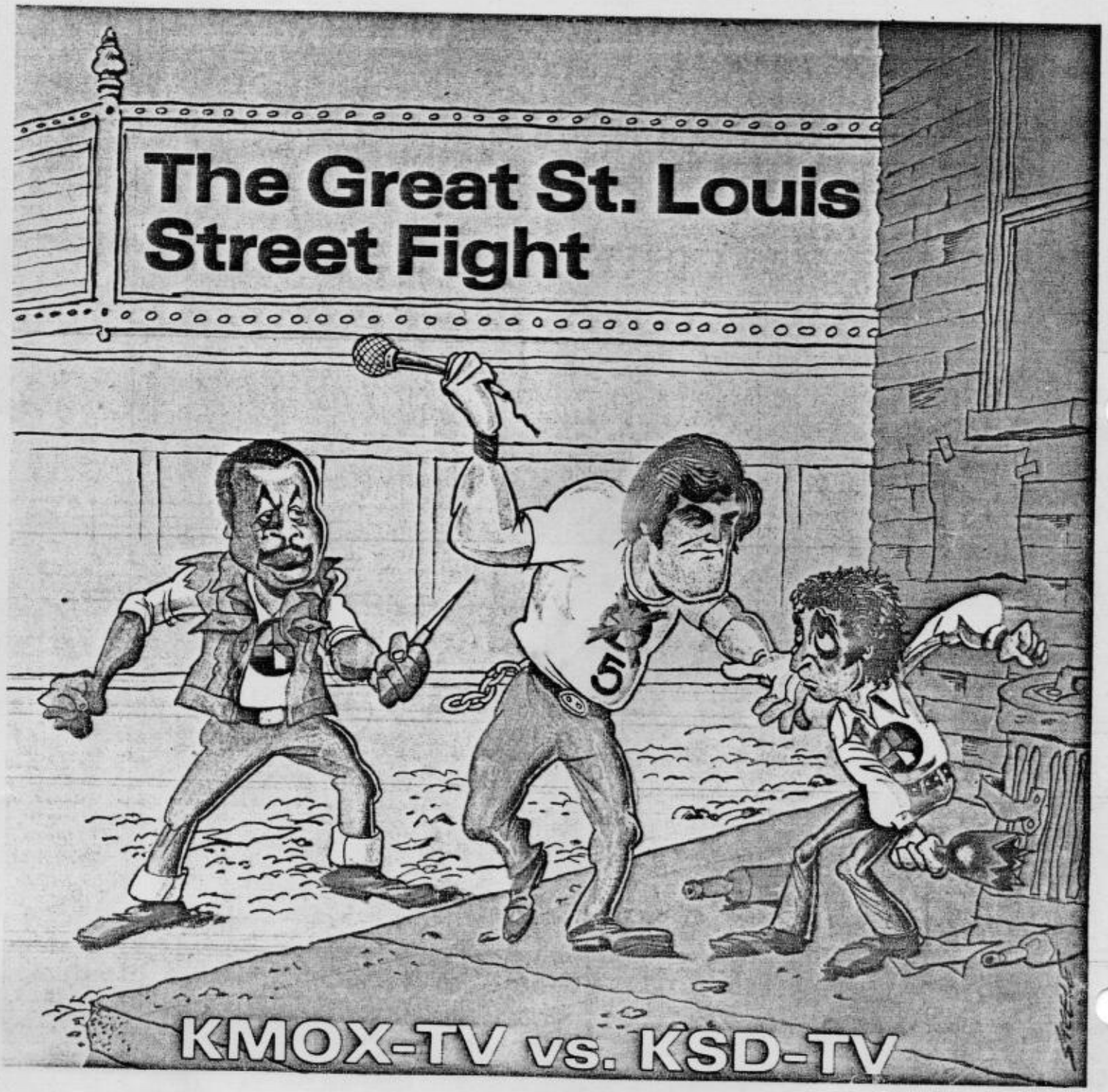
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Prologue to a Street Fight

HOW THE "NEWSROOM" LOST ITS ANCHOR

by Joe Popper

The sign was huge: "*...as a very good friend of mine would say, I'm looking forward to a fair and honest street fight.*" Patrick *Emory, July 1, 1976.* It hung on the wall of the KMOX-TV newsroom for months.

What was Emory talking about? A street fight with Julius Hunter and Steve Schiff? With Betsey Bruce? And why was the sign dangled before the Channel 4 news team like a red cape?

"Because," said one executive, "This has become a goddamned war, and asses are on the line!"

But it really wasn't that simple. Emory's statement was more than the boastful challenge it appeared to be, more than the start of something; it was also the tag line to a long story -- a story that began in St. Louis six years ago...

I. The Gray Old Days

KMOX-TV is one of five stations around the country fully owned and operated by CBS. The CBS eye is chiseled in the marble of the Channel 4 headquarters at One Memorial Drive, and what happens there does not go unnoticed by powerful people working in the giant complex known as "Black Rock" --the CBS corporate headquarters in New York City.

In 1971, the general manager of KMOX was a man named Gordon French. Known to the New York overseers as a tough, tight-budget executive, French was known to the KMOX news staff as "Baby Huey." It was not an affectionate nickname.

Local news is one of the few programming areas a general manager has any control over. Under French it had an effect on viewers not unlike Valium. If the news appeared stodgy, it was because French seemed to like it that way. He once sent a lengthy memo to the male reporters and the anchormen, insisting they always wear gray shirts on-camera. He also demanded narrow ties, dark suits and close-cropped hair with sideburns extending no further than the middle of the ear. Women were strongly urged to wear conservative dresses. Any reporter who violated the gray shirt dictum could expect a personal call from the boss.

French took budget cutting even more seriously than wardrobe supervision. He is said to have suggested that the station could save money by dispensing with the services of a weekend receptionist, filling that position instead with a news writer who would sit in the lobby with his typewriter and welcome visitors between sentences. French also concluded that home movie film was cheaper than commercial film and ordered the news department to begin experimenting with *Super 8* equipment.

French's somewhat eccentric brainstorms were greeted with gallows humor by the news people as long as they posed no real threat, but there was nothing funny about the staff cut carried out in 1971--the most severe cutback in the station's history. The action sent staff morale plunging to a new low.

One of the survivors was Bill Wehrman who, at 24, had been on the air for three years and was already the "dean" of a reporting staff not noted for its stability. 6' 3" and skinny as a rail, Wehrman was a graduate of the University of Missouri with a degree in journalism. The clothing memo had so irked him that he had purchased a single gray shirt and hung it ostentatiously in the studio. He made it a practice not to wear the shirt until he had received several calls from French. As time passed, Wehrman developed a near-scientific approach to the situation: he wore the shirt after every third call from French and this seemed to give the general manager the impression he was keeping the young reporter in line.

Betsey Bruce was another survivor. Also a Mizzou graduate, she had arrived in St. Louis in 1970, driving a beat-up old Ford and looking for a job. She started as a news writer, but within the year her intelligence and good looks had landed her a position as a reporter.

Max Roby, a veteran anchorman who had seen general managers come and go, headed up the on-camera team, while a tough, enigmatic, frequently abrasive character named Bob Schaefer functioned as the news director. Schaefer had come to KMOX from a New Orleans station in September, 1970.

"No big talk here, no introductions," he had said at his first staff meeting. "I'll get to know your names later, and, as I do, there will be some changes."

But, hampered by the budgetary policies of French and the lack of any real direction at the station, Schaefer was unable to do much more than begin a trend toward a greater emphasis on features. The news department was floundering and the

ratings reflected the problem. By the end of 1971, KMOX-TV news was stagnant.

In January of 1972, a basic change was made by CBS. French was shipped off to another station and, 24 hours later, into his job walked a hip swinging, gum chewing, finger popping young man named Tom Battista. The news staff didn't know what to expect but the change was refreshing ...to some.

At the time, station managers didn't involve themselves much in the operation of the news department except in matters of budget and basic policy. But Battista knew that if he could turn KMOX-TV around, if its news could capture the St. Louis market, it would be a major coup for him. That's just what he was after. He had already hustled, charmed and produced his way up the sales ladder at CBS, coming to St. Louis from New York, where he had held the national sales directorship of the owned-and-operated division. Now he was aiming higher still.

Beneath the hip exterior, the Gucci loafers and flowered shirts, Battista was, at 34, a fascinating blend of street-tough savvy and sophistication. A product of the heavily Italian "Hill" in Providence, Rhode Island, he could call upon a wealth of anecdotes to illustrate his points, play the menacing though somehow noble role of an alley fighter, and curse a blue streak. Changing gears, he was fully capable of coming on like a soft-spoken professor; for, in reality, the "Hill" was far behind him. He had total control of himself, switching from mode to mode as his finely tuned antennae picked up signals from those around him. He had the cultivated gifts of a great manipulator, a touch of creative genius and a streak of ruthlessness. He hit KMOX-TV like a tornado.

