

# HISTORY

Jim Gabbert's proven track record in the San Francisco radio market is well known by those in the industry. Gabbert entered the broadcasting field in 1957 with the acquisition of abandoned FM frequency 101.3. The property, KPEN, (for Peninsula) was begun with \$2,000 in borrowed money and two investor-partners who put up \$2,500 each. In the first month, the station produced a profit. This was only the beginning of a true success story.

In 1968, KPEN's call letters were changed to K101. This change marked the first time radio dial position and call letters were used interchangeably (K101 and 101FM).

In 1974, Gabbert made his first venture with AM radio. He purchased KSAY (1010AM) for \$2 million and changed the call letters to KIQI-AM. The AM/FM combination pushed the stations to the leadership position in the Bay Area.

Pacific FM is proud of its contributions to the development of FM service. Highlights of contributions in this regard are the following:

1. First new FM station in Northern California in 8 years when it commenced operations in 1957.
2. First 24-hour FM station in Northern California.
3. One of the founders of the National Association of FM Broadcasters which later became the National Radio Broadcasters Association.
4. First stereo station in California, and first national stereo success.
5. Instigated FCC rulemaking proceeding for the measurement of circular polarization to improve FM reception in automobiles and table radio.
6. Creator and operator of the first FM booster. Participant in rule-making on boosters and translators.
7. The first live FM stereo broadcast. The San Francisco Symphony was broadcast in live FM stereo and carried on a Northern California stereo network. KPEN also produced the first FM stereo dramas.
8. First to simulcast from FM to AM.



## HISTORY (Contd.)

9. First to interchange call letters with frequency.
10. Pioneer in quadraphonic (4 channel stereo) broadcasting, presenting one of the first FM-FM quad broadcasts in America and also pioneered FM-FM quad shows.
11. K101 was the first FM station in the world to broadcast single station quad broadcasts. It was selected by the National Quadraphonic Radio Committee as the national test station for testing all proposed discrete quad systems. It contributed thousands of dollars and man hours to this project and for a long time was the only FM station in the country participating in this important proceeding.

In 1979, Gabbert purchased Honolulu station KIKI-AM for \$350,000 and KPIG-FM for \$20,000. Four years later he sold both stations for \$1.5 million, sold K101-FM and KIQI-AM for \$12.5 million and purchased KEMO-TV, Channel 20, for \$9.8 million. KEMO-TV was changed to KTZO and began broadcasting in October 1980.

On February 20, 1985, KTZO-TV became the first television station in the Bay Area to broadcast in stereo.

In January 1986, the corporation purchased KOFY-AM for \$2 million, changed the television call letters from KTZO-TV to KOFY-TV and began radio broadcasting March 1, 1986.

The unique style of broadcasting produced by KOFY has brought recognition throughout the country and created a refreshing change for the Bay Area. KOFY is the fastest growing independent station in the Bay Area and continues to be a leader in broadcasting.





# INDUSTRY SERVICE

1964-Present	Chairman, State Emergency Communications Committee
1969-1970	VP, Engineering NAFMB, (National Association of FM Broadcasters)
1970-1971	President, NAFMB
1971-1980	President, NRBA
1973-Present	Director, Broadcast Skills Bank
1974-1976	Chairman, National Quadraphonic Radio Committee
1977-1978	Chairman, Advisory Committee to the House Communication Sub-Committee
1978-1979	Co-Chairman, National AM Stereo Committee
1979-1980	Member, National Television Stereo Committee
1987-1988	VP, Legislation CBA (California Broadcasters Association)
1988-1990	President, CBA
1991-	VP, Legislation, CBA NAB, Legislative Liasion Chair, California



Let's throw some light  
on the beginning of time....  
.... our time

## ***New FM Radio Station, KPEN, to Hit Air Waves***

A new FM radio station, KPEN, has received approval from the Federal Communications Commission and will begin transmitting in October from the highest antenna above sea level in the Bay Area.

The transmitter and studios will be located at the 2400-foot level atop Kings Mountain in the 120-year-old adobe owned by Atherton realtor John Wickett.

Owning and operating the station with Wickett are James Gabbert, a Stanford

University senior who will be chief engineer, and Gary Gielow, a recent Stanford graduate who will act as business manager. Wickett will be promotion manager.

Plans call for emphasis on good music and local programming. Shows covering each of the Peninsula towns, broadcasts of local music and dramatic groups and comprehensive news coverage are slated, say the new owners.

The station will operate at 101.3 megacycles on the FM band.

we began in 1957 with  
different call letters  
....in a different city.



# TV SCREENINGS

## Bob Foster



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LESS THAN five years ago an FM listener had less than a dozen stations to select from. Three of these stations were owned and operated by three networks and merely repeated the programs carried on their regular stations.

True, KDFC the background music station continued on the air through these lean years mostly supplying music for department stores, restaurants and super markets, but activity on the FM band was pretty quiet.



THEN ABOUT THREE OR FOUR years ago a couple of young men, fresh out of Stanford university, decided they wanted to go into radio. Gary Gielow, Jim Gabbart and a Peninsula real estate man decided to take the plunge into FM radio.

I STILL REMEMBER vividly when Gary dropped by the office to tell about his plans. Although I was well aware of the failure of a number of FM stations, the enthusiasm and confidence he showed at that time could not be discouraged, nor did I try.

Nevertheless, the young men put their station KPEN, on the air. Almost immediately it was obvious that KPEN was indeed a fine station. Not only was the signal sound and clear, the programming was outstanding.



THEN COMMERCIALS started to show up on the station. This was unheard of in local FM circles. The commercials continued to come, and KPEN prospered.

It didn't take long for others to see that it was possible to make FM pay, and almost everybody wanted in.

Today there is hardly any room left on the FM bands for more stations. Even FM channels allocated to the Bay Area are causing inter-channel interference. An application by a small station (Class A) today will bring no less than three protests from existing stations who fear the effectiveness of their signals will be cut down.



ALL THIS ACTIVITY has occurred in the last two or three years and much of the credit belongs to the couple of young men from Stanford who always wanted their own radio stations. Today FM in the Bay Area is the most successful in the nation.

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# FM Station In S. F. Stirs Stereo Sales

By JOHN BASSETT

SAN FRANCISCO. — A live-wire FM radio station has broken open the FM stereo market in this area and is helping dealers and manufacturers as well as itself reap profits and establish a tremendous potential.

As a major effort to get FM stereo off the ground, Radio Station KPEN, currently broadcasting 70 hours of stereo programs each week, held an open house at the weekend which more than 3,500 Bay Area consumers heard and saw the new medium in operation.

The four-year-old FM station has been a major factor in FM stereo sales here. James Gabbert, co-owner of KPEN, said there were at least 3,200 FM stereo adapters in use in the Bay Area after the first 30 days of FM stereo broadcasting.

**THE FIRST STEP** to successful consumer acceptance of FM stereo is the station's responsibility, said Mr. Gabbert. "It must be FM stereo," he noted. "Several stations in other cities have gone on the air with approved equipment, but insufficient engineering know-

how or testing. As a result, frequency response and the level of channel separation are not right, and the stereo effect is not achieved.

"KPEN wants the Federal Communications Commission to check the performance of an FM stereo station after the station is broadcasting, rather than simply okaying the installation plans."

Once good sounding FM stereo is available, said Mr. Gabbert, it is up to the retail dealer to sell it. So far, the components dealers have taken the lion's share of the local market, largely due to a lack of availability of packaged FM stereo sets.

Trade sources said that nearly half of the FM stereo adapters in use in the area are H. H. Scott adapters. The firm was ready with a workable adapter when KPEN began broadcasting stereo, and sales have been high, both to owners of Scott components and other FM sets, dealers contend.

**MR. GABBERT NOTED** that conventional radio-TV dealers can also capitalize on FM stereo. "The people who attended our show weren't the usual FM hi-fi fans," he noted. "Many of them were owners of packaged FM radio stereo-phonograph units and were checking to find out if their present sets were adaptable to FM stereo."

Packaged sets were on display at the KPEN open house. Manufacturers represented at the show included Magnavox, Ampex, Admiral, Zenith, Pilot and Voice of Music, all showing FM stereo in packaged sets.

"We want dealers and the public to know that this isn't necessarily a hobbyist's medium," said Mr. Gabbert. "FM stereo, like radio or TV, will soon be available in all sorts of packages. The consumer will get what he pays for, but if he can be sold some of the better-packaged units, he will get a fuller dimension of sound."

Mr. Gabbert's mention of the fact that FM stereo will "soon be available in all sorts of packages" is what's bothering most radio-TV dealers in the Bay Area. One San Francisco retailer said he has col-

lected several orders for General Electric's FM stereo sets by showing a demonstrator model, but can't deliver because of lack of merchandise here.

**DEALERS HANDLING** other brands are in a similar predicament. There is FM stereo programming, there are potential customers, but there are virtually no sets. One dealer in suburban Marin County noted he had sold a number of adapters to components set owners, but bemoaned the lack of availability of packaged units.

