenn Condon told about the station's news programming. Tom P. McDermott, chairman of the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, welcomed the station to the Oil Capitol and "Disc Jockey" Joe Knight began an evening of transcribed music.[48]

Four hours and 20 minutes after sign-on, KRMG's first commercial was aired.

"The first commercial was a national one and we played it at midnight. It was for a movie and they framed the order," said the program director.[49]

Ken Greenwood said the first commercial was for the

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[47] Op. cit. Tulsa World, December 24, 1949.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Op. cit. Ward interview.

picture "High Noon" and was played at midnight Christmas Eve,[50] thus, KRMG aired no commercials on its first day of operation.

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[50] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

VI. OUR GANG

KRMG had an advantage from the beginning--its staff. "Brownie" Akers hired Bob Jones who built one of the most envied staffs in Oklahoma broadcasting.

Program Director Perry Ward started at KVOO in Tulsa in 1931 as an announcer, but left his home town to work at the Pasadena Playhouse in California during the depression years. He returned to Oklahoma to take a $40 per week announcing job at WKY in Oklahoma City.

Ward produced "Spin and Win" which NBC bought in 1940 and wanted him with it. He was off to New York. The show grew quite popular and was broadcast "live" from various Army camps around the country in the pre-war years 1940 and 1941.

> Our contract ended in California and I went to work for CBS and worked for them a couple of years. When Art Linkletter started "House Party," I succeeded him on an afternoon ladies show called "What's Doin' Ladies" on ABC; and did that until I came back to Oklahoma City in the latter part of 1947 to emcee and produce a CBS show out of there called "Oklahoma Roundup." It was a coast-to-coast show.[51]

"That ended about the time Gene Autry was on tour;

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[51] Op. cit. Ward interview.

and I had known Gene for years and he hired me to be his announcer on the Wrigley's show on Sunday.[52] Then Ward went to KRMG, hired directly by Kerr.[53]

Glenn Condon was not only a great newsman, he was one of the most enthusiastic promoters and supporters Oklahoma has ever had. He was KRMG's first news director.

Condon was born October 13, 1891, at Greenfield, Iowa, and moved to Oklahoma City a year later.[54]

He started his enviable news career as a messenger boy for Western Union in Oklahoma City, but had returned to Tulsa in 1907, the year of Oklahoma's statehood.[55]

In a 1964 interview, Condon recalled those days when his news interest was sparked by delivering telegrams to the Oklahoma Times-Journal and Daily Oklahoman with news of the San Francisco earthquake and the assassination of President McKinley. He prided himself as "first on the streets."[56]

Condon's first reporting job was in Tulsa, a city he loved as much as life itself. The Tulsa Democrat saw him through his cub years until 1909 when he was fired for

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[52]Op. cit. Ward interview. [53]Ibid.

[54]Johnny Admire, University of Oklahoma, Journalism 311, "Glenn Condon", April 13, 1964.

[55]Ibid., p. 3. [56]Ibid.

reporting on gambling payoffs and illegal liquor. The truth of his articles was never denied, but they were called exaggerated and another Tulsa paper editorially said Condon had betrayed Tulsa.[57]

Condon was hired in 1911 as a reporter for the Tulsa World, where he stayed until 1917, serving as sports editor, city editor and managing editor.[58]

He was a Marine Sergeant from 1917-1919.[59]

Condon was editor and publisher of Vaudeville News in New York until 1926 when he returned to Tulsa as manager of the Orpheum and Rialto theaters.

While in New York he hired Walter Winchell as a messenger boy. The youth dug out a few backstage stories for the trade magazine and Condon gave him a chance to write and paid him $25 per week. Firing Walter Winchell was one of his favorite stories. "Brownie" Akers related the story as he had personally heard it from Condon:

> Glenn hired Winchell as a runner to pick up news and he would make all the back stages and would pick up ads, too. He wrote some too, and was offered a job after a year or so by the New York Mirror to write a daily

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[57] Op. cit. Admire, p. 18.

[58] Ibid., p. 19.

[59] Ibid., p. 29.

column on show people. He told Glenn about it, but told him he decided not to take it, so Glenn fired him so he would have to take the job. And Winchell stayed there years and years.[60]

In 1927, Condon helped W. G. Skelly set up a public relations department and was its first director. Skelly purchased KFRU later that year and it was Condon that organized it and put it back on a paying basis.[61]

He helped start KOME in 1938.[62]

In 1942, he resigned to become news editor of KTUL, then accepted the Oklahoma and Kansas Radio War News chairmanship. He acted as a news clearing house for the 35 stations under his wing.[63]

The "C" in KAKC stands for Condon. Sam Avery, Bob Kellog and he put it on the air in 1946.[64]

The fourth station he helped found was KRMG.

"Glenn Condon was kind of a father confessor for all the broadcast people around here," said Ward. "When I first started at KVOO, Glenn was public relations director for Skelly, but he didn't really get into radio until he put KOME on the air."[65]

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[60] Op. cit. Akers interview. [61] Ibid., p. 35.

[62] Ibid., p. 36. [63] Ibid.

[64] Op. cit. Ward interview. [65] Ibid.

Condon was hired by Akers at Ward's suggestion. He was known as "Mr. News" and had a great following and Ward wanted them to follow him down the dial to 740.

"Brownie" Akers didn't think "Mr. News" was a good enough title. He thought "Mr. Oklahoma" was better and many people agreed. "He was a great character, brilliant, Mr. Oklahoma." Anyway, the name stuck with him the rest of his life.

At KRMG, he found a home. He found a station that was as vitally interested in the community as he was. He believed that nothing could stop Tulsa's future because Tulsa was and always had been led by imaginative people.[66]

Condon's ability as a newsman brought many honors to KRMG and to himself. He, for example, is the only Oklahoman to have served as president of both the Oklahoma Associated Press Broadcasters and the UPI Broadcasters of Oklahoma.

Frank S. Lane, born May 1, 1905 at Freesboro, Arkansas, got his start in radio at KRFU shortly after it went on the air in 1923. He was paid $50 per month, but got married and was given a raise to $150. When Skelly bought the station and moved it to Tulsa, Lane was hired at $200 per

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[66] Op. cit. Akers interview.

month.[67] Thus began a long career in broadcasting.

He joined the KRMG staff as commercial manager December 5, 1949, at a time when:

"Sales were tough for a new station and people didn't know the salesmen. It took a little while, but in a couple of months, Lane had things pretty well in line."[68]

He was a good business man and found it easy to sell a station he liked. He later became station manager, because of his business ability.

Joe Knight was the station's chief announcer. Ward hired him by telephone and said he came well recommended.

"Joe Knight was a graduate of OSU [then Oklahoma A & M College] and came to KRMG right out of college. He was a very clever and talented guy," said Ken Greenwood.[69]

Ward said Knight's mother would listen to her son every afternoon on KRMG, from her Amarillo, Texas, home.

Knight "was ahead of his time," Ward recalled. "He was doing some things then a lot of the boys are doing now.

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[67]Edward S. Dumit, University of Oklahoma, Journalism 311, Jan. 1, 1968; Frank S. Lane--for service to broadcasting, p. 10.

[68]Op. cit. Ward interview.

[69]Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

He'd find some commercial with a particular line, then say something that tied in and the answer would come from the commercial. He tied a lot of things together that way. When Jones went to Baltimore to manage a station, he took Joe Knight with him and he's still there.[70]

Glenn Dobbs, All-American Tulsa University football player who later became the school's athletic director, was named sports director.

Alden F. Wooster was chief engineer.

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[70] Op. cit. Ward interview.

VII. THE FIRST FOUR

Senator Kerr took a lot of interest in KRMG, his second radio station, during the rough formation years. In fact, he sold the first local time:

"He sold an hour on Sunday morning from eleven to twelve to the Immanuel Baptist Church, by advising them that he had selected them to be the church that would get prime time on this station."[72]

"Brownie" Akers said the senator questioned him at every opportunity on the station's operations during the early years.[73] While Dean McGee admitted "all I did was watch the financial statements. Akers and Jones ran it."[74]

"KVOO fought KRMG like crazy because KVOO was the only 50,000-watter in town and they didn't want another one,"[75] Perry Ward recalled. And that pressure from the established stations retarded the station's growth.

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[72] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[73] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[74] Op. cit. McGee interview.

[75] Op. cit. Ward interview.

"It took quite a long time to show a profit as I recall," Dean McGee said. "We were making money with it after the first two years, but it didn't start picking up much momentum until about the time or just before we sold it."[76]

There wasn't much of a music format in the early days, before rock and roll, but the station was programmed pretty much to the whims of each announcer. Some towards good music and others preferring more country sounds. The station tried to be everything to everyone.

Ward said KRMG had no remotes during the first 18 months of its operation, except for sports.

"Glenn Dobbs and I were going to do the Oklahoma A & M football games on KRMG and it was a week before they were to start and they had not been sold," said Ward. But Kerr was in town for a day and "he picked up the phone and got us a sponsor."[77]

Ward did color and Dobbs the play-by-play. During 1936 and 1937, Ward had a similar announcing task as color man for the Oklahoma University football broadcasts on WKY. Walter Cronkite did the play-by-play and was WKY news director.[78]

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[76] Op. cit. McGee interview.

[77] Op. cit. Ward interview. [78] Ibid.

Bob Jones fired Ward after 18 months and it was a big play story for both the Tulsa newspapers, but particularly the Tulsa Daily World. Ward said the reason for the "big play" was that Maud Lorton, widow of the World publisher Eugene Lorton, "couldn't stand that old man--Kerr."[79] Ward recalled the incident vividly:

> The manager [Jones] and I clashed from the first day because Kerr hired me and he did not. He had a man he wanted and was looking down my throat constantly.
>
> At the time I was let out by him, it was the time of the McArthur "Old Soldiers Never Die" speech. It was one of those things that we clashed over; I said we should let the newsmen analyze it as in the past and he said we should go back to the commercial schedule.
>
> I made the engineers stay on the net for the analysis and I scheduled it to run again that night for people who could not hear it during the day.
>
> Two days later, I was gone and the papers a day after that said Kerr fired me for running McArthur's speech twice in the same day. Kerr called and wanted to know what we were trying to do to him down here and it all came out then. I made a statement to the paper that the senator had nothing whatsoever to do with it . . . it was a disagreement with the manager.
>
> Later, when I talked with Kerr, he backed me on the whole thing because he thought it was newsworthy and the people should have heard it. It was one of the big speeches of all time.
>
> The papers played the thing up because they fought Kerr and said here's a way we can get back at him.[80]

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[79] Op. cit. Ward interview. [80] Ibid.

Ward was hired by KOTV television, Channel 6, in Tulsa and he remained there until 1956 when he opened his own advertising agency.

Nearly 14 months passed after KRMG went on the air, before the FCC approved a power increase at night. The station had been licensed for 50,000 watts/day and 10,000 watts/night, but was on the air with 50,000 watts/day and 25,000 watts/night from the beginning, on a temporary permit. Engineering studies showed that the increased power did not interfere with stations in Canada or Mexico or the Buffalo, New York, station on the same frequency.[81]

Akers resigned at the station's board of director's meeting April 7, 1952, and Jones, who purchased an interest in the company, replaced him as vice president and general manager. The public announcement was delayed until FCC action approving the transaction.[82]

Akers remained with All-Oklahoma Broadcasting Company, and at this time is a consultant for their station in Oklahoma

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[80] Op. cit. Ward interview.

[81] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, February 13, 1951.

[82] Ibid., May 6, 1952.

City--KOCO television, Channel 5, which is on contract for sale.

Jones bought the interest formerly held by T. W. Fentom, long time associate of Kerr, who died in February, 1951. Terms of the sale were not disclosed. The plan had been considered some months, but was delayed until Fentom's estate could be settled.[83]

Frank Lane, commercial manager, succeeded Jones as manager.

April 28, 1953 it was announced that Jones would leave KRMG to work on television applications for Oklahoma City, Tulsa and Peoria, Illinois, effective June 15. Lane was elevated to the vice presidency, again replacing Jones.[84]

The Tulsa television application had been in the works since July 14, 1952, naming six prominent civic leaders and businessmen and Oklahoma A & M college as shareholders, plus Kerr and McGee. They had applied for Channel 2, with studios to be located in the Akdar Building, a floor above KRMG.[85]

The announcement came just one month after the famous

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[83] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, May 6, 1952.

[84] Ibid., April 28, 1953.

[85] Ibid., July 14, 1952.

television freeze was lifted.

The FCC imposed a freeze on all television applications September 29, 1948, and no licenses were granted for nearly four years. The commission announced it wanted time to plan television channel allocations and limit assignments by geographic areas.[86]

The rule changes were announced April 14, 1952, that assignments were limited to 2,053 in the United States, which seemed excessive at a time when only 108 stations were on the air. With that announcement, it seemed obvious that the freeze would soon be over. It ended June 1, 1952.[87]

Tulsa's first television station, KOTV, had signed on during the freeze by virtue of a construction permit which was granted before the freeze went into effect. It gave them a virtual monopoly and exclusive use of all four television networks for three years. Now, KRMG had its chance to get into the television business:

"This expansion of ownership in KRMG completes long-range plans of Senator Robert S. Kerr and Dean McGee," said

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[86]Sydney W. Head, "Broadcasting in America," Riverside Press, Boston, 1956.

[87]Ibid.

Jones when the application was announced.[88]

"Ever since KRMG went on the air in 1949, it has been our aim to establish and maintain a close identity with Tulsa and northeastern Oklahoma. We feel that we have succeeded," Jones said. But, the addition of television "will enable us to do an even better job."[89]

New stockholders on the application were: Harry Clarke, clothier; Louis W. Grant, president of Home Federal Savings and Loan; P. C. Lauinger, publisher of the Oil and Gas Journal; Floyd E. Stanley, president of Midwestern Constructors, Inc.; Ralph Talbot, owner of the Akdar Building, and C. B. "Brownie" Akers, former KRMG vice president. Grant, Lauinger and Stanley were brought into the KRMG directorate.[90]

The next 18 months saw the greatest fight in the station's history. The young "whipper-snapper" and its backers had squared off with the established KVOO forces and W. G. Skelly's oil money in a fight for the Channel 2 construction permit.

The directors knew they had a good opportunity with KRMG. It was building a good audience and had shown a few

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[88] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, July 14, 1952.

[89] Ibid. [90] Ibid.

more dollars income than expenses. Selling the station was an idea none of them wanted to consider. They were building an empire and did not want to make any sacrifices of their present holdings.

Competition was tough and Washington hearings frequent. It was beginning to look as though either Kerr or Skelly would have the best chance and most competition fell by the wayside. Fred M. Jones, owner of KFMJ, held on the longest and protested loudest, but was finally eliminated when the giants joined forces and KRMG was sacrificed.

"The only reason we sold the station was when Skelly, who owned KVOO in Tulsa, and ourselves applied for a TV permit," said McGee. "We finally got together and filed jointly."[91]

The FCC would not allow a television station to be owned jointly by two radio interests in the same city, so one had to go. In the choice of KVOO or KRMG, the winner was obvious. KVOO was Tulsa's oldest and at that time, most profitable station, far dominate over KRMG.

McGee admitted having some regrets about the sale:

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[91] Op. cit. McGee interview.

> KVOO was the oldest and best known [station] in Tulsa. It nearly broke our hearts to sell just as things were going good. And, we were taking some risk selling it before the TV permit could be granted, but by combining with Mr. Skelly, we at least eliminated our biggest competition and our application jointly looked pretty good.[92]

Exactly four years after sign-on, December 24, 1953, Altus publisher Harrington Wimberly purchased KRMG for $305,000, with $31,500 cash and $25,000 per year until paid. The FCC approved the sale in November to the owner of the Altus Times-Democrat and he had 30 days to complete the transaction, after approval, by terms of his contract with All-Oklahoma Broadcasting Company.[93]

Kerr was well acquainted with Will Harrington Wimberly, who was in Washington during those years as a member of the Federal Power Commission.

"He had asked us about it and shown an interest before we decided to sell," said McGee, adding Wimberly was aware of the application they had made for Channel 2 in Tulsa. "We looked around quite a bit, but he made the best offer. We weren't under a lot of pressure to get rid of it. It takes a long time to get approval for a TV permit.[94]

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[93]Personal interview with Will Harrington Wimberly, former owner of KRMG, Duncan, Oklahoma, May 3, 1970.

[94]Op. cit. McGee interview.

Eighteen months after Kerr's death on New Year's Day, 1963, the Illinois radio and television stations were liquidated to pay the estate taxes.[95]

Wimberly was on the Federal Power Commission until June 22, 1952, and wanted to get back to Oklahoma. He had purchased the Times-Democrat January 1, 1928 and put KWHW on the air with his brother at Altus in 1946.[96] The call letters are his initials.

During Wimberly's seven years and nine months on the power commission, his brother Frank was general manager of both the Altus newspaper and radio station.

"I knew this station would be up for sale, they never did publicize it or anything," recalled Wimberly. "Kerr knew I wanted to come back to Oklahoma and talked with me about it before he made that television application with Mr. Skelly."[97]

"I knew that it offered an excellent opportunity and it did turn out to be a splendid venture on my part.[98]

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[95] Op. cit. McGee interview.

[96] Doug Adams, University of Oklahoma, Journalism 311, "Harrington Wimberly", April 12, 1964.

[97] Op. cit. Wimberly interview.

[98] Ibid.

VIII. THE WIMBERLY YEARS

Harrington Wimberly had planned to return to Oklahoma after his purchase of KRMG, but became involved in other Washington projects which prevented relocation. In his absence, he said, the wisest move he ever made was to put Frank Lane in full control of the station on a salary plus bonus basis:

> I don't think the station had ever shown a profit, but I sensed putting Frank Lane, the manager, in charge with full authority, could make it go.
>
> I turned him loose on a salary and bonus deal on earnings. And, I gave him a large amount of the credit on developing the business. Of course, I gave him all the help I could and I was in and out of Tulsa.[99]

When Wimberly's Western Broadcasting Company took over, there were no staff changes, and few during the next four years, partly because "Frank Lane was such an easy guy to get along with," said Wimberly.[100]

"We did not initiate any program changes," Wimberly recalled, "unless it would have been that we did not fall for the rock-and-roll stuff that was coming in. The programing

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[99] Op. cit. Wimberly interview. [100] Ibid.

was maintained on a very high level." But, so was the programing of their biggest competitor.

"You'd have to put K-V-double-O as our biggest competition, one of the first and finest stations in Oklahoma," he said. "Later KAKC went all rock-and-roll and that was pretty stiff competition, too. But Frank dug in and bore down on accounts, so we didn't slip too much."[101]

His plaudits for Lane were almost endless:

"Frank Lane was one of the best pioneer radio men in Oklahoma, a fine man," Wimberly said. "I think that might have been the turning point, when I put it up to Frank."[102]

> As a newspaper publisher, news would have to be one of my interests and, of course, we had Glenn Condon as news director. We didn't need a large news staff with Glenn Condon. There were about six news programs a day from sign-on to sign-off, plus the ABC net.[103]

That ABC affiliation didn't last through the Wimberly years, however. Lane notified ABC October 14, 1955 that effective April 14, 1956, KRMG would terminate its network affiliation, thus becoming the first 50,000 watt independent radio station in the United States, and of course, the most powerful independent in terms of wattage. Condon and his

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[101] Op. cit. Wimberly interview.

[102] Ibid. [103] Ibid.

staff wanted to make it the most powerful in terms of influence, too.[104]

Lane said the sole reason KRMG went independent was "to give our listeners more complete local coverage of news and sports and more programing of all types geared to the area we serve."[105] He said to accomplish the station's goals, it would require six months of hard work, and that is when ABC would be dropped.

Their work paid off.

As an example of the hustle in the KRMG news department, the Associated Press presented KRMG with a national news award February 10, 1957 "for supplying more news stories during the year than any of the other 1,600 AP members." John Aspinwall, the AP national radio news editor presented the award to Condon and Lane personally at Tulsa.[106]

Violent weather is not entirely foreign to Oklahomans, and a good test of the worth of a radio station is during a period of crisis. In the spring of 1957, the Arkansas River pushed 12 to 14 feet out of its banks, flooding homes in Tulsa

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[104] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, October 14, 1955.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Op. cit. Tulsa World, February 11, 1957.

and all along the river to Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Newsman Larry Strain went 72 hours without sleep, broadcasting from "Airmobile Unit Number 1," a helicopter which covered the flooded lands all the way to the Arkansas border and advised residents of evacuation problems and congested areas.[107]

From Friday, May 17, through Tuesday, May 21, 1967, the station aired 153 local news broadcasts and carried 10 hours and two minutes of weather forcasts, warnings and flood reports.[108]

The station was community minded, too. Under Wimberly's reign it got the idea of going out and doing things, with plenty of remotes and man-on-the-street interviews. The station promoted civic projects and charities like the Salvation Army Christmas collections and "Toys for Tots", sponsored by local firemen. Wimberly said the station was involved in everything it could be and it showed growth each year during the time he owned it, until it was sold at a good profit,[109] August 26, 1957, with effective transfer date December 1, 1957.[110]

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[107] Op. cit. Dumit, p. 16. [108] Ibid.

[109] Op. cit. Wimberly interview.

[110] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, October 14, 1955.

Lane and his good music programing, Condon's news, a fine staff and a lot of drive increased the worth of the station from $305,000 to $500,000 in the four Wimberly years.

> Meredith seemed to want to buy it. A Meredith lawyer in Washington and I had talked over a period of six to eight months and there were no brokers involved. They were not giving the hard buy and I was sitting back and concluded that they wanted the station and when the time came, they would say so.[111]

Wimberly talked with no one but Meredith Publishing Company, of Des Moines, Iowa, about the sale. They made a good offer, he was satisfied with a nice profit and was interested in the purchase of the Duncan Banner, though it was four years before he made that purchase.

> I closed the deal on the Banner in 1962, so it was a few years later. I had talked with B. L. Abernathy, the owner, who died in 1959. He had been quite inactive over a period of a few years and had a heart attack and a reoccurrence. I talked with him very cautiously and let him know I was interested. After his death, it was at least six months before I talked with his widow. I did not push the deal, but waited until she was ready to sell.[112]

Harrington Wimberly moved to Duncan, his residence today, and Frank continued to manage the Altus newspaper and KWHW, which was sold in the fall of 1969.

There was a smooth transition from Wimberly to Meredith and KRMG retained its complete staff and Lane as manager.

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[111] Op. cit. Wimberly interview. [112] Ibid.

IX. THE MEREDITH YEARS

The purchase of KRMG by Meredith Publishing Company, under the name of Meredith-KRMG, was far from disaster, but it didn't make a nickle for them. It lost money nearly five straight years.[113]

The Des Moines, Iowa, firm published Better Homes and Gardens and Successful Farming magazines. It held radio and television licenses in Syracuse, Kansas City, Omaha and Phoenix before adding KRMG, a station they sold four and one-half years later at the same $500,000 they paid, and lost money all along the way.

There were two basic reasons for KRMG's poor performance, dictatorial group management policies and mish-mash programming.

Meredith inherited a good music station which was doing well at a time of a shift in programming toward rock. The good music policies were exaggerated to the saccharine sound of Mantovani, Percy Faith and Paul Weston. That was at night.

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[113] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

In the morning, from 6:00 to 7:00 A.M., then again from noon until 1:00 P.M., KRMG resounded with the pure country sould of Marvin McCullough. He brought in the best ratings, so Meredith added country throughout the day, but keeping the solid country blocks for Marvin.[114]

KAKC rose to number one in the market aboard the rock-and-roll music wagon, and Meredith, with eyes always open to a good thing, programmed some "chicken rock" in an effort to share the audience. "Chicken rock" is pretty much the same tune, with a more subtle beat and a more conventional group or singer.

Meredith let the night slip into some kind of a big band sound and KRMG sounded like chaos. But, the worst was yet to come.

Meredith was involved in a big play and got CBS affiliations in Kansas City, Phoenix and Omaha," said Greenwood, "Which ultimately, I suppose to sweeten the package, led them to take the CBS affiliation here in Tulsa."[115]

KTUL had dropped CBS and Meredith was quick to add Tulsa to the deal. The announcement came December 22, 1958,

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[114] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[115] Ibid.

and the network contract was effective January 5, 1959.[116]

"We have been happy with our independent status," said manager Frank Lane, "but we have found that our new format has its strengths and weaknesses. CBS will fill in those weaknesses."[117]

So, KRMG added two hours of Arthur Godfrey, Howard Miller and Art Linkletter's "House Party" to its morning schedule. The afternoons rang with the time-tested "soap operas" and Pat Buttram for two hours and the night spots were taken by Lowell Thomas and Edward R. Murrow for 75 minutes. The airways were filled with CBS news.[118]

The local news was still as good or better than anything else in the market with Glenn Condon at the controls, but because of failing health, not as firmly as he had been two years previously.

KRMG had fallen to third in the nation in the Associated Press news awards, still a quite enviable position. The AP presented its 1957 award April 20, 1958, at the Oklahoma AP Broadcasters spring meeting at Western Hills State Lodge, on Lake Fort Gibson, near Wagoner.[119]

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[116] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, December 22, 1958.

[117] Ibid. [118] Ibid.

[119] Op. cit. Tulsa World, April 21, 1958.

"Dock Hull was on the station at night, before he went to KVOO where he made his reputation as the old "Sleep Walker," said Ken Greenwood. And KRMG added the commercial religion shows like Garner Ted Armstrong's "The World Tomorrow."

Programming under Meredith was nearly non-existant. It was another case of trying to please everybody, something which probably will never be achieved. And, what happened to KRMG, the community interest station?

"It didn't have any image in the community," said Greenwood. "People weren't for it or against it, they just wished it would do something."[120]

It might be pointed out, in fairness to Meredith, that having no image in a community is far better than having a bad image, something that KRMG has never had. KRMG did have a few notable accomplishments during Meredith's ownership. It used a mobile studio with a radio link to the main studios for remote broadcasts and it caused quite a stir with its "Mobile Money Time."

The contest idea was not original, but something Lane had picked up at a National Association of Broadcasters

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[120] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

meeting. The KRMG mobile unit would follow a car on some Tulsa street, then broadcast its license number live on the air. If the driver was listening, he stopped and collected a silver dollar. He also got a chance to answer a question for a bigger prize.[121]

Bob Parkhurst began a show called "Day Dreams" from 9:00 until 10:00 A.M. during 1960. It was one of the few shows that continued when Meredith sold to SWANCO, KRMG's present owner. The show lasted until 1962.

