

## **Jack McLendon, Radio Personality Dies at 69**

“Help! I can’t breathe!” were the last words spoken on air by local morning radio personality Jack Everett “Jack Mack” McLendon who died from emphysema three weeks later on August 24, 2000 at age 69. His death was confirmed by his daughter Lisa Welch.

Born in Center, Texas in 1930, Mr. McLendon’s early hobbies in electronics, aviation and music blossomed throughout his life. A childhood fascination with crystal radios led to a broadcasting career that began when hometown AM radio station KDET began broadcasting in the late 1940s. A teenage aviation enthusiast, he hitchhiked to the local airport and traded electronics work for flying lessons. He had an innate musical talent, playing by ear and on almost any instrument he picked up, with the guitar being his favorite. He met his first wife, a UC Berkeley coed, in a San Francisco bar where he was playing pickup guitar during his Navy assignment in the area. The ill-fated marriage lasted 23 years and produced three children.

Mr. McLendon served in the US Navy for 4 years, working as a submarine electronics technician. He then completed his college studies and graduated from Baylor University, working for Lady Bird Johnson-owned television station KANG while in college. After graduation, he moved back to his hometown and resumed work at the radio station. In the early 1960s the family moved to the San Francisco Bay Area so that their son who was afflicted with cerebral palsy could attend a special needs school. During this time, Mr. McLendon initially worked as an electronics engineer in Bremerton, Washington, then as an announcer at a Los Altos FM radio station and later as a radio electronics engineer for Pacific Airlines in San Francisco.

Mr. McLendon’s third and final stint at his hometown radio station began when the family moved back home in the mid-1960s to care for his aging father. Each weekday at 6:00am listeners were subjected to a recording of his rooster crowing, followed by the Star-Spangled Banner, and then his voice - a true broadcaster’s voice betraying no regional accent. His show included the buy-sell-trade Swap Shop where he helped find lost dogs and homes for baby chickens. He sensitively read the submitted items exactly as written, never wanting to offend by editing poor grammar. He was a Jack of all radio trades, trouble-shooting the transmitter tower, selling radio advertisements by day and recording the ads at night, sometimes using the voices of his children.

Once his children were grown, Mr. McLendon resumed flying lessons, received his pilot’s license, restored and flew a 1946 Aeronca Chief and also continued to play pickup guitar in local venues for many years.

He is survived by two former wives, two children, a brother and his many loyal listeners.