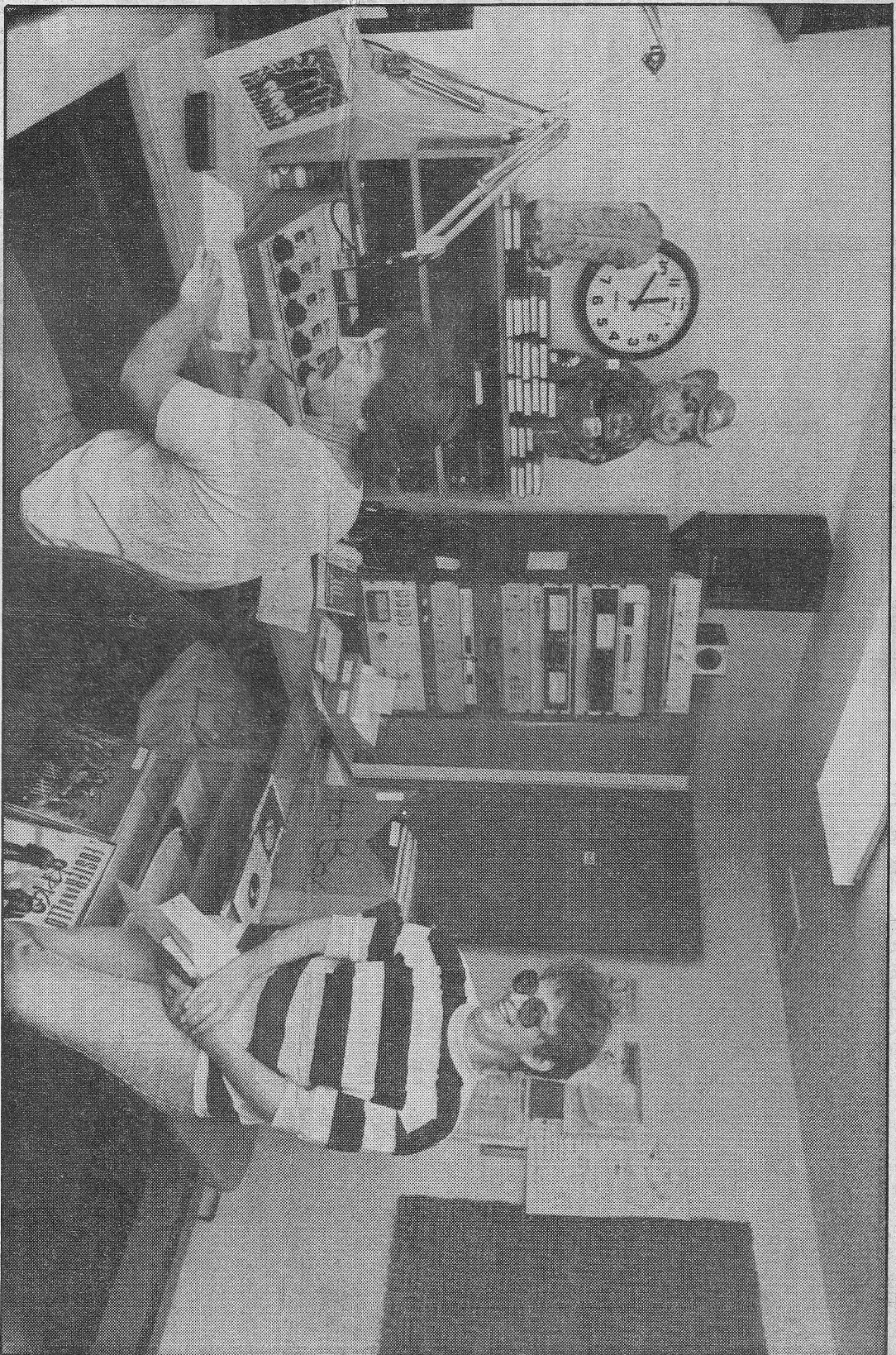


# Hamming it up on the airwaves

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Len Lahman - Mercury News

Corky Walsh, at microphone, and Laura Hopper, co-owner of KPIG, in the radio station's Watsonville studio

## KPIG aims at bringing home the bacon

By Bill Strobel  
Mercury News Staff Writer

Laura Hopper is gambling that few people are going to listen to Shostakovich's Scherzo in F sharp minor when there's an audience out there hankering to hear "She Got the Gold Mine and I Got the Shaft."