Lynn Higbee innovated "Saturday Seminar," from 8:00 until 11:00 A.M. on Saturday morning, a sparce time on most station's ratings. The show, at one time, was quite popular. Higbee talked with the other announcers and newsmen when Milt Haynes or Jim Hartz would wander in. Larry Strain would read a news item, and everyone would put in his two-cents worth.[122]

To say that KRMG was first in Tulsa to program stereophonic music would be a half-truth. The station set up its remote equipment in the television studios of KOTV, Channel 6, and carried the live music of Marvin Law Will's "Townhouse Trio" at 4:00 P.M. for an hour on a Sunday afternoon in 1959.

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[121] Op. cit. Dumit, p. 19. [122] Ibid.

KOTV carried the other half of the sound and the picture. Microphones were placed far enough apart that when a listener would place his radio, tuned to KRMG, about 10 feet from his television set on Channel 6, he could have stereo music in his living room.[123]

The FCC approved a name change from Meredith-KRMG to Meredith Broadcasting Company, April 4, 1961, just seven months before its sale to SWANCO, the frozen food company of Omaha headed by Gilbert Swanson.[124]

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[123] Op. cit. Dumit, p. 19.

[124] Op. cit. Tulsa World, November 8, 1961.

X. SWANCO TO THE RESCUE

SWANCO contracted for KRMG November 8, 1961, and took control February 15th. The devastation of the next two days made KRMG look like an atom bomb cleared the studio:

Frank Lane quit. He was replaced by Johnny Merrill as manager.

Program Director Keith Bretz lost his air control and was made a sales manager. He was replaced by Jay Harmon.

"Hillbilly" programming was immediately canned and with it, Marvin McCullough. And, commercial religion was also taken off the air.

Tulsa Oiler baseball voice Mack Creager went to KVOO.

Announcers Lynn Higbee and Bob Brown left, as did salesman Carl Larson, and sales woman Helen Lewis and continuity writer Martha Stewart.

Glenn Condon's news department, which had helped hold KRMG together during the Meredith years, was untouched. Condon remained news director and newsmen Larry Strain, Dick Evans and Jim Hartz stayed. Condon was also given the title of special events director.

The biggest axe fell on CBS. SWANCO Vice President Ken Greenwood told how:

> We tried to live out the CBS contract that we inherited from Meredith, which is about what we did. It finally got down to the place where we were carrying so little programming from CBS, just barely what our contract said we had to carry, and they finally said, well, forget it if that's what you think about CBS. That was about 14 or 15 months after our company bought KRMG.[125]
>
> Our original concept with the station was to use the CBS network and to fit some talk programs around it. We had some telephone talk shows and hired Dock Hull, who was a former radio personality here in Tulsa, and he did a morning show and he did an hour-long talk show from 9:00 until 10:00 A.M. which then fed into Arthur Godfrey.
>
> Our local manager in those days thought that some country-western programming would fit real swell on the station. So, he hired a country-western fellow to be on early in the morning where Marvin McCullough had originally been and also do some noon-time programming.
>
> We had another talk show in the afternoon and one in the evening to fit around CBS.
>
> CBS was going through the revolution then of gradually phasing out of daytime programming with the exception of Arthur Godfrey; so, for a while, we had a mixture of country music, talk, CBS news and some popular music.[126]

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[125] Op. cit. Tulsa World, February 17, 1962.

[126] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

Ken Greenwood was named manager of KRMG June 25, 1963[127] and was made president of SWANCO in December, 1966.



Another service that was axed by SWANCO was the Associated Press; it was done, however, much more reluctantly than the others.

> We discontinued the AP when we picked up UPI audio, because in those days you didn't know what was coming down the audio wire unless you had the regular news wire to "billboard" for you. So, we dropped AP. We had been talking to AP for almost two years, asking them when they were going to put an audio service in, and they kept dilly-dallying around and never got around to it. So, we just dropped AP in a lot of our markets as some contracts expired. It just so happened that we went to UPI at about the time we dropped CBS.[128]

SWANCO wanted KRMG to get involved in the community, to do more than just sit back and watch and report the news.

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[127] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, June 25, 1963.

[128] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

So, it became one of the first stations in the United States to endorse a political candidate. Some local office seekers won KRMG's approval and Page Belcher received the station's nod in his re-election bid for U. S. Congress. He won. Henry Bellmon won support when he ran and was elected to the governor's office and then later, he was elected as a Republican to the U. S. Senate against veteran Democrat A. S. "Mike" Monroney.[129]

And the station got involved editorially, becoming the first station in the state to editorialize. Greenwood told how:

> Initially Glenn [Condon] wrote all the editorials. Glenn wrote and delivered the editorials until he got to a place where he couldn't do that sort of thing, and then he wrote them and I delivered them. And, when he couldn't write anymore I took on the job of both writing and delivering them.[130]

KRMG broke the racial barrier in broadcasting, becoming the first station in the state to hire a black newsman. Don Ross, who does a lot of free lance work, was sent to Kansas City in May of 1968, when the city was under pressure from racial unrest. Veteran newsman David Stanford was also on the scene for KRMG, and the two of them reported their findings to KRMG and Tulsa Mayor James Hewgley after returning from

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[129] Op. cit. Greenwood interview. [130] Ibid.

the five-day trip. The disturbance was during the time of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King.

The report blamed the indiscretion of the Kansas City police, the lack of sensitivity of the school board and "Black Hoodlumism" as responsible immediately for the confrontation.[131]

As underlying causes, some frustrations similar to those in other cities, allegations of police brutality, poor quality housing for blacks and low quality education for Negroes.[132] But KRMG carried this one step farther.

KRMG studied the causes of the Kansas City disorder then informed Tulsa about it so "our citizens would be more inclined to involve themselves in steps to eliminate underlying causes of riot in Tulsa; and being aware of immediate causes of the flare-up, guard against the presence of those factors in Tulsa."[133]

"We've been the first station in this area that has arranged what we call 'phone forums' where we let people come in; and the people that come in are the authorities, and listeners call in and ask questions to both sides,"[134] said Greenwood.

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[131]"KRMG Kansas City Report", 1968. [132]Ibid.

[133]Ibid. [134]Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

KRMG has received quite a lot of commendation for the "phone forums" and they have been on a number of vital issues, such as: the right to work, port bonds, drugs, open housing and the Kansas City problem.

Panelists on the KRMG "phone forum" Saturday May 18, 1968, were The Honorable James M. Hewgley, Jr., Mayor of Tulsa; The Honorable Curtis Lawson, State Representative, District 73; Dr. Girard T. Bryany, Metropolitan Junior College, Kansas City, Missouri; Tulsa Police Chief Jack Purdie; Mr. C. L. Robinson, a citizen; KRMG Newsman David Stanford and Moderator Vic Bastien, KRMG news director.[135]

Greenwood said it is a chain policy to"let people sound off," because there are many sides to an issue.[136]

KRMG's community involvement wasn't a selfish motivation to bring them up from the zero ratings, shortly after the SWANCO take-over, to their present position of leadership, but it helped.

> KVOO was a very dominant station in the community at that time. They had NBC and a very fine reputation. They were regarded as the pillar of radio.
>
> Not that KRMG had a bad reputation, but when I first came to town, people used to say I'm glad to

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[135] Op. cit. "Kansas City Report."

[136] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

> see somebody finally is going to do something with KRMG. So, we had a lot of people rooting for us. They just seemed to think here was a station that had great coverage and a great potential for the Tulsa market. Because, if you can get people to listen to you throughout the state, obviously you're going to help pull business into the community, so they were rootin' for KRMG to do that.[137]

Meredith had only two personalities on his staff, Glenn Condon and Marvin McCullough; and Marvin was out the door the first week SWANCO took control.

Greenwood said SWANCO felt Tulsa would buy personality. "They had in the past and we felt if we put good personality in the market, they would buy it," he said. "The justification for this theory has been proven, because today we have the top radio personalities in the market."[138]

"I think more people could name the guys on our staff than they could any other station in the market," Greenwood continued. Chuck "Adams is very strong in the morning and Johnny Martin very strong at night. Fred Campbell has a good following now. These guys spend a lot of time in the community working on various projects and doing a lot of things which make quite a contribution."[139]

Community contribution is another SWANCO chain policy

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[137] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[138] Ibid. [139] Ibid.

sworn to by all four radio stations: KQEO, Albuquerque, and KLEO, Wichita, both contemporary sounds; and KBAT, San Antonio, like KRMG, a 50,000 watt middle of the road station with what Greenwood calls an "Independent better music format."[140]

SWANCO also owns two FM radio stations, one in New Orleans and KRMG-FM, Tulsa.

"We'll continue to grow if we can find good properties," said Greenwood. "We're not a big company and we're not a stock company. If we go in, we have to play with our own money, and that makes a big difference."[141]

KIHI FM was purchased June 15, 1964, by SWANCO, with take over in September.

"The adoption of FM to our KRMG-AM operation will enable us to widen the scope of our programming," said Greenwood in a Tulsa Tribune story at the time. "We have what we believe to be interesting plans for the FM operation, both in the field of music and public affairs."[142]

The call letters were changed to KRMG-FM.

The FCC approved assignment of KRMG from SWANCO to Texas Star Broadcasting Company, Inc., of San Antonio, Texas,

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[140] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[141] Ibid. [142] Ibid.

November 11, 1967.[143]

SWANCO is no longer connected with Swanson Foods, which was sold several years ago to Campbell Foods Company; but it is the Swanson sons who have the radio business-Gery Swanson, who lives in Tulsa, and Clarke Swanson of Fort Meyers, Florida.[144] Clarke runs a cable television operation owned by both brothers and Greenwood.[145]

Texas Star Broadcasters is a corporate name that SWANCO inherited when they purchased KBAT, and it is owned 100 per cent by SWANCO. Greenwood said there was once a SWANCO of Oklahoma, a SWANCO of Kansas and a SWANCO of New Mexico, which are now merged under the name Texas Star. They will be eventually merged under the name SWANCO.[146]

Chuck Adams, who had worked for KRMG three years as the early man, was named program director September 20, 1967, replacing Dick Jones. Sales Manager Ron Blue became general manager. Several other staff changes were announced:

Lew Jones was brought to Tulsa from Albuquerque to pull the 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. shift; and Dick Jones left

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[143] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, June 15, 1964.

[144] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[145] Ibid. [146] Ibid.

that time slot, transferring to the SWANCO outlet in San Antonio KBAT.

Jones was followed by Fred Campbell from 2:00 to 6:00 P.M., then came Don Cummings from 6:00 to 8:00 P.M. and Johnny Martin until 1:00 A.M. Adams retained the morning slot.

The program "Quiet Zone" bit the dust at the same time. It had been two straight hours of music only.[147]

The Martin show was simulcast on the FM station.

Sunday, December 31, 1968, KRMG began a popular program "The Word--and Music" at 7:00 A.M., a time when few stations can claim a great audience. Somewhere in Ohio a minister had devised a way to present controversial moral questions to an audience and spark their imagination. The non-denominational program covers in music and script such subjects as money and marriage, accidental nuclear war, parenthood, the aged, working mothers, the church in the next century, mental illness, adult dishonesty and leisure time.

It met with great success, even at that hour.

Adams said the show fits into the KRMG weekend programming and has a special appeal to the young people.[148]

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[147] Op. cit. Tulsa World, September 20, 1967.

[148] Ibid. February 10, 1968.

KRMG dubbed itself "The Friendly Giant," and became promotion happy. Things began to happen.

KRMG sponsored a Herb Alpert concert in the Tulsa Assembly Center; 10,000 people showed up to see the appearance of the "Great Pumpkin," to win prizes on a scavenger hunt and generally have a good time; "Operation Amigo" brought in 30,000 cans of food, weighing seven tons, which was flown to the victims of Hurricane Beulah of south Texas, and attracted over 9,000 persons to a Henry Mancini-Andy Williams concert at the Tulsa Assembly Center. That was the largest crowd ever to attend an Assembly Center event, despite "nippy weather."[149]

And, they don't call it "Award-winning KRMG" for nothing.

KRMG has won more awards in the last five years than any other Oklahoma radio station, and more than all Tulsa radio stations combined. UPI news awards are almost "matter of fact" at annual presentations. They earn them for coverage and special results like the "Kansas City Report" or "The Tulsa Drug Scene."

KRMG is the only Tulsa station with a full-time news correspondent in Washington, D. C., Malvinia Stephenson. She

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[149]Various KRMG promotion flyers.

was first to break the news that Secretary of Defense McNamara would resign, and first on the resignation of Chief Justice Earl Warren.

The editorials on KRMG collect awards, too. The Oklahoma Association of Secondary Schools presented its "Marshall Gregory Award" to KRMG for 28 broadcast editorials promoting greater understanding between schools and the general public.

Radio stations seldom win awards in competition with newspapers and television stations, but KRMG does. For example, last year KRMG won the Oklahoma Wildlife Federation trophy--"The Conservation Communications Award of the Year."[150]

> We say award winning, and people say, well what have you done? We won the conservation award from the Wildlife Federation for the editorials we did on conservation, and not just the editorials, but a lot of other activities. We've given a lot of support, financial and editorial-wise to the Scenic Rivers Bill which has just been passed.
>
> We've been harping on bad law enforcement around our lakes and it looks like finally something will be done on that. We sent a newsman out into the field and [Ed] Brocksmith spent a whole week talking and taping the stories people told him. He talked to sheriffs and talked to the highway patrolmen and all of these people, and we put the tape all together and we gave it to the senate and the house and the governor. We gave them a report on tape of people actually telling of some of the conditions around our lakes. That still hasn't reached any culmination, but I think it will.

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[150]Various KRMG promotion flyers.

We've been honored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and to the best of my knowledge, one of the few stations in the country so honored. It was for our stands on open housing and some work we have done inside to give the black community some voice in this city, and that's one of the reasons I think Tulsa is a peaceful town today, by comparison. It's not all peaceful, but at least it hasn't gone up in flames.

We've played call shot. Not to be wise or smart or know-it-all, that's not the point, but just to get things out in the open because we believe that people will talk about things and if you can dispell the rumors, you can do an awful lot, and if you can keep people talking to each other, you can do an awful lot to create an area of good understanding. This is what we've tried to do.[151]

KRMG has been quick to spot issues before they become problems. For example, it noticed there was only a slight minority representation in Tulsa's labor unions. They were not letting in either blacks or Indians, and KRMG took the editorial opinion that a union man should not be upset when people do something to him, if he turns right around and does it to someone else, Greenwood said.

Well, they didn't like that very well. But, we said it, then some other people hitched their britches up and they said it. The result is that today there's minority representation in every union in the Tulsa crafts. It's still not as much as it could be or should be, but we're making progress.[152]

The FM station does not use the editorials, but

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[151] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[152] Ibid.

approaches the issues from both viewpoints, citing both sides. It says this is a pertinent issue and if you, the listener, want to say something about it, it's time to write or call--then they direct the listener to the right person. The editorials are run on weekends.

XI. A PHYSICAL OF KRMG

KRMG is a maximum power amplitude modulated commercial broadcast radio station, Class 1-B, operating on 740 kcs. Its power output is 50,000 watts/daytime and 25,000 watts/night, from a transmitter located five miles southeast of Keystone, Oklahoma, on a 100-acre tract of land.[153]

Its original license provided for 10,000 watts power at night, but the FCC granted a temporary permit for the increased power from the station's inception.[154]

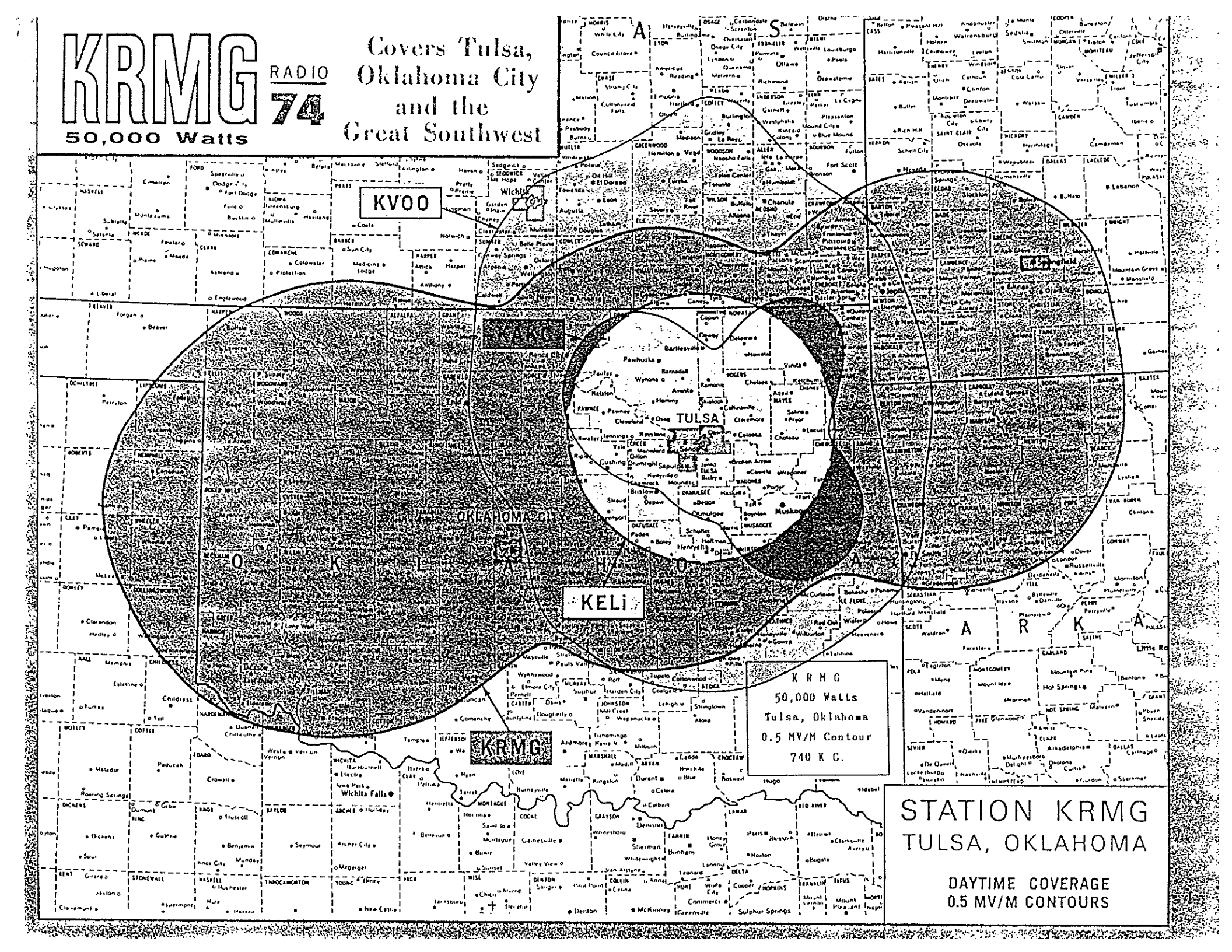
KRMG and KRMG-FM studios are located on the 23rd floor of the Liberty Towers Building, 1502 South Boulder Avenue, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74119. The 6,100 watt frequency modulated transmitter is also at that location, with its 295-foot antenna on top of the building. It operates on a frequency of 95.5 mcs. Also on the roof is a parabolic dish to microwave programming to the AM transmitter.

The Radio Corporation of America (RCA) transmitter, the first ever built with low power consumption tubes, was

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[153] Op. cit. Tulsa World, October 12, 1949.

[154] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, February 13, 1951.


KRMG
RADIO
74
50,000 Watts
Covers Tulsa, Oklahoma City and the Great Southwest
KVOO
KAKC
KELi
KRMG
TULSA
OKLAHOMA CITY
KRMG
50,000 Watts
Tulsa, Oklahoma
0.5 MV/M Contour
740 K C.
STATION KRMG
TULSA, OKLAHOMA
DAYTIME COVERAGE
0.5 MV/M CONTOURS

built in Miami, Florida, in an 11 month period beginning in September of 1948.[155] An RCA field engineer supervised its installation which was completed within a month.

The original transmitter, now over 20 years old, remains in 24 hour operation daily.

"The transmitter is air conditioned and equipped for emergency broadcasting," said Ken R. Greenwood, President of Swanco Broadcasting which purchased the station February 16, 1961.[156]

Its array of six antennas, each reaching skyward 270 feet from a base of 1,000 foot msl.,[157] are necessary to protect stations in Canada, Mexico and New York. The multiple towers each are phased with a percentage of the total signal to provide directional radiation.

The transmitter is located 18 miles west of Tulsa, allowing two primary lobes over both Oklahoma City and Tulsa.[158]

"The pattern runs on a line from Springfield, Missouri, to out past Amarillo, [Texas] on the backbone--U.S. 66--right

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[155] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, August 2, 1949.

[156] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[157] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, October 12, 1949.

[158] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

down the middle. At night it pulls into a bow tie to protect Canada and Mexico."[159]

More than 25 miles of control cable is in use at the transmitter location and its hugh grounding system uses 80 miles of copper wire in a wagon wheel pattern around each of the towers.[160]

Original studios were on the ground floor of the three-story Akdar Temple[161] at 4th and Denver Streets in downtown Tulsa. Construction began August 3, 1949, and was nearly complete by the sign-on, 20 weeks later.[162]

The building had been constructed in 1925 at a cost of $750,000[163] and was occupied only by a business college at the time a lease was secured by C. B. Akers.[164] Prior to obtaining the studios for KRMG, the building's second floor had been used for experimental television[165] and the station's lease provided

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[159] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[160] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, October 12, 1949.

[161] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[162] Op. cit. Tulsa World, December 24, 1949.

[163] Ibid. June 4, 1925.

[164] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[165] Op. cit. Ward interview.

an option on that floor, which it never needed.[166]

Swanco purchased KIHI-FM June 15, 1964,[167] and changed its call letters to KRMG-FM.

The original studios were kept until "one awfully hot August,"[168] of 1966, said Greenwood, who became president of the parent company four months after the move.

"Everybody was moving out of the old Akdar Building and we were having a lot of trouble with vandalism and theft because there was no other tenant in the building," he said. "Most tenants had moved out because of the vandalism."

"The Liberty Towers planners came to us and asked if we'd like to move in here," said Greenwood. "We were already thinking about moving a little bit, so we got to remodel our studios before there were any partitions put in or anything. We put together a very compact and very modern radio station. Later, we moved the FM in here and later we moved the whole management company to Tulsa."[169]

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[166] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[167] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, June 16, 1964.

[168] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[169] Ibid.

XII. TODAY

Some battles are never won. Twenty years ago, when KRMG went on the air, some of its roughest battles were with W. G. Skelly and KVOO and those battles continue, though KRMG is fighting from a much improved position--the top of the pile.

"I think our primary competitor is KVOO," said Ken Greenwood recently. "They're a 50,000 watt station and their programs on Tuesday are a lot like ours are on Monday. I'd guess they are our primary competition, but obviously KAKC gives us a lot of competition, too."[170]

He said KAKC's ratings in the summer reverse themselves from the winter. The change directly corresponds to the school term and KAKC collects the greatest audience in the summer months when it has a 35 per cent or 38 per cent share of audience.

An advertiser purchasing KRMG and KAKC would have about 65 per cent of the audience; while KELI, which claims to be a cross between the adult programming of KRMG and the rock and popular sound of KAKC, shows up with a 10 per cent share

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[170] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

in the morning, a nine at mid-day and an eight at night. But, KRMG does not sell ratings.

"From a sales philosophy standpoint, we won't sell by ratings," said Greenwood. "Our salesmen do not use ratings. Once and a while someone will ask to look at the ratings and if they ask for them, we show the ratings. But, unless they ask, we don't show them."[171]

When asked how KRMG sells itself, Greenwood replied: "We use a lot of success. Often times our advertisers will tell other advertisers. The last Hooper, we had a 36 per cent share in the morning and 32 per cent in the middle of the day. By afternoon, we were down to 20."

The 36 per cent morning "drive-time" share of audience figure means that KRMG, which shares the market with 10 other rated stations, has the best rating during a time when there are more people listening. The sets-in-use figure for the morning was 22 per cent, or slightly more than one of every five radios in Tulsa was playing during that time period.

"I think FM has a finger in this thing," said Greenwood about the relatively high sets-in-use figure. "I think some people are listening who had been watching TV in the morning.

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[171] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

They are starting to listen to AM radio or FM radio, which made the sets-in-use figure go up."[172]

The KRMG coverage pounds Oklahoma City harder than some places north of Tulsa, but KRMG does not sell in that market.

"We've got all we can say grace over here in town," said Greenwood. "We call on agencies in Oklahoma City and show up on ratings over there, but we don't sell there. We don't claim a big audience over there. I think the last ARB showed us with 3,500."[173]

"I think we're fifth, but don't sell that fact unless we are trying to sell Tulsa. We sell primarily Tulsa, with some area coverage. But," said Greenwood, "we don't happen to think that KRMG is going to be a real strong station in the area on its day-to-day programming, because too many of the stations in the small towns duplicate the news and the information and the special features we have on, but the music is duplicated in the small markets, whereas the contemporary or the country is not."[174]

---

[172] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[173] Ibid. [174] Ibid.

"We don't play any music that isn't recognizable, very recognizable," Greenwood said. "I tell the guys that we're the Lawrence Welk of the radio business. We don't offend anybody."[175]

> I doubt that a real jazz buff, oh, he might listen to [Johnny] Martin some evenings when Martin gets off on Kenton or Ellington or some of those things, but, if you really analyze the music, it's pretty square. It's done tastefully and we stay away from wild arrangements and anything that would offend people.
>
> Consequently, the music becomes very bland, and if there were no other programming on this radio station, then the music would be very bland. But, we want it bland, because what we put in and on top and around that music is what's important. That is where we put all the information.
>
> I tell the guys not to play Nancy Wilson. After she gets done singing and 64 trombones and 400 trumpets have played the last of it, the announcer tries to introduce the next record and he can't say anything. You can't top her when she gets done singing. There's no encore for that sort of thing, so we play a much simpler arrangement.[176]

Award-winning KRMG presents an award of its own which has come into high esteem in recent years--The KRMG "Pat on the Back." Tulsa's civic leadership, from the mayor to the blood donor or the fellow who volunteers his Sunday afternoons to help young baseballers at the Tulsa Boys' Home, is eligible for this honor. A certificate is awarded in recognition of those who build Tulsa and their honor is read on the station for all to hear.

