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A LOOK
BACK

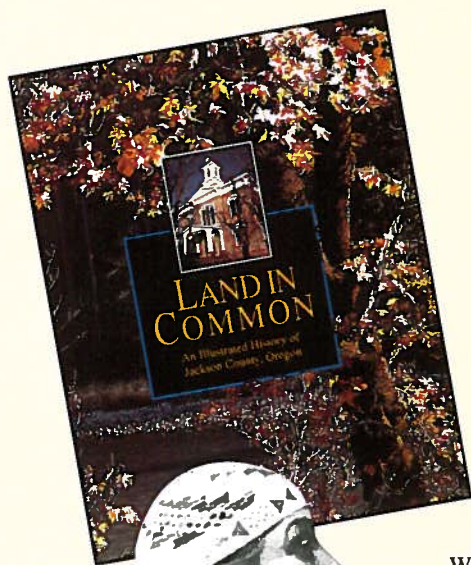
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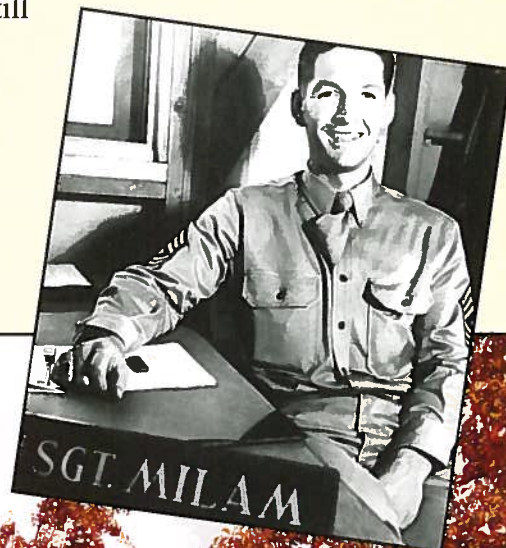


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Lavishly illustrated with memorable photographs from a century of life in Jackson County, *LAND IN COMMON: An Illustrated History of Jackson County, Oregon* will delight young and old, newcomers and native Oregonians alike. From the American Indians who once inhabited the Rogue Valley to the orchard barons who found “gold” in the valley’s fertile earth to the World War II soldiers who turned the Agate Desert into a sprawling city, *LAND IN COMMON* will open your eyes to the women and men whose roots still run deep throughout this land.

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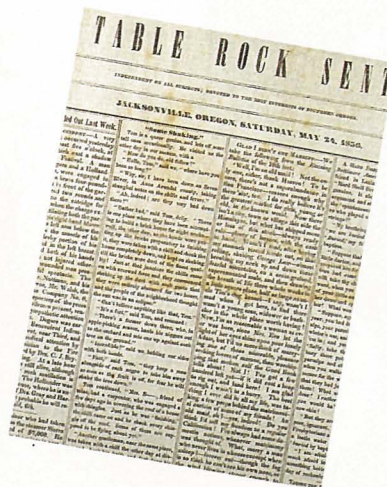




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by Ronald Kramer

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Since this is the final edition of the *Table Rock Sentinel*, Executive Director Samuel J. Wegner takes a look back at its past, and then glimpses into *Oregon Heritage's* future.

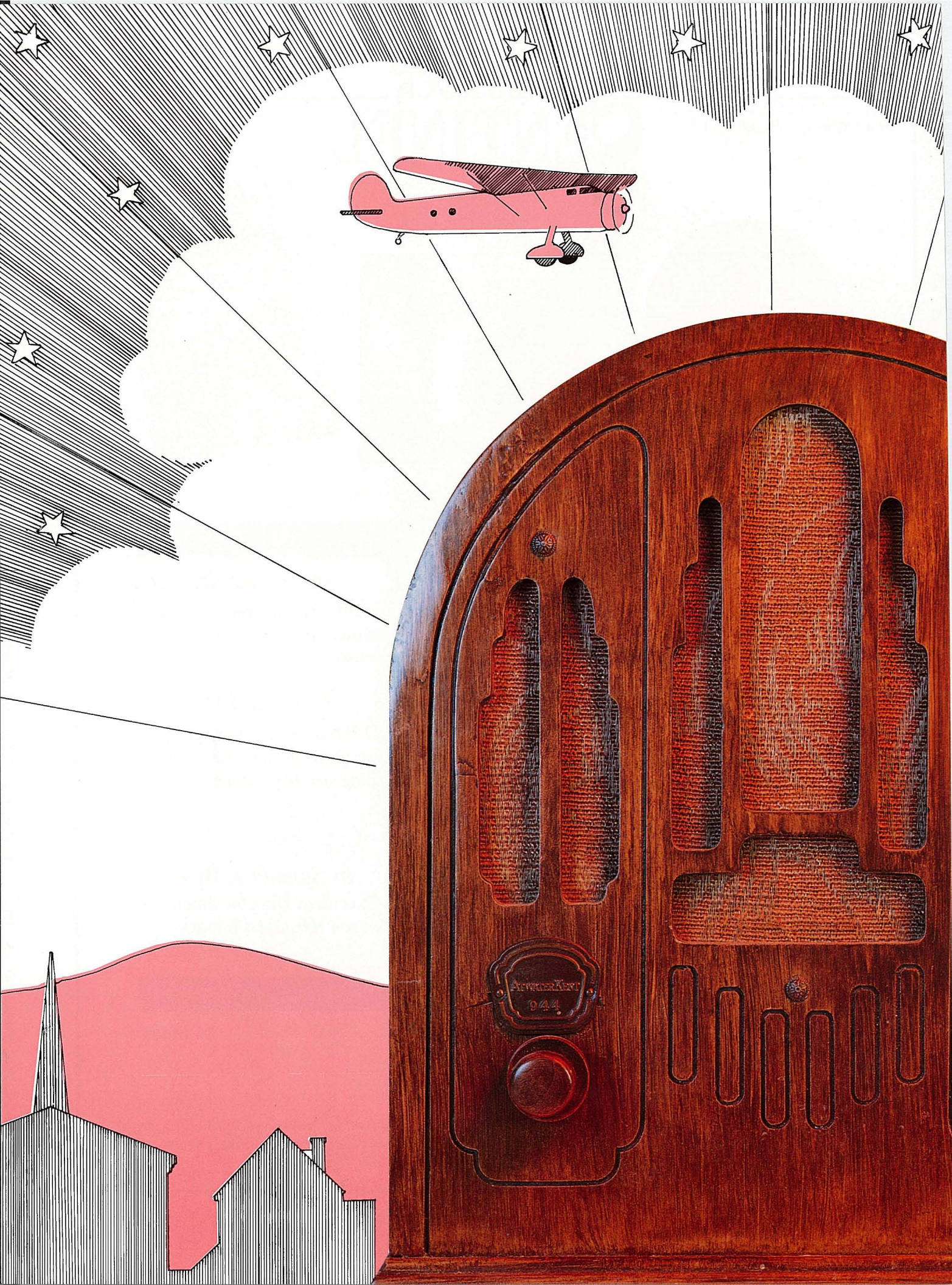
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Front cover: Hank Henry aims his 16-mm movie camera, while shooting for KMED-TV's news department. Photo courtesy KTMT

Back cover: My father, my two sisters, and I on our way to JC Penney's, 1960. I hated my hair. Southern Oregon Historical Society #12490





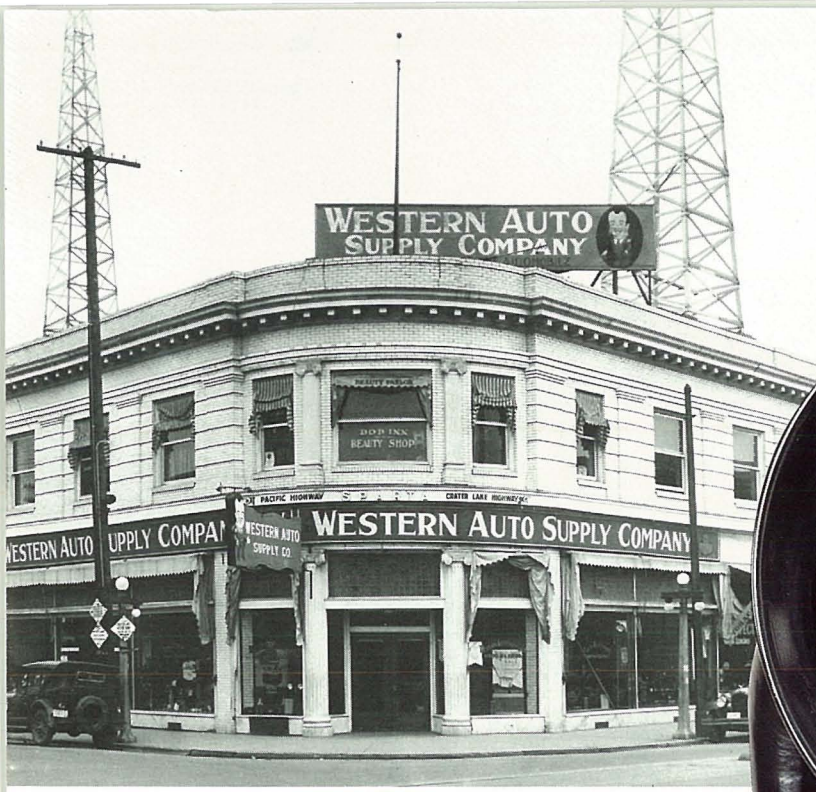
RADIO DAYS

by Ronald Kramer

In 1920, southern Oregon was isolated from the rest of the country in ways observers today may not fully appreciate. While the Medford Opera House did host a number of noted performers, such events were irregular. Daily newspapers provided coverage of national and international events, but the feeling of isolation from urban America was still palpable. With its sense of immediacy and connection with the outside world, emerging radio technology tantalized the imagination of New Yorker and southern Oregonian alike.

In the fall of 1921, a group of Ashland radio enthusiasts gathered in Elmer Morrison's garage at 1049 Ashland Street. In addition to Morrison, those attending included: Sam Jordan, owner of an automotive and electronics shop; Floyd Rush, a veteran radio operator; and William ("Bill") Virgin, a man destined to become one of radio's true pioneers in southern Oregon. After the men assembled a small, 5-watt radio transmitter and stretched an antenna wire from the garage to a large tree, southern Oregon's first radio station was "on the air."¹

There was clearly growing interest in radio, and area newspapers began running stories about "wireless concerts" that newly developing stations were broadcasting in other parts of



Above, KMED's twin transmitting towers can be seen atop Medford's Sparta Building. The station began broadcasting from the corner of Riverside and Main in 1926. Right, During radio's earliest days, listeners had to purchase a receiver and separate speaker, plus an unwieldy car battery to operate the apparatus. The Crosley radio and Magnavox speaker pre-date radios with built-in speakers. Southern Oregon Historical Society #7940, radio courtesy Ronald Kramer



the county. On March 15, 1922, the *Ashland Daily Tidings* reported that a Medford man had used "a radiophone" in his rooms at the Medford Hotel to listen to broadcasts from as far away as Chicago and San Francisco.

