

# **How to Be the Next King of All Media**

Copyright 2016 by Bill Russo  
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## Chapter One: Getting On the Air

This short book is for everybody who has ever dreamed of becoming the next Michael Buffer (booming announcer for HBO boxing shows); or even the next Ryan Seacrest, radio host and announcer for the once wildly popular, American Idol. Perhaps your ambitions are more modest. You only want to be a disc jockey on your own radio show or be the news reader on your town's television station.

These jobs are very easy to procure. All you have to do is obtain a degree from Emerson College in Boston, Syracuse University or Boston College.

The only problem is that Emerson costs about \$50,000 per year. At \$57,000, B.C. is not much of a bargain. And Syracuse will run you about \$53,000.

Of the three Emerson is probably the best value because it produces much of the nation's top talent. A quick check of notable alums includes, Jay Leno, Tim Burton, Norman Lear, Spalding Gray, Dennis Leary, Brandon Lee, Henry Winkler, and thousands of others - many of whom are local and national radio personalities and news anchors.

What was perhaps the best broadcasting school in the Northeast does not exist anymore. It was Gram Junior College, which occupied four huge buildings in Boston's historic Kenmore Square. From 1957 until about 1980, thousands of students learned valuable money making skills of the announcing trade at Gram. A high percentage of alumni went on to important positions in network and local broadcasting.

The school did not spit out as many big names as Emerson or Boston College, but it did place virtually every one of its pupils in a good paying broadcast job. And it did it for a lot less money than the schools with more prestige. .



Grahm Junior College - 1960s

Some of the jobs learned at Grahm were in front of the mike or camera and many of the positions were behind the scenes vocations in production or other facets of the communications industry.

I graduated in 1964 when the school was still growing and expanding at the rate of about thirty per cent per year. Located near Fenway Park, the college was literally in the middle of the best that Beantown had to offer. Scollay Square was giving way to the brand new Prudential Building. The Red Sox were always at the bottom of the American League standings, so when my fellow students and I, went to the ballpark we pretty much had the place to ourselves.

Boston Garden was home to the World Champion Celtics who almost never lost back in the day. With Bill Sharman, Bob Cousy, Tom Heinson and Bill Russell, the Celtics won the NBA Championship eight straight times between 1959 and 1966!!! You can look it up!!!!!!!

Graduates of Grahm during my time there included Gary LaPierre, a legendary Boston radio personality who led Boston's top rated, WBZ news team for decades.

LaPierre, working for Westinghouse's top station which reached 38 states, was one of America's most listened to newsmen. Perhaps his most famous broadcast was his deathbed interview of David Brudnoy.

Brudnoy, an evening talk show host with very high ratings, had fought a long and very public battle with cancer. Just hours before Brudnoy died, he and LaPierre did an extensive, poignant interview that was broadcast live.

Brilliant performance artist Andy Kaufman claimed that he learned Transcendental Meditation while at Grahm. There was no such course at the college, but that doesn't mean he didn't learn it.

Like many students at Grahm, Andy participated in the student radio and television stations, WCSB. He began formulating many aspects of his act during his time in Boston. Kaufman went on to become one of the weirdest, yet most fascinating comics of all time.



Andy Kaufman



Andy Kaufman with a Gramm Junior College WCSB-TV production of a children's puppet show.



Andy's character Latka, on the sitcom Taxi, was based on his earlier creation of a funny little guy that he called 'foreign man'.

While I was a student at Gram, I learned the Blues, Jazz, and 'the Dozens', from the coolest teacher on campus - a black janitor who befriended me. The man knew music!!!! I learned more from him than I could from any of the professors.

One of the things I learned from him was "The Dozens". Most common among African Americans, it's an insult game where one person faces off against the other to see who can hurl the biggest insult.

There were a few recorded versions of the dozens in the 1950s; with throbbing backing instrumentals in the style of Bo Diddley or Johnny Otis.

Here's a brief example of a battle of The Dozens, performed in 'call and response' fashion:

**THE CALL:** "Your girlfriend is so ugly, she looks like she was whipped with a ugly stick!"

**THE RESPONSE:** "Oh yeah. Well, YOUR girlfriend is so ugly, when she cries, the tears go down the back of her head, just so they don't have to look at her face!"

