



Kurt Ellison

Bill Moody will retire Friday after 29 years at KOMY radio station.

KOMY's morning man signs off

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BILL MOODY rolls around in the captain's chair at KOMY radio station's control panel, turning dials, flipping switches and starting tapes as though he owned a spare set of hands. His conversation is easy and chatty, just right for a station operator who specializes in the Big Band sounds of the 1940s.

But Moody, 69, says he's ready to hear Glenn Miller and the Andrew Sisters in his living room. He'll retire Friday from a 42-year career in television and radio that includes the past 29 years at KOMY.

Moody said that a year ago he told station owners Phil and Betty Rather that he was thinking of retiring. Later, when the Rathers had to schedule a suspension of the radio station's broadcast while they look for a new location for the transmitter, Moody said he set his retirement date. The station will suspend broadcast March 31.

The property has been sold and will become a housing development. Meeting license requirements for a new transmitter site are proving difficult.

Phil Rather said Moody has been with KOMY longer than Rather has. The Rathers bought the station in 1963 when Moody was the afternoon disc jockey. They first heard him when they were driving to Watsonville from San Jose one day while still negotiating the deal.

"I picked up the station on the car radio and Bill was on — he was the afternoon man," Rather said. "I told Betty, 'Boy, that guy has a really good voice. He'd make a good morning man.' He's been the morning man since. His voice quality, his even, pleasant manner is very desirable. A good morning person is key in broadcasting."

When the Rathers bought the station, they played adult contemporary music. But Moody said they realized there were several other area stations play-

ing the same selections.

"It got so you'd turn the (radio) dial and you couldn't tell what station you were on," he said. "We played light rock, Beatles, current hits and interspersed them with golden oldies of the day."

They hit on the idea of Big Band sounds, and to Moody's amazement, the calls and mail poured in from 1940s fans.

"We had boxes and boxes of postcards," he said. "We'd have people call with tears in their voices to thank us."

When the station leaves the air Sunday, Moody said listeners will be hard pressed to find the same music on the radio. There is one other Big Band type station in the San Francisco Bay Area, he said, but the reception isn't clear in the Pajaro Valley.

Moody says he'll miss his work, but looks forward to unscheduled time. He said his wife, Pat, a special education teacher, loves to travel, but he describes himself as a homebody. The Moody home is quiet

these days, but he says there was a time their eight children, now grown, kept things lively.

Before moving to Watsonville, Moody worked in television and radio in Washington state. He was later offered a job at KTVU Channel 2 in Oakland, but he and his wife preferred a smaller, more rural town to raise their family. Moody first worked at KSBW Channel 8, then joined KOMY when a friend associated with the previous owner asked him to work. Moody also sold real estate to bring in extra money. He eventually became the KOMY program director.

He describes KOMY fans as "dedicated."

"Some have their whole house wired (to receive the station)," he said.

Those fans, he added, are also surprised when they meet him.

"They say they don't connect me with the voice," Moody said, smiling. "They say, 'Oh, is that you? You don't look like your voice.' It always happens."