It was inevitable that radio enthusiasts would soon devise ways to combine the fun with commerce. On May 25, 1922, the *Medford Mail Tribune* reported on discussions among electronics dealers about building a local radio station. Central Point had been suggested as an ideal site because of its central location between Josephine and Jackson County listeners. The town offered \$200 toward the station's construction if Medford, Ashland, and Grants Pass contributors would raise the balance. Virgin sprang into action. The July 21, 1922 *Medford Mail*

Tribune reported that he was building a station in Central Point and that the newspaper would participate in the project by providing news and market reports for broadcast.²

The call letters KFAY were assigned, and Virgin's station began operations on September 23, 1922, with a broadcast of Launsbach's Dance Orchestra from the Jackson County Fairgrounds pavilion. Interested parties were invited to view "the first broadcast station in Southern Oregon."³

The *Mail Tribune* hailed the station as a success: "Radio station K.F.A.Y. located at Medford Oregon is getting excellent results. Last Saturday night, when broadcasting dance music by Launsbach's orchestra on low power with the aerial incomplete they were picked up by Santa Cruz Calif, Sedro Woolley, Wash., Salt Lake City, Utah

1920

November 2—KDKA, Pittsburgh, broadcast returns of the Harding election as the first licensed, operating radio broadcasting station.

1921

Fall—Virgin, Morrison, Jordan and Rush gather in Morrison's garage to build, operate, and experiment with a small transmitter.

1922

September 23—Virgin's station, KFAY, signs on with a broadcast from the Dance Hall building in the Jackson County Fairgrounds with 5 watts at 833 KHz.

1923

January 2—The programming of one radio station in New York is carried simultaneously over a second station in Boston, giving birth to concept of a "network" or "chain broadcasting."

1924

February 8—Transcontinental network broadcast links stations coast to coast. KFAY switches to 1060 KHz frequency.

1925



1927

December 26—KMED signs on from the Sparta Building as the Medford Mail Tribune-Virgin Broadcasting station with 50 watts at 1200 KHz.

1928

First major sale of AC radios operating off of house current to the general public. Replaces use of large, expensive automobile batteries previously used for operating radios in homes.



and other equally distant points. Last night, with the completed aerial and high power they probably reached over a radius of 1500 miles." The newspaper also encouraged community participation by reporting that "the owners of the station . . . wish the public to consider the installation of a [radio station] as a community affair and wish the support of all local talent to make it a success. They wish all musicians to register with them who are willing to sing or play over the radio-phone."⁴

During this formative period, each station broadcast at the same frequency (833 KHz), and in a kind of gentlemen's agreement, broadcasters opted to share the frequency in turns. Thus, when the *Medford Mail Tribune* published a radio schedule on March 17, 1922, that appeared like this:

Sunday

10:00 to 11:00 Fairmont Hotel, San Francisco
11:00 to 12:15 Trinity Center, San Francisco, sermon
12:15 to 1:00 Warner & Linden, San Francisco, concert
2:00 to 3:00 Stockton record station of the Portable Wireless Telephone Co., concert
4:00 to 5:00 Colin D. Kennedy, Los Altos, concert

the listings actually reflected the individual stations' sign-on and sign-off times. By late 1922, growth in the number of stations forced the Department of Commerce to authorize a second frequency at 750 KHz. The next year, the federal government began assigning specific frequencies to individual stations—a practice that continues today under FCC guidelines.

By this time, speculation over radio's significance and its impact on society became a regular theme in newspaper editorials:

A radio university, placing higher education within the reach of all, is now considered but a matter of time. The future educational possibilities of radio seem to be limited only by the cooperation of the people.

The unemployment problem of engineers and electrical technicians has been solved by the radio boom, according to a report issued by the Federated American Engineering Societies. Since January 1 the Society has placed in employment more than 900 engineers and is continuing its placement at the rate of more than 20 a day.

1929

A year after Bill Virgin's death, his widow, Blanche, is the first woman in the nation to own and operate a radio station.

1930



Blanche Virgin

1931

1932

KFJL, Astoria, moves to Klamath Falls and brings that city its first radio station, operating at 1210 KHz with 100 watts.

Bill Virgin

Southern Oregon's Radio Pioneer



William ("Bill") Jackson

Virgin was born July 8, 1886. In 1891, his father moved the family from Wisconsin to Ashland, Oregon in 1891. In 1893, Bill's father purchased the Ashland Mills, which he owned until 1906. Bill attended the Ashland schools and played football for Ashland High. In 1903, Bill enlisted in the United States Navy, where he developed an interest in electronics.

In 1921, Bill and several friends built an experimental radio transmitter in an Ashland garage, and a year later, Bill announced plans to construct and operate a radio station. He applied for a broadcasting license and began construction of the station himself.

Bill was a natural promoter, and when his plans were sufficiently advanced, the *Medford Mail Tribune* agreed to supply the station with news reports for broadcast. On September 23, 1922, the new KFAY was completed.

Bill was fast becoming a businessman of both means and reputation. He possessed a flair for showmanship and was adept at advancing radio. His personality and keen business sense in the emerging field placed Bill in the public eye and he gained great notoriety through such schemes as premiering KFAY's opening at the 1923 Jackson County Fair and later lowering equipment into the Oregon Caves to determine at what depth he could receive broadcasts.

On December 13, 1926, Bill filed an application for the new station KMED. The license was granted on December 26, and the new station signed on that day from newly constructed studios in the Sparta Building at Riverside and Main.

The station was a success and employed state-of-the-art equipment such as a Western Electric transmitter that generated a full 50 watts. Mounted on the Sparta's roof eighty-two feet apart were two eighty-five-foot wooden towers purchased from the Grange. Between the two towers was stretched Number 14 copper wires that radiated KMED's signal.

Bill had for some years suffered from Bright's Disease. His condition became acute in early 1928, and he died on Friday evening, January 27, 1928. Blanche Virgin took over operation of KMED as the first woman in the nation to own and operate a radio station. In 1950, she sold KMED to Radio Medford, Inc., and while she retained friendships with several former employees, she never returned to the station. She later lived in California for some time, but eventually relocated to Marysville, Washington where Blanche Virgin died on October 25, 1978.

Educational experts say that radio will prove of great assistance in the development of the minds of subnormal children. The great obstacle in their education has been the inability to arouse interest. It is believed that radio will greatly stimulate such interest.⁵

Ironically, it was the essentially altruistic, non-commercial quality of radio's advent in the early 1920s that soon proved a major economic headache for would-be radio entrepreneurs. Once broadcasting's initial thrill had worn off, performers began expecting payment for their services. Businesses that had been operating stations purely for the good of the community were soon subject to demands for more extensive programming. No one had yet discovered how to generate the revenue needed to meet the radio craze's increasing operating costs.

Before too long, the notion of selling radio advertising caught on, and Bill Virgin began selling radio spots over the KFAY airwaves. According to Art Chipman, 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."⁶

By 1924, KFAY was forced to compete with programming offered by big, corporate-supported stations. Competition from these network-affiliated "chain" stations from California, Portland, Seattle, and even the eastern United States, meant KFAY needed more power, more paid staffers, and more quality programming—all of which would require additional, and scarce, working capital.⁷ By the end of 1925, KFAY was forced to "go silent."⁸



Top, KMED's studio in Medford's Sparta Building featured a grand piano for performers. During the early days of radio, local programming was aired live, and syndicated programs were distributed to local stations on record disks. Below, Groucho Marx entertained millions of listeners over the years with his popular NBC network radio appearances. Southern Oregon Historical Society #9544, photo courtesy KMED



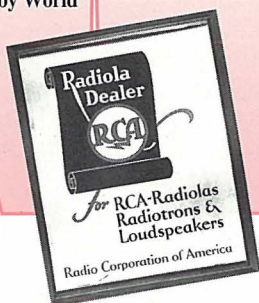
1938

October 30—CBS broadcasts Orson Wells dramatizing H.G. Wells' War of the Worlds, which terrorizes the nation. In Ashland, the city attorney calls the police in panic, seeking advice.

1939

KMED applies for FM license. Processing of the application is delayed by World War II.

1940



1941

March 29— KMED moves to 1440 on the dial as it moves out of the Sparta Building to new studios on Ross Lane.

1942

1946

Virgin and Robert Ruhl—the widely respected editor and co-owner of the *Mail Tribune*—entered into a partnership in which they would equally share in the ownership of a new station. Virgin purchased a Western Electric transmitter to replace his homemade equipment and leased modern studio facilities on the second floor of Medford's Sparta Building at Riverside and Main.⁹

In October 1926, the *Mail Tribune* somewhat bombastically announced its new venture in a large newspaper ad:

*A Civic Enterprise! Radio has assumed a place of utmost importance in the world today. The influence is far-reaching; its value incalculable. It will mean much to have Medford's name among the radio broadcasting stations of the Pacific Coast. People here will enjoy regular weather reports, news items of interest and sporting events furnished by the Mail Tribune. Regular programs will entertain local people as well as radio fans from Calgary to Tijuana. Virgin's and Mail Tribune's new station will mean much to Southern Oregon.*¹⁰

After a couple days' testing, KMED signed on December 28, 1926, at 6:00 PM as successor station to KFAY. The opening broadcast featured *Mail Tribune* news reports, an address by Professor Vining of Southern Oregon Normal School in Ashland, vocal offerings by members of the Maddox family, assorted musical performances, old-time dance music by Nick Kime, and a special "Frolic" presented by Medford's Crater Club that included a tongue-in-cheek proposal to enlarge Crater Lake as a harbor for Medford.¹¹

Virgin's salesmanship—combined with the *Mail Tribune's* association—paid off, and program sponsors began to sign up in droves. In a *Mail Tribune* editorial published December 29, 1926, the paper applauded Virgin's initiative—as well as its own foresight—in creating KMED. The *Grants Pass Daily Courier* also lauded Medford, saying: "We must take our hats off to our neighbors. Medford now has a licensed broadcasting station by which much valuable advertising can be accomplished for the Rogue River Valley."¹² In a

1927 review of the preceding year, the Medford Chamber of Commerce cited KMED's presence as one of the great achievements of 1926.¹³

Beginning in September 1926, the *Medford Mail Tribune* referred to KMED as "the Mail Tribune Virgin station" on all occasions—save one. Bill Virgin had suffered from Bright's disease for some years, and on Friday, January 27, 1928, he died at the age of forty-one, leaving his wife Blanche as KMED's owner and operator. Oddly, the *Mail Tribune's* obituary made no mention of the paper's association with KMED, nor of Virgin's role as a pioneer broadcaster and operator of KMED. Apparently, the newspaper's sanguine attitude regarding its joint venture with Virgin had apparently changed within a relatively short period.

