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# KMEID

## The First Half Century

"THE BIOGRAPHY OF A GREAT RADIO STATION"



By  
Art Chipman



**K M E D . . . . .**

**. . . . . THE FIRST HALF CENTURY**

**"THE BIOGRAPHY OF A GREAT RADIO STATION"**

Written and published in conjunction with  
the celebration of 50 years of broadcasting

by  
Art Chipman

Pine Cone Publishers  
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# FOREWORD

My professional life has been devoted to broadcasting, and I am pleased to share with the reader my evaluation of this dynamic and creative medium. My association with broadcasting dates back to 1937, when, as a high school student I was exposed to radio through an informal relationship with KFBB, Great Falls, Montana. Since that time, I have served with many of the broadcasters of the nation through state and national associations, numerous other industry related committees and boards, educational groups and government authorities. I can say without hesitation or equivocation, that the people in broadcasting are, as a group, the most dedicated and public service oriented of any profession with which I have come in contact. Broadcasters consistently demonstrate the higher ethics and moral standards demanded by a true profession. The intent of the Federal Communications Commission to reduce broadcast regulation is in itself a tribute to the overall quality of those involved in the medium.

KMED is now 50 years old, and I have had the honor to be associated with the station for nearly 25 of those years. I am grateful to those who guided me into this dynamic, creative and innovative electronic communicator business, to the fine people with whom I have worked for so many years, to the KMED owners, and especially to the citizens of Southern Oregon and Northern California who have accepted and supported radio and television during the days of its infancy.

I am very proud to be a broadcaster associated with KMED.

Ray Johnson



TOM McCALL  
Governor

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
STATE CAPITOL  
SALEM, OREGON

September 23, 1972

Mr. Ray Johnson  
KNED Radio  
Box 10  
Medford, Oregon 97501

Dear Ray:

Many Oregonians are able to remember when radio didn't exist. They, and many more, also can remember how they were confounded and then thrilled by the outstanding technical achievement that has become radio of today.

I am in a quandary: Has it really been 50 years since KNED began? Or has it been only 50 years? In an historical sense, I would guess, it has been a short span. But in the sense of what radio has wrought, I would say that you have spanned ages.

The days when radio was an immense part of our lives, and then only a small part as communications wonder arrived, are well known to us. Equally well known is what next occurred -- the recognition by a communications-conscious nation that radio still met a particular, vital need.

The people never really abandoned radio; their attention simply wandered briefly. You in radio never wavered, never lost faith, and today your medium is stronger than ever.

I am grateful that you had a first year, and a 25th and a 40th. Now, as you pass a most significant milestone, please allow me to add my most sincere congratulations to you of KNED for beginning and remaining as an integral part of America.

Sincerely,

*Tom McCall*  
Governor



NATIONAL BROADCASTING COMPANY, INC.  
THIRTY ROCKEFELLER PLAZA, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10020, CIRCLE 7-8300

June 26, 1972

JULIAN GOODMAN  
President

Mr. Ray Johnson  
Executive Vice President  
KNED Radio and Television  
Post Office Box 10  
Medford, Oregon 97501

Dear Ray:

On behalf of the National Broadcasting Company, I take great pleasure in congratulating and commending KNED-Radio on its 50 years of broadcasting service to its community and the nation.

We take pride in the fact that KNED has been affiliated with the National Broadcasting Company for the past 35 of those years.

During this time we have all witnessed great progress in broadcasting. Undoubtedly the next half century will provide even greater acceleration in the expansion of broadcast communication. This will be accompanied by increased opportunity for KNED and its sister stations to be of service in the areas covered.

My best wishes to you, Ray, and to all of your associates as you mark this first half century of progress for KNED.

Sincerely,

*Julian Goodman*  
Julian Goodman

# K M E D . . . .

## . . . . THE FIRST HALF CENTURY

### In the Beginning

Time has dimmed the history of the very first wireless (radio) transmitter in Southern Oregon. But the initial commercial installation in Medford is thought to have taken place during 1911. However, it was strictly for transmitting messages in Morse code, rather than for any participation by the general public. The installation of this radio transmitter was glowingly reported in the Medford Mail Tribune of October 24, 1911:

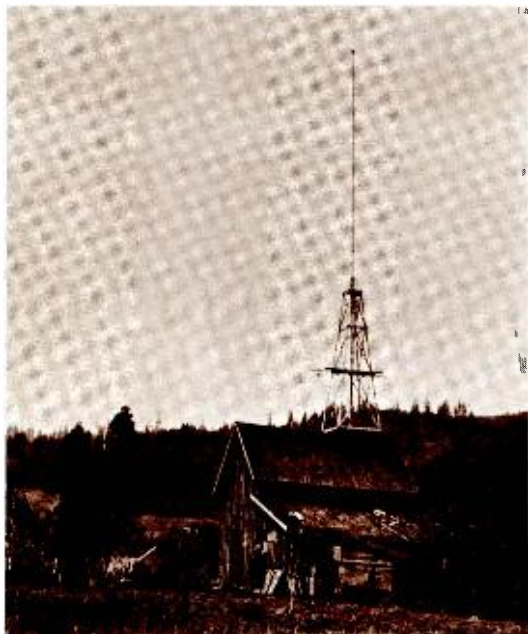
#### **"DEATH BRAVED FOR DAILY BREAD"**

(CROWD WATCHES WORKMEN AT TOP OF WIRELESS STATION MASTS AT TOP OF HOTEL MEDFORD, WHICH, BY THE WAY, RESEMBLES A TWO-MASTED BARK.)

The Hotel Medford with its new wireless station on the roof, has assumed the appearance of a two-masted bark and the attention of passers-by is directed at the pair of cool headed men who are defying death at the top of the main mast. At a height about equal to that attained by Eugene Ely in his flight over Medford and on a footing scarcely more secure, these men calmly smoke their pipes and talk of the wonders of the valley while they tighten the guy wires and place innumerable bolts.

Across the park all day a crowd watches the work and there is much speculation as to the manner in which the workmen are protected and as to the height at which they are working. Inquiry brought out the statement that they are close to 200 feet above the ground and that their bodies and souls are held to the needle-like poles by leather straps.

Like all aerial mechanics, these used to be sailors and in common with their kind, they have great pity for the aviator, who recklessly risks his life. The other day a pole upon which they had been working broke, and by the greatest of good fortune, it chose a time when no one was on it. "There's no danger at all the way they are protected", says a man on the sidewalk, but let's listen to what the man on the pole has to offer: Later: the Mail Tribune tried to interview the workers but could not find an interviewer who would climb up and talk to them."



*During 1921, this barn was the site of the first broadcast of the radio station which eventually developed into KMED Radio. The antenna shown was a receiving antenna built shortly thereafter.*

The final outcome of this particular installation is not now known, however, it does indicate the early interest in broadcasting by the residents of Southern Oregon.

On May 25, 1922, the Medford Mail Tribune reported that a radio station had been proposed for Central Point to broadcast four days a week. It was advised that reception would be possible as far distant as Grants Pass with use of crystal detector sets.

The major broadcasting milestone, however, took place, one evening, in the Fall of 1921, when several young men gathered in an old garage building at 1049 Ashland Street, in Ashland, Oregon. They were all interested in the new fad of radio broadcasting and were to build, that night, what was to eventually become KMED Radio, a famous, pioneer radio station. Unfortunately, the men were not aware of the historical significance of their endeavors and made no particular record of the event.

Through interviews with survivors, it has been ascertained that the equipment used that night, in construction of the primitive radio transmitting set, was purchased by Sam Jordan, the owner of an electrical shop in Ashland. Floyd Rush, who had been a radio operator in the service during World War I, apparently put it together. Rush was assisted by Elmer Morrison, who later operated an electrical shop for many years in Ashland, together with two or three other men whose names have been lost in time.





*William J. Virgin found the new fad of "radio" an extremely fascinating hobby which soon turned into an exciting career. This early radio station owner pioneered many concepts in radio broadcasting. . .concepts which have now become standard procedure... sportscasting. . .weather reports, etc. He died in 1928, but did live long enough to see KMED Radio develop from a dream to a vital factor with the people of Southern Oregon.*

*The death of Bill Virgin in 1928 made his widow. . .Blanche Virgin. . .the first woman radio station owner and manager. While she was initially inexperienced, she soon overcame this disadvantage and successfully operated KMED for more than 22 years until selling the station in 1950.*



From a design one of them had, probably Rush, plus Rush's background, a workable 5 watt broadcasting set was assembled that night. For the next 5 or 6 evenings, the young men and their friends, including an enthusiastic young William J. Virgin, gathered in the old garage to experiment with the transmitter. They would place a phonograph speaker in front of the microphone and play music, or send verbal messages to nearby friends whom they knew were listening to a radio at home.

Jordan wanted one of the young men to buy the equipment, but none had enough money, so finally it was all given to Bill Virgin, due to the fact his father owned a flour mill in Central Point which would provide an excellent place for stringing up the antenna. Moving the equipment provided no great problem as the whole thing could be carried in two hands, being mounted on board 4 or 5 feet long, and was commonly called a breadboard transmitter.

During the following few months, young Virgin and his friends occupied many of their evenings with "the radio." However, it was generally considered only a very interesting hobby.

To popularize radio listening, Virgin once arranged to have a receiving set placed in a Central Point church and invited people to stop in and "listen to him play the radio".

On March 17, 1922, the Medford Mail Tribune reported "Radiophone 'craze' grows. Local social set entertains at evening gatherings to hear messages from other states".

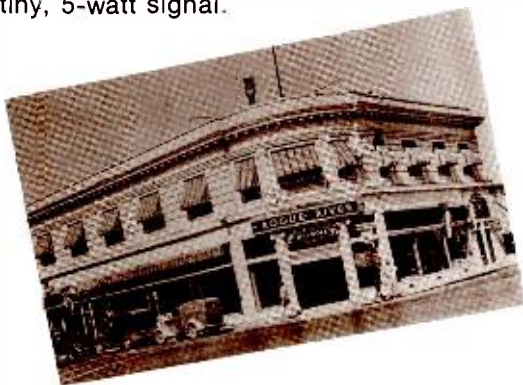
It's quite likely that it was around this time that Virgin learned it was necessary to have a license, and formal permission to operate the station. Unfortunately, specific details of when the license was actually applied for are lacking. It is known, however, that on Friday, July 21, 1922, the following appeared in the Medford Mail Tribune:

#### **"PUT VALLEY RADIO IN CENTRAL POINT"**

W. J. Virgin of Central Point is installing a radio transmitting set and will broadcast market and news reports furnished by The Mail Tribune. He will start with a 5-watt station, but a 50-watt transmitter will be installed as soon as possible. The reports will be able to be heard with suitable receiving apparatus all over Southern Oregon.

It is expected that the set will be in operation within the next three weeks. Mr. Virgin is doing the work himself and has bought the apparatus. Concerts will be broadcasted in addition to the news and market reports from The Mail Tribune."