Battista's presence was quickly felt by the news staff. Wehrman was pleasantly surprised when he was called to Battista's office and told to let his hair grow and wear wider ties with the suits and sportcoats he preferred. Max Roby was surprised, though not so pleasantly, when Battista told him he came across on the tube like a "plastic man."

On another occasion, Battista walked over to Roby's desk and said: "Max, do you think you're a good newsman?"

"Yes, a damned good one," Roby responded.

"Well, Max," Battista said coldly, "I don't really want good newsmen; I want good communicators, good actors."

It was an exchange that would stick in Roby's mind for a long, long time. He smelled change in the wind and it had an acrid scent. Under previous managers, Roby had developed a certain degree of authority in the news department, had felt that his input was important in making news judgments. Now he was not so sure. He was beginning to sense a new attitude toward him, expressed not only in Battista's comments but in Schaeffer's demeanor as well. It was not that he was being belittled overtly, but rather that, as a journalist, he was being increasingly ignored.

All they really want me to do, Roby thought, *is take my script, read it and otherwise stay out of the way.* Battista was not sure just what he wanted from Roby. His uncertainty stemmed from the careful study he had been making of the market and KMOX's position in it. What he found was not pleasing.

"Channel 5 had a substantial lead in the ratings," Battista recalled recently. "I mean, they were really killing us. We were a poor second, way down the ladder. More important than the ratings, they were beating the hell out of us in the crucial demographic area--women between the ages of 18 and 49. You just can't overemphasize that figure because seventy cents out of every advertising dollar spent is geared to that demographic. And beyond the numbers, they were doing a better job of news--period. They were out covering the good local stories and we were just screwing around."



Battista spent day after day monitoring the news shows of his competitors. "God, I looked at everything, and I said to myself: What can I do to make me look different, to make me look unique? I realized very fast that this was a dull, stiff, conservative, provincial old market, and I decided that I was going to knock them right on their asses."

But it wasn't so easy. Throughout 1972, Battista tinkered with various promotional devices--a banter-filled news with Roby and Jim Bolen stiffly trying to be chummy on the air, new spot ads, newspaper space and a few well-planted items in the columns--but there were no dramatic changes in the ratings. He and Schaefer spent long meetings reviewing possibilities. Joining them, occasionally in person, and more often by phone, was a man named Sam Zelman, the New York-based advisor to the five CBS local news operations. It was Zelman who began urging Battista to consider a new format then being toyed with in Philadelphia. The CBS station there had partially replaced the standard news set with an actual newsroom, and was broadcasting some of its news shows against a background of working reporters, writers and technicians. The "newsroom" concept was catching on with the New York people who wanted to standardize the "look" of CBS local news. They wanted a full-dress test at one station and though Philadelphia had begun working with the idea, it was too large a market to risk going with an unproven formula. St. Louis, a far smaller market, seemed ideal for the experiment.

Battista was taken with the idea and

PATRICK EMORY:

An instant success with Newsroom, they knew how to treat him stroke by stroke. But they lost him, and when he returned to St. Louis, the street fight began.



TOM BATTISTA:

"Whenever Max and I would meet on the street we would always exchange pleasantries...but in my heart of hearts I was out to bury him." He would later say the same of Emory.

began work on the design of a newsroom that could also function as a broadcast studio. Early in 1973, KMOX began using the newsroom as a background for its weekend news shows. Battista liked what he saw, but he was faced with a serious problem. He sensed that the physical change alone would not cause much more than a brief flurry of attention, that he needed a new direction and a new set of faces to make the proposed format come alive. The problem was that he already had a full news team.

"We were leaning hard toward the newsroom," Schaefer said in a recent interview. "We were impressed by its potential, its immediacy and power. But the truth is we were still looking for an identity. The ratings were struggling and we had no real game plan, no solid news philosophy. We were saddled with the old faces. We needed a catalyst to get us moving." The catalyst came in April.

Throughout the early months of 1973, Battista and Max Roby had been negotiating terms for Roby's new contract. They had reached agreement on salary and days off, so, when Battista left for a vacation toward the end of March, he left feeling the contract was concluded. But after Battista left, Roby had doubts. His earlier exchanges with Battista continued to haunt his thinking, the more so because the proposed contract included a clause stating the agreement could be terminated upon 26 weeks notice. Unable to reach Battista, Roby approached KMOX's business manager and asked that the language be altered, that he be given a solid, no-cut, five-year contract. The answer was no. The clause was standard and would not be removed. Roby went higher: the answer was still no. When Battista returned to St. Louis, he immediately went into Jewish Hospital for minor surgery to correct a chronic problem with his vocal chords. He had no inkling of any difficulty with Roby.

Following the surgical procedure, while Battista was still groggy from anesthesia, a strange thing happened: he began to scream obscenities. Battista's doctor, summoned by a worried nurse, arrived in time to hear Battista shout "Max Roby is a son of a bitch! Max Roby is a motherf-----!" The doctor ordered a sedative to put his patient back to sleep. When Battista awoke, he had no recollection of the outburst. He didn't learn of it until several months later when his doctor laughingly recalled the incident. Hearing what he had shouted, Battista at first felt acutely embarrassed. He would, after the chagrin faded, write the episode off as having been caused by the anesthesia. He couldn't possibly have meant those things, he reasoned; after all, he liked and respected Roby. Later still, he would wonder if Roby had not become some sort of symbol to him, a symbol, perhaps, of the obstacles in his way.

During the last week of Battista's absence, Roby was approached by a friend who had contacts at KSD-TV. Would Max, the friend wanted to know, be interested in moving to Channel 5 if a suitable long-term agreement could be arranged?

Battista came back to the office at the end of April. He was quickly visited by Roby, who told him that he was leaving KMOX--was, in fact, going over to KSD. Battista, still unable to speak, frantically scribbled a note on the pad he kept on his desk. Finally, in frustration, he grabbed Roby by the lapels, tugged him down and croaked in his ear, "What the f— are you talking about?" Roby remained dignified but adamant. He was leaving immediately.

Over the years, a myth has grown about Roby and Battista, a myth that Battista was delighted to see Roby leave, that he had, in fact, coldbloodedly engineered the whole thing. It wasn't quite that way. "To put it bluntly," says one KMOX veteran, "Battista was scared to death. Sure he said those things to Roby, and there's no question that he wanted to diminish Max's importance. But he sure as hell didn't want to lose him--not to the competition. Actually, Tom had been thinking of setting up Max as a sort of minor league Sevareid, some kind of elder statesman role."

Battista's fears about the effect of Roby's leaving were well-founded. With Roby at KSD, the KMOX news ratings fell further still. At KMOX-TV, the news is expected to produce between 30 and 40 per cent of the total revenue. Advertising people like to buy time with winners, and with the numbers going down, Battista was facing disaster. During the late spring, the gap between the two stations widened to nearly ten points, a staggering figure in an industry where a two-point lead is hailed as a decisive victory.

Roby's move sent tremors through the news staff. "We were just plain shocked," Betsey Bruce said recently. "Max never gossiped, never talked about his personal affairs, so we didn't know why he had left. There were lots of rumors and an air of uncertainty."

To buy time while they desperately searched for a permanent replacement, Battista and Schaefer made arrangements for network correspondent Barry Serafin -- a former St. Louisan -- to come to KMOX on temporary loan. Bill Wehrman, on vacation in Colorado when Roby

walked out, was called back on an emergency basis to help fill the gaping hole. The station's work log shows that during the next few months Wehrman worked close to 100 straight days. KMOX-TV was struggling to stay above water.

"You just can't imagine what it was like for awhile there," recalls Schaefer. "I mean, hell, we didn't have anybody to really take over for Max. Beyond that, we didn't know where the hell we were going."

II. The Newsroom

Battista was not only worried, he was mad as hell. In his view, Roby had been disloyal. "You know, whenever Max and I would meet on the street or at some function we would always exchange pleasantries, like, 'How's the wife?' that sort of thing," Battista says now. "But in my heart of hearts I was out to bury him."

Under what?

"I decided that the time had come to make the change for real. No more side-stepping, no more filling, no more crapping around. My back was up against it and I figured hey, how far down can I go?

"Bob Schaefer and I just said the hell with it, let's put together a brand new bunch of faces, a brand new bunch of journalists in this market who have the balls to go out and dig up the stories nobody else wants to talk about. I figured I could go with the straight types--the Max Robys and Walter Cronkites of this world--but why? I said let's get young, aggressive and attractive people to do our news. Why attractive? Hell, you can fall in love with a rich person just as easily as a poor person, and I say you can get your news just as easily from someone attractive as from someone not so attractive. And why not!"

