

# Mac Daniels

## Country And Radio And Country Radio

*The travelogue winds from rural Missouri to Dallas, Washington, Austin, Detroit, Fresno, San Francisco and back to Dallas. For KSCS & KPLX PD Mac Daniels, the scenery has changed, but the motivation hasn't. An unwavering belief in the medium and the music has served him well every step along the way.*

**When I was a kid** I would go to the McClain County Fair in Bloomington, IL to show my animals for 4H. I'd take care of them and then go watch the guy broadcasting live on the legendary WJBC-AM. I'd follow him around as he interviewed different people at the fair. Most of the time I just watched, but I'd help out if they needed something done or picked up. I just ate it up.

**Radio drew me in**, but I grew up around country music and always loved it. People will say they didn't want their friends to know they liked country. Well, it didn't make any difference to me. I've always been a fan and consider myself an historian.

**My first job** at KALM & KAMS/Thayer, MO was an opportunity to run the controls, play the music and talk to people. This was social media before that existed. A lot of the lure of those platforms is the ability to reach a lot of people and create communities. That's what radio was for me – that and knowing everything first.

**So much of what I learned** isn't relevant now. When you're the kid, you get nights and weekends, of course. So, making sure to sign the station off at night. Making sure the teletype has plenty of ribbon and paper because if it runs out, the morning shift will have no news or weather. And you learn how to improvise. I'll never forget fitting a Marti mast on a trailer hitch of the engineer's pickup so we could drive around and do broadcasts. We had an engineer who used a BB gun to shoot ice off the tower antennas. We don't worry about that today, because we have heaters that melt the ice. The bigger lesson was, you can do anything. Figure out how, give it a try and if it doesn't work, move on.

**The crossroads when I graduated** was whether I would go to college, but I could do that any time. Fortunately, the late John Daugherty, known in radio as Johnny Dark, took me under his wing. Originally from Memphis, he was doing afternoons at Country WJJD-AM/Chicago and invited me up over spring break. His wife and family welcomed me into their home; I went to work with him every day and learned so much. He sat me down in the production studio and helped me craft my first legitimate aircheck then set up an interview with the PD. I was 16-years-old sitting in a Chicago PD's office, and he's airchecking me. I was very blessed. Johnny continued helping me – a word of encouragement, advice, airchecks to study. I stayed in touch with him and got the opportunity to tell him just what his help meant before he passed.

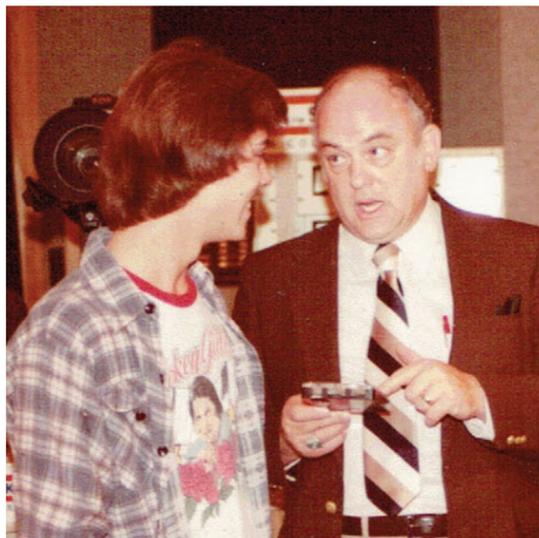
**The only position open** after I graduated was sales, so I would sell ads during the day then work on the air at night. After the station signed off, I'd do production on everything I'd sold that day. Getting people to agree to advertise was easy. The hard part was collecting. On-air was a heck of a lot more fun than that, so I decided to stay on the programming side.

**Memphis was the big local market**, and I would call the air talent at Country WMPs. I got to know two of them pretty well – Debbie Connor and Jay Marvin. Jay told me about an opening in Dallas that might work for me. I sent a package to the PD, who called me a few weeks later. He offered me the job at KBOX. I accepted, packed up my 1975 Oldsmobile Cutlass Supreme and drove down with my dad.

**The station I'd been at** had the transmitter in the next room and all the music was on vinyl. Walking in to KBOX and Beautiful Music sister KMEZ, they



were playing music off carts with auto-tones and flashing lights giving you a 30-second warning. Instead of one telephone, they had six lines. Music logs. A clock. It was magical and sort of intimidating at first. It would take me forever to fall asleep when I got home.



**Greatest Promotion Idea Of All Time: With Gordon Jump, aka WKRP's Arthur Carlson (r); and with Bob Kingsley (c) and Charlie Ochs (l).**



**Radio had changed**, revenue wasn't what it should have been and KBOX made some cuts. I got home from a shift at 6am and the phone rang. The PD was [future RCA promotion exec] Jack Weston. He told me it wasn't about my performance, they gave me vacation pay and severance, and that was it. Three days later, I lost everything I owned in an apartment fire in the middle of the night. The newspaper delivery guy was banging on my door and got me out. He saved a lot of lives doing that.

**I'd already talked to people** at KPLX/Dallas, which had signed on as a Country FM. They brought me in part-time, and I was also working part-time at Top 40 KNUS where my roommate worked. KPLX brought in Dan Halyburton as OM and he hired Bobby Kraig as PD. They kind of purged the staff, but I stuck around. Bobby likes to say I was an overnight guy who showed up on time. I stayed with the station from 1980 through 1993.

**Long before computers**, I was sending out research mailers to contest winners and any other PIs we had addresses for. When they sent the survey back, we mailed them an album. That was my first foray into music research; I learned a lot that way. Eventually they moved me to nights and offered me the MD job. When I started we'd write down the songs we played in a book, then we went to a music log, then a computerized log.

**When Bobby Kraig left for Arista**, I interviewed for the open PD position and didn't get the job. I figured that I'd been typecast as an APD/MD and started looking around. [KNIX/Phoenix VP/Programming] Larry Daniels referred me to Charlie Ochs, who was looking for a PD at WMZQ/Washington. They offered and I took the job as APD/middays with the understanding that I would work my way up to PD. Three years later, Charlie made me the PD. So my first programming job was a top 10 market. Who does this happen to?

**The Telecom Act went into effect [in 1996]**, and I worked for five different companies without having to ever leave the station. There were always new corporate guys, and eventually I was consolidated right out of a job. By that time, I had some cushion and time to look around. Dusty Black was the MM for Capstar in Austin. He had been DOS at KBOX when I was there, so we had history. I went down to program KVET, and a few months later the KASE PD left and I was given oversight of both stations.

**I'd tried to get back to Dallas**, it just never really lined up. While I was in Fresno, Cumulus was signing on a Nash station in San Francisco and asked me to drive up and babysit, which I did until they asked me to stay. For a variety of reasons, that didn't work out. But Cumulus/Dallas Market Manager Dan Bennett, who's been here 30 years, started as a part-timer and I'm the one who taught him how to run the board. Long story short, the programming job for KSCS & KPLX opened, and we managed to come to a deal.

**My cellphone rings and Bob Kingsley's** on the line. We carry his countdown, he lives here and we have a friendship. I answer and, in my best Bob Kingsley voice, say, "Bob Kingsley. What's on the *Country Top 40* this week?" He laughs and tells me he's got CRB's RJ Curtis on the line. "We wanted to let you know you're one of the latest inductees into the Country Radio Hall of Fame." To have an iconic personality in radio tell me that was just amazing. When I think about that moment I get choked up because it means that much to me. I love country music. I love radio. I love Country radio.

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