It is also known that the station was formally launched into official operation on September 23, 1922, with the call letters of KFAY from studios at the Jackson County Fairgrounds, apparently, to coincide with the annual County Fair. Reportedly, the equipment cost in excess of \$1,000. The initial broadcast from the site took place with Launpach's Pavilion Orchestra presenting an hour-long live program over the tiny, 5-watt signal.



*The KMED studio occupied 5 offices on the second floor of the Sparta Building, beginning with the 3rd office from the left. The transmitter antenna was located on the roof, to the rear of the building. The sign in the window of The Cozy Nook Confectionery advertises "Milk Shakes 5¢". . . . alas inflation.*

*The exotic oriental interior of the early KMED studios, (1937) with fierce dragon faces and beautiful vases thoroughly dramatized radio as being a mysterious, glamorous business.*



In 1923 the F.C.C. was still an element of the future but a new broadcast construction permit was issued by the Department of Commerce, Bureau of Navigation, Radio Service, Washington, D.C. to operate on 360 meters (833 kilocycles) with 100 watts maximum power.

While it may appear far-fetched now, with the pure atmospheric conditions of the time, unadulterated by neon lights, electric appliances, multitudinous broadcast signals, etc., the 5-watt signal reached wide areas. A short time later the power was increased to 50 watts which attracted listeners in practically every state, plus many foreign countries. Letters were regularly received from great distances, even as far as Australia.

The local radio club was extremely active, exchanging information on the construction of radio receiving sets, various operational problems, programs on broadcasting stations and related data. One of the accomplishments of the day was to report how many different radio stations had been listened to the night before. The club also tried to solve difficulties on behalf of listeners. For example, the Postal Telegraph Co. had a relay station in Ashland with several dozen pairs of overhead wires running through the downtown section. With so much bleed-off signal that radio reception was badly effected. When the com-

pany engineers were persuaded to listen to local radios picking up the telegraph messages, the wires were soon moved to the east of town. Diathermy machines were another constant irritation and owners of these were ever in conflict with radio listeners.

While component parts for making simple radio receivers had been available for some years, reportedly the first factory made receivers were sold by Sam Jordan of Jordan Electric Co. in Ashland. In 1923 Virgin bought out the radio parts department of Paul's Electric Store which catered to amateur set builders and opened his own shop. Soon thereafter he also obtained the franchise for a popular radio set of the day.

In those early days of KFAY, no one really wanted the station or the responsibility and expense of operating it. The idea of making money from its operation was unthought of. It was considered strictly as a public service to the Rogue River Valley, with entertainment being primarily live music and singing by local people or by entertainers passing through the area. At one time the station management proudly announced that all entertainment was live and that no records were played. The famed Andrews Opera Company headquartered in the valley and members frequently contributed their talents to what was considered promotion for the Rogue River Valley.

*The KMED control room in the Sparta Building (early 1930's) was somewhat less complicated than present day operations. However, few control rooms today sport a fresh bouquet every morning.*



*A live studio broadcast from the Sparta Building studios featuring local talent.*

A major crisis arose on the morning of April 19, 1923, when the fledgling radio station suffered a staggering blow. Virgin arrived at the studio and discovered the entire station, with the exception of two pianos and antenna, had been stolen. Although the equipment was never recovered, the thieves were arrested a day or so later. The station was back on the air, however, after a few weeks with all new equipment.

Sometime around 1923 or 1924, the sale of advertising began to be somewhat significant and the prospects of a commercially successful



operation, based on the sale of advertising appeared possible. Mr. Virgin would make the rounds of people he thought might wish to advertise that day and then go over to the station in the evening and broadcast until such time as the advertising had been used up; somewhat of an a.m./p.m. operation. Sometime during early 1924 the station switched to 106.0 kilocycles.

In 1926, Virgin and Robert Ruhl publisher and major owner of the Medford Mail Tribune entered into a partnership, with Ruhl buying half interest in the station for \$1,500. Ruhl thought radio might have some prospects and deserved further exploration, and conceivably could replace the need for costly special editions of the Mail Tribune to cover big, fast-breaking news events. The station call letters at that time were changed to KMED and the studios moved to the Sparta Building, a major office building in downtown Medford. The Mail Tribune referred to the station as "the official Mail Tribune station". The transmitter antenna at this point consisted of two 85 feet high windmill towers (which had been purchased from local farmers) anchored on the building roof with ground rods and straps buried in the soil beneath the building, certainly a far cry from present day systems, but effective, and economical, for the period. The power at this time was 50 watts on 1120 Kc.

After a few months, Mr. Ruhl lost interest in the operation and advised Virgin that he could foresee no worthwhile future in commercial radio and magnanimously gave him a quit claim to his half interest in the operation.

Despite Mr. Ruhl's pessimism, Virgin felt radio was on the threshold of great things and forecast a rosy future for it. He continuously experimented with its capacity to serve the area. As early as February, 1923, when a Mr. F. A. Blaesing and his family lost their home and entire possessions by fire, Bill Virgin persuaded John Dennison, Bill Gates and "Pop" Gates to appear on the air with him under the auspices of the Red Cross to ask for help for the unfortunate family. To their astonishment, the program raised \$508.80 in cash.

Radio was definitely becoming accepted in Southern Oregon and on March 11, 1927, Ike Dunford, Jackson County jailer, reported that he used radio to entertain prisoners with the theory "music soothes the savage breast, as well as those not so savage".

On September 23, 1927, the second Dempsey - Tunney prize fight was broadcast, with an estimated 15,000 listeners in Southern Oregon and Northern California. Enterprising businessmen set up radios in their place of business so people could listen to this fabulous accomplishment of bringing immediate information on the fight. Strangely enough, 25 years later, enterprising businesses in the Rogue Valley were setting up TV sets in their stores for similar purposes, including the

Friday night prize fights. With the intense sports interest of the area, undoubtedly the famous long count on Gene Tunney created many long and heated discussions among local fight fans.

Another long time tradition was established in October, 1927, when KMED broadcast the World Series. . .a tradition which has lasted through the years. . .New York beat Pittsburgh in 4 straight games that year. Residents of Southern Oregon now follow the World Series on KMED Radio and KMED-TV.

Sports interest has always been at a fever pith in Southern Oregon, and KMED has helped this interest over the years, establishing many firsts in the field of sports broadcasts. The first high school football game was broadcast on November 11, 1927 (most likely the first in the State of Oregon and for certain the first such broadcast outside of Portland). Medford played Ashland, with "Prink" Callison as the coach; Medford overwhelmed Ashland an embarrassing 72 to 7. The first college football game broadcast was the University of Oregon and California on October 15, 1927, over a special leased wire. In the early days the code messages would be transcribed by an operator and the announcer would look through the double windows, reading the information as it was being typed, actually recreating the games on a play-by-play basis.

In 1929, it was reported that "KMED broadcast more football games, play by play than any other Pacific Coast station, regardless of size". It was "the only Pacific Coast station to broadcast full returns of the 1929 World Series baseball games which it had done for three years".

Sports were not the only interest of the community, and KMED established a fine relationship with the local churches over the years with broadcasts of their services. The initial such broadcast was of the Presbyterian Church services on Sunday, October 9, 1927. The First Presbyterian Church still broadcasts every Sunday on KMED Radio.



*The battery operated amplifier and patch panel used at the Sparta Building studios in the early 1930's.*

It's sad that the visionary Bill Virgin did not live to see the fruition of his dreams for radio. . .he died January 28, 1928. However, he had fortuitously extracted a promise. . .a promise to help his widow every way possible upon his death. . .from one of Medford's leading businessmen, Bill Gates, owner of the Groceteria Market and a dynamic, promotionally minded go-getter. Nevertheless, even in death, Virgin established another record in the annals of broadcasting, with his widow Mrs. Blanche Virgin becoming the first woman to own and manage a radio station in the U.S.

## 1927



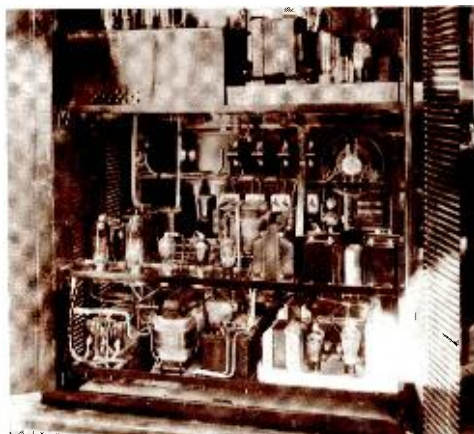
*The 1927 Medford High School football team was one of the all time great teams in the State. . .undefeated and state champions, after crushing all opposition. It was probably the first high school game broadcast in the northwest. . .for certain, the first in Oregon outside of Portland.*

However, the station really wasn't a resounding financial success at that point, as there was less than \$50 in the bank and more than \$4,000 in debts. The energetic Mr. Gates more than fulfilled his pledge to the deceased Virgin. Not only had Gates a considerable interest in broadcasting (his nephew, Parker Gates, had founded Gates Radio Co. on \$1,500 borrowed from Bill Gates' brother) but he and members of his family had appeared many times on the station for various reasons. This, coupled with a natural flair for promotion and a challenge, saved the young widow's radio station. Gates devised many special programs and promotions for the station, and even made frequent high level sales calls on behalf of the new medium. Some of the slogans he dreamed up for local merchants were in use decades later and his "Voice of a Great Country" was used by KMED for many years.

When Mrs. Virgin's bank account reached \$4,000 without any debts, Mr. Gates let her proceed on her own, but as long as he lived, he maintained an avid interest in the progress of the station and its operation. In fact, he established what was certainly one of, if not the longest running singly sponsored programs on radio; Friendship Circle was first broadcast on radio from the mid-1920's through 1961 and then switched to KMED-TV for several years, sponsored in its entirety by the Groceteria. Many a middle-aged adult in the Rogue River Valley can look back with great nostalgia to listening to Friendship Circle, as a youngster, and gleefully following the broadcast instructions for locating some hidden, but anticipated, birthday gift.

1928 was a momentous year in many ways, not only for KMED, but in the history of broadcasting, as well. That was the year when 2 innovative entertainers burst upon the American scene with a dramatic impact which has never since been equalled. 27 year old Freeman Fisher Gosden and 38 year old Charles Corral, better known as "Amos 'n' Andy" literally stopped the country. At exactly 7 p.m. each weekday evening, some 40,000,000 Americans ceased whatever they were doing and gathered at the radio for the first wildly successful situation comedy in broadcasting. To obtain any customers at all, movie houses throughout the country interrupted the main feature at that hour and provided their patrons with a broadcast of the program, resuming the movie at the conclusion of the radio program.

*This transmitter was originally 250 watts in power and was used at the Sparta Building location, and later at the Ross Lane site. Eventually it was modified to 1,000 watts and continued in service until the power was increased to 5,000 watts.*







*No other entertainer has ever had the impact on the American scene to equal Amos 'n' Andy. . .who literally stopped the country weeknights at 7:00 p.m.*

People really became aware of radio in 1928.

