

# THE MICHIGAN BROADCASTER

Transcription

April 2009

Interview: Tom Cleary (with Julie Sochay)  
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## Transcription

I was at the MAB from 1968 to 1985 when Karole came on. We were a part-time association and I was a full-time lobbyist and I had to make a decision in the early 80s whether I was going to be a full-time lobbyist or the executive director of the new full-time broadcasters association. It was an easy decision for me. I was a lobbyist, not an association executive.

It took me about five years to fully activate the association to go full-time. The problem we were having was quite evident to me early on that the MAB was not getting the services that they wanted, but on the other hand they weren't willing to raise the dues structure to pay for it. So they wanted stuff but they didn't want to pay for it. So in that system, I did it for 18 years and I enjoyed it very much.

The radio and TV (people) were a good group. You had small market radio and big market television and everything in-between. So that was good. So along the way, by going to Washington once a year like Karole does now with the NAB, I learned about the spot announcement program that other states were having and so it appeared to me that this was the program worth looking at which could convince the state that they wanted to do this. And that would make it possible for us to go full-time...and it happened.

The key players in putting this together...the front line...the #1 people doing this...and I'll name four of them: Pete Kizer, myself, and Rick Cole – who was Blanchard's press secretary at the time. Rick later went on to be Blanchard's chief of staff. But I approached Rick and said I had "a deal for you if you're interested." And he was very interested. He took it to Blanchard. The governor said "Rick, that's one of the better ideas you've had this week."

We took it from there and Pete Kizer really figured it out...what we were going to do. We started out at \$25,000 a month. What the state would get for that was 15 spots a month from each member station. And it was categorized into drive times, morning time and evening time. Some of the small market radio stations loved it so much that they just ran the stuff forever. The problem we had in the beginning was to make sure the Blanchard administration didn't give us political spots. On the other hand, we're talking about time the station would not sell anyway, more or less. And so it worked out. We got \$25,000 a month, oh my goodness gracious! That was a lot of money 'cause our dues structure was bringing in between 50 and 60 thousand a year. We ran the whole association on that.

The spot announcement program started out; it's still in there. We discovered Karole White, interviewed – and she's done a great job running the association and taking it to the next level. I'm just amazed when I think about it. I did it for 18 years and I think Karole (has been there) over 20 years now. So between the two of us we did this MAB part-time/full-time for 40 years.

When we first initiated the spot announcement program, to put it into effect we had to work with the director of the State Department of Commerce – this was now his program – in with Bob Bowman, the State Treasurer – and some staff people at the Department of Commerce – who would write the ads and work with us. Bob Bowman, the State Treasurer was also top advisor to Governor Blanchard and worked with Rick Cole. And so these guys would come up with the ideas. Commerce Department would write the spots and then work with the MAB to make sure we didn't have a problem because they were always on the edge of politics, always. Then occasionally we'd have to say "no, no...not that. You've got to tone it down a bit."

So anyway...then the MAB would do the distribution as we do now. We actually started distributing before Karole got there. We had done it for about six months so we had a bunch of cash and Karole got there. We had about...I don't know...six times \$25,000. So we were in good shape when Karole took over.