

50 Crazy Years in Broadcasting by Bryan Norcross

1990-1995 – WTVJ and Hurricane Andrew

WTVJ, Channel 4 (and then 6), Miami

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS – THERE'S MUCH MORE TO SAY

In 1987, NBC bought the venerable Miami CBS affiliate, WTVJ. Thus began a market-shaking episode of music chairs affecting all of the English-language television stations except WPLG. For contractual reasons, it took until 1989 until WTVJ became a fullfledged NBC station, and the network wanted to shake things up.

I wrote extensively about this in my 2017 book, *My Hurricane Andrew Story*, but the nub of it is that I was hired as Chief Meteorologist at WTVJ/NBC effective January 1, 1990. Due to a non-compete clause in my WPLG contract, however, I couldn't go on the air until six months later.

During the intervening time, we planned and built a new weather department at WTVJ. We also launched a mission including a commitment to be ready if a hurricane hit South Florida. Miami had a long history of damaging hurricanes, but no significant storms had affected the area in the previous 25 years. The city wasn't ready, and we weren't ready.

Two and a half years later, as the idea of spending time and money on hurricane preparations was wearing thin, we had a hurricane. It wasn't just any hurricane, of course. Hurricane Andrew would be the most expensive natural disaster in U.S. history times almost four. Andrew set me in a new direction. Hurricanes would dominate my life.

Here are the clips of my part of WTVJ's Hurricane Andrew coverage

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=8&v=H9WcQsfW2YU

And here is the amazing Hurricane Andrew: As It Happened documentary

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qf4VPd4rbKQ>

One of the more bizarre of the things that happened to me after Hurricane Andrew was the movie that NBC made called *Triumph Over Disaster: The Hurricane Andrew Story*. The main character was Bryan Norcross! Surreal. He (I) was played by a sitcom actor named Ted Wass. Here we are on the set, which was the WTVJ studio.



Somebody recorded the Hurricane Andrew movie in May of 1993. Here it is. Crazy!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srcP-Fu4v78>

I signed a new and generous contract with WTVJ after Andrew, which was up at the end of 1995. I was worn out handling Hurricane Andrew issues all day, and doing TV weather all night. NBC management in New York insisted that I sign another contract to do the 5, 5:30, 6, and 11 o'clock news. I resisted because I knew it was too much. I wasn't going to commit myself to the 11:00 PM news for another three or four years. I said, "thank you, but no thank you", and rolled the dice.

Thankfully, CBS was ready and anxious for an established Miami personality to join their team. The WTVJ period was ending, and the WFOR/CBS period was about to begin.

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