---

[175] Op. cit. Greenwood interview. [176] Ibid.

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS

_____

having offered of himself in the service of others:
having served his community beyond call;
and, having contributed generously to the welfare
of the City of Tulsa and State of Oklahoma . . . . .
therefore has been proclaimed a worthy candidate for the

KRMG

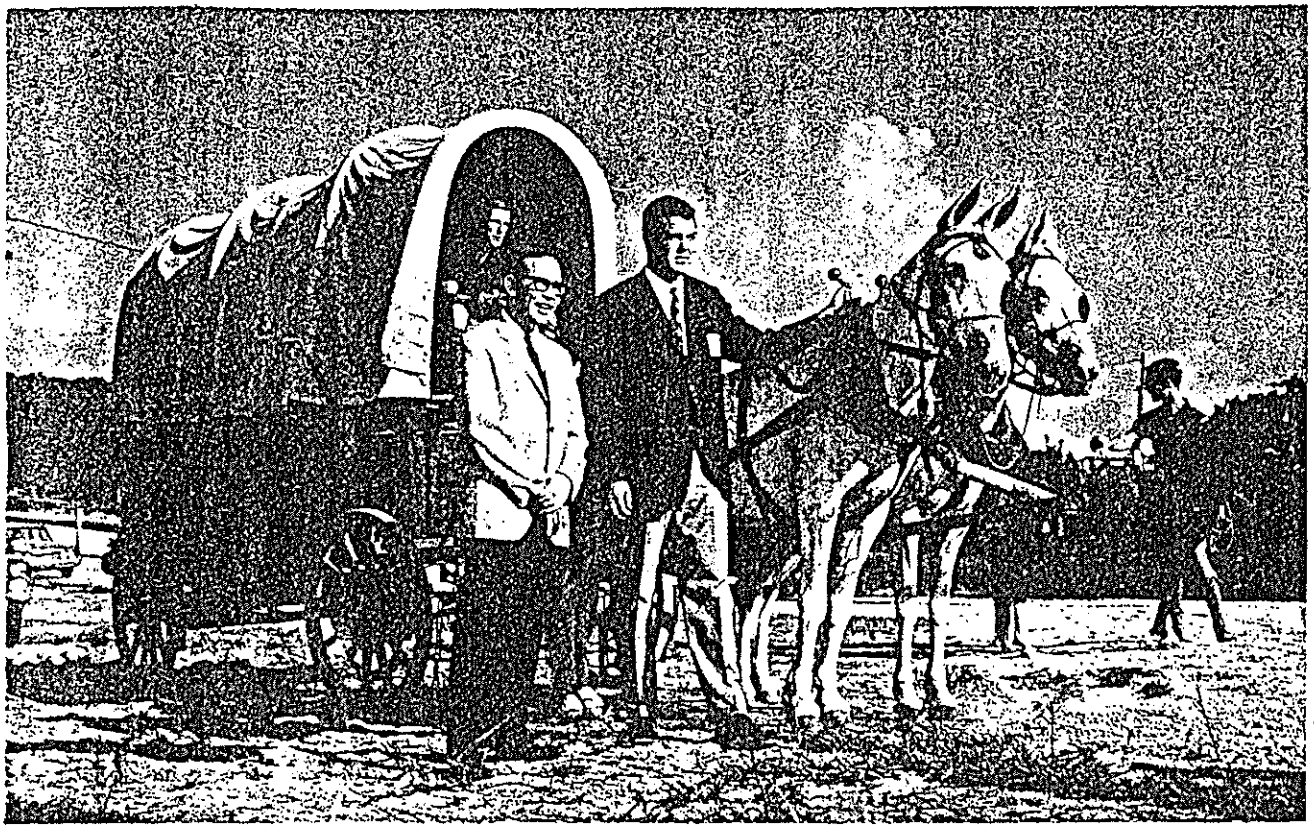
"PAT ON THE BACK"

Dated _____

Witnessth _____

Signed _____
Officer of KRMG Radio

People listen to KRMG because it does something for them. KRMG tries to touch as many people as possible and does it with a lot of zaney things, or things that seem on the surface to be zaney. Recently, the station gave six seals to the zoo. That sounds like a silly thing for a radio station to do, but the zoo didn't have any seals. Greenwood said the next promotion may help them get some penguins. He said they could have a lot of fun with it, and certainly it helps the community. And, what other radio station has a team of albino mules:



DAVID STANFORD (L) RON BLUE (R)

Not everything KRMG does for Tulsa is zaney. They innovated the research idea to find out about the drug problem in the Oil Capitol, analyzed their statistics and told the public:

> Our newsmen went out and supervised a poll that was taken. We first surveyed better than a thousand people at the Tulsa State Fair [September, 1969] and got the idea what the adult viewpoint was on drugs. Then we contacted the superintendent of schools, Dr. Gordon Kwalti, and said people ought to know what young people were thinking about drugs. He let us go into all the high schools and actually helped us develop the questions that we used because he wanted to find out some things.
>
> We talked to over 2,500 students and we did this as a news story which was released and we also have made reprints available and I guess the idea of the project has now been picked up by a dozen high schools over the state of Oklahoma.
>
> It's a very painless way to let the adults in the city, who don't really want to believe what people tell them, know about drugs. It's a painless way to let them know what the kids are really thinking and in many instances, what the kids are really doing.[177]

KRMG sat on the drug story in Tulsa for almost 14 months.

"We had names, which we gave to the police department and they asked us to sit on them," said Greenwood. "Not very long ago, when the heroin story was finally divulged, we got a three hour break on that particular story."[178]

Program Director Chuck Adams heads an all-star

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[177] Op. cit. Greenwood interview. [178] Ibid.

professional staff on KRMG in 1970. At 34, he is still the witty, young-at-heart early morning disc jockey that can warm the frost off your windshield on a winter's morning. He is one of the most popular and in-demand radio personalities to ever chat with the public on Tulsa airways.



Adam's friendly jokes during the morning drive-time, his singing of the school lunch menu, his bright pearls of wisdom and humor from Mother Adams, who just called-in, are part of his trademark, and welcomed with the first yawn of morning by many sleepy Tulsans. And what's even better, he loves Tulsa and Tulsans as much as they love him.

TABLE 3. KRMG on-air personalities:

Chuck Adams, program director,	6 a.m. to 10 a.m.
Jerry Vaughn	10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Fred Campbell	2 p.m. to 5 p.m.
Dick Ford	5 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Johnny Martin	8 p.m. to 1 a.m.
Greg Austin	1 a.m. to 6 a.m.
Vic Bastien, news director	
Ed Brocksmith	
Norm Colwell	
Dennie Eckert	
David Stanford	

The "Remarkable KRMG" is the only logo or slogan used, though it can be worked into a million lines. The "Friendly Giant" outlived its usefulness.

When SWANCO took over KRMG, advertising rates were based on the rating for the lowest person on the staff. They have been raised eight times since then and are the highest in Tulsa and comparable to that of WKY in Oklahoma City.

It only costs a few cents more to buy the very best--KRMG.

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University of Oklahoma

"The Remarkable KRMG"

Journalism 311

May 15, 1970

By Richard S. Boggs

cy - For your files
CB

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II. IN THE BEGINNING

It takes a long time for a radio station to grow and expand its influence, to flex its muscle and become a community leader; an attribute KRMG has known as a teen-ager.

Today, at 20, KRMG is a vital part of the Port of Tulsa. It is well known as a powerful influence on Tulsans and a station responsive to the wants and needs of its community.

KRMG's list of firsts is impressive:

TABLE 1. The innovative KRMG:

1. First 50 kw. low power consumption transmitter in the nation.
2. The nation's pioneer 50 kw. independent station.
3. First station to use helicopters in measuring the transmitter's radiated power for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) proof of engineering performance.
4. First Oklahoma station to editorialize.

5. First Oklahoma station, and one of the nation's first, to endorse a political candidate.

6. First Oklahoma station to hire a Negro newsman.

7. First Oklahoma station to poll the public on vital issues and air the results.

8. First Tulsa station to broadcast from a mobile studio.

9. First Tulsa station to send newsmen on out-of-state assignments to gather and report the news.

10. First Tulsa station to use "phone forums" with authorities from both sides of a question at the studio, answering telephone questions from the audience.

There were some rough years in KRMG's childhood and they had an influence on the station today, but most important to the quality of Oklahoma's outstanding radio station is its present owner. SWANCO purchased KRMG April 4, 1961,[1] after

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[1]Tulsa Daily World, Tulsa, Oklahoma, various clippings, April 4, 1961.

it had lost money for more than four years,[2] and locked it in on Tulsa's heartbeat.

This is how it happened.

---

[2]SWANCO. Personal interview with Ken Greenwood, president, SWANCO, Tulsa, Oklahoma, March 23, 1970.

III. OUR FATHERS

The FCC granted a construction permit to build Tulsa's seventh radio station--KRMG--to United States Senator Robert S. Kerr and Dean A. McGee, but the driving force behind the application was Kerr.

"The senator was the one interested in getting a radio station in Tulsa," said C. B. "Brownie" Akers, the station's first vice president. "And, of course, everything he did he invited McGee to go along with him. He was a great expansionist and very ambitious."[3]

Just how quick the senator's thoughts turned to television has been obscured through the years, but the original plans drawn up by Akers provided some insight. They had provisions for using the Akdar Temple auditorium as a television studio.[4] Their delay probably was to watch the progress of Tulsa's first television station, KOTV, which beat KRMG to the airways by only two months. KRMG was later sold to win

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[3]Personal interview with C. B. "Brownie" Akers, first KRMG vice president, Tulsa, Oklahoma, April 21, 1970.

[4]Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

approval on their application to purchase an interest in KVOO television.

> Senator Kerr had the idea that he was going to have a television station in Tulsa and the original plans, and I've seen some and I've read letters to the manager back in those days showing they wanted to apply for television. Their idea was to use that auditorium as a place where they could do live shows.
>
> Kerr had the idea that television in a political sense might be a more powerful medium than radio was, so when it became evident that the two interests, the Skelly and the Kerr-McGee interests, were not going to be able to both get a television station, he decided to arbitrate those differences. They sold KRMG and took a part interest in KVOO television.[5]

That was in 1953. Kerr, in 1949, however, was chiefly interested in getting KRMG on the air and he put television a few notches down the priority list. He saw his best chance for a station was in Tulsa, but his real hope was to reach as many people in the state as possible and in particular, the population centers.

> When the man said that he could put a 50,000 watt station in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Senator Kerr said, 'That's fine, the only thing I want you to do is to guarantee me it will cover both Tulsa and Oklahoma City.' He had great strength in the rural areas, but not much in the two urban areas and he could see that this would make him a pretty good outlet, I suppose, for his speeches. This is just conjecture on my part.[6]

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[5] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[6] Ibid.

Senator Kerr "was very, very shrewd and had a full knowledge of what radio was capable of doing and a full appreciation of what television was going to be," Greenwood said. "I found, going through the old, old files, some very interesting letters from Senator Kerr addressed to 'Brownie' Akers . . . instructing him that he wanted the speech he delivered in the senate, played right after 'Stop the Music'. Back in those days, ABC on Sunday night, had this real hot radio show . . . where they dial all over the country and give away big quantities of money. And he wanted his speech played right after 'Stop the Music', so this is where it would be used."[7]

Kerr was subtle though, according to Perry Ward, the station's first program director.

"He never interfered with the station in any way. Anything that was done was behind the scenes."[8]

Ward said McGee had nothing to do with station operations, a fact which McGee admits today.

"He was there opening night and I think that was the last time we ever saw him. Kerr was in town occasionally and

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[7]Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[8]Personal interview with Perry Ward, first KRMG Program Director, Tulsa, Oklahoma, April 19, 1970.

dropped by whenever he was."[9]

Akers said Kerr had no direct political use of the station in mind, citing the FCC regulations and the equal time provision.[10]

He said Kerr's involvement was strictly a business one.

"The senator thought it would be profitable after talking with an old friend who made money in the radio business--Lyndon Johnson. In fact, he sent me to Austin to see his radio station and to study its operation and [station manager] Bob Jones went, too."[11]

Dean McGee recalled that his concern was more in the station's books than its operation and his ambitions were for investment.

McGee picked out the transmitter site himself by flying around the countryside. Keystone was picked because of its proximity to the urban areas.

> That was the only high flat spot that we had to anchor those tall towers. Of course, we didn't want to go east of Tulsa because we didn't want to get away

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[9]Personal interview with Perry Ward, first KRMG Program Director, Tulsa, Oklahoma, April 19, 1970.

[10]Op. cit. Akers interview.

[11]Ibid.

from the population centers and Keystone is on the Oklahoma City side. It not only covers Tulsa and Oklahoma City, but all over Oklahoma. It wasn't a question of just Oklahoma City, but of getting as much statewide coverage as we could.[12]

At the time of sign-on, Kerr was near the end of his first year in the United States Senate. He had taken office in January and formerly was Oklahoma's governor from 1942-46. He died New Years Day, 1963.

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[12]KERR-MCGEE. Personal interview with Dean A. McGee, one of KRMG's two principal owners in 1949, Oklahoma City, April 24, 1970.

1. Jim Harts > CBS, National public Telev news anchor
2. Bob Stevens > ESPN anchor sports
3. Bob Losure > CNN anchor
4. Several in broadcasting someplace
5.

IV. CONSTRUCTION

KRMG was built in record time.

The first nail was driven at the Akdar Temple studios August 3, 1949,[13] with sign-on only 142 days later.[14] The official ground breaking was held August 2, 1949.[15]

C. B. "Brownie" Akers was working for Senator Kerr in the summer of 1949 as a liaison officer. He admitted he wasn't too useful because of Kerr's ability to "make his own answers."[16]

"Akers had worked for Video Theaters in Oklahoma, but was working for us when we got permission to go ahead," said Dean McGee. "He really built it for us."[17]

"They called me in the office one day and asked if I knew Tulsa pretty well and I told them yes," Akers recalled. "I had been with Griffith Video Theaters. They asked me if I

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[13] Tulsa Tribune, August 3, 1949.

[14] Op. cit. Tulsa World, December 24, 1949.

[15] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, August 3, 1949.

[16] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[17] Op. cit. McGee interview.

could locate a suitable building for them.[18]

After a few days in the Oil Capitol, Akers zeroed in on the Akdar Temple which was occupied only by a business college at the time. Its owner, Ralph Talbot, was an old friend of the new KRMG vice president and was a long time Tulsa civic leader and theater owner. The four first run theaters belonged to Talbot, the Orpheum, Majestic, Ritz and Rialto, as well as the Akdar which housed a theater seldom used before the building was remodeled as the Cimarron Ballroom.[19]

Talbot was in Paris at the time and Akers made the lease agreement via trans-Atlantic telephone. Talbot said he would provide Akers with a satisfactory lease on his return.

Kerr and McGee had made application for the station about a year earlier and there was a competitive hearing before the FCC. It narrowed down to a decision between Tulsa and Little Rock, and KRMG won.

"They had made application for a station a long time earlier and finally the FCC came through with a construction permit. Even then, they didn't act too quickly until they

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[18] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[19] Ibid.

had to build or give up their permit," said Akers. "That's when they called me in."[20]

The few remaining days of the construction permit caused quite a rush in getting the station on the air. It was build it, or have a good reason for the delay. Therefore, Akers couldn't wait for Talbot to return and secured his permission to "go ahead and take it, remodel, do anything you want,"[21] and work out the details later.

Construction went pretty smoothly but under a lot of pressure. Akers was a decision maker of the first order,[22] yet readily admitted he had no experience in broadcasting. He took it upon himself to hire a first rate staff of professional radio men.

Kerr and McGee already owned WEEK radio in Peoria, Illinois.

As KRMG manager, Akers hired Bob Jones in September, 1949, from their major competitor at Peoria, "to kill two birds with one stone. He ran a tight station there and was giving us a heck of a lot of trouble."[23]

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[20] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Op. cit. McGee interview.

[23] Op. cit. Akers interview.

"I brought our chief engineer [Alden F. Wooster] down from our Peoria station and put him in charge of the technical end, and Jones for the management end of it. He had been in the radio business all of his adult life."[24]

A consulting engineer from RCA was sent from Miami, Florida to Tulsa to supervise transmitter installation and the other technical problems were handled by Wooster and McIntosh and Inglis, a top consulting firm out of Washington, D.C.[25] Tom Seale, chief engineer of Kerr-McGee Oil Corporation, handled most of the design problems at the studio and transmitter shack.[26]

The days of the big studio stations were over and KRMG became one of the first powerful radio stations to be built specifically for a music and news operation, though a single studio was built and available for both recording and live broadcasts.[27]

Akers admitted his biggest problem was getting everyone to agree. He told Dean McGee everyone had good ideas, but

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[24] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[25] Op. cit. Tulsa World, November 28, 1949.

[26] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[27] Ibid.

contrasting opinions on a number of issues.

"Dean said just do it your way and if it's wrong, we'll tear it down and start over. Then he chuckled and said, I've drilled a lot of dry holes."[28]

The only major delay, pushing back the October 1, 1949 target sign-on date, was lack of air conditioning in the studio and more importantly at the transmitter.[29]

The air conditioning problem was not a big one, but a necessary one to solve at the transmitter. The RCA 50,000 watt transmitter, using low power consumption tubes, fully reduced total power consumption by 25 per cent, yet the air that cooled it was warm enough to keep the transmitter building well heated during "the worst winter storm." Warm weather, without air conditioning, would have spelled disaster.[30]

The cooling delay and using the conventional auto and horseback method of conducting field tests, a three month process, would have delayed sign-on until late January or early February of 1950.[31]

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[28] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[29] Op. cit. Tulsa World, October 12, 1949.

[30] Ibid. December 21, 1949.

[31] Ibid. November 28, 1949.

Kerr wouldn't stand for that and for the first time, helicopters were used to make the field measurements.[32]

The Commission required that measurements for the Class 1-B station be made in 22 directions, every 500 feet outward from the six antennas for the first five miles, then every one-half mile thereafter all the way to Canada and Mexico. Using two helicopters, two pilots and eight engineers, the process was trimmed to less than three weeks.[33]

"Our final engineering data arrived in Washington Saturday [December 17, 1949] and we will be ready to go on the air as soon as the Federal Communications Commission puts in final approval of this data," said Jones at the time. "By completing construction in four months, 15 days, we have broken all radio construction records."[34]

True enough, the transmitter was ready and all the equipment to get a signal to it was installed, but workers were still hammering in the next room the night of sign-on, two weeks later.[35]

"We're really rushing so that we can give Tulsa and Oklahoma a Christmas present," said Jones, who admitted working

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[32]Op. cit. Tulsa World, November 28, 1949.

[33]Ibid. [34]Ibid. December 21, 1949. [35]Ibid.

nearly 24 hours a day during December.[36]

"There is little doubt," said consulting engineer Andrew F. Inglis, "that the tuning of the station's day and night pattern in less than two weeks time, lowered by more than one-fourth all previous records made in the tuning of a six tower array."[37]

Thus, by using two rented helicopters from LaFayette, Louisiana, KRMG became a radio pioneer even before its first program penetrated the airways.

The only other engineering problem of any proportion during the pre-sign-on days, was getting the signal from the downtown studio to the transmitter, 18 miles away at Keystone.

Engineers suggested renting the top of the National Bank of Tulsa Building, the tallest structure in town, for a microwave transmitter, but Akers ruled that out as too expensive because it would have required a licensed engineer at the bank building.[38]

"The engineers told me they didn't think it [the signal] would get over the mountains between the station and

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[36]Op. cit. Tulsa World, December 21, 1949.

[37]Ibid. December 18, 1949.

[38]Op. cit. Akers interview.

Keystone.[39] Well, I wanted to find out for myself."[40]

> I had a man climb to the top of our tower out there [Keystone] and flash lights to see if we could see it, but we couldn't. But, I had one man on my side, the guy who sold us the microwave. He wanted to keep us happy, so we put one of the dishes[41] on top of the Akdar Building, and leaned it against the fly loft. We got a signal. It wasn't much, but we refined it and it worked. [42]

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[39]Microwave is a high frequency signal traveling in a straight line.

[40]Op. cit. Akers interview.

[41]Parabolic antennas for microwave are called dishes.

[42]Op. cit. Akers interview.

V. ON THE AIR

"This is it, KRMG is on the air,"[43] proclaimed Program Director Perry Ward at 7:40 P.M., Friday December 23, 1949, giving Oklahomans their first impression of a station which would make its presence known in and for the community and the state.

Tulsa now had its sixth AM radio station and had only recently been introduced to television by KOTV, Channel 6. Earlier stations include:

TABLE 2. Tulsa Stations by sign-on-year: (through 1949)

KVOO,	1925,	Formerly KFRU at Bristow, moved to Tulsa 1927,
KTUL,	1934,	
KOME,	1938	
KFMJ,	1946,	
KAKC,	1946,	
KWGS,	1947,	The University of Tulsa FM station, and
KOTV,	1949,	Television Channel 6.

[43] Op. cit. Ward interview.

KOME had been the outlet for both the American Broadcasting Company, and the Mutual Radio Network until August of 1949, when ABC Vice President Lee Jahnche announced that effective October 1, 1949, KRMG would be the new Tulsa affiliate. He said the network was "very pleased to welcome another 50,000 watt station to ABC."[44]

"KOME had both ABC and Mutual, KTUL was CBS and KVOO was NBC, and KRMG wanted a network and the only one they could get was ABC," said Ward. "ABC wanted a 50,000 watt station in this area so they took it away from KOME and gave it to KRMG. I imagine there was some behind the scenes maneuvering."[45]

KOME, only 250 watts at the time, retained its Mutual affiliation. It had applied for a power increase to 5,000 watts, but the FCC had not acted on the request.

"We went on the air at 7:40 and I made the opening remarks--This is it, KRMG is on the air--then turned the program over to Cal Tinney who was the emcee."[46]

Senator Kerr dedicated the station "To the domestic

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[44]Op. cit. Tulsa World, August 3, 1949.

[45]Op. cit. Ward interview.

[46]Ibid.

civic, social, economic and religious life of the people of this magnificent state," and read the station's creed: "Programs for the rank and file of our people; for those who live on the farm; for those who work in the factories and in the mills."[47]

Tinney, of Broken Arrow, was known as the "teller of tall tales." He introduced the Rev. J. W. Storer, Pastor of the First Baptist Church, who gave the innovation.

Then McGee was introduced; and Glenn Condon told about the station's news programming. Tom P. McDermott, chairman of the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, welcomed the station to the Oil Capitol and "Disc Jockey" Joe Knight began an evening of transcribed music.[48]

Four hours and 20 minutes after sign-on, KRMG's first commercial was aired.

"The first commercial was a national one and we played it at midnight. It was for a movie and they framed the order," said the program director.[49]

Ken Greenwood said the first commercial was for the

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[47]Op. cit. Tulsa World, December 24, 1949.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Op. cit. Ward interview.

picture "High Noon" and was played at midnight Christmas Eve,[50] thus, KRMG aired no commercials on its first day of operation.

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[50] *Op. cit.* Greenwood interview.

VI. OUR GANG

KRMG had an advantage from the beginning--its staff. "Brownie" Akers hired Bob Jones who built one of the most envied staffs in Oklahoma broadcasting.

Program Director Perry Ward started at KVOO in Tulsa in 1931 as an announcer, but left his home town to work at the Pasadena Playhouse in California during the depression years. He returned to Oklahoma to take a $40 per week announcing job at WKY in Oklahoma City.

Ward produced "Spin and Win" which NBC bought in 1940 and wanted him with it. He was off to New York. The show grew quite popular and was broadcast "live" from various Army camps around the country in the pre-war years 1940 and 1941.

> Our contract ended in California and I went to work for CBS and worked for them a couple of years. When Art Linkletter started "House Party," I succeeded him on an afternoon ladies show called "What's Doin' Ladies" on ABC; and did that until I came back to Oklahoma City in the latter part of 1947 to emcee and produce a CBS show out of there called "Oklahoma Roundup." It was a coast-to-coast show.[51]

"That ended about the time Gene Autry was on tour;

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[51] Op. cit. Ward interview.

and I had known Gene for years and he hired me to be his announcer on the Wrigley's show on Sunday.[52] Then Ward went to KRMG, hired directly by Kerr.[53]

Glenn Condon was not only a great newsman, he was one of the most enthusiastic promoters and supporters Oklahoma has ever had. He was KRMG's first news director.

Condon was born October 13, 1891, at Greenfield, Iowa, and moved to Oklahoma City a year later.[54]

He started his enviable news career as a messenger boy for Western Union in Oklahoma City, but had returned to Tulsa in 1907, the year of Oklahoma's statehood.[55]

In a 1964 interview, Condon recalled those days when his news interest was sparked by delivering telegrams to the Oklahoma Times-Journal and Daily Oklahoman with news of the San Francisco earthquake and the assassination of President McKinley. He prided himself as "first on the streets."[56]

Condon's first reporting job was in Tulsa, a city he loved as much as life itself. The Tulsa Democrat saw him through his cub years until 1909 when he was fired for

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[52]Op. cit. Ward interview. [53]Ibid.

[54]Johnny Admire, University of Oklahoma, Journalism 311, "Glenn Condon", April 13, 1964.

[55]Ibid., p. 3. [56]Ibid.

reporting on gambling payoffs and illegal liquor. The truth of his articles was never denied, but they were called exaggerated and another Tulsa paper editorially said Condon had betrayed Tulsa.[57]

Condon was hired in 1911 as a reporter for the Tulsa World, where he stayed until 1917, serving as sports editor, city editor and managing editor.[58]

He was a Marine Sergeant from 1917-1919.[59]

Condon was editor and publisher of Vaudeville News in New York until 1926 when he returned to Tulsa as manager of the Orpheum and Rialto theaters.

While in New York he hired Walter Winchell as a messenger boy. The youth dug out a few backstage stories for the trade magazine and Condon gave him a chance to write and paid him $25 per week. Firing Walter Winchell was one of his favorite stories. "Brownie" Akers related the story as he had personally heard it from Condon:

> Glenn hired Winchell as a runner to pick up news and he would make all the back stages and would pick up ads, too. He wrote some too, and was offered a job after a year or so by the New York Mirror to write a daily

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[57] Op. cit. Admire, p. 18.