Cathedral-style radios typified those available in the 1930s. Southern Oregon Historical Society #86.22.18



1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955
September 25— <i>Medford Mail Tribune</i> receives permit for FM station, but it is never constructed. October 10— <i>Medford Mail Tribune</i> signs on KYJC at 1230 KHz with 250 watts.	KGPO-FM, sister station of KAGI, signs on in Grants Pass at 1340 with 100 watts.	March 1—KYJC joins the ABC radio network, bringing the Rogue Valley two full-time network affiliated stations. Station later joins CBS network as well.		March 1—KWIN joins the Liberty Broadcasting network. Liberty folds after operating for only two years.	August 1—After losing Liberty Network affiliation, KWIN goes off the air during a foreclosure proceeding.	April 20—KWIN returns to the air. Six months later, it joins the Mutual Radio network. Medford now has all four major radio networks represented locally.	May 27—KBOY-AM goes on the air at 730 KHz with 1,000 watts. [In the 1980s, the station changed to KRVC and KLOV, but later returned to original call sign.]	





Left, The major networks supplied news coverage of such historic events as the 1937 Hindenburg disaster in Lakehurst, New Jersey. Local stations eventually developed their own skilled news teams. Bottom, Bill Smullin reports on election results for KIEM, Eureka. Photos courtesy KMED

KMED was an active sports broadcaster. On October 15, 1927, the station broke ground with what was the first broadcast of a college football game in the United States (University of Oregon versus UCLA).¹⁴ In addition, historian William Pierce Tucker reported in 1931 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 has done for three years."¹⁵

KMED possessed no method for recording programs, and without network affiliation, all local broadcasts were live until well after World War II. In addition to offering phonograph recordings, KMED also broadcast syndicated programs that were distributed to stations on large phonograph disks. Portland's KOIN would use such recorded program disks, and then mail them on to KMED for broadcast. Such syndicated programming helped stations like KMED compete with larger network stations.

In December 1928, the newly formed Federal Radio

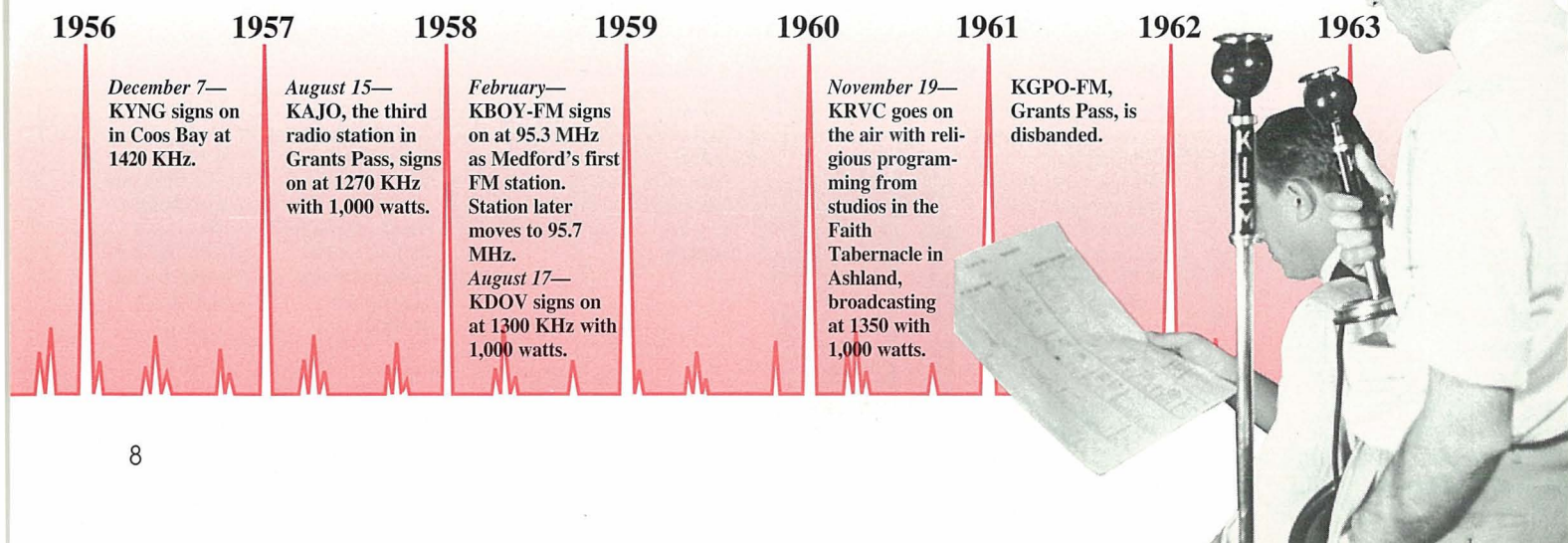
Commission ordered KMED to move to 1310 KHz as part of an effort to eliminate the interference mess on the AM dial.

By 1931, KMED had increased its power to 100 watts and brought on two innovative announcers, Dave Rees and Lee Bishop. Two years later, the station again sought to increase its power. Such an increase would require additional space, and in 1933, Mrs. Virgin began searching for a new site for the station. She eventually secured land to the west of Medford on Ross Lane.¹⁶ In addition, KMED's Sparta Building studios were remodeled in an elaborately Oriental style, further illustrating the station's growing financial success.

NBC brought KMED into its fold in 1937, and the station finally gained the status and revenue that came with network association. KMED could now offer listeners "Amos 'n Andy," Eddie Cantor, Rudy Vallee, the "National Barn Dance," and other major network features.

In 1939, KMED filed an application with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to build a new Frequency Modulation (FM) station. A product of brilliant inventor Major Edwin Armstrong, FM radio provided static-free, high-fidelity reception that was vastly superior to AM's capabilities. However, World War II interrupted FM's development as well as KMED's plans for opening an FM station.

On March 29, 1941, KMED moved to 1440 KHz on the dial—its final home—and raised its power to 1,000 watts.¹⁷ While the war interrupted technical developments like FM radio (and television), it did give KMED an opportunity to broadcast from—and for—the growing military community at Camp White. With former KMED employee Sergeant Jimmy Dunlevy as



ing military community at Camp White. With former KMED employee Sergeant Jimmy Dunlevy as master of ceremonies, KMED broadcast several programs over NBC from Camp White, feeding the NBC network at Portland via KGW.

On October 10, 1946, the *Medford Mail Tribune* signed on a new AM station, KYJC, with a broadcast of a Medford High-Eureka football game.¹⁸ Despite a lack of previous radio experience, Gerry Latham, the newspaper's circulation manager, supervised KYJC's construction, reviewing three sites before selecting a Barnett Road location. Other *Mail Tribune* staff prepared and presented news over the air, and eventually a radio booth was installed at the newspaper so these reporter/announcers could broadcast without having to travel to and from the station.

In 1948, southern Oregon's first FM station signed on when the Grants Pass station KGPO-FM took to the air. KGPO was

a daring venture given the fact that few FM receivers existed at the time and that television was fast emerging to further cloud radio's horizon.

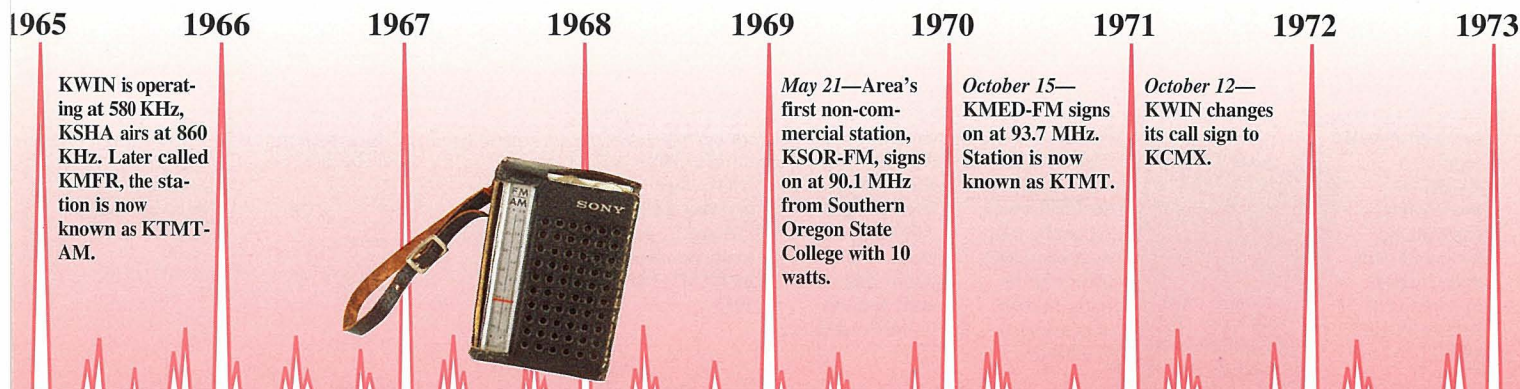
Perhaps sensing the changes that were threatening radio's commercial future, Blanche Virgin sold KMED in June 1950 to a group of local businessmen who operated as Radio Medford, Inc.¹⁹

In the face of television's growing appeal, the radio networks saw declining audiences throughout the 1950s. By 1955, insufficient radio listenership made it difficult for the networks to find advertising revenue that would cover the cost of presenting expensive network programs. Thus, the major radio networks discontinued day-long programming, and the affiliate stations were forced to fill the gaps with local programming.

Disk jockey programming—the use of phonograph recordings that had been a foundation of experimental radio broadcasting in the early 1920s—once again became a broadcast staple. It was less expensive than dramas or live music, and stations began to distinguish themselves by specializing in specific types of music. On May 27, 1954, KBOY-AM signed on at 730 KHz. Before long, the station gained prominence as Medford's first rock radio station.



Right, The 1940s Bakelite radio listed call letters rather than frequencies on its dial. **Top,** In the 1950s, some radios adopted garish colors and designs, such as the salmon-colored Philco brand, above. Radios courtesy Ronald Kramer, Steve Wyatt



radio industry. Coos Bay's second radio station signed on December 7, 1956, as KYNG. Grants Pass' KAGO went on the air on August 15, 1957, as the city's second AM station. KBOY-FM began broadcasting its "beautiful music" (or "easy listening") format in 1958 at 95.3 MHz, and KDOV signed on that same year at 1300 KHz on the AM dial. KSHA (later known as KTMT-AM) went on the air on April 7, 1962. KMED's FM station signed on October 15, 1970, and was soon renamed KTMT.

On May 21, 1969, the area's first non-commercial radio station signed on at Ashland's Southern Oregon College as KSOR. The station operated at 90.1 MHz with a fledgling capacity of 10 watts, and only Ashland residents could receive KSOR's signal. The station offered a mixture of music designed largely to help train college students to be announcers.

Spearheaded by former KAGI employee Dave Allen—then a SOC broadcasting instructor—KSOR broadcast during most portions of the year and offered rock-and-roll, beautiful music, and classical programs such as the Metropolitan Opera. On February 25, 1977, KSOR expanded from 10 watts to 2,000 watts, enabling all of Jackson County to receive its public radio offerings.

