



FIRE IN THE WHOLE

Great Firing (And Hiring) Stories

At last check, this was still the entertainment business (right?), which means creativity is at a premium. Sometimes, for better or worse, that particular trait finds its way into much more serious employment issues. And since the radio and music industries seem to be in as much upheaval as ever, Country Aircheck asked around for those classic stories that might just bring a smile, draw a groan, spark an idea or elicit a wee bit of gratefulness for the matter-of-fact approach of that severance-toting HR rep.

The Walk Of Shame

WUBL/Atlanta's **Scott Lindy** has a cautionary tale for all those late-risers out there. "An old-school PD pulled this in the '90s," he says. "A jock showed up late for his show, and when he walked into the station's lobby that was adorned with gold records, DJ pictures and awards, the receptionist told him the PD wanted to see him immediately.

"The jock went to the PD's office, which had a smaller room you had to pass through to get to the programmer's door. The assistant who sat in that room told the DJ that the PD wanted him to go back to the lobby, take his picture off the wall and come back to his office. The poor bastard walked the whole length of the station, took his picture down off the lobby wall and made the walk of shame back through the offices to the PD's waiting room.

He then sat there for 20 minutes waiting for the PD, holding his own 13x10 framed picture in his hands as office staff, other jocks and salespeople walked by. Then the PD called him in and yelled at him without closing the door, allowing all to hear.

"The jock didn't actually get fired, but got put on

probation and was told to walk his picture back up to the lobby and re-hang it. A thorough and walloping embarrassment to the DJ. Moral of the story: If you go to work for a station with DJ pictures in the lobby, make sure they're permanently affixed to the wall. Or find a sane PD."

Board Of Direction

WGH-FM/Norfolk's **John Shomby** didn't have to be hit in the head with lumber to choose a job candidate. "I was PD of 'live and local' Talk KLIF/Dallas in the '90s and always needed board operators for shows," he says. "A kid who wanted a job sent me, yes, a 2x4 in a package with his resume inscribed on it to show how much in sync he was with a 'board.' Got my attention, and I gave him a shot."

Isn't This My Office?

Veteran label exec **Nick Hunter** was three days into a new job as part of a regime change when he realized something was amiss. "I got a call in the middle of the week from the head of promotion I had replaced," Hunter explains. "He was out of town and wanted to know what I

was doing in Nashville. I kind of stammered and said, 'Let me call you back.'

"I immediately got the new label president out of a meeting he was in and told him what was going on. 'Could [corporate] have forgotten to fire him?' I asked. He said, 'There's another guy they were supposed to let go. Lets call him and see what's up.' So we called and the guy was sitting at his desk, completely unaware. The home office got it straightened out by the end of that day, but that was still four days after we'd started."

Cart Before The Hoarse

Hunter has another communication breakdown story from Denver. "The PD at Top 40 KLZ-FM was a friend of mine, Max Floyd," Hunter says. "I was in town and stopped by his office to see him. He wasn't in, but was due back in a little while, so I sat in the office waiting for him. While I'm in there, one of the jocks comes in and starts looking through this big stack of carts piled up on Max's desk. After a few minutes he goes, 'I'll be a motherf---,' knocks all the carts off the desk and storms out.

"Max comes in a little while later, sees this big mess on the floor of his office and says, 'What happened here?' I told him about the jock, and he explained that he'd just had new imaging and promotion done for the station. 'He didn't see his name on any of the carts,' Max said. "So he figured out he was about to be fired."

Picture To Burn

KBEQ/Kansas City's **Mike Kennedy** has a trio of harsh dismissal stories. "The first one is from my Rock days in the '80s," he says. "Programmer called a jock into his

THEN HE FLICKED ONE OF THE SOLDIERS DOWN WITH HIS FINGER. 'THAT'S YOU. YOU'RE NOT IN MY ARMY ANYMORE.'

—MIKE KENNEDY

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office and took a picture of him with a Polaroid camera. He hands it to the DJ, who says, 'What's this?' PD says, 'It's a picture of you on your last day.'

"I've heard a modern version of this, could be a myth, where a PD calls a jock while he's on-air and says, 'Look into the studio webcam. I want the listeners to get a good look at you on your last day.'

