

BRIAN O'NEILL



WROV stumbles but doesn't strike out

Burt Levine, the owner of WROV, was faced with a decision Friday.

"I had to decide whether I was going to Brazil or to Oakey's" funeral home, Levine said.

His radio station had just completed a two-week promotion that awarded pairs of World Series tickets to two lucky contest winners.

There was just one problem. After announcing the winners Friday, folks at the radio station realized they had forgotten something: the tickets.

"I felt like the guy who got a home run and then ran all the way to third base and forgot to come home," Levine said.

If you think the stockbrokers were frantic Monday morning, you should have heard "No Tickets" Levine. Our phone conversation was shorter than a good bunt. He said I'd have to call back later.

A happy ending

It's probably good I never had the chance to ask Levine, a fellow Aesy's luncheonette regular, if his AM station stood for "Absent Minded." By the time I called back around 5:45 p.m. Monday, Levine had made a comeback as miraculous as last year's Mets', and was ready to tell a story with a happy ending.

The story begins around Labor Day, when preparations for this, WROV's second annual Series tickets contest, began. A guy in the Baltimore Orioles organization told WROV he probably could get the station two pairs of tickets.

A call in mid-September confirmed that the station could have tickets wherever games were played. In October, after the playoffs put St. Louis and Minnesota in the Series, WROV operations director Mike Bell and Levine made a decision.

There's always a chance the last couple of Series games never get played. So why not go for the sure thing, the middle three games in St. Louis? Bell had just talked to the O's guy, and he said he could get tickets.

Levine agreed. But then he dropped the baseball.

"I was supposed to call back and I didn't. Everyone thought I had."

Finally back on Cloud 9

You wouldn't have wanted to be Levine last weekend. But how about Rick Moss, who was told on his 35th birthday Friday that he had won Series tickets?

Moss proudly told his sixth-grade pupils at Forest Park Elementary School the news Friday.

But after he and his wife, Nancy, met with Levine Sunday, Moss had to relay the bad news to his class Monday morning. Then he had to hear a worldly wise retort.

"It's just another ripoff, a big con," they told him.

Moss stuck up for Levine, but the kids were unimpressed.

When I called Moss Monday night and interrupted his packing for Tuesday morning's flight to St. Louis, the teacher had a message for his class.

"There really is a WROV, kids. Burt Levine just worked, and worked and worked. He felt worse about it than we did."

It was the longest game Levine will ever want to play. But he was on the phone early