

Bilingual Eskimo Disk Jockey Makes Bethel Radio Sparkle

By LAEL MORGAN

Staff Writer

BETHEL—Radio KYUK has broken the silence of the Kuskokwim airwaves with a delightfully unique broadcast format.

"Angelanaqvaa....KYUK....On the air now," goes the station break jingle in Eskimo dance rhythm. "Angelanaqvaa", Yupik Eskimo for "oh, what fun!" And that it is, in two languages.

A star performer is Levi Lott of Tuluksak who is a bilingual disc jockey.

"I told the board that an experienced radio announcer who spoke Yupik was an impossibility," recalls Dave Moore, station manager. "Then along came Levi. He'd gotten his experience in Fairbanks and he's good."

Levi is a quick translator who

can read record requests in both English and Eskimo. He also does a 10 minute Eskimo news broadcast nightly.

Another popular program is a children's show run by Miss Mary. Her identity is a secret but rumor has it Miss Mary is really a married woman with a family.

"Did you know Miss Mary has a baby?" That's a favorite Bethel joke at the moment.

Also unique with KYUK is an Eskimo story hour where local legends are told in Yupik. Villagers along the Kuskokwim are so enthusiastic about it they are making tapes of their own stories and the station hopes to use them if it can resolve problems with sound quality.

Such features, plus the efforts

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LEVI LOTT

Bethel Radio Sparkles...

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of two additional full-time announcers, bring the station about 60 fan letters daily.

This is surprising because, KYUK is only broadcasting one-tenth of its range at this point (transmitting off a little clothes line arrangement until a tower can be installed) and considers itself very much in the pioneering stage. (News must either be phoned from a sister station KUAC at the University of Alaska or collected by a giri on a bike who meets the plane for a current issue of the Anchorage Daily News.

The station is Alaska's second educational system. State legislator George Hohman of Bethel promoted it with Sen. Ray Christiansen of Bethel and Moses Paukan of St. Mary's.

Moore, who had been working for KENI-TV in Anchorage, read their ad for manager and signed on last October. The transmitter had just arrived but things got off to a slow start.

"There wasn't much interest until we actually got on the air," Moore recalls. "Now the community has taken it to heart."

Consider a recent review in the Kuskokwim Chronicle:

"Bethel has been totally involved in its latest innovation, Radio Station KYUK for nearly three weeks now, and loving every minute of it.

"That love affair may come to an abrupt end in July, however, if funding for the station's continued operation is not forthcoming from the state.

"During the Economic Development Committee meeting last Thursday, Charlie Guinn said: 'this is our station. I think we have a sense of pride and ownership. I think that this group

should go on record as giving Dave Moore a vote of confidence for his fine work.'"

"We also need to keep this station. To do everything within our power to insure its future... because it is changing all our lives."

The problem is that although legislature appropriated about \$70,000 for KYUK, costs are running higher. For example, salaries were planned only for one programmer and a part time trainee. That's not enough for the 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. format.

There are also problems with the broadcasting tower.

"The most we'd expected to pay was \$11,000," Moore said. "Our lowest bid was \$32,000!"

But government agencies, businesses and even individuals are coming forward to help. The town of Napakiak volunteered \$1 per family.

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation, city of Bethel and Rural Cap have all come forward with grants. And the University of Alaska offers programming, Eskimo material and technical assistance.

"You can't imagine what a difference the station makes in our lives," explained one Bethel citizen. "Little things, like before if we wanted to get word around town that a meeting was canceled we had to knock on doors. Now we just phone the station.

"Plus the cultural interchange. Listening to that story hour makes some of the whites want to learn Eskimo. Following bilingual requests helps Eskimos with their English. And we're getting to understand each other better."

Angelanaqvaa!