



DAN HALYBURTON

Being Part Of The Accomplishment



Renowned as a programmer, group VP, market manager, and technologist, Dan Halyburton epitomizes the versatile radio executive, exemplified by countless success stories: WDGY/ Minneapolis, WQAM/Miami, WFMS/Indianapolis, KPLX/Dallas (first as a turnaround with Hall of Famer Bobby Kraig and later as the daring Wolf with now-CMT President Brian Philips), Susquehanna SVP/GM Group Operations, Emmis/ New York VP/MM and now as President of RadioTime. Those achievements are matched only by his reputation as a mentor and thought leader, including roles as CMA President and Chairman. Dan's induction

into the Country Radio Hall of Fame coincides with his 40th year in broadcasting, which, as you'll read, started with some enterprising experiences.

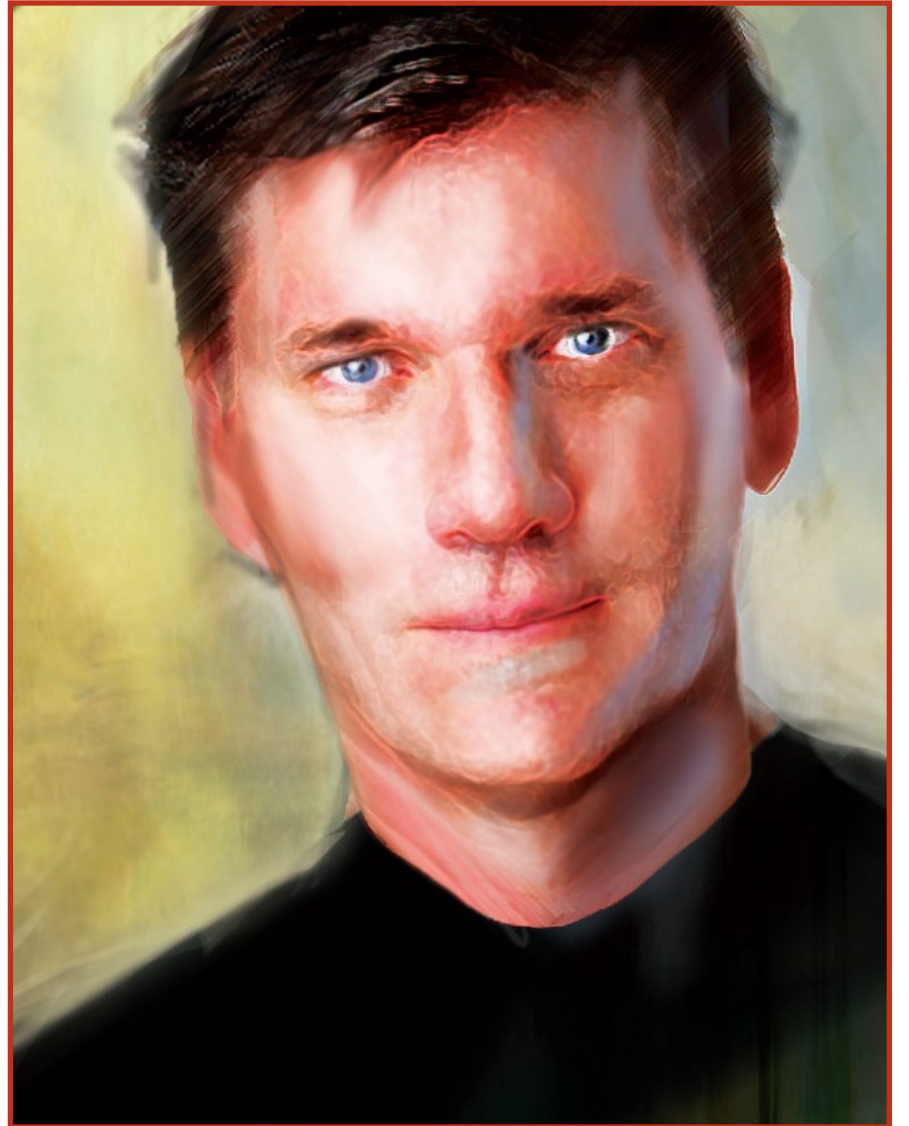
Growing up in Miami, I was always interested in radio. During a hurricane one day, I put on my yellow slicker, went outside with a spoon as a microphone, and reported on what was happening. I was the MC in my junior high school band (which later included Bobby

Right after high school, a job opportunity came up to take rock FM station WWOM/New Orleans to Top 40. I drove there with three other kids who would work there, too. Four shifts, no part-timers, no other employees that we ever saw – except for a guy who brought us the log every couple

a melee broke out and nearly fistcuffed. Finally, we packed up and drove back to Miami, and eventually were paid about \$175 for the month.