The 1980s saw public radio flourishing at KSOR. Using translator technology whereby signals could be relayed to targeted areas, KSOR's programming was extended to previously unreachable communities in southern Oregon and northern California. KSOR eventually constructed a unique network of thirty-four translators by the end of the decade, becoming the nation's largest network of public radio translators.

In 1986, KSOR moved its transmitter and raised the station's power from 2,000 watts to 35,000 watts. On November 7, 1987, Southern Oregon State College's KSOR signed on sister FM station KSMF—the first instance in the area in which one party was operating two FM stations in the same community. KSMF offered some of the same programming as KSOR, but periodically presented such formats as jazz when KSMF was broadcasting classical music.

The success of the non-commercial programming offered on KSOR and KSMF prompted the two stations to construct facilities that would allow similar offerings in other communities served by a translator. The results were impressive: KSKF (FM 90.9) signed on in Klamath Falls in 1988; KSBA (FM 88.5) was



installed in Coos Bay in 1989; and KSRS (FM 91.5) began broadcasting in 1990. That same year, KAGI (AM 930) of Grants Pass joined the regional network of public radio providers.

By 1991, with nearly twenty operating radio stations in the Medford-Ashland area alone, the Rogue Valley had virtually more radio stations per capita than any other area in the nation.

Ever since Bill Virgin's first experimental broadcasts from Elmer Morrison's garage more than seventy years ago, radio was destined to bring southern Oregonians the magic of its "art." Unlike painting, sculpture, music, and literature,

1974

September—School District #6 in Central Point signs on KCHC, a non-commercial training station for students. Station operates at 91.7 MHz with 10 watts.



1975

1976

February 3—KEPO, a non-commercial training station owned and operated by the Eagle Point School District, signs on at 89.1 MHz with 10 watts. Station later moves to 92.1 MHz.

1977

January 2—KHUG signs on from Phoenix. February 25—KSOR expands from 10 watts to 2,000 watts and can now offer public radio to most Jackson County residents.

1978

July 28—KCMX signs on its FM station as KKIC at 101.9 MHz. KKIC later becomes KCMX-FM and is eventually purchased by KTMT-FM in 1993.

1979

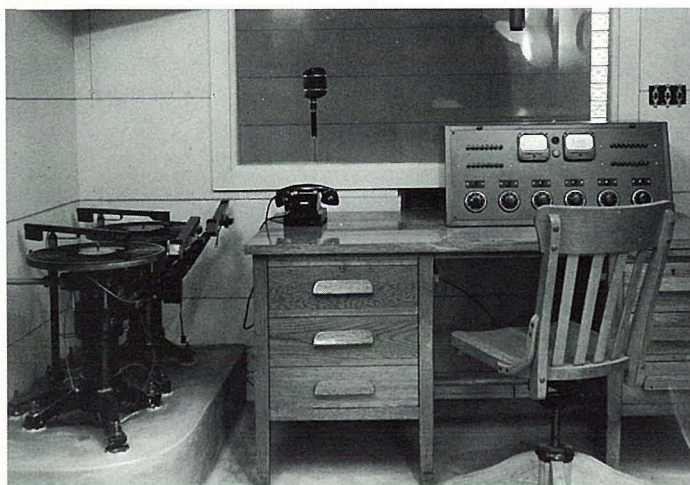
1980

August 11—KRWQ-FM signs on from Gold Hill at 100.3 MHz.

1981

October 2—KFMJ-FM signs on from Grants Pass at 96.9 MHz. Station is now known as KYJC-FM.

1982



Left, Typical of stations in the 1940s and 1950s, KUIN featured live, local programming, as well as syndicated recordings that were played on heavy turntables, above. Grants Pass Daily Courier publisher Amos Voorhies and radio pioneer William Smullin established KUIN as Grants Pass' first station. KUIN began broadcasting on December 16, 1937. In the late 1950s, it became KAGI. Photos courtesy KOB

however, no physical products of early radio in the region have endured. What has endured is the vision, talent, and inspiration of those broadcasters who today follow in the wake of such radio pioneers as Bill and Blanche Virgin, Elmer Morrison, and Dave Rees. The efforts of these radio pioneers changed forever the future—and the promise—of a young and somewhat isolated southern Oregon.



Ronald Kramer has worked in radio since 1963 and is broadcasting director for Jefferson Public Radio at Southern Oregon State College. The author gratefully acknowledges the contributions of Lee Bishop, Ray Johnson, Gerald Latham, Morris Morrison, David Rees, and William B. Smullin for their generous assistance. Thanks also to Steve Blackman, Carol Harbison, and Terry Skibby for the extensive research assistance they provided. Special thanks to George Kramer, local architectural historian, for his invaluable help and patience.

ENDNOTES

1. According to the *Radio Service Bulletin* (Department of Commerce, 1922), the first radio station license issued in southern Oregon was for KDYU in Klamath Falls in June 1922. The station was apparently never constructed and the license was surrendered in November.
2. "Put Valley Radio in at Central Point," *Medford Mail Tribune*, July 21, 1922.
3. "Radio Broadcasting Station at Fairgrounds," *Medford Mail Tribune*, September 23, 1923, p. 2.
4. "Radio Station at Fair is Getting Splendid Results," *Medford Mail Tribune*, September 28, 1922, p. 8.
5. Squibs from the "Tips to the Radioist," "Short Flashes," and "Sparks" columns printed in the *Grants Pass Daily Courier* between August 26, 1922, and September 23, 1922.
6. Chipman, Art, *KMED, The First Half Century*, Pine Cone Publishers, Medford, OR, 1972, p. 7.
7. One impetus to Virgin's starting KFAY was that during daylight hours, it was impossible to pick up distant stations, and the lack of daytime programming was a sales impediment. Daytime broadcasting would have helped alleviate that problem. Ray Johnson interview with the author, November 11, 1993.
8. Corroboration for KFAY's going off the air is found in the April, 1925 issue of *Radio News* (page 1227), the October 31, 1925 issue of *Radio Digest Illustrated*, and in William Pierce Tucker's unpublished M.A. thesis *History of Jackson County* (University of Washington, 1931, page 161).
9. Lee Bishop describes the studio layout as follows: "At the second floor corner advertising dentist was located and the KMED rooms were then in a series proceeding along Riverside. Ruth Louise's Dancing Studio was across the hall from KMED on the interior side of the corridor." Interview with author, October 29, 1993.
10. Advertisement, *Medford Mail Tribune*, October 6, 1926.
11. "Mail Tribune Radio Station Opens Tonight," *Medford Mail Tribune*, December 28, 1926.
12. "Radio Praised By Sister City," *Medford Mail Tribune*, December 29, 1926, p. 2.
13. "Radio Service is Great Benefit to City Says Baker," *Medford Mail Tribune*, December 28, 1927, p. 3.
14. Chipman, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
15. Tucker, William Pierce, *History of Jackson County*, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Washington, Seattle, 1931, p. 162.
16. Gerry Latham interview with the author, November 11, 1993.
17. Following KMED's 1928 move to 1310 KHz, the station operated on 1410 KHz—the frequency it vacated to move to 1440 KHz. The date of the move is not known.
18. On July 30, 1946, Jackson County's second station, KWIN of Ashland, went on the air at 1400 KHz. In 1971, the station was renamed KCMX.
19. Engineer Ray Johnson eventually became KMED's general manager and an owner in Radio Medford. Johnson continued as general manager until his son Bob took over in the 1980s. Ray Johnson remains actively involved in Radio Medford.

1983

May 24—KYJC moves to 610 KHz with 5,000 watts.

1984

January 23—KDOV moves to 1230 KHz from 1350 KHz.

1985

April 30—KBBG-FM signs on from Cave Junction at 97.7 MHz. Station is later sold several times and is now known as KCNA.

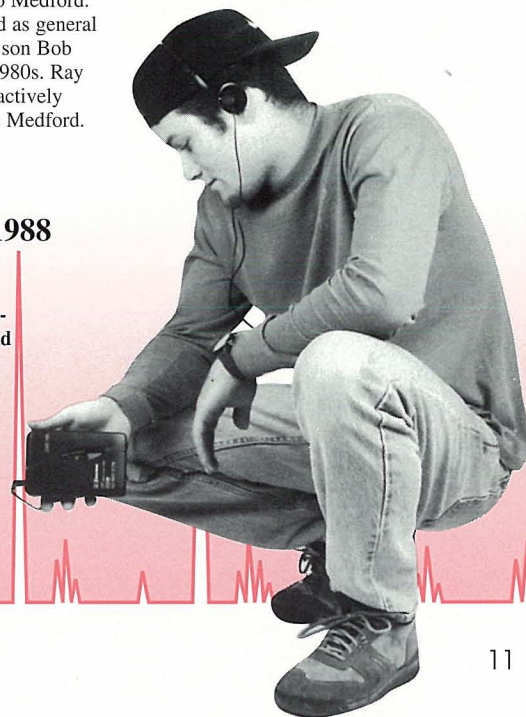
1986

1987

November 7—KSMF, sister station to KSOR and part of Jefferson Public Radio, signs on at 89.1 MHz with 228 watts.

1988

1991





Television

Comes to Southern Oregon

by Ronald Kramer

*L*aunching a television station in Medford was a daunting enterprise, but that's exactly what William B. Smullin did when KBES signed on the air in 1953.

As with the early days of radio, no one seemed to mind the rather hazy transmission quality. Community enthusiasm had already been fed by long-distance television reception for some time.¹

Months before KBES signed on, local appliance stores began to extensively advertise their new television

Photos courtesy KOB1, KTMT

Left, Station owner Bill Smullin hosted "Q Block" on KBES, now KOB1-TV, in the 1950s. Right, Hank Henry was one of the area's pioneers in television news reporting, shown here with a 16-mm film camera that predated video news gathering.

Pioneering Television

Radio was barely in place before scientific journals and popular literature forecasted "radio pictures" were just around the corner. However, transmitting high-quality pictures proved to be unexpectedly challenging during television's early days.

The earliest television transmissions used a partially mechanical camera and receiving set that simulated movement by flipping illustrated pages, similar to a child's flip book. The development of the iconoscope tube in 1928 finally made electronic television cameras and sets practical, and throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s, enthusiasts debated the superiority of mechanical versus electronic technologies.

NBC made a major commitment to the development of electronic television, and on April 30, 1939, the network signed on as the nation's first regular television system with a live broadcast of the New York World's Fair. Rival companies CBS and Dumont started systems shortly thereafter, offering programming for selected areas—principally New York—but none interconnected nationally as we know them today.

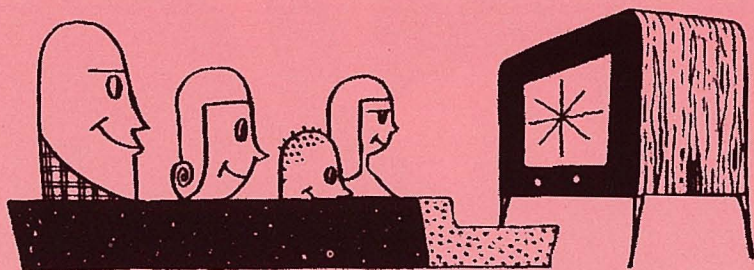
Even with television's popularity, pre-World War II projection sets were costly, awkward, and cumbersome. Only very small picture tubes were available—usually no larger than three inches in diameter. Despite such limitations, NBC began commercial telecasts on July 1, 1941.

