



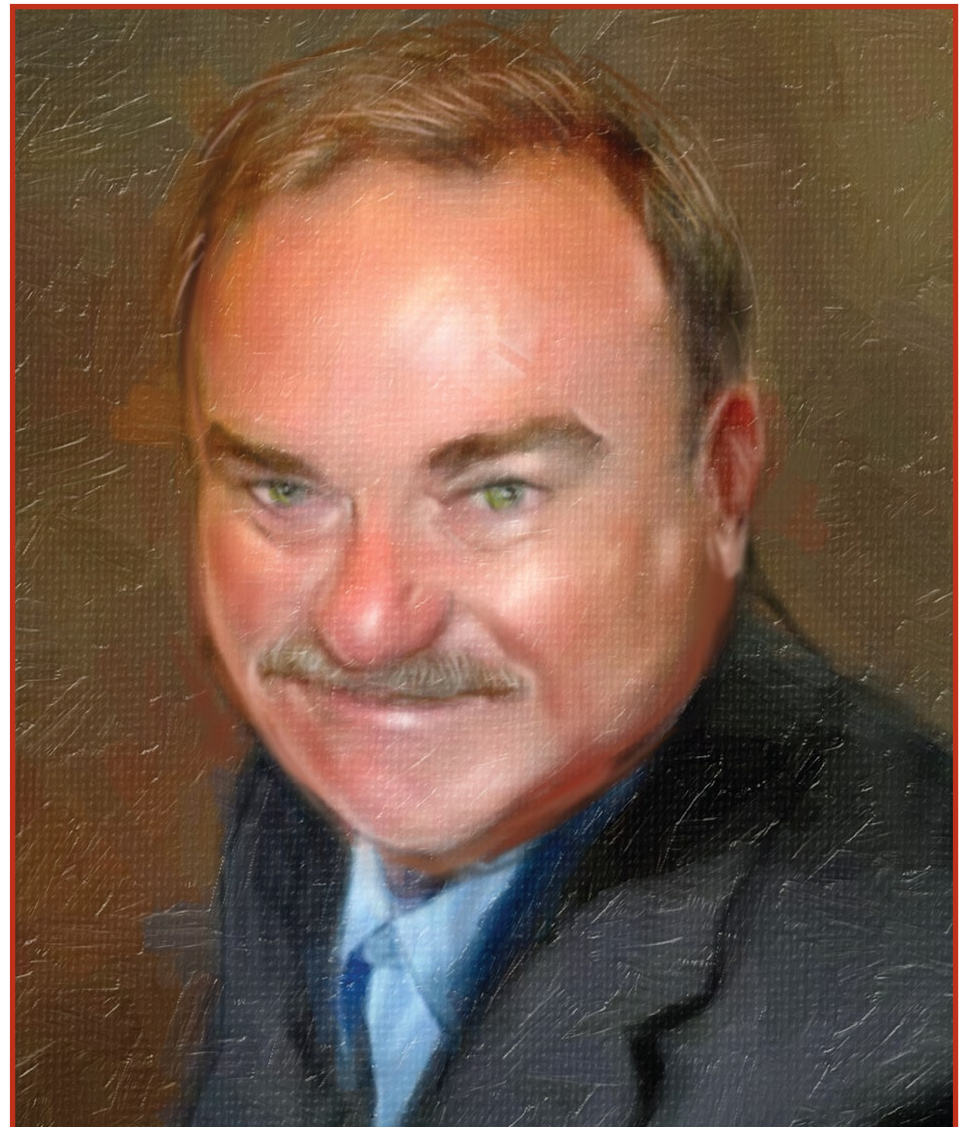
DENE HALLAM

Hit Finder & Radio Mastermind



Dene Hallam with Moby

“Hey, pal!” Larger than life, irrepresible, big-hearted, meticulous – Dene Whittington Hallam III was all that and more. Widely praised for possessing “golden ears” for hidden hits and the boldness to play them, Hallam loved music as a fan and programmed as a relentless competitor. After starting at WFEC/Harrisburg under the mentoring of Ed Salamon, he delivered success from coast to coast at such giants as WEEP/Pittsburgh, WHN and WKHK/New York, KKQB/Houston and WKHX/Atlanta. He most recently was involved in expanding syndication of Moby In the Morning. A CMA Award recipient, Hallam died Nov. 20, 2009, but his legacy lives on through the Hallam Daughters Educational Trust, to which friends can contribute via co-trustee Moby Enterprises. Here are memories from some of his closest friends.



Ed Salamon: As a consultant, I gave Dene opportunities because he delivered results. He was one of the few PDs who you could count on to be effective at making a positive, measurable ratings difference wherever he worked.

Dene’s qualities of being detail-oriented and uncompromising when he knew he was right were big reasons why he was successful. Dene would call you up at any hour: “Hey, pal, I just heard this record, and you gotta hear it!”

Dene was into the details of programming from the first time I met him, even before he had even worked fulltime at a station. He’d

in two months with Dene at WEEP than in four years at Northwestern. He taught me to think more critically about programming, promotions, marketing, sales relations – everything. Dene was a perpetual student of the game. He was always forward-thinking and wanted to know what the next new thing was. Dene was really good at spotting cultural trends.

At WHN, competing against him at WKHK, I’d announce the premiere of a song, knowing he’d hear it and try to get it on before me. And he usually was successful. I’d say, “At 2pm, we’re going to play “Islands In The Stream”;

wrong; a lot of people don’t want to admit that. He always did what he believed was best for the station, not what was politically correct. He seemed intimidating to record people to a certain degree, but really was a puppy dog inside.