My first Country jobs were at WGMA/Hollywood, FL and the big competitor WWOK. I loved Country

My first PD gig was at WTCR-AM/ Huntington, WV, a ramshackle building on a dirt lot that used to be a shipping office for a trucking company. There was a big hole under the console we had to put a board over at night, or the studio would be full of bugs the next



“ IT'S NOT WHAT YOU'VE DONE, IT'S HOW YOU'VE DONE IT ”

Caldwell) and in 1969, a few of us in our high school theater group got permission to start a rock station during lunch. We went into the office to the console that could send audio to each classroom, and cued up eight-track tapes to the songs we wanted to play. Seconds after we started, the principal came out, yelling “Turn it off!” We were blasting “Crossroads” by Cream into his office and had forgotten to switch off his speaker. So my close friend Mark Elfenbein [later as broadcaster Mark Stevens, who passed away recently] suggested setting up equipment in the back of the theater department and running wires to speakers in the cafeteria. We didn't tell anyone who we were “on the air,” even using fake names. It went great for almost two weeks, when the activities director came to me and said, “OK, we know it's you! And it's pretty good, but you have to operate through our auspices.” So my start in radio was actually a kind of pirate station.

I got a job tip about doing overnights at automated Beautiful Music WOCN/ Miami at a Sheraton on Key Biscayne – a luxury location compared to many radio stations we've all worked in. I thought, “This must be the way all radio stations are.” The manager asked, “Do you have your FCC license?” I hadn't taken the test, but said I had and was just waiting for the results. So right after the interview, I ran out to take it, passed, and was hired. They asked, “On weekends, you have to cut up the UPI audio for the newscasts, and write intros. You've done all that before, right?” “Yeah, yeah, no problem.” I didn't even know how to type. My first night, I was just terrible, in way over my head. I went home at dawn and my mom asked “How did it go?” I started to cry, bawling, “They're going to fire me.” But they didn't, and I survived.

of days. I was doing afternoon drive, but had never been on the air except to do legal IDs for WOCN, and I was awful. One day, a truck full of refrigerators and washer/dryers that had been traded out arrived, and we put them all in the sales department. We got bomb threats from Day One, because the hippies were mad for taking away their free-form rock and playing “A-B-C” by the Jackson 5 every hour. For a month, it was crazy: long hours, no adult supervision, drinking hurricanes every night. One night the audio console caught fire, and the overnight guy who was there couldn't tell if he was still on. The PD told him to take the station off the air because we needed an engineer. And the next morning a big, ugly guy came in and fired all of us without pay,



HIT MAN: Although he's an unabashed country music fan, Dan Halyburton will tell you he's never sought to get close to the artists. However, numerous performers have reached out to him over the years, including John Denver, (top left, taken in Dan's KPLX days in the early '90s) and all dressed up with Mel Tillis (above), back in 1978. (At right) Dan with his wife Kristy before the 2007 N.Y.C. Halloween Parade.

because my dad would listen to WWOK in his pickup. Glynn Walden was our chief engineer [later head of engineering at CBS Radio], and I got into the technical side of radio from talking with him. Cy Russell was an amazing GM and a real character. One time I used the word “nookie” on the air, and got dragged into Cy's office with a listener who'd actually come down to the station to complain. In front of the guy, Cy gave me a real verbal beating. I apologized profusely, and as the guy got up to leave and looked away, Cy winked at me, and afterwards said, “Listen, kid, just don't say that again.”



morning. I crawled under there one day when the AC went out, and there was a giant pile of beer bottles guys had been drinking while on the air and thrown down through the hole!

WWOK PD Mal Harrison was a great programmer, and I later worked for Ted Cramer there, too. That's where I discovered I wanted to be a PD, to put it all together. I also studied under mentors Larry Grogan at WFMS/Indianapolis and Dale Weber at WDGY/Minneapolis, who showed me the parts and pieces of a station, and later with [Susquehanna Presidents] Art Carlson and Dave Kennedy, who showed me what leadership looked like.

One time at Emmis/New York I was having a great conversation with someone in the kitchen about the business. She came back later and apologized for not knowing I was the GM. To me, that was always the highest compliment – that she thought I was just somebody who worked there. I had accepted the role of leadership and was proud of it. But rather than being known as the guy in charge, it was more important to me to just be part of something being accomplished.

The two most exciting times for me were, first, at WTCR when I got my first book as PD and we had the biggest share the station had ever had. I ran around the building, proud and thrilled. I had the same feeling in my heart when Lon Helton told me I was being inducted. To be recognized for something you love as much as I love radio, means the world to me. It's not what you've done, it's how you've done it – to me, that's what this honor is all about.

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