Betsey Bruce and Bill Wehrman, already being tried at the anchor desk, were judged to be young and attractive enough to keep around, and sportscaster Bob Buck seemed to fill the *macho* bill. But the majority of the on-camera people failed, in Battista's eyes, to meet the new criteria. Most got the message and began looking for alternate employment, though at least one--Jim Bolen, the weatherman--was unceremoniously dumped.



The search was on for new faces to replace the rapidly departing staff. The newsroom set was ready, was being used during the transition period, but it would take the completion of a new team to transform it to *The Newsroom* Battista had in mind.

The top priority was finding an anchorman to work the six and ten o'clock shows. "It was incredible," recalls Schaefer. "We looked at tapes and looked and looked and finally Tom and Sam Zelman and I set out to different markets to find the right guy. I think it was Sam Zelman who first mentioned Patrick Emory, who was then working at a station in Pittsburgh."

Actually, Emory had been calling Zelman regularly for some time. A former reporter for KNXT, the CBS station in Los Angeles, Emory was anxious to get back into the CBS structure. He had been in Pittsburgh for two years and was ready for a change. But not just any change -- he wanted to make it big and his sights were set on California gold.

Battista liked what he heard about Emory and asked Zelman to get back in touch with the ambitious anchorman to arrange an audition. After viewing the tape, Battista had no doubt he had found his man: Emory was young, handsome, capable and relaxed on camera.

While discussing terms, Battista made a committment to Emory. "Patrick," he said, "I know you want to go to California; well, if you come and stay with me a couple or three years, I'll do everything in my power to deliver for you." Emory jumped at the offer and secured a release from his Pittsburgh contract.

Now that Battista was free to wheel and deal, this dangling carrot approach became characteristic. One TV executive who observed Battista in operation over a period of years summed up his impression during a recent discussion: "Tom could have an almost hypnotic effect when he wanted to. He could convince you that as Tom Battista goes, so goes your future. Just stick close to Battista and your hands will turn to gold. He was able to elicit incredible loyalty that way, and he got results. But, personally, I began to find the thing a little frightening."

A young investigative reporter named Sandy Gilmour was brought to town for an interview on the strength of a video tape he had sent. A man with five years broadcasting experience in Salt Lake City, plus a year with the Associated Press, Gilmour impressed Schaefer tremendously. The next day he was interviewed by Battista, who told him he was going to be part of an all new staff, a hard-hitting staff that was going to make use of an innovative format. The excitement was contagious and Gilmour left certain he would sign the proposed contract.

Another new face arrived in the person of Stan Bohrman, a Los Angeles talk show host whom Battista had known when he had worked CBS sales on the Coast. Bohrman did

MAX ROBY:

"All they want me to do is take my script, read it and stay out of the way." But he showed them.

"You think everything was great down in that studio?" says a CBS executive. "You gotta be crazy. That place was turning into a zoo."

not impress Schaefer as a journalist, but Battista was convinced he was a "magnificent communicator" who could electrify an audience. Schaefer couldn't stand him professionally, but bowed to Battista's desire to have an "outraged liberal" juice up the news.

With the addition of a few more people--a young woman named Penny Crone elevated from a writing job, Jim Murphy, who had been doing station editorials and was now assigned a reporting slot, and Ollie Raymand as weatherman--the new group was



ready to premiere. Emory and Gilmour arrived together on July 7, to begin several weeks of meetings and observation. The day they walked into the KMOX-TV offices to officially report for work, they ran into a departing member of the old staff. "Good luck," the man said, shrugging his shoulders. "It would have been nice to work with you guys...." Emory turned to Gilmour and said: "What the hell are we getting into here?" The two men got a chilly reception from the few old-timers who had remained around during the transition period and were waiting to be herded out. "Herd 'em in, herd 'em out -- there's more like them in the grass," was one of Schaefer's favorite expressions. It seemed funny. At first.

Battista scheduled the official start of Newsroom for the third week in July and used the intervening time to impress his new team with his vision. At one meeting at the Cheshire Inn he gave his pre-game speech.

"I want you all to carry an image in your minds," he said. "I want you all to think of yourselves as Yale Bulldogs with big, spiked leather collars on. And I want you to see yourselves chained together and chained underneath the Arch from one leg to the other. I want you to be known as the watchdogs of the community, and I want you to be so fearsome that nobody better f--- with you."

Emory felt a sense of exhilaration. "We were like young Davids taking on the Goliaths across the street. Chris Condon had dominated this market for so long and now he had Roby with him, and here we were, this bunch of fresh newcomers, out to knock them off the throne." Gilmour was just as excited, though the thought of taking on Roby and Condon meant nothing to him: he didn't know who they were.

Battista and Schaefer hammered away at the staff, drumming in the style they wanted to present, the image they wanted to convey.

"I want my news programs written in a contemporary style," Battista insisted. "I don't want any more 'journalese.' I want you to give the news in a professional, simple manner so that people can understand what the hell we're talking about."

The watchword was "communication," and the key phrase was "people news." Battista and Schaefer pushed and prodded the new team to dig up "people-oriented stories."

Betsey Bruce was impressed with the approach, but she was a little leery of the obsessive concern with image, fearing that the news just might be veering a bit too far in the direction of show business.

Wehrman, having already lived through two sets of reporters and numerous changes in style, had a slightly jaundiced view of the hoopla surrounding Newsroom. He had a nagging recollection of the day Battista had talked about hiring Jim Murphy to do the station's editorials.

"Battista was really excited," Wehrman remembers, "He kept raving about this young guy he was hiring and what a dynamite personality he was: how he used his arms when he talked, cocked his head, used his face. Later I realized that Tom hadn't once mentioned just what Murphy was going to talk about. It was all appearance."

The format was an almost immediate success. Emory caught on so fast that it stunned even Battista, and the ratings began to climb. "It was like a Broadway opening night," says Schaefer. "Everything just came together."

For the first few months the reporters were given free rein. "Jeezus, it really was something," says Gilmour. "We had this sense that we were really going to set the town on fire, really going to open things up. It was a great feeling."

Battista was riding high, constantly pushing and stroking, and always looking for ways to improve the production. On more than one occasion, unhappy with graphics projected behind the anchor desk, he went downstairs and threw the slides away. It was, he felt, the quickest method of getting new ones made.

"He was some character to work for then," Gilmour recalls. "I remember one night after I had finished a story that ripped hell out of an oil executive, Battista actually came walking out of the control booth applauding -- and we were still on the air. I mean, God, that kind of enthusiasm really gets through to you."

"It was the first time in my experience at KMOX that we were really striking out on our own," says Betsey Bruce. "We weren't following Channel 5 anymore. It was an anxious and exciting time. We broke some patterns in this town."

Battista's rule of thumb for political stories was simple: "The best way to cover city hall is not to cover it. Who cares about the aldermen?"

Bohrman went on the air almost every night for the first months with long stories about abuses in the city and county jails. On some evenings his stories would run close to five minutes, an unheard-of length in a 30 minute newscast; and he was as out-

BETSEY BRUCE:

"Can you imagine an intelligent, beautiful woman like her coming into the newsroom with her face almost to the floor because she had been chewed out for no good reason at all...?"

raged as Battista wanted him to be, often puffing into the station at 4:30 or even later with his latest exposé. ("Here comes Stan," the staff joke went, "and boy, is he outraged today.") Bohrman, the handpicked "juice" of the Newsroom, Battista's old pal, lasted eleven weeks and then he vanished.

It happened like this: Bohrman was an assassination buff and quick to pick up on anything that pointed to a conspiracy in the murder of President Kennedy. One afternoon at a press conference, President Nixon made a statement to the effect that if wiretapping had been widespread in 1963, it might have been possible to show that more than one individual had been involved in the Kennedy killing. Nixon quickly backpedaled when questioned by astonished reporters, but when Bohrman read the transcript on the newswire he was convinced that Nixon's statement indicated knowledge of a plot. He went on the air at six with his theory. Schaefer was furious and demanded that Bohrman go on the ten o'clock show and state that he had been in error. Bohrman told the news director that he wouldn't eat crow, but would correct the mistake. At ten, however, Bohrman went live, interviewing an assassination "expert" who also contended that Nixon's statement was evidence that a plot existed. Schaefer came unglued.

"Damn," Schaefer said recently, "here was a reporter on the f------ news and misquoting the president." Gilmour remembers the scene the next morning: "It seemed like the walls were going to buckle out, there was so much tension in Schaefer's office. Bohrman was shouting and Schaefer was screaming like mad and finally Bohrman hollered, 'I don't have to take this s--- from you, I quit!' And that was that. Schaefer accepted his resignation on the spot."