The retailer said he had a large backlog of customers to call when sets became available, but noted that many of these people had probably also left their names elsewhere. "In other words, I'll miss some sales if I don't have FM stereo packages first," he said.

A San Francisco dealer said the advent of FM stereo marked the first time since the end of World War II when there were more orders than merchandise. "People are going to components dealers, and they'll be buying the first adapters they can get their hands on if we don't get some merchandise soon," he said.

"This thing should mean plenty of big-ticket sales. I'd quit selling if I can't talk people up from small FM sets or stereo phonographs with no radios and into FM stereo sets with the works."

**MOST DISTRIBUTORS** queried by HOME FURNISHINGS DAILY were promising limited deliveries of FM stereo packaged units no later than Oct. 15, but many admitted they were worried that their factories would not have sufficient supplies of FM stereo packaged units to cope with the anticipated Christmas rush.

In spite of the dealers' problems, KPEN is continuing to expand its FM stereo broadcasting. The station started its programming Aug. 10 with 50 hours a week. Its 70 hours will be increased to 80 Oct. 1.

"There is no extra cost or effort involved in stereo broadcasting," said Mr. Gabbert, who is KPEN's chief engineer, "but we feel it would be a mistake to jump into a 24-hour schedule of FM multiplex stereo. By gradually increasing our programming of stereo, we

give listeners a feeling that the stereo idea is growing. We're hoping other stations in the area get into the field. We've done plenty of spadework to open the market for them."

KPEN's management disagrees with the Electronic Industries Association's recent decision to drop the word "multiplex." "Stereo has become a worn-out word," said Mr. Gabbert, "and besides, you can buy an FM radio in combination with a stereo phonograph and not have FM multiplex stereo. Many people may be confused by unscrupulous salesmen on this basis. As a matter of fact, we've had some complaints about it already."

**THE STATION WILL** probably hold another FM stereo demonstration and open house on its fourth anniversary, Oct. 27, said Mr. Gabbert. The first show, originally planned as a public demonstration of FM stereo, became a profit-making venture when more than 20 manufacturers of FM stereo packaged units, adapters and related sound equipment, expressed interest in renting booths to show their products to the public.

"We want to work with dealers on these shows," Mr. Gabbert said. "We have a mailing list of 150 top audio dealers in the Bay area, and they are at liberty to bring people to our open house demonstrations. We also have available for them, window streamers, tent cards and broadcast schedules promoting FM multiplex stereo."

KPEN's efforts to promote FM stereo have met with enough success to merit contact by officials of the EIA, who seek to use the station as a model for FM stereo promotion on a nationwide basis.

Reprinted from . . .

Home Furnishings  
Daily

September 22, 1961



Radio and Television

# Pioneers Opening FM Stereo Frontier

By Laurence Laurent

**PEOPLE & PROGRAMS:** Anyone who thinks that all the opportunities are gone in broadcasting ought to meet a pair of 26-year-old men from San Francisco. They are James Gabbert and Gary Gielow who came to Washington this week to talk about the success of their five-year-old radio station KPEN.



Laurent

With \$11,000 and lots of nerve, the two joined with a real estate friend and built what is called the Nation's premier FM Stereo station." They took a long chance on public acceptance of stereophonic broadcasting and the rewards have been huge.

Gabbert was a senior engineering student at Stanford University when the station was built. He is the son of Howard M. Gabbert, who lives in Washington and works at the State Department. Gielow is a native of San Francisco, graduated from Stanford with a degree in psychology and is the station's busiest salesman.

They claim that KPEN has caused the sale of 100,000 FM stereo radio receivers in the San Francisco area. One of the reasons: A live FM stereophonic broadcast of a complete performance of the San Francisco Symphony last November. Two sponsors paid for the broadcast and agreed to settle for "no commercials" other than opening and closing identification.

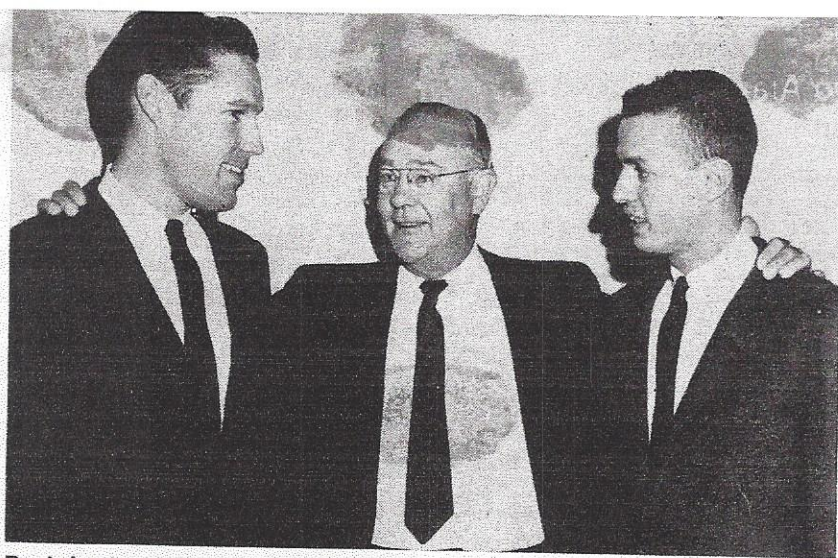
Gielow said that stereo-

phonic broadcasting has put "radio back into the living room, for the first time since television." He plans to expand the station's audience with more live music and live dramatic productions.

They also have commercial policies that listeners enjoy. There is a limit of six commercial announcements an hour. Singing commercials are not permitted; nor are those multi-voice sales pitches.

Business groups must like the policies, too. There is a waiting list for advertisers at KPEN.

WTOP NEWS sent reporter Sam Donaldson and cameraman Jack Marsh to New York City for a two-part "Newsnight" feature on the prolonged newspaper strike in New York City . . . Frank Forrester, formerly the WRC-TV weatherman, is now public information officer for the Department of Interior's Geological Survey . . . Radio station WDN has decided to broadcast only country and western music from sign on to 2 p.m. It will stick with popular music the rest of the broadcast day. . . Actor Skip Homeier, who used to be known as Skippy, has decided to use his own name, George. He would like to become known as an adult actor, not a onetime child star . . . Ian N. Wheeler has been promoted to operations manager of educational TV station WETA. He used to be program manager and producer-director . . . Michael J. Marlow, formerly a producer with CBS News and Public Affairs since 1954, is now director and executive producer of Norwood Studios' new Nor-



Back in the 1940s, when FCC Commissioner Robert T. Bartley (c above) was a young executive with the Yankee Network in New England, he persuaded that organization to enter fm, then a new and untried method of broadcasting. Over the years fm has had rela-

tively tough sledding. Last week in Washington, and 20 years later, Commissioner Bartley welcomed two young San Franciscans who have made a startling success of fm stereo broadcasting. They are Gary Gielow (l) and James Gabbert (r). Their station is KPEN (FM).

## An fm stereo success story: KPEN (FM)

Two young San Franciscans who have made fm stereo history lay their success to high quality programming and high quality stereo.

The two, both 27 years old, former Stamford U. campus radio operators, are Gary Gielow and James Gabbert, owners of KPEN (FM) in the Bay area (on 101.3 mc with 46 kw). They told their story last week to a luncheon gathering in Washington, sponsored by Electronic Industries Assn., and which included four of the seven FCC commissioners, staffers and newsmen.

Wonder of their story is that they have been making a profit with fm stereo; they claim they account for 55% of the gross revenues of all the fm stations in the San Francisco-Oakland market. Although they declined to indicate their profit, they did say that two months after they inaugurated stereo, in August 1961, the influx of additional advertisers paid for the outlay they incurred for additional equipment.

All this in the light of a 1961 gross of \$300,244 and an overall loss of \$156,000 by the 10 fm stations in the area, as reported by the FCC.

The young men told how they had scraped together \$11,000 to put KPEN on the air in 1957 and how after they began stereocasting the station began appearing in program rating surveys. During some seg-

ments of the broadcast day, they said, KPEN is fourth in share of audience, including am listeners. A Sunday morning religious program, the choir of Grace Church on Nob Hill, has been receiving a rating of 8, they excitedly announced.

**Symphony Live** - Latest venture, and already a cultural and commercial success, began last month when KPEN broadcast live the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. This was hailed as a major first and a virtuoso high fidelity triumph for fm stereo. The three-hour program was jointly sponsored by Merrill, Lynch, Fenner & Smith and by Safeway Stores. Safeway has agreed to take half sponsorship of the remaining programs in the symphony series.

The next big step, now in the planning stage, is the presentation of live drama in stereo.

The key to their success, both emphasized, is "sparkling fidelity." This is accomplished, they pointed out, by a high standard of technical excellence, including maintenance that refuses to accept less than the best and the upgrading of commercial equipment until today the gear is "almost custombuilt," and program ideas. This has brought them 65 regular advertisers.

Both are energetic and enthusiastic. "Stereo has put radio back into the living room for the first time since television," Mr. Gabbert said.



# Stereo FM Can Compete With AM, Two Show in SF

By WALTER JOHNSON

WASHINGTON. — Stereophonic FM radio can successfully compete with AM stations in the same market, two 26-year-old California entrepreneurs have dramatically demonstrated.