I was like one of Dene’s “disciples.” He was very proud of people such as Jeff Garrison, John Trapane, Barry Mardit and every jock he hired or artist who went on to accomplish better things. When it comes to broadcasting excellence, there’ve been very few who dedicated as much time and effort as Dene.

Mike McVay: Dene was gregarious and full of life. He also was unfiltered; he said whatever was on his mind. What I also loved about Dene was his amazing passion and ability to always be on. It would be wrong to say Dene was [purely] a Country guy. He was a *radio* guy because he also was amazingly creative as an AC and Oldies programmer, as well – someone you could send in to fix a station in mere moments. Dene was very talent-oriented, and once hired former NFL star Conrad Dobler as the perfect, aggressive personality for our K.C. Sports station after seeing him in a Miller Lite spot. Dene had the ability to

“ DENE WAS A GENUINE PERSON AND FRIEND TO THOSE OF US WHO WERE FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO BE CLOSE TO HIM. ”

ask, “Why is it that way, and not *this* way?” He wanted to understand everything. He was just a natural in the programming business from the passion he had for the medium and the music.

One time in Atlanta, Dene was in a competitive battle and got a local Wal-Mart employee to give him the new George Strait CD before it was released. That’s the kind of length Dene would go to in order to play the hottest artist first for his listeners, and was an example of how he moved the ratings needle forward.

In a business where so many relationships are superficial, Dene was a genuine person and friend – no matter whether he was up or down – to those of us who were fortunate enough to be close to him. That kind of honesty and courage is what I miss most about him.

Joel Raab: I may have learned more in radio



Don’t Happen Twice: When Kenny Chesney opened for Alabama in the mid ’90s, some special friends stopped by for his Phoenix show. Shown (l-r) are KMLE MD Gwen Foster, Chesney, KMLE PD Jeff Garrison, KKQB/Houston PD Dene Hallam and WUBE/Cincinnati PD Tim Closson.

we had received an acetate of it that morning. Of course, he had it on by 1pm.

Because we knew each other, it was a game of chess. Willie Nelson did his picnic at Giants Stadium, and both radio stations were vying for more visibility. We handed out these nice lithographs of all the artists at the concert. It was a hot day, and in a brilliant move, Dene gave out fans to everyone that said, “I’m a fan of WKHK.”

I think Dene would be thrilled and, frankly, pleasantly surprised to know he’s been inducted. In spite of the big ego people thought he had, in some ways he was insecure. I’m not sure he knew how well-respected he was.

Kevin Herring: When I was 21, WWWW/Detroit was my first radio job, and I worked as Dene’s assistant for eight months. I believe Dene’s in the Hall of Fame because of his intangibles – the little things that make the big difference at being a better broadcaster. Dene was my mentor in many ways. His 24/7 work ethic amazed me, and until his daughters were born, radio was the No. 1 thing in his life.

Dene always was thinking of unconventional angles to get his station attention. He’d put artists on as DJs; they could play and talk about anything. He’d even make them read commercials and PSAs so they’d get a perspective of what we in radio did. When Lacy J. Dalton came to W4 with her single “Wild Turkey,” Dene brought in a live wild turkey and let the damn thing loose in the studio. Lacy J. about died.

To this day, I believe Dene had the best ears in radio. He was right way more than

Barry Mardit: When Dene interviewed me for a job at WFEC, he noticed that I’d been a 99X/New York request line operator, just as he’d been. In that job, nobody has any respect for you, so he understood early on the importance of giving credit and positive reinforcement to people. If you were a good worker, he’d go to the end of the earth to brag about you and your ideas, and try to move you ahead. That helped me get to Pittsburgh.

When Dene was at WEEP and I was PD at WFEC, he told me he had just gotten Kenny Rogers’ new single, “Love Or Something Like It,” before anyone else. I said, “Dene, I’d do anything to get a copy and play it tomorrow morning.” He actually put the 45 on a Greyhound, and I picked it up in the middle of the night. Who else but Dene would agree to this? Dene was so passionate about whatever he believed in and felt he had to share it with the world right then. He told me about ZBB’s “Chicken Fried” a year before it even charted.

One time Dene was craving a Nathan’s hot dog, and we drove two hours from Harrisburg to Times Square just to get one. When I visited him at KBZT/San Diego, he suggested we go down to Tijuana. Coming back, the customs officer asked, “Do you have anything to declare?” I said, “I’ve got this sombrero and shawl for my parents.” And Dene turns to me and says, “Why don’t you tell him about the cocaine?” The closest I come to coke is a six-pack of Diet. I’m surprised they didn’t do a body search, but they also didn’t let Dene keep the wicker hamper he bought!

hear the station in his head and convey that sound to his staff. He was closer to being like a movie director in the creativity he had, and he always knew that what he was doing would work. Dene was a real leader.

Moby: Dene and I worked together at WKHX, and developed a pretty good relationship. At Moby Enterprises, I brought Dene in to make sales calls and grow the network. He eventually took over as PD, and it was great for my network to have him sitting in that chair. He loved being involved in the music, and got me many good interviews. The prize closet stayed full because he had done so much for so many people. I always told him how much we appreciated all that he did for us. While he lived in our home for 19 months and worked for me for three years, we became family.

Dene was very meticulous, and so successful so many times it was hard to argue with him. He offered to critique me; he wouldn’t have been Dene if he hadn’t! I realized the strength of the source, and it would have been stupid not to listen to him. I wanted to hear what Dene was thinking because I had the benefit of having one of the greatest PDs in Country radio sitting in an office downstairs from my studio.

Dene drove me crazy, but I loved him like a brother, and was proud to deliver the eulogy. I already can hear him programming the celestial music at the Gates of Heaven, telling St. Peter, “Hey, pal, I love the band, but I think you need a few more trumpets, and maybe hold the harps back a little!”

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