Bakersfield Broadcasting Network

For 30 years, the Bakersfield Broadcasting Network (BBN) exclusively aired gameshows on their television network. BBN was highly successful in the 1990’s and early 2000’s having developed several popular, innovative game shows including BBN’s flagship shows: Gold Case and Quiz buckers. Quiz buckers was BBN’s most popular show and was aired daily on the network. The basic premise of Quiz buckers was that contestants would compete against each other by taking turns answering increasingly more difficult questions for increasingly large amounts of money until one of them “chickened out” and refused to answer. The other contestant then won the accrued prize money if they were able to answer the question “chickened out on.” Average prizes handed out on a given show were around $50,000.However, by 2007, the show began to decline. The decline was not caused by lack of viewership, the show had become more popular than ever. Instead, the decline was caused by the fact that contestants, with increased access to internet logarithms, were able to more accurately prepare for the show and answer more questions. This lead, of course, to larger prizes and lower profits. By the end of 2008, the average prize given away on Quiz buckers had risen to a staggering $110,000.Bob Barker, a high-level executive at BBN, decided that something needed to be done. Bob called in his close friend, Ted Slauson, to discuss possible solutions. The two of them came up with an idea. Three times a week, they would use a “plant” contestant on the show. The “plant” would receive the answers to the questions via a small earphone that they could secretly wear during the show. The “plant” would be an employee of BBN and would return the prize money at the end of the show, saving them millions of dollars a year, while still keeping the show airing daily. The two put their plan into action and it went well for several months until one of their “plants”, Adam Rose, decided to report what the show was doing to the FCC. The head of the FCC, Mike Stouber, was initially skeptical of any violations. Stouber was a personal friend of Barker and BBN had been sending Stouber gift baskets every few weeks as well as VIP tickets to Quiz buckers taping sessions for the last several years. BBN had done this not only for Stouber, but for every head of the FCC since the network had been in existence. The head of the FCC is a position that directly influences nearly every aspect of network television programming and, as such, has a great deal of influence over the networks. Despite his reservations, Mike Stouber nonetheless sent a few agents to BBN in order to begin a preliminary investigation. As soon as the agents arrived, Bob Barker began to panic. He called a private investigator, Holly Hallstrom. Bob gave Holly $2,500 with a promise of $2,500 more if she were able to go to Mike Stouber and convince him to call off the investigation using “any means necessary. “Holly called Stouber and met him a bar near his office. The two of them actually hit it off and Holly decided she really liked Stouber and the two of them began dating. A few weeks after they started dating, Holly asked Stouber if he could do her a favor and call off the investigation into the show. Stouber agreed and called the Enforcement Bureau (EB) and asked them to discontinue the investigation into BBN. The EB decided that they had already invested time and resources into starting the investigation, so they were going to at least wait for the preliminary reports to return. Meanwhile, agents Kathleen Bradley and Rod Roddy, had begun conducting interviews at BBN about the possible fraud. Adam Rose had given the identities of several of the other “plants” that had been used on the show and one of them was James O’Halloran. The agents placed a microphone on Rose and listened in while Rose spoke to O’Halloran about the Quiz bucker’s hoax. O’Halloran made several incriminating statements including a statement that he was paid $7,000 ‘hush money’ for participating in the scheme.