The two enterprising young men, James Gabbert and Gary Gielow, owners of FM-stereo station KPEN, San Francisco, gave the formula for their success at a luncheon sponsored by the Electronic Industries Association recently.

They explained to an audience, including four Federal Communications Commissioners, EIA officials, and several newspapermen how they got started and what they did to keep the business growing.

Mr. Gielow said that while the two were still in Stanford University, they surveyed the broadcast field and decided that FM radio had the best potentials for newcomers.

After scraping up \$11,000 in capital, they opened the first FM station in San Francisco on Oct. 27, 1957. Doing all the work themselves, they managed to meet the \$600 a month expenses of running the station.

They really got going when FCC authorized stereo-FM in mid-1961. They laid their plans carefully then jumped into FM-stereo with both feet.

## Quality Stressed.

Mr. Gabbert said it was decided to base the station's operation strictly on quality. No singing

commercials were allowed, only male voices were used in commercials, and commercials were limited to six per hour in good taste and of short duration. This policy still prevails.

The station caught the public's fancy almost immediately. When KPEN went on the air for the first time with stereo, its programs were scheduled to catch the largest number of listeners. It broadcast six hours a day, around lunch time to attract businessmen downtown, from 5 to 6 p.m. to reach the dinner audience, and from 10 to 12 p.m., to get the late evening listeners.

Mr. Gielow said the station owners did some vigorous promoting ahead of time and several department stores in San Francisco stayed open after hours to demonstrate the new medium. He said all FM-stereo sets in the area were sold out in four days.

Today, KPEN is generally considered the number one FM-stereo station in the country and San Francisco leads all other cities in the number of stereo sets in the hands of the public.

## Increased Hours.

The station increased its stereo hours gradually and the owners paid for the equipment in two months.

The high point in cultural endeavors occurred on Nov. 29, 1962, when KPEN broadcast the two-hour San Francisco symphony, with the only commercial being an announcement at the beginning that the two sponsors made this possible. A taped recording of the symphony broadcast was played at the luncheon last week and showed the extent to which the two young men went to make certain that there was the very best possible reproduction of the music.

This broadcast was so well accepted by the public that Mr. Gabbert said he and Mr. Gielow are now considering broadcasting live FM-stereo drama.

FM-stereo, he said, has put radio back into the living room for the first time since TV practically drove it out. AM radio, not other FM stations, he emphasized, is stereo's real competitor, and it can be successfully coped with in the market place, he said.



# FM Radio Comes Into Its Own

## KPEN Scores a Heavy Victory

### FAVORITE FM STATION

On the basis of the ballots received in the annual poll, FM is now over the hump. Building from about 20 per cent of the total ballots entered five years ago, FM has progressed to the point where 62.7 per cent of the total ballots showed a favorite FM station.

Of the FM stations in the area, KPEN more than dominates the field. The powerful local station now can proudly point to the fact that nearly 55 per cent of the FM listeners tune 101.9 megacycles for the KPEN programming.

Next found KPFA, the Berkeley subscription station, with a figure of something like 22 per cent of the audience. The rest of the Bay Area stations heard on the Peninsula shared the remaining 23 per cent of the audience.

Here's the way the FM stations wound up:

- 1—KPEN
- 2—KPFA
- 3—KSFR
- 4—KJAZ
- 5—KNBR-FM
- 6—KEAR
- 7—KYA-FM
- 8—KBAY (KFOG)
- 9—KBCO
- 10—KMPX



KPEN (FM), America's most successful FM station, topped the poll.

The re-  
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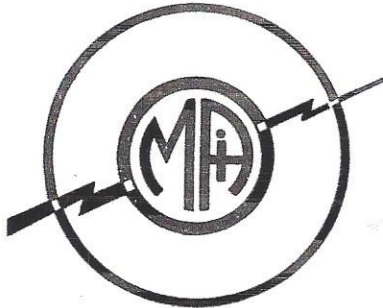
# es Into Its Own



st successful FM sta- tion, topped the poll by a huge majority.

The real surprise was that KREN drew enough votes in the "Favorite Radio Station," category, to wind up in seventh place, overall. KKHI, the classical music station, showed surprising power and replaced KGO in the standings.





LYTELL 1-6567

# MOBIL ASSOCIATES INC.

529 OLD COUNTY ROAD • SAN CARLOS, CALIFORNIA • U.S.A.

April 23, 1964

Mr. James Gabbert  
K P E N  
1001 California Street  
San Francisco, California

Dear Mr. Gabbert:

As a research, development agency, and manufacturer of FM-MPX radios, we are vitally interested in factors affecting performance of such units under all conditions.

Since you have started vertical polarization transmission we have had numerous field tests on our equipment - mainly with our automobile FM-MPX receiver - to determine the effect of this transmission polarization change.

We feel confident that your personnel have completed extensive field studies on this effect. Your reputation of thoroughness and constant maintenance of quality transmission leads us to that conclusion. In spite of this, we feel prompted to express our conclusions of our tests in a general way for your information.

In general we have found that :

a. For mobile use - your vertical polarity signal has increased reception in difficult areas well over 80 %. For example - on the Bayshore Freeway while passing around the foot of San Bruno Mountain in South San Francisco, we previously had an almost complete signal loss or break-up until passing this area and getting in line of sight of your transmitter. With your vertical polarity we can now drive through this area with no signal loss and with minimal interference. This area is within a mile or so of your transmitter. Quite a contrast to horizontal polarity ! This same result applies to many areas in San Francisco where previously we had loss or break-up we now are able to retain your signal, however with some interference. These areas are more distant from your transmitter.

b. In stationary use we found that your vertical polarity signal could be received where other FM signals could not; for example, in the deep cul-de-sacs in the San Carlos and Belmont hill areas. The open end of these cul-de-sacs are in the direction

of Sacramento, and we were able to receive the Sacramento MPX stations there, but only your signal from San Francisco.

All these evaluations support our conclusions that the vertical polarization of your signal has greatly improved reception in previously difficult areas. It is our understanding that your present broadcasts are only partially vertical polarized. With no intention of criticism of your present signal we would like to express our opinion that in view of your improved reception and our possibly being correct in our understanding that your signal is both horizontal and vertical we believe that a complete vertical polarization transmission at your full power would be the ultimate in opening up fully the many difficult reception areas and solve many antenna problems for the users of FM-MPX receivers.

We have the greatest respect and admiration for the results your past pioneering has achieved including your latest well based thinking on vertical polarization. Again, expressing our opinion, we feel that those who are now attempting to imitate your pioneering broadcasting results will also ultimately attempt to follow your engineering results on vertical polarization.

Our best wishes for your continued success in this endeavor.

Sincerely yours,



ROBERT J. DIXON  
Secretary-Treasurer.



# BROADCAST<sup>®</sup>

## engineering

20TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

Fm &amp; am

### Case study:

## K101, an FM pioneer

By Jim Gabbert

The saga begins in 1956 when my partner, Gary Gielow, and I decided that since we liked working in the Stanford radio station so much, it would be nice if we could build our own station when we graduated. Since Gary was a psych major with a good business mind, and I was in engineering, we figured that we had the basic necessities to do this, and all we needed to do was raise some money.

The first trip to the FCC's local office revealed that there were no AM frequencies available in California, but there were 12 vacant FM frequencies, and if we wanted one, we could have one. Earlier, FM had made a very small splash and then had gone away and died a quiet death. (Those 12 vacant FM frequencies had once been occupied). There was nobody manufacturing FM transmitters anymore and only Zenith and Granco still were making FM radios. I was supposed to be responsible for all the engineering on our radio station and I didn't even know what FM was. All in all, things didn't look too good, but we were young and we wanted a radio station and we didn't know it couldn't be done.

We figured that we could graduate from college and get high paying jobs and build the radio station in our spare time...just for fun. The jobs would support the station (by this time, we realized that we were not going to make a fortune with an FM station). FM just wasn't happening. Where would we get the money? We pooled our resources to come up with the \$6000 we needed and were short by about \$5300. And we still didn't have a place for the antenna. Since money was the more difficult of the two problems, we went off looking for an antenna site and found the perfect place on 2400-ft Kings Mountain behind the school campus. The owner of the land got so excited by our project that he volunteered to co-sign the necessary loans and we were on our way. He also owned a 120-year old adobe hut which we moved up to the mountain top to become the first studios.

We chose 101.3 out of the 12 available frequencies and called it KPEN, the city of license being Atherton on the San Francisco

Peninsula. To show how times have changed, our original application was 20 pages long and the CP came through in 45 days. We rented a D-10 caterpillar and started clearing the land. We sold the trees for firewood and used the money to buy a new RCA console.

KPEN signed on at noon on October 27, 1957, with an effective radiated power of 1500 W. The emphasis was on superior sound and within a couple of months, the station started showing up in newspaper polls. Our advertisers were getting good results and there was so much hub-bub about the new hi-fidelity FM that national advertisers phoned in buys during the second month on the air. Within three months, we had increased power to 5 kW and business was almost too much to handle. In fact, things were going so well that another application was submitted for an increase in power. We considered this a mere formality, because the FCC had given us everything we had asked for. With visions of 50,000 W on the air 24 hours a day, we hired an announcer to help out while I was still in class at Stanford. And the commission did not grant the application.