"The other one that was told to me by a rock guy was about a PD who set a bunch of plastic toy soldiers up on his desk. He called a guy in and said, 'Look at this. This is my army.' Then he flicked one of the soldiers down with his finger. 'That's you. You're not in my army anymore.'

"Hey, they're mean, but they're creative."

Welcome To The Jungle

Softdrive recording artist **Tommy Joe Wilson** has a full bladder to thank for his gig. "It was a Monday night in Nashville, and my band and I were playing the 10pm-2am slot at the Second Fiddle Bar on Broadway," he says. "About halfway into our set, two leather-clad, scarf-wielding guys walked in with two other people (I learned later they're called assistants). I had no idea who these guys were, but my bass player had the perfect way to find out. He raised his hand and asked the audience, 'Are there any bass players in the house? I gotta go pee!' One of the four out-of-place guys, a long-haired blonde guy, said he would play. So he made his way to the stage and told his buddy to join him.

"When they stepped onstage, they introduced themselves as Duff and Scott. Almost immediately it clicked, and we realized we were sharing the stage with rock 'n' roll royalty. These guys were Duff McKagan (Gun N' Roses/Velvet Revolver) and Scott Weiland (Stone Temple Pilots/Velvet Revolver). They were in town to be the celebrity judges on *Nashville Star* and had wandered into the bar to hear, as Scott calls it, 'real honky-tonk music.' A few minutes after playing 'Honky Tonk Women' with us, Scott waved me down from the stage. He asked me to give him all my contact info, and said he would give me his because he really liked what he'd heard. We finished the night about 5am, hanging out in Scott's rental car and exchanging songs we'd written. He said, 'A lady is going to call you tomorrow and offer you a deal with my new label called Softdrive Records? The next day, I got a call from Los Angeles and ended up accepting the craziest job I ever landed!'"

Dishonesty Policy

Warner Bros. promotion exec **Bob Reeves** got a gig the old-fashioned way. "I completely lied my way into my first-ever radio gig. I was hired as assistant production director at an AM/FM combo, and the first time I walked into the production studio I thought the carts were weird-looking eight-tracks!"

What, Gonna Dock My Pay?

WLWI-FM/Montgomery, AL's **Bill Dollar** turned a reprimand on its ear by landing a sweeter job. "I was working at the college campus station (an AM on carrier-current to the dorms) as PD, and happened to be in the studio when a 'paying' customer from a department at the college (with money in hand) walked in and wanted to buy some advertising," he says. "I told him that I would take the

information and have a member of the sales staff contact him regarding when the spots would be scheduled.

"I then received a phone call from the station manager and operations director, who asked me to meet with them about what I did wrong. The station manager proceeded to tell me that I was overstepping my bounds and trying to do somebody else's job. He said the salespeople would never learn how to do their job because I was doing it for them. Keep in mind that this was an entirely volunteer organization at the time.

"I was so mad at the two supervisors that I did not attend a talk (and possible interview opportunity) with Gary Sandy (aka Andy Travis from *WKRP In Cincinnati*) that afternoon. I really wanted to meet the guy and tell him he was a role model, but I went back to my dorm and fumed instead.

"I guess I got the last laugh when the 50,000-watt commercial FM (also on our campus) hired me the next week to do nights. It was rather humbling to have to walk by their studios to go down the hallway in the student union to go the 'real' radio station."

Performance Unrelated

Veteran programmer **Randy Hill** has been a victim of his own success.

"A few years ago, a market manager let me go because the station, as he put it, 'wasn't performing the way they expected.' The station had been No. 1 for four of the past five books, and had received national recognition for its success. I was a little dumbfounded, and mentioned if they didn't want a top-rated station they should have mentioned it when we created the yearly strategic plan. He didn't think that was funny, but neither was the fact that I was fired the day before the ratings book came out (again No. 1) so they wouldn't have to pay me a bonus."

