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The Rays Have Hartford Sewn Up

by Leslie Stimson, 12.23.2010

It's unusual to have members of several generations of one family all working in radio at the same time these days.

Radio World contributor Tom Ray tells me there's been a Ray involved in Connecticut broadcasting, specifically the Hartford market, since 1977. You know Tom, the vice president/corporate director of engineering for Buckley Broadcasting, from convention panels, Radio World's news coverage and articles he has written. I wanted to learn more about his brother Rob Ray, and Tom's son Tom IV.



Rob Ray says he acquired the "radio bug" at age five when his dad took him to Charlie's Record Shop, a few minutes from their house. "The desire to work in broadcasting became cemented in my mind when my dad, along with my brother and a neighborhood kid named Joe, took a tour of WDRC when it was at 750 Main Street in Hartford when I was 10. I was so excited to get a promo copy of the Commodores' hit 'Machine Gun' pressed on red vinyl autographed by Dick Robinson, Bob Craig and Music Director Jim English." He still has that record.

Rob began working at WDRC in 1980 when he was still in high school, mailing the weekly "Big D Dial A Hit" contest 45's every week for a salary of 3 LP's a week. "I've done every shift imaginable in my broadcasting career: board operator, morning show producer, promotions, music scheduler and overnight operator, all leading up to what I do now, on air personality from 3-7 p.m. on Saturdays at 102.9 DRC FM while working as the production director during the week."

Rob says: "I also spent several years working at ESPN Radio, so I consider myself blessed that I was given the opportunity to work at two places that I always wanted to, working in a field I love."

And the next generation is represented by Tom's son Tom IV, who turns 23 in February. Tom once took his son to the WTIC transmitter site when the towers were being painted, and had him hit "plate on" on a Continental 317C-2. That was when Tom IV was three years old.

Tom IV works for the Office of Radio and TV at the Archdiocese of Hartford, on their TV productions and with their radio station, WJMJ(FM). He says his interest in the business "stemmed



Shown in the studio of WDRC(FM) in Hartford, from left, are Thomas R. Ray, III, vice president/corporate director of engineering, Buckley Broadcasting; Thomas R. Ray, IV, production assistant, Office of Radio and Television/Archdiocese of Hartford and radio station WJMJ(FM), Prospect, Conn.; and Robert Ray, production director/DJ "Rockin' Rob the Music Professor" at WDRC(FM), Hartford, Conn.

from my watching old 'Saturday Night Live reruns,' stand-up comedy specials and late-night talk shows when I was in high school and thinking 'I would love to be a part of something like that.' I would buy comedy albums old and new and listen to them until I had them memorized. I was fascinated with the power that a person with a microphone had over a crowd."

In college Tom IV set out to do behind-the-camera work for television, but later he took audio production and radio classes, calling those some of the most fun and rewarding classes in his college days; since then, he's been leaning more toward a career in radio. "Being employed at WJMJ in Prospect, Conn. has helped to further teach me what makes good radio and has been a great learning experience for me. My goal is to be a part of something that entertains people, and hopefully I can accomplish that sometime soon."

Tom Ray himself is full of great stories about radio, so if you can corner him next time you see him, ask him to tell you about the time he said "hi" to his mom on the air at around age 4. Or the time he exercised on the floor with Richard Simmons in the WOR lobby.

Not everyone has been bitten by the bug, though. Tom Ray's daughter Sarah wants to go into veterinary science.

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