This period too, became the pivotal point in the success of KMED. Its power as an advertising medium became more and more accepted. The staff was enlarged and the quality of programming greatly improved. Many live dramas were presented, written and directed by talented young newcomers to the industry, limited in scope only by their fertile imagination. One of the big hits locally was the Copco Theatre written by Miss Mary Greiner (later to become Mrs. Edward Kelly) and regularly presented live. Incidentally, while Copco Theatre is no longer a feature on KMED, and Copco (California-Oregon Power Company) has merged with Pacific Power and Light Company. . . Pacific Power and Light Company is still a major, and regular advertiser on KMED.

In January, 1930, a young Lee Bishop joined the staff and for many years to follow his voice was known to everyone in Southern Oregon, as was the cheerful chirping of the canary in the background on his program. Lee left the station in 1944 to manage Keating Studios in Portland, the first Northwest sales representative organization. . Later he moved to Eugene, Oregon, where he became manager of a very successful radio station, and subsequently part owner of KORE and KVAL-TV.

That same year, on June 7, another youngster, David H. Rees, joined the station. Rees had been a wireless operator on the S. S. San Vicente, but following an unpleasant bout with sea sickness, he left the ship at Port Townsend, Washington. Learning that KMED needed an engineer, he applied for the position. In 1932, Rees became chief engineer, succeeding Floyd Rush, one of the men at the original broadcast and who later had joined the station as chief engineer. Rees remained with the station until 1947 when, in partnership with Art Adler, he established KWSD Radio, in Mt Shasta, California.

Considerable credit must be given to Floyd Rush for his long and valuable role with the station. Much of the early equipment was made by or modified by him to fit the needs and pocketbook of the station. Without Rush, it is doubtful if there would have been such a pioneer radio station.

Adler had joined KMED in 1933, initially as a salesman, later writing continuity and announcing, until 1938 when he became the commercial manager. He remained with the station until leaving with Dave Rees in 1947.

Another of the early employees was Gladys LaMar who was first employed at KMED in 1927. In 1928 she left KMED going to San Francisco where she had her own program as a singer and pianist on KFRC. At various times she also appeared on KPO, KGO and KJBS. In 1934, she returned to KMED as program director where she remained for the balance of her career.

In 1931, the station's power was increased from 50 watts to 100 watts and in 1933 it was again increased, to 250 watts, with the transmitter being moved from the Sparta Building to the present 5.3 acre site at Broadcast Center on Rossanley Drive and Ross Lane, west of Medford.

Although Blanche Virgin was optimistic for the future of radio and KMED, as reflected by this expansion of facilities and power, the deep depression which gripped the country made things extremely difficult for a period of time. KMED salesmen eagerly traded advertising time for groceries or gasoline. Several of the employees shared living expenses by all moving into a big, old house and dividing costs and products garnered by the salesmen.

Mrs. Virgin's faith in the future, however, was echoed by the newly elected Franklin Delano Roosevelt who announced in his inaugural speech that Americans had "Nothing to fear but fear itself". Roosevelt also became the first U. S. President to visualize and utilize the vast power of radio to communicate with the people. He initiated his famous "Fireside Chat" on March 12, 1933 and thereafter regularly shared his thoughts and dreams with his fellow countrymen. (An odd touch of radio history involves KMED and Herbert Hoover, Roosevelt's predecessor. When Hoover was advised at his home in Palo Alto that he had been elected president, reluctant to use the new medium of radio, he wrote out his victory speech which was then handed to a young NBC announcer to read over the NBC network. The announcer was named Jennings Pierce, who later became manager of KMED.)



*Franklin D. Roosevelt was the first President to be aware of the tremendous potential of radio for quick and effective communication with the people.*

## The Nostalgic Years

While the 1920's were the years of birth for commercial radio, the 1930's and 1940's represented a period of dynamic changes and dramatic news events. Many of these news stories were so startling as to be remembered for the balance of the listener's life. . .the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in September 1931. . .President Roosevelt declaring a bank holiday in 1933. . .the late Prince of Wales abdicating his throne for "the woman I love" in 1936. . .the April, 1936, broadcast of Bruno Richard Hauptmann's execution for kidnapping the Lindberg baby. . . Amelia Earheart being announced as missing on her around the world flight

*In 1933 Mrs. Virgin purchased a 4.3 acre plot on Ross Lane (the present site of Broadcast Center) where an 18' x 20' concrete building was constructed to house the transmitter.*





in July, 1937. . .or, October 30, 1938 when a very young Orsen Welles, starring in a "Mercury Theatre" program called "Attack from Mars", panicked the nation. . .and, the terrible day of September 1, 1939 when Hitler's blitzkreig pounded into Poland. For the first time in history, people could be on the scene of momentous happenings. A Portsmouth flood might be thousands of miles from the Rogue River Valley, but it was just next door from the radio.



*In 1933 this was a very modern control room at KMED*

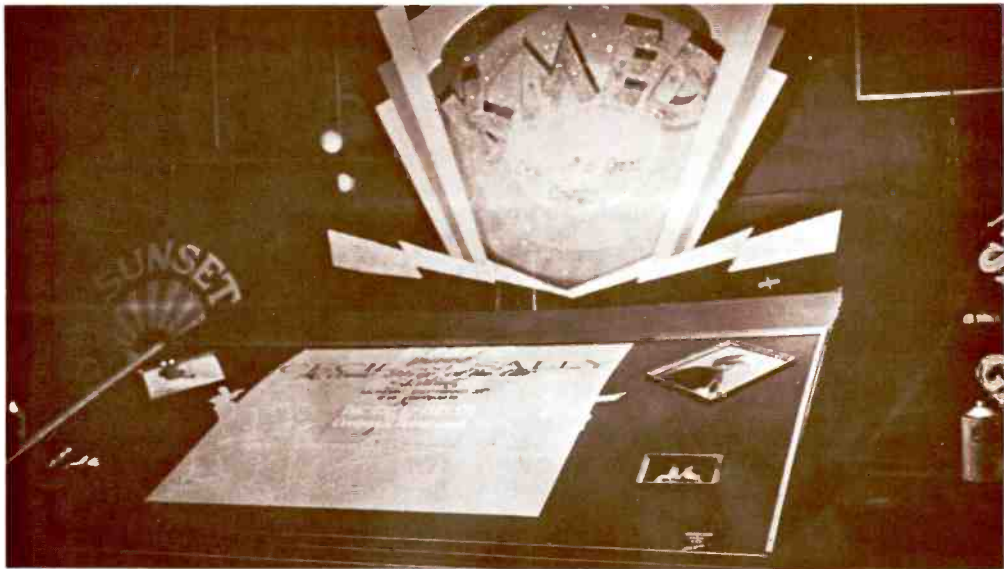
Although the station had earlier been connected with one of the ambitious efforts to establish a radio network, in 1937 it became an affiliate of the National Broadcasting Company. . . which it still is today. . .one of the oldest NBC affiliates in the U. S. While this association with NBC opened up a whole new spectrum of entertainment and news coverage, it also established KMED as an important link in a dynamically expanding and important industry.

1937 was also the year when people listening to a mundane report of a routine mooring at Lakehurst, N. J., by the German airship Hindenburg, were stunned to hear it turning into one of monumental horror as the giant airship exploded in a deathly mass of flames. Only recently has it been exposed that the explosion was almost certainly a case of sabotage by one of the crew members and concealed at the time for political reasons.

During the 1930's while the station was located in the Sparta Building, the studios were dramatically furnished in an exotic Chinese motif to reflect the new-found financial success of the operation. Many a wide-eyed young visitor to the station was visibly impressed with the grotesque-faced oriental dragons and brilliant colors.



*In 1937, NBC Newsmen reported on the Portsmouth Flood...telescoping distances with on-the-spot News reporting through the novel use of mobile radio units.*



*The "voice of a great country" presented "Cecil and Sally" sponsored by Pacific Hi-Flex Co. and Oregon Oil Petroleum Co. (marketers for Sunset Gasoline).*



*A debonair NBC Newsmen, with his mobile broadcasting equipment, provides a follow up report on the tragic Hindenburg disaster in May 1937.*

A continuing bit of drama involved the studio in the Sparta Building, with the fire department siren being located on the building just outside the control room. Sometimes, on hot summer days, the announcer would be drowned out by the sound of the siren before he could get the windows closed. Radio listeners over a wide area could tell whenever there was a fire in Medford.

Incidentally, while it may not have been a real socially significant event to remember, in 1938, some innovative radio programmer came up with a format called "Information Please". . .the first panel show and an interesting program concept which has continued until the present day.

In 1938 KMED's licensee name was changed to Virgin's Broadcast Station. Power was increased in 1939, from 250 watts to 1000 watts day and 250 watts at night.

In 1939, a new element in broadcasting was forecast. . .something entitled Frequency Modulation. . .FM broadcasting. Mrs. Virgin filed an application for a license and that same year was granted a FM construction permit. A 40 acre plot was purchased on the mountain to the west of Medford, as an antenna site. Progress, however, in the new industry was not as fast as had been predicted and with the looming likelihood of war, the project was shelved, with the CP for KMED-FM eventually being dropped on February 15, 1949. Some 20 years later, the project was renewed, resulting in present day KTMT (initially KMED-FM Stereo). . .the first FM Stereo Station in Southern Oregon. . .except the transmitter location is now on the top of Mt. Ashland and serves an area of 40,000 square miles.

During 1941, lavish new studios were constructed on the Ross Lane property, designed to provide the ultimate in acoustics. . .still maintaining the oriental decor. Coincidental with the granting of an increase to 1,000 watts of power, day and night, broadcasting began from the new building. On March 29, 1941, KMED was assigned 1440 kc to replace the previously authorized 1410 kc.



On the morning of December 7, 1941, the listeners of KMED were stunned at the shocking news crackling over their radios, interrupting Sunday morning programs, to breathlessly announce that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. Listeners would, for years, remember precisely what they had been doing when first hearing the never-to-be-forgotten announcement. And, on December 8, 1941, a still-stunned nation listened to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his famous "Day of Infamy" speech, also carried on KMED.

The war years, which followed, linked local people to the happenings throughout the world by radio. And, while these war years were hectic, the worries and cares of the day were eased somewhat by the happy songs of "Smilin' Ed McConnell, as well as the unforgettable singing of Al Jolsen and Ethel Waters. The sound of "the Whiffenpoof Song" meant Rudee Vallee to millions of radio listeners and the introduction of "Banjo Eyes" foretold the rollicking songs of Eddie Cantor. Entertainment which had been beyond the reach of the richest oriental potentate or the wildest dreams of a king was being enjoyed by people in the remotest areas of southern Oregon, without cost. Voices of newscasters such as Lowell Thomas or H. V. Kaltenborn were as easily recognized as members of the family. . .in fact, they were members of the family in most homes.

