

Oral Memoirs

of

Mick Dolan

An Interview Conducted by

Geoffrey Cravero

July 30, 2015

Regional Initiative for Collecting the History, Experiences, and Stories

(RICHERS) of Central Florida

University of Central Florida RICHERS of Central Florida

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Interview Histories

Interviewer: Geoffrey Cravero

Transcriber: Geoffrey Cravero

The recordings and transcripts of the interview were processed in the offices of the RICHES of Central Florida Department, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida.

Project Detail

RICHES of Central Florida is an umbrella program housing interdisciplinary public history projects that bring together different departments at UCF with profit and non-profit sectors of the community.

Central Florida has often been associated with large-scale, commercial tourism and housing development. While those aspects of Central Florida are important to the economic growth of the region, much of its history has remained unnoticed and under researched. The Public History program at UCF links many projects under one initiative to promote the collection and preservation of Central Florida history. By facilitating research that records and presents the stories of communities, businesses, and institutions in Central Florida, RICHES seeks to provide the region with a deeper sense of its heritage. At the same time, the initiative connects the UCF students and faculty with the community and creates a foundation on which Central Floridians can build a better sense of their history.

Geoffrey Cravero graduated in the Spring of 2015 with a Master of Arts in History from the University of Central Florida and continued to work for RICHES as an OPS employee, collecting and entering data on Central Florida Music History. Mick Dolan is a radio personality, news and traffic reporter, voiceover actor, promotions director, production director, talk show producer and social media blogger in Orlando, Florida.

Legal Status

Scholarly use of the recording and transcript of the interview with Mick Dolan is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on July 30, 2015.

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Abstract

An oral history interview of Mick Dolan, a radio personality, news and traffic reporter, voiceover actor, promotions director, talk show producer and social media blogger based in Central Florida. The interview was conducted by Geoffrey Cravero at the Salem Media Group radio stations in Altamonte Springs, on July 30, 2015. Topics covered in the interview include how Dolan got into broadcasting, his experiences working on *The Baxter and Mark Show*, Clear Channel's impact on broadcasting, the evolution of the Orlando music scene, including some of his favorite musicians and venues, Rock Super Bowls at the Tangerine Bowl, interviewing David Lee Roth and George Thorogood, being onstage for The Who, his attempt to put together a country music fantasy camp with CMT's Camp Nashville, what he's been up to lately, and his final thoughts and advice to young musical artists and broadcasters.

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Mick Dolan

Oral History Memoir
Interview Number 1

Interviewed by Geoffrey Cravero
July 30, 2015
Altamonte Springs, Florida

0:00:00

Introduction

Cravero Today's Thursday, July 30, 2015. My name's Geoff Cravero. I'm speaking with Mick Dolan at the Salem Media Group radio stations in Altamonte Springs, Florida. Thanks for speaking with me today, Mick.

Dolan No problem.

Cravero Uh, let's just begin I guess with a little of your biography. Could you, uh, tell us a little about where you're from originally and, uh, early kind of bio details?

Dolan I was found under a rock...

Cravero [*laughs*].

Dolan About, uh 64 years ago.

Cravero [*laughs*].

Dolan [*laughs*] Uh, my radio career started in, uh, Topeka, Kansas. I was, uh, at a station there. Then I went to Kansas City[, Missouri], spent a couple years there, and, uh, about five years in Louisville[, Kentucky], but, on July 28, uh, 1980, I came here, uh, and started at [W]DIZ[-FM 100.3]. So uh, 35 years – I'm celebrating my 35th, eh, on the radio here.

Unidentified [*inaudible*].

Dolan Uh, DIZ, uh, was a great radio station. It's gone now. Uh, then I went on – took a break, got out of the, eh – the business completely, and about three or four years later, uh, somebody – I saw a friend at a – in line at the post office and she goes, "You know what? They're looking for people over at WLOQ[-FM 107.7], the smooth jazz station." So I said, "Eh." I went over there – I actually interviewed for the promotions director job, but, uh, I didn't get it. The program director says, "Hey, man, we need to get you back on the air here." So they – they – we did a part-time job for a while. It worked into a full-time job. I was a morning host with another guy, Mark Taylor.

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Unidentified [inaudible].