World War II halted further development of TV programming and technology. Immediately after the war, however, tremendous advances were made in television technology, and electronic systems were favored over the older projection method. Postwar consumers saw both vast improvements in reception and ever larger picture tubes. By the late 1940s, television screens grew to seven-, ten-, and even twelve-inches.

Television programming was still extremely expensive to both launch and operate. To cut costs, many theorized that stations could transmit only audio during the day—like a sort of modified radio—and broadcast full television programming only in the evening. However, popular demand soon put an end to such schemes, and while television never replaced radio, it did alter it.

Radio stars such as George Burns and Gracie Allen, Jack Benny, and Arthur Godfrey switched to television with varying success. Some programs that were highly successful on radio—like "Amos 'n Andy"—failed to sustain audiences on television. The popularity of other programs—like Milton Berle's "Texaco Star Theatre"—affected the daily lives of millions of viewers.

Critics called it a "cultural wasteland" while advocates hailed its potential for good. Few, however, will deny television's cultural, social, and political impact.



sets. Minkler's TV on East 6th offered the twenty-one-inch screen Westinghouse Deluxe for \$229.95. Johnston Stores on South Riverside offered the prestigious RCA line at prices ranging from \$199.95 to \$550. Modern Plumbing on North Riverside sold the twenty-one-inch Hallicrafters for \$249.95. By July, KBES was broadcasting a test pattern "so that . . . television sets can [be] properly adjusted by [the] dealer

who sold them . . . [for] perfect reception of the KBES-TV programs."²

Originally, the FCC allocated Medford two television channels, 4 and 5. Medford's KMED Radio had long been associated with NBC, and the network encouraged all its radio stations to

apply for Channel 4 where possible. Not wanting to fight for the channel, Bill Smullin applied for Channel 5. With the request approved, he constructed a transmitter and studio on Blackwell Hill near Gold Hill.

When CBS-affiliate KBES signed on at 6:00 P.M. on August 1, 1953, a studio orchestra played for the first thirty minutes. Medford attorney Frank Van Dyke then hosted opening ceremonies that featured Acting Governor Eugene E. Marsh, Oregon Secretary of State Earl Newbry, State Treasurer Sig Unander, local legislator Bob Root, and a host of officials from Jackson and

In the 1950s, movie heroes such as Rex Allen found stardom on the small screen, too.



Photo courtesy David Kalston

Josephine counties. At 7:00 P.M., KBES broadcast its first network feature, the "Chrysler Medallion Theatre."³ Reception reports for the broadcast came in from Weed, Yreka, Klamath Falls, Lakeview, Bend, Eugene, Roseburg, and Coos Bay.

CBS provided KBES with most of the station's programming.⁴ Because Oregon did not yet observe daylight savings time—and Pacific Standard Time was four hours behind the network's East Coast offerings—KBES broadcast that first summer from 3:55 P.M. until 10:35 P.M. As television matured, the station's program schedule lengthened and the station made subsequent arrangements to carry programs from NBC, Dumont, and eventually ABC.

Bill Smullin pursued expansion in a variety of ways, and shortly after KBES signed on, he built a TV station in Eureka, California. Since the success of KBES depended on the number of television sets in use, Smullin also relentlessly pushed television sales.

In 1955, Roseburg businessman Harris Ellsworth petitioned the FCC to move Channel 4 from Medford to Roseburg. When the move was approved, Smullin filed for the frequency, as did owners of Eugene's KVAL-TV. Smullin and the KVAL interests subsequently joined forces and evenly split ownership of the new station. Roseburg's new KPIC signed on April 1, 1956.⁵

That same year, W.D. Miller of Klamath Falls sold Smullin the FCC permit to build a Channel 2 station. Smullin then built studios on the site of the old Oregon Institute of Technology and signed on the new KOTI on August 12. Operating as a KBES satellite station, KOTI carried the same programming as its parent station.

BROADENING THE PICTURE

Originally called "master antenna television," cable was born in 1949 when Astoria neighbors pooled funds to install an antenna to receive Portland broadcasts. By the mid-1950s, cable had become a fledgling industry offering access to multiple program services in areas with few or no stations. George Mann—along with movie theater interests in Klamath Falls—joined Bill Smullin in establishing a new cable television system. Smullin then built another system in Grants Pass with equipment he purchased from a near-defunct Roseburg cable system. In the fall of

Bill Smullin

Southern Oregon's Television Pioneer

With a twenty-year history already in broadcasting, William B. Smullin's greatest accomplishments were waiting to develop in southern Oregon with the age of television.

Smullin was born in Kansas, raised in Oregon, and took a degree at Willamette University, where he both managed and edited the university's newspaper. After graduating, he remained in the newspaper field, working several years at papers in Coos Bay, Salem, and Portland.

In 1933, during the height of the Depression, Smullin decided to enter radio by starting his own station in Eureka, California. He built KIEM into one of the nation's most widely respected small-market stations.

Smullin later entered into a partnership with Amos Voorhees—the highly respected owner/publisher of the *Grants Pass Daily Courier*—resulting in Smullin's second radio station, KUIN. The partnership flourished with the arrival of television in southern Oregon. By 1953, the two men had established Medford's first television station.

Smullin's broadcasting reputation continued to grow with the founding of KIEM and KUIN. He became a board member of the influential National Association of Broadcasters and was often profiled in respected national journals. As a civic leader, Smullin launched a successful campaign to base a naval air station in Eureka. In addition to being a broadcaster, manager, and station owner, Smullin was also something of a visionary. His decision to construct KUIN in Grants Pass proved instrumental in southern Oregon's development and vitality.

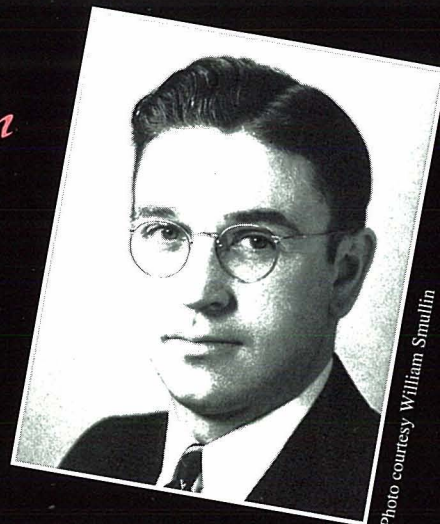


Photo courtesy William Smullin

Bigger Broadcasts for Better Living

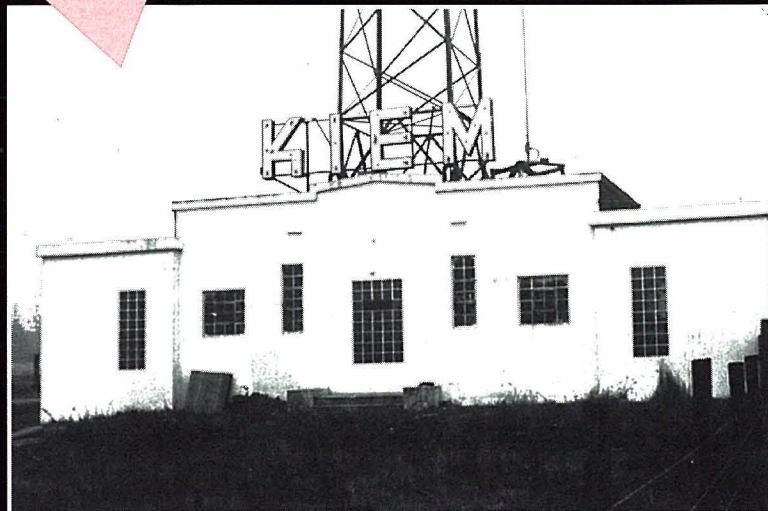


Photo courtesy KOTI

Courtesy David Ralston



Courtesy David Ralston



Top, Many radio personalities, including Art Linkletter, found fame in television. Left, Network TV launched such hits as "The Mickey Mouse Club"—and primo Mouseketeer Annette Funicello. Bottom, Locally produced programs included Mrs. Bill "Rusty" Smullin as "Aunt Polly" hosting a children's show.

1958, he began constructing a similar system in Medford and, finally, in Ashland. Launched as Southern Oregon Cable, the system offered four channels that imported programs from Portland, San Francisco, Sacramento, and San Jose. Importing the distant signals involved installing expensive microwave systems on mountaintops in order to relay signals. In the 1960s, Smullin separated the microwave business from cable television by launching Pacific Teletronics.

EXPANSION AND IMPROVEMENT

Due to Channel 4's move to Roseburg in 1955, the FCC allocated the new Channel 10 to Medford. One of three contenders for the channel was KMED radio, owned in part by Bill Smullin's friend Dwight Findley, a Medford physician. Reasoning that KMED should establish the area's second television station, and that such expansion would boost the region's television industry, Smullin contacted Findley and offered the KMED owners use of his transmitting tower on Blackwell Hill along with advice on how to get started.

The two other contenders for Channel 10 were TOT-TV ("Tops on Ten")—comprised of some of KMED's own employees—and Bill Hansen, founder of KBOY radio. KMED ultimately prevailed and, on October 3, 1961, KMED-TV signed on from Smullin's Blackwell Hill facility.

In the early 1960s, KBES changed its call letters to KTVM. Both KTVM and KMED-TV sought to enlarge their operations and subsequent coverage. KTVM's Smullin developed enormously expensive and complex transmission facilities on King Mountain above Wolf Creek in order to serve Douglas and southern Lane counties, as well as to have access to the Oregon coast. In the meantime, KMED's general manager, Ray Johnson, opted to leave Blackwell Hill and move to Mt. Ashland, where a major road had been recently built for the ski park. In September 1966, KMED-TV dramatically increased its coverage when it signed on

Photo courtesy KOB



from this new transmitter site. Two years later, KTVM signed on from King Mountain with the new call letters KOBİ, which stood for Oregon Broadcasting Incorporated.

TELEVISION NEWS

During the 1950s, KBES' initial news broadcasts were scant at best and failed to attract real attention. This changed when Dave Allen, a Smullin employee at the Grants Pass radio station KUIN, took over the KBES news department.

KMED-TV was able to draw from its distinguished history of radio news, having set up the first full-scale radio news operation between Portland and San Francisco in 1957.

KMED-TV had not offered news programming until Hank Henry was hired as news director in January 1963, about fourteen months after the station signed on. Thus, Henry inherited a working radio news operation and proceeded to set up a joint radio-TV news department, which endured until the TV station was sold. Henry, with a twenty-year broadcast career, was a true journalist with excellent credentials. He came to Medford from Portland where he had worked at KGW with legendary Tom McCall, Oregon's future governor.