[58] Ibid., p. 19.

[59] Ibid., p. 29.

column on show people. He told Glenn about it, but told him he decided not to take it, so Glenn fired him so he would have to take the job. And Winchell stayed there years and years.[60]

In 1927, Condon helped W. G. Skelly set up a public relations department and was its first director. Skelly purchased KFRU later that year and it was Condon that organized it and put it back on a paying basis.[61]

He helped start KOME in 1938.[62]

In 1942, he resigned to become news editor of KTUL, then accepted the Oklahoma and Kansas Radio War News chairmanship. He acted as a news clearing house for the 35 stations under his wing.[63]

The "C" in KAKC stands for Condon. Sam Avery, Bob Kellog and he put it on the air in 1946.[64]

The fourth station he helped found was KRMG.

"Glenn Condon was kind of a father confessor for all the broadcast people around here," said Ward. "When I first started at KVOO, Glenn was public relations director for Skelly, but he didn't really get into radio until he put KOME on the air."[65]

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[60] Op. cit. Akers interview. [61] Ibid., p. 35.

[62] Ibid., p. 36. [63] Ibid.

[64] Op. cit. Ward interview. [65] Ibid.

Condon was hired by Akers at Ward's suggestion. He was known as "Mr. News" and had a great following and Ward wanted them to follow him down the dial to 740.

"Brownie" Akers didn't think "Mr. News" was a good enough title. He thought "Mr. Oklahoma" was better and many people agreed. "He was a great character, brilliant, Mr. Oklahoma." Anyway, the name stuck with him the rest of his life.

At KRMG, he found a home. He found a station that was as vitally interested in the community as he was. He believed that nothing could stop Tulsa's future because Tulsa was and always had been led by imaginative people.[66]

Condon's ability as a newsman brought many honors to KRMG and to himself. He, for example, is the only Oklahoman to have served as president of both the Oklahoma Associated Press Broadcasters and the UPI Broadcasters of Oklahoma.

Frank S. Lane, born May 1, 1905 at Freesboro, Arkansas, got his start in radio at KRFU shortly after it went on the air in 1923. He was paid $50 per month, but got married and was given a raise to $150. When Skelly bought the station and moved it to Tulsa, Lane was hired at $200 per

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[66] Op. cit. Akers interview.

month.[67] Thus began a long career in broadcasting.

He joined the KRMG staff as commercial manager December 5, 1949, at a time when:

"Sales were tough for a new station and people didn't know the salesmen. It took a little while, but in a couple of months, Lane had things pretty well in line."[68]

He was a good business man and found it easy to sell a station he liked. He later became station manager, because of his business ability.

Joe Knight was the station's chief announcer. Ward hired him by telephone and said he came well recommended.

"Joe Knight was a graduate of OSU [then Oklahoma A & M College] and came to KRMG right out of college. He was a very clever and talented guy," said Ken Greenwood.[69]

Ward said Knight's mother would listen to her son every afternoon on KRMG, from her Amarillo, Texas, home.

Knight "was ahead of his time," Ward recalled. "He was doing some things then a lot of the boys are doing now.

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[67]Edward S. Dumit, University of Oklahoma, Journalism 311, Jan. 1, 1968; Frank S. Lane--for service to broadcasting, p. 10.

[68]Op. cit. Ward interview.

[69]Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

He'd find some commercial with a particular line, then say something that tied in and the answer would come from the commercial. He tied a lot of things together that way. When Jones went to Baltimore to manage a station, he took Joe Knight with him and he's still there.[70]

Glenn Dobbs, All-American Tulsa University football player who later became the school's athletic director, was named sports director.

Alden F. Wooster was chief engineer.

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[70] Op. cit. Ward interview.

VII. THE FIRST FOUR

Senator Kerr took a lot of interest in KRMG, his second radio station, during the rough formation years. In fact, he sold the first local time:

"He sold an hour on Sunday morning from eleven to twelve to the Immanuel Baptist Church, by advising them that he had selected them to be the church that would get prime time on this station."[72]

"Brownie" Akers said the senator questioned him at every opportunity on the station's operations during the early years.[73] While Dean McGee admitted "all I did was watch the financial statements. Akers and Jones ran it."[74]

"KVOO fought KRMG like crazy because KVOO was the only 50,000-watter in town and they didn't want another one,"[75] Perry Ward recalled. And that pressure from the established stations retarded the station's growth.

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[72] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[73] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[74] Op. cit. McGee interview.

[75] Op. cit. Ward interview.

"It took quite a long time to show a profit as I recall," Dean McGee said. "We were making money with it after the first two years, but it didn't start picking up much momentum until about the time or just before we sold it."[76]

There wasn't much of a music format in the early days, before rock and roll, but the station was programmed pretty much to the whims of each announcer. Some towards good music and others preferring more country sounds. The station tried to be everything to everyone.

Ward said KRMG had no remotes during the first 18 months of its operation, except for sports.

"Glenn Dobbs and I were going to do the Oklahoma A & M football games on KRMG and it was a week before they were to start and they had not been sold," said Ward. But Kerr was in town for a day and "he picked up the phone and got us a sponsor."[77]

Ward did color and Dobbs the play-by-play. During 1936 and 1937, Ward had a similar announcing task as color man for the Oklahoma University football broadcasts on WKY. Walter Cronkite did the play-by-play and was WKY news director.[78]

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[76] Op. cit. McGee interview.

[77] Op. cit. Ward interview. [78] Ibid.

Bob Jones fired Ward after 18 months and it was a big play story for both the Tulsa newspapers, but particularly the Tulsa Daily World. Ward said the reason for the "big play" was that Maud Lorton, widow of the World publisher Eugene Lorton, "couldn't stand that old man--Kerr."[79] Ward recalled the incident vividly:

> The manager [Jones] and I clashed from the first day because Kerr hired me and he did not. He had a man he wanted and was looking down my throat constantly.
>
> At the time I was let out by him, it was the time of the McArthur "Old Soldiers Never Die" speech. It was one of those things that we clashed over; I said we should let the newsmen analyze it as in the past and he said we should go back to the commercial schedule.
>
> I made the engineers stay on the net for the analysis and I scheduled it to run again that night for people who could not hear it during the day.
>
> Two days later, I was gone and the papers a day after that said Kerr fired me for running McArthur's speech twice in the same day. Kerr called and wanted to know what we were trying to do to him down here and it all came out then. I made a statement to the paper that the senator had nothing whatsoever to do with it . . . it was a disagreement with the manager.
>
> Later, when I talked with Kerr, he backed me on the whole thing because he thought it was newsworthy and the people should have heard it. It was one of the big speeches of all time.
>
> The papers played the thing up because they fought Kerr and said here's a way we can get back at him.[80]

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[79] Op. cit. Ward interview. [80] Ibid.

Ward was hired by KOTV television, Channel 6, in Tulsa and he remained there until 1956 when he opened his own advertising agency.

Nearly 14 months passed after KRMG went on the air, before the FCC approved a power increase at night. The station had been licensed for 50,000 watts/day and 10,000 watts/night, but was on the air with 50,000 watts/day and 25,000 watts/night from the beginning, on a temporary permit. Engineering studies showed that the increased power did not interfere with stations in Canada or Mexico or the Buffalo, New York, station on the same frequency.[81]

Akers resigned at the station's board of director's meeting April 7, 1952, and Jones, who purchased an interest in the company, replaced him as vice president and general manager. The public announcement was delayed until FCC action approving the transaction.[82]

Akers remained with All-Oklahoma Broadcasting Company, and at this time is a consultant for their station in Oklahoma

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[80] Op. cit. Ward interview.

[81] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, February 13, 1951.

[82] Ibid., May 6, 1952.

City--KOCO television, Channel 5, which is on contract for sale.

Jones bought the interest formerly held by T. W. Fentom, long time associate of Kerr, who died in February, 1951. Terms of the sale were not disclosed. The plan had been considered some months, but was delayed until Fentom's estate could be settled.[83]

Frank Lane, commercial manager, succeeded Jones as manager.

April 28, 1953 it was announced that Jones would leave KRMG to work on television applications for Oklahoma City, Tulsa and Peoria, Illinois, effective June 15. Lane was elevated to the vice presidency, again replacing Jones.[84]

The Tulsa television application had been in the works since July 14, 1952, naming six prominent civic leaders and businessmen and Oklahoma A & M college as shareholders, plus Kerr and McGee. They had applied for Channel 2, with studios to be located in the Akdar Building, a floor above KRMG.[85]

The announcement came just one month after the famous

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[83] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, May 6, 1952.

[84] Ibid., April 28, 1953.

[85] Ibid., July 14, 1952.

television freeze was lifted.

The FCC imposed a freeze on all television applications September 29, 1948, and no licenses were granted for nearly four years. The commission announced it wanted time to plan television channel allocations and limit assignments by geographic areas.[86]

The rule changes were announced April 14, 1952, that assignments were limited to 2,053 in the United States, which seemed excessive at a time when only 108 stations were on the air. With that announcement, it seemed obvious that the freeze would soon be over. It ended June 1, 1952.[87]

Tulsa's first television station, KOTV, had signed on during the freeze by virtue of a construction permit which was granted before the freeze went into effect. It gave them a virtual monopoly and exclusive use of all four television networks for three years. Now, KRMG had its chance to get into the television business:

"This expansion of ownership in KRMG completes long-range plans of Senator Robert S. Kerr and Dean McGee," said

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[86]Sydney W. Head, "Broadcasting in America," Riverside Press, Boston, 1956.

[87]Ibid.

Jones when the application was announced.[88]

"Ever since KRMG went on the air in 1949, it has been our aim to establish and maintain a close identity with Tulsa and northeastern Oklahoma. We feel that we have succeeded," Jones said. But, the addition of television "will enable us to do an even better job."[89]

New stockholders on the application were: Harry Clarke, clothier; Louis W. Grant, president of Home Federal Savings and Loan; P. C. Lauinger, publisher of the Oil and Gas Journal; Floyd E. Stanley, president of Midwestern Constructors, Inc.; Ralph Talbot, owner of the Akdar Building, and C. B. "Brownie" Akers, former KRMG vice president. Grant, Lauinger and Stanley were brought into the KRMG directorate.[90]

The next 18 months saw the greatest fight in the station's history. The young "whipper-snapper" and its backers had squared off with the established KVOO forces and W. G. Skelly's oil money in a fight for the Channel 2 construction permit.

The directors knew they had a good opportunity with KRMG. It was building a good audience and had shown a few

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[88] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, July 14, 1952.

[89] Ibid. [90] Ibid.

more dollars income than expenses. Selling the station was an idea none of them wanted to consider. They were building an empire and did not want to make any sacrifices of their present holdings.

Competition was tough and Washington hearings frequent. It was beginning to look as though either Kerr or Skelly would have the best chance and most competition fell by the wayside. Fred M. Jones, owner of KFMJ, held on the longest and protested loudest, but was finally eliminated when the giants joined forces and KRMG was sacrificed.

"The only reason we sold the station was when Skelly, who owned KVOO in Tulsa, and ourselves applied for a TV permit," said McGee. "We finally got together and filed jointly."[91]

The FCC would not allow a television station to be owned jointly by two radio interests in the same city, so one had to go. In the choice of KVOO or KRMG, the winner was obvious. KVOO was Tulsa's oldest and at that time, most profitable station, far dominate over KRMG.

McGee admitted having some regrets about the sale:

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[91] Op. cit. McGee interview.

> KVOO was the oldest and best known [station] in Tulsa. It nearly broke our hearts to sell just as things were going good. And, we were taking some risk selling it before the TV permit could be granted, but by combining with Mr. Skelly, we at least eliminated our biggest competition and our application jointly looked pretty good.[92]

Exactly four years after sign-on, December 24, 1953, Altus publisher Harrington Wimberly purchased KRMG for $305,000, with $31,500 cash and $25,000 per year until paid. The FCC approved the sale in November to the owner of the Altus Times-Democrat and he had 30 days to complete the transaction, after approval, by terms of his contract with All-Oklahoma Broadcasting Company.[93]

Kerr was well acquainted with Will Harrington Wimberly, who was in Washington during those years as a member of the Federal Power Commission.

"He had asked us about it and shown an interest before we decided to sell," said McGee, adding Wimberly was aware of the application they had made for Channel 2 in Tulsa. "We looked around quite a bit, but he made the best offer. We weren't under a lot of pressure to get rid of it. It takes a long time to get approval for a TV permit.[94]

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[93]Personal interview with Will Harrington Wimberly, former owner of KRMG, Duncan, Oklahoma, May 3, 1970.

[94]Op. cit. McGee interview.

Eighteen months after Kerr's death on New Year's Day, 1963, the Illinois radio and television stations were liquidated to pay the estate taxes.[95]

Wimberly was on the Federal Power Commission until June 22, 1952, and wanted to get back to Oklahoma. He had purchased the Times-Democrat January 1, 1928 and put KWHW on the air with his brother at Altus in 1946.[96] The call letters are his initials.

During Wimberly's seven years and nine months on the power commission, his brother Frank was general manager of both the Altus newspaper and radio station.

"I knew this station would be up for sale, they never did publicize it or anything," recalled Wimberly. "Kerr knew I wanted to come back to Oklahoma and talked with me about it before he made that television application with Mr. Skelly."[97]

"I knew that it offered an excellent opportunity and it did turn out to be a splendid venture on my part.[98]

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[95] Op. cit. McGee interview.

[96] Doug Adams, University of Oklahoma, Journalism 311, "Harrington Wimberly", April 12, 1964.

[97] Op. cit. Wimberly interview.

[98] Ibid.

VIII. THE WIMBERLY YEARS

Harrington Wimberly had planned to return to Oklahoma after his purchase of KRMG, but became involved in other Washington projects which prevented relocation. In his absence, he said, the wisest move he ever made was to put Frank Lane in full control of the station on a salary plus bonus basis:

> I don't think the station had ever shown a profit, but I sensed putting Frank Lane, the manager, in charge with full authority, could make it go.
>
> I turned him loose on a salary and bonus deal on earnings. And, I gave him a large amount of the credit on developing the business. Of course, I gave him all the help I could and I was in and out of Tulsa.[99]

When Wimberly's Western Broadcasting Company took over, there were no staff changes, and few during the next four years, partly because "Frank Lane was such an easy guy to get along with," said Wimberly.[100]

"We did not initiate any program changes," Wimberly recalled, "unless it would have been that we did not fall for the rock-and-roll stuff that was coming in. The programing

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[99] Op. cit. Wimberly interview. [100] Ibid.

was maintained on a very high level." But, so was the programing of their biggest competitor.

"You'd have to put K-V-double-O as our biggest competition, one of the first and finest stations in Oklahoma," he said. "Later KAKC went all rock-and-roll and that was pretty stiff competition, too. But Frank dug in and bore down on accounts, so we didn't slip too much."[101]

His plaudits for Lane were almost endless:

"Frank Lane was one of the best pioneer radio men in Oklahoma, a fine man," Wimberly said. "I think that might have been the turning point, when I put it up to Frank."[102]

> As a newspaper publisher, news would have to be one of my interests and, of course, we had Glenn Condon as news director. We didn't need a large news staff with Glenn Condon. There were about six news programs a day from sign-on to sign-off, plus the ABC net.[103]

That ABC affiliation didn't last through the Wimberly years, however. Lane notified ABC October 14, 1955 that effective April 14, 1956, KRMG would terminate its network affiliation, thus becoming the first 50,000 watt independent radio station in the United States, and of course, the most powerful independent in terms of wattage. Condon and his

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[101] Op. cit. Wimberly interview.

[102] Ibid. [103] Ibid.

staff wanted to make it the most powerful in terms of influence, too.[104]

Lane said the sole reason KRMG went independent was "to give our listeners more complete local coverage of news and sports and more programing of all types geared to the area we serve."[105] He said to accomplish the station's goals, it would require six months of hard work, and that is when ABC would be dropped.

Their work paid off.

As an example of the hustle in the KRMG news department, the Associated Press presented KRMG with a national news award February 10, 1957 "for supplying more news stories during the year than any of the other 1,600 AP members." John Aspinwall, the AP national radio news editor presented the award to Condon and Lane personally at Tulsa.[106]

Violent weather is not entirely foreign to Oklahomans, and a good test of the worth of a radio station is during a period of crisis. In the spring of 1957, the Arkansas River pushed 12 to 14 feet out of its banks, flooding homes in Tulsa

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[104] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, October 14, 1955.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Op. cit. Tulsa World, February 11, 1957.

and all along the river to Port Smith, Arkansas.

Newsman Larry Strain went 72 hours without sleep, broadcasting from "Airmobile Unit Number 1," a helicopter which covered the flooded lands all the way to the Arkansas border and advised residents of evacuation problems and congested areas.[107]

From Friday, May 17, through Tuesday, May 21, 1967, the station aired 153 local news broadcasts and carried 10 hours and two minutes of weather forcasts, warnings and flood reports.[108]

The station was community minded, too. Under Wimberly's reign it got the idea of going out and doing things, with plenty of remotes and man-on-the-street interviews. The station promoted civic projects and charities like the Salvation Army Christmas collections and "Toys for Tots", sponsored by local firemen. Wimberly said the station was involved in everything it could be and it showed growth each year during the time he owned it, until it was sold at a good profit,[109] August 26, 1957, with effective transfer date December 1, 1957.[110]

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[107] Op. cit. Dumit, p. 16. [108] Ibid.

[109] Op. cit. Wimberly interview.

[110] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, October 14, 1955.

Lane and his good music programing, Condon's news, a fine staff and a lot of drive increased the worth of the station from $305,000 to $500,000 in the four Wimberly years.

> Meredith seemed to want to buy it. A Meredith lawyer in Washington and I had talked over a period of six to eight months and there were no brokers involved. They were not giving the hard buy and I was sitting back and concluded that they wanted the station and when the time came, they would say so.[111]

Wimberly talked with no one but Meredith Publishing Company, of Des Moines, Iowa, about the sale. They made a good offer, he was satisfied with a nice profit and was interested in the purchase of the Duncan Banner, though it was four years before he made that purchase.

> I closed the deal on the Banner in 1962, so it was a few years later. I had talked with B. L. Abernathy, the owner, who died in 1959. He had been quite inactive over a period of a few years and had a heart attack and a reoccurrence. I talked with him very cautiously and let him know I was interested. After his death, it was at least six months before I talked with his widow. I did not push the deal, but waited until she was ready to sell.[112]

Harrington Wimberly moved to Duncan, his residence today, and Frank continued to manage the Altus newspaper and KWHW, which was sold in the fall of 1969.

There was a smooth transition from Wimberly to Meredith and KRMG retained its complete staff and Lane as manager.

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[111] Op. cit. Wimberly interview. [112] Ibid.

IX. THE MEREDITH YEARS

The purchase of KRMG by Meredith Publishing Company, under the name of Meredith-KRMG, was far from disaster, but it didn't make a nickle for them. It lost money nearly five straight years.[113]

The Des Moines, Iowa, firm published Better Homes and Gardens and Successful Farming magazines. It held radio and television licenses in Syracuse, Kansas City, Omaha and Phoenix before adding KRMG, a station they sold four and one-half years later at the same $500,000 they paid, and lost money all along the way.

There were two basic reasons for KRMG's poor performance, dictatorial group management policies and mish-mash programming.

Meredith inherited a good music station which was doing well at a time of a shift in programming toward rock. The good music policies were exaggerated to the saccharine sound of Mantovani, Percy Faith and Paul Weston. That was at night.

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[113] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

In the morning, from 6:00 to 7:00 A.M., then again from noon until 1:00 P.M., KRMG resounded with the pure country sould of Marvin McCullough. He brought in the best ratings, so Meredith added country throughout the day, but keeping the solid country blocks for Marvin.[114]

KAKC rose to number one in the market aboard the rock-and-roll music wagon, and Meredith, with eyes always open to a good thing, programmed some "chicken rock" in an effort to share the audience. "Chicken rock" is pretty much the same tune, with a more subtle beat and a more conventional group or singer.

Meredith let the night slip into some kind of a big band sound and KRMG sounded like chaos. But, the worst was yet to come.

Meredith was involved in a big play and got CBS affiliations in Kansas City, Phoenix and Omaha," said Greenwood, "Which ultimately, I suppose to sweeten the package, led them to take the CBS affiliation here in Tulsa."[115]

KTUL had dropped CBS and Meredith was quick to add Tulsa to the deal. The announcement came December 22, 1958,

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[114] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[115] Ibid.

and the network contract was effective January 5, 1959.[116]

"We have been happy with our independent status," said manager Frank Lane, "but we have found that our new format has its strengths and weaknesses. CBS will fill in those weaknesses."[117]

So, KRMG added two hours of Arthur Godfrey, Howard Miller and Art Linkletter's "House Party" to its morning schedule. The afternoons rang with the time-tested "soap operas" and Pat Buttram for two hours and the night spots were taken by Lowell Thomas and Edward R. Murrow for 75 minutes. The airways were filled with CBS news.[118]

The local news was still as good or better than anything else in the market with Glenn Condon at the controls, but because of failing health, not as firmly as he had been two years previously.

KRMG had fallen to third in the nation in the Associated Press news awards, still a quite enviable position. The AP presented its 1957 award April 20, 1958, at the Oklahoma AP Broadcasters spring meeting at Western Hills State Lodge, on Lake Fort Gibson, near Wagoner.[119]

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[116] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, December 22, 1958.

[117] Ibid. [118] Ibid.

[119] Op. cit. Tulsa World, April 21, 1958.

"Dock" Hull was on the station at night, before he went to KVOO where he made his reputation as the old "Sleep Walker," said Ken Greenwood. And KRMG added the commercial religion shows like Garner Ted Armstrong's "The World Tomorrow."

Programming under Meredith was nearly non-existant. It was another case of trying to please everybody, something which probably will never be achieved. And, what happened to KRMG, the community interest station?

"It didn't have any image in the community," said Greenwood. "People weren't for it or against it, they just wished it would do something."[120]

It might be pointed out, in fairness to Meredith, that having no image in a community is far better than having a bad image, something that KRMG has never had. KRMG did have a few notable accomplishments during Meredith's ownership. It used a mobile studio with a radio link to the main studios for remote broadcasts and it caused quite a stir with its "Mobile Money Time."

The contest idea was not original, but something Lane had picked up at a National Association of Broadcasters

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[120] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

meeting. The KRMG mobile unit would follow a car on some Tulsa street, then broadcast its license number live on the air. If the driver was listening, he stopped and collected a silver dollar. He also got a chance to answer a question for a bigger prize.[121]

Bob Parkhurst began a show called "Day Dreams" from 9:00 until 10:00 A.M. during 1960. It was one of the few shows that continued when Meredith sold to SWANCO, KRMG's present owner. The show lasted until 1962.

Lynn Higbee innovated "Saturday Seminar," from 8:00 until 11:00 A.M. on Saturday morning, a sparce time on most station's ratings. The show, at one time, was quite popular. Higbee talked with the other announcers and newsmen when Milt Haynes or Jim Hartz would wander in. Larry Strain would read a news item, and everyone would put in his two-cents worth.[122]

To say that KRMG was first in Tulsa to program stereophonic music would be a half-truth. The station set up its remote equipment in the television studios of KOTV, Channel 6, and carried the live music of Marvin Law Will's "Townhouse Trio" at 4:00 P.M. for an hour on a Sunday afternoon in 1959.

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[121] Op. cit. Dumit, p. 19. [122] Ibid.

KOTV carried the other half of the sound and the picture. Microphones were placed far enough apart that when a listener would place his radio, tuned to KRMG, about 10 feet from his television set on Channel 6, he could have stereo music in his living room.[123]

The FCC approved a name change from Meredith-KRMG to Meredith Broadcasting Company, April 4, 1961, just seven months before its sale to SWANCO, the frozen food company of Omaha headed by Gilbert Swanson.[124]

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[123] Op. cit. Dumit, p. 19.

[124] Op. cit. Tulsa World, November 8, 1961.

X. SWANCO TO THE RESCUE

SWANCO contracted for KRMG November 8, 1961, and took control February 15th. The devastation of the next two days made KRMG look like an atom bomb cleared the studio:

Frank Lane quit. He was replaced by Johnny Merrill as manager.

Program Director Keith Bretz lost his air control and was made a sales manager. He was replaced by Jay Harmon.

"Hillbilly" programming was immediately canned and with it, Marvin McCullough. And, commercial religion was also taken off the air.

Tulsa Oiler baseball voice Mack Creager went to KVOO.

Announcers Lynn Higbee and Bob Brown left, as did salesman Carl Larson, and sales woman Helen Lewis and continuity writer Martha Stewart.

Glenn Condon's news department, which had helped hold KRMG together during the Meredith years, was untouched. Condon remained news director and newsmen Larry Strain, Dick Evans and Jim Hartz stayed. Condon was also given the title of special events director.

The biggest axe fell on CBS. SWANCO Vice President Ken Greenwood told how:

> We tried to live out the CBS contract that we inherited from Meredith, which is about what we did. It finally got down to the place where we were carrying so little programming from CBS, just barely what our contract said we had to carry, and they finally said, well, forget it if that's what you think about CBS. That was about 14 or 15 months after our company bought KRMG.[125]
>
> Our original concept with the station was to use the CBS network and to fit some talk programs around it. We had some telephone talk shows and hired Dock Hull, who was a former radio personality here in Tulsa, and he did a morning show and he did an hour-long talk show from 9:00 until 10:00 A.M. which then fed into Arthur Godfrey.
>
> Our local manager in those days thought that some country-western programming would fit real swell on the station. So, he hired a country-western fellow to be on early in the morning where Marvin McCullough had originally been and also do some noon-time programming.
>
> We had another talk show in the afternoon and one in the evening to fit around CBS.
>
> CBS was going through the revolution then of gradually phasing out of daytime programming with the exception of Arthur Godfrey; so, for a while, we had a mixture of country music, talk, CBS news and some popular music.[126]

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[125] Op. cit. Tulsa World, February 17, 1962.

[126] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

Ken Greenwood was named manager of KRMG June 25, 1963[127] and was made president of SWANCO in December, 1966.



Another service that was axed by SWANCO was the Associated Press; it was done, however, much more reluctantly than the others.

