



KRLA announcer

Sie's 'come a long way, baby'

By BRENDA SELLERS
DT Guest Writer

She looked up from her desk as the security guard ushered me into the unmarked offices of KRLA. "This young lady is looking for Sie Holliday," he said.

"Well, she's found her," she replied. Everything about her manner put me at ease. The interview that followed was relaxed and informal, but it took me a few minutes to recover my equilibrium. She was not the sexy, soft, gorgeous creature I had expected. She was articulate, intelligent, warm and well-informed (not a bad group of adjectives).

"The Sie Holliday sound" had led me to expect the former, but I had gone to the Pasadena programming center of KRLA, an AM radio station, to interview a successful female announcer, and that's exactly what I got.

Sie Holliday got her start in broadcasting in college back home in Texas where she was a Speech and Drama major until she changed to radio at the University of Texas. There, one of her professors tried to get rid of her hill-type sound, get her to close her diphthongs and to pronounce

her consonants.

When speaking to her in person, one detects the remains of that soft, southern accent. She states that she never consciously lowered the pitch of her voice for radio, although her voice over the air is soft and sexy. Even though she worked on overcoming some dialectical differences, she slips back into her Texas accent whenever she visits home. One professor used to tell her that she had a beautiful voice, but no one would ever hear it because she didn't speak up. But people hear her now.

One female Sie Holliday fan said, "She's very sexy, but not too sexy, you know. That would turn women off." Sie Holliday has as many female as male fans. She gets little or no negative response from her listening audience. She says, "If they don't like Sie Holliday, they just turn to another station."

People just don't complain much anymore. If they are offended by something you say, they might call and say, "That offends me." But no one gets much negative reaction anymore from anybody.

Most calls that Sie gets (50 per cent of them from males) mention something about her being a woman. But it is positive, not negative. The Sales Department of KRLA says that the time buyers from advertising agencies, who are mostly women, are pleased to have a woman on "traffic time," which is comparable to prime time on television.

"I've gotten good reaction from the activist women, who are glad to have a woman in traffic time," says Sie, with a detectable gleam in her eye.

Her "fellow" announcers don't give her any negative feedback, either. At least, she says, "If they have any negative feelings, they are keeping it to themselves." At one point in her career, she did have one Program Director tell her that she needn't bother coming to programming meetings. "They

just didn't know what to do with a woman, I guess."

Of course, when she started out in broadcasting, she had to do the little "women's things" like fashions and homemaking hints. When asked if it was harder for her, as a woman, to break into broadcasting, Sie responded, "Oh, yes. Of course! It was particularly true back when I started in 1951. Most women on the air were either home economics specialists or the program director's wife. So, it was difficult. I mean, it's always harder for women, of course. A lot of stations are looking for women to put on the air or in jobs up front to be seen and heard. And, that's to the good."

When asked if one of the reasons that women aren't used more in broadcasting is that both men and women don't like to hear them say anything important, she responded, "The reason women's voices lack authority to the mind is because we haven't heard them say important things. Now that stations are hiring women, for tokenism or whatever, I think it will condition the public to hearing women say important things and accept it. We used to think that a woman had to have a very aggressive, almost masculine sound to do news. I think television has done away with a lot of that, because people can accept more when they have the audio and the visual, whereas on radio, women's voices have had a hard time being accepted by people in the industry. I am going to say, and believe me, it's only a personal experience, I have never had a problem with the "public acceptance." And I was a staff announcer on television long before there were women staff announcers.

"The profession has lagged behind in giving women an opportunity to do everything, whatever there was to be done. And, I think, the public hasn't had a chance to see that many women. But I don't think there is going to

be any problem as soon as women have broadcast enough that they aren't a gimmick. I think the industry will accept them and I think the public will."

"There is a quality to the female voice that is so totally different that it has a tendency not to be as understandable. It has a harsher sound...and when you have nothing but the ear! I think it has always been true that a woman has to be four times as good as a man has to be. And she has a harder time becoming professional because she doesn't get as much experience. So it hasn't been an easy profession for women."

From selling used cars and cotton picking machines to a "traffic time" announcer on KRLA, Sie Holliday has "come a long way, baby." And she believes that this is an exciting time for women in media and everywhere. She likes being a woman. She considers herself liberated. And she is paving the way for more and more women to be accepted in broadcasting.

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