

50 Crazy Years in Broadcasting by Bryan Norcross

1982 – The Producer Workshop and Engineering the Olympics

Gannett Broadcasting, Atlanta, Minneapolis, Denver

THIS IS A QUICK SYNOPSIS

By the spring of 1982, I was running seven TBS shows – four documentaries and three weeknight magazine shows Ted came up with. These feel-good shows were part of Ted Turner’s crusade against the major networks. Ted claimed that ABC, CBS, and NBC were ruining America. Keeping up with Ted’s ideas was more than a challenge.

I was hiring crews and studios in New York and Los Angeles, while managing over 60 people in Atlanta. Often I’d have breakfast in Atlanta, lunch in New York, dinner in LA, and come back to Atlanta on the redeye. Only to do it again a couple days later.

First I gave up the weekend weather on WXIA-TV, which helped. But eventually I was beyond burned out. To be honest, it was too much for everybody. The company president, Bob Wussler, knew I wanted to quit, but was over his head as well. He would sneak out the back door of his office when I came to see him. Finally I found out what flight he was taking to New York, hid at the gate waiting for him to board, and ran on the plane as they closed the door. I had booked the seat next to him. We had a great talk, and came up with a plan. I stayed long enough to get three executives in place, and said goodbye.



No remote trucks were allowed at the Olympic Stadium, so we build one that ran on batteries.

All this time I stayed in touch with the management at Gannett Broadcasting, who owned the stations in Denver and Louisville where I had had success in news. They hired me for two big consulting projects: design a program to teach producers at the company’s television stations how to put together effective and audience-grabbing news programs; and design engineering and production systems to cover the 1984 political primaries, political conventions, and the Los Angeles Olympics. I got a cut of the fee paid by every station I signed up for the consortium, beyond the seven Gannett stations. In the end, a total of 25 stations used our feed system.



Bryan at the 1984 Democratic Convention

Along the way, I went to Miami to pitch TV stations on joining my coverage group, and ended up with a weather weathercaster job at the ABC station, WPLG-TV.

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