> We discontinued the AP when we picked up UPI audio, because in those days you didn't know what was coming down the audio wire unless you had the regular news wire to "billboard" for you. So, we dropped AP. We had been talking to AP for almost two years, asking them when they were going to put an audio service in, and they kept dilly-dallying around and never got around to it. So, we just dropped AP in a lot of our markets as some contracts expired. It just so happened that we went to UPI at about the time we dropped CBS.[128]

SWANCO wanted KRMG to get involved in the community, to do more than just sit back and watch and report the news.

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[127] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, June 25, 1963.

[128] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

So, it became one of the first stations in the United States to endorse a political candidate. Some local office seekers won KRMG's approval and Page Belcher received the station's nod in his re-election bid for U. S. Congress. He won. Henry Bellmon won support when he ran and was elected to the governor's office and then later, he was elected as a Republican to the U. S. Senate against veteran Democrat A. S. "Mike" Monroney.[129]

And the station got involved editorially, becoming the first station in the state to editorialize. Greenwood told how:

> Initially Glenn [Condon] wrote all the editorials. Glenn wrote and delivered the editorials until he got to a place where he couldn't do that sort of thing, and then he wrote them and I delivered them. And, when he couldn't write anymore I took on the job of both writing and delivering them.[130]

KRMG broke the racial barrier in broadcasting, becoming the first station in the state to hire a black newsman. Don Ross, who does a lot of free lance work, was sent to Kansas City in May of 1968, when the city was under pressure from racial unrest. Veteran newsman David Stanford was also on the scene for KRMG, and the two of them reported their findings to KRMG and Tulsa Mayor James Hewgley after returning from

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[129] Op. cit. Greenwood interview. [130] Ibid.

the five-day trip. The disturbance was during the time of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King.

The report blamed the indiscretion of the Kansas City police, the lack of sensitivity of the school board and "Black Hoodlumism" as responsible immediately for the confrontation.[131]

As underlying causes, some frustrations similar to those in other cities, allegations of police brutality, poor quality housing for blacks and low quality education for Negroes.[132] But KRMG carried this one step farther.

KRMG studied the causes of the Kansas City disorder then informed Tulsa about it so "our citizens would be more inclined to involve themselves in steps to eliminate underlying causes of riot in Tulsa; and being aware of immediate causes of the flare-up, guard against the presence of those factors in Tulsa."[133]

"We've been the first station in this area that has arranged what we call 'phone forums' where we let people come in; and the people that come in are the authorities, and listeners call in and ask questions to both sides,"[134] said Greenwood.

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[131]"KRMG Kansas City Report", 1968. [132]Ibid.

[133]Ibid. [134]Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

KRMG has received quite a lot of commendation for the "phone forums" and they have been on a number of vital issues, such as: the right to work, port bonds, drugs, open housing and the Kansas City problem.

Panelists on the KRMG "phone forum" Saturday May 18, 1968, were The Honorable James M. Hewgley, Jr., Mayor of Tulsa; The Honorable Curtis Lawson, State Representative, District 73; Dr. Girard T. Bryany, Metropolitan Junior College, Kansas City, Missouri; Tulsa Police Chief Jack Purdie; Mr. C. L. Robinson, a citizen; KRMG Newsman David Stanford and Moderator Vic Bastien, KRMG news director.[135]

Greenwood said it is a chain policy to"let people sound off," because there are many sides to an issue.[136]

KRMG's community involvement wasn't a selfish motivation to bring them up from the zero ratings, shortly after the SWANCO take-over, to their present position of leadership, but it helped.

> KVOO was a very dominant station in the community at that time. They had NBC and a very fine reputation. They were regarded as the pillar of radio.
>
> Not that KRMG had a bad reputation, but when I first came to town, people used to say I'm glad to

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[135] Op. cit. "Kansas City Report."

[136] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

> see somebody finally is going to do something with KRMG. So, we had a lot of people rooting for us. They just seemed to think here was a station that had great coverage and a great potential for the Tulsa market. Because, if you can get people to listen to you throughout the state, obviously you're going to help pull business into the community, so they were rootin' for KRMG to do that.[137]

Meredith had only two personalities on his staff, Glenn Condon and Marvin McCullough; and Marvin was out the door the first week SWANCO took control.

Greenwood said SWANCO felt Tulsa would buy personality. "They had in the past and we felt if we put good personality in the market, they would buy it," he said. "The justification for this theory has been proven, because today we have the top radio personalities in the market."[138]

"I think more people could name the guys on our staff than they could any other station in the market," Greenwood continued. Chuck "Adams is very strong in the morning and Johnny Martin very strong at night. Fred Campbell has a good following now. These guys spend a lot of time in the community working on various projects and doing a lot of things which make quite a contribution."[139]

Community contribution is another SWANCO chain policy

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[137] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[138] Ibid. [139] Ibid.

sworn to by all four radio stations: KQEO, Albuquerque, and KLEO, Wichita, both contemporary sounds; and KBAT, San Antonio, like KRMG, a 50,000 watt middle of the road station with what Greenwood calls an "Independent better music format."[140]

SWANCO also owns two FM radio stations, one in New Orleans and KRMG-FM, Tulsa.

"We'll continue to grow if we can find good properties," said Greenwood. "We're not a big company and we're not a stock company. If we go in, we have to play with our own money, and that makes a big difference."[141]

KIHI FM was purchased June 15, 1964, by SWANCO, with take over in September.

"The adoption of FM to our KRMG-AM operation will enable us to widen the scope of our programming," said Greenwood in a Tulsa Tribune story at the time. "We have what we believe to be interesting plans for the FM operation, both in the field of music and public affairs."[142]

The call letters were changed to KRMG-FM.

The FCC approved assignment of KRMG from SWANCO to Texas Star Broadcasting Company, Inc., of San Antonio, Texas,

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[140] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[141] Ibid. [142] Ibid.

November 11, 1967.[143]

SWANCO is no longer connected with Swanson Foods, which was sold several years ago to Campbell Foods Company; but it is the Swanson sons who have the radio business-Gery Swanson, who lives in Tulsa, and Clarke Swanson of Fort Meyers, Florida.[144] Clarke runs a cable television operation owned by both brothers and Greenwood.[145]

Texas Star Broadcasters is a corporate name that SWANCO inherited when they purchased KBAT, and it is owned 100 per cent by SWANCO. Greenwood said there was once a SWANCO of Oklahoma, a SWANCO of Kansas and a SWANCO of New Mexico, which are now merged under the name Texas Star. They will be eventually merged under the name SWANCO.[146]

Chuck Adams, who had worked for KRMG three years as the early man, was named program director September 20, 1967, replacing Dick Jones. Sales Manager Ron Blue became general manager. Several other staff changes were announced:

Lew Jones was brought to Tulsa from Albuquerque to pull the 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. shift; and Dick Jones left

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[143] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, June 15, 1964.

[144] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[145] Ibid. [146] Ibid.

that time slot, transferring to the SWANCO outlet in San Antonio KBAT.

Jones was followed by Fred Campbell from 2:00 to 6:00 P.M., then came Don Cummings from 6:00 to 8:00 P.M. and Johnny Martin until 1:00 A.M. Adams retained the morning slot.

The program "Quiet Zone" bit the dust at the same time. It had been two straight hours of music only.[147]

The Martin show was simulcast on the FM station.

Sunday, December 31, 1968, KRMG began a popular program "The Word--and Music" at 7:00 A.M., a time when few stations can claim a great audience. Somewhere in Ohio a minister had devised a way to present controversial moral questions to an audience and spark their imagination. The non-denominational program covers in music and script such subjects as money and marriage, accidental nuclear war, parenthood, the aged, working mothers, the church in the next century, mental illness, adult dishonesty and leisure time.

It met with great success, even at that hour.

Adams said the show fits into the KRMG weekend programming and has a special appeal to the young people.[148]

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[147] Op. cit. Tulsa World, September 20, 1967.

[148] Ibid. February 10, 1968.

KRMG dubbed itself "The Friendly Giant," and became promotion happy. Things began to happen.

KRMG sponsored a Herb Alpert concert in the Tulsa Assembly Center; 10,000 people showed up to see the appearance of the "Great Pumpkin," to win prizes on a scavenger hunt and generally have a good time; "Operation Amigo" brought in 30,000 cans of food, weighing seven tons, which was flown to the victims of Hurricane Beulah of south Texas, and attracted over 9,000 persons to a Henry Mancini-Andy Williams concert at the Tulsa Assembly Center. That was the largest crowd ever to attend an Assembly Center event, despite "nippy weather."[149]

And, they don't call it "Award-winning KRMG" for nothing.

KRMG has won more awards in the last five years than any other Oklahoma radio station, and more than all Tulsa radio stations combined. UPI news awards are almost "matter of fact" at annual presentations. They earn them for coverage and special results like the "Kansas City Report" or "The Tulsa Drug Scene."

KRMG is the only Tulsa station with a full-time news correspondent in Washington, D. C., Malvinia Stephenson. She

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[149]Various KRMG promotion flyers.

was first to break the news that Secretary of Defense McNamara would resign, and first on the resignation of Chief Justice Earl Warren.

The editorials on KRMG collect awards, too. The Oklahoma Association of Secondary Schools presented its "Marshall Gregory Award" to KRMG for 28 broadcast editorials promoting greater understanding between schools and the general public.

Radio stations seldom win awards in competition with newspapers and television stations, but KRMG does. For example, last year KRMG won the Oklahoma Wildlife Federation trophy--"The Conservation Communications Award of the Year."[150]

> We say award winning, and people say, well what have you done? We won the conservation award from the Wildlife Federation for the editorials we did on conservation, and not just the editorials, but a lot of other activities. We've given a lot of support, financial and editorial-wise to the Scenic Rivers Bill which has just been passed.
>
> We've been harping on bad law enforcement around our lakes and it looks like finally something will be done on that. We sent a newsman out into the field and [Ed] Brocksmith spent a whole week talking and taping the stories people told him. He talked to sheriffs and talked to the highway patrolmen and all of these people, and we put the tape all together and we gave it to the senate and the house and the governor. We gave them a report on tape of people actually telling of some of the conditions around our lakes. That still hasn't reached any culmination, but I think it will.

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[150]Various KRMG promotion flyers.

We've been honored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and to the best of my knowledge, one of the few stations in the country so honored. It was for our stands on open housing and some work we have done inside to give the black community some voice in this city, and that's one of the reasons I think Tulsa is a peaceful town today, by comparison. It's not all peaceful, but at least it hasn't gone up in flames.

We've played call shot. Not to be wise or smart or know-it-all, that's not the point, but just to get things out in the open because we believe that people will talk about things and if you can dispell the rumors, you can do an awful lot, and if you can keep people talking to each other, you can do an awful lot to create an area of good understanding. This is what we've tried to do.[151]

KRMG has been quick to spot issues before they become problems. For example, it noticed there was only a slight minority representation in Tulsa's labor unions. They were not letting in either blacks or Indians, and KRMG took the editorial opinion that a union man should not be upset when people do something to him, if he turns right around and does it to someone else, Greenwood said.

Well, they didn't like that very well. But, we said it, then some other people hitched their britches up and they said it. The result is that today there's minority representation in every union in the Tulsa crafts. It's still not as much as it could be or should be, but we're making progress.[152]

The FM station does not use the editorials, but

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[151] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[152] Ibid.

approaches the issues from both viewpoints, citing both sides. It says this is a pertinent issue and if you, the listener, want to say something about it, it's time to write or call--then they direct the listener to the right person. The editorials are run on weekends.

XI. A PHYSICAL OF KRMG

KRMG is a maximum power amplitude modulated commercial broadcast radio station, Class 1-B, operating on 740 kcs. Its power output is 50,000 watts/daytime and 25,000 watts/night, from a transmitter located five miles southeast of Keystone, Oklahoma, on a 100-acre tract of land.[153]

Its original license provided for 10,000 watts power at night, but the FCC granted a temporary permit for the increased power from the station's inception.[154]

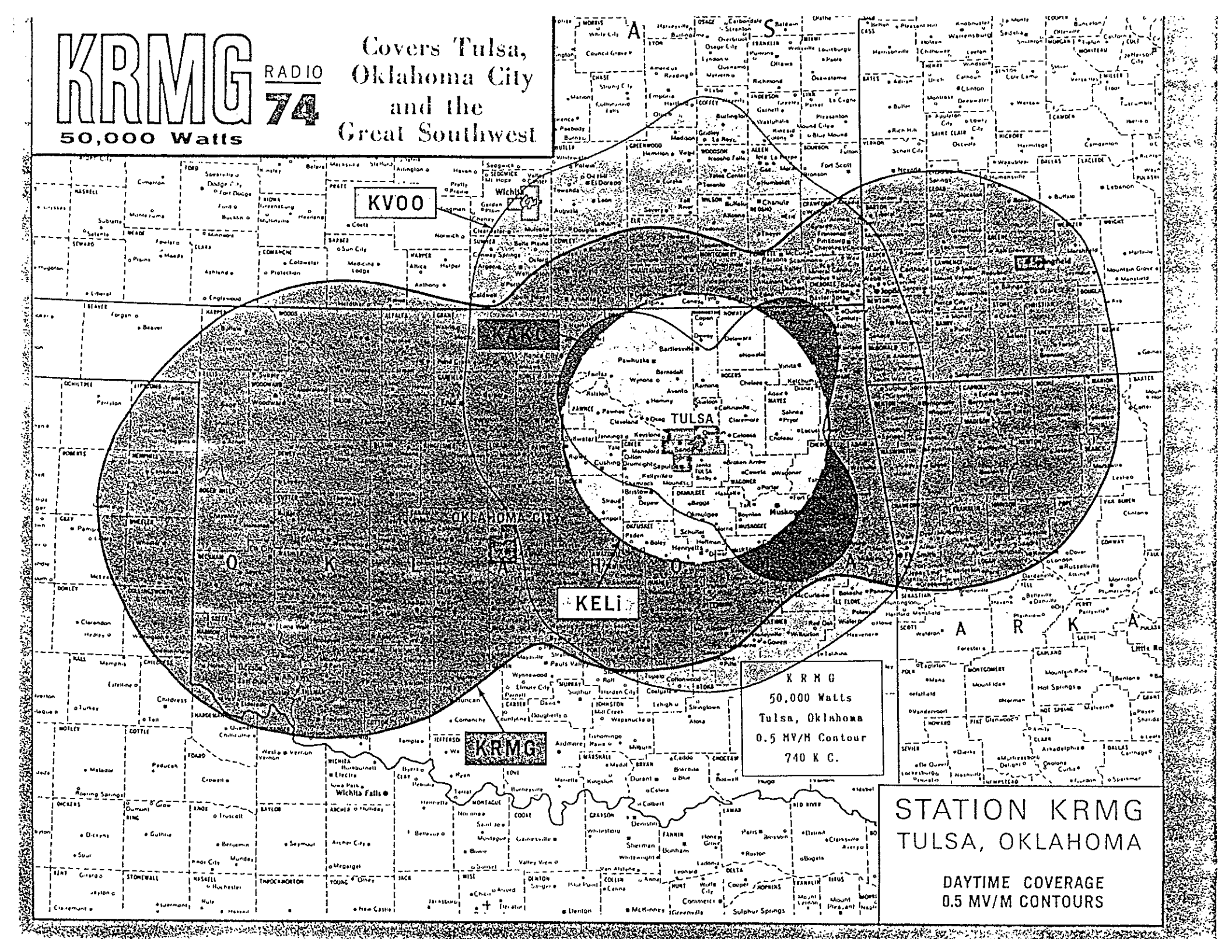
KRMG and KRMG-FM studios are located on the 23rd floor of the Liberty Towers Building, 1502 South Boulder Avenue, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74119. The 6,100 watt frequency modulated transmitter is also at that location, with its 295-foot antenna on top of the building. It operates on a frequency of 95.5 mcs. Also on the roof is a parabolic dish to microwave programming to the AM transmitter.

The Radio Corporation of America (RCA) transmitter, the first ever built with low power consumption tubes, was

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[153] Op. cit. Tulsa World, October 12, 1949.

[154] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, February 13, 1951.


KRMG
RADIO
74
50,000 Watts
Covers Tulsa, Oklahoma City and the Great Southwest
KVOO
KAKC
KELi
KRMG
TULSA
OKLAHOMA CITY
Wichita Falls
K R M G
50,000 Watts
Tulsa, Oklahoma
0.5 MV/M Contour
740 K C.
STATION KRMG
TULSA, OKLAHOMA
DAYTIME COVERAGE
0.5 MV/M CONTOURS

built in Miami, Florida, in an 11 month period beginning in September of 1948.[155] An RCA field engineer supervised its installation which was completed within a month.

The original transmitter, now over 20 years old, remains in 24 hour operation daily.

"The transmitter is air conditioned and equipped for emergency broadcasting," said Ken R. Greenwood, President of Swanco Broadcasting which purchased the station February 16, 1961.[156]

Its array of six antennas, each reaching skyward 270 feet from a base of 1,000 foot msl.,[157] are necessary to protect stations in Canada, Mexico and New York. The multiple towers each are phased with a percentage of the total signal to provide directional radiation.

The transmitter is located 18 miles west of Tulsa, allowing two primary lobes over both Oklahoma City and Tulsa.[158]

"The pattern runs on a line from Springfield, Missouri, to out past Amarillo, [Texas] on the backbone--U.S. 66--right

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[155] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, August 2, 1949.

[156] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[157] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, October 12, 1949.

[158] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

down the middle. At night it pulls into a bow tie to protect Canada and Mexico."[159]

More than 25 miles of control cable is in use at the transmitter location and its hugh grounding system uses 80 miles of copper wire in a wagon wheel pattern around each of the towers.[160]

Original studios were on the ground floor of the three-story Akdar Temple[161] at 4th and Denver Streets in downtown Tulsa. Construction began August 3, 1949, and was nearly complete by the sign-on, 20 weeks later.[162]

The building had been constructed in 1925 at a cost of $750,000[163] and was occupied only by a business college at the time a lease was secured by C. B. Akers.[164] Prior to obtaining the studios for KRMG, the building's second floor had been used for experimental television[165] and the station's lease provided

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[159] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[160] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, October 12, 1949.

[161] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[162] Op. cit. Tulsa World, December 24, 1949.

[163] Ibid. June 4, 1925.

[164] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[165] Op. cit. Ward interview.

an option on that floor, which it never needed.[166]

Swanco purchased KIHI-FM June 15, 1964,[167] and changed its call letters to KRMG-FM.

The original studios were kept until "one awfully hot August,"[168] of 1966, said Greenwood, who became president of the parent company four months after the move.

"Everybody was moving out of the old Akdar Building and we were having a lot of trouble with vandalism and theft because there was no other tenant in the building," he said. "Most tenants had moved out because of the vandalism."

"The Liberty Towers planners came to us and asked if we'd like to move in here," said Greenwood. "We were already thinking about moving a little bit, so we got to remodel our studios before there were any partitions put in or anything. We put together a very compact and very modern radio station. Later, we moved the FM in here and later we moved the whole management company to Tulsa."[169]

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[166] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[167] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, June 16, 1964.

[168] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[169] Ibid.

XII. TODAY

Some battles are never won. Twenty years ago, when KRMG went on the air, some of its roughest battles were with W. G. Skelly and KVOO and those battles continue, though KRMG is fighting from a much improved position--the top of the pile.

"I think our primary competitor is KVOO," said Ken Greenwood recently. "They're a 50,000 watt station and their programs on Tuesday are a lot like ours are on Monday. I'd guess they are our primary competition, but obviously KAKC gives us a lot of competition, too."[170]

He said KAKC's ratings in the summer reverse themselves from the winter. The change directly corresponds to the school term and KAKC collects the greatest audience in the summer months when it has a 35 per cent or 38 per cent share of audience.

An advertiser purchasing KRMG and KAKC would have about 65 per cent of the audience; while KELI, which claims to be a cross between the adult programming of KRMG and the rock and popular sound of KAKC, shows up with a 10 per cent share

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[170] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

in the morning, a nine at mid-day and an eight at night. But, KRMG does not sell ratings.

"From a sales philosophy standpoint, we won't sell by ratings," said Greenwood. "Our salesmen do not use ratings. Once and a while someone will ask to look at the ratings and if they ask for them, we show the ratings. But, unless they ask, we don't show them."[171]

When asked how KRMG sells itself, Greenwood replied: "We use a lot of success. Often times our advertisers will tell other advertisers. The last Hooper, we had a 36 per cent share in the morning and 32 per cent in the middle of the day. By afternoon, we were down to 20."

The 36 per cent morning "drive-time" share of audience figure means that KRMG, which shares the market with 10 other rated stations, has the best rating during a time when there are more people listening. The sets-in-use figure for the morning was 22 per cent, or slightly more than one of every five radios in Tulsa was playing during that time period.

"I think FM has a finger in this thing," said Greenwood about the relatively high sets-in-use figure. "I think some people are listening who had been watching TV in the morning.

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[171] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

They are starting to listen to AM radio or FM radio, which made the sets-in-use figure go up."[172]

The KRMG coverage pounds Oklahoma City harder than some places north of Tulsa, but KRMG does not sell in that market.

"We've got all we can say grace over here in town," said Greenwood. "We call on agencies in Oklahoma City and show up on ratings over there, but we don't sell there. We don't claim a big audience over there. I think the last ARB showed us with 3,500."[173]

"I think we're fifth, but don't sell that fact unless we are trying to sell Tulsa. We sell primarily Tulsa, with some area coverage. But," said Greenwood, "we don't happen to think that KRMG is going to be a real strong station in the area on its day-to-day programming, because too many of the stations in the small towns duplicate the news and the information and the special features we have on, but the music is duplicated in the small markets, whereas the contemporary or the country is not."[174]

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[172] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[173] Ibid. [174] Ibid.

"We don't play any music that isn't recognizable, very recognizable," Greenwood said. "I tell the guys that we're the Lawrence Welk of the radio business. We don't offend anybody."[175]

> I doubt that a real jazz buff, oh, he might listen to [Johnny] Martin some evenings when Martin gets off on Kenton or Ellington or some of those things, but, if you really analyze the music, it's pretty square. It's done tastefully and we stay away from wild arrangements and anything that would offend people.
>
> Consequently, the music becomes very bland, and if there were no other programming on this radio station, then the music would be very bland. But, we want it bland, because what we put in and on top and around that music is what's important. That is where we put all the information.
>
> I tell the guys not to play Nancy Wilson. After she gets done singing and 64 trombones and 400 trumpets have played the last of it, the announcer tries to introduce the next record and he can't say anything. You can't top her when she gets done singing. There's no encore for that sort of thing, so we play a much simpler arrangement.[176]

Award-winning KRMG presents an award of its own which has come into high esteem in recent years--The KRMG "Pat on the Back." Tulsa's civic leadership, from the mayor to the blood donor or the fellow who volunteers his Sunday afternoons to help young baseballers at the Tulsa Boys' Home, is eligible for this honor. A certificate is awarded in recognition of those who build Tulsa and their honor is read on the station for all to hear.

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[175] Op. cit. Greenwood interview. [176] Ibid.

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS

_____

having offered of himself in the service of others:
having served his community beyond call;
and, having contributed generously to the welfare
of the City of Tulsa and State of Oklahoma . . . . .
therefore has been proclaimed a worthy candidate for the

KRMG

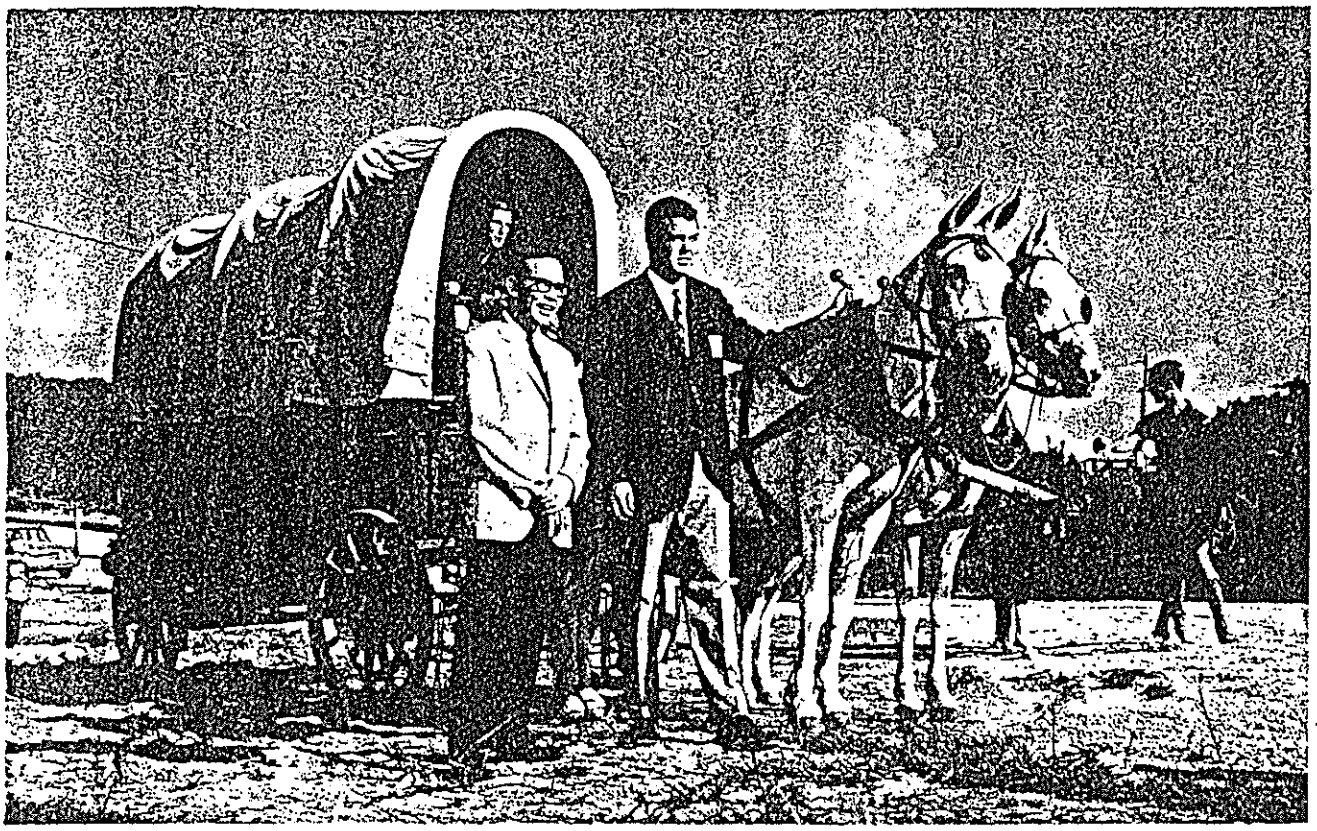
"PAT ON THE BACK"

Dated _____

Witnessth _____

Signed _____
Officer of KRMG Radio

People listen to KRMG because it does something for them. KRMG tries to touch as many people as possible and does it with a lot of zaney things, or things that seem on the surface to be zaney. Recently, the station gave six seals to the zoo. That sounds like a silly thing for a radio station to do, but the zoo didn't have any seals. Greenwood said the next promotion may help them get some penguins. He said they could have a lot of fun with it, and certainly it helps the community. And, what other radio station has a team of albino mules:



DAVID STANFORD (L) RON BLUE (R)

Not everything KRMG does for Tulsa is zaney. They innovated the research idea to find out about the drug problem in the Oil Capitol, analyzed their statistics and told the public:

> Our newsmen went out and supervised a poll that was taken. We first surveyed better than a thousand people at the Tulsa State Fair [September, 1969] and got the idea what the adult viewpoint was on drugs. Then we contacted the superintendent of schools, Dr. Gordon Kwalti, and said people ought to know what young people were thinking about drugs. He let us go into all the high schools and actually helped us develop the questions that we used because he wanted to find out some things.
>
> We talked to over 2,500 students and we did this as a news story which was released and we also have made reprints available and I guess the idea of the project has now been picked up by a dozen high schools over the state of Oklahoma.
>
> It's a very painless way to let the adults in the city, who don't really want to believe what people tell them, know about drugs. It's a painless way to let them know what the kids are really thinking and in many instances, what the kids are really doing.[177]

KRMG sat on the drug story in Tulsa for almost 14 months.

