

building a new part of the industry as well as an individual station since so much of our ultimate success depends on acceptance of uhf as a whole. The smart station operator will be sure that releases on set count can be authenticated and will avoid exaggerated claims. In many cases, servicemen have not taken the trouble to learn enough about installation and service. Some of these have asked excessive prices for converter and antenna installations, but yesterday's errors are today's opportunities, and I am confident that these problems are being worked out successfully.

Among the first uhf grants was a construction permit for WKNB-TV in New Britain, Conn., to operate on Ch. 30. In this case, the station was somewhat unique in that the market served comprised the rich Hartford County area which had no local TV service and relied solely on outside vhf coverage from New Haven, Conn. While New Britain has a population of approximately 100,000 in the city proper and surrounding towns, the Hartford County area covers 562,000 people and the service contours for the new licensee under full power included 2,368,000 people. Even under the interim power operation, the total population served is 1,200,586.

This market, rated as twenty-fifth nationally in population and third in per family buying income, was a major test of the ability of uhf to become established against vhf competition.

#### Power vs. Height

In the original engineering design for the station, the emphasis was placed on greatest possible height for the radiating system, rather than power. After a careful analysis of power versus antenna height, it was felt that the scales were overwhelmingly in favor of a strategic transmitter location that would effectively serve a wide area and where subsequent power increase would result in a substantial increase in coverage, and would increase signal strength within the original service area in spots that were difficult by reason of terrain conditions.

The site selected for WKNB-TV was in an almost inaccessible mountain area about three-quarters of a mile off the nearest highway and located approximately three miles northwest of New Britain, and about 7 miles southwest of Hartford. The site had a natural elevation of 740 feet and a five hundred foot tower was erected which, with a forty-five foot antenna, provided a 1,285 foot height above sea level. From this point the area slopes down to the Connecticut River along the entire valley from New Haven north to Springfield with relative heights above sea level in Hartford at 64 feet and in Springfield at 101 feet.

With this tremendous line-of-sight advantage over the whole central Connecticut and western Massachusetts area, WKNB-TV elected to use RCA equipment with a one kilowatt transmitter and a 21BL antenna. The resulting ERP was approximately 20 kw; 6½ co-ax line was chosen to reduce line loss on the relatively high tower.

Since the transmitter was fairly close to both Hartford and New Britain, it was decided to put a one-half degree electrical tilt on the antenna to provide maximum effectiveness in the close-in area. The com-

## IT'S OKAY TO KID THE COMMERCIAL, BUT FINISH WITH A SERIOUS PITCH

By Ted Brown\*

SOME people call a commercial the kiss of death. It better not be. In ayem radio a commercial may come up as often as 10 times in a half hour and that could obliterate a 10-minute show. My show, the rise and shine type, lasts from 7 to 9 a.m. Mondays through Saturdays, and it has to stay lively, not despite the commercials but including them.

I figure there's a commercial approximately every four to five minutes. This could be annoying, to say the least, unless handled with sincerity, taste and a dash of humor. Sounding sincere is up to the individual announcer. But thought and practice are necessary to develop reliable senses of taste and humor.

I like the job of early morning disc jockey, despite the hours. It's a challenge. People getting up in the morning getting ready for work don't concentrate fully on the radio, but they can be cheered on their way with a light, airy word or two and a bright, saucy tune. There's a turnover every 20 minutes, which means that I can't do anything of long duration, and that I must constantly feed the morning necessities—time, weather, temperature, and the little humor that may mean a smile. At all times I must use catch phrases and chuckle-getting remarks, not intricate stories and lengthy jokes.

Lately, the trend on ad lib shows has been to kid the commercials. But if you kid the commercial from top to bottom, people may remember the joke and fail to go out and buy. Usually people remember the last thing they hear. So I think it's a good rule, and one that I use, that if you're going to have fun with the sponsor's product, do it on top of the commercial, as a hook to capture the ear of the listener. And then, once you have his attention, make a legitimate pitch.

Rhoda, my wife, appears on the show as "Loudmouth," "Redhead," and a variety of characters. She uses various gag voices. Generally we begin the commercials together. But she doesn't participate in the legitimate pitch. Once I start selling the product in earnest, she doesn't come in. We may be announcing events at a race track. Rhoda interrupts with her story of the celebrities she saw at the track—Eddie Cantor, Frank Gallup, John Scott Trotter.

Or we may be selling packets of tissues for automobile visors, with: A friend of ours bought a dozen of these. He found them so terrific he went out and bought 11 more cars.

Or: This beer has real character. It's the kind you'd want your sister to go out with.

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The Browns manage exuberance at hours when others can't crack a smile. Here Rhoda pretends to throw an anniversary cake at her husband.

Whatever you tag to the top of the commercial, however, has to be followed with a serious treatment of the product.

Of course there are all kinds of sponsors. Some of them prefer that you don't tamper with the commercial. Some insist that you handle it straight. At the other extreme are the ones who say have as much fun as you want with the product, it's up to you. But the crucial point is always implied: Sell the product. So in treating the product with humor, one should remember the facts: The sponsor laid his money on the line, and your line had better not be derogatory.

As a rule, nothing is duller than a station break. At our 50 kw outlet, management has tried to inject some originality in station breaks by using all the available star talent on the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer lot in Culver City. The stars, and they include Jimmy Durante, Clark Gable, Esther Williams, Robert Taylor, Lionel Barrymore and many others, sign on and off with WMGM call letter identifications, and a plug for themselves. Both Rhoda and I have been playing havoc with these recorded station breaks by the MGM stars on our early morning aerial romps. This is the sort of lampooning we go in for with the station breaks:

This is a midget. You are tuned to the small letters of the stars.

(Sound of a train.) Thank you, Lionel. You are tuned to the call letters of the stars.

What is the secret of how to be gay at such ungodly hours? Ask Rhoda. She says it's no secret. Other people are grouchy in the early morning and feel good during the day. We're different. We're happy between 7 and 9 a.m. and miserable the rest of the day.