Well before videotape, KBES used still film to capture picture images for transmission. Later, KBES and KMED-TV both used a system of Polaroid transparencies to project a series of still images. Next came 16-mm black-and-white—and later color—film for news coverage. By 1977, portable videotape equipment allowed for the instantaneous field recording of news material without the need for developing and editing, as with film.

Both stations' news departments grew continually as reporters and other staff joined the effort, and what had been two- or three-person staffs in the 1960s grew to more than a dozen by 1980.

MEDFORD GETS THE THIRD NETWORK

In 1978, the FCC took the highly unusual step of allocating to Medford a fourth—and unsolicited—VHF channel, Channel 12. The action may have been the FCC's response to Channel 8's earlier shift to non-commercial status. The new channel would thus ensure that Medford would be served by the three remaining networks (Dumont

Below, KBES sold television sets direct to the public to increase viewership.

Bottom, KMED-TV constructed its transmitter on Mount Ashland in 1966.



Photo courtesy KOBİ

ceased operations in 1955).

After several months, the Christian Broadcasting Company (CBC) of Rogue River applied for the frequency. CBC intended to build a full-time religious station and began raising public funds for the project. CBC began programming a channel on the Rogue River cable system as a preliminary step to securing Channel 12. In addition to CBC, a local group of investors banded together in 1979 as Sunshine Television and applied to operate as an ABC affiliate. The group was headed by Dunbar Carpenter and Ronald Kramer. A third application was filed by broadcast interests headquartered in New York state.

In 1981, as FCC processing hearings dragged on, Sunshine Television purchased CBC's interest for \$210,000. Sunshine then purchased the interest of the New York applicant for one-half million dollars

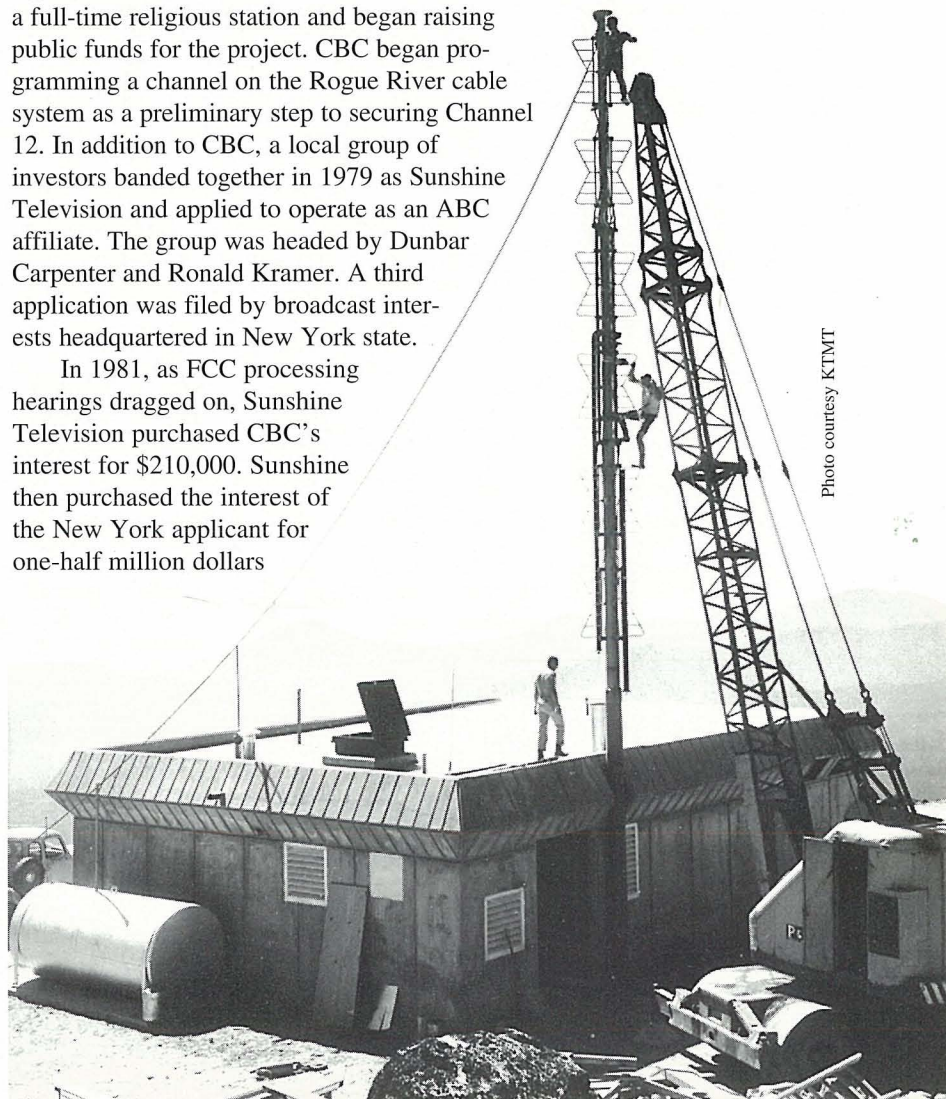


Photo courtesy KTMT

Highlights in the Development

1927

May—Philo Farnsworth transmits first experimental electronic television pictures.

1928

March—Vladimir Zworykin patents the iconoscope tube which makes electronic television feasible.

1932

NBC installs an experimental television station in newly constructed Empire State Building, New York.

1935

NBC installs primitive television studio in New York.

1937

Seventeen experimental television stations are operating.

1939

April 30—Formal opening of NBC's New York service, offering one program per day; CBS and Dumont Television follow suit. TV sets go on sale for \$200 to \$600.

1940

August—CBS airs the first "colorcast" using the CBS color system.

1941

July 1—NBC's commercial telecasting begins.

1942

February—With ten stations on the air, television broadcasting shuts down for the duration of World War II.

1945

Telecasting resumes at the war's end.

1946

Summer—RCA resumes production of TV sets.

November—RCA demonstrates all-electronic color television system.

1947

Nationwide there are 14,000 television sets. Television industry creates its first regular programs, like "Howdy Doody," and "Kraft Television Theatre."

March—FCC declines to authorize CBS color television system.

1948

August—NBC and CBS announce plans for major network expansion by 1950. A New York television station, ABC's first, goes on the air.

September—With sixteen TV stations on the air, the FCC imposes a freeze on construction of new stations.

"Texaco Star Theatre," starring Milton Berle—later known as "Mr. Television"—focuses the nation's attention on television.

1949

The nation's first cable television system is built in Astoria, Oregon.

December—

There are now 190,000 television sets in use nationwide, primarily owing to the popularity of Milton Berle.

1950

Television sets nationally number 1,000,000.

October—FCC approves CBS's mechanical color television system.

1951

June 25—CBS presents its "gala premiere" first commercial color telecast with Arthur Godfrey, Ed Sullivan, and Faye Emerson.

September—First coast-to-coast live network television broadcast is transmitted.

"I Love Lucy" debuts on CBS.

1952

April—FCC lifts freeze on new TV stations and authorizes creation of UHF channels 14-83.

September—First UHF television station, KLOR (now KPTV) takes to the air in Portland, Oregon.

1953

There are 20,000,000 television homes in the nation.

August 1—Southern Oregon's first television station, KBES, Channel 5, signs on in Medford. The station changes call signs to KTVM in the early 1960s.

December—FCC reverses its earlier position and authorizes NBC's system of electronic, compatible color television as the nation's standard.

1954

March 9—Edward R. Murrow takes on Sen. Joe McCarthy on CBS' "See It Now" program, setting new expectations for broadcast journalism.

1955

September—Dumont Television Network goes out of existence.

1956

April 1—Roseburg's first television station, KPIC, signs on Channel 4.

August 12—Klamath Falls' first television station, KOTI, signs on Channel 2.

1958

Fall—Southern Oregon Cable Television first brings all four network services, and other television programming, to local subscribers.

1959

October-November—Rigged network quiz shows scandalize the nation and rock the television industry.

1960

October 1—KCBY, Channel 11, signs on as Coos Bay's first television station.

Fall—The first presidential election debates are televised between John F.

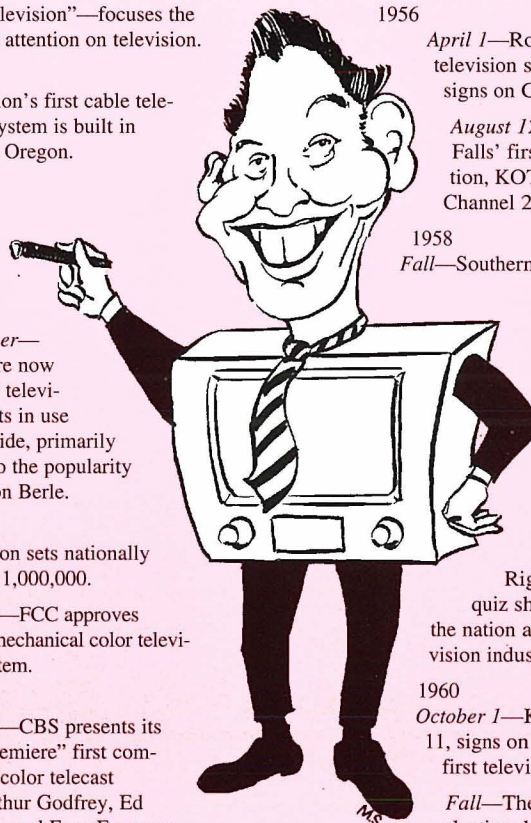
Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon. The telecast probably changed the outcome of the election.

1961

October 3—KMED-TV, Channel 10, signs on in Medford as the community's second television station.

1963

September—NBC and CBS begin half-hour evening television newscasts.



of Television

1965

Fall—NBC broadcasts virtually all its shows in color while CBS and ABC offer about half of their schedules.

1966

September—KMED-TV moves its transmitter to Mt. Ashland.

1967

January—First live, interconnected public television programming, the Public Broadcasting Laboratory, takes to the air one night weekly. The same month the Carnegie Commission issues an influential report advocating the establishment of a public radio and television system.

November—Corporation for Public Broadcasting is established.

1968

September—KTVM changes its call sign to KOBI and moves its transmitter to King Mountain.

1977

January 17—KSYS, Channel 8, signs on bringing southern Oregon on-air public television.

1979

KMED-TV is sold to Freedom Communications and its call sign changed to KTVL.

1980

PBS begins using satellite transmission to link the network's stations.

1981

Southern Oregon Cable is sold to McCaw Cablevision.

1984

February 26—KDRV, Channel 12, signs on as ABC affiliate. Medford now receives all three major networks.

1985

NBC is the first commercial television network to use satellite interconnection for its stations.

1986

October—Fox Broadcasting Company takes to the air as the fourth national television network.

1989

March—KFTS, Channel 22, signs on in Klamath Falls as a satellite of KSYS, Medford.

October 17—KDKF, Channel 3X, a satellite of KDRV, Medford, signs on as Klamath Falls' third television station.