Dolan And, uh, then went to the nights, and then the station got sold. So [laughs] I've actually killed two radio stations in my career here, but, uh, after that, uh, took another little break and found a job here doing news and traffic now at, uh, the Salem [Salem Media Group] stations: WORL[-AM 660] and WBZW[-AM 1520]. So afternoon drive, man. I'm the news guy and the traffic guy. So, you know, what goes around comes around.

Cravero [laughs]

Dolan And, uh...

Unidentified [inaudible].

Dolan But, you know what? It—it is always beat working.

Unidentified [inaudible].

Dolan I've never, uh—you know, I—I never really wanted a real job.

Unidentified [inaudible].

Dolan I wanted to do what I liked to do, and isn't that the whole reason? Uh, I mean, come on. If you can't like what you're doing, then what are you—what are you doing? So that's what I tell people: "Always beats working."

Unidentified [inaudible].

Dolan Let's close that door.

Cravero Alright [laughs].

Dolan That's awful noise in here.

Cravero [laughs].

Unidentified [inaudible].

Dolan We make a lot of noise here at Salem.

Cravero [laughs] That's okay.

[door closes]

Dolan Most of it's good.

Cravero Yeah [laughs].

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Dolan Alright. Should I be looking at there? Or...

Cravero Oh, no. Just – this works fine.

Dolan Okay, alright, okay.

0:02:46 *The Baxter and Mark Show*

Cravero That's good. Um, yeah, I guess, uh – let's see. Tell us a little about the, uh – the *Baxter and Mark Show*.¹ I noticed you – you sent us some photos of them, and, uh...

Dolan Unbelievable.

Cravero I read a little bit about, uh, the shock jock-era kind of thing. Uh...

Dolan Yeah, that was before your time. Right?

Cravero [laughs].

Dolan You young guys – I just don't – well, uh, they were one of the best morning shows ever, and the thing that they did was they interacted with people. They – they're not talking to ya. They're getting ya – they had callers all the time. They were always pulling stunts and pranks and, uh, just [laughs] – just some amazing stuff on the radio, and, uh, unfortunately, uh, because the business is the business, uh, the management, uh, felt that, uh, after a while that they'd outlived, uh, you know, their – their run, and they replaced them with *Ron and Ron* – another good show – but, just kind of kicking them to the curb after five, six, seven years, that's – that's crazy, but, uh, they were not able to carry on the team.

So they split up, and Mark Samansky died back in 2011, uh, and we try to do a, uh, reunion for him. I haven't been able to do it the last couple of years. Uh, it's kind of a – it's a lot of work, but, uh, just in his memory, because he was such a talented guy. I mean, "Dr. Zonas" and, uh, you know, the [laughs] – "Opie Gets Nookie", all these songs that they did that, uh, just – you – you know, they would take a song – a popular song – and – and, uh – and change it around a little bit and – and make a funny out of it, and, you know, it's such[?], uh – the wake-up calls were legendary. Uh, they were doing this stuff before anybody else did. So they were – they were true groundbreakers. They really were, and Baxter's still around. He's up in, uh, Washington D.C. He's doing voice work, but, um, you know, he's the kind of guy who just anything in radio. I mean, he can do the commercials, he's – he was an operations guy. Uh, he was really the – he sort of kept them on the ground [laughs]. [inaudible]. Samansky was out of his mind, so they worked so well together.

¹ Starring Alan Baxter and Mark Samansky.

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It was a great show, but, uh, long live Baxter and Mark. You can still see them, uh—I can't think of the—it's—it's Baxterrado.com. He's got a bunch of their old bits. Uh, one of my favorites ev—ever was Mr. Bradley. This was an old black guy that thought he was calling the radio station to win Michael Jackson tickets, and they [*laughs*]—they turned that poor boy every which way. They recorded the bit and then later would split it, you know, chop it up. They could make him say anything. It was the most unbelievable thing, and they got—I don't know how many bits they did. It wa—you know, every once in a while Mr. Bradley would call, and, uh, so you know—it just—stuff like that that was just epic. Unbelievable [*laughs*], but, anyway, we've got the memories.

