

STEVE CURRIE

OCTOBER 7, 1998

When Chuck Currie called me on Sunday and asked if I would say a few words today about Steve, I could not find an adequate reply to his request. Judy had called me on Friday to inform me of Steve's death, so I was already aware of what had happened. Somehow, I have been fearful of getting a call from either Chuck or Judy, because I didn't think it would bring good news, and it didn't. Steve has been fighting a demon for several years, and I had always hoped that he would be victorious, but it wasn't to be. The demon had won this temporary, earthly battle.

After a few moments of reflection, it became very clear to me that Steve's memory must be committed to those of us who knew and loved him. Today, I'm going to recall a few of the many successes he enjoyed in his career and at KOIN-TV.

I believe Steve was about 32 years old when, after serving as Conference Chair, was elected president of NATPE, that huge television programmer's association. He was at the apex of his young career. I was fortunate to be introduced to Steve then, in 1978, by Dean McCarthy, the programming VP of our national representative firm. I had joined KOIN earlier that year, and the station was in need of major programming improvement. As it happened, Steve accepted the job and came to Portland in early 1979 from New Orleans. He had previously worked in Charleston, Spartanburg, Indianapolis and Columbia, SC. And, are you aware that Steve was only 19 years old when he was hired as the Program/Production Manager of WOLO-TV in Columbia? Yesterday, Irwin Starr, former General Manager of KGW called me about Steve, and reminded me that while he was working as Assistant General Manager of WCBD-TV in Charleston, SC, at the age of 21, Steve pioneered the use of news gathering using a home video camera? That was long before Sony or Ampex brought portable video cameras to the industry. Steve also had the voice (the 'pipes' as we call them) of a network announcer. As a matter of fact, you would often hear Steve's voice on various KOIN announcements and commercials. Well, not long after Steve's arrival, KOIN was becoming the dominant station in the market. His knowledge, innovation and professionalism helped make that possible.

I found it easy to chronicle Steve's accomplishments at KOIN. There were many, but here are a few that readily come to mind: Do you remember May 18, 1980? That was when Mt. St. Helen's blew her top. The nation thought Portland was under a pile of dead trees and ash. We knew that our station could do something to get the word out that Portland was fresh, green and open for business. So what did Steve do? He called some of his many contacts in the industry, and as quick as you can say Marlo Thomas, Phil Donahue brought his daytime program to Washington Park for a week of live origination. The weather was magnificent, and the nation quickly learned that Portland was still green, sunny and gorgeous. KOIN was honored both locally and nationally for this event, and Steve was the one who pulled it off. He also

produced and syndicated the Mt. St. Helen's eruption videos. In subsequent years, Steve's industry knowledge and relationships resulted in the live origination of Geraldo Rivera's program from Montgomery Park, and Merv Griffin's appearance in the Grand Floral Parade in 1982. Appearances are always difficult to arrange, but Steve always had the ideas and the ability to get them done for KOIN.

Perhaps you recall those fun days of television when unique local programming was exciting and doable. Steve's understanding of the importance of that type of programming made it possible for the increased exposure of local music groups like Billy Rancher and Seafood Mama. I remember his association with the 'Pillars of Portland' series with Dan Biggs. That program was years ahead of its time. (Remember Wes Hills?). While Steve may not have actually produced many of our local programs, he was always willing to put them on the schedule. He always believed that local programming was the signature of a great station.

Perhaps Steve's highest achievement came in 1985 with the production and successful syndication of 'Halley Returns', featuring former American astronaut Alan Shepard. Steve was miles in front of the television industry with this exciting and informative Special and two-minute vignettes. Steve played a major role in securing the Oregon Lottery franchise, including the production of 'The Money Game', broadcast every Saturday night from KOIN's new studios. The Grand Floral Parade, the Queen's Coronation, the annual Shrine All-Star games all had the imprimatur of Steve Currie on them. Remember 'Waterfront Classics' with the Oregon Symphony and the Portland Youth Philharmonic? I do, and I thank Steve again for helping KOIN become the market leader in programming.

I'm certain you all remember the syndicated programs 'Wheel of Fortune', 'Jeopardy' and 'Oprah Winfrey'. These programs haven't always been mega-hits, but Steve saw their potential and secured them for KOIN long before they went to the top of the national ratings. Do you recall how an old, tired, off-network series, M*A*S*H, sat on the 630PM, then 1130PM slot for years on Channel 6. Somehow, Steve knew the series had legs - long legs. KOIN's ratings for newly-syndicated product were often used by the syndicator's sales persons when opening other markets.

About 3 weeks ago, I got a call from Gary Gannaway, formerly president of Genesis Entertainment. He was calling to say 'thank you, again' for what Steve had done for him. Gary had an opportunity to acquire the rights to National Geographic's video library, but he had no money and the competition was enormous. Well, Steve and Gary structured a deal which resulted in a then unheard-of contract of 7 years, if Gary could get the rights. The '7 year contract' projected sufficient money so that Gary was able to go back to the folks at National Geographic and show them his contract with KOIN. He told them that if he could get this kind of financial commitment from the 24th or 25th market, think

of what he could bring in from the rest of the nation. They took one look and gave Gary the contract. The rest is history, and Steve made it happen. Steve was also the person who formed the alliance between KOIN and KPDX for Channel 49's entry into local News, an agreement which exists to this day. It was one of the first of its kind in the nation.

Aside from his programming expertise, Steve was a master in really knowing all facets of our industry; FCC Rules and Regulations, License Renewals, Copyright Tribunals, Music Licensing, Ascertainment, Retransmission Consent, etc.

Steve loved to help young people interested in broadcasting careers. Following his term as NATPE president, Steve chaired and served on the NATPE Educational Foundation. It was here that he was able to do his best in helping make dreams of young people come true. He was also a featured speaker at many professional organization meetings, both domestically and internationally. He was the recipient of several awards, including recognition of his work in programs which won Emmy's, the New York IRTV, the San Francisco State Media Awards and NATPE Iris Awards.

Steve was a very special person. I sometimes believe that perhaps he was so special that many people, including me, had a difficult time keeping up with him. I think he always saw a bigger picture, and that is why I will always be sorry that I wasn't able to truly understand what he was going through.

Steve: You did well in your chosen profession. There aren't many who did it any better, and I'd like to read this short piece my son, Joe, sent to me this week. It's called 'The Dash':

I read of a reverend who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend. He referred to the dates of his life from the beginning....to the end.

He noted that first came the date of his birth and spoke of the following with tears, but he said what mattered most of all was the dash between the years.

For that dash represents all the time that he spent alive on earth, and now only those who loved him know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own; the cars, the house, the cash. What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash.

So think about this long and hard, are there things you'd like to change? For you never know how much time is left. (You could be at "Dash mid-range.")

If we could just slow down enough to consider what's true and real, and always try to understand the way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger, and show appreciation more, and love the people in our lives like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect, and more often wear a smile, remembering that this special dash might only last awhile.

So, when your eulogy is being read with your life's actions to rehash....would you be pleased with the things they say about how you spent your dash?

Finally, a prayer of St. Francis : Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; Where there is hatred, let me sow love; Where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope; Where there is darkness, light; And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; To be loved, as to love; For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.