

REMARKS BY FCC COMMISSIONER JAMES H. QUELLO
AT THE BROADCAST PROMOTION & MARKETING EXECUTIVES
HONORS LUNCHEON
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It is a distinct pleasure for me, who started a business career as a broadcast promotion man in 1945, to be with you today at the annual Broadcast Promotion & Marketing Executives Seminar. For the few of us surviving publicity-promotion people of the late 1940s and early '50s, it is gratifying and almost unbelievable to see this huge turnout for your impressive Honors Luncheon. It compares most favorably with a significant meeting of promotion men in 1952 when eight of us convened in Detroit to come up with a catchy slogan "Wherever you Go, There's Radio." It caught on nationally and was widely disseminated on the air, in billboards, in newspapers, magazine ads and by direct mail.

As I look over this impressive gathering with your prestigious awards, I can say that you -- no, I now mean we -- have come a long way! If you are this big and this good, I want you to know that as an old promotion manager I could be eligible to become a member-emeritus of the BPME.

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I wish I could personally claim some kind of oldtime promotional honor to further substantiate my mutuality of interest with you. But I don't remember any special promotional honors back in those days -- probably because I never received any. However, I do remember a type of recognition that I considered a high honor at the time. It was a one column item in Variety in 1946 stating "Jim Henry (my nom de plume), enterprising WXYZ flack, is now writing a radio column for 18 community papers to relieve his frustration over anti-radio policies of major Detroit dailies." I was flattered being considered a professional press agent -- flack sounded so "with it" and distinctive from Lt. Colonel, my former relatively stuffy army monicker. In those early days I considered "flack" a prestigious term of endearment and I had the overworked, underpaid credentials to qualify.

How did I get into the publicity and broadcast business?

Well, it all started at Michigan State University. I majored in communications, became editor of the college newspaper and the first student to be a newscaster on station WKAR, a powerful 5000 watt AM college outlet. I really wanted to be a newspaper reporter. With my upper Michigan Copper Country dialect I didn't have the voice for radio. My closest college friends said the voice was unfortunate because I really had the looks for radio!

Incidentally, I contribute a little every year to Michigan State University, not so much for what it did for me, but kinda in reparation for what I did to it during my trial and error phase in college communications.

At college I took ROTC because the uniform constituted acceptable clothing in class and I found students could skim a little extra money from the uniform allowance. The regular army commandant warned "Quello, you pay absolutely no attention to your military classes; I don't think you can even qualify for a gentlemen grade of C-." I replied "Colonel, I have absolutely no interest in ROTC. I took it to make a little money from the uniform allowance. I don't think military training has any place in my future."

That last statement as to my future plans was characteristically off-target. I was called to active duty during the pre-World War II buildup. I served more than five years in the army; thirty three consecutive months overseas in seven campaigns and, through sheer survival, went from lieutenant to Lt. Colonel. Without that ROTC uniform allowance, I might have served from private to staff sergeant. I wish I could give you a more inspirational story on how wise, early career planning really pays off. I'm telling you about the army experience because it was indirectly responsible for my entree into broadcast promotion. However, I don't want to mislead you -- I did not gain commercial communications experience in the army.

A typical question from my broadcasting friends was "You served in the army a long time -- were you in public information?" I replied "No, they had some big mean SOB in public information. I served in the infantry!"

I suppose one could build a case that army wartime service provided some exposure to marketing manpower and industry for the war effort. Any major war itself requires the ultimate promotional and marketing campaign to generate patriotism and self sacrifice. Exhibit a: I will always remember General George Patton's famous fight talk just before we sailed for Africa. He promoted, he sold excitement, adventure, patriotism and conquest. He also made good copy. (Give fight talk.) I also remember the billboards and radio spots saying "Uncle Sam Needs You!"

Our enemies, too, had their campaigns urging the ultimate sacrifice. One of the less-publicized campaigns is one I have always remembered. Karl Holtz, Mayor of Nuremberg in World War II, papered the country with bulletins and handbills exhorting "We must fight to the last man against British arrogance, Russian savagery and American irresponsibility." I didn't appreciate the frantic house-to-house fighting at the time, but later on reflection I grudgingly admitted he may have had a point.

Enough digression. Now back on target and a word about my transition from army to broadcast promotion and management.

Right after VE Day, my wife and I visited New York City for a belated second honeymoon after my 33 months overseas separation. Those were patriotic times and the war with Japan was still raging. I wore my uniform complete with all the indicia of overseas combat. Our next door neighbor in the hotel introduced himself and volunteered to show us the big city. After he took us on a tour of the Stork Club, 21 and other spots, he asked me what I intended to do. I was scheduled for Camp Blanding, Florida, to train infantry battalions headed for Japan. He mentioned this was an ideal time to get out of the army because of the labor shortage. It so happened he was VP-GM of WXYZ and general manager and part owner of King-Trendle Broadcasting Co. which owned and produced The Lone Ranger, Green Hornet and Challenge of the Yukon. If I could get discharged from the army, I could have a choice of publicity-promotion for station WXYZ or learn to write scripts for the Lone Ranger or the Green Hornet. I asked for his advice, mentioned I appreciated the opportunity but that pounding a typewriter in the backroom writing scripts, even famous scripts, might not be my bag. We decided the route might better be publicity-promotion then eventually to sales and, hopefully, to management.

My first week I was called in by the big boss, lawyer, financier George Trendle, who gave me the initial indoctrination into publicity for the station and for the famous King-Trendle personalities. I learned that the fantastically popular "Lone Ranger" was always first promotional priority.

