

**Parkland Spotlight: 40 Years of WPCD FM**  
**Featuring Dan Hughes Interviewed by Doug Woodward**

**Original air date: September 27, 2017**

Woodward: 00:00 Thank you for joining us today. I am Doug Woodward, the host of Your Daily Dose of Doug, right here on WPCD. And I had the pleasure of sitting down and interviewing Dan Hughes. And for those of you that don't know Dan, he's a former WPCD station manager and Parkland college teacher. He was in charge of the station from 1981 to 2007, the longest the position has ever been held. In the interview, Dan and I talked about the changes he's seen to WPCD and the station itself from back then to now. We also touched topics like favorite memories and life in retirement, but most importantly we talked about what it was like getting a job here at WPCD.

Hughes: 00:39 I was working at WKRP, the real WKRP, in Dallas, Georgia, in the late 70s, when I got a phone call from my sister who was up here in Rantoul and she told me there was an ad in the paper that Parkland College was looking for an assistant general manager for the radio station.

Woodward: 00:57 How did you feel? Do you remember how you felt when you got that phone call, you know, being the job you wanted.

Hughes: 01:02 I was ecstatic. I couldn't wait to submit an application. And well, I had always wanted to teach, I'd always wanted to teach radio the way I felt it should be taught and wasn't taught in the universities, way too formal and nothing about modern day radio, at least at Purdue when I went, and I've never regretted a bit of it. I've had more fun in my life than any other ten people I think. How many people have a job where they just can't wait to come into to work every day? That's how it was for me.

Woodward: 01:37 Awesome. So, walking in to the radio station today we gave you a little tour. What do you, what do you see as different changes around the studio and what's it, what was it like, you know, coming in seeing the digital systems and the way we're doing things now?

Hughes: 01:59 I hate it. I hate every bit of it. I want to cue up a record. I see these old turntables behind me that are covered with cobwebs and I weep. In the days of two and a half minute records, you had to cue up a record. You had to get your, whatever you were going to read ready. You had to line up your tape cartridges. They were going to air in the break. And you couldn't just sit

there and be quiet and now, you were busy all the time, and now it's just, you kind of sit and wait for the computer to tell you it's your turn.

Woodward: 02:28 That's a, that's a good point, you know, being a COM student myself. So, so, you've been retired for 10 years now. What, what have you done in those 10 years? Are you still into broadcasting? Are you...

Hughes: 02:41 I have gotten into a lot of things. My hobby for, since the 1970s has been metal detecting, finding things with a metal detector and I've written a book about that. I've also done podcasts. I did seven years' worth of podcasts on metal detecting and five years' worth of podcasts on old time radio, which is another huge hobby of mine, radio before television. I also wrote a book about managing and coaching adult slow pitch softball. There are no books at all on adult slow pitch until now.

Woodward: 03:18 Until you, you are the first. What are, what are some of your best memories? You know, 40 years, you were here for almost 30 of them. What are some of your best memories of WPCD and being a director here and working here?

Hughes: 03:29 One of my proudest moments was, and there were many of them, my kids getting jobs. But when I came in to WPCD it was very loosey-goosey. Anybody did what they wanted and everybody had a great time, but they weren't making professional radio. I changed that. I got rid of all the country programs, and talk programs, and disco programs, and we adopted a straight top 40 format and we played the music right out of Billboard and later right out of radio and records. Those are two industry trades that list the most popular songs of the week. People weren't bringing in their own favorites that nobody had ever heard of before. Everything was very strict. Everybody was very angry when I did that. But, you know what, all of a sudden our kids started getting hired. There were 14 radio stations in this market at the time and several of those would come to us first to hire students. One of the managers of one of the commercial stations in town told me, he said, I said, 'Why are you always hiring our guys? There are people over there at WPGU, the University of Illinois. Those are four year students. He says, 'You know what,' he says, 'when I hire one of them, I have to train them how to do a professional show. When I hire one of your kids, I just put them on the air.' And I felt really good about that.