The 1940's were fabulous years for network radio and many stars were created, practically overnight. The biting humor of Fred Allen and W. C. Fields made their names household words, which still persist. The so-called "soap operas" (due to their frequent sponsorship by big laundry soap advertisers) such as "Ma" Perkins, Pepper Young's Family, One Man's Family, etc., had a loyal following among housewives listening to KMED. While none of these programs made the successful transition to television, to last any length of time, they have been replaced with similar programs, with only the basic difference being a change of title. Housewives today watch "Days of Our Lives" or "The Doctors" on KMED-TV. . .however, there is one big change, as few programs of this type are sponsored by laundry soap advertisers, for laundry soap has been almost eliminated through the use of detergents.



*Smilin' Ed McConnell and his partner Froggy brightened the airwaves of KMED, Saturdays at 11:30 a.m., with the Buster Brown Gang.*



*In 1932 a vibrant young Ethel Waters entertained radio listeners with her singing. . .40 years later viewers of the Mike Douglas show on KMED-TV affectionately watched her still singing.*





*The "Good News Show" of June 1938 featured five of the great names in show business. . .Franchot Tone, Robert Young, Frank Morgan, Margret Sullivan and Robert Taylor. Of the men, only Robert Young is still alive. . .starring currently as Marcus Welby, M.D. on CBS.*

*Al Jolsen, with his memorable "Mammy", Rudee Vallee's crooning of "The Whiffenpoof Song" and Eddie Cantor's rollicking "Ida" were virtually trade marks for these great, long'time entertainers.*





*Fred Allen and his wife, Portland Hoffa, along with the residents of "Allen's Alley" provided a brilliant, biting type of humor.*

The antics of Ed Wynn, Groucho Marx, Abbott & Costello, etc., lightened and brightened the war time years of the 1940's. Homesick young soldiers stationed at the huge Camp White, near Medford, followed the familiar network programs they had known at home. . . over KMED. . . Dr. I. Q. with the famous "I have a lady in the balcony, Doctor", and the ubiquitous Quiz Kids with their vast fund of knowledge. A glimpse of their studio sets poses a vast difference though from the lavish sets required to present a TV program today.

Many of these young men stationed at Camp White subsequently returned to live permanently in Southern Oregon. Several of them became important business leaders, including two who were to play vital roles in the progress of the KMED family. . . Ed Barnett, who joined KWIN Radio in Ashland and later became manager of KBES-TV, and still later manager of KMED-TV. The late James J. (Jimmy) Dunlevy came to Camp White as a private, where he was assigned to the public relations department. Private Dunlevy, (eventually Sgt. Dunlevy) was the jovial master of ceremonies on many of the old Blue Network (western division) radio programs originating at the camp. Following his discharge, in 1945, Jimmy Dunlevy joined KMED as public service director, becoming manager in 1948. In 1950 he left to manage KYJC and still later became manager of the Rogue Valley Country Club until his untimely death, early in 1972. He served his community well, including a number of years as mayor of Medford.

During the war years, its progress was avidly followed by residents of the area. . . MacArthur's retreat in Bataan and General Wainright's surrender at Corregidor. . . the battle of Midway, the invasion of North Africa. . . the invasion of Italy. . . D-Day in Europe. . . events throughout the entire world. . . on KMED Radio. Voices of famous newscasters were daily visitors in most homes and strange foreign words such as Oran, Salerno, Okinawa, Yalta, etc., were familiar to everyone.



*Dorothy Lamour gave a real touch of glamour to radio, easily arousing an impassioned Charlie McCarthy, with an assist from Edgar Bergen. Some of the confrontations between Charlie and W. C. Fields were classics of the time, as was the humor of Fields.*



KMED performed many other good-neighbor chores during those war years, with the promotion of Bond drives, tin-can drives, save-the-fat drives, victory gardens, etc. Public service announcements involved explanation of the new ration books and the rules thereto. . .gas rationing was initiated on December 1, 1942, and on March 29, 1943, rationing of meats, butter, cheese, oils, etc., began... stamps for sugar...shoes...red tokens for meat and blue for canned goods. And, too, the periodical sad announcement that some local young man had lost his life in a far away land.

*"Pepper Young's Family", "Ma Perkins" and "One Man's Family" were tremendously popular programs in early radio, but their sets were considerably less lavish than listeners imagined. How many people today can remember that Oxydol soap began sponsoring "Ma Perkins" on December 4, 1933.*



*Bob Burns and his bucolic bazooka made the former resident of Arkansas a household word.*



*Ed Wynn. . . "The Perfect Fool" sent gales of laughter through generations of radio listeners with his antics.*



*The "put-on" feud between Jack Benny and Fred Allen was great fun for radio listeners. . . millions of housewives shared the problems of Stella Dallas. . . Fibber McGee and Molly, with their overstuffed closet at 79 Wistful Vista, were network favorites for many years.*



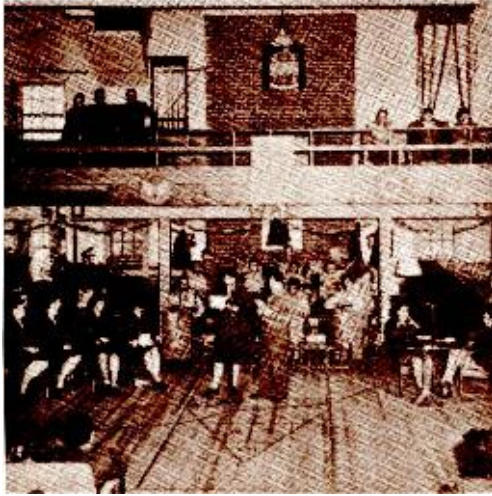
*Ralph Edwards brightened the war years with his "Truth or Consequences" proving that people enjoy laughing at themselves.*





*Groucho Marx, along with Abbott & Costello, gave many years of laughter to radio listeners. . . . "Dr. I. Q.", featuring Jimmy McLain, was one of the early audience participation programs. . . and, the precocious "Quiz Kids" gave most adults a touch of inferiority complex with their astonishing fund of knowledge.*





*A young Sergeant from Camp White, named James Dunlevy, was the master of ceremonies at many of the KMED army programs originating from the U.S.O. Club in Medford during World War II.*

Then, there was May 7, 1945. . .VE Day. . .and thousands of weary young warriors began returning from Europe, and, finally, on August 14, 1945, VJ Day, following two devastating atomic bomb attacks on Japan. The surrender of the Japanese and the return to peace also brought forth a host of new changes in the United States. Numerous technologies developed for war could be turned to peaceful uses, thus bringing forth great changes in the lives of Americans, in broadcasting, and with KMED.



*The signing of the Japanese surrender, on the battleship Missouri, in September 1945, marked the beginning of a new era in international relations. It also marked the return to peace time pursuits for millions of eager young men and a great surge in the advance of broadcasting.*



## The Changing Years

In 1946, after almost a quarter century involvement with broadcasting and KMED, Mrs. Virgin decided to sell the station to the Gibson Broadcasting Corporation, a California company, and on May 9, 1946, application was filed with the FCC for transfer of ownership. However, the FCC ruled that only local interests would be permitted to control the station. The determined Mr. Luther E. Gibson, President of Gibson Broadcasting, appealed the ruling all the way to the Supreme Court, resulting in a reversal of the FCC decision. However, after winning his battle, and more than \$40,000 in expenses, Mr. Gibson decided not to purchase the station.

This was the second land-mark legal decision in conjunction with the station. The first being in the early 1930's when KMED refused to broadcast the views of the radical "Good Government Congress", with a federal court rendering a decision that radio stations were not common carriers and therefore not required to broadcast everything brought to them.



*"Road of Life" with Don McLaughlin and Virginia Dwyer and "Young Widder Brown" featuring Ned Weaver and Wendy Drew were two of the radio "soap operas" which lasted until the mid-1950's.*

In February, 1947, application was made to increase the power of KMED from 1,000 watts to 5,000 watts daytime and 1,000 watts nighttime.



*"The Great Gildersleeve" with Willard Waterman and Lillian Randolph as "Birdie" lasted until the mid-1950's, when "the water commissioner" went off radio.*



*In 1950 a young Russ Jamison joined KMED as an announcer and a year or so later initiated his popular late night "The Broom Closet" show which was a harbinger of the changes taking place in radio programming. . . a turn toward talk and music.*

The late 1940's initiated further changes in broadcasting. The war years and travel by so many people brought a new sophistication. While some of the long time network programs such as Road of Life, Young Widder Brown, etc., managed to hold a faithful following for a few more years, there was a new tempo in entertainment. New names entered the scene, new radio stations were being granted in Southern Oregon. . . KWIN in 1946, KYJC in 1947, KBOY in 1954. Broadcast technology was making leap-frog advances.

Perhaps this change was sensed by Mrs. Virgin. . . in any event, she had married Lyonel E. Randle, an employee



*Many touring entertainer groups visit Medford, and even in the early days they made a point of stopping at KMED to make personal appearances.*



*While Tucker Sno-Cat gained fame in far corners of the world, it is also used extensively in the mountains of Southern Oregon, as shown here at a snowy Crater Lake.*

of the station, and wished to retire. Randle had joined the station in 1936, following six years in the U. S. Army Signal Corps. He had left KMED in 1942 to be an Army instructor, but returned in the fall of 1944. In 1950, KMED was sold to a group of local business men. This new ownership was comprised of Verne Robinson, a local insurance man, President; Dr. Dwight Findley, physician, Vice President; Dr. Bert Lageson, dentist, Treasurer; William McCallister, attorney, Secretary; Les A. DeArmond, a mill and lumber operator; and Howell Murphy, a packing house and fruit shipping operator, under the corporate title of Radio Medford, Inc.

The new owners took over in June, 1950, and were immediately plagued by management problems. Following a quick succession of managers, the owners decided to consult with Jennings Pierce, the west coast Station Relations Manager for NBC and to ask his assistance in acquiring a stable man of stature and capabilities. Pierce had just recovered from severe injuries received in a spectacular airplane crash in downtown Hollywood in which Buddy Young, a singing star of the time, had been killed. After listening to the plans for the station and the type of man they were endeavoring to find, Pierce indicated an interest in the proposal. Subsequently, he was persuaded to take over as manager and joined the station in July, 1950.

*Jennings Pierce, manager of KMED, moderating a network program originating at the KMED studios, featuring Sam Taylor of Elk Lumber Co. (now a division of Boise-Cascade Corp.) and "Doc" Simpson, secretary-manager of Southern Oregon Conservation and Tree Farm Association (now re-titled Southern Oregon Timber Industries Association), together with some unidentified guests.*





Jennings Pierce was a recognized industry leader and pioneer broadcaster. His stature in the industry brought national recognition to the station which has been expanded even farther in the years following. Through Pierce's contacts, the station became known as one of the outstanding small market operations in the nation...a bellwether station for secondary markets. During his time as manager, many nationally-broadcast programs were originated from the studios on Ross Lane, including the National Farm and Home Hour which was regularly beamed throughout the U. S.