Later, Bohrman tried to retract his resignation, but Battista backed Schaefer and Bohrman was gone. Zip. His leaving made no great impression on the growing Newsroom audience since he hadn't been around long enough to achieve any real recognition. But the way in which he left made a small dent in the esprit of the staff. It wasn't that they disagreed with Schaefer, it was just that Bohrman had received such a buildup from Battista, had seemed so close to him, and then the general manager hadn't batted an eye when Bohrman "outraged" himself out of a job. It made a few people wonder.

Battista's handling of Gentry Trotter also made a few people uneasy. Trotter, who joined the Newsroom as a critic in September, was urged by Battista to play up a "camp" approach to reviews, and the character that came to be known as "Sugarplum" gradually evolved. What is generally not known is that Trotter made two audition tapes, and that one of them revealed a serious, knowledgeable side to the man, a side Battista chose not to emphasize. Battista wanted an attraction -- a character people would talk about.

The obsession with "characters" -- the *outraged liberal*, the *camp reviewer*, the *hard hitting reporter* and the *matinee idol*, is a revealing clue to Battista's view of how to market his product.

During the first six months of Newsroom, Gilmour broke several stories -- including the now famous Stouffer's meat scandal--that had Battista ecstatic. They were exactly the kind of "big hitters" he was after. More important, Emory was becoming a matinee idol and the November ratings showed that KMOX was closing the gap, was moving up on KSD.

The initial success of Newsroom made Emory a hot property and Battista knew just how to treat him stroke by stroke. Coffee and conversation in Battista's office became a regular part of Emory's schedule and more money was in the wind. It appeared to others on the staff that Emory was getting very special treatment and the first stirrings of resentment -- a few jokes, a few mutters -- began. Emory was not unaware of the budding antagonism felt by some, but he took the position that he was only getting what he was entitled to.

"I've always been completely aware of just why I was hired," Emory said recently. This is a commercial business and people like Paley and Pulitzer and Battista are not in it for fun. Part of my success has been the ability to draw from the target audience and I've never tried to pretend differently. But I don't just sit out there in front of the camera and read the news; I've always played a big part in determining the way in which the news is delivered on my programs.

Schaefer agrees: "Emory was a guy that executed and delivered. He was the basis for the team spirit that existed on the air because he seemed to sense how to move things along. Unfortunately management people have a tendency to stroke the anchorman, build them up, because they are perceived as more delicate pieces of machinery. Management has a big investment in those people, "hell, they build their whole public relations campaigns around them."

On the surface all was well, the staff seemed happy, the programs were attracting wide attention and a



BOB SCHAEFER:

"Herd 'em in, herd 'em out -- there's more like them in the grass," was one of his favorite expressions. It sounded funny at first.

"Here comes Stan," the staff joke went, "and boy, is he outraged today." He finally outraged himself out of a job.

team spirit appeared to prevail. But...

"You think everything was great down in that studio?" says a CBS executive. "You gotta be crazy. That place was turning into a zoo."

Six months after Newsroom hit the air, trouble was brewing. Nothing big yet, nothing dramatic, but the original fervor was fading and problems were beginning to crop up between people on the staff. Schaefer's abrasiveness seemed to worsen.

"Let me give an example of what it was like," says one former Newsroom employee. "Say you're at your desk at 9:00 in the morning -- there might be five other people in the room -- at 9:15 Schaefer's door flies open really hard and Schaefer stomps into the studio. The first thing he does is place-kick the nearest wastebasket, and I mean really kick the thing hard. He has his mouth turned down in a frown so far it's hard to believe. He walks into the room where the wire service machines are, and starts ripping the hell out of them, putting some of the stories on pegs and throwing others into the trash. Then he comes stomping back out and walks over to some reporter's desk, puts his face about two inches away from theirs and shouts: 'What the f--- do you have for me today?' It was a great way to start the morning."

More than once Schaefer launched into Betsey Bruce for not projecting enough "personality" on the air. Battista went after her on the same point. Says Wehrman: "Try to imagine a sharp, hardworking, beautiful woman like Betsey coming into the newsroom several times just about as low to the floor as you can get from being chewed out for no good reason at all. They did the same thing to Penny Crone. God, some of the things they said to her were unbelievable.



FRED CAESAR:

It was probably the first on-camera termination since Arthur Godfrey fired Julius La Rosa.

Part of the problem can be traced to the social and economic differences that exist in television news. It is not unusual, for example, to find an assignment editor--the individual who assigns the stories to the various reporters--making considerably less than the reporters he is supervising.

"Some of the things Battista and Schaefer said to Penny Crone were unbelieveable. Schaefer was the all time king at that; he could make Jimmy Carter think he was incompetent."

Schaefer was the all time king at that; he could make Jimmy Carter think he was incompetent."

What was the problem at KMOX? What was happening before the bright lights went on and everyone smiled and said cheese? "There were a lot of personality conflicts back then," says Bruce, "and I guess the excitement of the first six months was gone. Battista expected a great deal out of the new team and there was also a constant concern about the ratings."

One of the junior executives during that period was a lanky, young man named Fred Caesar, who had started with KMOX in 1967 as a part-time writer while still in high school. He gradually worked his way up at the station, became the producer of the five o'clock show in 1971 and later became the assignment editor. He was known around the studio for always bringing a pack of Twinkies along with his lunch, a habit that earned him a good deal of friendly teasing. He remembers the tension that began to build in the Newsroom around the start of 1974.

"The ratings were going up but not fast enough to suit Battista," Caesar said in a recent interview. "Everybody seemed to be realizing that we weren't doing what we thought we were going to do. It had been such a dynamite beginning, such a fast start, and now we just couldn't figure out why it wasn't gelling faster. Maybe management was putting on too much pressure."

Nor is it unusual to discover that the news director is making less money than the anchorman. The writers and technical people who work behind the scenes lacing the product together are so much lower paid than the on-camera "talent" that animosity is an almost inevitable result.

Some of the developing distaste for Emory was linked to this factor, but adding to the problem was a mushrooming feeling that the Newsroom star was contemptuous of off-camera employees. There is no question that even some on-camera people were jealous of the attention and money Emory was receiving, and several reporters muttered about Emory's short hours and easy job. Emory believes that the real basis for any hostility toward him lay in his constant demands for better writing and production.

Another problem area was the deepseated animosity ripening between Wehrman and Schaefer. Wehrman couldn't stand Schaefer's method of dealing with people, and Schaefer couldn't stand Wehrman, period. The dislike that festered between the two frequently erupted in loud shouting matches in the studio. Curiously, the two men had a common friend in Sandy Gilmour, who spent many evenings drinking and talking shop with the news director.

Wehrman and Gilmour shared a love of folk music and would often stay up half the night drinking wine, swappings songs and talking about their craft. They had a mutual fear that the job they were doing, the team they were part of, was not all it was cracked up to be.

Wehrman explains: "We were beginning to feel that we were not really on top of things; I mean, we were going to the newsroom every morning and had about half an hour to figure out what stories we were

going to cover, get our camera crews assigned, and get going. As a result, we were constantly reacting to what other people said was happening--to the newspapers, the wire services, hell, we used to send around xeroxed copies of Newsweek. We just never had any sustained contact with newsmakers; we never had the time to build up sources, to dig up original stories. I would venture to say that we never really knew what was going on in the community, never had the pulse of the city and county. And yet we went on every night with what we said was the news. I'm afraid that to many, many people, what we said was the news *was* the news.

Wehrman kept another feeling to himself. He was afraid that a few of the people around were not even interested in quality journalism, that they just wanted to be part of a winning team.

"It's a lot of fun sitting around a studio with your feet up on a desk talking about how we really knocked 'em dead and about the events of the world, but I'm afraid we were pretty heavy on big talkers and light on real reporters.

"Tom Battista was sincere in what he was trying to do. I think he really worked to put together a good staff, but so many damn problems arose from mistakes made in confusing appearance with substance, communication with news."

"It's true that we had an uneven staff in terms of experience," says Bruce, "and, as a team, we had a general lack of experience in St. Louis. We really didn't know our way around; it wasn't an easy time for anybody. One of the problems I had was that nobody was giving me any good, serious advice about anchoring. People were always advising me about my appearance, but on the important questions I had to sort of go it alone."

The Newsroom reporters created a dubious honor to bestow upon one another. It was called the "Who Missed The Obvious Question of the Week Award."

The reporters may have been missing questions, but Battista wasn't missing a trick. He had a successful commercial product on his hands and was gaining a reputation for creativity and innovation, a reputation that was spreading far beyond St. Louis. Other CBS stations were becoming interested in the format and Battista obligingly sent them tapes so that they could see what he had wrought. Newsroom was becoming Battista's ticket into "Black Rock."