Prior to action on this application by the FCC, we realized that it would be prudent to move the station to San Francisco as quickly as possible, as obviously it was better to have a radio station licensed in San Francisco than in the suburban town of Atherton. At the completion of this move, KPEN ended up with a maximum radiated power of 125,000 W and an antenna height above average terrain of 1420 ft.

At this time in the history of FM development, the maximum power of an FM transmitter was 10,000 W and, to achieve 125,000 W without utilizing a super high gain FM antenna which would not work well in the rugged terrain of San Francisco, we had to develop a directional FM antenna. The basic design for this antenna is still in use by the station and is the grandfather of all the high power FM panel antennas. Many companies have since duplicated the design of this antenna (back in those days it was all horizontally polarized).

The only 10,000 W transmitter

available was a 1946 Western Electric 506B-2. These transmitters were notorious for poor tube life and, at \$500 a final tube, was something we could not afford, so a research program was started by Eimac to develop a ceramic triode transmitter tube for FM. The people at Eimac felt that there would probably be a market for 10 kW (and higher power later) FM transmitters. The first 3CX 10,000 A3 ever put into FM service was used in our Western Electric transmitter, and was designated an X762B. At the same time that Eimac was researching this project, we were conducting experiments with zero bias triodes and grounded grid circuits. Today, these are standard in most FM transmitters.

The first three years that the station was on the air, we did a great deal of experimenting with stereo and, in 1961, we became the first station west of the Mississippi to broadcast in stereo, which opened up the proverbial can of worms for receiver manufacturers. Being the first to do something is always difficult, because there is no yardstick against which to measure performance. In this case, we were using a stereo generator that was a prototype and there were no receivers available to see if the system worked or not.

When receivers finally appeared, all but two distorted the signal on the high end, but since this was not happening in any of the Eastern markets which were broadcasting in stereo, the manufacturers said it was our fault. After much investigation, we found that it was indeed our fault because our fidelity was superior to any other station in the country. At that time, there were two basic design concepts. The GE circuit received a 19 kHz pilot tone, doubled and amplified it and reinserted it in the decoder. The Scott receiver, which did not distort, was a time division decoder. Since we were using STLs instead of phone lines, and really high fidelity cartridges, our high frequencies were getting in the 19 kHz doubler circuit and creating severe distortion.

Needless to say, all of these receivers were eventually recalled and the systems were changed, but in the first year of FM stereo, there were more stereo sets in San



## A swipe at the Ayatollah



Times Tribune Staff Photo by Joe Melena  
Passengers at Menlo Park's Southern Pacific train station are presented with "Ayatoilet" paper rolls by Jim Gabbert, manager of K101. The radio station rolled out the Ayatoilet at various Peninsula points to downgrade Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini and to point up K101.

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## San Francisco Examiner

Fm & am



Jim Gabbert and 15 of the women who work for his two radio stations: 'Radio has always been a good mirror of our society,' he says

Examiner photos by Gordon Stone

### K-101: Opening the doors of the 'white men's club'

By Albert Morch

**W**OMEN WORKING in radio, on the air or behind the scenes, are a special breed. They tend to be aggressive, self-confident and willing to relocate on short notice. FM station K-101, and its AM sister station, KIQI, claim to have more women on their staff than any other broadcast outlet in the Bay Area, and possibly the nation.

Nineteen of its 38 full-time employees are women, and of that number, the women outnumber the men in upper echelon positions, 10 to five. Eight of the 19 women come from minority backgrounds.

"I have to admit," said station-

owner Jim Gabbert, 43, "that when I was a student at Stanford I was a male chauvinist. I ran the campus radio station, and would never let a woman be an announcer. I guess my attitude then could be blamed on the generally shared chauvinistic attitudes of most male college students. I really had no reason, because I grew up in Costa Rica, and in Latin American countries women are used extensively in radio."

Gabbert, who has a reputation in the industry as a maverick, put a woman newscaster on the air in 1968. "Nobody else around here had done it, and I thought I'd give it a try. It just said he hires employees to sex or ethnic background does the job best, gets believe that if you do you're doing, you should."

It's obvious Gabbert enjoys what he's doing. He recently turned down \$20 million for his two stations the also operates two in Hawaii, and is currently thinking about buying a couple of TV stations. K-101, on the air 24 hours a day with 125,000 watts of power, is in the top five in listener ratings among the Bay Area's 76 stations. Its AM sister, KIQI, now operating on coverage-limiting 10,000 watts from sunrise to sunset, will soon, he said, get FCC approval to go 24 hours a day and boost its power to 50,000 watts. Both stations play contemporary adult music, air news and present a variety of community affairs programming.

"Radio has always been a good mirror of our society, and today is reflecting societal changes more swiftly than other media," he said. "I used to be the stately and white man's club."

While there were few objections raised to women at the microphones and engineer's panels and doing the laundry jobs that keep a station on the air, Gabbert said the biggest barrier he encountered was hiring K-101's first female advertising sales representatives in 1974. "There was a lot of resistance from our retail accounts. They were not ready to work with a female rep. Strangely, the loudest reactions came from female retail executives."

The atmosphere at K-101 and KIQI.



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
SAN FRANCISCO

JOSEPH L. ALIOTO

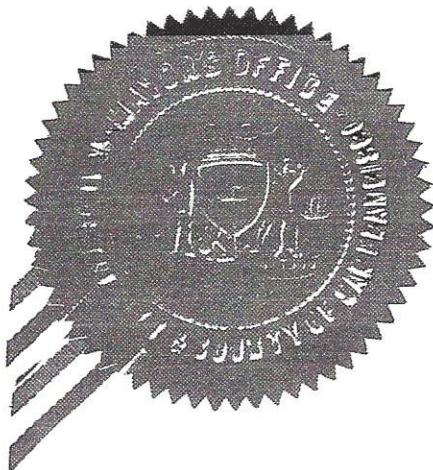
## Proclamation

October 27, 1975 marks the 18th Anniversary of Radio Station K101. K101 owner and general manager, James Gabbert started the station with some used equipment and a license from the Federal Communications Commission in 1957.

We are proud that a San Francisco radio station was one of the first stereo stations in the country, continuing to pioneer in the areas of quadrasonic broadcasting and stereo radio drama. K101 has continually demonstrated its desire to serve the public interest...broadcasting the S.N.A.C.K. concert live and unsponsored, providing a community access van so that citizens can air their opinions from their own neighborhood, and by broadcasting local news programs designed to educate and inform the voters of San Francisco about the issues vital to their daily lives.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Joseph L. Alioto, Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco, in recognition of Mr. Gabbert's accomplishments and the efforts of his staff, do hereby proclaim Monday, October 27, 1975, as K101 DAY in San Francisco, and congratulate Radio Station K101 for its continued outstanding service to the Bay Area.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Seal of the City and County of San Francisco to be affixed this fourteenth day of October, nineteen hundred and seventy-five.



*Joseph L. Alioto*  
Joseph L. Alioto  
Mayor





## Bob Foster

PENINSULA-BORN FM

STATION 18 YEARS OLD

OCT 21 1975

It really doesn't seem like it was 18 years ago that two young Stanford students, Jim Gabbert and Gary Gielow, came to my office to talk about their new FM station. Both were still attending classes at Stanford but getting ready to put an FM station on the air, and their confidence in themselves and their plans was not only refreshing, but inspirational.

The fact that nobody had been able to make a success of FM radio didn't appear to bother either of the young men. They only knew that they wanted to go into radio, regardless of what kind.

Nobody, it seemed, every told the two young men that FM couldn't succeed. As a result, on Oct. 27, 1957 KPEN took the air from an adobe-hut transmitter on Black Mountain and Bay Area FM radio hasn't been the same since. In fact, the entire local FM industry owes a great deal to Gabbert and Gielow.

Up to the arrival of KPEN, FM locally had been a miserable failure. Only KNBR, KGO, KCBS and KPFA, Berkeley were broadcasting. The network stations were just duplicating the AM programs. This continued until the FCC forbade duplication in major markets.

FCC Inspector Ney Landry still remembers the day that the pair went to the FCC offices in San Francisco. "They wanted to know how to build a radio station," Landry recalled. They were told that there were no AM stations left, but "you can have an FM channel." Gary wasn't enthusiastic about getting an FM station. "They were dead," he recalls, "and I couldn't see getting involved in that kind of an operation."

About that time FM made some major improvements in technical quality, and Jim, always the experimenter, and gambler, decided that an FM license might not be a bad idea.

Originally the station was licensed to Atherton-Menlo Park, a designation that bothered the good people of Atherton. There were not supposed to be any new business enterprises in that town.

