

thing from a stunt to a giveaway. Broadcasters still talk about the more than \$100,000 treasure hunts that Storz promoted in Omaha and Minneapolis-St. Paul. Daily clues were given on the air and frantic listeners trampled the cities into virtual shambles in their mad quest for the riches.

"The whole idea of formula broadcasting," a New York station operator remarked the other week, "is to be loud and obtrusive. It's as if the station is saying to the listener and the advertiser and the agency timebuyer, 'Look at me, bud. Forget about those 12 other radio stations in my market. I'm more exciting than them. I attract more listeners. Look what devoted foolishness the audience will do for me. And don't think television is going to obscure me or bury me. For if it does, I'm going to be the liveliest corpse in the grave.'"

And while some operators took the high publicity-gear road of noisy fanfare and madcap contests, a silver-haired, ex-time salesman named Dickens Wright took a more low-keyed road that brought him to profit's street just as speedily. Buying WOPR Paterson, N.J.—a loud, brassy community station—for \$300,000 in 1954, Wright assiduously transformed it into a well-modulated showcase for Metropolitan New York listeners. Soft, sweet, instrumental music, that brooked little voice intrusions, was the soul of Wright's formula. Commercials, limited to brief intervals, were policed with a velvet whip—they weren't discouraged, just subdued. Such concern for the sensitivities of listeners paid off. In 1961, Wright sold his station to the Capital Cities Broadcasting group for an estimated \$5 million.

With the help of the formula concept, local radio became bigger than it had ever been. By 1956, local time sales accounted for some 60% of total radio billings and were still on the wing.

One network executive recalls how surprised he was upon first discovering the rise of the independents.

"It used to be you could chart the stations in a market without looking at their track record," he reminisced. "You'd know that the number one station had to be either an NBC or CBS affiliate. Whichever wasn't first, would be second, with ABC and Mutual stations fighting it out for third and fourth position. Then one day you looked up and there was some stinker of an independent leading the parade."

So successful were the hierarchy of "new radio" that would-be emulators came from town and city with tape recorders in tow and note books in hand. They came, they saw, but they could not properly copy. The subtleties of the formula were beyond most of them. Timing, pitch, songs and sounds painstakingly blended together into one pop-

ping or soothing (depending on whether you were a Storz or Wright man) tantalizing recipe, could not be mass-produced.

But station owners by the dozens, flapping about in the competitive market without a network to anchor them down, tried. Dickens Wright once estimated that in a five-year period from about 1956 through 1961, he received upwards of 1,000 requests for information from radio station operators all over the world. Yet in trying, the imitators only achieved a numbing sameness. For too many years, critics of the medium say, independent radio stations have been too reliant on the same hopped-up beat of rock 'n' roll music.

"They fought off competition behind a fusillade of weird, disjointed sounds that none but the most adventurous and far-out advertiser would brave," an advertising agency timebuyer said last month. "Most national advertisers were appalled. Magazines were streamlining their already glossy package. Newspapers had a reputation to fall back on. Television was gaining complete ascendancy over all media. Yet all radio could do was woo the pompadour and short skirt set."

Still, there's little doubt that music, regardless of its caste, saved the day for independent stations, while for the net-

works news was the lifesaver. For the networks, programming to a wide swath of stations, had to steer clear of extreme formulas.

ABC Radio's vice president Robert Pauley remembers well how the tides of change came in:

"The shift from radio to television was sharp," Pauley recounts. "Sound plus picture became the thing most advertisers wanted. The top people at the networks moved from the radio to the television side, with the result that there was a talent squeeze. Affiliates, in increasing numbers, made the switch to local operations."

But, Pauley stresses, even in those black days, ABC never gave up on radio.

CBS Radio president Arthur Hull Hayes also remembers the evolution of the network species.

"Radio was slow to make the turn," he explains. "It's pretty hard to change when you've been successful, but if we were not ready to change we were not long for this world."

"The blacksmiths," he continues, "faced the same problem when horses went out of style. I guess they must have gone out and made wrought iron fences instead of horseshoes. Well, that's what we had to do."

"Our audience had become much more mature. There were more high

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