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Procedural Analysis:

**A Historical Study of the Growth and Influence
of Radio Broadcasting
in Southern Illinois**

by Shannon Michael Taylor

University Honors Thesis/Project Supplement

Spring 1997

Procedural Analysis

The purpose of this supplement is to give an analysis of the scope, process, and results of the project called *A Historical Study of the Growth and Influence of Radio Broadcasting in Southern Illinois*. I designed this project at the prompting of one of my professors, Phylis Johnson. Professor Johnson is the director of the Audio Production Sequence of the Department of Radio-Television in the College of Mass Communications and Media Arts. Professor Johnson had wanted to conduct a historical survey of Southern Illinois radio broadcasters to glean interesting stories and anecdotes of their careers in radio broadcasting. Furthermore, Professor Johnson wanted to discover the perceptions and beliefs of the interviewees about the changing atmosphere of radio broadcasting in Southern Illinois. The purpose was to preserve the history of these broadcasters as many of them are growing quite old and frail. Therefore, Professor Johnson employed myself and one other student to conduct the preparatory stages of the project that would, on the whole, take about a year to a year-and-a-half.

Our duties were to ascertain the names and locations of several influential broadcasters in Southern Illinois that could provide valuable information for the completion of the project. This was a tedious process. We had to ask several people who worked in broadcasting if they knew of anyone we could interview. We were given several leads. However, many of the suggested persons were either dead or no longer living in the area. Once we had gathered a couple of names, we called them to set up an interview. Most of the broadcasters were very cordial and eager to share their stories with us. Before we met with the broadcasters, I researched their history in order to develop questions that were appropriate to their duties and knowledge of Southern

Illinois' radio history. Using the Internet, *Broadcasting and Cable*, and personal sources, I created a sketch of the broadcaster's background which the questions were geared around. The actual interview recording involved an S-VHS camera setup, full lighting equipment, a DAT audio recorder, and other equipment essential in the field production process. The equipment was quite a job to handle in itself. All of the equipment was placed in proper working condition and the interview began.

The interviews were the most interesting part of the process. The broadcasters had insightful and interesting stories to tell about their life and times in Southern Illinois radio. We interviewed Disc Jockeys and station owners. Many of the broadcasters commented on how radio used to be more personable and laid back. Some said the formatics of today's radio does not allow enough flexibility and fun in the process. On the other hand, most of the broadcasters said they felt the radio of today was better than the radio of yesterday. The broadcasters said one of the biggest changes in radio broadcasting is the new equipment. Many of the broadcasters remembered when radios were like a "piece of furniture." The broadcasters gave mixed opinions about the recent passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. This Act allows radio stations to form larger groups within a market. Therefore, the Southern Illinois radio market is now predominantly owned by two broadcast groups. A few of the station owners who sold out their stations to merge with larger companies said the merging process would improve the radio broadcasting. However, one owner said he was forced to sell his station because of the Act of 1996. He said selling his station was the hardest decision he ever made and a decision he would rather not have had to make. Most of the broadcasters said Southern Illinois was their home so they never considered taking a job

somewhere else. One announcer said, "...once you take a drink of Big Muddy water, you'll never leave." What did most of the broadcasters see in the future of Southern Illinois radio broadcasting? Most of them said they see only good things ahead for Southern Illinois radio.

This project gave me a valuable sense of the heart of long-time broadcasters. All of those interviewed love radio and think the most of it. One broadcaster had been involved in radio for over 50 years and just recently retired from ownership. The commitment and duty they had for radio is truly commendable and admirable. However, another important aspect of the project was the process of organization, data collection, and group cooperation. These were the most tedious and difficult part of the project. Organizing and cooperating the group effort, many times, took most of the time. Even setting up the interviews with the broadcasters was a difficult task. Some broadcasters turned down the interview, others never returned our calls, and one was placed in the nursing home the day we called.

Despite all of the work and trials, this project was very rewarding and educational. I believe the final product of this project will be a very interesting and engaging production. The broadcasters we interviewed have been through the school of "hard knocks" and from their experience, I believe my career foundation has been enhanced. This project has been a highlight of my college career.