



Three little words

Not heard from in a month of Sundays, voice of drag racing now working behind the scenes in ads

By Jim Mueller

Special to the Tribune

'Sunday! Sunday!! Sunday!!!"
Jan Gabriel worried WLS in the early 1960s.

Well, perhaps "worried" is a bit strong, but former WLS disc jockey Clark Weber admits his bosses were aware of the brash drag-racing announcer's popularity in the south suburbs, where kids tuned in his nightly rock 'n' roll show over WJOB in Hammond.

"His name came up around WLS all the time," says Weber. "But understand, WLS never hired directly from small markets like Hammond. The station would bring people in from Seattle or Buffalo or Cleveland first."

Too bad.
Imagine dueling motor mouths at WLS circa 1962.

Dick Biondi nattering about pizza?

Jan Gabriel doing his "Sunday! Sunday! Sunday!" racing line?

Gabriel lights up at the thought. He's sitting in his office at TV-One Productions in Lombard, reviewing three scrapbooks covering 40 years in Chicago broadcasting. There's Gabriel hosting the "Up Tempo" dance program on Channel 26 in 1964. There he is with radio and TV personality Al Parker on the set of the original "Flash Gordon Theater," which Parker hosted and Gabriel produced and directed for the Community Discount Store chain on Channel 7.

But motorsports are where he made his legend.

Indeed, Gabriel would spend 14 years as the voice of Santa Fe Speedway and another three with the announcing team at the Indianapolis 500. His nationally syndicated "Super Chargers" TV series ran 12 seasons starting in 1982 on Channel 7 and then Channel 5, snaring two Emmy nominations, and there were TV-One's pioneering Monster Truck videos.

Gabriel was the first guy to run Big Foot and seven other Monster Trucks side-by-side on national TV. (And those Battle of the Monster Trucks tapes sold a tidy million copies at \$19.95 a crack.) The 60-year-old Gabriel is still out there at TV-One with his wife and business partner; There-



Tribune photos by Mario Petitti

Among Jan Gabriel's extensive memorabilia is a picture from the 1980s of him with Adam West (left), who played Batman on TV, and a 1938 Phantom Corsair.

sa, still writing and producing radio and TV commercials for Aronson Furniture and other retailers.

But he realizes his legacy comes down to one phrase: "Sunday! Sunday!! Sunday!!!"
The phrase was born because former U.S. 30 Drag Strip owner Ben Criss really wanted radio listeners to under-

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