



ELSTON BROOKS

Adios, 1270: Hello again, JZ

It happened at 7:28 p.m. Tuesday. It was supposed to happen at 7:30 p.m., but they were running behind time with all the farewells from the disk jockeys standing around the mike. And they still had one last recursive play, appropriately Sinatra's sentimental *Here's to the Band*.

And so, at 7:28 p.m. Tuesday, disk jockey Gary Ruff took a deep breath and said, "I don't know if I can do this." There was a pause, as Ruff unapologetically struggled with his emotions, and then he said, "This is KFJZ, 1270, Fort Worth."

That he hit the bottom and there was silence. After 20 years, KFJZ was gone.

Wednesday morning, check radios and car radios still tuned to 1270, came on to "Buena Vista. Metro-

plex." There were the last words most of us understood. The spot on the dial had been taken over by a new Spanish language station, its new call letters yet to be assigned by the FCC.

As one who grew up listening to KFJZ, 1270, in Fort Worth, it seemed impossible to grasp that JZ was gone.

And, in a manner of speaking, it really isn't. The station's *Music of Your Life* format, featuring the Golden Oldies of the Big Band era, has already been snatched up by KJLW-AM. And KJLW has even applied to the FCC to become known as KFJZ once the new Spanish-language station gets its new call letters.

But, actually, the old KFJZ, 1270, that I grew from childhood has been gone for a long time.

Back in those days, before the advent of inde-

pendent stations like K302L in 1940, there were only five radio stations — and although it was always number 6, JZ was always a licensed-on-spot on the Fort Worth dial.

WRAP was the biggest, sharing the NBC network with rival WFAS-Dallas. KGRD-570 in Fort Worth had NBC. KRLD-Dallas had CBS. And KFJZ had what was left — the much smaller Mutual network.

That meant KFJZ never had the big network shows or daytime soap operas. But they had *The Studio* on Sundays, and Zack Hurl broadcasting the Fort Worth Cubs baseball games from LaGrave Field.

And later, in the 1940s, they had newscasters like Porter Randall, and disk jockeys like Dave Nangle, George Erwin and "Uncle" Walker Moore, whose kindly gentle voice resided over the late nights from the studios on West Lancaster.

Later, JZ would switch to a Top 40 rock format, with such personalities as Mark E. Berry and (briefly) Miss Duesie. And, still later, switch to the *Music of Your Life* format.

But it's the KFJZ of the pre-and-post World War II years that I remember the best.

Porter Randall — whose trademark was long pauses between sentences of his newscasts. It was said that someone timed Randall with two stop watches for talk and pauses, and that Porter ended

up being off the air more than he was on. George Erwin — who spent 20 years 4 a.m. to be KFJZ's morning man. He'd coffee with his listeners but he never Carson, or Jack Paar, for that matter.

Zack Hurl — whose disk jockey Chatterbox was so popular that it called him up to New York one year during the regular bear's vacation.

Zack got used twice during his time for the Fort Worth Cubs. One night he pitched. "Ray Starr is coming in to pitch." Then he hit his "cough button" to take him momentarily off the air. He was in the booth. "I wouldn't let pitch to my cows if I had a scurving bad mercy flicked at the switch and went out over the air. Starr sped for collected at least a portion of it.

Zack's trademark was telling Cat in and walk around their chairs when the set a bag lining. One man who did, broke his leg. He sued, too, but didn't win. They're all gone now — Zack and Porter and the old KFJZ.

To borrow from Edward R. Murrow can hear it now."