He also most emphatically impressed upon me that it was Brace Beemer, who portrayed the role of the Lone Ranger, he repeated "portrays the role of" . . . He is not the Lone Ranger. "I am the Lone Ranger -- we own it lock, stock and barrel!" I was caught in the crossfire of a big well cast radio actor who was a great horseman and a great shot who considered himself the Lone Ranger and the principal owner who said "He is good but every time that ham gets a lot of publicity, he demands another \$500.00 a week! This is radio and another strong voice could qualify." This was a great learning experience for me before TV came on the scene. The public was never allowed to see the radio Lone Ranger. Mike Todd who played the role of Tonto at that time was a short, rotund blue eyed semi-bald Irishman. Silver was a sound effect created by plungers. Yet the great mental image of the Lone Ranger on radio could not be imitated or captured by mere film. He was a combination of a Western Robin Hood and a merciful righteous Jesus with a loyal Indian disciple. However, with the advent of TV, the Lone Ranger had to compete with big production westerns and lost its mystique and much of its unique emotional hold on the public.

In late 1947, I moved from WXYZ to station WJR for more money and a less flacky title as Advertising and Public Relations director. I asked management to please consider me somewhere in the chain of command. Some twelve years later I was appointed Vice President and General Manager.

With your indulgence, I could go on for hours entertaining myself with fascinating broadcasting and promotional experiences but it wouldn't tell you enough about the FCC and current issues affecting the public.

First, I must say it took quite a comprehensive campaign on the part of my sponsors for me to become an FCC Commissioner in 1974, an activist era. I was a former president of the Michigan Broadcasters Association and VP-GM of a major 50,000 watt clear channel station. I also helped in an application for a TV station. Even though I pledged not to return to active broadcasting, my previous radio, TV and promotional experience were not exactly considered qualifying factors. My first Senate confirmation hearing took a record-breaking eight days on and off the stand. The two subsequent confirmation hearings each averaged twenty minutes. After I leave the commission, I can write my own inside version of the hearing and oversight processes and the foibles of regulation and deregulation.

It is hard to believe that I am now starting my fourteenth year as an FCC Commissioner. I have seen a productive evolution from overregulation to deregulation, to unregulation, to market-place self regulation with occasional counterproductive lapses into unregulatory excess. I'm glad I was around to participate in the long overdue deregulatory transition that eliminated tons of paperwork and over intrusive government regulation.

I'm also glad I was around to register a dissent when our actions struck me as counterproductive. I disagreed with a majority of commissioners on several major issues such as must carry, UHF-land mobile sharing, repeal of the 3 year anti-trafficking rule, the public trustee concept for broadcasters, diminishing of minority ownership preferences, and financial interest and syndication.

I have personally served under both Democratic and Republican controlled Commissions. (Only three of five commissioners can come from the same party.) I was relatively comfortable with the different social and legal approaches to regulation. Fortunately, most of my colleagues and I don't decide complex regulatory issues by partisan Democratic or Republican votes. The issues are decided on the legal record and the individual commissioner's determination of logic, reason and serving public interest.

We have a full load of issues and developments for commission deliberation in the broadcasting, cable, telephone and satellite field. The most highly publicized and volatile current issue is the indecency and obscenity policy stands taken by the FCC. As you may know, the Commission is caught in a crossfire of First Amendment purists and a growing public outcry for action against indecency on the air. The subject lends itself to adversarial journalistic zeal with editorials in several major publications criticizing FCC action.

I want to state at the outset, the FCC is not on a Salem witch hunt to exorcise evil disc jockeys or lewd students. We are not creating a new law. We are finding means of enforcing an established statute prohibiting the broadcast of indecent or obscene speech and material. Previous FCC decisions interpreted a former Pacifica case so narrowly that they had the practical effect of obstructing the prosecution of patently indecent or obscene language on the air. We are re-interpreting the Commission's legal precedent in a broader, more practical manner to enable us to act on egregious violations.

As a strong first amendment advocate and former President of the Michigan Association of Broadcasters, I am personally wary of government intrusion in programming. We are all well acquainted with Section 326 and the prohibition against any form of government censorship.

Then too, as I said on a previous occasion, I normally should be the least likely of any of the current commissioners to lead a charge against obscenity. As I mentioned previously, I served in the army for over five years. I served overseas for 33 consecutive months, finally as a combat infantry battalion commander in France and Germany. I assure you that I heard all variations of expletives in the heat of battle. As far as the most commonly over-used sexually oriented single word is concerned, I heard it, used it and done it.

But there are places, occasions and times where it is improper and even disgusting. Of course, I have to admit that I now prefer playing R rated movies backwards because at my age, I like to see people get dressed and go home.

The recent FCC action was in response to a growing public outcry for corrective action. The Mass media Bureau estimates that over 20,000 complaints were received in 1986 regarding obscenity or indecency on the air and the FCC was picketed for one month. This pattern of complaints has accelerated in 1987. The recent actions taken against indecency and repulsive language would be overwhelmingly approved by a majority of Americans. It is unbelievable that any responsible licensee would claim that such language is permissible under the federal indecency statute. The FCC action strives to encourage constructive social values and maintain a reasonable standard of decency in the most accessible and pervasive of all media - TV and Radio.

Overall, it is a challenging, fascinating time to be at the FCC. Congress, the FCC, the press, all industries and the public at large must work together in a continual overall marketing and public service campaign to maintain our communications leadership. We must assure that Americans remain the best informed, best served and the most gainfully employed people in the world. At my age, an active 73 and with over four more years to serve, I'm not looking for anything but decent effective government in a strong, socially-progressive America.