"Once I knew the thing was working, I switched to a fine-tuning mode," Battista said recently. "There were always things to be changed and improved." One thing that he felt needed improving in the spring of '74 was the five o'clock show: he didn't like the numbers.



GENTRY TROTTER:

The news director grabbed a tear gas gun and began stalking him around the studio... The Mary Tyler Moore Show? No, the Newsroom.

One afternoon Emory was asked to Battista's office and found both Battista and Schaefer waiting for him. "Pat," said Battista, "the show is in trouble; we're not pulling the demographic. I want to take Betsey off and have you co-anchor with Wehrman. What do you think?"

"Well," Emory answered, "I don't want it to seem like Bill and I are competing."

"Do you want me to fire him?" Battista said.

"It's your TV station," said Emory. "I don't want to have anything to do with that decision."

Betsey Bruce returned to reporting, having been through the anchor door for her first spin around. "I knew they were going to take her off a month before they did it," says Wehrman, "just by the way they were talking to her. Hell, they prepared her for the change by jumping all over her every day. I thought it was hateful." Wehrman never knew that he, too, had been near the edge, that Battista had offered to dump him if that's what Emory wanted.

It is hard to imagine two more unlikely partners. Wehrman was becoming an ever more serious journalist while Emory was basking in his success. Emory once told Wehrman, jokingly, that he would really like to be running a game show in Hollywood, where the money was better and the hours shorter. Despite their totally conflicting viewpoints, Wehrman found it impossible not to like Emory.

"God," Wehrman recalls, "we really had a good time together. Pat was great to work with because of his sense of humor and because he was always so upfront about his attitude."

Not everyone appreciated Emory's sense of humor, however, and there were a few people in the newsroom who began to think his pranks bordered on outright cruelty. Perhaps the most notorious of Emory's practical jokes was played on a young producer. Knowing the young man longed to work for the network, Emory went into the news director's office one afternoon and staged a phone call. Thinly disguising his voice, Emory told the unsuspecting producer that he was calling from New York, that he was an executive from *60 Minutes*, and that he had been hearing great things about his work. Would he, Emory asked, be willing to leave St. Louis and come to work for the network? The producer was ecstatic. He announced to all his friends that he was on his way up.

Emory was surprised at the gullibility of his victim, but he made no attempt to correct the impression he had created. For two days he allowed the producer to believe the call had been authentic before finally crushing him with the truth. The young man had not only been misled, he had been made a fool of, and many of his friends -- Caesar among them -- were not amused at all.

Penny Crone was another frequent target of Emory's jibes, often being ridiculed on the air. Even Bob Buck did not escape unscathed. One evening, Emory, parodying the often absurd role played by sportscasters, leaned over and plucked a hair from Buck's chest.

III. The Wallow

For Bob Schaefer the opening stages of Newsroom had been both an exciting and a draining experience. Playing a role in pioneering a new format successfully and seeing many of his ideas about TV journalism carried through had been rewarding and stimulating; but the extraordinarily long hours and the constant tension had become corrosive. He was not by talent or inclination as image conscious as Battista, and the contradiction between making prima donnas happy and producing good journalism at times seemed overwhelming.



Schaefer is a complex individual. Hard-assed, demanding and sometimes unapproachable, he is also a man of intense feeling and sensitivity. In May, 1974, exhausted and faced with personal problems that made his work even harder to tolerate, Schaefer resigned.

"Like all successful operations, we just temporarily ran out of gas," he says. "It was a great bunch to work with -- they did some good stuff -- but sometimes the very worst thing that can happen in this industry is success. This is an ego-minded business with a show biz flair, and I guess some of our people just started to develop star syndromes. I got an offer to go back home. I was fed up with being the news director, with constantly dealing with personality problems, so I accepted the offer and returned to New Orleans."

Before Schaefer departed, there was a small party scheduled in a nearby restaurant. Just after the five o'clock show Schaefer received a phone call from Battista, who wanted the news director to take care of a technical problem.

"This is where I came in, and this is where I'm leaving," said Schaefer. He slammed down the phone, picked up his briefcase and walked out. There was no party.

With Schaefer gone, the period referred to at KMOX as "the wallow" began. Whatever the feelings toward Schaefer had been, the fact was that at a critical point in Newsroom's history it was without competent, experienced line leadership. It was a particularly difficult time because, in addition to the nerve-wracking everyday problems involved with running a schedule of news programs, the staff was confronted with a new headache: Electronic News Gathering (ENG). The era of the mini-cam was beginning.

PENNY CRONE:

"She was so in and then, bam, she was so out. Hell, it was a sad thing..."

Television technology had progressed to the point where it was possible to send out vans rigged with special equipment which could transmit both picture and sound to the studio via microwave. The potential seemed unlimited.

Battista went bananas over the new hardware. Because of his success with Newsroom, and again because of the size of the market, KMOX-TV was chosen by CBS to become the first all ENG station in the country.

The early mini-cam stories were often absurd. The station used the new equipment as both a gimmick and a toy, once even broadcasting a live spot on how to properly barbeque meat. Trying to steal a jump on the competition, KMOX technicians spent an entire day setting up the mini-cam equipment for a live broadcast of Mayor Poelker's inauguration, only to discover they were unable to transmit any picture at all. But the mini-cam explosion settled quickly as KSD also equipped itself and after a brief flurry of competition, the novelty wore off.

The pioneering of KMOX in the ENG field paid one unexpected dividend. Julius Hunter, then a reporter and weekend anchorman at Channel 5, was impressed by the seriousness with which his competitors were treating the new hardware. Unhappy that KSD had been unwilling to make the changeover as rapidly, Hunter began to ponder an offer made to him by Battista months earlier. The two men had been talking privately for nearly a year, Battista turning on the charm and promising personally to look after Hunter's career if he came over. Now Hunter was ready. In May, 1974 he signed with Channel 4.

With Schaefer gone, Battista hired a man named Bill Addison as the executive news coordinator -- a newly created title that essentially meant executive producer. Three months later, Herb Humphries was signed as news director.

Addison quickly became the focus of a major dispute. Caesar once openly attacked him as a major source of Newsroom difficulty and Wehrman made known similar feelings. Addison didn't last long, but the confusion and mismanagement that marked the entire episode left a sour taste in many mouths. For the first time since its inception, there was a feeling of indecisiveness in the Newsroom.

During the summer, Wehrman entered contract negotiations with Battista. He had never worked under contract in the past; now, under pressure, he was willing to consider it. All through August and September the talks continued, but Wehrman had other things on his mind. At 27, he had been at KMOX longer than anyone else then on-camera, and the absurdity of that situation no longer seemed so funny to him. *How could this be real journalism,* he thought,

when I'm the guy people keep coming to when they don't know how to pronounce the name of a street. He was beginning to feel like a very old, young man. He was also beginning to wonder about the copy he was reading as anchorman. He wasn't sure it was accurate and had no real way to tell. It was a small but nagging doubt.

Were all the hours away from his wife and kids really worth it? He wasn't sure any more. What once had seemed so important, and, he had to admit, ego satisfying, now seemed tiresome and a bit phony.

"One day," Wehrman says, "it just hit me that I didn't want to be doing it anymore. It had nothing to do with money. Damn, I was breaking the bank. I had made $32,000 at the age of 26. Some of it had to do with the problems the station was having, but mostly I was just tired of it all."

Wehrman abruptly broke off the negotiations, informing Battista that he was quitting. His last broadcast was on Nov. 22, 1974. In the following weeks he received several high-paying offers from other stations and briefly considered them, but he realized his dissatisfaction was with TV news, not with KMOX, and he turned down all the job proposals that came his way. A few months later, he moved to Durango, Colorado, a beautiful town in the southwest corner of the state, where he intended to start a small newspaper. In the language of Tom Battista, a language not unlike that used by football coaches, Wehrman had made a "lifestyle call." Lifestyle calls are O.K.; they're not disloyal to the team.

In February, 1975, Bob Schaefer returned from his self-imposed exile. He had hoped for peace and quiet in New Orleans but had felt, instead, like he was living in a retirement home. He missed the action of the Newsroom, the rough and tumble — even the personality conflicts. He was about to play a part in one of Newsroom's biggest controversies.

Sandy Gilmour had, in his year and a half with KMOX, been billed as the Newsroom's "big hitter," the investigative reporter who dug up the "dynamite" stories, who went after the sacred cows and untouchable institutions. He took the job, if not the billing, seriously. Gilmour had reported a long series on telephone solicitation charity rip-offs, a series on consumer fraud, a series on Southwestern Bell and a number of stories related to the fuel shortage. It was thought to be good stuff, people stuff. But a strange thing was happening. He was falling out of favor with both Battista and Schaefer, who had begun to believe and say that he was lazy and uncooperative.