*Marilyn Van Derber, Miss America for 1958, posed with Ray Johnson in the KMED remote broadcast booth at the Kiwanis Fair.*

Mrs. Virgin had employed a young engineer in 1948 by the name of Ray Johnson. When Pierce left the station in 1954 to establish an advertising agency, he was succeeded by Johnson. It was a fortuitous choice by the board of directors for he not only followed the paths used by his predecessor, but carried them to even greater heights. In line with the corporate thinking of station involvement at both industry and community level, Mr. Johnson was honored as president of the Oregon Association of Broadcasters. He has been long active on the national level as director of the National Association of Broadcasters for both radio and TV, as well as chairman of the Radio Code Board for NAB, the committee within the industry which polices against misleading advertising, offensive commercials, over commercialism, etc. Under his guidance the corporation expanded from a very successful small town radio station to a broadcast complex of major importance in the Pacific Northwest.

There were other major changes taking place in Southern Oregon. Many of the Camp White

*The changed listening habits of the radio audience and the advent of television brought forth many experiments in new radio programming. One of the highly successful programs developed which has lasted, with minor changes, to the present time, was Monitor. It featured many top entertainers and personalities such as Jonathan Winters.*





*Many nationally known companies are choosing southern Oregon for their headquarters, due to the area's great livability, low labor turnover and proximity to western markets.*



*More than 16 acres under one roof mark the huge operational complex in southern Oregon for Boise-Cascade Corp., annually pouring out millions of dollars in building materials.*



*Harry & David's Bear Creek Orchards not only supply fruits of exquisite quality to the world, but it is also headquarters for Jackson & Perkins, world's largest rose shipper.*

soldiers, remembering the fabulous Rogue River country, kept returning there to live. The expanding national interest in the outdoors brought legions of new visitors each year to the state of Oregon, thousands of whom fell in love with the southern part of the state and returned to buy homes and become permanent residents. This boom in population growth created new industries, new shopping facilities and new job opportunities. Some of the local plants which had been insignificantly small operations, mushroomed into internationally known corporations. A back-shop tinkering genius by the name of Emmitt Tucker patented numerous items and eventually developed the world renowned Tucker Sno-Cat which gained fame on its trips to the Antarctic areas. (KMED-TV engineers frequently use a Sno-Cat to reach the top of Mt. Ashland during winter time.)

With the skyrocketing growth in the housing industry, some of the little sawmill operations of Southern Oregon became great complexes of lumber and plywood manufacturers, etc. . .Elk Lumber Company became a major division of the far-flung Boise Cascade Corporation. A small camper manufacturer in Grants Pass grew to be a major factor in the exploding recreation industry, known as Caveman Industries, and now a division of DiGiorgio Corporation.

At the time of this writing, the names of 3M Corporation, Textron, Weyerhaeuser, Georgia-Pacific and many others known throughout the world. . .have operations employing thousands in Southern Oregon.

The luscious Rogue Valley pears are world famed through Harry & David's Bear Creek Orchards. But it is not equally well known that this is also the world's largest fruit gift packing operation, or that they operate Jackson & Perkins, the largest mail order shipper of rose plants.



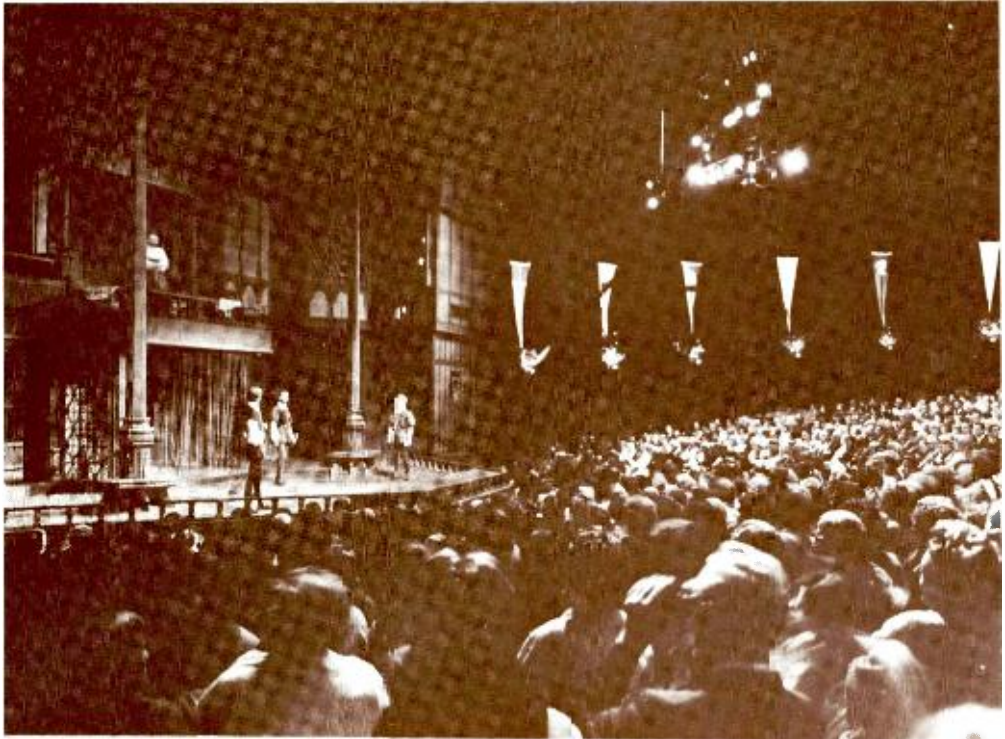
Despite the great growth of Southern Oregon in people and industry, culture has played an equivalently vital role. As far back as the 1920's the Andrew's Opera Company sparked an active awareness of better type entertainment, which has persisted to this day. The great Chautauqua of Ashland provided decades of internationally known entertainment (and edification) for the local citizenry. Now, one of the major attractions is the internationally famous Shakespeare Festival Theatre which operates each summer on a sold-out basis presenting authentic Elizabethan drama. Adjacent to the Shakespearean Theatre is the modern and beautiful Bowmer Theatre for other types of indoor stage entertainment. Each summer, in the gold rush town of Jacksonville, the Britt Music Festival fills the tree covered mountains with great music.

In 1951, KMED Radio initiated the very first radio broadcast of the Shakespearean Theatre and has always been the originating station for the annual broadcast over the NBC Radio Network.

In the past few decades, Southern Oregon has become recognized as a great place to live and work. . .and a great place to do business. KMED has materially contributed to making it so.



*Bill Gates, owner of The Groceteria, maintained an avid interest in KMED during his lifetime and is shown here, with KMED manager Ray Johnson, presenting the grand prize to a contest winner.*



*The superbly presented Shakespearean plays, from America's first Elizabethan theatre, have become world famous and bring thousands of visitors annually to southern Oregon.*



## The Growing Years

For the first few decades of broadcasting, its purpose was primarily envisioned as a rescue device, or at least no more than a method of sending and receiving commercial messages. And, it was in this vein, on April 14, 1912, when the tremendous potential of radio was dramatized, as a young radio operator at Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company of America received the stunning message "S. S. Titanic ran into iceberg. Sinking fast." All other wireless transmissions in the U. S. were forbidden by President Taft for the following 72 hours so as not to interfere with the vital flow of information being received.

The young man receiving this memorable message was David Sarnoff, who later became head of the far-flung Radio Corporation of America. In 1916, young Sarnoff wrote a (now) famous memo to his superiors at Marconi (later to become RCA)

in which he stated, "I have in mind a plan of development which would make radio a household utility in the same sense as a piano or phonograph. The idea is to bring music into the home by wireless." Little did even he anticipate the profound influence which radio was to have on the entire world...during his lifetime.

*In 1961 KMED-TV had its debut, involving a major enlargement of the Ross Lane studios and a second story on much of the building.*





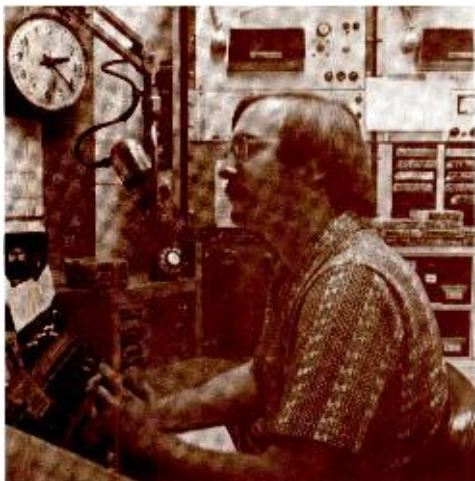
As early as 1908, television had been foreseen by a brilliant British scientist, who certainly made the misstatement of the century when describing the theory as "Probably scarcely worth anyone's while to pursue it. I think you would have to spend some years in hard work, and then would the result be worth anything financially?"

David Sarnoff was not quite so pessimistic, and in 1923 wrote, "I believe that television, which is the

*Construction of the antenna and transmitter complex on the summit of Mt. Ashland presented many problems, in getting material to the site and completing construction during the short summer season.*



*A bustling Broadcast Center houses the operations of KMED Radio, KMED-TV, KTMT Stereo 93, as well as the corporate headquarters for Radio Medford, Inc.*



*The modern control room of KMED Radio is packed with the latest broadcast equipment and there's little room for a daily bouquet of fresh flowers, as was the custom at the old Sparta Building studio.*



*The control room is the pulse center of KMED-TV, handling the dissemination of network programs, locally originated programs, as well as the production of many local commercials.*

technical name for seeing as well as hearing by radio, will come to pass in due course." What an accurate prophet Mr. Sarnoff has proven to be.

In 1921, young Virgin and his companions in the Ashland garage building, couldn't have, in their wildest dreams, imagined the progress of broadcasting and their little transmitting set. The thought of leaping from 5 watts of power to 50, to 100, to 250, to 1,000, to 5,000 would surely have astonished them, but perhaps not nearly so as to think that anyone could actually build a profitable business from the operation. . . or, even more so, astonishing advances such as television.

Television came to Southern Oregon in 1953 with the establishment of KBES-TV, under the control of William B. Smullin, who had previously established a TV station in Eureka, California.

In 1959, Radio Medford, Inc., the corporate owner of KMED Radio, applied for permission to install KMED-TV on Channel 10 and won the construction permit over two other applicants. Television studios were constructed adjacent to KMED Radio on the site purchased by Mrs. Virgin in 1933, with the transmitter located on Blackwell Hill, near the little town of Gold Hill, some 10 miles north of Medford.

In the years prior to KMED-TV the corporate thinking had been largely to provide the finest service for the benefit of the residents of Southern Oregon. With the advent of TV, the corporate thinking expanded to include various other compatible services, for the benefit, however, of a much expanded area stretching from mid-northern California to much of Southern Oregon.





