

WROV: 55% of Roanoke listeners tuned in

FROM 1

"Whatever that means," Prater says today.

"I wanted to get fired. I wanted to go to K-92, but I had a noncompete clause. ... Finally, one day, Bert came up to me and said, 'I love you. Now get out of here.'"

If there ever was a genius behind the fantastic success at ROV, it was Burt Levine, said Prater. "He was something."

Levine, who died in 1995, had the ability to spot talent and bring out the best in people.

In the early '80s, less emphasis was put on the disc jockeys. News and information was hot. WROV launched an FM station in 1989. The AM frequency, 1240, became an oldies station.

Fast forward to 1999. The Cleveland Avenue studios closed down. WROV and its AM sister station, WGMN — now known as "The Game" — moved into new studios on Brandon Avenue.

"The 1240 Guys," known as the "Old ROvers," have been in touch for almost a year now sharing stories and memories. One of them, Pat Garrett, has been building a Web site of the station's history.

Starr Stevens, an ROV announcer in the mid-'70s, credited Levine for giving his announcers the freedom to be themselves. "Every announcer has his own shtick and delivery style," Stevens said.

Levine wanted ROV to stand out as the most entertaining radio station in Roanoke. And during the days before FM, ROV was a legend in radio circles.

Levine was the exception to the "numerous species of sharks that wear suits and own or otherwise run radio stations," said Rich Randall, another DJ from the '70s at ROV. Levine was "tough but fair, and compassionate as any human could be. He trusted his key people and that made him 'comfortable' and made them lifelong successes."

When Randall left ROV, he did a show and tried to imitate Prater. "If you listened close, I was doing Bart Prater — only earlier in the day and without the whiskey voice," Randall said.

"And don't forget my cigarettes," said Prater, who used



Bart Prater

"The King of Disc Jockeys"

"In that Quonset hut we were always doing something for the community."

For more information go to the Web site wrovhistory.com



Jack Fisher

A former disc jockey and part of the two-man show with Fred Frelantz, his best friend and partner.

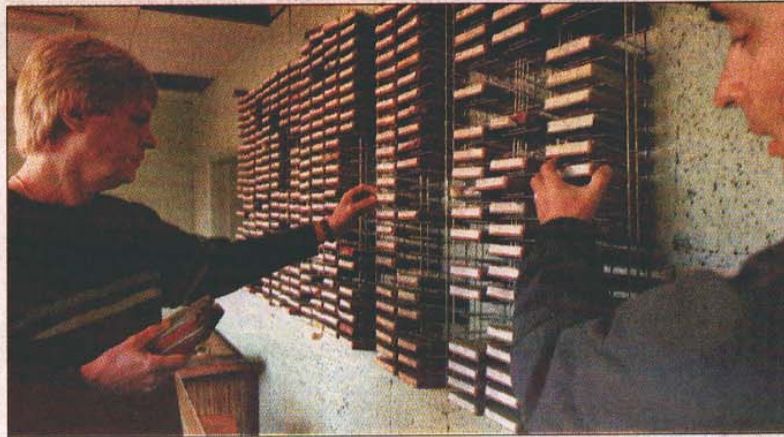
"We made things happen....I had lunch with a cow and took a roller coaster ride with a gorilla. Not a real gorilla, it was a college student dressed in a gorilla costume."



Jim Carroll

Disc Jockey, sales manager and sportscaster

"When I came to ROV its motto was more listeners than all other stations combined...could be proven by the ratings at the time."



JILL NANCE | The Roanoke Times

Tommy Holcomb (left) and disc jockey Steve Cannon look through song cartridges Saturday at the old WROV building on Cleveland Avenue.

to work the afternoon shifts at ROV. "I couldn't stand to get up early." The then-lanky disc jockey who sported a mustache was named International Billboard Disc Jockey of the Year in 1975.

In the mid-'70s, Prater hired Bill Jordan. "We played what we wanted to play, Jordan said. "I don't think any of us had any more fun than we had at WROV."

The story wouldn't be complete without mentioning the infamous two-man show of Jack Fisher and Fred

Frelantz.

"They were like bacon and eggs on the air," Beckman said. "They were just right for each other."

Fisher fondly remembered his best friend, Frelantz, and all of the whacko things they did.

"Bert encouraged us to have fun. We made things happen," Fisher said.

He recalled the Fisher-Frelantz Free-loaders show, where Frelantz would tell the audience that he and Fisher hadn't eaten in days. They got

themselves invited to clubs and organizations so they could have a dinner. "Their expectations were always higher than our delivery," Fisher said. "Fred would usually tell one joke and then we would eat."

The personalities were pranksters. Garrett, who made his debut at WROV in 1980, remembered the

summer of 1980 when Prater, Fred Palmer, a promotions guy known as "Quiddly" and Chris Stevens would fish in the Roanoke River. "I remember standing there when the receptionist, Carole Beane, sat down at the front desk and opened her drawer and screamed when she saw a fish laying there. About that time, Fred walked around the corner and asked her if she liked her fish, then said, "Good! Because you still have two more to find!"