



Joyce

Long Island region.

Joyce foresees more and more TV station heads being recruited from the news sector. "It's beginning to happen right now," he says, "Off-hand, I can think of Jay Feldman of WCAU-TV Philadelphia and Bob Morse at WHAS-TV Louisville and I'm sure there are others throughout the country. I think the reason it's happening is that local news is becoming more and more important to a station, both in terms of revenue and stature."

Another former broadcast newsman (KTLA-TV Los Angeles) and newspaperman (*Los Angeles Times*) is Jerry Birdwell, vice president and general manager of KAUT(TV) Oklahoma City, which was launched last November as an all-news TV station during the hours from noon to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. (In the evenings, the station functions as a subscription television operation.)

Birdwell believes that an all-news TV station may be the wave of the future but agrees it has been tough sledding for KAUT(TV). He points out that Oklahoma City, which only three years ago had three commercial TV stations and a PBS outlet, now has eight stations—six commercial, one PBS and one all-religious.

Birdwell says that KAUT went to the all-news approach in part because it seemed to be a viable avenue since a conventional independent outlet would rely on syndicated programming. With the plethora of stations in Oklahoma City, he continues, syndication prices there "went out of sight."

How to sustain news for seven hours? In each one-hour segment, with two rotating anchors, there is the usual national and international news (provided by Ted Turner's Cable News Network); complete local news coverage including planned stories on community events; feature material, and phone-in interviews with residents. The station's news staff totals 24.

"We think of ourselves as both a newspaper and a magazine," he explains. "We cover sports, business, entertainment and so forth. We get calls from a representative section of the community, including lawyers, physicians, businessmen and politicians and we're heard in places that the rating companies don't visit. Like TV service



Birdwell

stores, barber shops and auto service stations."

Ratings have admittedly been low. Birdwell says the station has rated a one or a two and this obviously has affected advertising. He contends the station should not be bought strictly by the numbers during this early stage and suggests to advertisers that a news-oriented audience has value beyond the numbers.

"We know we have to create interest in sampling our station," Birdwell says. "Our residents are not accustomed to long-form news coverage. Some people don't know we exist. We need a few outstanding stories in Oklahoma City to put us on the map. Unfortunately that hasn't happened yet."

The need to provide viewers with a better understanding of bread-and-butter issues in today's inflation-riddled society was underscored by Al Schottelkotte, news director of WCPO-TV Cincinnati. During the past year the news staff has engaged Dr. Alan Schreiber, a professor at nearby Miami University as staff economist.

"We use Schreiber on our newscasts about three times a week," Schottelkotte says, "and he is able to make economic issues understandable to our viewers. Through Schreiber we have developed a cost-of-living index for our area which we feel is more accurate than the government index."

WCPO-TV also is bolstering its effort in regional news coverage, using its helicopter to rush to the scene of developing events. Another sector that is being strengthened, according to Schottelkotte, is documentaries that are being produced on the local level.

"We want to broaden our activities in this area," he continues, "and from time to time produce documentaries that would be appropriate to run on other stations in the Scripps-Howard family." Schottelkotte is pleased with the progress of WCPO-TV's locally produced *Newsmagazine* program, which is a mixture of hard news, interviews, sports and features. He believes the show attains a quality level that "is lacking in syndicated programs."

Bob Gilmartin, director of news and public affairs at KIII(TV) Corpus Christi,



Schottelkotte

Tex., spots a trend in local TV journalism in the emphasis on in-depth reporting. There is a corresponding shift away from the brief story, he says.

He sees a stronger effort being made to "put the why in the story," rather than a recitation of a series of facts. He believes these "meatier" stories are more meaningful to citizens.

Gilmartin acknowledges that there must be a blend of lengthy and shorter items in a newscast, but adds: "If we put 30 stories in a newscast, nobody would remember even one." By the same token, he continues, a news program containing all long items would be "cheating the audience."

Gilmartin cites the growing use of investigative news teams by local TV stations, even in the smaller markets. KIII(TV), he says, has a news staff of 23 and frequently assigns teams of reporters to explore different aspects of a major story. The staff too is divided along "beat" lines to some extent, with reporters assigned to special fields. One person, for example, is assigned to the field of education, which, Gilmartin says, is "a hot issue" in Corpus Christi.

Steve Greenwald, news director of WBT(TV) Charlotte, N.C., says he sees stations leaning toward longer stories, providing more in-depth coverage of vital issues and less preoccupation with story counts. "If we need three minutes to make a story comprehensible, we do it."

Story emphasis today is on providing news that can help viewers to cope with life's problems, he says, and this means items dealing with health, consumer affairs and changing life styles.

In Wausau, Wis., says WSAU-TV's vice president, news and sports, Mark Zelich, "we don't have a murder-a-day" and therefore have to do "a lot of news development." Smaller markets may require more scrambling just to find the news that may more readily present itself in larger, more eventful areas.

While budgets may be smaller outside major metropolitan areas, the pride in the news product is comparable. Dave Walker, news director at KATC(TV) Lafayette, La., may not have the resources to launch the investigative efforts of a