The call letters KPEN were a natural, and became well-known almost immediately. Both men realized after they got on the air that the \$15,000 (all borrowed) they had put into the station wasn't going to take care of the cash needed for day-to-day operations. The first sponsors the station picked up was Alco-Paramount, now Alco, a high-fi firm of San Jose, and Davies Chevrolet. Both are still with the station. For a long time Jim and Gary were reluctant to increase the spot rate to the two sponsors because they appreciated them so much for saving the station in the early days.



# Broadcasting

The news weekly of broadcasting and allied arts

## Closed Circuit

Insider report: behind the scene, before the fact

### Real progress?

James Gabbert of K101(FM) San Francisco gave what many in audience regarded as impressive performance when he appeared before FCC commissioners at en banc meeting last week to appeal for rules permitting discrete quadraphonic FM broadcasting (see page 42). But there are some commission staffers, including engineers, whose skepticism will have to be overcome before Mr. Gabbert's hopes are realized.

Some staffers wonder whose interest introduction of quadraphonic would serve—public's or those who would profit from sale of records and new equipment. "I can't help but feel it's too much of a rip-off," said one engineer. Those who share his view hope that commission, instead of deciding which of several quadraphonic systems to adopt, will step back and decide whether any system represents significant advance from existing stereo broadcasting.

## Television/Radio Age

November 24, 1975



*James Gabbert, owner/general manager of K101-AM-FM San Francisco, receives the highest honor presented by the city and county of San Francisco, the Certificate of Honor, from Diane Feinstein, president of the Board of Supervisors. The award was for responsiveness to community needs.*



# Billboard®

## Radio-TV Programming

### Gabbert Gabby; Claims His K101 Will Be Tops In S.F. In 1976

By JACK McDONOUGH

SAN FRANCISCO—"Our goal," says ambitious owner-manager Jim Gabbert of K101 here, "which we plan to reach through a carefully calculated and mapped-out plan, is to become the San Francisco radio station by the end of 1976. It's being done very slowly. We're building a strong base."

It is not unlikely that Gabbert will achieve his goal. Since he changed the call letters from KPEN in 1968 and started evolving a format change away from KPEN's classical music ("It was the most recognized FM station in the country, but it got boring"), Gabbert has built K101 into one of the top trend-setting stations in the market.

He has done this mostly with brashly shrewd innovations that defy most of the rules of radio—for instance, a fat playlist of 60-70 records that ranges from the Stones to Johnny Mathis, that sometimes will omit a gigantic hit like Elton John's "Philadelphia Freedom," and that repeats hits only once every six hours at the most.

Gabbert also uses on his AM-FM simulcast stations the FM technique of 15-minute sweeps of music, which keeps spots down to eight per hour; he spends money on such things as a fully-equipped mobile van to go out and gather news and "free-speech messages"; he's using new, crazily creative call letter jingles that have already created a stir in the market here, and he steadfastly maintains an unquestioned technical superiority in the San Francisco Bay Area market.

"Our philosophy was to create an alternative to Top 40: that is, go after the 18-plus to adults, using ideas that were developed in Top 40," Gabbert says. "A lot of Top 40 stations in the last six years have been showing heavily in adults. Bill Drake was responsible for much of this. Music was changing, tastes were changing. Progressive rock stations had an influence also.

"But even though they were showing well in adults, 50 percent was still teens. So we looked at this and said, for an adult to put up with this—the razzmatazz teen sound, the screaming jocks sitting on thumbtacks, the coat hanger down the throat, the tight playlist, the whole thing—we looked at this and said, why don't we provide an alternative?"

"So we took the teenybopper crap out and slid right down the middle. We came out with a long playlist but hit-oriented. Our separation can be as much as eight hours on a current hit, whereas at a Top 40 it's just an hour or two. We use a lot of oldies, a jog-the-memory-bank type thing, but our rotation on those is five days. We'll go back a little further for the oldies than the usual station. They give balance and variety without losing familiarity.

"When we bought the AM station last year (formerly KSAY, a country station at 1010 on the AM dial) it basically just killed KYA and we're giving KFRC a stiff run for their money. We do eight spots an hour. How can they compete when they've got to run 12-18? And we've got the sweeps of music, we balance it well, and we break a lot of rules. They would be reluctant to play Streisand's "The Way We Were" or Diana Ross' "Touch Me In The Morning." We forced them into playing those. We can play records like that normally and then swing into the Stones and pull it off.

"Gavin described our format as 'All Over The Road' but we do it without knocking over the telephone poles. Just as we get to the edge of the road we gracefully curve back again. And a lot of the ideas we started here are now standard. Listen to KFRC today. It's totally different than what it was. Sometimes they sound more like us than we sound like us. But when the ratings show that we're grabbed another

chunk they have to respond some way. And more than that—KFRC isn't considered in competition, for instance, with KSFO or KABL. Yet we are. We're picking up women listeners in large quantities. And KSFO has a very hard time responding. Because they can't do what we do and go on being what they are.

"The pure Top 40 people will hate us for what we're doing, and the pure progressive FMs will hate us for what we're doing. But there's a big chunk of people in the middle and we just go scoop!"

Program director at K101 is Don Kelly, who chooses the records "except for questionable ones" when Gabbert and Mike Lincoln will be called in for a yea-nay. Sometimes there'll be a unanimous yea and we'll put it on the air and in the different environment we'll find we shouldn't be playing it.

"In April of last year we were on top of the world. Our AM had just gone on and the ratings were great, so we thought during the summer we'd get a little harder in music. But we found that in the 35-49 range we chased listeners away like we had cancer. Our teens started to come up, and we didn't want that. We do everything we can to keep teens away, because they hurt with a lot of accounts. We can go after banks and Cadillac dealers, more blue-chip clients than a rocker can get. Our peak of audience is 25-34, right in the middle of the 18-49 spectrum.

"So we just took those few records away, records that had that constant, driving sound, even if they were very big hits. We found that if we don't play them most people wouldn't know anyway because of our long rotation, and we're going to lose more by playing them than we gain. 'Philadelphia Freedom' is a classic example. I think it's a super record. If it had been three minutes long we would have played it. But its five and one-half minutes long. We

played it a little but we got complaints.

"Adults respond slower than teens and sometimes in a case like that we wait for the record to get established so that adults have heard it on jukeboxes and so on, and then we bring it in. And I think we're pretty good at introducing records. 'HiJack, we broke here; MFSB and Love Unlimited we broke here. We broke 'Never Can Say Goodbye.' We tried 'Honeybee,' but didn't quite make it with that. I've found a lot of music directors going out to the discos. We'll do that, go up to Dance Your Ass Off, Inc., and watch people respond to a record and we'll maybe put the record on the air. And because we start playing it KFRC will and KHJ will and bang, it's a hit.

Gabbert is proud of the many accomplishments of K101: (1) it is the only independently owned station in San Francisco; (2) it was the first stereo FM station west of the Mississippi and one of the first FMs to play pop music; (3) it has built an AM signal equal in quality to the FM signal as well as conducting all the quad broadcasting tests for the FCC.

Since the station is independently owned, says Gabbert, when they changed over from KPEN to K101 "we didn't have a corporate bankroll to finance a massive format change. We couldn't afford to lose money for 30 days. So we had to evolve. So we set up a master plan saying, by 1970 we'll be here, by 1971 we'll be here. The amazing thing is we carried a lot of the 40-50 years-olds with us and we introduced them to groups like Chicago and Blood, Sweat and Tears. By 1972 we'd become a major influence in the 18-49 area."

(Continued Next Week)

JULY 5, 1975, BILLBOARD



# Radio & Records

Fm & am

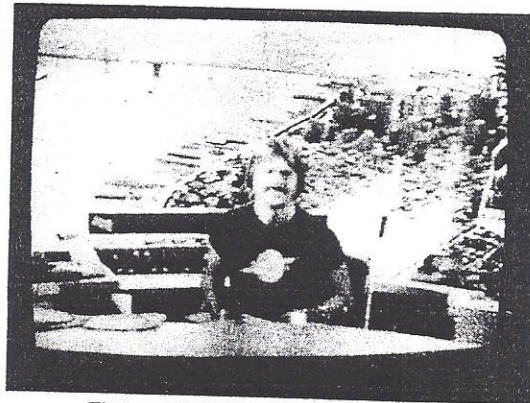
THE INDUSTRY'S NEWSPAPER

FRIDAY, JUNE 2, 1978

## "WATCH YOUR RADIO"

### K101 Exposes Itself Over TV

K101/San Francisco recently found an entertaining way to use TV to boost radio. They invited listeners to "tune in and watch your radio," in the form of what the station believes is the first AM/FM/TV simulcast ever, coordinated with Channel 26 in San Francisco. For 12 hours, viewers/listeners could watch K101 in action over their TV sets while hearing the station's programming simultaneously. Cameras focused on individual air personality shows, as well as behind-the-scenes glimpses and tours of the



studios and transmitters. Different color patterns were used as backgrounds to create visual contrast, and at times the images of air personalities were superimposed on aerial views of the city taken from K101's airplane. The station reported vast numbers of telephone calls from listeners, and may try the triple simulcast again. Pictured is air personality Sam Van Zandt superimposed against a San Francisco vista, while a technician oversees the complicated multimedia board.