*The weather at the summit of Mt. Ashland... 7,500 feet high... becomes rather rugged during the winter, with ice and snow encasing the tower and wrapping around the building.*

During 1963 the Mt. Ashland Ski Resort was established near the summit of Mt. Ashland, with the accompanying all-year road and electricity. This provided an opportunity to tremendously expand the coverage of KMED-TV and provide additional service to thousands of families. Permission was granted by the FCC for the move and in September, 1966, telecasting was initiated from the summit of Mt. Ashland; 7,600 feet above sea level. It is the highest TV transmitting antenna in the Pacific Northwest, with a primary signal covering Klamath, Josephine and Jackson County in Oregon and Siskiyou County of California. . . plus parts of Modoc, Lake, Douglas and Curry County. This was an area linked geographically and economically, and the heart of the historical (but mythical) State of Jefferson.

Installation of the new transmitter complex presented numerous difficult problems for Ellis Feinstein, KMED's director of engineering and his dedicated department. While there was "sort of a road" zig-zagging its narrow, steep way to the summit, hauling equipment and building supplies over it was a tough job. To circumvent the severe winter weather, when line repairs would be impossible, the power line was placed underground, and surmounting the precipitous slopes and raw-boned, rock ridges with the line involved another Herculean effort. The entire operation was made even more difficult

*KMED-TV owns or services a multitude of mountain-top translators, providing TV viewing to many remote or difficult-reception areas.*





through the desire to keep from upsetting the ecological values of the alpine area. And, all of these problems were complicated even farther by the fact the project had to be totally completed in the short period of July to October 1, prior to the onset of winter which would stall additional efforts until the following year.

These problems were possibly equalled though, in designing and constructing a functional building and antenna on the mountain peak. The structure had to be able to withstand extreme cold, as well as occasional winds of hurricane force. The periodic loss of engineers at these remote mountain locations by other TV stations represented a possibility which the station management wanted to totally eliminate. During winter, great deposits of ice form on antennas at this height, occasionally plummeting off in half-ton masses to thunder onto the building roof, giving the lone occupant the startled feeling of being the objective of some heavy artillery fire. It would be impossible to haul water to the location in winter time, so a water system was designed to utilize melting snow from the roof, filtered and stored for the long winter consumption. Many long, overtime hours were involved in making certain the September deadline was met.

An auxiliary diesel power plant and enough fuel for prolonged operation is maintained at the transmitter for use in case of power failures, assuring KMED-TV viewers they will not be deprived of TV.

An engineer is stationed 24 hours a day, at the transmitter, changing shift every 2½ days. Complete living quarters and a full kitchen aid in their comfort. During summer time the engineers can drive to work, exhilarated by the gorgeous view and a landscape decorated by a myriad of wildflowers. During the long snowy season they generally ride the KMED Sno-Cat although, periodically, they may take the Ski lift which reaches to within a few hundred feet of the building. Again, they are treated to winter sights of great beauty with sculptured snow banks, snow covered trees, and spectacular views of snow blanketed mountains punctuated on the south by the great spire of Mt. Shasta.

Southern Oregon and northern California is an excitingly beautiful, mountainous country decorated by jewel-like valleys and narrow canyons. While this makes the area one of the most livable in the U. S., great reception problems are created for TV. To overcome this quirk of nature, KMED-TV has laced the area together with a multitude of translators, in essence, small TV stations which rebroadcast the Channel 10 signal. Twenty of these operations are

*Thousands of housewives attend the annual KMED Food Fairs featuring nationally known food experts giving cooking demonstrations.*





*A strong local News base, NBC Network News and a responsible element of community service has enabled KQMS Radio to achieve a dominant position in Redding, California.*

owned by the station or serviced by KMED-TV engineers. Inasmuch as almost all of these are on peaks, or at least, higher areas, when anything goes wrong during the winter storms, arduous efforts are necessary by the men to put the units back in operation. In deep winter KMED-TV or radio is practically the only communication with the outside world in some of the isolated areas of Northern California.

The acceptance of KMED-TV and the outstanding success of KMED Radio with its continued number one rating with listeners over the years in Southern Oregon aroused the interest of the management and board of directors to try and repeat the same success in a similar market.

Redding, California is a market somewhat a counterpart to Medford in that it, too, is isolated from any nearby metropolitan area which would overshadow it; it is an important trading center for numerous small surrounding towns and is a vibrant, growing area, with an obvious great future.

In 1966, Radio Medford, Inc. purchased KQMS Radio in Redding, a 250 watt full-time operation on 1400 kc. which had been operated for several years as a religious station. A new studio location was leased, new equipment purchased and on August 1, 1967, a new KQMS was launched in an almost identical format as KMED Radio. Several KMED staff members were transferred to the new operation with long-time employees Harry Barker and Lee Davis becoming manager and program director, respectively.

During 1970 the power of KQMS was increased to 1,000 watts. Its aggressive News policy, coupled with the NBC network soon established it as the voice of News in Redding and the dominant station with adult listeners, as has been KMED for so many decades.

The success of these two new divisions of Radio Medford, Inc. expanded the corporate thinking even farther, with the accepted objective of the Board of Directors to expand as long as these moves dove-tailed with the other interests of the corporation and fulfilled the needs of the people within the corporation's general area of interest.

During November, 1970, the debut of KMED-FM Stereo took place, bringing the first stereo operation to a vast expanse of over 40,000 square miles, from Lakeview to the coast and from Cottage Grove to Redding. The new FM division was quite a step from the 1939 plans which had been shelved due to World War II, (and dropped in 1949) but it brought a new, exciting element of stereo music to thousands of homes for the first time. In 1972 it was decided a change in call letters would be to the best interests of the station, permitting an establishment of its own identity throughout the huge area served. In line with this thinking, in July of 1972, the call letters were changed to Stereo 93.7-KTMT. . .an alliterative use of the abbreviation for mountain. . .to reflect the transmitter site on top of Mt. Ashland. This division is currently under the managership of John Larkin.

Southern Oregon is an area noted for the participation of its citizens in community projects. Numerous of these projects are continually under way and KMED personnel are not only extremely active in many of these undertakings, but make every reasonable effort to help promote their success.

While this history of community involvement stretches back to the very beginning of KMED, it takes many different forms. It may be anything from announcements for a lost dog on behalf of a tearful youngster, to an interview with the publicity chairman of the Oregon Heart Association. Or, to annually turning over more than two hours of prime time television (without charge) to the Lions Club for conducting an auction which raises thousands of dollars for the Southern Oregon Sight and Blind Center... to an extreme national involvement such as the tragically sorrowful period in November, 1963, when President Kennedy was assassinated, whereupon all commercial programming and advertising was cancelled on radio and TV until after the funeral.

In addition to these projects, the station initiates its own worthwhile ventures into helping the community. Again, this covers a wide spectrum and can be anything from the KMED Sportscasters Club, an organization of some 125 local businessmen who, in conjunction with KMED Radio, promote local high school sports and presents an annual banquet for Medford High School coaches and football players, with KMED providing a college scholarship to the outstanding athlete of the season. . .to the KMED Food and Home Festival which invites outstanding home economists from around the country to put on cooking demonstrations for local housewives.

*KMED is probably the only broadcast operation in the country which provides public service to its area through a free airport parking lot.*





*Oregon's important presidential primary brings most candidates to the state for campaigning. . . as it did a handsome young John F. Kennedy on his way to the White House.*

If it is something important to the people of Southern Oregon. . . most likely KMED and its people will be involved in some manner.

Even away back October, 1922, Mr. Virgin thought a daily weather report would be of great value to listeners. With the strong help of the Mail Tribune, permission was finally obtained from the government to do so. Later the station initiated a fruit frost forecast for the benefit of the many orchardists during frost danger periods. A half century later, weather reports on KMED are avidly followed and each spring orchardists still listen to the station to determine if the tender fruit buds are in danger and if heating is required.

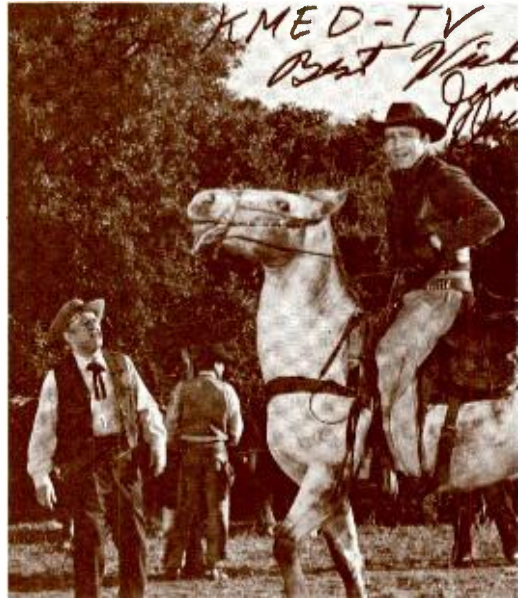


*Broadcasting has made the voices and faces of public figures familiar to almost everyone (Ex-congressman Robert Duncan and former President Lyndon B. Johnson).*



Many famous personalities have appeared before the KMED microphones. John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon were both interviewed as presidential candidates during Oregon's vitally important presidential primary. . .the Virginian (James Drury), Leonard Nimoy, star of Mission Impossible and Star Trek, Pinto Colvig, the voice of many Walt Disney characters, etc., etc.

*James Drury, star of the long-running "Virginian" on TV, is well known in southern Oregon and a former resident of Shady Cove.*



*Leonard Nimoy was Grand Marshall at the annual Pear Blossom Festival parade in Medford.*

The new changes in broadcasting with the accompanying impact reach deep into every American home, and the growth of television makes not only the voices of famous people readily known but their faces familiar, as well. Through the facilities of KMED Radio and TV, the voices of President Johnson, President Nixon, David Brinkley, Lorne Green, and uncountable others have become as recognizable as those of one's own family.

In the spring of 1972, an entirely new division was established by Radio Medford, Inc. . . Cascade Sound Service. This division provides pleasing background FM



*Pinto Colvig, the famous Disney characters' voice, was born in the little gold rush town of Jacksonville and on his frequent visits there often stopped at KMED.*

Stereo Music for offices and businesses. The music for this operation is originated from Mt. Ashland, providing service 18 hours daily, seven days a week throughout Norther California and Southern Oregon.

