

In My Opinion...

Dean Says:

It's All About Learning



Chadwick Kicker

Bill Winn worked as a master of many jobs. Whenever you encountered Bill, you would have to stop and try to determine which "hat" he wore at the moment.

Bill held the positions of Chief Engineer, News Director, Program Director, Sports Director, Traffic Manager, Continuity Director, Chief Announcer, Scheduling Director, and Chief Operating Officer of Radio Station WESB in Bradford, Pennsylvania. Amazingly, he did every one of those jobs with competency, professionalism, and great style.

Everyone who worked with or for Bill Winn held him in very high esteem. He had a very jovial personality and quickly offered both wit and wisdom in every conversation. He set a standard of excellence for on-air work product that kept the level of performance very high for this small town 1000-watt daytime/250-watt nighttime radio station.

I had the unique privilege from age 12 through age 18 of working both with and for Bill Winn. He took a tall, overweight kid with a high-pitched voice and taught me every aspect of radio

broadcasting. From gathering news stories by telephoning the area police and fire departments, to writing promotional copy for the annual safe driving campaign, to editing commercial spot announcements onto small reels of magnetic recording tape, to helping him adjust the output of the station's brand new RCA transmitter, Bill Winn coached, counseled, taught, and mentored me for no good reason other than that was the kind of person he was.

Over a six-year period, Bill Winn took me with him to broadcasts from remote sporting events, to the broadcast from the county fair, to the annual Memorial Day parade, to the high school band concert, to broadcasts from local churches, to the Exchange Club's awards banquet, and many more.

He made certain that I understood how the policies and procedures of the Federal Communications Commission were developed and administered to make certain the broadcast industry was operated in a manner that would support the public's right to know and to enhance community development.

He coached me in preparation for taking my FCC License exam. He encouraged me to develop writing and thinking skills. He taught me techniques to make every aspect of my on-air production have a clear professional edge.

Competency and professionalism were not remote, pie-in-the-sky ideas to Bill Winn. They were literally a way of life. Bill Winn believed that there was

only one way to perform any task: the right way. And, he believed that anyone could *learn* how to perform any task the right way.

Looking back from my vantage point of over 40 years later, I can see that Bill Winn chose to mentor me because he believed strongly and passionately that life was all about learning. He had sacrificed growing up during the Great Depression to earn his way into a college entrance by obtaining consistent honors during his high school years. He worked his way through college paying all of his tuition and other expenses.

With his high energy and immutable work ethic coupled with his basso profundo "thunder-throated" radio voice, he could most likely have moved on from the small town radio market into a position at one of the national networks. He deliberately chose to stay in a small Pennsylvania town in order to live in modest home with his wife, Shirley, and raise his only son, David, in an environment that would retain the kind of values on which he had staked his life.

Even when he served as the President of the Pennsylvania Region of the Associated Press, Bill Winn took every opportunity to channel his energies to promote a learning environment.

As a result, I personally know of several individuals who today hold positions of significant importance with the national broadcast networks. Everyone of these individuals give clear credit to Bill Winn as the person who sparked their life long commitment to learning and who helped them develop the professionalism that has marked their careers.

Bill Winn's message holds a kernel of truth that can apply to any industry. As he applied it to radio broadcasting, others can and have applied it to the fire alarm industry. Professionalism and competency represent core skills that anyone can learn. Once learned, they forge patterns of excellence that can persist for a lifetime.

You see, when one closely examines the seeds that ultimately blossom into success, one discovers that it really is all about learning. □

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