## Chapter Two: Amazing Success Formula

Grahm was a great school. The faculty had some sure fire formulas for success that they shared with us.

Sworn to secrecy for decades, I have decided to pass along to you the Grahm magic primer for announcing excellence.

My old professors have all gone to the big microphone in the sky as has the institution's founder, a nice man named Milton Grahm: So there is probably nobody left to yell at me for letting this cat out of the bag.

For free; you are now going to get a condensed version of a two year course guaranteed to get you a top radio or television gig.



*The Author, Bill Russo, in the 1950s*

Please allow me to first take you back about a half century to my classroom. There were about twenty students, fifteen were men. Just five young women were brave enough to try to break into what was then a male dominated work force.

The Professor was Howard Nelson. In addition to teaching at Gram, he was a staff announcer of the CBS Radio Network. At the time CBS had an O & O station in Boston. (O and O meant that it was both owned and operated by the network.) The station was called WEEI and it was a news and entertainment station. Its staff numbered over 100 people. Today whole networks don't even have a hundred workers.

(Note: WEEI today is the flagship station of the WEEI Sports Radio Network - a string of about a dozen outlets covering all of New England)

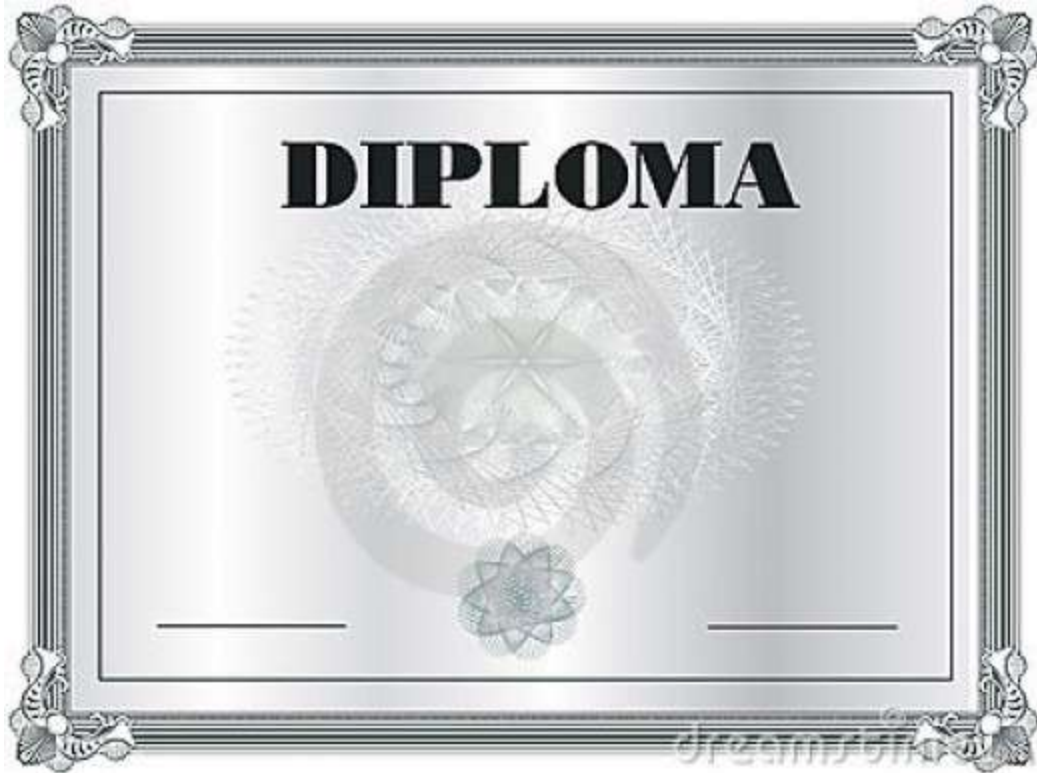
The WEEI of the 1950s and 60s was the biggest radio station in Boston and Professor Nelson was one of the top CBS announcers. He was in his mid fifties and distinguished looking in a 'fat king' kind of a way.

One of Professor Nelson's pet peeves was news. Not the actual news itself but the way 99 per cent of the world pronounces the word.

