

The Daily Sparks Tribune

Friday, September 29, 1989

Return of the Lost Boys

For 13 bittersweet hours last week, the Lost Boys were back in town. They came not to bury KCBN, but to bring her back to life, if only for a day.

The flatlanders now running the station decided to execute the venerable top-rocker by lethal neglect. Today, nothing remains of Boss Radio, not even the quarter-century-old call letters.

The Lost Boys flew back (at their own expense), for one final rock 'n' roller coaster ride. They found their old flying machine rusted and lifeless. So thirteen superannuated disc jockeys set to work, operating in a sterile, whitewalled room. Using pixy dust and antique equipment—45 rpm records and turntables—they turned back the hands of time and sent us on a musical magical history tour.

They waxed nostalgic between records, telling personal stories of their golden oldie days. David Lavezzi (aka Dave Price), a fixture at the station for 13 seasons in the 60's and 70's, mused of erstwhile March of Dimes haunted houses, now undoubtedly filled with the musty jerseys of the KCBN One-ers charity basketball team. Price even revealed the secret identity of mythical One-der coach and sportcaster Darren Dribble. As the hour of hemlock drew nearer, Price wondered if anyone remembered.

David, rock 'n' roll never forgets. Half the population has lived here over 11 years and one in six was born here. Almost 100,000 of us who populate this valley are bona fide 25-44 Baby Boomers. We remembered, and for one more shining moment, KCBN topped the charts.

While the Lost Boys soared, Wendy was missing. ("We were her kids," said Dr. Eric "Preston" Kroll.) Although she was just an hour away via plane or pixy dust, the flatlanders didn't bother to in-

□ Andrew Barbano

vite Lorraine Arms.

Long ago, Wendy married a handsome prince, moved to Neverland south and started KRLV in Las Vegas. She was hurt by the snub, but shocked at the shutdown. "If I had still owned it, I would not have done that. I'm pretty sad at what happened. AM radio is not dead if you've got the right programming," she said.

I agree. The prototype for a renewed KCBN exists right next door at KPTL in Carson City. Craig and Mary Beth Swope have put together a feisty mix of news, sports, talk, community involvement and, of course, rock 'n' roll. It works, it sells and gets respect.

When I came here two decades ago, it was not respectable to advertise on "that rock 'n' roll station." KCBN was put down by the World War II-vintage businessmen who ran this town. KOLO and KOH were the stations on which respectable businesses advertised, even if their customers weren't listening.

"Lorraine's guts, spit and baling wire kept it together," says former sales manager Dan Gustin (aka Darren Dribble) of the lean days 20 years ago.

The same old men who found rock non-respectable paved the way for paving over the pretty little valley called the Truckee Meadows. It is now up to the descendants of KCBN to try to undo some of the damage. Curiously enough, we can count on help from flatlanders who moved here because of the decay they witnessed back home.

Captain Hook and his pirates will continue coming over the

horizon to prove they know better than the unwashed natives. As the battles of the 90's take shape, they will continue making venerable institutions walk the plank. Harrah's Auto Collection and now KCBN are lost.

But our memories of Wendy and the Lost Boys will never die. Memories of unspeakable things spoken on the air. Of unspeakable acts committed in the control room while you and I listened to the music. Of bad boy Palmer Stewart flying to the Virgin Islands in hopes of renaming them. Of Johnny Michaels and me up in a ballon throwing cash down on a teeming, frenzied mob.

I remember moments, frozen in time---of Chris Mitchell and my future wife merrily twisting fairy tales into story lady commercials. Of Phil Harvey and me singing the MS Danceathon jingle---the best musical spot ever produced for an event that never happened (neither did our singing careers).

Flashback to newsman Robert Lamont, who left us in his prime. Slip back to 70 oily badies (with only legs visible) at the KCBN hot legs contest. Step back to the Big Foot contest, when two big bruisers tied for one solid gold foot.

Steer back to the Ugly Car Contest, where the winner was such a disgusting wreck it almost caused a boycott by Autorama custom car builders. Bark back to the day my wife had Stewart chauffeured by a car-driving golden retriever.

Fall back to Stewart ("it's just sleeping, kids") at the Oddie Mall petting zoo the day the llama died.

Golden memories of KCBN, the day the music died.

Andrew Barbano is a Reno-based syndicated columnist. Barbwire by Barbano originates each Friday in the Daily Sparks Tribune.