Woodward: 05:02 Thank you for tuning in. This is Doug Woodward, host of Your Daily Dose of Doug. I have had the pleasure of interviewing Dan

Hughes. If you're just now joining us, Dan Hughes is a former WPCD station manager and Parkland college teacher. In the previous part of this interview, Dan and I talked about the changes he's seen to WPCD, the station itself, and how we do things now. Also we've talked about how he's spent retirement, some of his favorite memories, and also what it was like getting the job here at Parkland College. Also, in the later parts of this interview, coming up, we're going to talk about if he's still an avid listener of WPCD and anything else he wanted to add. I hope you enjoy.

Woodward: 05:49 Another question I had for you is, are you still an avid listener of WPCD? Do you tune in?

Hughes: 05:54 No, I cannot stand any music that came out after about 1975.

Woodward: 06:00 Understandable. That's understandable. It's, it's a different era.

Hughes: 06:05 You, you ask me anything about the old music and I'm pretty good at that. But to me, I like songs that tell stories and you don't get much of that anymore. You just get a lot of repetition and heavy drum beats.

Woodward: 6:16 Yeah I agree with that. Always, always-

Hughes: 6:18 You're not allowed to agree with that. You're too young.

Woodward: 6:19 I'm not allowed to agree with that? I'm too young?

Hughes: 06:21 It's okay to argue. I'm not giving grades out anymore.

Woodward: 06:25 I couldn't argue with that, because I do agree with you. I mean, there are... a lot of music is repetitive and you hear one song and it sounds the same as another, even if they have completely different lyrics and completely different meanings. But the bass line and the drum, they all sound the same.

Hughes: 06:38 To me, it's cheating. It's cheating when you run a voice through a machine that makes you sound better than you really are and then you go out and perform live and your audience goes 'What'?

Woodward: 06:50 It's, it's, it's a lot. A lot has changed. Well, really that's about all the questions I have. Is there anything you'd like to add? I mean...

Hughes: 7:00 Excellent. That's right out of my COM 141 basic class interview tips. 'Is there anything you'd like to add?' That's always your last question. I wish I'd made some notes. I'm sure there are 100 things I'll think of when we're done here. One of the things, when I was hired, the director of broadcasting said, 'We'd really like to do a high school Quiz Bowl,' because where he had come from there'd been one on television. And I kind of took it upon myself to put that together and I wrote all the questions. In 25 years I figured up I wrote over 10,000 questions for the high school Quiz Bowl and we'd invite all high schools in the area and we'd generally have anywhere from 12 to, I think, 18 was maybe the most we had. And it was a single elimination tournament and it was a lot of fun. It was a lot of fun. In the beginning, we let some of the students write questions and then I'd go through and pick the ones I wanted to use. But everybody was writing the same questions and a lot of the questions were just wrong. There are so many trivia questions out there that are not right. There's one question, 'What is the only thing visible from, what is the only thing on earth visible from the moon?' And the answer they give is 'the Great Wall of China.' No, you can't see the Great Wall of China from the moon. It's only six feet wide. Forget it. Can't be done. And a lot of other questions like that with wrong answers, so I had to triple check just about every question I asked to avoid that. The best answer I ever got on that show, I was looking for development of the alphabet, and the question was, 'What was the chief contribution to civilization of the Phoenicians?' and a girl buzzed in and said 'blinds.' You know, Phoenician blinds. Yeah, stopped, stopped the show dead. Another great answer I got, see if you know the answer to this one, 'What was peeping tom peeping at, the original peeping tom?' Most people don't know. The answer is 'Lady Godiva.' He was the only one who looked. The answer I got was 'Becky Thatcher,' Tom Sawyer's girlfriend. That, that gave us quite a, we had to stop the tapes on that one and start over too.

Woodward: 09:19 Wow, that's a cool fun fact. Thank you for sharing that. Once again, I'm Doug Woodward. I just interviewed Dan Hughes. Thank you for tuning in and we are out.

Woodward: 09:30 All right, thank you for joining us today. I hope you enjoyed this interview I had with Dan Hughes. If you want to learn more about Dan and what he's up to these days and his background, you can visit him at [DanHughes.net](http://DanHughes.net). And there you will find a biography of his life in radio, his books, his podcasts, and all that stuff we talked about in the interview. Once again, I am Doug Woodward, host of Your Daily Dose of Doug, Friday mornings from 8 to 10 right here on 88.7 WPCD Parkland College radio.