# Billboard<sup>®</sup>

## Radio-TV Programming

### Vox Jox

By DOUG HALL

\* \* \*

When **Jim Gabbert's** KIOI/KIQI San Francisco stations suggested to listeners tune in and watch these stations they weren't fooling. For 12 hours viewers could tune in channel 26 in San Francisco and watch the behind-the-scenes operation of the AM-FM combination.

Using the radio stations' audio on the tv program Gabbert called the program the "first AM-FM-TV simulcast in history." The show was produced by KIOI's own tv production company, Michael Lincoln Associates.

DJs viewed and heard were **Ron Castro, Chuck Morgan, Cliff Saunders, Jack Friday, Sam Van Zandt, and Charlie Seraphin.** The show also included tours of the transmitters as well as the studios and interviews with the stations' staff.

Visual interest was maintained as aerial views of the city were superimposed over the DJs at work. These were provided from the KIOI plane. In addition, audio-modulated color patterns were used.

\* \* \*

June 3, 1978



## How a 1,000 Watt Daytimer Beat San Francisco

*KOFY-AM, San Mateo only got a 1.8 but it was higher than powerful competitor KYA-FM. Higher than KFRC-AM. And seven-tenths of a share from equaling the ratings of KIOI-FM — once sold for millions by the new owner of KOFY-AM.*

When radio veteran Jim Gabbert signed on March 15 with his new radio station in the San Mateo/San Francisco market he had a lot of surprises in store.

One was the immediate ratings recognition — in the Spring 1986 San Francisco Arbitron book (April 3-June 25), Gabbert's station pulled a 1.8 share. Oldies competitor KYA-FM is full-time and fully in the city coverage area. It only got a 1.6. KFRC-AM could only do a 1.6.

In fact, Gabbert sold KIOI-FM, San Francisco — for millions and millions — to Price Communications. KIOI-FM could only beat KOFY-AM's ratings by seven-tenths of a percentage point.

But there's more to the story. Gabbert had a lot going against him: His station KOFY is an AM daytimer. Only 1,000 watts.

It was off the air from January until the March sign on. Before that, it was a Spanish-formatted station. And it is licensed to San Mateo.

KOFY-AM was only on the air for 20 days during the ratings sweep.

Gabbert is convinced his station earned the 1.8 share by breaking

many of the "rules." Here's how:

■ **Employed no research.** That's a must, says Gabbert. Stations can be over-researched and it may not always give a true picture. And they also over-react to ratings.

■ **No structure-format.** At any other station, the "Nifty 1050" would be golden oldies. Gabbert cringes at that description. People don't like to be told they're old — and a station is doing that when it calls the music they love "oldies."

And the younger listener doesn't want to be associated with anything that "old people listen to." Thus, the double whammy of calling something "oldies." Adds Gabbert, who started as a DJ in 1957: The 50's are trendy today. Kids are getting flat-top haircuts.

■ **Banned playing more than two records in a row.** Gabbert says conventional research indicates people don't want to listen to commercials.

He notes that is what people "think" they feel. Actually, well-placed national spots, for example, will make a radio station seem classier and more exciting to listen to.

Another KOFY-AM rule: Always announce every record you play. Never go into one cold.

■ **Jocks can play what they want from a "loose" playlist.** Each DJ has his or her own special colored pen to "X" out the date next to a song title. That way, Gabbert can keep track of how often a song is played.

■ **Only toe-tappers or hand-clappers are played.** It ranges from the 1950's to the 1970's. Some of the breed that appeal to Gabbert: "At the Hop," "Blueberry Hill" and "Hound Dog."

What he avoids: syrupy songs. And many Motown tunes that don't fit the strategy. However the Supremes are a big exception.

■ **Brought back the old jingles.** They're a series of PAMS jingles the jingle producer put together for the old Collier stations, including KFVB-AM, Los Angeles and KEWB-FM, San Francisco in the 50's (Series 18). PAMS used the original music and jingle themes inserting KOFY-AM's calls.

■ **Kept promotions and contests low key and low in cost.** Like giving away a six-pack of Coke or a \$1 lottery ticket. Gabbert says it isn't the munificent prize that attracts the listener. Rather, it's getting the listener involved with the radio station.

When a listener calls, Gabbert jumps to get them on the air. He's the morning man for the station. His only advertising is done on KOFY-TV, Channel 20. It was a deal he couldn't refuse. He owns the TV station.

The TV campaign shows people lip-syncing oldies, such as a young kid doing the bass part in an old song.

He also sells his advertising in combination with the television station.

KOFY-AM's first book shows a strong male, 25-54 audience skewing in the older end of the range — all as would be expected. But Gabbert expects the station to include people as young as 18 as it becomes known.

Part of the promotion: two 50's dance parties, Saturday morning and Saturday night, on KOFY-TV. Those attending range from high schoolers to grandparents.

Gabbert's station had a low-power problem: only 1,000 watts. But Channel 20 carries the radio station on its stereo signal (viewers can listen to the station on Channel 20's secondary-audio program).

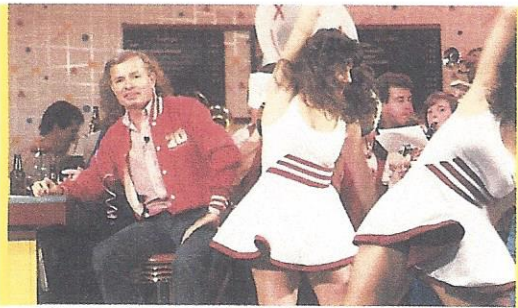
That gets the "Nifty 1050" into every home reached by the television station.

When the treaty is signed with Mexico to free up some AM frequencies, KOFY-AM will be able to broadcast full-time at 50,000 watts. —By Neill Borowski



KOFY-AM owner Jim Gabbert (with co-hosting dog Cody) previously sold KIOI-FM for millions. Now he's within less than a point from beating them with a 1,000 watt AMer.





Paul Miller

Above: James Gabbert cavorts with Stanford University cheerleaders and band members on his Sunday night movie show.



## James Gabbert Is Staying Tuned for Big Changes in Broadcasting

By Bill Cardoso

**T**here was Jim Gabbert a year ago, climbing San Francisco's Sutro Tower like a steeplejack, week after week, installing the new TV20 broadcast antenna, rigging wires, checking connections, hauling parts and equipment.

How many other station managers would do that high and risky work? Go ahead, name one.

But that's Gabbert, president and CEO of San Francisco's Pacific FM Inc., the corporation that owns KOFY-TV and KOFY-AM.

He pilots his own turboprop Piper Cheyenne and flies an average of 450 hours a year; he hasn't been on a commercial flight in four years. He lives on an 85-foot motor yacht, *Defiance*, in Sausalito, and recently bought a house there; he says he'll move in "sooner or later." He owns a Mercedes and a Ford Bronco and, time permitting, water skis on the Sacramento River.

But Gabbert, a bachelor, is in a real sense married to his work. Last year he returned to his first love, radio, after a six-year absence, paying \$2 million to Radio Español for a 25-year-old Spanish-language station in San Mateo. He plans to sink \$5 million into the operation, having successfully petitioned to increase the weak 1,000-watt signal to 50,000 watts, which will enable the station to cover a 100-mile radius, and to consolidate all operations in San Francisco by this summer. His KOFY-AM broadcasts a 1950s-1980s "oldies" format over "the nifty ten-fifty" on the AM dial.

To achieve authenticity, Gabbert studied five years' worth of weekly Top 40 playlists from two stations of that era. The 1986 spring San Francisco Arbitron ratings gave the station a 1.8 share, better than its strongest "oldies" competitor, and just a fraction behind K101, the station Gabbert sold in 1980.

His plan is to make AM stereo "a household word" because, he says, "it is better than FM stereo. Right now people don't realize this, so AM stations are going for very low prices. In San Francisco you could buy a typical AM

station now for \$4 million or \$5 million. An FM station is going for \$40 million. Yet the AM covers [the area] better. But everybody's given up on it. Everybody's turned their back and walked away, and said it's dead. My feeling is that AM is as good as FM, if not better."

Until recently, Gabbert, 51, worked the morning-drive disc jockey slot at KOFY radio. He gave it up on the station's first anniversary in early March.

"I had no intention of doing it in the first place, but the guy I hired didn't show up. Meanwhile, as modest as I can be, I happen to be good in radio and I know that. But it's still the worst shift known to humanity. You've got to get up at 4:30 a.m. Your day is over at 10. So, you go home and nap. And by the time everybody comes home and it's time to go out and have drinks, you've got to go to bed. It's absolutely the worst. You look forward to Friday nights. Saturday morning you can sleep in till 5," he says.

Spinning discs is one thing, but now Gabbert is popping up on the TV screen, presiding over movies, hosting Saturday night's *Fifties Dance Party* (his own version of *American Bandstand*) and doing editorial commentary while dressed in jeans and sport shirt.