Car & Driver

Casey Carter, of KXKC/Lafayette, LA fame, tells how an auto parted the obstacles between her and a new job. "Back in 2001, I really wanted the APD/MD/afternoon drive job at WNOE/New Orleans, so to get then-PD Les Acree's attention, I sent him a toy car that I had personalized myself. I bought it at Wal-Mart for a buck, and it was about a foot long. I NASCAR-ed the thing up really good! It had my phone number on the door and on top where the car number would be. There was not a speck on the rest of it that didn't have some kind of little phrase written on it: sayings like, 'Hire Casey CAR-ter,' 'Casey has the 'drive' to be your next MD/APD,' 'Give Casey a 'brake' and hire her for afternoons' - the thing was hideous! It must've worked, though, because Les hired me. On my first day on the job, he gave me that car as a 'welcome' gift. He told me he figured I'd want to keep it, and he was right. I still have it!"

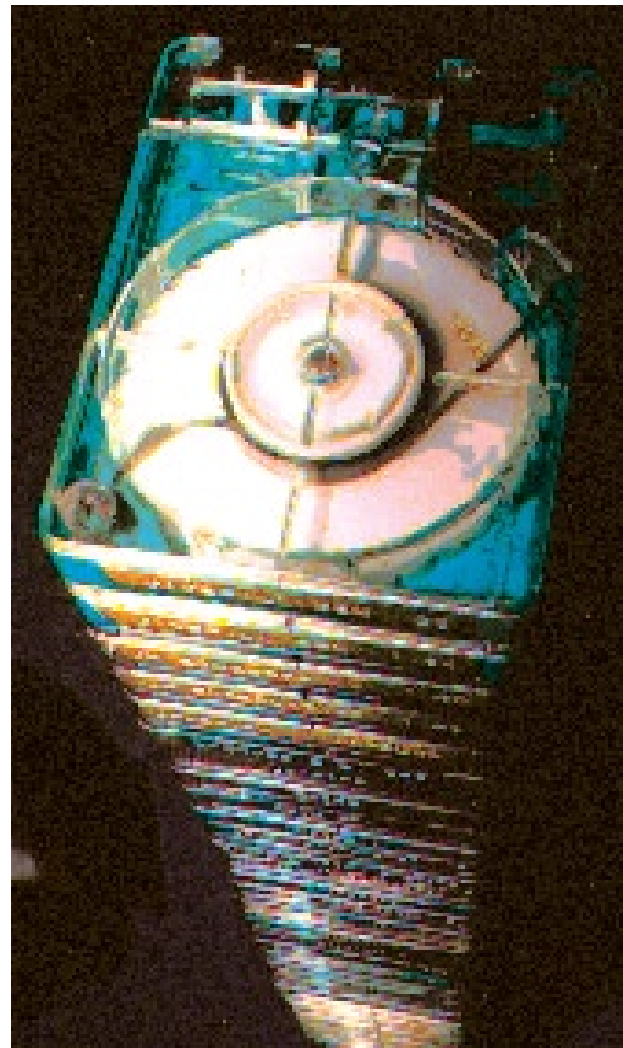


All My Rowdy Friends

Trade journalist **Ken Tucker** discovered it takes a village to get from West Virginia to Nashville. "I was MD/night jock at WXXK/Parkersburg, WV and had been telling people I was interested in moving to Nashville," he says. "Sharon Allen, who was doing independent promotion for Stan Byrd back then, called me in late 1989 to tell me that R&R Associate Editor Debe Fennell had resigned. 'Maybe this is your chance to get to Nashville,' she said. 'Lon's looking for someone.'

"I sent Lon a resume and followed with a phone call a week later. We had a nice conversation, but he said, basically, thanks for your interest but I'm really looking for someone who knows people here in Nashville and really has a lot of connections. I told him I did, but could tell he wasn't convinced.

"To prove to him I knew more people in Nashville than he thought, I had postcards printed that said, 'I know Ken Tucker' on one side, and had Lon's name and address on the other. I had about 150 printed up, put stamps on them, dropped them in envelopes and sent them out to record reps, managers, artists - everyone I knew, basically. I asked them



to sign the card and drop it in the mail.

"So over the course of the next week or two, Lon received all these postcards in the mail saying, 'I know Ken Tucker.' Charlie Daniels did one. Marty Stuart. Various people at record labels. Ed Mascolo.

"He finally hired me in February of 1990. I don't think that's what ultimately got me the job, but it proved a point. Getting hired probably had more to do with the fact that I think he offered the job to three people before me and all of them turned it down."

(Editor's Note: Tucker was the first to be offered the position. And the credit goes to the postcards.) **CAC**



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