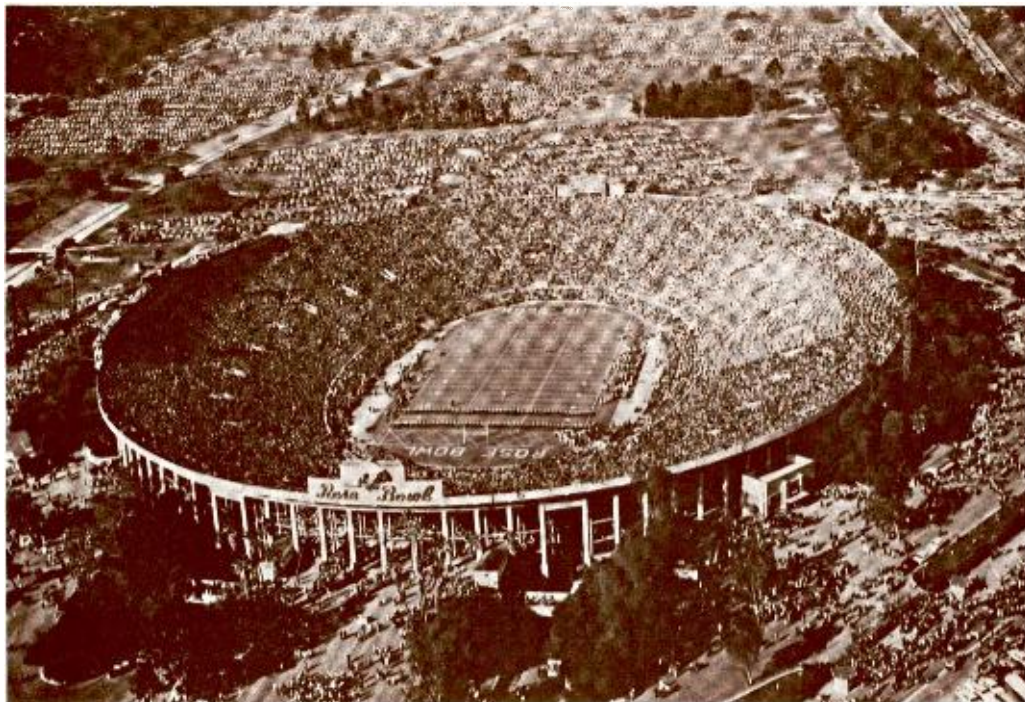
Broadcasting has had dynamic growth in southern Oregon/northern California. Isolated from metropolitan station coverage, the area developed broadcasting from within, with each of the consequential cities being reached by local radio, and service over the entire area achieved only by TV or Stereo KTMT.



*KTMT was originally established in November 1970 as KMED-FM Stereo but during mid 1972 the call letters were changed to reflect a more individual identity for the station throughout its huge coverage area and the transmitter location atop the mountain (Mt. Ashland).*



The visionary Bill Virgin would surely have been ecstatic to see how his hopes for broadcasting have grown in the (mythical) State of Jefferson. He'd be happiest of all though, to see how his dreams, and the pioneering KFAY have grown from the dinky little room at the old Jackson County Fairgrounds, with the tiny 5 watt transmitter and fistful of hand-made equipment, to the bustling Radio Medford, Inc. headquarters at Broadcast Center on Rossanley Drive and more than 60 employees. But, he would have been proud too, of the great traditions initiated and followed by the people of the operation. . .but proudest of all, perhaps, at the daily influence his little broadcast operation has grown to have over a vast area and with the thousands of families living here.



*Each year scores of outstanding sporting events are broadcast on KMED Radio and TV. . .the annual Rose Bowl game may be a far cry from that long-ago October 1927 University of Oregon and California game, but every sporting event is big in sports-minded southern Oregon.*



## The Development of Broadcast News

When Robert Ruhl, publisher of the Medford Mail Tribune, persuaded William J. Virgin to expand the News coverage of KMED. . .way back in 1926. . .it was a far different concept than what broadcast News has since become.

Initially, most News stories were merely recaps of items which had, or were to appear in the Medford Mail Tribune. In theory the paper would also be saved the cost of issuing expensive special editions on anything of outstanding, fast-breaking News value. As late as the 1930's and 1940's local News was pretty much bypassed by most radio stations, offering primarily a concentration of News from the national and international scene and minor local/regional offerings from the wire services. In the early days all newswire feeds were in Morse code and Newspapers and radio stations had to have a man on the staff capable of receiving telegraphic transmissions.

Following the end of the relationship with the Mail Tribune, KMED had relied on News service from such organizations as Transradio Press Service, until becoming affiliated with NBC in 1937. Following this association, the dynamic impact of the network newscasters established a new rapport and an enlarging interest about happenings in distant lands. . .bringing them to a focus previously unknown to southern Oregon. World War II provided an even greater awareness of world events. By that time KMED had contracted for the services of United Press International, but radio still was not considered a primary source for local News, even though feeds of local and regional material were provided and used.

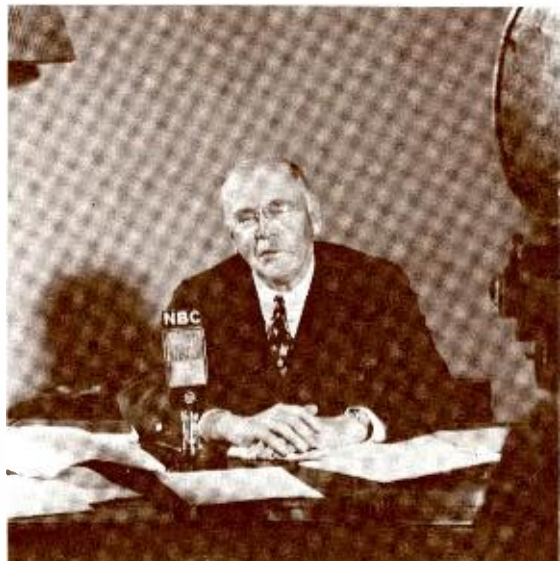
While through the years KMED had carried substantial network News with supplemental local/regional coverage, events happened in 1955 which changed the whole News reporting picture in Southern Oregon. That summer had been tinder-dry and during September a rash of forest fires broke out, almost simultaneously, from northern California through southern Oregon. Surrounded by rampaging fires, communication in some of the remote areas was confined strictly to radio, and without news from KMED, many people just didn't know what was going on during



*By the early 1930's KMED national and international news was received from Trans-Wireless by teletype, as shown in this mid-1930's picture of the News room.*

an extremely dangerous period. Recognizing the critical need for information by these endangered people, a full-fledged local fire-news department was established with Frank Pinnock as director. An experienced newsman, Pinnock immediately established contacts for providing a continuous flow of vital, up-to-the-minute fire information. Following the forest fire emergency, the News gathering facilities were transformed to a day-to-day local News reporting organization. At the present time, Radio Medford, Inc. has the largest broadcast News gathering staff in Southern Oregon/Northern California. . .with five full-time newsmen, plus several stringers in various communities stretching from Redding north. Four remote radio equipped News cars provide on-the-scene coverage. Sound-on-film cameras, a KMED film laboratory, shoulder-carried tape recorders and other sophisticated equipment provide dramatic, vital, local News coverage, unimaginable a few years ago.

*One of the most famous early network newscasters was H. V. Kaltenborn. His distinctive, authoritative delivery made his voice known to millions. Unfortunately, he is best remembered for his decisive radio pronouncement in 1948 that Thomas E. Dewey had defeated Harry S. Truman for the office of U. S. President, which turned out to be erroneous, as Mr. Truman never let him forget.*



In a similar vein of providing another needed element in local broadcasting, in 1956, Ray Jahnsen, general manager of KMED, initiated the first broadcast editorializing in southern Oregon. These editorials have continued until the present time, to quote Mr. Johnson "not on any regular basis but when there is a need. . .and, not to convince people of any corporate objectives. . .only to motivate the thinking of listeners".

Election News has been totally revolutionized from the local level to national elections by the coverage from radio and TV stations.

In decades past, few candidates really knew the outcome of their campaign efforts until the following day, at best, or sometimes even weeks. Now, through the wide use of voting machines and computer centers, the bulk of any election News is known within a couple of hours after the polls close. . .through the facilities of broadcasting.

Political experts can, through an analysis of voting in key areas, determine with amazing accuracy voting trends and advise the broadcast public. Presidential candidates now frequently determine their political fate, even before the polls have closed on the west coast.

Candidate's voices and faces become as familiar as some of the air personalities. This powerful impact on voters has led to some extremely controversial laws being passed. . .limiting of spending on radio and TV by candidates for national office. . .equal time and equal access rulings. . .strong testimonials to the powerful impact of broadcasting and broadcast News.

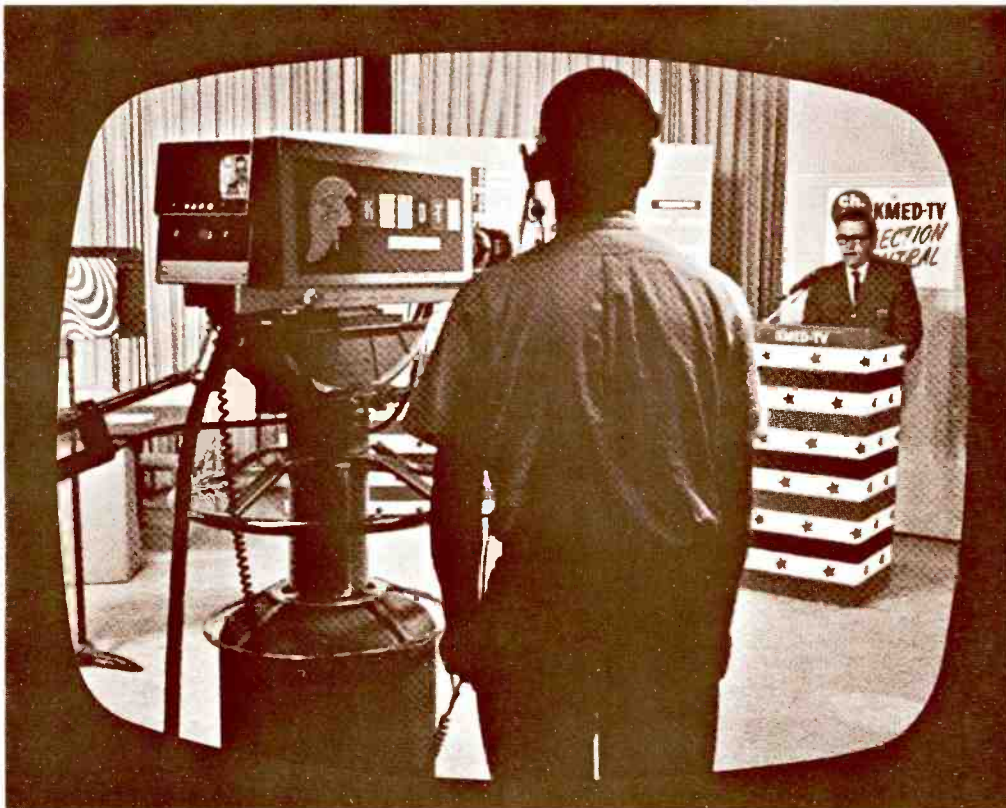
This is a far cry from the early 1930's when Mrs. Virgin was sued by Henrietta B. Martin because Mrs. Virgin would not sell her air time for promoting her election as county clerk. Judge Herbert Hanna ruled that "the office was too insignificant to merit the use of air time".

