

young Todd Storz, some see merely a reward give-away specialist, others a vital and powerful new force in radio. His influence on the medium, already considerable, continues to grow

THE STORZ BOMBSHELL

Here are the facts on today's most controversial station operation

By HERMAN LAND, Executive Editor

Violent passions are aroused in otherwise gentlemanly broadcasters when the name "Storz" is mentioned. To many, R. (for Robert) Todd Storz is cynicism incarnate, a cold-blooded exploiter of gullible listeners, a betrayer of the medium. To others, he is a bright, fresh new force on the radio scene who has brought originality, vitality and excitement to a medium that has slumbered so long in defeatist nostalgia.

On one thing both sides agree: this man Storz is a tactically successful operator. Beginning with KOWH, Omaha, in 1949, young Storz by last year was a five-station owner, the other stations being WDGY, Minneapolis-St. Paul; WTIK, New Orleans; WHB, Kansas City; and WQAM, Miami. In March, he sold the Omaha station for \$822,000; he had purchased it for \$75,000.

There are, of course, numerous successful group operations in radio. But the Storz venture has more than the usual significance, for it has exerted an extraordinary influence on station operation around the country.

Each of the Storz stations is not only a rating and commercial success, but has achieved its eminence in the market with breath-taking rapidity. Broadcasters have flocked to the Storz markets to listen and discuss. The approach he has developed for independent music-and-news operation has been widely adopted, and the list of imitators continues to grow.

In recent years, advertisers and agencies have been noticing sudden rating changes in market after market were, overnight it seems, the relative standing of the stations is drastically altered, with long-time rating long-pins toppled and relative unknown independents surging to the top. They are sensing a new volatility in

the medium, strikingly different from the pre-TV days, when the rating relationships tended toward stability rather than abrupt and frequent change.

Storz did not invent the music-and-news approach, of course, and stations like WNEW in New York and WIND in Chicago, along with many others, have shown what can be accomplished with that format. But Storz has departed from the standard approach and has attacked his markets so aggressively as to stir up the competition as nobody has in years.

From those ill-disposed toward this young competitor, you hear that he buys the audience with give-aways, uses phony promotions and fraudulent advertising, deviously influences the rating services, even that he is remiss in his obligations to the public.

Time magazine last June called him "the fastest-rising figure in U. S. radio . . . whose low estimate of listeners' intelligence is tempered only by his high regard for their cupidity . . . he has found that give-aways work even better for stations than they do for individual programs."

Some say that his real genius consists of an ability to "pick markets with weak competition . . . they were sitting like clay pigeons. He'd get killed in New York."

To all of which, the Storz camp retorts: nonsense. These criticisms are only the outcries of frantic competitors who neither understand what has happened to them nor how to adapt to the new radio era. The charges, they say, are based on plain misrepresentation or distortion of fact.

What has really happened, according to this view, is that a programming service has been developing which