"There was," says Gilmour, "this tremendous pressure to come up with more and more original so called 'big hitters.' The problem was that the system just wasn't geared for it. To do those stories for TV you have to have pictures. You can't just sit at your desk and read copy into the camera. Who wants to see that? The basic problem is a simple one: any investigative story takes a long time to develop. On a newspaper you might have a hundred reporters, so you can always spare a few to spend time doing the research for investigative pieces. But in TV news you only have five or six reporters and management doesn't want to have them off the air for any length of time. Each of the reporters is making a lot of money and there is a tremendous investment in them. Management wants its dollar's worth."

To Schaefer, it appeared that Gilmour was slacking off, and Gilmour's situation wasn't helped any by the resentment of other reporters who felt he was not a team player, not carrying his share of the general assignment stories they all had to cover. There was a certain truth in their complaints. Gilmour wasn't enthusiastic about the assignments coming his way, and he made no attempt to hide his attitude.

The conflict reached a new level following one of the regular Wednesday night meetings attended by the news staff and Battista. During the meeting Gilmour complained that he was not getting enough time to do stories, was not getting sufficient crew support.

Battista challenged him: "What would you do with it? Where are the big stories?" And Gilmour, annoyed and on the defensive, shot back: "Give me the support and I'll bring in a Watergate!"

"You got it!" shouted Battista.

Looking back on the exchange Gilmour reflects, "I really got sucked in. It was a stupid thing to say."

Battista: "I got news for you, anytime somebody tells me something like that, they not only get a crew, they get a producer, six writers and a partridge in a pear tree." And just enough rope.

A week later, Gilmour came in with a story about an appliance rip-off. It was good but it wasn't Watergate; it wasn't even close.

"I guess," Gilmour says wryly, "they weren't too impressed."

Patrick Emory closely watched the decline of Gilmour. "Sure Sandy rankled some people," Emory says, "but I'll say this for the guy. When he had a story he'd work all night if he had to. He used to come in later than the rest of the staff and sit at his desk drinking coffee and eating a donut--God, he always had a donut--and that upset other reporters who always came in at nine on the dot. But that 'lazy' tag they hung on him was contrived as hell."

Battista: "Sandy started believing his own press notices, his own PR, and he went into a lazy mode. It got to the point that Bob Schaefer came to me and said that Sandy was ripping us off."

And then Schaefer, Gilmour's drinking buddy and confidante, simply stopped talking to Gilmour. Period.

Schaefer: "Yeah, Sandy and I had been very good friends, but in this business you never let friendship stand in the way. I warned him that he wasn't doing his job. I felt he was using my friendship to go about his merry way. If someone isn't being up front with me they just become invisible."

Battista tried one last time to invest Gilmour with the proper spirit. During a private meeting, Battista said: "Sandy Gilmour, you don't know, *only I know*, only Tom Battista knows,

One of Battista's final acts as general manager was to declare his news number one in St. Louis. Channel 5 responded by having its newscasters go on the air waving little ratings books and announcing that they were in first place.

how good you are and how important you could be. You don't know and you're going to f--- it up."

Fred Caesar also observed Gilmour's fall from grace. "I was the assignment editor then," Caesar says, "and I gotta say Sandy could be kind of weird. But anything he did, he did well. It boiled down to a question of whether the station was willing to pay for a guy whose output was oriented toward quality, not quantity. Sandy wanted to do stuff of value and meaning and, at first, he was built up to believe that was what was needed and expected. So he would go looking for better than average stories. He was a newspaper-type journalist. Schaefer really turned off on him. You know, the same thing happened to Penny Crone. She was *so* in and then, bam, she was *so* out. She kept trying day after day to do what was wanted. Hell, the whole thing was pretty sad."

Wehrman: "Sandy was misunderstood at the station. He was a talented person who was not handled right at all. I told him before I left that sooner or later Schaefer would give him the cold shoulder; I think I even told him to leave KMOX, that it wasn't the right place for him. I guess that in a way Sandy became a luxury they didn't want to pay for."

When Schaefer stopped talking to Gilmour, literally ignoring him, Gilmour became increasingly depressed. During April, 1975, he became totally frustrated with his inability to get through to the man he had considered a close friend. On Thursday, May 1, in the early afternoon, Gilmour walked across the street from the KMOX building and sat for nearly an hour on a bench in Luther Ely Smith park thinking over the situation.

"I just figured," Gilmour says, "that the time had come to leave. How can you stay around a place when you're not getting along? My impression was that it was all over, that this great spirit we had all begun with was gone. And, hell, it could have been done..."

At about 1 p.m., Gilmour walked back into the building, went up to Battista's office and resigned. He told Battista that his contract ran until July 7, that he wanted to work it out and then call it quits. Battista responded that he didn't want anyone hanging around who had already quit, and offered four weeks severance pay plus a week's vacation. It was left at that -- for the moment.

Gilmour felt he wasn't getting a fair shake, so he called an attorney and asked him to negotiate with Battista for more money. The lawyer called Battista and said Gilmour was not happy with the arrangement, that he wanted to work out his contract or get paid the full amount due him. Battista became enraged. He thought the lawyer was "grinding" him. "Wrong," he said. "I'll pay him off through July 7. But he's not resigning. He's been fired!" On Friday morning. Schaefer handed Gilmour an envelope that contained 11 weeks' salary and a termination slip.

Over the weekend, Gilmour spoke to John Archibald, TV critic of the Post-Dispatch, and told him he had resigned because he had not been given the opportunity to do the kind of investigative work he wanted to do. It was a classic error. Archibald called



Battista, who hit the ceiling. "He didn't quit," said Battista, "he was fired. His story is an out and out lie... In my opinion he is lazy." Archibald went with both statements in his Monday column and Gilmour felt screwed. Archibald had never called him back.

During the following weeks, Gilmour, depressed and hurt, made several other statements about the Newsroom. One was to a reporter writing a story for the *St. Louis Journalism Review* -- a publication put out by a loose collective of local journalists and avidly read by many in the field. Gilmour called the Newsroom a "fraud" and added, "they are purporting to be a really rock 'em, sock 'em news team. It's just a crock. The product is just too frivolous. They treat it as a show biz thing."

Julius Hunter, one of the Review's regular readers, was outraged by the story. He found the tone of the piece condescending and patronizing toward TV news and was particularly upset by Gilmour's remarks.

Battista: "The integrity of the entire effort was involved and it really made Julie mad. I told him not to take it so personally, but that if he wanted to write a letter I wouldn't stop him. I just said to make sure it was in the first person."

"It was more than just anger," says Hunter. "I really wanted the truth known about the situation. I'd seen what it took to get the guy moving." Remembering all the general assignment stories Gilmour had seemingly refused, Hunter composed a scathing letter in response to the article.

"You are greatly misinformed about Sandy Gilmour's contribution to journalism while he was in St. Louis," wrote Hunter. "If you had bothered to check with any of his colleagues you would have found that the only in-house awards Gilmour would receive would be 'Latest to Arrive at Work Everyday,' 'First to Leave Work Everyday,' and 'Most Alibis Given By a Reporter On a Regular Basis For Lack of Contribution and Production.' "

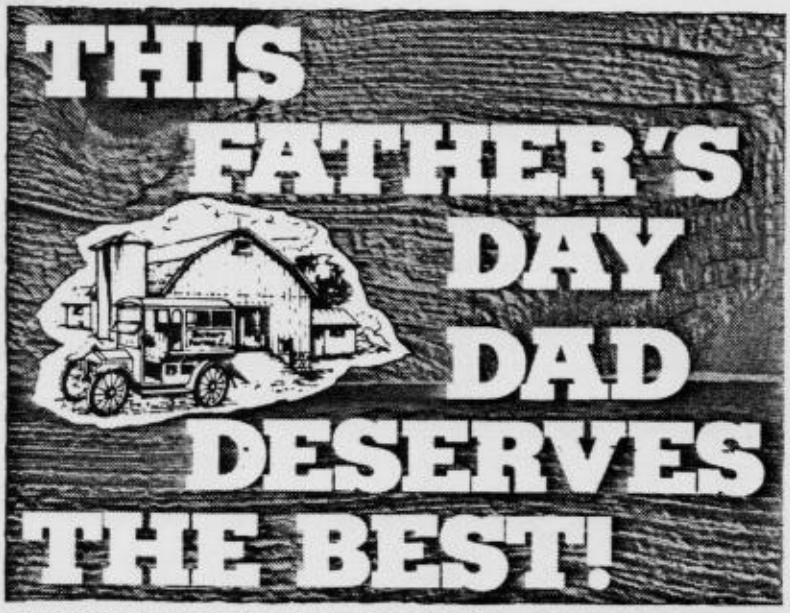
There is no question that the letter was written in sincerity. There is some question, however, about Hunter's full knowledge of the Gilmour story, and at least one former Newsroom staffer--not Gilmour--says privately that he will never forgive Hunter for what he considers a character assassination. By the time Hunter's letter appeared, Gilmour was long gone. He didn't see the point in any further exchange.