Thursday is perhaps the busiest day of Gabbert's hectic week. He manages the day-to-day operations of his TV and radio stations, tapes a movie show, then dons a tuxedo to host the '50s-style *Dance Party*. "I haven't missed a day of work in five years," he says cheerfully. "If I look like I'm having fun on TV, well that's just what I'm doing. What's work? I'm doing what I want to do."

The Gabbert on your TV screen is the same Gabbert sitting across from you in a restaurant or office. He readily converses, especially about his first love, broadcasting, and speaks with a rapid-fire delivery, going off on tangents while holding two or three topics aloft, returning, almost seamlessly, to tie together his thoughts.

James Jeffrey Gabbert, the son of a career

diplomat, grew up in El Salvador, Paraguay, Argentina and, finally, Costa Rica, where he finished high school. "When I was 17 and getting ready to come up to the United States, my biggest worry was choosing between West Point and Annapolis. I had appointments at both," he recalls.

But then a radio station moved in next door to him in Costa Rica, and young Gabbert was smitten. Thoughts of a military career or a life in the foreign service evaporated when he began hanging around the station. "I came into broadcasting through the back door, designing and building transmitters, fixing equipment," he says. "Engineering was always the part of broadcasting that I really liked."

He also liked being on the air, so he purchased an hour of time, sold advertising and broadcast in English with the latest stateside pop music of 1953 sent by his brother, then a West Point cadet. When Gabbert came north to attend Stanford, he reversed his Costa Rican broadcasting experience and went to work as a Spanish-speaking disc jockey. "It was easier to find a job that way than to compete with everybody who wanted to come to San Francisco."

In 1957, three credits shy of earning a degree in electrical engineering, he dropped out of Stanford to start KPEN-FM in Atherton.

"KPEN was me, another student and a real-estate broker," Gabbert says. Each partner invested \$2,500 to put the 1,000-watt FM station on the air.

**W**hen I got into KPEN my parents were absolutely convinced that I was headed off as a wayward child. Almost anything would have made them happier than my getting into broadcasting," he says. Gabbert did the programming, engineering and on-air work while his partners found advertisers. "The very first month we made \$10. That's profit!"

The timing, it turned out, could not have been better. "We wanted an AM station and couldn't get one. We took an FM because that was all that was available. It was the first new FM in eight years," he says.

Gabbert vigorously promoted FM, and helped popularize it. He earned recognition as an industry innovator and was honored at the National Press Club by President John F. Kennedy in 1962.

By 1968 Gabbert and his partners were on top of the world. "We were the pioneers of FM stereo at KPEN. We did the first live stereo broadcast and the first live stereo dramas. Somebody offered us a whole \$1 million for the station. I was making a lot of money. I bought a 75-foot yacht and went to the Caribbean to enjoy newfound wealth. And my partner was off somewhere else.

But: "The station went right into the basement," he recalls. "I mean, like lightning. So, I hightailed it back here. It was a major crisis, the

# The Rajah of Radio and Reruns



kind that I think happens to people when they make it. The moral of the story is that it [radio] is a very people-oriented business. It's not the kind of thing, like real estate, that you can remote-control manage. It's very involved. It's a product or ideas or creativity. We ran it like a machine and it just ran out of gas. When I leave here for a week now, I'm looking over my shoulder."

His KPEN partners voted to sell; he refused. "Nobody was going to buy two-thirds of a station with the other third unavailable." As strong and as bull-headed as I was," he says, "it would not be a good relationship." In 1968 the partners decided to sell to Gabbert.

Gabbert moved the station to San Francisco and immediately changed the call letters to reflect its position on the FM dial. Thus, K101

was born.

By 1973 Gabbert realized that, because of the hilly Bay Area terrain, he was in a rough market for FM — as the signal travels only as far as its line of sight from the transmitter — and that to dominate the market he also needed an AM station. That search led to the purchase of what is now K101-AM and within two years Gabbert was "making money hand over fist." He soon added to his domain, buying KIKI-AM and KAMI-FM, two Honolulu radio stations.

In 1980 he chose to sell all four stations.

"I had a mid-life crisis. By 1980 I was tired of doing what I was doing. I was spending a week in San Francisco; a week here and a week there. I was one of the founding directors of the National Radio Broadcasters Association and

was its president for 12 years. After doing all that for 20 years I wanted the hell out. So, what were my choices? At the time I cashed out. I had \$16 million in my hand."

It did not take Gabbert long to decide what *not* to do: "This was 1980 when you were getting about 14 or 15 percent interest," he says. "Take \$10 million, buy a CD [certificate of deposit], and you could get \$150,000 a year. But that wouldn't have satisfied me."

Perhaps that is the bottom line about Jim Gabbert. He is not only restless and energetic — he seems constitutionally unable to enjoy life from the sidelines. He had already tried that once, when he went off in 1968 to the Caribbean on his boat — with unhappy results.

After Gabbert left radio, he turned to television. "I saw the fragmentation that was going to come and the opportunity to use my whole background in radio. I saw the need to build loyalty to stations versus loyalty to programs."

Gabbert bought KEMO-TV, a UHF station in San Francisco, and changed its call letters to KOFY-TV, Channel 20. He dispensed with financing, choosing instead to pay \$9.85 million in cash.

"I didn't want to make program decisions based on a mortgage," he says, explaining the decision. "I didn't want to go in leveraged. The risk was so high that I didn't want to make decisions on whether or not it would produce revenue."

**H**is TV strategy was to target a particular audience in the same way that magazines and radio stations do. "The idea is to build fans," he says. "You build station loyalty, which is unheard of in television. My strategy is to be different. Being called a 'maverick' used to offend me. Now, I kind of enjoy it. When I bought the station five years ago nobody bought demographics. They bought households. You have to target the audience. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, this station is targeting adults 18 to 49. The industry has to deal with fragmentation and, fortunately, that's where I think my radio background gives me a tremendous advantage."

TV20 (Channel 20) is known for its promotional gimmicks such as posing viewers' dogs during station identifications.

Gabbert's notion of viewer loyalty hinges on familiarity. "When I do editorials," says Gabbert, citing another example, "there's no necktie. I'm sitting there, comfortable. You feel that you can relate to the station. The purists will call it unprofessional and unslick and all of those little barbs that are thrown."

These days, Gabbert regards being considered unprofessional the highest compliment.

"The experts told me don't get into FM. The experts told me don't get into AM in '86. The experts told me not to buy a UHF television station. So? This is the biggest 'me-too' business in the world: the entertainment business. A station runs a sitcom. They get big ratings. A station runs *Wheel of Fortune*. They get big ratings. Everybody comes out with a clone."

Gabbert runs an action-adventure format, with reruns of *Hart to Hart*, *Mannix*, *Cannon*, *Quincy*. The station's slogan is: "TV20, Where the Action Is."

Occasionally Gabbert makes mistakes. *Dynasty* is one of them. The drama costs him

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\$1.2 million a year, and it's on the shelf.

"I'm not running it because it didn't work," he says. It's just sitting there and I'm giving Fox [Broadcasting] the money. It's not a bad show, it's just that our timing was off. When I bought it, I thought, 'My God, all these people are into it!' San Francisco had this huge *Dynasty* following. It was like 30 percent of the audience. I still don't know what went wrong, but it didn't work."

Retruns of sitcoms were another mistake.

"When we tried to become the normal independent with sitcoms like *The Jeffersons* and *Benson* and all of that, it damn near killed us —almost put me into bankruptcy," he says. "It was because I listened to the experts, all of the sales reps. They came in with all the little guys in green eyeshades and computer sheets from here to the other end of the building, telling me why I should run *The Jeffersons*; why I should run *Benson*. It cost me a lot of money. When I have bought programming off my gut, it has never failed."

**G**abbert's problems are minuscule when he compares them to what he sees in store for the networks. "One of the biggest problems with broadcasting is the MBA degree. The networks are very much run by money people. They relate to money; cost-conscious, heavy debt service. Everything they do they've got to watch. You're going to see less and less risk-taking, more research on programs, if you will, and more reliance on research. So everything is going to look the same.

"No matter what's going to happen, network audiences will erode," Gabbert predicts. "Ultimately, the networks probably will be suppliers of programming. They'll have adult programs, women's programs . . . each network. And they'll go to different stations. I'll take a show and we'll work out a barter thing, probably give them half of the commercials. Then they'll come up with a sitcom and go over to Channel 5 and give them that sitcom. The same thing has happened in radio today."

He explains: "ABC has five radio networks, all appealing to different demographics. They're all separate networks. They created that in the '70s to compensate for the fragmented market. It has to happen to television. The broadcaster has to learn — like the radio broadcaster did —how to deal with a fragmented market. They don't understand it. Thank God!"

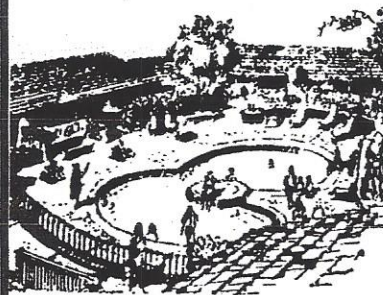
Moreover: "You're going to see 30 channels by the time it's over. You flick the dial and say 'What the hell is that?' But if my station is worth \$85 million on the market today, that funny little one over there is worth at least \$10 million. Somebody who buys it for \$10 million isn't going to run the crap that's on there now. They'll become a viable competitor. Just like five years ago when this station was non-existent in the market; it was Spanish, foreign-language and religion. Who knew Channel 20 in 1980? So, there's more coming. In San Francisco with K101, we had 76 stations to compete with. In television, we had five. I felt like I had died and gone to heaven."