Another type of broadcast News has been developing in recent years. . .the documentary. . .covering, not just day-to-day News events, but providing a penetrating analysis of situations, events, etc., important or interesting enough to warrant an in-depth coverage. The resources and man power of the networks enable them to cover major projects of this type, such as NBC's "White Paper" series and "First Tuesday". KMED Radio and Television have won numerous awards for similar documentaries at the local level.



*On February 9, 1942 the Normandie burned at pier 88, in North River. The story was brought to radio listeners with on-the-spot reporting by Graham McNamee for NBC and Glenn Riggo for the Blue Network.*





*Radio and TV has revolutionized the reporting of election returns. Generally, the outcome of important offices is known within hours of polls closing. The first live color TV cameras used in southern Oregon were at KMED-TV for the primary election returns in May 1968.*

*KMED's 5 man (full time) News department is the largest broadcast News organization in southern Oregon. This is supplemented by regular News stringers throughout the four county basic coverage area.*





Broadcast News is now the first choice source for News in the U.S., providing an incisive hear-see participation in the world happenings. The role of newspapers has been changed to give more in-depth coverage than is generally possible with broadcast reporting. . .newspapers and broadcast reporters have combined to make the citizens of the United States the best informed people in the entire world, since the beginning of time.



*The advent of television enlarged the role of broadcast News to an even greater height. Network newscasters and commentators like David Brinkley became national personalities, tremendously influential throughout the country. Leading political figures, such as the late Senator Everett M. Dirksen, eagerly appear on these programs to express their opinions and plans.*



*Hank Henry, News Director, has been a broadcast newsman for over 25 years and, for more than a decade, presenting the News in southern Oregon/ northern California. He is unquestionably the best known local newsman of the area.*



*4 mobile units help the KMED News team provide accurate, up-to-the-minute News coverage.*

## Future Years

Millions of anxious Americans were glued to their TV sets or radios on February 20, 1962, vicariously riding with a gallant young John Glenn in his epic circling of the world, KMED and KMED-TV brought the memorable event to southern Oregon and Northern California. A few years later this thrill was repeated when another young American became an instantaneous hero with a stroll on the moon.

These amazing events are just two examples of the happenings, totally inconceivable, but a few decades ago. However, the most amazing thought of all, is that people throughout the entire world were able to listen to practically every word spoken by the astronauts, as well as seeing much of the historic adventure.

Without question, these are only tokens of the things still to come. There already are sophisticated satellites in operation to provide weather information, world wide communications, etc. There will be dramatic new developments, each serving mankind in a new or better manner. Who, just a decade ago, would have conceived of untold millions of Americans sitting in their living room listening and watching the President of the United States dining with officials of the Peoples Republic of China, in Peking.

These things are possible due to the unbelievable developments in the communications industry. Tape recorders and video tape recorders are able to instantaneously capture sound and pictures for immediate playback as well as preservation. Initially, these were huge, cumbersome items, too weighty for most purposes. . .how many people today remember those first wire tape recorders which were so "new" in 1950. Now, tape recorders have been converted to shirt pocket size operations and many people correspond with tape cassettes rather than letters. Radios the size of cigarette packages are now commonplace. The first home TV sets were monsters. . .now, they're being made the size of a coffee cup.

The first video tape recorders cost \$100,000 or so, and were obviously unavailable

*A smiling John Glenn in "Friendship 7" and his epic circling of the earth was another of the great historic events people of this generation have shared through the miracle of radio and TV.*



*Astronaut Buzz Aldrin stands on the Moon...broadcasting brought the memorable moment in the history of the World to millions of people...as it happened.*



to the average citizen, offering recordings only in black and white. Now, they cost but half of that and provide a better picture in color. There are home models available for only a few thousand dollars. Before long, these will have been streamlined into a common household item, perhaps attached to the TV set for recording a favorite program on a cassette. This, then to be played back at a more convenient time, or to capture some memorable event for a permanent home record. Or, who knows, but what people will soon be able to buy cassettes of their favorite opera as casually as they now purchase a 45 rpm record.

No one, of course, knows what effect all these changes, and the new ones still to come, will have on the communications industry or on the various divisions of KMED. . .or, on the people of the areas served. Bill Virgin and his friends, in the 1920's hadn't the faintest concept of the great changes to come in their era.

The remote ranchers and placer miners of the 1930's, who depended upon a 250 watt KMED Radio to provide them with entertainment and news of the outside world could hardly have dreamed of the thousands of families who would pour into the same areas following World War II.

As big city living palled, people began searching for the beauty, livability and opportunity for peaceful challenges as offered by the land of southern Oregon, so inappropriately described in an 1854 letter by a homesick miner to his family back East as "a land fit only for the habitation of savages, as no road will ever be built through these inhospitable mountains and normal commercial intercourse will be impossible". . .one wonders what the miner's reaction would be could he see the great Interstate 5 freeway which links the rich Rogue River Valley to the huge metropolitan areas of San Francisco, Portland, Los Angeles, etc., with overnight travel. . .the bustling Medford-Jackson County Airport which is the second busiest in the State of Oregon. . .or the hustling manufacturing operations supplying the needs of the world.

In discussing the future years of KMED and broadcasting with Ray Johnson, executive Vice-President of Radio Medford, Inc., past president of Oregon Association of Broadcasters, past director of National Association of Broadcasters (radio division), past chairman Radio Code Board and currently director of National Association of Broadcasters (television division), he made these observations:

"While KMED is observing its 50th Anniversary, and broadcasting, as most people know it, is only slightly older, it still is in comparative infancy. Nevertheless, during this period, radio and television has accomplished much, and proven itself to be a real community and national servant. In the years to come, we can look forward to many more improvements and refinements in the industry, particularly in the areas of program services, miniaturizing of home and personal receivers, and numerous entirely new services.

I see AM radio stations moving ever closer to the individual listener, becoming even of greater personal service. I visualize the day, not too far away, when a color television set will be a two sided or many sided screen, small enough to be



*Great events of the world and the activities of people make News, but perhaps the challenging exploration of the dangerous unknown excites people most of all. An NBC microphone accompanied William Beebe and his famous bathysphere in their memorable 22 mile descent beneath the ocean's surface in 1932. . .providing exciting radio reports on "News in depth". . .as it happened. Some 30 years later NBC. . .through the facilities of KMED Radio and TV gave listeners and viewers of southern Oregon and northern California a chance to participate in the launching of space exploration. As man continues his struggles in a thirst for exploration of the unknown, the KMED family of stations will continue to bring his exploits to those of us who must stay behind. . .vicariously listening and watching. . .and learning.*

placed in the center of a table, like a center piece, for viewing and enjoyment by all who are gathered, sharing a good meal or playing their favorite game of cards.

Future stereo FM radio stations will probably replace AM radio as the regional medium, serving vast areas, such as our own mythical State of Jefferson, from a single transmitter site, while its older brother, AM radio, will assume a new role of the extremely local medium, much like the typical home town newspaper.

I see local television stations being provided programming directly from satellite relay stations, obviating the current use of telephone facilities for network and non-network program distribution. Earth receiving stations will be owned and operated by individual stations, such as KMED-TV, or groups of stations located in the same city. The genius of man, coupled with human need, desire and inquisitiveness, in a quest for information, education, instruction and entertainment, will continue to call upon the scientific sector of our society, and the results, as in the past, will be an ever increasing and astonishing public servant called broadcasting."

Prophets in the field of broadcasting have, generally, been shy in envisioning the fabulous developments of the industry. . .but, one thing is certain. . .the first half century of broadcasting and KMED Radio. . . have only been indications of things to come. And, that the corporate philosophy of KMED. . .community service. . .industry participation. . .and reinvestment in the communities served, will provide a continuously greater asset on behalf of these areas.

Fifty years from now the operators of the KMED communications family can look back, we hope, and say "the first 50 years were certainly great ones, and gave us the opportunity of making the second half century equally as progressive and great". . .and "thanks a lot Bill Virgin and the fellows who gathered in that Ashland garage back in the fall of 1921, along with some other dedicated people, in the meantime, for making it all possible."

The end

## Divisions of Radio Medford, Inc.

### Radio Medford, Inc.

President . . . . . J. Les DeArmond

Operating Executive . . . . . Ray Johnson

### Board of Directors

J. Les DeArmond

John R. Dellenback

Dr. Dwight H. Findley

Dr. Burt Lageson

Ray Johnson

### Corporate Executives

Edward P. Barnett, Director of Sales

Ellis Feinstein, Director of Engineering

Russ Jamison, Director of Programming

### Department Heads

Art Chipman, National Sales Manager

Marvin Frymire, Comptroller & Bus. Manager

Hank Henry, News Director

### KMED Radio

Sam Price  
Station Manager

### KMED-TV

Don Hanlin  
Operations Manager  
Gene Barlow  
Sales Manager

### KTMT-Stereo

John Larkin  
Station Manager

### Cascade Sound Service

John Larkin  
Manager

### KQMS Radio

Harry Barker  
Station Manager





**J. Les DeArmond**  
President  
Retired lumberman  
& businessman



**Dr. Dwight H. Findley**  
Vice-President  
Retired Physician



**Ray Johnson**  
Executive Vice-President  
& General Manager  
(Operating Executive)



**Dr. Burt Lageson**  
Secretary-Treasurer  
Dentist



**John R. Dellenback**  
Director  
U.S. Representative, 4th District  
Attorney

# Credits

Putting together a history of this type involves bits and pieces of information from innumerable sources, frequently the same information from several people. Eventually, it becomes difficult to properly credit the assistance given by these many people. The author would, in particular, like to acknowledge the invaluable help from the following:

**Medford Mail Tribune** - - Herb Grey and Gerald Latham were most helpful in providing some extremely pertinent information, in particular, of the early relationship between the Mail Tribune and KMED. The generous access to the microfilm files of the Mail Tribune provided authentic dates and data which would not have been available from any other source.

**Elmer Morrison** - - The good fortune of interviewing one of the participants at the initial broadcast of what eventually evolved into KMED, provided many early details which could not have been provided by any other person. . .also the photo of the original broadcast site.

**David Rees** - - Many fine early photos of the Sparta Building operation and early Ross Lane studios were provided, as well as information from the 1930's and 1940's.

**Paul Smith** - - The use of several early photos and information regarding the relationship of Mr. Gates to the station.

**Verle G. Walker** - - Interviews with the late Mr. Walker gave a great deal of information on the early days and incidents of KMED.

Numerous worthwhile facts were obtained from:

**The History of Jackson County** M. A. Thesis, University of Washington, 1931.

**Early Radio Broadcasting & Reception in Southern Oregon**, Term Paper for History of the Northwest. Sam Thompson, 1959.

**National Broadcasting Company** - for providing many pictures of early radio personalities.

**National Aeronautics and Space Administration** - for the pictures of John Glenn and Buzz Aldrin.