He told us that we had to pronounce the word 'news' in almost - but not quite - two syllables.

"The correct way to say the word," he instructed, "is to say Knee - ews", "Try it. Don't say 'Nooze'. Say 'Knee-use'. When you go on the air say, 'Good morning, here's the Knee-ews'."

I was never sure that the professor's advice on that point was particularly useful. But when he gave us the sure fire method for becoming an announcer, I knew my parents were investing their money wisely by sending me to Gram.



**After completion of the next section, you will be entitled to print out a copy of this genuine fake diploma and call yourself an 'Announcer'.**

In a nutshell, here is Professor Nelson's method for developing announcers. Let's go back to the classroom.

Professor Nelson enters :

Nelson: "Good Morning. Today is the first day of your announcer training. I am going to give you a bag of marbles. You will put said marbles in your mouth and leave them in for the entire day. You will practice reading aloud with your marbles in your mouth.

"You will return to school tomorrow and will recite a poem. With your mouth full of marbles you will say, "Peter Piper Picked a Peck of Pickled Peppers." When you can say it correctly, you will take out one marble.

"You will return to college the next day and with all your marbles but one, you will recite 'She Sells Sea Shells by the Seashore.'

"When you can say it clearly and distinctly with your marble mouth, you will then lose another marble.

"And so it shall go. We shall meet anew every day and gradually take out the marbles from your mouth one at a time.

"When you have lost all your marbles, you will be an announcer."

It worked, I lost my marbles, managed to avoid being committed and made a living for a long time just playing records and having fun. It was like I never worked a single day in all that time. Fun is never work and announcing work was always fun.

Some notable Graham grads: Marc Summers of the Food Network and Paul Fusco, the creator of 'Alf'.

In the beginning I mentioned Ryan Seacrest. He did not graduate from Graham Jr. College, but one of his top aides did. Tony Novia, Senior Vice President, New

Media Development at RYAN SEACREST PRODUCTIONS graduated in the 1970s.

So that's it. I have given you an announcing course that could change your life. No charge. The only thing you have to do now is buy yourself a bag of marbles and get talking.

Good luck



### Chapter Three: The ‘Six Letter Secret’

It’s my hope that you will find some humor in this short book, especially in chapter three, but the intent of this chapter is to give you some hints for writing short articles and news items. Even if you do not wish to write for profit, there may be times where you have to write announcements for your club or your place of employment.

If you follow the path laid out by the little six letter secret, you will always be the author of a clear and effective article or notice.

Writing a clear, concise news article for publication is as easy as following a recipe. A simple formula ensures that you will include all the pertinent information.

It works for news and sports items as well as features. The name for this magic aid to journalism is, “The five Ws (and one H).”

Rudyard Kipling in 1902 first gave name to it, but the formula has been in use since the 1600s.

In “Just So Stories” Kipling said,

“I keep six honest serving-men  
They taught me all I knew;  
Their names are What and Why and When  
And How and Where and Who.”

Let’s take a fictional house fire in a small Northern Maine town, and apply the formula to pen a brief report.

Here's the item as it might appear in a newspaper or an internet news roundup.

"A family of five escaped serious injury last night when fire destroyed their home.(WHAT).

The blaze broke out at four a.m. (WHEN) in the two story dwelling at 26 Chestnut Street in Fort Kent.(WHERE).

Mr. and Mrs. Bert Daigle and their two sons and a daughter (WHO) were awakened by their smoke alarm (HOW) and quickly dashed to safety in the chilly pre dawn hours.

Fire Chief Lucien Pelletier said that it appears as though the flames were ignited by a faulty electrical switch (WHY).

Three engines from Fort Kent worked the fire with help from the towns of Madawaska, and Frenchville. The home was declared a total loss. The fire inspector said it appears that the fire began in the basement and quickly spread to the upper floors.

He credited the smoke detector with saving the lives of the family. They were checked for injuries at a local hospital and are staying with relatives until they can find a more permanent place to live."

All of the important information was packed into the first paragraph. This is done because editors are notorious for trimming stories to fit into the space available.

For this reason your report must be written so that it can be cut from the bottom and still make sense.

In the above story, if the editor removes the second paragraph the item can stand alone and will still be readable.