But heaven can wait for Jim Gabbert.

"Television is still very new to me," he says. "There are still a lot of things I'd like to do." □

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# San Francisco Examiner

Thursday, October 15, 1981

## A hard look / The new Channel 20: how its creator did it



By Cynthia Robins

Somewhere in the wilds of the Peninsula, there is a late-model Rolls Royce Corniche with an electric blue and orange bumper sticker: "I Love TV 20."

For a station that has been on the air exactly one year and one month, KTZO has received an abundance of good press and word-of-mouth attention for itself and its owner. And, by Nielsen standards, it has, in certain time periods, outscored two opposing area independent stations, KICU, Channel 36, and KBHK, Channel 44.

Now, those ratings are minuscule 2.8s and 3s as compared to the 17s and 18s of the three network affiliates and Oakland's fat and fancy Channel 2, KTVU. Channel 20, however, does not have the programming support of a major network and is not part of any corporate chain.

It is the brainchild of radio whiz kid James Gabbert, a 45-year-old Chico native who is running his TV station the same way he ran his radio stations — with unorthodox programming and expensive promotions.

To say that Gabbert is an unusual broadcaster and boss is to say Oakland A's manager Billy Martin has a slight problem with his temper.

Gabbert has been known to deliver his editorials in bed; he usually hosts the Sunday night movie from his "Sleazy Arms Hotel" set, but has, on occasion, broadcast from an airplane flying over the Bay. He uses his station manager's pet Samoyed, Sammy, not to mention viewers' pets and his own malamute, Whiskey, as station identification signatures.

At Channel 20, there is no news department to speak of; Jack Popejoy, a former disc jockey, delivers the headlines three times a night dressed in a sport shirt and sweater. All of the sales staff is young, pretty and female.

As he did with his radio station, K-101, Gabbert has not allowed a craft union in the door at Channel 20 and has been known to tell an employee whose services were no longer required to pick up his check and get out.

To celebrate one year on the air, Channel 20 threw an in-house birthday party that was also broadcast. It was, in the words of one media observer, "embarrassingly hokey." Gabbert's comment: "It was spontaneous, the audience loved it."

Gabbert says his purpose is to make the TV station "homey ... but not hokey. We want people to think they're missing something if they're not watching us."

As the new TV kid in town lacking the requisite dollars to purchase expensive half-hour situation comedies (traditionally the ratings attractions of independent stations), Gabbert bought up hour-long action series such as "Kojak," "Mission Impossible," "Man-nix," "It Takes a Thief," "Baretta" and "Barnaby Jones," some of which had been lying fallow in syndicators' vaults. He then scheduled them opposite the

three network affiliates' local and national news broadcasts and prime-time programming and the independent stations' money-making sit-coms.

The local news media have dubbed Gabbert's approach "Top Ten Television," noting that most of the programs were in the Top Ten the first time around. Says one local broadcaster, "That may have worked when Gabbert owned a radio station, but it doesn't work for TV."

Gabbert did buy one contemporary sit-com, "Rhoda," which he says is his most expensive purchase. The series is also his biggest loser, or, as he is fond of saying, "a total disaster." Rather than have to absorb the show as a total loss, Gabbert has scheduled it on Sundays directly after financial wizard Louis Rukeyser's new syndicated program.

James Gabbert sold his pioneering FM rocker, K-101 for \$12 million cash; he also unloaded his Spanish language AM station, KIQI, for an additional \$3 million cash. He previously sold two Hawaiian radio properties, KIKI and KPIG. He took the proceeds and paid \$9.8 million for KEMO-TV, a Spanish language, religious broadcasting station that was not only \$6 million in the hole but which had a so-so tower, a run-down office and no modern equipment.

Gabbert had, in effect, paid close to \$10 million for an available television channel. And, after pouring an additional \$2 million in state-of-the-art equipment into the station (bought for cash to speed delivery), Gabbert was faced with the monumental job of creating an identity for the station. There was not, he says, a master plan other than just getting on the air.

TV



# San Francisco Examiner

Page 2

"The medium looked like it was fun — that we could have a lot of fun and make enough money at it," says Gabbert, a slender, boyish man who prefers alligator knit shirts, button-front Levis and Top-siders.

"I always felt that since most of the stations in town were owned by major corporations, that we could out-fox 'em just because of the politics of major corporations — Cox, Westinghouse, ABC, Field, etc. — it's impossible to be as flexible as we could be. When you are owned by a major corporation, you have to answer to the board of directors and if the major corporation owns a lot of TV stations, you're answering to a division chief who answers to another chief who answers to another chief. There are a lot of layers and everybody has to cover their rear. Most decisions are made on 'How can I keep my job,' and they're rather conservative decisions. Because, if you go stepping out on a limb, you'll probably be shot between the eyes once or twice; somebody has to get

blamed for the failure and generally it's the general manager of the local station.

"In buying product," Gabbert continued, "they're very safe and they don't gamble. It's their job also to get a return on investment. With Channel 20, we don't have to give what's considered a return on investment. My total investment to date is \$14-16 million and it drives the accountant crazy. I'm not looking at taking that \$14 million and investing in municipal bonds; that \$14 million is invested in the TV station. Over and out. If I can survive and live and it produces a profit, I'm happy. But from a financial standpoint, it's illogical. I could have taken that money out and invested it and gotten a higher return on the money, which, to me, is immaterial. I'm still drawing the same salary I was at K-101 and my standard of living is still the same. . . . It's a good one."

The progress is very slow but very encouraging and, according to Gabbert, audience levels are growing.

From his competition, there is grudging recognition that Gabbert is a personality and a force to be reckoned with. However, says Bill White, station manager at Field Communication's KBHK, Channel 44, "You can't argue with the success he's had, but I do maintain this: in the long run, if he's going to (have) a viable TV station, he's going to have to buy programs like everyone else."

Says KRON-TV's director of creative services, Dennis Fitch (who admits to being an "unabashed fan"), "Gabbert? I don't know how anyone can disagree that he's done a marvelous job of promoting the station. He's done radio-style promotion on TV, and the result in a really short period of time from when there was nothing but snow on Channel 20 to now is remarkable. . . . I would imagine there is maybe more fear and apprehension in the back of (local industry) people's minds than they'd care to admit. The man has done a terrific job."

S.F. EXAMINER ☆☆ Thurs., Oct. 15, 1981

TV



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ROBERT L. FOX  
CHAIRMAN/CEO

May 3, 1994

Dino Corbin  
KHSL-TV  
Box 489  
Chico, CA 95927

Dear Dino,

Although requests have not yet been sent to members regarding nominations for THE HARVEY LEVIN AWARD, I would like to nominate Jim Gabbert and I hope the nomination will be a "slam dunk."

Jim is a true pioneer in our industry. He was one of the founders of National Association of FM Broadcasters and was primarily responsible for FCC rulemaking that popularized FM due to improved reception in automobiles and table top radios. He was the President of the NAFMB and later President of the National Radio Broadcasters Association. He has been a director of the Skills Bank in the Bay Area, has appeared before Congress on behalf of the industry and has co-chaired and chaired a number of industry organizations.

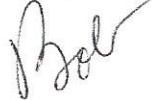
His broadcaster history began in 1957 when he founded KPEN while a student at Stanford - the station became K101 and had moved to San Francisco. Through the years he has been at times a "one person" advocate for necessary changes in the rules and regulations of our industry. And, of course, he served as President of CBA from 1988 to 1990. He has also served as V.P. for Legislation from 1987 to 1988 and after his presidency of the CBA has served as V.P. for Legislation since 1991.

Jim has a national reputation and I believe he is most deserving of the award mentioned above.



I have enclosed a list of some of Jim's credits and accomplishments. In closing it is apparent that he has been tireless and inspired in serving the best interests of our industry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bob", written in dark ink.

Robert L. Fox

cc: Vic Biondi  
Mickey Luckoff



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

November 10, 1994

James J. Gabbert  
President and Owner  
KOFY  
250 Marin Street  
San Francisco, California 94124

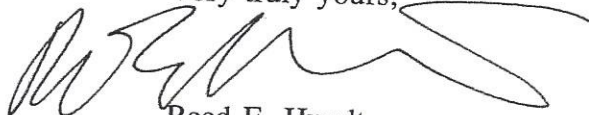
Dear Jim:

Thank you for joining me at our communications roundtable dinner in San Francisco last month.

Our conversation was among the most spirited exchanges I have had as Chairman. Listening to everyone's views on the major issues of the day proved insightful, educational and enjoyable. I appreciate your going to lengths to attend the event and to making it an unqualified success.

I look forward to seeing you again.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Reed E. Hundt', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Reed E. Hundt  
Chairman