



DALE CARTER

Still Plenty Of Game Left



The Late Harry Caray and Dale Carter

With an easy laugh and a love of radio going back almost as far as he can remember, Dale Carter has, in his own words, been "blessed." Nurtured by teachers, advisers and mentors such as Jaye Albright, Joe Patrick and Scott Huskey, among many others, Dale has turned his passion into a five-decade profession. His impressive

on-air and programming career has led him to 16 years in mornings and as PD at KFKF/Kansas City. The stadium announcer for the Kansas City Chiefs, Dale still makes time to bring his award-winning play-by-play skills to high school football Friday nights each autumn on KCWJ/Blue Springs, MO.

A group of us kids hung out together and played radio back in Evansville, IN. I lived in the basement of my parent's house and rigged up an on-air red light at the top of the stairs so that nobody would come down there. At 14, my dream job was to be the voice of the Chicago Cubs. I had this little black-and-white TV, and would do play-by-play of games into a tape recorder. My stepfather was a police officer, and one of his side jobs was as security for a bank in town. At their Christmas party, they gave him a 45

You'd go to the podium to read it, and Ray's at his desk circling in red every word you mispronounce. Mine was virtually all red, but that was probably the spark that got me going down the road.

At my first station, GM Red Walker was a bigwig at our church. I told him, "I've been taking these radio classes and I think I want to do this." As any good GM would do, he put me on to his PD Tiny Hughes, who was not. Tiny Hughes looked like Charlie Daniels, only bigger. He weighed about



Dale Turner, who was at RCA, and David Haley, who was at MCA. One of the first letters I got was from Dale, went, "Hey, Dale! My name's Dale, too! I'm at RCA, and congrats on getting the gig. We'll be working closely with you." Dale and David didn't care that we weren't a reporter, and that's one of the things that's always meant something to me. Those two guys have a special place in my heart because they cared even though at the time we couldn't do anything for them.

He went, came back, and said, "OK, I cried twice. You can do it."

At WWYZ, the afternoon guy Floyd Wright didn't like me at all. Here's this 28-year-old kid from Indiana coming to Connecticut. They called me "Mr. Haynie" behind my back. Floyd was telling people, "Hmph! Next thing you know, we'll be playing Kitty Wells." I didn't even know who she was. "Achy Breaky Heart" was the big single then, and I was doing a remote on Floyd's show. I took a cart, put

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with their jingle package. So I had my first commercials, and then I thought, "I can make my own." I recorded a half-hour of our top 40 station, WJPS – a station I ended up working for – and that's what I went to bed listening to every night.

Benjamin Bosse High School had a radio department. Probably the most influential person on my career was our radio teacher Ray Begarly. We had "Phase Elective English" with classes such as "Radio Directing." I took 'em all. On day one of "Introduction to Radio," Ray gave us this script called "Cold Copy" – a nonsensical piece of copy with every commonly mispronounced word on it.



In Like Clint: When Clint Black came to Evansville for the first time in 1990, he got the "big star" treatment from Dale and WYNG, and spent part of the day shopping for boots.

400 pounds and had the big beard and hat. At the old DJ Convention at the Hilton, he mooned everybody from the glass elevator. Tiny would let me sit in on his shift, and one day he said, "I've got midnight-6am on Sunday. It pays \$2.90 an hour, and if you want it, you can have it." You have no idea how thrilled I was. My first night was crazy. Tiny didn't like to fire people, and as a PD for 26 years, I don't like it, either. But he said, "When you get there, the overnight person is probably going to come in. Just tell her we don't need her anymore." I'm 15 years old, waiting for ABC News to be over at midnight, and she comes sauntering in. She looks at me sitting behind the board, and goes, "Well, guess I'm fired." And she turned around and walked out. I didn't have to say a word.

Beasley's WYNG/Evansville, IN was a big 50-kw FM Country station, but was not making a dent against my old 1-kw AM WROZ. CJ Jones, who promoted me to PD, came in with a plan. He said, "We're going to do marketing, billboards, television. We're going to really move this thing in the right direction" and we did. In the spring of '85, we rolled in a 17.5, up from a 6 or 7 share. I thought, "Man, this is easy." I was Beasley's co-PD of the Year in 1985. And then the next book we went from a 17 to a 9. I'm thinking, "Maybe this a little harder than I thought."

We were not an R&R reporter yet, but there were two guys who called me on day one and have been dearest friends ever since:

St. Jude is among my proudest accomplishments. Brian Monell from the Louisville office came to see me in Evansville in 1991. Up to that point, there really wasn't a Country Cares; the radiothons were on whatever the big stick was in town. In Evansville, that was AC WIKY, which raised about \$15,000. Brian said, "I really want you to jump on board." And I replied, "Let me get this straight: You want me to give up two days of my station and beg for money? Absolutely not." Brian said, "Fly to Memphis and see for yourself." I had never flown before then and was terrified of heights. I remember CJ telling me early on, "If you don't get on a plane, Evansville will be the end of your universe."

So it was off to Memphis on one of those little turbo-props with our sales manager Ron Eberhardt, a very spiritual guy. I rationalized, "I'm with Ron on a mission to St. Jude to help sick kids. If this is the end, then I'm destined!" But we made it, I was sold on Country Cares, and we did \$50,000 the first time.

When I got to WWYZ/Hartford, I called Claire Murtha at St. Jude. She'd been trying to get the station for years, and about dropped the phone. WWYZ has since raised millions of dollars. When I came to KFKF, same deal. I told the GM, "I really believe in St. Jude." He said, "We have Children's Mercy Hospital and the KU Med Center. We really don't want to do that." St. Jude was having a session at CRS. I said, "Go to their presentation and tell me what you think."

a Kitty Wells tune on it, labeled it "Billy Ray Cyrus" and put it in the studio. He fires it up, and you hear him open the mic, "What the hell is this?!" Then this explosion on the air as Floyd goes into a different song. After that we became good friends.

I was the ninth PD in 13 years at KFKF when I came here. We'll have a reunion of all the PDs including Ted Cramer, Rusty Walker, Ray Massie, John St. John, Jim Murphy, Dean James – a "Who's Who." When I came here, I thought, "Wow. I'm going to be in a town that's got Major League Baseball and the NFL. Where do I sign up for Chiefs tickets?" Then the sales manager said, "You won't work here long enough to get through the waiting list."

Being inducted is a great achievement, but I've got mixed emotions because I know I'm not done. The people holding my mortgage are hoping I keep a gig for a lot longer. It really means something to know my plaque will hang on the same wall with my heroes. One is Ted Cramer, who started this station in 1963 – the year I was born – and here I am, having programmed it for the last 16 years, with Ted now on my staff.

I'm doing everything I've ever wanted in my professional life. Since the second grade I've wanted to be in politics, and now I'm on the city council. I've got a pretty terrific family, and I want to enjoy it. As far as I'm concerned, I'll be waking up Kansas City as long as they'll let me. CAC