0:05:54

Clear Channel's impact on broadcasting

Dolan Uh, and, you know, it's hard to believe that radio station went away—it'll be 20 years next year. 1996. Uh, Clear Channel bought them, turned them into soft rock, and then they went to Spanish and then, uh—I don't know. what is it now? I—I don't know, but, I—I think it's still Spanish, and—but, uh, it was pretty amazing. That's the way radio is. Nothing ever stays the same. Well, that's an—any media it's like, uh, it's always changing, and you've got to stay one step ahead, and, uh, quite frankly that—that—that's[sic] has been a problem. I haven't been able to do that [*laughs*], but, you know, it's hard to be a 64 year old disc jockey in rock radio, and, uh, I can—I can still bring a lot to the table, but, it—it is what it is—what it is.

Cravero When you talked about, uh, you know, Clear Channel in '96, buying out a lot of the...

Dolan [*inaudible*].

Cravero The radio stations, yeah.

Dolan 104. Uh, that's—that was—these were all free standing radio stations, 'cause back then, you could only own an AM and an FM [*clears throat*]. That was it. Now, I think it's like seven total, uh, you can own. So you've got three companies that dominate the market here: Cox [Media Group], uh, Clear Channel, and, uh [*inaudible* what is it? CBS [Columbia Broadcasting System], I think. I'm not sure. Maybe they call it something else. I have no idea, but those three guys dominate, uh, still, and, you know, it's what deregulation did. Can't win them all. Put a lot of good people out of work, I can tell you that, and, uh, is the quality of radio any better? [*buzzer noise*] I don't think so. No, no.

I mean what [W]MMO[-FM 98.9] does, what [W]JRR[-FM 101.1] does—they do what they do. That's good, but it just doesn't have the soul. It doesn't have the heart that—that we had back in the day, because those guys are doing a bunch of other jobs. You don't just do radio. When I was hired back in the day, I—I mean, in my case I was promotions director, too, and—and, uh—so I did that, as well as

be on the air, and I was also the production director. I had three jobs there, but really, most people just did one – you were on the air. You did your four hour shift and you were done. It's like, "Wow." What a job that is. Not anymore. Now, uh, you gotta pay the piper. So anyway, business has changed. You can't win them all [*laughs*].

0:08:31

Evolution of Orlando's music scene

Cravero What was the, uh – the Orlando music scene like, uh, when you first came and – and kind of had, you know – how did it evolve?

Dolan Uh, it – it – it was – it blew up in the '80s. I mean, uh, there was a rock club on every corner. Point After [Tom's Point After], Fern Park Station, Plus 3 Lounge, uh, gosh, the ABC Lounges were doing live music, uh, and I'm, uh – I'm forgetting a bunch of others, but, uh, you know, it was – it was fun. I mean, you could – and it didn't hurt that I lived like two blocks from Fern Park Station, and my car knew the way home. So I had no problems there, but it was just a fun time. It was kind of an innocent time. It was anything goes. It was back when you could get away with stuff, and – and now you've got laws. So uh, it – it was just a really special time and there was – there were booking agents that – oh, my god – Ricky Young and Steve, uh, Brewton – "Brewster" Brewton – uh, these – Steve Peck. These guys – Earl Tennent – these guys made big money booking bands. Now, the clubs don't want to pay for it. That's the – that's the problem. The clubs don't want to pay for their entertainment. Plus, everybody think he can be a rock star, and so there's a million bands out there, and there's some good bands. You're in a good band.² So [*laughs*] where's the outlet? How do you guys make money? I should be asking you that.

Cravero [*laughs*].

Dolan Uh, so it – it's – it was real special, and then I think just a combination of the economy just kind of went another direction and, you know, the deregulation of – of radio, and, uh, I – I think that just – it really hurt, and now, there's still clubs out there – there's still – you can still hear a good band, but, they're not making any money. Uh, it's too bad, but they're just not. So...

Cravero Do you have any, uh – any favorites? Like local bands from the '80s, or '90s, or...

Dolan Oh, then there re was the Bobby Friss Band, and Stranger, and Foreign Legion, and, uh, uh – in fact, Stranger Band, uh, they lost a couple of people. They lost their guitar player.³ He, uh, passed, uh, years ago, and then their drummer, uh, [John] "J.P." [Price], recently had, uh – he had cancer or something, but – so they're all getting old and dying, but Greg Billings was in that band. He still has

² Prison Wine.

³ Ronald "Ronnie" Wayne Garvin.

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his band, the Greg Billings Band. So – but, those were special bands. Uh, oh, I don't know. I – I – I can't – there's a million of them.

Cravero [laughs].