"We had names, which we gave to the police department and they asked us to sit on them," said Greenwood. "Not very long ago, when the heroin story was finally divulged, we got a three hour break on that particular story."[178]

Program Director Chuck Adams heads an all-star

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[177] Op. cit. Greenwood interview. [178] Ibid.

professional staff on KRMG in 1970. At 34, he is still the witty, young-at-heart early morning disc jockey that can warm the frost off your windshield on a winter's morning. He is one of the most popular and in-demand radio personalities to ever chat with the public on Tulsa airways.



Adam's friendly jokes during the morning drive-time, his singing of the school lunch menu, his bright pearls of wisdom and humor from Mother Adams, who just called-in, are part of his trademark, and welcomed with the first yawn of morning by many sleepy Tulsans. And what's even better, he loves Tulsa and Tulsans as much as they love him.

TABLE 3. KRMG on-air personalities:

Chuck Adams, program director,	6 a.m. to 10 a.m.
Jerry Vaughn	10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Fred Campbell	2 p.m. to 5 p.m.
Dick Ford	5 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Johnny Martin	8 p.m. to 1 a.m.
Greg Austin	1 a.m. to 6 a.m.
Vic Bastien, news director	
Ed Brocksmith	
Norm Colwell	
Dennie Eckert	
David Stanford	

The "Remarkable KRMG" is the only logo or slogan used, though it can be worked into a million lines. The "Friendly Giant" outlived its usefulness.

When SWANCO took over KRMG, advertising rates were based on the rating for the lowest person on the staff. They have been raised eight times since then and are the highest in Tulsa and comparable to that of WKY in Oklahoma City.

It only costs a few cents more to buy the very best--KRMG.

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University of Oklahoma

"The Remarkable KRMG"

Journalism 311

May 15, 1970

By Richard S. Boggs

cy - For your files
CB

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II. IN THE BEGINNING

It takes a long time for a radio station to grow and expand its influence, to flex its muscle and become a community leader; an attribute KRMG has known as a teen-ager.

Today, at 20, KRMG is a vital part of the Port of Tulsa. It is well known as a powerful influence on Tulsans and a station responsive to the wants and needs of its community.

KRMG's list of firsts is impressive:

TABLE 1. The innovative KRMG:

1. First 50 kw. low power consumption transmitter in the nation.
2. The nation's pioneer 50 kw. independent station.
3. First station to use helicopters in measuring the transmitter's radiated power for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) proof of engineering performance.
4. First Oklahoma station to editorialize.

5. First Oklahoma station, and one of the nation's first, to endorse a political candidate.

6. First Oklahoma station to hire a Negro newsman.

7. First Oklahoma station to poll the public on vital issues and air the results.

8. First Tulsa station to broadcast from a mobile studio.

9. First Tulsa station to send newsmen on out-of-state assignments to gather and report the news.

10. First Tulsa station to use "phone forums" with authorities from both sides of a question at the studio, answering telephone questions from the audience.

There were some rough years in KRMG's childhood and they had an influence on the station today, but most important to the quality of Oklahoma's outstanding radio station is its present owner. SWANCO purchased KRMG April 4, 1961,[1] after

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[1]Tulsa Daily World, Tulsa, Oklahoma, various clippings, April 4, 1961.

it had lost money for more than four years,[2] and locked it in on Tulsa's heartbeat.

This is how it happened.

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[2]SWANCO. Personal interview with Ken Greenwood, president, SWANCO, Tulsa, Oklahoma, March 23, 1970.

III. OUR FATHERS

The FCC granted a construction permit to build Tulsa's seventh radio station--KRMG--to United States Senator Robert S. Kerr and Dean A. McGee, but the driving force behind the application was Kerr.

"The senator was the one interested in getting a radio station in Tulsa," said C. B. "Brownie" Akers, the station's first vice president. "And, of course, everything he did he invited McGee to go along with him. He was a great expansionist and very ambitious."[3]

Just how quick the senator's thoughts turned to television has been obscured through the years, but the original plans drawn up by Akers provided some insight. They had provisions for using the Akdar Temple auditorium as a television studio.[4] Their delay probably was to watch the progress of Tulsa's first television station, KOTV, which beat KRMG to the airways by only two months. KRMG was later sold to win

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[3]Personal interview with C. B. "Brownie" Akers, first KRMG vice president, Tulsa, Oklahoma, April 21, 1970.

[4]Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

approval on their application to purchase an interest in KVOO television.

> Senator Kerr had the idea that he was going to have a television station in Tulsa and the original plans, and I've seen some and I've read letters to the manager back in those days showing they wanted to apply for television. Their idea was to use that auditorium as a place where they could do live shows.
>
> Kerr had the idea that television in a political sense might be a more powerful medium than radio was, so when it became evident that the two interests, the Skelly and the Kerr-McGee interests, were not going to be able to both get a television station, he decided to arbitrate those differences. They sold KRMG and took a part interest in KVOO television.[5]

That was in 1953. Kerr, in 1949, however, was chiefly interested in getting KRMG on the air and he put television a few notches down the priority list. He saw his best chance for a station was in Tulsa, but his real hope was to reach as many people in the state as possible and in particular, the population centers.

> When the man said that he could put a 50,000 watt station in Tulsa, Oklahoma, Senator Kerr said, 'That's fine, the only thing I want you to do is to guarantee me it will cover both Tulsa and Oklahoma City.' He had great strength in the rural areas, but not much in the two urban areas and he could see that this would make him a pretty good outlet, I suppose, for his speeches. This is just conjecture on my part.[6]

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[5] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[6] Ibid.

Senator Kerr "was very, very shrewd and had a full knowledge of what radio was capable of doing and a full appreciation of what television was going to be," Greenwood said. "I found, going through the old, old files, some very interesting letters from Senator Kerr addressed to 'Brownie' Akers . . . instructing him that he wanted the speech he delivered in the senate, played right after 'Stop the Music'. Back in those days, ABC on Sunday night, had this real hot radio show . . . where they dial all over the country and give away big quantities of money. And he wanted his speech played right after 'Stop the Music', so this is where it would be used."[7]

Kerr was subtle though, according to Perry Ward, the station's first program director.

"He never interfered with the station in any way. Anything that was done was behind the scenes."[8]

Ward said McGee had nothing to do with station operations, a fact which McGee admits today.

"He was there opening night and I think that was the last time we ever saw him. Kerr was in town occasionally and

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[7]Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[8]Personal interview with Perry Ward, first KRMG Program Director, Tulsa, Oklahoma, April 19, 1970.

dropped by whenever he was."[9]

Akers said Kerr had no direct political use of the station in mind, citing the FCC regulations and the equal time provision.[10]

He said Kerr's involvement was strictly a business one.

"The senator thought it would be profitable after talking with an old friend who made money in the radio business--Lyndon Johnson. In fact, he sent me to Austin to see his radio station and to study its operation and [station manager] Bob Jones went, too."[11]

Dean McGee recalled that his concern was more in the station's books than its operation and his ambitions were for investment.

McGee picked out the transmitter site himself by flying around the countryside. Keystone was picked because of its proximity to the urban areas.

> That was the only high flat spot that we had to anchor those tall towers. Of course, we didn't want to go east of Tulsa because we didn't want to get away

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[9]Personal interview with Perry Ward, first KRMG Program Director, Tulsa, Oklahoma, April 19, 1970.

[10]Op. cit. Akers interview.

[11]Ibid.

> from the population centers and Keystone is on the Oklahoma City side. It not only covers Tulsa and Oklahoma City, but all over Oklahoma. It wasn't a question of just Oklahoma City, but of getting as much statewide coverage as we could.[12]

At the time of sign-on, Kerr was near the end of his first year in the United States Senate. He had taken office in January and formerly was Oklahoma's governor from 1942-46. He died New Years Day, 1963.

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[12]KERR-MCGEE. Personal interview with Dean A. McGee, one of KRMG's two principal owners in 1949, Oklahoma City, April 24, 1970.

1. Jim Harts > CBS, National public Telev news anchor
2. Bob Stevens > ESPN anchor sports
3. Bob Losure > CNN anchor
4. Several in broadcasting someplace
5.

IV. CONSTRUCTION

KRMG was built in record time.

The first nail was driven at the Akdar Temple studios August 3, 1949,[13] with sign-on only 142 days later.[14] The official ground breaking was held August 2, 1949.[15]

C. B. "Brownie" Akers was working for Senator Kerr in the summer of 1949 as a liaison officer. He admitted he wasn't too useful because of Kerr's ability to "make his own answers."[16]

"Akers had worked for Video Theaters in Oklahoma, but was working for us when we got permission to go ahead," said Dean McGee. "He really built it for us."[17]

"They called me in the office one day and asked if I knew Tulsa pretty well and I told them yes," Akers recalled. "I had been with Griffith Video Theaters. They asked me if I

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[13] Tulsa Tribune, August 3, 1949.

[14] Op. cit. Tulsa World, December 24, 1949.

[15] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, August 3, 1949.

[16] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[17] Op. cit. McGee interview.

could locate a suitable building for them.[18]

After a few days in the Oil Capitol, Akers zeroed in on the Akdar Temple which was occupied only by a business college at the time. Its owner, Ralph Talbot, was an old friend of the new KRMG vice president and was a long time Tulsa civic leader and theater owner. The four first run theaters belonged to Talbot, the Orpheum, Majestic, Ritz and Rialto, as well as the Akdar which housed a theater seldom used before the building was remodeled as the Cimarron Ballroom.[19]

Talbot was in Paris at the time and Akers made the lease agreement via trans-Atlantic telephone. Talbot said he would provide Akers with a satisfactory lease on his return.

Kerr and McGee had made application for the station about a year earlier and there was a competitive hearing before the FCC. It narrowed down to a decision between Tulsa and Little Rock, and KRMG won.

"They had made application for a station a long time earlier and finally the FCC came through with a construction permit. Even then, they didn't act too quickly until they

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[18] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[19] Ibid.

had to build or give up their permit," said Akers. "That's when they called me in."[20]

The few remaining days of the construction permit caused quite a rush in getting the station on the air. It was build it, or have a good reason for the delay. Therefore, Akers couldn't wait for Talbot to return and secured his permission to "go ahead and take it, remodel, do anything you want,"[21] and work out the details later.

Construction went pretty smoothly but under a lot of pressure. Akers was a decision maker of the first order,[22] yet readily admitted he had no experience in broadcasting. He took it upon himself to hire a first rate staff of professional radio men.

Kerr and McGee already owned WEEK radio in Peoria, Illinois.

As KRMG manager, Akers hired Bob Jones in September, 1949, from their major competitor at Peoria, "to kill two birds with one stone. He ran a tight station there and was giving us a heck of a lot of trouble."[23]

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[20] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Op. cit. McGee interview.

[23] Op. cit. Akers interview.

"I brought our chief engineer [Alden F. Wooster] down from our Peoria station and put him in charge of the technical end, and Jones for the management end of it. He had been in the radio business all of his adult life."[24]

A consulting engineer from RCA was sent from Miami, Florida to Tulsa to supervise transmitter installation and the other technical problems were handled by Wooster and McIntosh and Inglis, a top consulting firm out of Washington, D.C.[25] Tom Seale, chief engineer of Kerr-McGee Oil Corporation, handled most of the design problems at the studio and transmitter shack.[26]

The days of the big studio stations were over and KRMG became one of the first powerful radio stations to be built specifically for a music and news operation, though a single studio was built and available for both recording and live broadcasts.[27]

Akers admitted his biggest problem was getting everyone to agree. He told Dean McGee everyone had good ideas, but

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[24] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[25] Op. cit. Tulsa World, November 28, 1949.

[26] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[27] Ibid.

contrasting opinions on a number of issues.

"Dean said just do it your way and if it's wrong, we'll tear it down and start over. Then he chuckled and said, I've drilled a lot of dry holes."[28]

The only major delay, pushing back the October 1, 1949 target sign-on date, was lack of air conditioning in the studio and more importantly at the transmitter.[29]

The air conditioning problem was not a big one, but a necessary one to solve at the transmitter. The RCA 50,000 watt transmitter, using low power consumption tubes, fully reduced total power consumption by 25 per cent, yet the air that cooled it was warm enough to keep the transmitter building well heated during "the worst winter storm." Warm weather, without air conditioning, would have spelled disaster.[30]

The cooling delay and using the conventional auto and horseback method of conducting field tests, a three month process, would have delayed sign-on until late January or early February of 1950.[31]

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[28] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[29] Op. cit. Tulsa World, October 12, 1949.

[30] Ibid. December 21, 1949.

[31] Ibid. November 28, 1949.

Kerr wouldn't stand for that and for the first time, helicopters were used to make the field measurements.[32]

The Commission required that measurements for the Class 1-B station be made in 22 directions, every 500 feet outward from the six antennas for the first five miles, then every one-half mile thereafter all the way to Canada and Mexico. Using two helicopters, two pilots and eight engineers, the process was trimmed to less than three weeks.[33]

"Our final engineering data arrived in Washington Saturday [December 17, 1949] and we will be ready to go on the air as soon as the Federal Communications Commission puts in final approval of this data," said Jones at the time. "By completing construction in four months, 15 days, we have broken all radio construction records."[34]

True enough, the transmitter was ready and all the equipment to get a signal to it was installed, but workers were still hammering in the next room the night of sign-on, two weeks later.[35]

"We're really rushing so that we can give Tulsa and Oklahoma a Christmas present," said Jones, who admitted working

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[32]Op. cit. Tulsa World, November 28, 1949.

[33]Ibid. [34]Ibid. December 21, 1949. [35]Ibid.

nearly 24 hours a day during December.[36]

"There is little doubt," said consulting engineer Andrew F. Inglis, "that the tuning of the station's day and night pattern in less than two weeks time, lowered by more than one-fourth all previous records made in the tuning of a six tower array."[37]

Thus, by using two rented helicopters from LaFayette, Louisiana, KRMG became a radio pioneer even before its first program penetrated the airways.

The only other engineering problem of any proportion during the pre-sign-on days, was getting the signal from the downtown studio to the transmitter, 18 miles away at Keystone.

Engineers suggested renting the top of the National Bank of Tulsa Building, the tallest structure in town, for a microwave transmitter, but Akers ruled that out as too expensive because it would have required a licensed engineer at the bank building.[38]

"The engineers told me they didn't think it [the signal] would get over the mountains between the station and

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[36] Op. cit. Tulsa World, December 21, 1949.

[37] Ibid. December 18, 1949.

[38] Op. cit. Akers interview.

Keystone.[39] Well, I wanted to find out for myself."[40]

> I had a man climb to the top of our tower out there [Keystone] and flash lights to see if we could see it, but we couldn't. But, I had one man on my side, the guy who sold us the microwave. He wanted to keep us happy, so we put one of the dishes[41] on top of the Akdar Building, and leaned it against the fly loft. We got a signal. It wasn't much, but we refined it and it worked. [42]

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[39]Microwave is a high frequency signal traveling in a straight line.

[40]Op. cit. Akers interview.

[41]Parabolic antennas for microwave are called dishes.

[42]Op. cit. Akers interview.

V. ON THE AIR

"This is it, KRMG is on the air,"[43] proclaimed Program Director Perry Ward at 7:40 P.M., Friday December 23, 1949, giving Oklahomans their first impression of a station which would make its presence known in and for the community and the state.

Tulsa now had its sixth AM radio station and had only recently been introduced to television by KOTV, Channel 6. Earlier stations include:

TABLE 2. Tulsa Stations by sign-on-year: (through 1949)

KVOO,	1925,	Formerly KFRU at Bristow, moved to Tulsa 1927,
KTUL,	1934,	
KOME,	1938	
KFMJ,	1946,	
KAKC,	1946,	
KWGS,	1947,	The University of Tulsa FM station, and
KOTV,	1949,	Television Channel 6.

[43] Op. cit. Ward interview.

KOME had been the outlet for both the American Broadcasting Company, and the Mutual Radio Network until August of 1949, when ABC Vice President Lee Jahnche announced that effective October 1, 1949, KRMG would be the new Tulsa affiliate. He said the network was "very pleased to welcome another 50,000 watt station to ABC."[44]

"KOME had both ABC and Mutual, KTUL was CBS and KVOO was NBC, and KRMG wanted a network and the only one they could get was ABC," said Ward. "ABC wanted a 50,000 watt station in this area so they took it away from KOME and gave it to KRMG. I imagine there was some behind the scenes maneuvering."[45]

KOME, only 250 watts at the time, retained its Mutual affiliation. It had applied for a power increase to 5,000 watts, but the FCC had not acted on the request.

"We went on the air at 7:40 and I made the opening remarks--This is it, KRMG is on the air--then turned the program over to Cal Tinney who was the emcee."[46]

Senator Kerr dedicated the station "To the domestic

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[44] Op. cit. Tulsa World, August 3, 1949.

[45] Op. cit. Ward interview.

[46] Ibid.

civic, social, economic and religious life of the people of this magnificent state," and read the station's creed: "Programs for the rank and file of our people; for those who live on the farm; for those who work in the factories and in the mills."[47]

Tinney, of Broken Arrow, was known as the "teller of tall tales." He introduced the Rev. J. W. Storer, Pastor of the First Baptist Church, who gave the innovation.

Then McGee was introduced; and Glenn Condon told about the station's news programming. Tom P. McDermott, chairman of the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce, welcomed the station to the Oil Capitol and "Disc Jockey" Joe Knight began an evening of transcribed music.[48]

Four hours and 20 minutes after sign-on, KRMG's first commercial was aired.

"The first commercial was a national one and we played it at midnight. It was for a movie and they framed the order," said the program director.[49]

Ken Greenwood said the first commercial was for the

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[47]Op. cit. Tulsa World, December 24, 1949.

[48]Ibid.

[49]Op. cit. Ward interview.

picture "High Noon" and was played at midnight Christmas Eve,[50] thus, KRMG aired no commercials on its first day of operation.

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[50] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

VI. OUR GANG

KRMG had an advantage from the beginning--its staff. "Brownie" Akers hired Bob Jones who built one of the most envied staffs in Oklahoma broadcasting.

Program Director Perry Ward started at KVOO in Tulsa in 1931 as an announcer, but left his home town to work at the Pasadena Playhouse in California during the depression years. He returned to Oklahoma to take a $40 per week announcing job at WKY in Oklahoma City.

Ward produced "Spin and Win" which NBC bought in 1940 and wanted him with it. He was off to New York. The show grew quite popular and was broadcast "live" from various Army camps around the country in the pre-war years 1940 and 1941.

> Our contract ended in California and I went to work for CBS and worked for them a couple of years. When Art Linkletter started "House Party," I succeeded him on an afternoon ladies show called "What's Doin' Ladies" on ABC; and did that until I came back to Oklahoma City in the latter part of 1947 to emcee and produce a CBS show out of there called "Oklahoma Roundup." It was a coast-to-coast show.[51]

"That ended about the time Gene Autry was on tour;

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[51] Op. cit. Ward interview.

and I had known Gene for years and he hired me to be his announcer on the Wrigley's show on Sunday.[52] Then Ward went to KRMG, hired directly by Kerr.[53]

Glenn Condon was not only a great newsman, he was one of the most enthusiastic promoters and supporters Oklahoma has ever had. He was KRMG's first news director.

Condon was born October 13, 1891, at Greenfield, Iowa, and moved to Oklahoma City a year later.[54]

He started his enviable news career as a messenger boy for Western Union in Oklahoma City, but had returned to Tulsa in 1907, the year of Oklahoma's statehood.[55]

In a 1964 interview, Condon recalled those days when his news interest was sparked by delivering telegrams to the Oklahoma Times-Journal and Daily Oklahoman with news of the San Francisco earthquake and the assassination of President McKinley. He prided himself as "first on the streets."[56]

Condon's first reporting job was in Tulsa, a city he loved as much as life itself. The Tulsa Democrat saw him through his cub years until 1909 when he was fired for

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[52]Op. cit. Ward interview. [53]Ibid.

[54]Johnny Admire, University of Oklahoma, Journalism 311, "Glenn Condon", April 13, 1964.

[55]Ibid., p. 3. [56]Ibid.

reporting on gambling payoffs and illegal liquor. The truth of his articles was never denied, but they were called exaggerated and another Tulsa paper editorially said Condon had betrayed Tulsa.[57]

Condon was hired in 1911 as a reporter for the Tulsa World, where he stayed until 1917, serving as sports editor, city editor and managing editor.[58]

He was a Marine Sergeant from 1917-1919.[59]

Condon was editor and publisher of Vaudeville News in New York until 1926 when he returned to Tulsa as manager of the Orpheum and Rialto theaters.

While in New York he hired Walter Winchell as a messenger boy. The youth dug out a few backstage stories for the trade magazine and Condon gave him a chance to write and paid him $25 per week. Firing Walter Winchell was one of his favorite stories. "Brownie" Akers related the story as he had personally heard it from Condon:

> Glenn hired Winchell as a runner to pick up news and he would make all the back stages and would pick up ads, too. He wrote some too, and was offered a job after a year or so by the New York Mirror to write a daily

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[57] Op. cit. Admire, p. 18.

[58] Ibid., p. 19.

[59] Ibid., p. 29.

column on show people. He told Glenn about it, but told him he decided not to take it, so Glenn fired him so he would have to take the job. And Winchell stayed there years and years.[60]

In 1927, Condon helped W. G. Skelly set up a public relations department and was its first director. Skelly purchased KFRU later that year and it was Condon that organized it and put it back on a paying basis.[61]

He helped start KOME in 1938.[62]

In 1942, he resigned to become news editor of KTUL, then accepted the Oklahoma and Kansas Radio War News chairmanship. He acted as a news clearing house for the 35 stations under his wing.[63]

The "C" in KAKC stands for Condon. Sam Avery, Bob Kellog and he put it on the air in 1946.[64]

The fourth station he helped found was KRMG.

"Glenn Condon was kind of a father confessor for all the broadcast people around here," said Ward. "When I first started at KVOO, Glenn was public relations director for Skelly, but he didn't really get into radio until he put KOME on the air."[65]

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[60] Op. cit. Akers interview. [61] Ibid., p. 35.

[62] Ibid., p. 36. [63] Ibid.

[64] Op. cit. Ward interview. [65] Ibid.

Condon was hired by Akers at Ward's suggestion. He was known as "Mr. News" and had a great following and Ward wanted them to follow him down the dial to 740.

"Brownie" Akers didn't think "Mr. News" was a good enough title. He thought "Mr. Oklahoma" was better and many people agreed. "He was a great character, brilliant, Mr. Oklahoma." Anyway, the name stuck with him the rest of his life.

At KRMG, he found a home. He found a station that was as vitally interested in the community as he was. He believed that nothing could stop Tulsa's future because Tulsa was and always had been led by imaginative people.[66]

Condon's ability as a newsman brought many honors to KRMG and to himself. He, for example, is the only Oklahoman to have served as president of both the Oklahoma Associated Press Broadcasters and the UPI Broadcasters of Oklahoma.

Frank S. Lane, born May 1, 1905 at Freesboro, Arkansas, got his start in radio at KRFU shortly after it went on the air in 1923. He was paid $50 per month, but got married and was given a raise to $150. When Skelly bought the station and moved it to Tulsa, Lane was hired at $200 per

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[66] Op. cit. Akers interview.

month.[67] Thus began a long career in broadcasting.

He joined the KRMG staff as commercial manager December 5, 1949, at a time when:

"Sales were tough for a new station and people didn't know the salesmen. It took a little while, but in a couple of months, Lane had things pretty well in line."[68]

He was a good business man and found it easy to sell a station he liked. He later became station manager, because of his business ability.

Joe Knight was the station's chief announcer. Ward hired him by telephone and said he came well recommended.

"Joe Knight was a graduate of OSU [then Oklahoma A & M College] and came to KRMG right out of college. He was a very clever and talented guy," said Ken Greenwood.[69]

Ward said Knight's mother would listen to her son every afternoon on KRMG, from her Amarillo, Texas, home.

Knight "was ahead of his time," Ward recalled. "He was doing some things then a lot of the boys are doing now.

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[67]Edward S. Dumit, University of Oklahoma, Journalism 311, Jan. 1, 1968; Frank S. Lane--for service to broadcasting, p. 10.

[68]Op. cit. Ward interview.

[69]Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

He'd find some commercial with a particular line, then say something that tied in and the answer would come from the commercial. He tied a lot of things together that way. When Jones went to Baltimore to manage a station, he took Joe Knight with him and he's still there.[70]

Glenn Dobbs, All-American Tulsa University football player who later became the school's athletic director, was named sports director.

