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PAGE 2D *Ann Landers*

PAGE 4D *Entertainment*

THE COUNTY LINE

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The Pig is dead

Citizens of Earth, beware! Even as you read this, Invaders From Outer Space are ruthlessly terminating another group of innocent earthlings. Radio waves, which at this very moment are being beamed at this planet from space satellites circling overhead, are eliminating human beings at KPIG, the Freedom-based "progressive country" FM station.

Talk about your communist alert!

Easily the most imaginative commercial radio station in the Central Coast area, KPIG will be missed by fans all over the world. You read that right, the world. "The Pig" inspired a special kind of loyalty among its listeners — many of them taped 'Pig programming to share with far-flung friends of like musical taste.

Serving up a clever, eclectic musical melange sprinkled with gag commercials and celebrity testimonials, the station's on-air talent included some of the most knowledgeable deejays in the country. They called their mix "progressive country," but grand opera was just about the only kind of music I can think of that I never heard them play. Glenn Miller, Lord Sutch, Kitty Wells, King Crimson, the Beatles, Bob Wills, Utah Phillips, the Schmenge Brothers — if you listened long enough, I think you could have heard most every musical style.

Their commercials and testimonials, meanwhile, were always irreverent and sometimes verged on the bizarre. Here's an unworthy paraphrase of a wicked Jerry Jeff Walker spot, for example, that I particularly enjoyed:

"Hi, this is Jerry Jeff Walker and I'm here on K-Pig to tell you that it's National Adopt-a-Cat Month. Now cats are unusual animals; some say they make great pets, while others don't care for them at all. As for me, I don't know — but they sure do make great guitar strings!"

Well forget it. The party's over, finito. No more singing backhoe ads. Because if it hasn't already, K-Pig will soon switch to "classic rock" satellite programming. And if that sounds like *deja vu* to you, you've obviously got a better memory than the station's owners. See, KPIG was begat by "classic rock" station KHIP, which was begat by Top 40 station KWSS, which was begat by alternative country station KFAT and so on and etcetera, back to Marconi and the original version of "Sweet Home Alabama."

KPIG's progenitor, KFAT, (fans called themselves Fatheads) went on the air in 1974 and much-prized KFAT decals are still preserved on a fleet of vintage pickups and such. In the film "Peggy Sue Got Married," which was filmed in Petaluma, there is a scene where Peggy Sue (Kathleen Turner) visits her grandparents. Set in the year 1960, the scene has her grandfather picking her up at the bus station in an old, green car that has — look quickly when he opens the door to let her out — a KFAT decal on the window.

I saw it in the theater and immediately envisioned a scenario that pitted the car's owner against a film company gofer who demands the decal's removal. "It's an anachronism," the gofer sputters. "Go near that decal with a razor blade and this car is out of the movie, I don't care what you're paying me," I imagined the Fathead vowing.

Anyhow, I warrant that a covert international conspiracy is behind the current trend to mold each and every FM radio station on the dial to the "classic rock" format. Yes, somewhere, deep below the marl of some James Bond-like desert island, lurks a character not unlike Dr. No who giggles and gibbers over his latest conversion: "I will numb their minds!" he cackles. "I will play 'Chewy-Chewy' until they launch a first strike against Canada!"

That's not to say that I think "classic rock" isn't worthwhile. It is, of course. I mean, there's a reason they call it "classic," right? Hey, it's *important* that "MacArthur Park" and "White Room" and Michael Jackson's cover of "Rockin' Robin" get as much airplay as technically possible. I mean, "Cut the Cake" and "I Am Woman" need to be heard by as many people as possible as often as possible. I believe this as deeply as I do that the Federal Communications Commission has the people's best interest in mind when it grants licenses to public-spirited radio and television station owners.

Sigh.

If you want to know the truth, I think Son of 'PIG will be back on the air before long. It's historical fact: you can't keep these folks down. In the meantime, we'll miss y'all: Felton Pruett and Gordy, Sleepy John, Sister Tiny, Cousin Al and Travis T. Hipp, we'll be seeing you around. If we're lucky, we'll be hearing you around, too.