In the year of Gilmour's demise, Tom Battista decided that Betsey Bruce needed a change in appearance. He made arrangements to send the very reluctant reporter to Los Angeles to have her hair cut by a top Hollywood stylist. Bruce was annoyed as hell, but eventually agreed. When she arrived in California, the hair stylist was sick and unable to do the job. She flew back to St. Louis. She refers to the trip as "the world's most expensive haircut." There are luxuries and there are luxuries.

IV. A Body to Carve Out

In July, Patrick Emory left KMOX and went to KNXT, the CBS-owned station in Los Angeles. Battista had made good on his word. KMOX was now faced with the serious problem of

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filling the hole left by the man who, more than any other on-camera personality, was responsible for the success of Newsroom. Two preferred replacements proved unavailable, and Battista became interested in Steve Schiff, who was then working in New Orleans. Schaefer was surprised to hear of Schiff's availability, having just returned from New Orleans where he had spoken with Schiff on the phone. Schaefer was certain Schiff had told him he was tired of the business and was thinking of quitting altogether to open a tennis club.

When Schiff auditioned for the job, Battista was happy with the tape. Schaefer's reaction was lukewarm: "There was never any doubt in my mind that I wanted Hunter for the six o'clock news; he'd earned it." Schiff arrived later that month and took on the ten o'clock slot. Betsey Bruce was tapped to co-anchor the five o'clock news with Schiff, entering the revolving door for her second spin around.

In August, Battista left for New York to become an executive vice president of CBS. At a big farewell party, the Newsroom staff presented him with a special going-away present: his name in neon lights.

A few days later, at about 9 in the morning, Schaefer walked into the studio and spied Gentry Trotter acting it up as "Sugarplum." Grabbing a small tear gas spray gun that had been used in a story on self-defense, the news director began stalking Trotter, who bolted into his little office just off the studio floor and barricaded the door. Schaefer sprayed the gas under the door and then over the top of the partition while Trotter jokingly begged for mercy. It was a quaint little scene, all in fun. Trotter barely lasted out the year.

One of Battista's final acts as general manager was to publicly declare his news number one in St. Louis. Channel 5 responded by having its newscasters go on the air the same night, waving little ratings books and announcing that *they* were in first place. Behind the silliness, though, the KSD management was apoplectic, believing that KMOX had distorted the numbers by omitting two days out of a sample week. KSD complained to the ratings services and considered taking legal action, but the matter was later dropped.

In January, 1976, Fred Caesar left Newsroom and joined the staff of KSD. He changed employers under rather peculiar circumstances. Early in 1975 he had been told by Battista that he was an "up and coming young executive," just the type CBS was looking to keep around. CBS was conducting an in-house talent search, said Battista, and Caesar would be well rewarded for his efforts.

"You get this dream working for a CBS-owned station," says Caesar," "this dream that you will be discovered and carried up the corporate ladder." It is one of the most powerful weapons in the arsenal of a station manager and Battista was expert at deploying it.

If it's all true, wondered Caesar, why am I making peanuts as a producer? "It will come," said Battista.

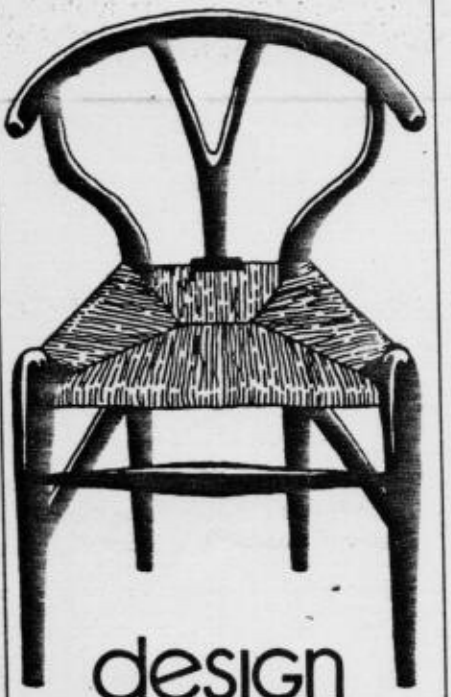
When nothing had happened by the end of the year, Caesar got restless and talked to Schaefer. The news director asked him to put in writing all the things he thought were wrong with the operation and to make up a new chain-of-command chart. Schaefer also asked Caesar if more money would make him feel better. The answer was yes. By mid-January of '76, no money had arrived and Caesar accepted a private invitation to go to the Channel 5 offices for an informal talk with KSD's news director, Pete Vesey. On January 18, Caesar toured the Channel 5 news center and spoke with Vesey about possibly taking a job. "But," Caesar told Vesey, "I want time to think it over. I would like to work it out with Schaefer, if possible, and stay at KMOX." Vesey said he understood. It was all very casual and seemingly private. It didn't stay private for long. Bill Addison was working temporarily at KSD Radio and saw Caesar walking through the building; he wasted no time in calling Schaefer with the news.

The next morning Schaefer told Caesar about the phone call. Caesar responded that he had not made up his mind about anything, that he still wanted the opportunity to talk things out, that the problem was resolvable if his salary increase and job change came through.

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In her free time, she enjoys collecting antiques and Depression Glass, eating Mexican food at West Port Plaza and reading the **St. Louisan**.

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Newsroom

"All I want to know is when your job will be available," Schaefer said.

"I'd like to talk..." said Caesar.

"There's nothing to talk about."

"Can we get together later...?"

There was no response. Caesar had become instantly invisible. In Schaefer's eyes he had not only been disloyal, he had lied. Schaefer was convinced Caesar had already signed with KSD and was covering his tracks. Knowing he was through, Caesar quietly took some of his friends aside and told them he was probably going to be fired by the end of the day. Around 4:30 that afternoon, he called Vesey to tell him he was getting the ax. Caesar was nervous because he had never actually made a deal with Vesey, but was reassured when Vesey told him he could start immediately with KSD.

During the five o'clock news that evening, observant viewers saw a strange scene. Just before a station break, as the camera panned the newsroom, Caesar came into view. He was handing over his office keys, his company car keys and his press pass to a KMOX executive. It was probably the first on-camera termination since Arthur Godfrey fired Julius La Rosa.

Caesar was told he had to have all his things out of the KMOX studio that night. He hurriedly grabbed some boxes, packed his files and started to leave--but he couldn't go; he had no car. It was safely back in the hands of CBS. He had to bum a ride home.

Three days later, Caesar received a note from Tom Battista in New York.

You blew it.
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Happy Twinkies.
TB

"That really ticked me off," says Caesar. "Boy, did it ever tick me off."

On March 3, 1976, Bob Schaefer was transferred to KNXT in Los Angeles to help bolster the station's drooping numbers. He found a sloppy, stiff operation. For nine months, Patrick Emory had been pleading with CBS, and particularly with Battista, to make some changes. He felt stilted and confined in the L.A. set-up and knew that unless the format were altered he was doomed.

"If we can't get this place turned around," Emory once told Battista, "I'm going to lose my golden oppor-

→

tunity." He was deadly serious.

While in California, Emory had come under heavy fire from the local press which frequently criticized him as a "pretty boy". Noting that his co-anchor was a beautiful young woman, one story tabbed Emory as the "Ken" of a "Ken and Barbie" team. He had also become embroiled in a widely-publicized exchange with Walter Cronkite after the gray eminence of TV news had made some disparaging remarks about young, handsome and vapid local anchormen. All in all, it had not been the best of experiences, and Emory was no longer the high-riding jockey he'd been when he left St. Louis.

In consultation with the L.A. station manager, Schaefer decided that if he was going to make a go of it, some bodies had to be carved out. One of the bodies belonged to Patrick Emory.

"Pat could have made it out here under better circumstances," Schaefer says. "But he became tainted in the eyes of the audience. It was as simple as that; he had to go."

On June 9, without any prior warning, Emory was fired. "Patrick," Schaefer said, "my advice to you is to just pack it in with no hard feelings." Emory sat in Schaefer's office for a few moments after hearing the decision. He felt a peculiar numbness creeping over him. "I decided, hell, I'm not going to sit here and beg for my job. I'm just going to get out of here as fast as possible and keep my dignity."

