

50 Crazy Years in Broadcasting by Bryan Norcross

1972 – The TV Adventure Begins in Engineering and Directing

WFSU-TV, Channel 11, Tallahassee and WQXI-TV, Channel 11, Atlanta

SHORT VERSION – MORE TO COME

In 1972, I took a job at WFSU-TV, the university TV station, running video tape. Video tape reels were huge and heavy in those days, and the tape itself was 2 inches wide. Swapping out those monster reels of tape to play back to back shows on the same videotape machine was a TV version of manual labor. I didn't know anything about the job or how to do it until the night before I applied, when my friend Bill Lance showed me the ropes. When the Chief Engineer asked me if I could do the job, I said, sure. And that was that.

I graduated at the end of the year and didn't know what to do. On a whim, I drove to Atlanta and walked into Channel 11, WQXI-TV. I don't remember why. Maybe because it was less intimidating than WSB, which was right next door in a building with big white columns.

I filled out an application and was escorted upstairs to meet the Chief Engineer, a good old southern guy named Glynn Rogers. He looked at my application and asked who I worked for in Tallahassee. I said, Woody Walker, the guy who hired me at WFSU-TV. Glynn picked up the phone, dialed Woody, talked good-old-boy for a minute or two, and offered me the job.

I never related well to southern culture, but Glynn and Woody were classy gentlemen and great people.



Bryan running Master Control at WQXI-TV

Acting

fired the entire management team.

At that time, all of the production functions were handled by engineers except show directing and floor directing – the people who chose what cameras would air and the people who controlled what was happening in the studio. I was soon put on an engineering vacation relief shift, which meant I got to do a little of everything. That evolved into technical directing – punching the buttons on the switcher at the director's instruction – and running master control. In those days before animation, a human sat at a control board and inserted commercials into the TV station's programming manually. It was actually more interesting and challenging than that sounds.

Technical directing led to actual directing – a move out of the engineering department. And that led to being named Production Manager when a new company took over and

It was a crazy time. I was still directing the morning show from 7:00 to 9:00 AM – a local country-music-based variety show with some news thrown in. (The ABC network didn't start programming in the morning until 1975.) Then I would spend all day on production manager duties including changing every logo on every station announcement. The station had changes call letters to WXIA-TV in December of 1973.

I averaged over 100 hours a week for over two months at the end of 1974. The station was grateful. I got a \$250 bonus for my extra time. I also got the flu.

New management came in to start 1975, and I decided it was time to move on. Denver was my next stop, but it took a bit of a snow job to get there.



WQXI-TV Master Control above and Studio Control below. In Studio Control, as Technical Director, I sat in front of the switcher on the left. The Director sat in the chair. Audio on the right.



MORE COMING SOON

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