

Texas A&M

I'm not sure how we learned about Texas A&M putting their radio rights up for bid, nor can I recall how it was that we decided to do it in a joint venture with an old friend, Gene Ashcraft. Gene and I met in 1973 as he was one of the organizers of the state network association and manager of the Texas State Network; one of the real giants of our industry. He was available, having left the TSN and knew every radio station owner/manager in Texas--so he was a natural in our venture.

Gene, Greg and I went to College Station to meet with the school's AD, Jackie Sherrill. The meeting in itself showed me something about "Coach Sherrill". We were escorted into the top floor conference room in the athletic administration's campus tower. Everyone was around this imposing conference table--general counsel, associate athletic director, John David Crow, etc. As if on cue, the door opened, Jackie Sherrill entered, and everyone rose to their feet. He had them trained.

At that meeting we sought assurance from the school that they had the authority from the Conference to undertake this RFP. For as long as anyone could remember, the Southwest Conference had run its own network, often with the label of its official sponsor, such as the Humble Oil Network. The question was: Is the conference giving up its official radio network? Sherrill, their legal counsel, and everyone agreed they DID have the authority. We'd put more money on the table than anyone and we won the radio rights.

We opened an office -- painted with Crimson and Creme. We drafted affiliate contracts, hired a secretary, and Gene began travelling around the state signing up stations. We were off and running until... the Athletic Department called and told us the deal was off. They didn't tell us why, of course. Truth was the Conference had told Sherrill that A&M would be removed from the Conference if the school persisted in setting up its own radio network. But that was the beginning of the end. It wasn't long before the Conference threw in the towel on its radio operation, freeing member schools to do their own thing. By that time, John David Crow (formerly of the St. Louis Football Cardinals) was A&M's Athletic Director. A true gentleman, and remembering the past, Crow invited us back and we began operating their radio network. But we lost it again when Regent, former student, and Clear Channel executive, Lowry Mays, was successful in winning it for his radio stations. But we re-won it again several years ago--this time as a full-media property.

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