If you decide to start your own blog and write articles about any niche at all - you can use the FIVE Ws and the H, to advantage. The formula will prevent you from making critical mistakes.



If you need to write announcements or news releases for your company or your club, make a check list and be sure to cover each W.

If you are looking for a great part time job, think about becoming a local correspondent for your hometown newspaper or online blog. They are often looking for people to cover municipal meetings as well as to report on sporting and social events. You will usually have to write no more than a few paragraphs and will get pretty good pay and gain status in town by meeting and working with local leaders and officials.

## **Chapter Four: The Bawdy Confessions of a Radio Dee Jay**

The title of the book is obviously a reference to the comedian/broadcaster Howard Stern who has amassed an immense fortune with his offbeat, controversial and unique program.

The fact that the show has lasted decades and has earned him hundreds of millions of dollars is testimony to his talent. Younger readers may find it hard to imagine, but in the radio world of the 1940s through the 1960s, nobody said ‘hell’ or ‘damn’ on the radio and certainly no broadcaster ever hurled “F” bombs even once, let alone every five seconds.

For better or worse, we have Howard Stern to blame or credit (pick one) for the state of radio today. Stick with me here. I will get to the ‘bawdy confessions’ in a couple of pages.

But first, I want to take you back to those thrilling days of yesteryear when nobody swore on radio.

W.C. Fields wanted to swear on radio. W.C. Fields was arguably the funniest comic of the first half of the 1900s. On radio, he appeared regularly on the Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy program.

Now it must be said that Mr. Fields had the reputation of a drunk. During the early days of World War Two, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Fields brought a hand truck to a liquor store and bought six cases of gin.

A friend saw him returning and said, “Bill why did you buy six cases of gin?”

“I think it’s going to be a short war.” Fields replied.

The jokes about Fields and booze would fill an entire volume. Here’s another.

“I always keep a flask of whiskey around in case of snakebite,” he said. “I always keep a little snake around too,” he added.

One of the funniest jokes about Fields and liquor may actually have happened and it may be the reason why Mae West refused to work with him again, even though they had made one of the most successful films ever; “My Little Chickadee.”

She was offered a fortune to make more films with the red faced comic but never gave in. Mae West had a reputation as a wild and wanton woman, but she simply could not stand Fields because of his drinking.

Here’s what Fields had to say about his drinking on the set.....

I did drink at work, but I disguised it by putting my whiskey in a lemonade container. One time a smartass took out my booze and substituted lemonade for it. I took a swig and almost choked to death. I screamed out...what damn fool put lemonade in my lemonade?

During his appearances on the highly rated Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy show, W.C. Fields may or may not have been consuming liquor, but he was consumed by anger.

It was only a radio show and Charlie McCarthy was only a puppet/dummy operated by Edgar Bergen, but in the comic exchanges between Fields and Charlie, W.C. got so angry that he wanted to strangle Charlie.

Whether it was character acting or he was truly enraged, even Edgar Bergen didn’t know.

Keep in mind that in those days, a performer could not say ‘damn’ or any swear word. But that did not stop W.C. Fields. He invented a clever way to vent his anger on the vent doll by saying “God Damn you Charlie”, without actually spelling it out.

He said instead, “Godfrey Daniels, Charlie!” The radio listener knew what he meant but even the censors couldn’t stop W.C. Fields and his G.D. Charlie rant.

Although speech on radio was heavily monitored and censored...it was radio and the censors could not see behind the microphone. Radio is actually television without the picture.

No picture! That was the beauty of radio. People would listen to their favorite radio announcer and imagine him in a luxurious setting, attired in a white tux with black tie and vest. In reality, he was wearing faded blue jeans and a grubby tee shirt with coffee stains on the front.

Dateline: Boston, Mass. Metropolitan Area

Population: 7.6 million people, the fifth largest metro area in the U.S.

The Time: The early 1960s. The tail end of radio, just before it died.

The Station: Let's just say that it was not unlike the one depicted in the TV program WKRP in Cincinnati except that it was New England and the station was bigger than the one on the television show.

The Names: Have been changed to protect the innocent and the guilty and those still living.

