



The

# ***Broadcasters' Desktop Resource***

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... edited by Barry Mishkind – the Eclectic Engineer

## **Ron Rackley**

Broadcast Engineer, Gentleman, Friend



**Ronald Rackley**

November 27, 1952 – April 12, 2019

If you had a difficult AM Directional to design or construct, there was no one better than Ron Rackley - the Go To consultant for AM DA's. He touched a lot of lives.

4/15/19 - For years, one of the highlights of attending an NAB Show was the sort of embedded Ben and Ron Show - a presentation by Ben Dawson and Ron Rackley on the finer aspects of transmission systems.

Yet, both were exceedingly approachable.

Even though the stations and publications I worked for were not clients, Ron was always willing to take my calls and help answer questions I had.



Perhaps one of the highlights was a trip I made to Tampa in 2003, to research the first directional antenna in the US.

With Ron's help, we located the site, and found the original base foundations.



Ron even tried to have it designated an historical site - although a drive-through coffee shop ended up being built there

In 2007, at Radio Guide, we put on a three-day AM transmission seminar. Ron came over and shared information that benefited us all, including key points about properly matching the transmitter to the antenna system, things that explained a lot of what happens when folks just put equipment into a building and walk away.

As many will share, Ron might be compared to a Google search accompanied by wisdom, experience, and humor. Those who got to work with Ron on projects were very, very fortunate. - Barry Mishkind, Tucson.

4/15/19 - Thoughts:

- There will be an emptiness outside the KTL booth at NAB.
- One of the highlights of my AM ground system work was Ron actually asking ME how to do something...
- Ron actually thought in vectors and amplitudes and I firmly believe could "see" the RF flowing thru conductors and components. Few of us are blessed with that level of mathematical and engineering skill. - *Kevin Kidd, Lawrenceburg, TN*

4/15/19 - I had the great fortune to work with Ron on an AM digital research project demonstration in Las Vegas several years ago. Fun fact: Ron, myself and a couple of other people I can't remember were likeley the first human beings ever to hear AM IBOC skywave on a nighttime signal drive drive back towards LA from Las Vegas, albeit that the longest period we heard it was only about 32 seconds.

Ron was more than a brilliant radio engineer. I swear Ron could visualize Smith Charts in his mind, a form of analyzing that as we know requires us mere mortals to use expensive test equipment, pricey computer programs and/or advanced math. Ron was also a wonderful teacher with a folksy down home style. He will be missed by many including me, especially the next time I go to a Chinese restaurant, a mutual cuisine choice we shared on the Las Vegas project. - *Richard Rudman, Santa Paula, CA*

4/15/19 - Probably a year ago I had the surprise and distinct honor of a call from this famous man I've never met. He was looking for information on a couple of AM stations in Los Angeles. When I reminded him that I'm an FM engineer, and try to keep AM at least 50 dB down, he had a hearty laugh. But I was able to answer some questions about recent AM history here and point him to people who would know more detail. - *Lyle Henry, Los Angeles.*

4/15/19 - Not long before I proposed to my then astro-physicist girlfriend, Ron and her started talking electrical field theory over a dinner we all enjoyed. A couple days later, he suggested I not let this one go..."She's a keeper." Sage advice it was now happily married to her many years later.

I also owe him my career as he was both a mentor and introduced me to my current employer 22 years ago when we both went to inspect a station in desperate need of a rebuild. Which we did a year later.

"Let's put some whoop-whoops in the air" is an aphorism I will always remember Ron by when ever doing AM work. And I'm sure he'll hear each and every single whoop...and run a plot on a Smith Chart. - *Mike McCarthy, Chicago*

**4/15/19** - I am so saddened to learn of Ron's passing as he always had time to explain and share his incredible knowledge. A short two-line e-mail from me would lead to a long multi paragraph explanation of the problem or situation and his thoughts on solving it.

At last week's NAB convention he sent me a picture of the former AM site on Gomer Road where our first AM IBOC demonstration on KUSA took place showing the site is now a housing development. We spoke several times at the show. Our last conversation was about the nights we spent at the Gomer Road with Dave Hartup and Hilmer Swanson getting KUSA on the air.

Ron lived his life true to his Christian values. I will miss my friend and mentor, the gentle giant and the broadcast industry will be less without him. - *Glynn Walden*

**4/16/19** - While I never knew Ron personally, my one contact with him involved his desire to acquire more GR impedance bridges. I had a second hand one I virtually never used. Ron made me an offer I felt was more than fair. So off it went. - *Ira Wilner, Vermont*

**4/19/19** - Ron was simply one of the finest people I have ever known. He was kind, thoughtful, generous, honest, and self-effacing. And of course he was a brilliant engineer. Because we worked together on projects for many years all over the world, taught classes together, collaborated on comments to FCC rulemakings, and traded ideas and thoughts about all sorts of things besides our engineering work, I can say that I've never had a better friend. I still can't quite believe he's gone. - *Ben Dawson, Seattle*

**4/20/19** - The broadcast industry has lost a friend and AM icon, its been said before, but I'll say it again ... he will be missed. Ron taught me a lot about directional AM antennas and for that I am forever grateful. Ron had a quiet sense of humor, I remember when we were working on the new directional system at WQBA in Miami, we would get back to the hotel early in the morning and the ice machine was always empty. Ron took out a 3 X 5 card and neatly wrote "Please do not urinate in the ice machine" he taped it to the machine, and quietly said "We'll have ice tomorrow night". When we got back to the hotel the following night, the ice machine was completely full.

I would like to express my sincere condolences to Ron's family, co-workers and all of his friends of which there are many. - *Fred Greaves, Susquehanna Radio, retired.*

**4/20/19** - I was very saddened to hear of Ron's passing. I first met him at a monthly luncheon for Amateur Radio Operators who either were on the staff of the FCC or who practiced before the FCC. We hit it off immediately and have been friends ever since. Ron was one of the most talented engineers that I have ever known and worked with, and also one of the most decent persons I have had the pleasure to have known. He had a wonderful sense of humor and was always a pleasure to be around. Thank you for all of the good times, Ron. My sincere condolences to his family. The pain of separation is commensurate to the depth of love and joys that you shared. I hope that you take some comfort from the good times that you had with him and from the affection and respect that we who worked with him have had for him. - *John Joseph McVeigh*

*This is Elizabeth, Ron's daughter. I want to let you all know that there will be a Celebration of Life ceremony planned around when my father's friends from the engineering world are able to come down. I know close family friends from dLR are reaching out to arrange with the community when the date should be. If anyone is not getting contacted and would like to come, please feel free to get in touch with me. I will be on this account.*