Herd 'em in, herd 'em out; there's more like 'em out in the grass, Emory thought.

That night Emory received a call from Cronkite, who had heard about the firing and wanted to assure Emory that their exchange had had no bearing on the incident. They talked in quiet, friendly tones about their differing views.

Back in St. Louis, Pete Rahn of the Globe-Democrat received word of Emory's termination and called Ray Karpowicz, the general manager of KSD, to tell him the news. Karpowicz was intrigued by the possibilities, but wanted, first of all, to confirm the story. He decided to have an old KMOX employee call Emory and make a casual inquiry. He picked Fred Caesar.

"We've heard a rumor that you've →





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been fired," Caesar said to Emory when he reached him on June 10.

"How many times do I have to tell you not to deal in rumors," Emory said gruffly. *Lord,* Caesar thought, *here I go again.* He vividly recalled Emory's attitude toward the writers at KMOX. "It ain't no rumor," Emory laughed. "It's a fact."

Caesar asked if Emory would be interested in talking about coming back to St. Louis to work for KSD.

"Interested? Of course I'd be interested; I'm unemployed." Emory asked a lot of questions about the station. He was concerned about how any move would affect Max Roby and Chris Condon. Caesar was impressed by that concern and concluded that the California experience had changed Emory.

Emory was quickly approached by several talent agencies and a radio station. The Gallo wine company wanted to know if he was interested in becoming one of its spokemen. But he put off making any decisions; he was still numbed by what had occurred.

He briefly mulled over a few of the offers, and then made a firm choice to stay in journalism. Battista called him a few times to talk about jobs with CBS stations in Chicago and Philadelphia, and made tentative arrangements to fly Emory to Philly for some testing. But Emory wasn't happy with the proposed arrangement.

During the following weeks Emory had several discussions with Karpowicz. He suggested that the station conduct a survey in St. Louis to find out if he was still a valuable property in this market. The suggestion struck Karpowicz as both sound and mature. He was impressed. He was more impressed when the survey showed that Emory still had a "remarkable impact in St. Louis for a man who had been gone for a year." Karpowicz and Emory were close to a deal.

On July 1, Emory received two calls from Battista, who seemed to have gotten wind of the proposed arrangement. Battista prodded Emory again about going to Philly for talks. Emory told him about KSD, that he had just about made up his mind to go back to St. Louis, and that he was, in fact, expecting a call from Karpowicz shortly.

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Battista said. "I feel like I've been acting as your agent." This struck a sour note with Emory, who figured that Battista must have had something to do with what had happened at KNXT. Emory made one last stab at it, saying he would stay with CBS if Battista would pick up his L.A. contract ($100,000 plus) and make suitable arrangements at another station. Battista hedged and Emory then said he was going with KSD. Battista's tone became vitriolic: "The romance is over, kid; I'm going to bury you in St. Louis!"

When Emory put down the phone, he started to tremble. He was overcome with emotion. He had considered Tom Battista one of his closest friends. "What really sort of crushed me," Emory says, "was that Tom had let me know that, above and beyond business, he was referring to our friendship. It was over, finished."

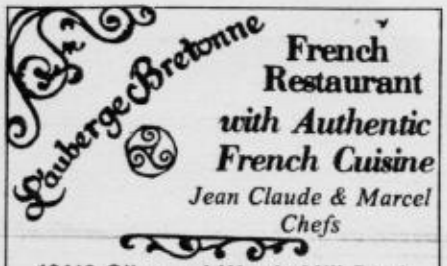
When a St. Louis reporter called a few minutes later, Emory was unable to speak. Later that day, when the reporter called back and wanted to know how he felt about returning to St. Louis, Emory responded: "As a very good friend of mine would say, I'm looking forward to a fair and honest street fight."

V. Epilogue

Patrick Emory returned to St. Louis in August, 1976, and began anchoring the six and ten o'clock shows for KSD. At the time, KMOX was ahead in the ratings, but the situation has changed. Emory's return set off a ratings war between the two stations that is, as yet, unresolved. "The Newsroom is facing a stiff challenge," Battista said in March of this year. "The matinee idol is back in town."

There are two companies, Nielsen and Arbitron (ARB), that conduct viewer preference surveys. During the last rating period, the surveys indicated that KMOX and KSD were virtually tied at five and six o'clock, but that KSD had taken over the lead at ten.

If the next rating book shows KSD still in front, it is likely that changes will be made in the Newsroom. One indication of the seriousness with



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which CBS views the situation was the highly publicized return of Ollie Raymand from Los Angeles. The extraordinary hoopla surrounding the arrival of a weatherman can only be taken as a sign that KMOX sees itself in some trouble, and is fighting back.

And what has happened to the others who helped create Newsroom, and set the stage for the current battle?

Bill Wehrman is living in Durango, Colorado, where he edits and publishes a successful weekly paper. One of his investors is *Max Roby*, with whom Wehrman has maintained a friendly and respectful relationship. Wehrman loves the newspaper business, finds time now to spend with his family, and feels that he is making a contribution to his community. He remembers his Newsroom days with mixed feelings. "Tom Battista," he says, "gave me a big chance and I still believe that he sincerely tried to put together the best news team in St. Louis. I just can't forget some of the things that were done to people at the station."

Betsey Bruce is the only member of the original Newsroom team still with KMOX. Last September she was again taken off the anchor desk, a move that "annoyed" her. She strongly believes that a woman should be anchoring at least one of the Newsroom shows. "TV news is a business in which you have to be constantly prepared for change," she says. "My security lies in my reputation as a reporter." She should feel secure; at 28, she has developed into one of the most diligent and respected TV journalists in St. Louis.

Sandy Gilmour is working for a TV station in Salt Lake City. He recently was elected the Utah state chairman of the professional journalism fraternity. He looks back on his experience at KMOX with regret. "When I left, my self-confidence had gone to hell. All the things that happened there toward the end were just unfortunate. It was the only job I ever left behind with any sense of failure." His criticisms? "Just say that the rhetoric has mellowed, though the criticism remains." As for the Hunter letter he says simply, "It hurt me."

Bob Buck went through a period of unemployment and is now working for a radio station in Detroit. *Penny Crone* is in New York City, doing →



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Newsroom

radio work. *Stan Bohrman* and *Jim Murphy* are both working in California. *Gentry Trotter* is the critic-at-large and community relations director for Channel 11 in St. Louis.

Fred Caesar is the assistant news director at Channel 5. "I learned a great deal working at KMOX," he says. "The Newsroom was an exciting place to be." But Caesar also believes that the intense loyalty demanded by Battista, and the heady atmosphere at a CBS-owned station, had a distorting effect on the thinking of some Newsroom people.

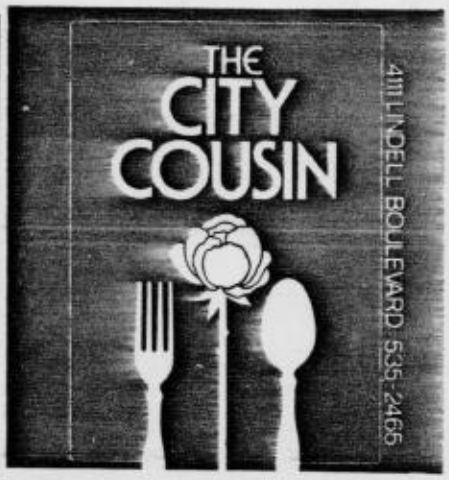
Bob Schaefer is the news director at KNXT in Los Angeles. "I like to think I have a little human feeling," he says, "and, yeah, all the personality conflicts have an eroding effect. When I fire someone I can't help but think about their families. But that comes with the territory. If I didn't do it, someone else would. If I started questioning all those decisions, it would be hypocritical. But, well, it stays with you. My pride is in my journalistic integrity; if I ever felt that I had prostituted that, I'd quit."

Tom Battista is an executive vice president of the CBS television stations division; he monitors and advises the five owned-and-operated local stations. He is the constant subject of rumors in the industry, an indication of the fascination his career has engendered. He misses the "hands-on" work he was able to do as a general manager and says: "It's kind of sad to think that maybe the truly fun days of my career are over now."

Battista came to St. Louis and transformed television news. Beyond that, he pioneered a new format and a new technology which have both affected TV news across the country. The irony is that in the current battle here, Battista's proteges are on both sides.

But he made the rules: "I've always been fair: if you deserve to get stepped on, you're going to get it; if you deserve to get boosted, you're going to get it; if you deserve to sit and rot, you're going to get it. But I gotta tell you, if you tick me off you better be ready, 'cause I'm a street fighter, and if you're gonna take me on you better f------ be ready."

Tom Battista would be the first to admit that in a real street fight, people get hurt. *



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