Alden F. Wooster was chief engineer.

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[70] Op. cit. Ward interview.

VII. THE FIRST FOUR

Senator Kerr took a lot of interest in KRMG, his second radio station, during the rough formation years. In fact, he sold the first local time:

"He sold an hour on Sunday morning from eleven to twelve to the Immanuel Baptist Church, by advising them that he had selected them to be the church that would get prime time on this station."[72]

"Brownie" Akers said the senator questioned him at every opportunity on the station's operations during the early years.[73] While Dean McGee admitted "all I did was watch the financial statements. Akers and Jones ran it."[74]

"KVOO fought KRMG like crazy because KVOO was the only 50,000-watter in town and they didn't want another one,"[75] Perry Ward recalled. And that pressure from the established stations retarded the station's growth.

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[72] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[73] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[74] Op. cit. McGee interview.

[75] Op. cit. Ward interview.

"It took quite a long time to show a profit as I recall," Dean McGee said. "We were making money with it after the first two years, but it didn't start picking up much momentum until about the time or just before we sold it."[76]

There wasn't much of a music format in the early days, before rock and roll, but the station was programmed pretty much to the whims of each announcer. Some towards good music and others preferring more country sounds. The station tried to be everything to everyone.

Ward said KRMG had no remotes during the first 18 months of its operation, except for sports.

"Glenn Dobbs and I were going to do the Oklahoma A & M football games on KRMG and it was a week before they were to start and they had not been sold," said Ward. But Kerr was in town for a day and "he picked up the phone and got us a sponsor."[77]

Ward did color and Dobbs the play-by-play. During 1936 and 1937, Ward had a similar announcing task as color man for the Oklahoma University football broadcasts on WKY. Walter Cronkite did the play-by-play and was WKY news director.[78]

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[76] Op. cit. McGee interview.

[77] Op. cit. Ward interview. [78] Ibid.

Bob Jones fired Ward after 18 months and it was a big play story for both the Tulsa newspapers, but particularly the Tulsa Daily World. Ward said the reason for the "big play" was that Maud Lorton, widow of the World publisher Eugene Lorton, "couldn't stand that old man--Kerr."[79] Ward recalled the incident vividly:

> The manager [Jones] and I clashed from the first day because Kerr hired me and he did not. He had a man he wanted and was looking down my throat constantly.
>
> At the time I was let out by him, it was the time of the McArthur "Old Soldiers Never Die" speech. It was one of those things that we clashed over; I said we should let the newsmen analyze it as in the past and he said we should go back to the commercial schedule.
>
> I made the engineers stay on the net for the analysis and I scheduled it to run again that night for people who could not hear it during the day.
>
> Two days later, I was gone and the papers a day after that said Kerr fired me for running McArthur's speech twice in the same day. Kerr called and wanted to know what we were trying to do to him down here and it all came out then. I made a statement to the paper that the senator had nothing whatsoever to do with it . . . it was a disagreement with the manager.
>
> Later, when I talked with Kerr, he backed me on the whole thing because he thought it was newsworthy and the people should have heard it. It was one of the big speeches of all time.
>
> The papers played the thing up because they fought Kerr and said here's a way we can get back at him.[80]

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[79] Op. cit. Ward interview. [80] Ibid.

Ward was hired by KOTV television, Channel 6, in Tulsa and he remained there until 1956 when he opened his own advertising agency.

Nearly 14 months passed after KRMG went on the air, before the FCC approved a power increase at night. The station had been licensed for 50,000 watts/day and 10,000 watts/night, but was on the air with 50,000 watts/day and 25,000 watts/night from the beginning, on a temporary permit. Engineering studies showed that the increased power did not interfere with stations in Canada or Mexico or the Buffalo, New York, station on the same frequency.[81]

Akers resigned at the station's board of director's meeting April 7, 1952, and Jones, who purchased an interest in the company, replaced him as vice president and general manager. The public announcement was delayed until FCC action approving the transaction.[82]

Akers remained with All-Oklahoma Broadcasting Company, and at this time is a consultant for their station in Oklahoma

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[80] Op. cit. Ward interview.

[81] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, February 13, 1951.

[82] Ibid., May 6, 1952.

City--KOCO television, Channel 5, which is on contract for sale.

Jones bought the interest formerly held by T. W. Fentom, long time associate of Kerr, who died in February, 1951. Terms of the sale were not disclosed. The plan had been considered some months, but was delayed until Fentom's estate could be settled.[83]

Frank Lane, commercial manager, succeeded Jones as manager.

April 28, 1953 it was announced that Jones would leave KRMG to work on television applications for Oklahoma City, Tulsa and Peoria, Illinois, effective June 15. Lane was elevated to the vice presidency, again replacing Jones.[84]

The Tulsa television application had been in the works since July 14, 1952, naming six prominent civic leaders and businessmen and Oklahoma A & M college as shareholders, plus Kerr and McGee. They had applied for Channel 2, with studios to be located in the Akdar Building, a floor above KRMG.[85]

The announcement came just one month after the famous

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[83] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, May 6, 1952.

[84] Ibid., April 28, 1953.

[85] Ibid., July 14, 1952.

television freeze was lifted.

The FCC imposed a freeze on all television applications September 29, 1948, and no licenses were granted for nearly four years. The commission announced it wanted time to plan television channel allocations and limit assignments by geographic areas.[86]

The rule changes were announced April 14, 1952, that assignments were limited to 2,053 in the United States, which seemed excessive at a time when only 108 stations were on the air. With that announcement, it seemed obvious that the freeze would soon be over. It ended June 1, 1952.[87]

Tulsa's first television station, KOTV, had signed on during the freeze by virtue of a construction permit which was granted before the freeze went into effect. It gave them a virtual monopoly and exclusive use of all four television networks for three years. Now, KRMG had its chance to get into the television business:

"This expansion of ownership in KRMG completes long-range plans of Senator Robert S. Kerr and Dean McGee," said

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[86]Sydney W. Head, "Broadcasting in America," Riverside Press, Boston, 1956.

[87]Ibid.

Jones when the application was announced.[88]

"Ever since KRMG went on the air in 1949, it has been our aim to establish and maintain a close identity with Tulsa and northeastern Oklahoma. We feel that we have succeeded," Jones said. But, the addition of television "will enable us to do an even better job."[89]

New stockholders on the application were: Harry Clarke, clothier; Louis W. Grant, president of Home Federal Savings and Loan; P. C. Lauinger, publisher of the Oil and Gas Journal; Floyd E. Stanley, president of Midwestern Constructors, Inc.; Ralph Talbot, owner of the Akdar Building, and C. B. "Brownie" Akers, former KRMG vice president. Grant, Lauinger and Stanley were brought into the KRMG directorate.[90]

The next 18 months saw the greatest fight in the station's history. The young "whipper-snapper" and its backers had squared off with the established KVOO forces and W. G. Skelly's oil money in a fight for the Channel 2 construction permit.

The directors knew they had a good opportunity with KRMG. It was building a good audience and had shown a few

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[88] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, July 14, 1952.

[89] Ibid. [90] Ibid.

more dollars income than expenses. Selling the station was an idea none of them wanted to consider. They were building an empire and did not want to make any sacrifices of their present holdings.

Competition was tough and Washington hearings frequent. It was beginning to look as though either Kerr or Skelly would have the best chance and most competition fell by the wayside. Fred M. Jones, owner of KFMJ, held on the longest and protested loudest, but was finally eliminated when the giants joined forces and KRMG was sacrificed.

"The only reason we sold the station was when Skelly, who owned KVOO in Tulsa, and ourselves applied for a TV permit," said McGee. "We finally got together and filed jointly."[91]

The FCC would not allow a television station to be owned jointly by two radio interests in the same city, so one had to go. In the choice of KVOO or KRMG, the winner was obvious. KVOO was Tulsa's oldest and at that time, most profitable station, far dominate over KRMG.

McGee admitted having some regrets about the sale:

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[91]Op. cit. McGee interview.

> KVOO was the oldest and best known [station] in Tulsa. It nearly broke our hearts to sell just as things were going good. And, we were taking some risk selling it before the TV permit could be granted, but by combining with Mr. Skelly, we at least eliminated our biggest competition and our application jointly looked pretty good.[92]

Exactly four years after sign-on, December 24, 1953, Altus publisher Harrington Wimberly purchased KRMG for $305,000, with $31,500 cash and $25,000 per year until paid. The FCC approved the sale in November to the owner of the Altus Times-Democrat and he had 30 days to complete the transaction, after approval, by terms of his contract with All-Oklahoma Broadcasting Company.[93]

Kerr was well acquainted with Will Harrington Wimberly, who was in Washington during those years as a member of the Federal Power Commission.

"He had asked us about it and shown an interest before we decided to sell," said McGee, adding Wimberly was aware of the application they had made for Channel 2 in Tulsa. "We looked around quite a bit, but he made the best offer. We weren't under a lot of pressure to get rid of it. It takes a long time to get approval for a TV permit.[94]

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[93]Personal interview with Will Harrington Wimberly, former owner of KRMG, Duncan, Oklahoma, May 3, 1970.

[94]Op. cit. McGee interview.

Eighteen months after Kerr's death on New Year's Day, 1963, the Illinois radio and television stations were liquidated to pay the estate taxes.[95]

Wimberly was on the Federal Power Commission until June 22, 1952, and wanted to get back to Oklahoma. He had purchased the Times-Democrat January 1, 1928 and put KWHW on the air with his brother at Altus in 1946.[96] The call letters are his initials.

During Wimberly's seven years and nine months on the power commission, his brother Frank was general manager of both the Altus newspaper and radio station.

"I knew this station would be up for sale, they never did publicize it or anything," recalled Wimberly. "Kerr knew I wanted to come back to Oklahoma and talked with me about it before he made that television application with Mr. Skelly."[97]

"I knew that it offered an excellent opportunity and it did turn out to be a splendid venture on my part.[98]

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[95] Op. cit. McGee interview.

[96] Doug Adams, University of Oklahoma, Journalism 311, "Harrington Wimberly", April 12, 1964.

[97] Op. cit. Wimberly interview.

[98] Ibid.

VIII. THE WIMBERLY YEARS

Harrington Wimberly had planned to return to Oklahoma after his purchase of KRMG, but became involved in other Washington projects which prevented relocation. In his absence, he said, the wisest move he ever made was to put Frank Lane in full control of the station on a salary plus bonus basis:

> I don't think the station had ever shown a profit, but I sensed putting Frank Lane, the manager, in charge with full authority, could make it go.
>
> I turned him loose on a salary and bonus deal on earnings. And, I gave him a large amount of the credit on developing the business. Of course, I gave him all the help I could and I was in and out of Tulsa.[99]

When Wimberly's Western Broadcasting Company took over, there were no staff changes, and few during the next four years, partly because "Frank Lane was such an easy guy to get along with," said Wimberly.[100]

"We did not initiate any program changes," Wimberly recalled, "unless it would have been that we did not fall for the rock-and-roll stuff that was coming in. The programing

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[99] Op. cit. Wimberly interview. [100] Ibid.

was maintained on a very high level." But, so was the programing of their biggest competitor.

"You'd have to put K-V-double-O as our biggest competition, one of the first and finest stations in Oklahoma," he said. "Later KAKC went all rock-and-roll and that was pretty stiff competition, too. But Frank dug in and bore down on accounts, so we didn't slip too much."[101]

His plaudits for Lane were almost endless:

"Frank Lane was one of the best pioneer radio men in Oklahoma, a fine man," Wimberly said. "I think that might have been the turning point, when I put it up to Frank."[102]

> As a newspaper publisher, news would have to be one of my interests and, of course, we had Glenn Condon as news director. We didn't need a large news staff with Glenn Condon. There were about six news programs a day from sign-on to sign-off, plus the ABC net.[103]

That ABC affiliation didn't last through the Wimberly years, however. Lane notified ABC October 14, 1955 that effective April 14, 1956, KRMG would terminate its network affiliation, thus becoming the first 50,000 watt independent radio station in the United States, and of course, the most powerful independent in terms of wattage. Condon and his

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[101] Op. cit. Wimberly interview.

[102] Ibid. [103] Ibid.

staff wanted to make it the most powerful in terms of influence, too.[104]

Lane said the sole reason KRMG went independent was "to give our listeners more complete local coverage of news and sports and more programing of all types geared to the area we serve."[105] He said to accomplish the station's goals, it would require six months of hard work, and that is when ABC would be dropped.

Their work paid off.

As an example of the hustle in the KRMG news department, the Associated Press presented KRMG with a national news award February 10, 1957 "for supplying more news stories during the year than any of the other 1,600 AP members." John Aspinwall, the AP national radio news editor presented the award to Condon and Lane personally at Tulsa.[106]

Violent weather is not entirely foreign to Oklahomans, and a good test of the worth of a radio station is during a period of crisis. In the spring of 1957, the Arkansas River pushed 12 to 14 feet out of its banks, flooding homes in Tulsa

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[104] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, October 14, 1955.

[105] Ibid.

[106] Op. cit. Tulsa World, February 11, 1957.

and all along the river to Port Smith, Arkansas.

Newsman Larry Strain went 72 hours without sleep, broadcasting from "Airmobile Unit Number 1," a helicopter which covered the flooded lands all the way to the Arkansas border and advised residents of evacuation problems and congested areas.[107]

From Friday, May 17, through Tuesday, May 21, 1967, the station aired 153 local news broadcasts and carried 10 hours and two minutes of weather forcasts, warnings and flood reports.[108]

The station was community minded, too. Under Wimberly's reign it got the idea of going out and doing things, with plenty of remotes and man-on-the-street interviews. The station promoted civic projects and charities like the Salvation Army Christmas collections and "Toys for Tots", sponsored by local firemen. Wimberly said the station was involved in everything it could be and it showed growth each year during the time he owned it, until it was sold at a good profit,[109] August 26, 1957, with effective transfer date December 1, 1957.[110]

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[107] Op. cit. Dumit, p. 16. [108] Ibid.

[109] Op. cit. Wimberly interview.

[110] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, October 14, 1955.

Lane and his good music programing, Condon's news, a fine staff and a lot of drive increased the worth of the station from $305,000 to $500,000 in the four Wimberly years.

> Meredith seemed to want to buy it. A Meredith lawyer in Washington and I had talked over a period of six to eight months and there were no brokers involved. They were not giving the hard buy and I was sitting back and concluded that they wanted the station and when the time came, they would say so.[111]

Wimberly talked with no one but Meredith Publishing Company, of Des Moines, Iowa, about the sale. They made a good offer, he was satisfied with a nice profit and was interested in the purchase of the Duncan Banner, though it was four years before he made that purchase.

> I closed the deal on the Banner in 1962, so it was a few years later. I had talked with B. L. Abernathy, the owner, who died in 1959. He had been quite inactive over a period of a few years and had a heart attack and a reoccurrence. I talked with him very cautiously and let him know I was interested. After his death, it was at least six months before I talked with his widow. I did not push the deal, but waited until she was ready to sell.[112]

Harrington Wimberly moved to Duncan, his residence today, and Frank continued to manage the Altus newspaper and KWHW, which was sold in the fall of 1969.

There was a smooth transition from Wimberly to Meredith and KRMG retained its complete staff and Lane as manager.

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[111] Op. cit. Wimberly interview. [112] Ibid.

IX. THE MEREDITH YEARS

The purchase of KRMG by Meredith Publishing Company, under the name of Meredith-KRMG, was far from disaster, but it didn't make a nickle for them. It lost money nearly five straight years.[113]

The Des Moines, Iowa, firm published Better Homes and Gardens and Successful Farming magazines. It held radio and television licenses in Syracuse, Kansas City, Omaha and Phoenix before adding KRMG, a station they sold four and one-half years later at the same $500,000 they paid, and lost money all along the way.

There were two basic reasons for KRMG's poor performance, dictatorial group management policies and mish-mash programming.

Meredith inherited a good music station which was doing well at a time of a shift in programming toward rock. The good music policies were exaggerated to the saccharine sound of Mantovani, Percy Faith and Paul Weston. That was at night.

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[113] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

In the morning, from 6:00 to 7:00 A.M., then again from noon until 1:00 P.M., KRMG resounded with the pure country sould of Marvin McCullough. He brought in the best ratings, so Meredith added country throughout the day, but keeping the solid country blocks for Marvin.[114]

KAKC rose to number one in the market aboard the rock-and-roll music wagon, and Meredith, with eyes always open to a good thing, programmed some "chicken rock" in an effort to share the audience. "Chicken rock" is pretty much the same tune, with a more subtle beat and a more conventional group or singer.

Meredith let the night slip into some kind of a big band sound and KRMG sounded like chaos. But, the worst was yet to come.

Meredith was involved in a big play and got CBS affiliations in Kansas City, Phoenix and Omaha," said Greenwood, "Which ultimately, I suppose to sweeten the package, led them to take the CBS affiliation here in Tulsa."[115]

KTUL had dropped CBS and Meredith was quick to add Tulsa to the deal. The announcement came December 22, 1958,

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[114] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[115] Ibid.

and the network contract was effective January 5, 1959.[116]

"We have been happy with our independent status," said manager Frank Lane, "but we have found that our new format has its strengths and weaknesses. CBS will fill in those weaknesses."[117]

So, KRMG added two hours of Arthur Godfrey, Howard Miller and Art Linkletter's "House Party" to its morning schedule. The afternoons rang with the time-tested "soap operas" and Pat Buttram for two hours and the night spots were taken by Lowell Thomas and Edward R. Murrow for 75 minutes. The airways were filled with CBS news.[118]

The local news was still as good or better than anything else in the market with Glenn Condon at the controls, but because of failing health, not as firmly as he had been two years previously.

KRMG had fallen to third in the nation in the Associated Press news awards, still a quite enviable position. The AP presented its 1957 award April 20, 1958, at the Oklahoma AP Broadcasters spring meeting at Western Hills State Lodge, on Lake Fort Gibson, near Wagoner.[119]

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[116] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, December 22, 1958.

[117] Ibid. [118] Ibid.

[119] Op. cit. Tulsa World, April 21, 1958.

"Dock" Hull was on the station at night, before he went to KVOO where he made his reputation as the old "Sleep Walker," said Ken Greenwood. And KRMG added the commercial religion shows like Garner Ted Armstrong's "The World Tomorrow."

Programming under Meredith was nearly non-existant. It was another case of trying to please everybody, something which probably will never be achieved. And, what happened to KRMG, the community interest station?

"It didn't have any image in the community," said Greenwood. "People weren't for it or against it, they just wished it would do something."[120]

It might be pointed out, in fairness to Meredith, that having no image in a community is far better than having a bad image, something that KRMG has never had. KRMG did have a few notable accomplishments during Meredith's ownership. It used a mobile studio with a radio link to the main studios for remote broadcasts and it caused quite a stir with its "Mobile Money Time."

The contest idea was not original, but something Lane had picked up at a National Association of Broadcasters

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[120] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

meeting. The KRMG mobile unit would follow a car on some Tulsa street, then broadcast its license number live on the air. If the driver was listening, he stopped and collected a silver dollar. He also got a chance to answer a question for a bigger prize.[121]

Bob Parkhurst began a show called "Day Dreams" from 9:00 until 10:00 A.M. during 1960. It was one of the few shows that continued when Meredith sold to SWANCO, KRMG's present owner. The show lasted until 1962.

Lynn Higbee innovated "Saturday Seminar," from 8:00 until 11:00 A.M. on Saturday morning, a sparce time on most station's ratings. The show, at one time, was quite popular. Higbee talked with the other announcers and newsmen when Milt Haynes or Jim Hartz would wander in. Larry Strain would read a news item, and everyone would put in his two-cents worth.[122]

To say that KRMG was first in Tulsa to program stereophonic music would be a half-truth. The station set up its remote equipment in the television studios of KOTV, Channel 6, and carried the live music of Marvin Law Will's "Townhouse Trio" at 4:00 P.M. for an hour on a Sunday afternoon in 1959.

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[121] Op. cit. Dumit, p. 19. [122] Ibid.

KOTV carried the other half of the sound and the picture. Microphones were placed far enough apart that when a listener would place his radio, tuned to KRMG, about 10 feet from his television set on Channel 6, he could have stereo music in his living room.[123]

The FCC approved a name change from Meredith-KRMG to Meredith Broadcasting Company, April 4, 1961, just seven months before its sale to SWANCO, the frozen food company of Omaha headed by Gilbert Swanson.[124]

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[123] Op. cit. Dumit, p. 19.

[124] Op. cit. Tulsa World, November 8, 1961.

X. SWANCO TO THE RESCUE

SWANCO contracted for KRMG November 8, 1961, and took control February 15th. The devastation of the next two days made KRMG look like an atom bomb cleared the studio:

Frank Lane quit. He was replaced by Johnny Merrill as manager.

Program Director Keith Bretz lost his air control and was made a sales manager. He was replaced by Jay Harmon.

"Hillbilly" programming was immediately canned and with it, Marvin McCullough. And, commercial religion was also taken off the air.

Tulsa Oiler baseball voice Mack Creager went to KVOO.

Announcers Lynn Higbee and Bob Brown left, as did salesman Carl Larson, and sales woman Helen Lewis and continuity writer Martha Stewart.

Glenn Condon's news department, which had helped hold KRMG together during the Meredith years, was untouched. Condon remained news director and newsmen Larry Strain, Dick Evans and Jim Hartz stayed. Condon was also given the title of special events director.

The biggest axe fell on CBS. SWANCO Vice President Ken Greenwood told how:

> We tried to live out the CBS contract that we inherited from Meredith, which is about what we did. It finally got down to the place where we were carrying so little programming from CBS, just barely what our contract said we had to carry, and they finally said, well, forget it if that's what you think about CBS. That was about 14 or 15 months after our company bought KRMG.[125]
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> Our original concept with the station was to use the CBS network and to fit some talk programs around it. We had some telephone talk shows and hired Dock Hull, who was a former radio personality here in Tulsa, and he did a morning show and he did an hour-long talk show from 9:00 until 10:00 A.M. which then fed into Arthur Godfrey.
>
> Our local manager in those days thought that some country-western programming would fit real swell on the station. So, he hired a country-western fellow to be on early in the morning where Marvin McCullough had originally been and also do some noon-time programming.
>
> We had another talk show in the afternoon and one in the evening to fit around CBS.
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> CBS was going through the revolution then of gradually phasing out of daytime programming with the exception of Arthur Godfrey; so, for a while, we had a mixture of country music, talk, CBS news and some popular music.[126]

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[125] Op. cit. Tulsa World, February 17, 1962.

[126] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

Ken Greenwood was named manager of KRMG June 25, 1963[127] and was made president of SWANCO in December, 1966.



Another service that was axed by SWANCO was the Associated Press; it was done, however, much more reluctantly than the others.

> We discontinued the AP when we picked up UPI audio, because in those days you didn't know what was coming down the audio wire unless you had the regular news wire to "billboard" for you. So, we dropped AP. We had been talking to AP for almost two years, asking them when they were going to put an audio service in, and they kept dilly-dallying around and never got around to it. So, we just dropped AP in a lot of our markets as some contracts expired. It just so happened that we went to UPI at about the time we dropped CBS.[128]

SWANCO wanted KRMG to get involved in the community, to do more than just sit back and watch and report the news.

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[127] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, June 25, 1963.

[128] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

So, it became one of the first stations in the United States to endorse a political candidate. Some local office seekers won KRMG's approval and Page Belcher received the station's nod in his re-election bid for U. S. Congress. He won. Henry Bellmon won support when he ran and was elected to the governor's office and then later, he was elected as a Republican to the U. S. Senate against veteran Democrat A. S. "Mike" Monroney.[129]

And the station got involved editorially, becoming the first station in the state to editorialize. Greenwood told how:

> Initially Glenn [Condon] wrote all the editorials. Glenn wrote and delivered the editorials until he got to a place where he couldn't do that sort of thing, and then he wrote them and I delivered them. And, when he couldn't write anymore I took on the job of both writing and delivering them.[130]

KRMG broke the racial barrier in broadcasting, becoming the first station in the state to hire a black newsman. Don Ross, who does a lot of free lance work, was sent to Kansas City in May of 1968, when the city was under pressure from racial unrest. Veteran newsman David Stanford was also on the scene for KRMG, and the two of them reported their findings to KRMG and Tulsa Mayor James Hewgley after returning from

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[129] Op. cit. Greenwood interview. [130] Ibid.

the five-day trip. The disturbance was during the time of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King.

The report blamed the indiscretion of the Kansas City police, the lack of sensitivity of the school board and "Black Hoodlumism" as responsible immediately for the confrontation.[131]

As underlying causes, some frustrations similar to those in other cities, allegations of police brutality, poor quality housing for blacks and low quality education for Negroes.[132] But KRMG carried this one step farther.

KRMG studied the causes of the Kansas City disorder then informed Tulsa about it so "our citizens would be more inclined to involve themselves in steps to eliminate underlying causes of riot in Tulsa; and being aware of immediate causes of the flare-up, guard against the presence of those factors in Tulsa."[133]

"We've been the first station in this area that has arranged what we call 'phone forums' where we let people come in; and the people that come in are the authorities, and listeners call in and ask questions to both sides,"[134] said Greenwood.

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[131]"KRMG Kansas City Report", 1968. [132]Ibid.

[133]Ibid. [134]Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

KRMG has received quite a lot of commendation for the "phone forums" and they have been on a number of vital issues, such as: the right to work, port bonds, drugs, open housing and the Kansas City problem.

Panelists on the KRMG "phone forum" Saturday May 18, 1968, were The Honorable James M. Hewgley, Jr., Mayor of Tulsa; The Honorable Curtis Lawson, State Representative, District 73; Dr. Girard T. Bryany, Metropolitan Junior College, Kansas City, Missouri; Tulsa Police Chief Jack Purdie; Mr. C. L. Robinson, a citizen; KRMG Newsman David Stanford and Moderator Vic Bastien, KRMG news director.[135]

Greenwood said it is a chain policy to"let people sound off," because there are many sides to an issue.[136]

KRMG's community involvement wasn't a selfish motivation to bring them up from the zero ratings, shortly after the SWANCO take-over, to their present position of leadership, but it helped.

> KVOO was a very dominant station in the community at that time. They had NBC and a very fine reputation. They were regarded as the pillar of radio.
>
> Not that KRMG had a bad reputation, but when I first came to town, people used to say I'm glad to

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[135] Op. cit. "Kansas City Report."