Certainly not old FATheads, whose tastes run to romantic ballads like "Sixteen Little Red Noses and a Horse That Sweats" and "If You're Not Six-Foot, You're Spilt."

Hopper and her partner, Leo Kesselman, are the owners of KPIG, a new radio station in Watsonville that is bring-

ing funky characters from the defunct KPAT back to radio life. KPIG disc jockeys who worked at the oftentimes off-color Gilroy station include Sister Tiny, Cuzin' Al Knott, Christa Taylor and But-falo Bob.

Hopper and Kesselman, former KPAT executives, actually founded the station

on a little higher scale three months ago. They called the radio station KLCZ and played little ditties by Shostakovich, Bach, Mozart and some other good ol' boys.

But it didn't catch on.

So Hopper and Kesselman figured that

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# KPIG roots out old radio favorites

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listeners were ready for something a little more dynamic in tone, with strong personalities spinning the records and making comments on the world and its ways.

All this has FATHheads like John Spreen jumping for joy.

When he heard some of the gang was back, Spreen, owner of the Redwood Estates grocery in the Santa Cruz Mountains, installed a special antenna on his roof to make sure he could get KPIG (107.5 FM).

"I felt a real loss when KFAT went off the air," said Spreen, 40. "The station played songs that covered the entire spectrum of music,

and the personalities made me laugh. The station had it all."

Besides country and western, the KPIG musical mix includes bluegrass, Hawaiian, Tex-Mex, Cajun and rock 'n' roll oldies. The off-the-wall D.J.s also scatter comedy sketches throughout their shows.

It may come as a blow to some FATHheads, though, that their heroes are no longer playing "Moose Turd Pie," the talking-blues classic.

"I think we all just got tired of it," Hopper said.

For more than a month, KPIG has been beaming out music and merriment from its 3,000-watt transmitter in Prunedale to listen-

ers in South Santa Clara County and the Monterey Bay area. By contrast, KFAT's 50,000-watt signal could be picked up from Marin to Monterey.

Born in 1975, KFAT died in January 1983 after the FM station was sold. The new owners chose a rock format, changed the call letters to KWSS and moved to San Jose.

Two years later, old KFATers resurfaced in a well-seasoned house in Hollister using the call letters KHIP. But the revival was short-lived. The station was losing money, so the format was changed to golden oldies.

In applying for a new license from the Federal Communications

Commission, Hopper and Kesselman couldn't resurrect the KFAT call letters because they now belong to a station in Corvallis, Ore. The new KFAT plays country and western music and lacks the zaniness of the old KFAT.

With the KFAT call letters gone north, Hopper and Kesselman began to look around for an equally catchy series of letters to identify their station.

KPIG, they decided, has a nice air about it.

Hopper and Kesselman have come up with a series of KPIG bumper stickers and T-shirts with a logo on the front and the words "Pure Pork" stenciled on the back. They also have plans to float a helium-filled balloon, shaped like a pig and the size of a Volkswagen van, over various promotional events they take on the road.

And if that doesn't attract fans with a hunger for their product, they plan to serve 15,000 "pig sandwiches" from a 30-foot-long "Pig-mobile" with a rotating spit. Fans will also be able to decorate their noses with pig snout masks.

Ironically, the folks who started KFAT in the mid-'70s originally were going to call it KPIG, but they decided the FCC would reject it as tasteless.

Kesselman, until he got bored and decided to go into the radio business, used to practice law in San Jose. He was KFAT's general manager; Hopper was program director.

KPIG, the partners say, will operate on a little more businesslike basis than KFAT and KHIP.

"We're going to bring our audience around gradually and make the station commercially sound," Hopper said. "But we're not afraid to play the songs and present personalities that will challenge our audience."



## KPIG logo has an aura of country-western

Special to the Mercury News

Buffalo Bob, the KFAT veteran "with the Purple Hearts and everything to prove it," said he couldn't be happier about the businesslike attitude.

"That means we'll stay on the air. Who could ask for anything more?" asked Bob, who had been

working as a carpenter before he was called back in front of the mike.

One of the new stars, Corky Walsh, who has worked for stations in Carmel and Monterey, said the staff still intends to have lots of laughs.