For this story, I will call the station WXXX and I will inform you that WXXX had its own version of the 'hot' receptionist played by WKRP's lovely Loni Anderson. The WXXX receptionist, Marion, unlike her TV counterpart, was grossly overweight; which made it hard for her sparkling personality to show through. Determined to change her unhappy situation, she went on a strict diet and in a single year, shed some 80 pounds. Marion went from well over 200 pounds on a frame not much over five feet tall, to a curvy and flattering 135. Her mousy brown hair, was transformed into brilliant blond. Her pretty face morphed into a palette of deftly applied reds, greens, and violets that combined to give her the appearance of an elegant doll come to life.

Life should have been perfect for Marion at this point - but the sudden blossoming of her good looks had brought an intense need for her to show off her charms to men; or perhaps I should say to every man.

The two main studios of WXXX faced each other. A glass wall between the two provided for visual communication from the one studio to the other. At the top of the hour, the Dee Jay on duty spinning records in Studio A, was able to see when

the newsman walked into Studio B.

Conversely the newsman, reading from his stack of pages, could see in the other studio when the Dee Jay walked out for a quick break while the news was on.

So, imagine now that you are John, the newly hired newscaster at WXXX. You are seated in the studio delivering your first broadcast. The Dee Jay has just left and as you get to the second page in your stack of news, Marion dances her way into Studio A.

Though you are intent upon your work, you cannot help but notice out of the corner of your eye, Marion is doing a strip tease in the opposite studio. With practiced ease, she quickly slips out of her pretty pink dress. When she gets down to bra and panties, she picks up her dress and leaves the studio.

Equally relieved and disappointed, you go back to concentrating 100 per cent on delivering a flawless presentation of the news, proud that you did not 'break up' during Marion's imitation of Blaze Starr - a Burly Q headliner of the 1950s and 60s.

As you are halfway through an item reporting that Jack Ruby has been sentenced to death for killing Lee Harvey Oswald, John Kennedy's killer; the door to studio B silently swings open. The aroma of 'Chanel Number 5' announces the presence of Marion - still attired only in bra and panties, both of which she snatches away as you steal a peek.

As you get further into the grisly story of Ruby, Oswald, and the late President Kennedy, she walks up behind you, pushes her ample bosoms into your back, and wraps her arms around you.

Modesty prevents me from deeper description, so let's just say that while you are struggling to present the news to your unseen audience, Marion is struggling to undo your belt and unzip your fly.

You are now three minutes into the broadcast, which will run for five minutes. The Disc Jockey will probably be back in the other studio shortly after the four minute mark. So for sixty seconds you will have to endure the touch of a beautiful, naked, and busty blond gently massaging your very center - and you will have to accomplish this while still doing a live reading of your newscast and giving no audible sign to your unseen audience that anything is going on other than the reading of the news.

In mid-stroke, the door of the other studio slowly begins to open as the announcer

returns. Marion with blazing speed, abandons her task, picks up her clothes and vanishes. John holds up brilliantly under the assault and completes his initial broadcast with success and no audible sign of what had transpired other than one quick 'uuhm' sound when she first touched him.

After speaking for a moment with the Disc Jockey, John leaves Studio B and walks to the receptionist's office where Marion, now fully dressed, is busily typing out the next day's Station Log (a sheet for the announcers listing the station's programs and the times scheduled for advertising messages).

"Hi John", beams Marion as he approaches her desk. "Did you enjoy your first newscast? If you did, I have a feeling you might have a similar experience next hour."

"Hello Marion. I loved doing that broadcast, but it wasn't long enough. I told the Dee Jay that my next report will be fifteen minutes long. I'll see you at the top of the hour!"

The End

## **Other books by Bill Russo**

### ***The Creature From the Bridgewater Triangle***

Bill's riveting account of meeting a puckwudgie

His story is featured in the films, *America's Bermuda Triangle* and *The Bridgewater Triangle*, as well as on *Monsters and Mysteries in America*.

### ***Swamp Tales and Jimmy Catfish***

Two fictional thrillers set in the Hockomock Swamp (*The Place of Evil Spirits*) and an eerie Cape Cod Lake

### ***Crossing the Musical Color Line***

Stories of iconic singers and musicians known or interviewed by the author during a long career in radio and as a newspaper editor.

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