



Eugene Louie — Mercury

KFAT disc jockey Bill Goldsmith as last number is almost up

# KFAT's next move is now up in the air

By David N. Rosenthal  
Staff Writer

"The end is near" was no mindless slogan Sunday night at KFAT radio.

It was a fact of life.

After seven years of unconventional garlic-flavored country music, the pride of little Gilroy was being taken over by new owners bent on changing what was

*Continued on Page 6A*

## KFAT's loyal fans wave goodbye

*Continued from Page 1A*

surely America's most freewheeling format, much to the chagrin of KFAT's employees and listeners.

Western Cities Broadcasting of Santa Barbara, which paid a reported \$3 million to buy KFAT from the estate of late owner Harvey Levin, told the people now running the station to program it through midnight Sunday. No one knew exactly what would happen then.

"I know," said one of the many well-wishers who wandered through the station during the day. "At midnight, 800 armed police arrest us all and the new owners take over."

The wisecrack drew a laugh from disc jockey Bill Goldsmith as he worked what he expected to be his final shift from 2 to 6 p.m.

"I guess because I've been at so many other stations, I look at this more philosophically than most people," he said between swigs on a Michelob. "We were damn lucky to have been around this long. Most places would have had a format like this for six months and then given up in disgust."

Goldsmith, who came to KFAT as music director two years ago and has done a variety of things at the station since then, said that as of Sunday afternoon no one knew what Western Cities' plan was.

"We have someone scheduled to work at midnight just in case," he said. "But we're approaching it as if midnight is 'it.' Of course, we'll be happy to stick around and do this for a couple more weeks if they want us to. Actually, I've never worked anywhere that was this loose at the end. Usually there's someone looking over your shoulder and it's business as usual. You don't even get to say goodbye. One day you turn on the radio and it's something totally different."

Under Federal Communications Commission regulations, new owners may take a station off the air for

10 days after buying it, but it was not known if Western Cities would do that with KFAT.

"I think they were afraid of what would happen if they told us what they were going to do," Goldsmith said. "So they've just kept us all in the dark."

For weeks, ever since it became known that KFAT would become KWSS, with a format to be announced later, disc jockeys at the station have been playing old favorites like "Moose Turd Pie" and "Merchant's Lunch." The final weekend was no exception, particularly with the absence of almost anything that could pass for advertising.

"Oh, we've played a few commercials," Goldsmith said, "but only when we ran out of anything else. What this has been is an attempt to recapture the looseness of the old days at the station. I think everybody has really enjoyed it. We've gotten zillions of phone calls, most of them from people who never called before. With each one of them, it's the same 90-second speech about how sorry we are, too, and no, there's nothing you can do about it. It's a pain, but we owe it to them."

Disc jockey Doug Abernathy, better known as Felton Pruitt on the air, said he had no idea what he would play at the end of his shift or what he would say.

When the end came for him, he reached for The Byrds' "For Free" and said, "This is Felton Pruitt and I'll be back again whenever music is played on the radio for free."

Goldsmith, too, said he came to the station Sunday with a "blank slate" for a repertoire. But as he went along, his spontaneous selections took on meaning: "I'm Getting Ready to Go" by Michael Hurley; "After the Fire is Gone" by Tracy and Willie Nelson; "Something's Gonna Happen" by Robert Gordon.

"Yes, something's going to happen," he told listeners on the air. "And it probably is not too interesting. But who knows? The universe has surprises for us all. We can always hope for divine intervention."

1382