1991

July 8—KMTZ, Channel 23, signs on in Roseburg as a satellite of KMTR, Eugene.

and established ABC's Channel 12. The new KDRV began broadcasting on February 26, 1984, from its studios on Knutson Drive with Keith Lollis, the station's general manager, reading a brief, recorded statement. The following morning, David Hartman saluted ABC's newest affiliate on "Good Morning America." KDRV inaugurated local news and other programming late in 1985. The station was subsequently sold to a southeastern broadcast group and finally to KEZI-TV of Eugene.

SALES AND CHANGES

Since the scope of Bill Smullin's communication holdings had grown over the years to include cable systems in Oregon and Washington, a television station in Redding, microwave systems and other broadcast properties, he came under increased scrutiny and pressure to divest some portion of his holdings. In the August 25, 1980, issue of the influential *Broadcasting Magazine*, Smullin ran a large—and very personal—advertisement with the headline "To Whom It May Concern." After sketching the history of his pioneering role in radio and television, he concluded:

Now because of the latest FCC edict, grandfathering of cable and TV interests in the same market appears to be out the window, and if so, then either Channel 2—Klamath Falls and Channel 5—Medford: or our cable systems in Oregon must be sold. If any non-aliens want to buy either Channel 5, Medford or Channel 2, Klamath Falls, Oregon, they can write to me.

He signed the ad: "Personal to Bill Smullin, Chairman, Government Dictated Divestiture."⁶

Actress and comedienne Lucille Ball's television career spanned more than three decades.

7:00 p.m.

- ③ Ironside—Drama
- ④ News—John Chancellor
- ⑤ Bowling for Dollars
- ⑥ Rawhide—Western
- ⑧ To Tell the Truth—Game
- ⑨ Concentration—Game
- ⑪ I Love Lucy—Comedy
- ⑬ The FBI—Drama
- ⑤0 Yoga with Madeline

7:30 p.m.

- ④ Wild Kingdom—Perkins
- ⑤ Dick Van Dyke—Comedy
- ⑧ Cross-Wits—Game
- ②8 Robert MacNeil Report
- ③0 Trucking for Jesus

8:00 p.m.

- ④ Movie—Comedy (1939) *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington.*



Public Television

Oregon was an early leader in educational television. Under the aegis of the State Department of Higher Education, Oregon established educational television stations in Corvallis in 1957 and in Portland in 1961. These stations operated under the name Oregon Educational Broadcasting or OEB. Because southern Oregon was the state's largest area unserved by educational television, OEB petitioned the FCC in 1965 to reassign Channel 8 from Brookings to Medford as the OEB's third station. The reassignment may also have been due to the developing momentum that would within a year lead to the establishment of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and federal financial assistance for stations.

Channel 8's original FCC assignment had been for commercial television use, rather than noncommercial, and several commercial parties applied for the frequency following the move to Medford. These included Liberty Television of Eugene, owners of KEZI-TV; Siskiyow Broadcasters, a group of local investors; and the *Medford Mail Tribune*. At the time, the *Mail Tribune* owned and operated KYJC-AM and had been involved in area broadcasting since 1922.

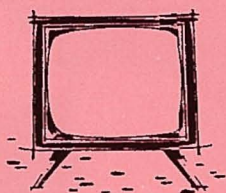
After litigious skirmishing, state officials withdrew the OEB application. The remaining parties fought for several years, with the *Mail Tribune* appearing to have the upper hand. However, in light of a federal court decision that ruled such combinations violated federal antitrust statutes, the *Mail Tribune* eventually withdrew its application.

At this time, William B. Smullin and Ray Johnson offered funds to a new nonprofit corporation, Southern Oregon Education Company (SOEC), for the purchase of Liberty's construction permit, and they committed cash payments of \$50,000 once the station began broadcasting.

Federal sensitivity to media "concentrations of control" was growing, and the Justice Department began examining the economic effects of joint broadcasting/newspaper ownership in several cities. With no clear regulations prohibiting joint ownerships, the FCC became increasingly uneasy. Over the years, much of the radio industry had been founded by newspaper-radio combinations.

After a twelve-year struggle, with the FCC permit for channel 8 nearing expiration, the SOEC board decided to limp onto the air with whatever could be begged or borrowed. The new KSYS began broadcasting on January 17, 1977.

Some felt KSYS deprived the community of a third commercial channel, as well as full-time ABC programming. However, had channel 8 gone commercial, public television would not have developed until much later. No remaining VHF frequencies were available to Medford. Even today no full-service VHF television station is successfully on the air in the Rogue Valley's mountainous terrain. Had it not been for the intervention and assistance of Smullin and Johnson, southern Oregon may have waited a long time for public television service.



Smullin resented the forced sale and believed it failed to serve the public benefit in any discernable way. He sold his cable systems in southern Oregon to McCaw Communications, for what was reported to be the highest price (per subscriber) ever paid for a U.S. cable system. Operating as McCaw Cablevision for several years, a change in corporate strategy dictated another sale, this time to Jack Kent Cooke of Cooke Cablevision. Around 1991, the systems were sold to TCI, the nation's largest cable operator.

Around 1978, KMED-AM was sold to Gary and Cheri Hawke, broadcasters with interests in other regional stations. In 1979, KMED-TV was sold to Freedom Communications, a publishing company with newspapers across the nation. Radio Medford retained its ownership of the FM station, KTMT. Concurrent with the sale, KMED-TV became KTVL.

On January 1, 1985, William B. Smullin turned over the presidency of his company to his daughter. Patricia Smullin had entered the broadcasting business through the company's cable division and eventually came to oversee the daunting collection of stations and related enterprises her father had accumulated over the years. Ray Johnson, who had been with KMED-AM since 1948 and an owner of Radio Medford for almost as many years, turned over the presidency of the radio properties to his son Bob.

On the eve of KBES' sign-on in 1953, the RCA Victor company published an open letter to the citizens of southern Oregon in the *Medford Mail Tribune* declaring that "Television offers us a chance to weave a bond of peace and brotherhood stronger than any the world has ever known. For when people can see each other at work and play, no barriers of language and ideology can destroy that essential human understanding that all people have."⁷ Founded during the 1953 winds of the McCarthy era, television has succeeded in realizing portions of that RCA prophecy.



Currently the director of broadcasting for Jefferson Public Radio, Ronald Kramer was also co-founder of Sunshine Television in 1979.

ENDNOTES

1. The *Medford Mail Tribune* reported on June 1, 1953, that KNGC-TV, Channel 4 in Amarillo, and KFEL, Channel 2, from Denver had been received on the Trowbridge and Flynn Electric Company's television set at their Court Street warehouse and, with a booster amplifier, a New York station's test pattern was reportedly picked up.

2. Advertisement, *Grants Pass Daily Courier*, July 1953.
3. Interview with Hank Henry, December 6, 1993.
4. Other network features that first summer included Jackie Gleason, the "Cavalcade of Sports, the situation comedy "My Friend Irma," and *Liberace*. Local features included the "Val Rogue Show," "Feminine Fancies," and the "Uncle Bill" show. The latter featured a deodorized skunk cavorting with the host (who was not Bill Smullin). There were rumors that the host and the skunk were not on friendly terms.
5. Smullin still owns half of the station.
6. *Broadcasting Magazine*, August 25, 1980.
7. *Medford Mail Tribune*, August 1, 1953.

Photo courtesy KTMT



Photo courtesy KOB



Top, KMED's news team, mid-1960s, produced the news for both radio and TV. Center, Members of the KOB-TV staff gathered for a group shot in 1967. Bill Smullin is seated in the center. Right, In the mid-1950s, Bill Smullin receives insurance check for damages resulting when an airplane hit the transmitter of his KIEM, Eureka, station.

Photo courtesy KOB



LOOKING BACK
LOOKING FORWARD

The *Table Rock Sentinel* has undergone several changes over its 138

Like a set of bookends, the *Table Rock*

The *Table Rock Sentinel* began as a typical frontier town newspaper. In 1855, William G. T'Vault and two partners purchased the printing equipment of the *Scottsburg Umpqua Gazette* and moved it to Jacksonville, where they christened the new weekly *The Table Rock Sentinel*. With T'Vault as editor, the first issue came off the press on November 14, 1855, with the bold proclamation that the newspaper would be "independent on all subjects and devoted to the best interests of southern Oregon."

Nearly seventy-five years later, the *Table Rock Sentinel* again went to press, reincarnated this time as the newsletter of the Southern Oregon Historical Society. In fall 1980, the *Sentinel's* editor, Marjorie Edens, announced that:



With this issue of the Newsletter, the name becomes **THE TABLE ROCK SENTINEL: THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY**. It's a long title, and at times probably will be shortened to **SENTINEL**. . . . The headline on the cover of this Newsletter is reproduced from an 1856 issue.

By the next January, the *Sentinel*—as it was commonly known—went from bimonthly to monthly, and retired local educator Ray Lewis joined the staff part-time “to help with the increased workload.” By August 1984, Lewis became the *Table Rock Sentinel*’s new editor. Already more magazine than newsletter, the *Sentinel* reflected Lewis’ unique character and special ability to bring local history to life. An article written after his death described Lewis’ talent and commitment the following way:

Ray developed the Southern Oregon Historical Society's Table Rock Sentinel, then a newsletter, into a popular history magazine. He wrote hundreds of history features during his seven-year tenure as Sentinel editor, drawing on his personal wealth of knowledge regarding the early days of Jacksonville and Jackson County. Many a southern Oregon pioneer came leaping to life under Ray's pen. Family histories were his fort , and he handled intimate and sensitive family issues with discretion, taking more than a few secrets with him to his g accompany his stories; when photographs were not available he produced his own illustrations."

Under the editorial and creative direction of Natalie Brown, the *Sentinel* further evolved into the regional, award-winning magazine of today. While still retaining its popular appeal, the *Table Rock Sentinel* began to address topics of regional and statewide history ranging from Camp White and World War II in southern Oregon to Lindy's in Roseburg; Zane Grey on the Rogue River to Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in Medford; Peter Britt and the history of photography to the Ku Klux Klan in Oregon. Acknowledging the magazine's excellence, the American Association for State and Local History awarded the Southern Oregon Historical Society a Certificate of Commendation in 1990.

This is the *Sentinel*’s final edition. However, much of what made it such an integral component of southern Oregon's past and present—as newspaper, newsletter,

and magazine—will live on into the future through the Society's new magazine, *Oregon Heritage*, which premieres this spring. *Oregon Heritage* will be a different kind of history magazine. It will recognize that ours is a world of inter-connected relationships, that our lives are constantly affected by events, decisions, and people beyond the bounds of our personal experiences. Recognizing this, *Oregon Heritage* will examine the people, places, and issues both in Oregon and the region, that have and will define Oregon's past, present, and future. The role of the reader in *this* relationship is key. Among *Oregon Heritage*’s standard features will be letters from our readers, and we welcome your comments, criticisms, and observations as we continue to celebrate the uniqueness of Oregon's heritage.