Dolan I can't remember any of them right now, but, uh, those bands were able to make a living and have a lot of fun. You know, back in – opening up for Van Halen and, you know, things like that. So they were big, uh, but, it's all gone now. There was a band called Sons of Doctors [laughs]. That was great too. They were a little bit later – late '80s – but, uh, Angelo Jannotti, those guys – they're still around, you know? So, uh, it – it – it was a special time. It really was.

0:11:48

Rock Super Bowls

Cravero What about, um – I read a little about the Rock Super Bowls they did...

Dolan Oh.

Cravero At the Citrus Bowl.

Dolan Epic, epic. Unbelievable. I came from Louisville in 1980, and it was funny, because they – those big stadium shows were just starting back, you know, late '70s, early '80s, and I had seen, uh, ZZ Top and, uh, Lynyrd Skynyrd, uh, in – in Louisville, and that same show that had Bob Seger, and they came that [clears throat] – that summer. So I – I caught them there too, but those Super Bowl[s], they – they had big name acts, every one of them, and I think that fell victim to the times, as well. The people – the bands, who are big and popular, they want too much money, and – and a show like that, you just couldn't put it together, uh, like they – they could then. Uh, then, of course, there was The [Rolling] Stones and The Who, and, uh, Stones came back – I did not see that show. I wanted to, but I missed it, and, uh – well, because I had to pay now.

Cravero [laughs].

Dolan [laughs] I didn't have to pay back then, and I ain't going to pay hundreds of dollars. I'm sorry. I love the band, but uh-uh. I've got better things to do with that money. I shouldn't say that. I probably shot myself in the foot, but that's alright. It's only rock and roll. So uh – but those – that was a community thing, man, and the memories, and – and again, what you can get away with. It's like – it's crazy. It was all good, and you – you talk to anybody who's been around a while and you mention Rock Super Bowls, and they're going to go, "Oh, oh, I remember that one, yeah." Ted Nugent, uh – it was pretty cool. Very nice, but I don't think they could pull that off now. You just can't do that. It would have to be part of a tour, and – and I know there's tours like that, but – but not in that environment. I mean, it's just something else, and the – and the Citrus Bowl wasn't even that big back then. They still put 50,000 in there. So, you know,

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promoters made a lot of money. Everybody was happy, and the tickets—I don't know—I—those Super Bowl tickets probably weren't more than 20 dollars. Oh, my god. How—can you imagine that? You know, those were the days. It is.

0:14:17

Backstage stories

Cravero Yeah, did you, uh, have any interesting, uh, stories about being backstage at any of them?

Dolan [laughs].

Cravero [laughs] That you can share.

Dolan That I can talk about today?

Cravero [laughs].

Dolan One of my favorites was, uh, uh, David Lee Roth of Van Halen and—because I got to do an interview with him, and, you know, it—those days it wasn't, you know, wireless—there wasn't any of that, but—so I recorded it on a cassette player, and we took a bus over there to see him. It was in Lakeland[, Florida], and, uh—that's where—that's where the concerts were—was Lakeland Civic Center. There was no Orlando Arena. There was no Amway Center. There was nothing. So you had to go to Lakeland to see a show, and the same for Tampa. So the—the two converged—the markets converged there, and—and it was kind of cool because backstage you'd see the Tampa radio guys and, you know, it was a kind of a family, but, uh, David Lee Roth was out of his mind. Took over the interview. I mean—I—he was interviewing me. So I had that and I—I played it for the people on the bus back home, uh—on the way back, and it was just epic. Uh, I had a—I'll tell you the worst interview I ever had was George Thorogood. Guy was a total asshole.

Cravero [laughs].

Dolan I'm sorry. He was. Great music. Love the guy.

[cell phone beeps]

Dolan Couldn't believe that—that—but, he was obnoxious, he was making fun of radio, he was, you know, uh, dissing on everybody...