[136] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

> see somebody finally is going to do something with KRMG. So, we had a lot of people rooting for us. They just seemed to think here was a station that had great coverage and a great potential for the Tulsa market. Because, if you can get people to listen to you throughout the state, obviously you're going to help pull business into the community, so they were rootin' for KRMG to do that.[137]

Meredith had only two personalities on his staff, Glenn Condon and Marvin McCullough; and Marvin was out the door the first week SWANCO took control.

Greenwood said SWANCO felt Tulsa would buy personality. "They had in the past and we felt if we put good personality in the market, they would buy it," he said. "The justification for this theory has been proven, because today we have the top radio personalities in the market."[138]

"I think more people could name the guys on our staff than they could any other station in the market," Greenwood continued. Chuck "Adams is very strong in the morning and Johnny Martin very strong at night. Fred Campbell has a good following now. These guys spend a lot of time in the community working on various projects and doing a lot of things which make quite a contribution."[139]

Community contribution is another SWANCO chain policy

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[137] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[138] Ibid. [139] Ibid.

sworn to by all four radio stations: KQEO, Albuquerque, and KLEO, Wichita, both contemporary sounds; and KBAT, San Antonio, like KRMG, a 50,000 watt middle of the road station with what Greenwood calls an "Independent better music format."[140]

SWANCO also owns two FM radio stations, one in New Orleans and KRMG-FM, Tulsa.

"We'll continue to grow if we can find good properties," said Greenwood. "We're not a big company and we're not a stock company. If we go in, we have to play with our own money, and that makes a big difference."[141]

KIHI FM was purchased June 15, 1964, by SWANCO, with take over in September.

"The adoption of FM to our KRMG-AM operation will enable us to widen the scope of our programming," said Greenwood in a Tulsa Tribune story at the time. "We have what we believe to be interesting plans for the FM operation, both in the field of music and public affairs."[142]

The call letters were changed to KRMG-FM.

The FCC approved assignment of KRMG from SWANCO to Texas Star Broadcasting Company, Inc., of San Antonio, Texas,

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[140] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[141] Ibid. [142] Ibid.

November 11, 1967.[143]

SWANCO is no longer connected with Swanson Foods, which was sold several years ago to Campbell Foods Company; but it is the Swanson sons who have the radio business-Gery Swanson, who lives in Tulsa, and Clarke Swanson of Fort Meyers, Florida.[144] Clarke runs a cable television operation owned by both brothers and Greenwood.[145]

Texas Star Broadcasters is a corporate name that SWANCO inherited when they purchased KBAT, and it is owned 100 per cent by SWANCO. Greenwood said there was once a SWANCO of Oklahoma, a SWANCO of Kansas and a SWANCO of New Mexico, which are now merged under the name Texas Star. They will be eventually merged under the name SWANCO.[146]

Chuck Adams, who had worked for KRMG three years as the early man, was named program director September 20, 1967, replacing Dick Jones. Sales Manager Ron Blue became general manager. Several other staff changes were announced:

Lew Jones was brought to Tulsa from Albuquerque to pull the 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. shift; and Dick Jones left

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[143] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, June 15, 1964.

[144] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[145] Ibid. [146] Ibid.

that time slot, transferring to the SWANCO outlet in San Antonio KBAT.

Jones was followed by Fred Campbell from 2:00 to 6:00 P.M., then came Don Cummings from 6:00 to 8:00 P.M. and Johnny Martin until 1:00 A.M. Adams retained the morning slot.

The program "Quiet Zone" bit the dust at the same time. It had been two straight hours of music only.[147]

The Martin show was simulcast on the FM station.

Sunday, December 31, 1968, KRMG began a popular program "The Word--and Music" at 7:00 A.M., a time when few stations can claim a great audience. Somewhere in Ohio a minister had devised a way to present controversial moral questions to an audience and spark their imagination. The non-denominational program covers in music and script such subjects as money and marriage, accidental nuclear war, parenthood, the aged, working mothers, the church in the next century, mental illness, adult dishonesty and leisure time.

It met with great success, even at that hour.

Adams said the show fits into the KRMG weekend programming and has a special appeal to the young people.[148]

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[147] Op. cit. Tulsa World, September 20, 1967.

[148] Ibid. February 10, 1968.

KRMG dubbed itself "The Friendly Giant," and became promotion happy. Things began to happen.

KRMG sponsored a Herb Alpert concert in the Tulsa Assembly Center; 10,000 people showed up to see the appearance of the "Great Pumpkin," to win prizes on a scavenger hunt and generally have a good time; "Operation Amigo" brought in 30,000 cans of food, weighing seven tons, which was flown to the victims of Hurricane Beulah of south Texas, and attracted over 9,000 persons to a Henry Mancini-Andy Williams concert at the Tulsa Assembly Center. That was the largest crowd ever to attend an Assembly Center event, despite "nippy weather."[149]

And, they don't call it "Award-winning KRMG" for nothing.

KRMG has won more awards in the last five years than any other Oklahoma radio station, and more than all Tulsa radio stations combined. UPI news awards are almost "matter of fact" at annual presentations. They earn them for coverage and special results like the "Kansas City Report" or "The Tulsa Drug Scene."

KRMG is the only Tulsa station with a full-time news correspondent in Washington, D. C., Malvinia Stephenson. She

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[149]Various KRMG promotion flyers.

was first to break the news that Secretary of Defense McNamara would resign, and first on the resignation of Chief Justice Earl Warren.

The editorials on KRMG collect awards, too. The Oklahoma Association of Secondary Schools presented its "Marshall Gregory Award" to KRMG for 28 broadcast editorials promoting greater understanding between schools and the general public.

Radio stations seldom win awards in competition with newspapers and television stations, but KRMG does. For example, last year KRMG won the Oklahoma Wildlife Federation trophy--"The Conservation Communications Award of the Year."[150]

> We say award winning, and people say, well what have you done? We won the conservation award from the Wildlife Federation for the editorials we did on conservation, and not just the editorials, but a lot of other activities. We've given a lot of support, financial and editorial-wise to the Scenic Rivers Bill which has just been passed.
>
> We've been harping on bad law enforcement around our lakes and it looks like finally something will be done on that. We sent a newsman out into the field and [Ed] Brocksmith spent a whole week talking and taping the stories people told him. He talked to sheriffs and talked to the highway patrolmen and all of these people, and we put the tape all together and we gave it to the senate and the house and the governor. We gave them a report on tape of people actually telling of some of the conditions around our lakes. That still hasn't reached any culmination, but I think it will.

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[150]Various KRMG promotion flyers.

We've been honored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and to the best of my knowledge, one of the few stations in the country so honored. It was for our stands on open housing and some work we have done inside to give the black community some voice in this city, and that's one of the reasons I think Tulsa is a peaceful town today, by comparison. It's not all peaceful, but at least it hasn't gone up in flames.

We've played call shot. Not to be wise or smart or know-it-all, that's not the point, but just to get things out in the open because we believe that people will talk about things and if you can dispell the rumors, you can do an awful lot, and if you can keep people talking to each other, you can do an awful lot to create an area of good understanding. This is what we've tried to do.[151]

KRMG has been quick to spot issues before they become problems. For example, it noticed there was only a slight minority representation in Tulsa's labor unions. They were not letting in either blacks or Indians, and KRMG took the editorial opinion that a union man should not be upset when people do something to him, if he turns right around and does it to someone else, Greenwood said.

Well, they didn't like that very well. But, we said it, then some other people hitched their britches up and they said it. The result is that today there's minority representation in every union in the Tulsa crafts. It's still not as much as it could be or should be, but we're making progress.[152]

The FM station does not use the editorials, but

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[151] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[152] Ibid.

approaches the issues from both viewpoints, citing both sides. It says this is a pertinent issue and if you, the listener, want to say something about it, it's time to write or call--then they direct the listener to the right person. The editorials are run on weekends.

XI. A PHYSICAL OF KRMG

KRMG is a maximum power amplitude modulated commercial broadcast radio station, Class 1-B, operating on 740 kcs. Its power output is 50,000 watts/daytime and 25,000 watts/night, from a transmitter located five miles southeast of Keystone, Oklahoma, on a 100-acre tract of land.[153]

Its original license provided for 10,000 watts power at night, but the FCC granted a temporary permit for the increased power from the station's inception.[154]

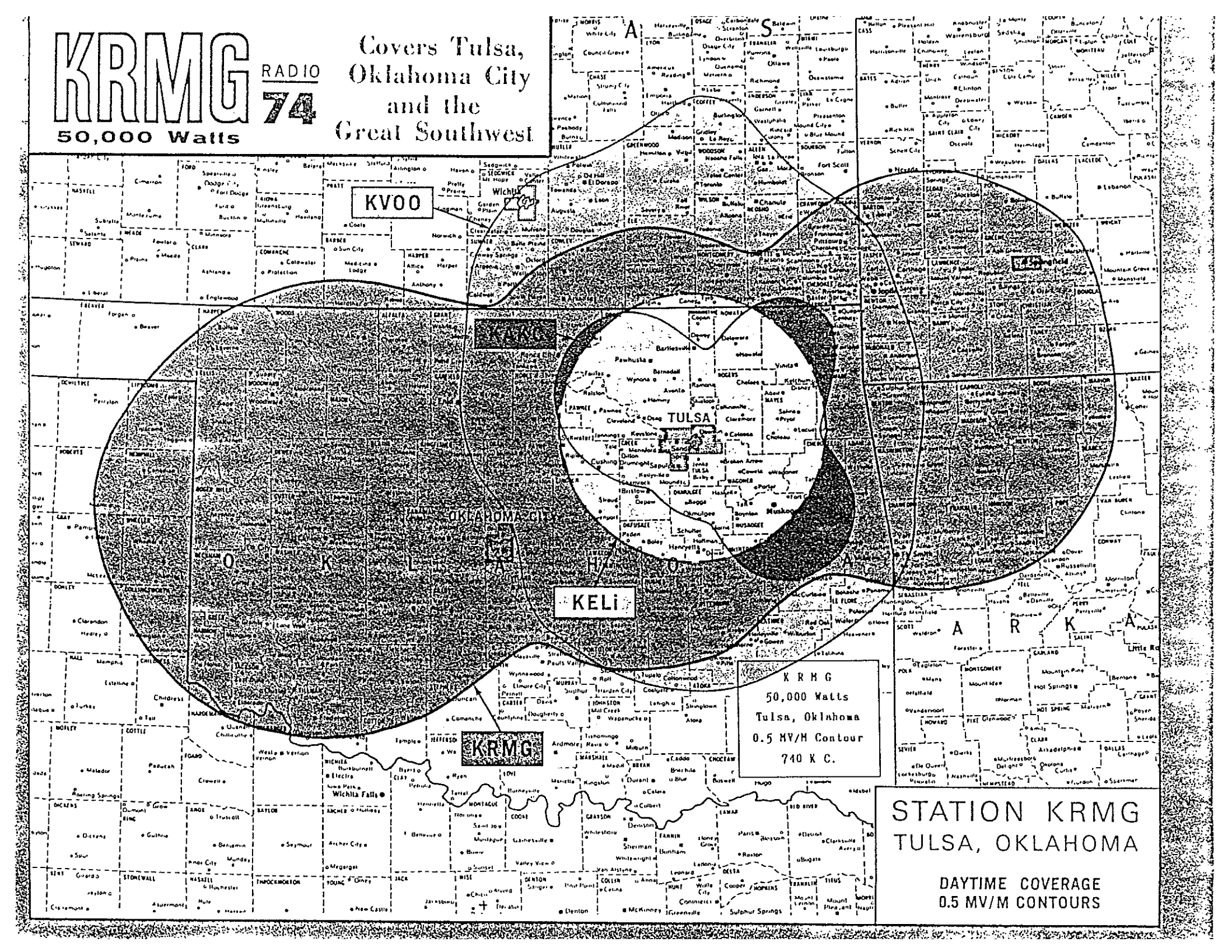
KRMG and KRMG-FM studios are located on the 23rd floor of the Liberty Towers Building, 1502 South Boulder Avenue, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74119. The 6,100 watt frequency modulated transmitter is also at that location, with its 295-foot antenna on top of the building. It operates on a frequency of 95.5 mcs. Also on the roof is a parabolic dish to microwave programming to the AM transmitter.

The Radio Corporation of America (RCA) transmitter, the first ever built with low power consumption tubes, was

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[153] Op. cit. Tulsa World, October 12, 1949.

[154] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, February 13, 1951.


KRMG
RADIO
74
50,000 Watts
Covers Tulsa, Oklahoma City and the Great Southwest
KVOO
KAKC
KELI
KRMG
TULSA
OKLAHOMA CITY
Wichita Falls
Muskogee
Springfield
K R M G
50,000 Watts
Tulsa, Oklahoma
0.5 MV/M Contour
740 K C.
STATION KRMG
TULSA, OKLAHOMA
DAYTIME COVERAGE
0.5 MV/M CONTOURS

built in Miami, Florida, in an 11 month period beginning in September of 1948.[155] An RCA field engineer supervised its installation which was completed within a month.

The original transmitter, now over 20 years old, remains in 24 hour operation daily.

"The transmitter is air conditioned and equipped for emergency broadcasting," said Ken R. Greenwood, President of Swanco Broadcasting which purchased the station February 16, 1961.[156]

Its array of six antennas, each reaching skyward 270 feet from a base of 1,000 foot msl.,[157] are necessary to protect stations in Canada, Mexico and New York. The multiple towers each are phased with a percentage of the total signal to provide directional radiation.

The transmitter is located 18 miles west of Tulsa, allowing two primary lobes over both Oklahoma City and Tulsa.[158]

"The pattern runs on a line from Springfield, Missouri, to out past Amarillo, [Texas] on the backbone--U.S. 66--right

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[155] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, August 2, 1949.

[156] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[157] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, October 12, 1949.

[158] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

down the middle. At night it pulls into a bow tie to protect Canada and Mexico."[159]

More than 25 miles of control cable is in use at the transmitter location and its hugh grounding system uses 80 miles of copper wire in a wagon wheel pattern around each of the towers.[160]

Original studios were on the ground floor of the three-story Akdar Temple[161] at 4th and Denver Streets in downtown Tulsa. Construction began August 3, 1949, and was nearly complete by the sign-on, 20 weeks later.[162]

The building had been constructed in 1925 at a cost of $750,000[163] and was occupied only by a business college at the time a lease was secured by C. B. Akers.[164] Prior to obtaining the studios for KRMG, the building's second floor had been used for experimental television[165] and the station's lease provided

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[159] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[160] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, October 12, 1949.

[161] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[162] Op. cit. Tulsa World, December 24, 1949.

[163] Ibid. June 4, 1925.

[164] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[165] Op. cit. Ward interview.

an option on that floor, which it never needed.[166]

Swanco purchased KIHI-FM June 15, 1964,[167] and changed its call letters to KRMG-FM.

The original studios were kept until "one awfully hot August,"[168] of 1966, said Greenwood, who became president of the parent company four months after the move.

"Everybody was moving out of the old Akdar Building and we were having a lot of trouble with vandalism and theft because there was no other tenant in the building," he said. "Most tenants had moved out because of the vandalism."

"The Liberty Towers planners came to us and asked if we'd like to move in here," said Greenwood. "We were already thinking about moving a little bit, so we got to remodel our studios before there were any partitions put in or anything. We put together a very compact and very modern radio station. Later, we moved the FM in here and later we moved the whole management company to Tulsa."[169]

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[166] Op. cit. Akers interview.

[167] Op. cit. Tulsa Tribune, June 16, 1964.

[168] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[169] Ibid.

XII. TODAY

Some battles are never won. Twenty years ago, when KRMG went on the air, some of its roughest battles were with W. G. Skelly and KVOO and those battles continue, though KRMG is fighting from a much improved position--the top of the pile.

"I think our primary competitor is KVOO," said Ken Greenwood recently. "They're a 50,000 watt station and their programs on Tuesday are a lot like ours are on Monday. I'd guess they are our primary competition, but obviously KAKC gives us a lot of competition, too."[170]

He said KAKC's ratings in the summer reverse themselves from the winter. The change directly corresponds to the school term and KAKC collects the greatest audience in the summer months when it has a 35 per cent or 38 per cent share of audience.

An advertiser purchasing KRMG and KAKC would have about 65 per cent of the audience; while KELI, which claims to be a cross between the adult programming of KRMG and the rock and popular sound of KAKC, shows up with a 10 per cent share

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[170] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

in the morning, a nine at mid-day and an eight at night. But, KRMG does not sell ratings.

"From a sales philosophy standpoint, we won't sell by ratings," said Greenwood. "Our salesmen do not use ratings. Once and a while someone will ask to look at the ratings and if they ask for them, we show the ratings. But, unless they ask, we don't show them."[171]

When asked how KRMG sells itself, Greenwood replied: "We use a lot of success. Often times our advertisers will tell other advertisers. The last Hooper, we had a 36 per cent share in the morning and 32 per cent in the middle of the day. By afternoon, we were down to 20."

The 36 per cent morning "drive-time" share of audience figure means that KRMG, which shares the market with 10 other rated stations, has the best rating during a time when there are more people listening. The sets-in-use figure for the morning was 22 per cent, or slightly more than one of every five radios in Tulsa was playing during that time period.

"I think FM has a finger in this thing," said Greenwood about the relatively high sets-in-use figure. "I think some people are listening who had been watching TV in the morning.

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[171] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

They are starting to listen to AM radio or FM radio, which made the sets-in-use figure go up."[172]

The KRMG coverage pounds Oklahoma City harder than some places north of Tulsa, but KRMG does not sell in that market.

"We've got all we can say grace over here in town," said Greenwood. "We call on agencies in Oklahoma City and show up on ratings over there, but we don't sell there. We don't claim a big audience over there. I think the last ARB showed us with 3,500."[173]

"I think we're fifth, but don't sell that fact unless we are trying to sell Tulsa. We sell primarily Tulsa, with some area coverage. But," said Greenwood, "we don't happen to think that KRMG is going to be a real strong station in the area on its day-to-day programming, because too many of the stations in the small towns duplicate the news and the information and the special features we have on, but the music is duplicated in the small markets, whereas the contemporary or the country is not."[174]

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[172] Op. cit. Greenwood interview.

[173] Ibid. [174] Ibid.

"We don't play any music that isn't recognizable, very recognizable," Greenwood said. "I tell the guys that we're the Lawrence Welk of the radio business. We don't offend anybody."[175]

> I doubt that a real jazz buff, oh, he might listen to [Johnny] Martin some evenings when Martin gets off on Kenton or Ellington or some of those things, but, if you really analyze the music, it's pretty square. It's done tastefully and we stay away from wild arrangements and anything that would offend people.
>
> Consequently, the music becomes very bland, and if there were no other programming on this radio station, then the music would be very bland. But, we want it bland, because what we put in and on top and around that music is what's important. That is where we put all the information.
>
> I tell the guys not to play Nancy Wilson. After she gets done singing and 64 trombones and 400 trumpets have played the last of it, the announcer tries to introduce the next record and he can't say anything. You can't top her when she gets done singing. There's no encore for that sort of thing, so we play a much simpler arrangement.[176]

Award-winning KRMG presents an award of its own which has come into high esteem in recent years--The KRMG "Pat on the Back." Tulsa's civic leadership, from the mayor to the blood donor or the fellow who volunteers his Sunday afternoons to help young baseballers at the Tulsa Boys' Home, is eligible for this honor. A certificate is awarded in recognition of those who build Tulsa and their honor is read on the station for all to hear.

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[175] Op. cit. Greenwood interview. [176] Ibid.

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS

_____

having offered of himself in the service of others:
having served his community beyond call;
and, having contributed generously to the welfare
of the City of Tulsa and State of Oklahoma . . . . .
therefore has been proclaimed a worthy candidate for the

KRMG

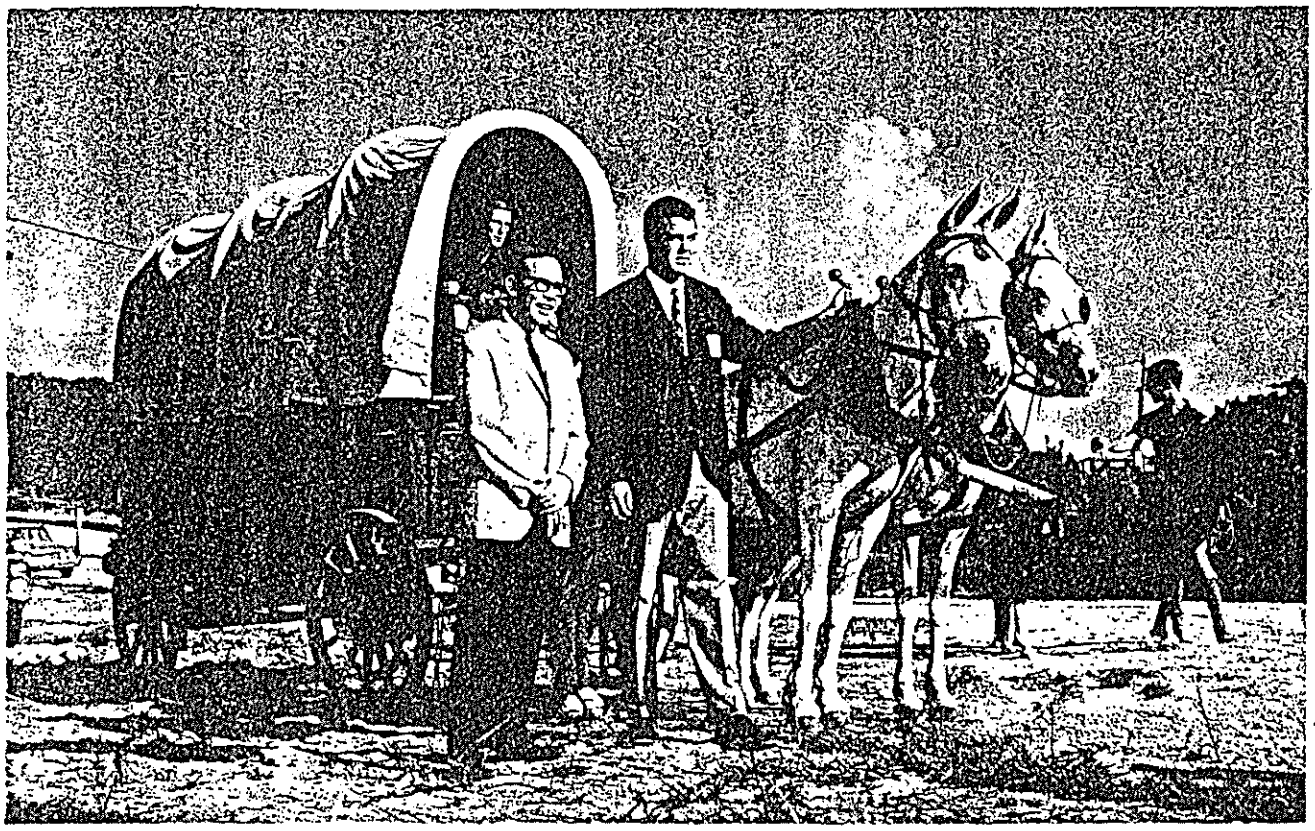
"PAT ON THE BACK"

Dated _____

Witnessth _____

Signed _____
Officer of KRMG Radio

People listen to KRMG because it does something for them. KRMG tries to touch as many people as possible and does it with a lot of zaney things, or things that seem on the surface to be zaney. Recently, the station gave six seals to the zoo. That sounds like a silly thing for a radio station to do, but the zoo didn't have any seals. Greenwood said the next promotion may help them get some penguins. He said they could have a lot of fun with it, and certainly it helps the community. And, what other radio station has a team of albino mules:



DAVID STANFORD (L) RON BLUE (R)

Not everything KRMG does for Tulsa is zaney. They innovated the research idea to find out about the drug problem in the Oil Capitol, analyzed their statistics and told the public:

> Our newsmen went out and supervised a poll that was taken. We first surveyed better than a thousand people at the Tulsa State Fair [September, 1969] and got the idea what the adult viewpoint was on drugs. Then we contacted the superintendent of schools, Dr. Gordon Kwalti, and said people ought to know what young people were thinking about drugs. He let us go into all the high schools and actually helped us develop the questions that we used because he wanted to find out some things.
>
> We talked to over 2,500 students and we did this as a news story which was released and we also have made reprints available and I guess the idea of the project has now been picked up by a dozen high schools over the state of Oklahoma.
>
> It's a very painless way to let the adults in the city, who don't really want to believe what people tell them, know about drugs. It's a painless way to let them know what the kids are really thinking and in many instances, what the kids are really doing.[177]

KRMG sat on the drug story in Tulsa for almost 14 months.

"We had names, which we gave to the police department and they asked us to sit on them," said Greenwood. "Not very long ago, when the heroin story was finally divulged, we got a three hour break on that particular story."[178]

Program Director Chuck Adams heads an all-star

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[177] Op. cit. Greenwood interview. [178] Ibid.

professional staff on KRMG in 1970. At 34, he is still the witty, young-at-heart early morning disc jockey that can warm the frost off your windshield on a winter's morning. He is one of the most popular and in-demand radio personalities to ever chat with the public on Tulsa airways.



Adam's friendly jokes during the morning drive-time, his singing of the school lunch menu, his bright pearls of wisdom and humor from Mother Adams, who just called-in, are part of his trademark, and welcomed with the first yawn of morning by many sleepy Tulsans. And what's even better, he loves Tulsa and Tulsans as much as they love him.

TABLE 3. KRMG on-air personalities:

Chuck Adams, program director,	6 a.m. to 10 a.m.
Jerry Vaughn	10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Fred Campbell	2 p.m. to 5 p.m.
Dick Ford	5 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Johnny Martin	8 p.m. to 1 a.m.
Greg Austin	1 a.m. to 6 a.m.
Vic Bastien, news director	
Ed Brocksmith	
Norm Colwell	
Dennie Eckert	
David Stanford	

The "Remarkable KRMG" is the only logo or slogan used, though it can be worked into a million lines. The "Friendly Giant" outlived its usefulness.

When SWANCO took over KRMG, advertising rates were based on the rating for the lowest person on the staff. They have been raised eight times since then and are the highest in Tulsa and comparable to that of WKY in Oklahoma City.

It only costs a few cents more to buy the very best--KRMG.

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