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 MADDOX, ROSE, Ma. 2-9
 Magic Mirrors & Ground Glass: A Half
 Century of Photographic Invention &
 Ingenuity, Ma. 14-20
 MEDFORD COMMERCIAL CLUB,
 Ma. 24-25
 MUSIC, Ma. 2-9, 10-13
 Noah, Catherine, Ja. 11-19, Ma. 24-25
 One Career Spanning Photography's
 First Fifty Years, Ma. 20-21
OREGON HERITAGE, Sp. 22-23
 Peril, Barry, Ja. 12-15
 PHOTOGRAPHY, Ma. 14-20, 20-21
 Pioneering Television, Sp. 14
 Politics and the Klan: Jackson County's
 Struggle with Fear and Bigotry, Ja. 2-
 10
 Public Television, Sp. 20
 Radio Days, Sp. 2-11
 RADIO, Sp. 2-11
 Reflections on the Past, Ja. 24, Ma. 22
 Remembering Gum San, Ja. 12-15
 RESTAURANTS, BARS, ETC., Ma. 10-
 13
 Rose Maddox: Sweetheart of Hillbilly
 Swing, Ma. 2-9
 ROSENBERG, DAVID, Ja. ii
 ROSENBERG, HARRY, Ja. ii
 RUHL, ROBERT W., Ja. 2-10
 SEARS ROEBUCK & CO., Ma. 25
 Seemann, Charlie, Ma. 2-9
 SMULLIN, WILLIAM B., Sp. 12-21
 Strieby, Matt, Ja. 20-23, Ma. ii
 TABLE ROCK SENTINEL, Sp. 22-23

Back in Time



MEDFORD'S RIALTO THEATER • 1947

For decades, Medford's Rialto Theater (located at 106 West Main) served as one of downtown's entertainment meccas. The Rialto was part of the Fox syndicate of theaters, and its blazing neon marquee beckoned teens and oldsters alike for features ranging from rootin'-tootin' westerns to mushy love stories. During the 1920s, neighborhood movie theaters sprouted by the hundreds in towns big and small. These movie houses enjoyed a second heyday during World War II as newsreels and feature films gave folks back home a greater sense of involvement in the days' events. By 1947, however, the burgeoning television industry was stealing away the lion's share of audiences as Americans traded in their ticket stubs for rabbit ears. Although Medford at one time had several theaters, the Craterian is the only surviving movie house downtown. Southern Oregon Historical Society #8936

Television Comes to Southern Oregon, Sp. 12-21
 TELEVISION, Sp. 12-21
 Then & Now, Ma. 24-25
 U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, Ja. 24
 VIRGIN, WILLIAM JACKSON, Sp. 2-11
 Wegner, Samuel J., Sp. 22-23
 Wyatt, Steven M., Ja. 24, Ma. 10-13, 25
 Year of the Craft, Ja. 23

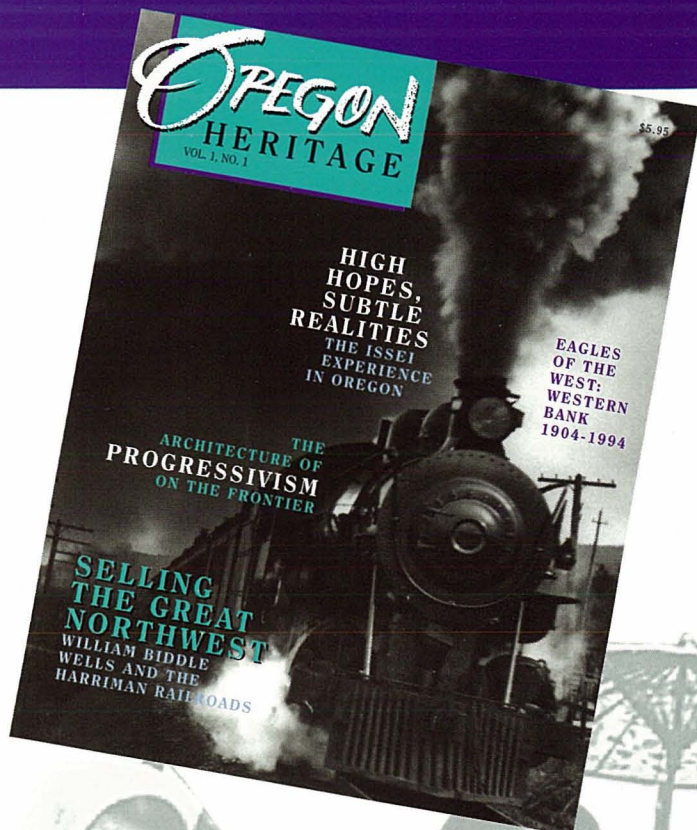
The Southern Oregon Historical Society presents . . .

OREGON HERITAGE

. . . a new popular history magazine discussing the varied relationships between southern Oregon and the entire state.

Oregon Heritage looks at historical people, places, and issues—in southern Oregon and throughout the region—and their roles in defining our past, our present, and our future.

Oregon Heritage offers articles on such topics as biographies, oral histories, folklore, archaeology, agriculture, and business and industry.



COMING IN APRIL:

- Railroad Promotion of the Pacific Northwest
- Oregon's First Japanese Settlers
- Revisiting Ben Hur Lampman and Robert Ruhl
- Oregon's Pioneer Publishers
- Southern Oregon "Wall Art"
- Travels to Southern Oregon's Covered Bridges
- History of "Oregon Pioneer" Western Bank
- Oregon Architecture from Farmhouse to Townhouse
- Book Reviews
- Short Fiction by Elizabeth Woody
- Guest Editorial by Southern Oregon State College President Joe Cox



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106 N. Central Avenue • Medford, Oregon

MARCH & APRIL 1994

March • *Crater Lake: A Place for all Seasons* exhibit, Southern Oregon History Center.

March • *Toothpick Holders, Community Collects* exhibit, Southern Oregon History Center

March 9 • Women's History Month program, *Pioneers in Petticoats*, noon, Rogue River Room, Stevenson Union, Southern Oregon State College.

March 12 • Women's History Month program, *Pioneers in Petticoats*, 1:00 P.M., Southern Oregon History Center.

March 24 • *Central Point: Fair City*, community panel exhibit at the Central Point Branch of the Jackson County Library, 226 E. Pine Street.

March 24 • *Gold Hill: A Quiet City*, community panel exhibit at the Gold Hill Historical Society, 501 First Avenue.

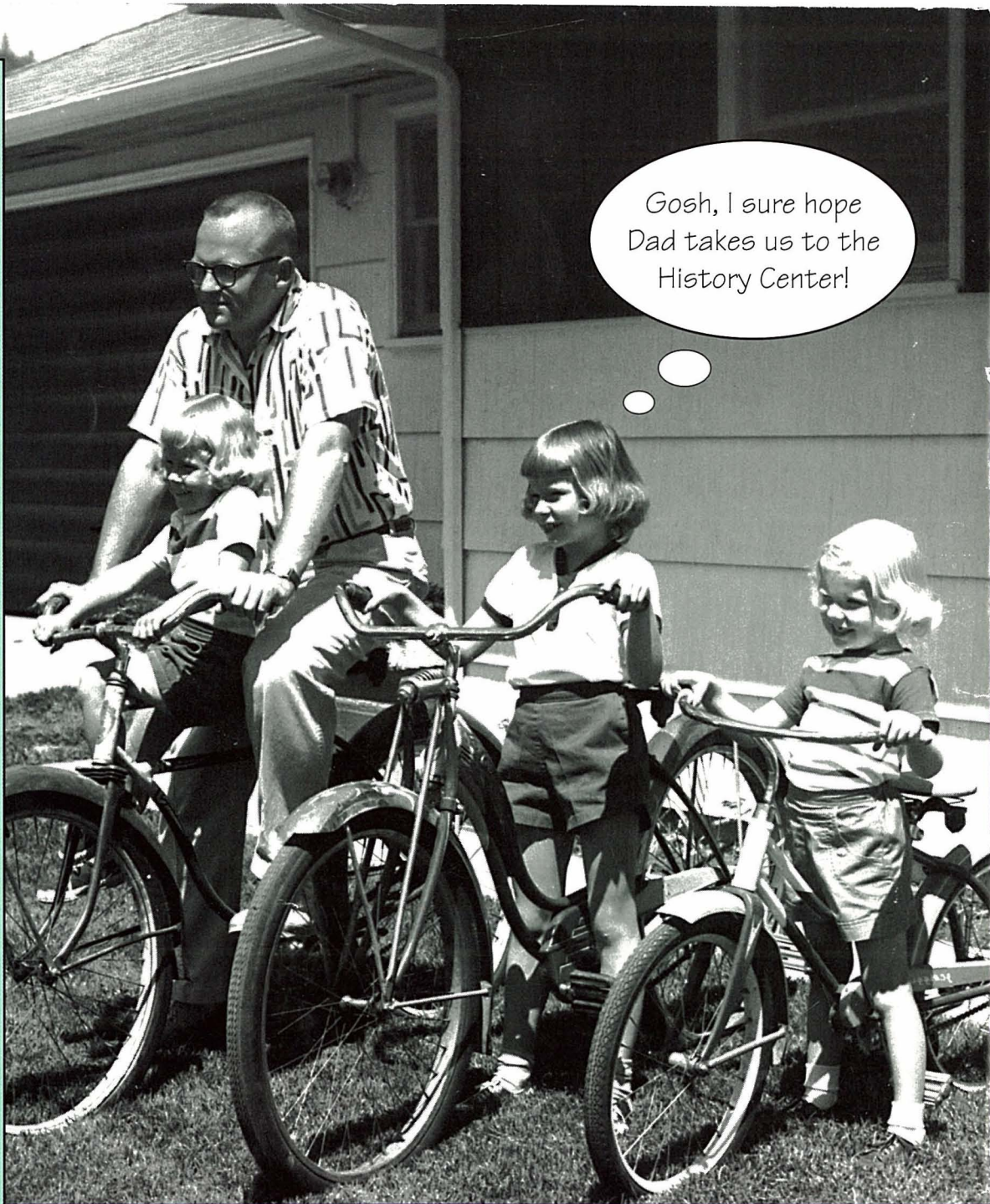
March 24 • *Rogue River: The Tree City*, community panel exhibit at the Woodville Museum at First and Oak.

April 6 • *Archaeology Rap*, Archaeology Book Club, 7:00 to 8:00 P.M., Southern Oregon History Center conference. Book Club meetings will be held the first Wednesday of each month.

April 16 • Volunteer and membership reception for exhibit opening *In This Great Land of Freedom: Japanese Pioneers of Oregon*, 6:30 to 8:30 P.M., Southern Oregon History Center. Evening activities will include a haiku poetry reading by local author and Southern Oregon State College professor Lawson Inada, Japanese musical performances, arts demonstrations, and refreshments.

April 16 • Oregon History Day competition, Stevenson Union, Southern Oregon State College.

April 30 • Japanese drummers "Shasta Taiko," 2 P.M., Medford's Craterian Theater, 23 S. Central Avenue.



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