

Ben Hoberman, Talk Radio Pioneer, Father of Biz Figures Thomas & David Hoberman, Dies at 91

By [CARMEL DAGAN](#)



Ben Hoberman, a key figure in the rise of talk radio and former president of ABC Radio, died Saturday in Los Angeles. He was 91.

Hoberman was the father of entertainment lawyer Thomas Hoberman and movie producer [David Hoberman](#).

Ben Hoberman became general manager of KABC Radio in Los Angeles in May 1960, and within months he began to build a stable of popular talkshow hosts that included Michael Jackson, Joe Pyne, Bill Balance, Jack Wells, Pamela Mason, Ken Minyard and Ray Briem. Ratings for the local affiliate increased by 12% within the first six months as Hoberman experimented with the new format. KABC was certainly one of the first stations to program talk radio and may well have been the first; today hundreds of radio stations throughout the world offer talkradio shows.

Hoberman had little tolerance for the sort of shockjock antics that would later become a staple of talk radio and suspended well-known talent like Howard Cossell and Pyne.



Hoberman was born in Chisholm, Minnesota. Demonstrating an early flair for public speaking, Hoberman took his first job at WMFG in Hibbing, Minnesota, in 1940. Two years later he enlisted and was sent to England, where he was assigned to the American Forces Network, the European arm of the Armed Forces Radio Service. After VE Day, Hoberman was sent to Munich to set up a radio station for the AFN.

Following the war, Hoberman jumped from radio stations in New Haven, Conn., to Detroit and then on to KABC in Los Angeles. KABC was the broadcast home for the Los Angeles Dodgers, and Hoberman was close to the O'Malley family, owners of the baseball franchise.

In addition to sons Thomas and David, Hoberman is survived by daughter Joanie.

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