[cell phone beeps]

Dolan And it was like, "What?" You know, "Hey, man, I'm sorry. I'm trying to help you. I'm doing this for you as much as for me." So just left a really bad taste in my mouth, but, uh, um—and then, you know, I got to be onstage for The Who. I got to bring on The B-52's. They opened for The Who, and [laughs] that was the

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punk rock scene there, and that was—they were considered, you know, new wave. Uh, that was, uh [*makes sound*]—the rock guys did not like—they were booed[sic] ‘em. They were throwing stuff onstage. I’m bringing them on and I dodge a can—a Converse [Chuck Taylor] All Star [shoe] that—a red one. I’ll never forget it. So I dodged that one, brought on the band. They lasted maybe three songs, and while I was onstage, the other Converse All Star—the other red one—came flying up on the stage. So they only lasted three songs and walked off and I can’t blame them, but, uh [*laughs*] there’s just—just epic stuff like that, but, uh, there’s no—I mean, you can’t even describe what it’s like to be out on that stage in front of 50,000 people, and when you speak, there’s a delay. There’s like a half to a full second delay. So you’re hearing, you know—that’s very—that’s hard to get used to, but, you know, the—the—the—the experience was just unbelievable. Great stuff.

Cravero That’s cool.

Dolan Yeah.

Cravero [*laughs*].

0:17:15 **CMT’s Camp Nashville**

Cravero I read also you did, uh,—you, uh—CMT’s [Country Music Television], uh—they did like a fantasy camp?

Dolan Yeah, Camp Nashville [*laughs*].

Cravero What was that?

Dolan My—my friend and I, Lee Bailey, who was a promoter himself—in fact, he was of the only guys to lose money on Larry the Cable Guy,⁴ if you can believe that, uh, and—so he had some bad luck, but, uh, we—we were trying to do, uh—it was patterned after Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp, uh, which is hugely successful. I—and what the concept is: you gather musicians, you pay to be a camper, and, you know, they jam with you, they teach you some stuff, they have sessions. You know, it’s all—it’s very cool. Very cool concept. Well, we thought we could do it and we went to Nashville and, uh, found out that it was a little harder than we thought, and so it never even got off the ground. Uh, we—we had—we opened it, uh, we were taking camper, you know, registrations, but, uh, just didn’t have the money or the contacts to—to make it happen, and I still think it’s a good idea, but we just couldn’t pull it off.

So, uh—I like all kinds of music. I mean, I’ve worked rock and smooth jazz, always, you know, news and traffic, but, I like country. Uh, I’m not real fond of rap, but, uh—I mean, every music has something in it, and every music—

⁴ Daniel Lawrence Whitney.

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Americana? uh, I mean, come on. Bon Iver? I like that guy.⁵ I think that guy is talented, uh, but – but, you know, I don't know all of the new music. I – I don't know how anybody keeps up with it. There's just so much out there, and so much that's never heard by, you know, anybody but the real fans. Uh, so I depend on my two, uh, sons to keep me up on that.

0:19:04

Closing remarks

Dolan But, uh, it's – it's just a great – a great career, if you can find your niche. That's the whole key, and you've got to remember that it changes every day [*laughs*] practically, and so uh, be ready to move, you know?

Cravero Well, I know you've got a show to get to.

Dolan Yeah, man.

Cravero So, uh...

Dolan The news and traffic never stops.

Cravero [*laughs*].

Dolan And there's plenty to do, but, uh, let's make sure – yeah, I'm good.

Cravero Alright.

Dolan Okay, but, uh, you know – just in closing, it – it – it's so good to be remembered, I think, in a positive way, and I just try to be myself and – and try to connect, try to – I mean, I love people, and – and that's what you have to have. You have to have that empathy for your audience, and, uh – onstage, as well. Uh, I love to do onstage, love to bring bands on. I – I just brought, uh – uh – uh, Blandini – Jeff Blando was an old rocker. It's – he's still around, and, uh, you know, played with, uh, uh, uh, Slaughter and, uh, I can't think of it. Anyway – but – but he – he's got his own band, Blandini. I just brought him on. It's a new place called Paradise Cove in Seminole County, right by the river. Man, it's got a pool, boat slips – you can pull your boat right up, uh, and so my friend, uh, Randy – he's – he's got that, uh, place, and so you know, I still do that all the time. I'll bring – I love these – especially these bands that have been around for a while and are still doing it, and it's like, hey. You know, one relic introduces the others.

Cravero [*laughs*].

Dolan Right? So it – it's just – it's – it beats working always, and I appreciate you coming by and talking to me [*laughs*].

⁵ Justin Vernon.

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Cravero I appreciate you talking to us, Mick. Thanks a lot.

Dolan And get the word out. We're still here.

Cravero [laughs].

Dolan [laughs].

Cravero Will do.

Dolan Okay.

Cravero Alright, man. Thanks.

Dolan Thank you. Alright.

End of Interview