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"Clean Up Cancer"

For well over a year now many of us have seen the pink van of **Eastern Carpet and Upholstery Cleaning** driving around York and Cumberland counties, and we may have asked what's it all about. To clear up this question I spent some time with Diane Gadbois at her home and asked her some very personal questions that I am sure were difficult to answer. You see, George and Diane Gadbois are private people who give more than their share back to the community, and the last thing they want is to be noticed for their generosity. They started Eastern Carpet and Upholstery Cleaning 40 years ago on a wish and a prayer and now have the largest family-run carpet cleaning and water damage restoration company in the area.

Back to the pink van! If you notice on the rear side panels are the words Susan G. Komen for the Cure. This national foundation has brought forth women's cancer awareness, promoted extensive cancer research, and although not exclusive to the cause, is nationally recognized by the color pink. The cost to place this name on the van will not be discussed here, but let us say the

yearly donation is significant and the proceeds all go to the cure for women's cancer.

Diane was introduced to breast cancer early in life when her mother had a radical mastectomy. She remembers her mother's doctor telling her sister and her "one of you will have cancer." Not a pleasant thought at the time, but it stuck with Diane and saved her life. Twice, after the normal tests and screenings for cancer, Diane received a clean bill of health and relatively soon after, while doing a self-examination, found a lump. Not once but twice! Fortunately they were found in time, and Diane is doing fine, but she wants to get the message out that as important as it is to get regular screenings, it is equally as important to be your own advocate and make double sure with a self-examination.

So when you see the pink Eastern van go by, remember it's just Diane reminding you even if you have had the tests be your own advocate and make a regular self-examination part of your life because it could save it. It did for Diane!



**Heidi
KNIGHT**



RADIO

Heads

We know their voices. Here are the stories & faces of the women on local airwaves.

BY OLIVIA GUNN

One year ago, I started working in radio. I had no prior radio experience. I was clueless, nervous as hell, and very intimidated. That is until I started venturing out of the mole hole of the newsroom and realized there were actually a lot of rocking

women in Portland's radio scene. I wanted to meet them, talk to them, hear what they had to say off air, and ask why radio? Be it the laughs they offer or the stories they share, these women greet you every morning, pull you through each afternoon, and keep you posted on the drive home. They

are the voices in your car, a neighboring cubicle, and the corner bar. They're brought to you every day and night over the rolling airwaves. Even at your loneliest hour, there is someone to keep you company on the dial. They are the voices of Portland radio, and these are their faces.

COURTESY PHOTO



Lori
VOORNAS

LORI VOORNAS, WJBQ, 97.9

How did you get your start in radio?

I have a different story than most. I got into the office end of radio in the '80s at WBLM by answering a newspaper ad for a traffic manager.

I was 21 or 22 at the time. Eventually I asked if I could be on the radio, and they said no. Because I had no radio experience. I asked how I'd get it, and they said, *Don't know, don't care.* I went and worked at WMPG [at USM] and did the very enviable midnight-to-6 a.m. Sunday morning slot. Once I'd been on the radio six months, [BLM] gave me a weekend shift and changed my name to Paula Roque. That's when I realized working in radio sucks, because you make minimum wage and it ruins your weekends."

Eventually you moved on...

It was '92 or '93. That's when Randi Kirshbaum called me up. I'd gone to a wedding for someone at WMGX, and you know, you have a few drinks and you're funny as hell and Randi's thinking, *Why not?*

She asked if I wanted to do mornings on WMGX (Coast 93.1). That was '93. I

left there in '99 and have been here (the Q) ever since.

What's the best thing about working morning radio?

You have no idea what the day is going to be like. I absolutely love making people laugh. That's what's fun about working with other people. If I were doing this alone, I wouldn't know if anyone was laughing. I'm laughing, but I'm my best audience.

“I've offended many people... Every once in a while you'll step in it.”

Do you ever worry about being liked?

I'm not everyone's cup of tea, and I can't try to be. Otherwise, I lose who I am.

How do you deal with critics?

The bottom line is, we're an entertainment

show. Your opinion does matter. I've offended many people by accident. Every once in a while you'll step in it. And radio is such a personal medium. You're talking one-on-one with somebody, so if you're saying something about something someone really cares about and you don't agree, it's going to really offend someone.

Proudest moments?

We do a giant charity event in October for breast cancer. I lost my mom to breast cancer, and who doesn't know someone who has cancer? It's a giant disease that affects a lot of people. I'm proud of it because of the listener involvement. We raised \$50,000 this past October, which is a giant chunk of money for radio. We did it a nickel at a time collecting cans. Over a million bottles and cans.

Most memorable moment?

The first person I ever co-hosted with was Willy Rich. I remember when he quit and I felt like my dad was leaving. That was a big moment. And I came out on the air.

I was so afraid. Scared to death because I'd been in the closet on air for 19 years. It

was like living a double life, sort of... The reason I came out is because I got married and everyone was coming to the wedding. I guess I was expecting backlash. But I didn't hear one negative thing. And everyone knew. It was the worst-kept secret ever.

How has radio changed?

Technically everything is so different... We used to have to—

Put records on?

No, not records, you little shit. But CDs definitely. And to record a phone call, reel to reel? Do you know what that is? It's tape. A call comes in and you start a tape recorder that has two giant reels. You say *Hey listener, congratulations*—and they say *Oh, hot goddam shit!* Well, you've got to take out the profanity. You take the tape, cut it with a razor blade, tape it together, and cue it back up.

What do you want for your career?

I want to remain relevant and entertaining. I want people to say *I was cracking up in my car, I can't believe you said that, I love this radio show.* I want to hear that until they



Who is Randi Kirshbaum?

Nearly all the women interviewed for this story mention her influence on their way up in radio. Presently the brand manager and listener advocate for 98.9 WCLZ and Coast 93.1, Kirshbaum was a pioneer.

She was 16 when she walked into KQRS, her favorite station in Minneapolis—where they played Hendrix, Joplin, and the Doors—and said, “You bill yourselves as a progressive radio station but have no women on air. Why don't you hire me?” She got the job as the first female disc jockey in the Twin Cities, even though her program director at the time told her not to expect to make a career out of it.

That was 46 years ago.

“I was very persistent. I didn't think then I wanted to get into radio and do it the rest of my life. I just knew I wanted to be on that particular radio station, and I worked hard to get hired... I had the radio bug; I was one of the nerdy kids who'd go to bed with a transistor radio under my pillow and listen to WLS out of Chicago. I've loved radio my whole life.”

Randi took jobs in Baltimore and D.C. for several years before reaching WBCN, then Boston's Classic Rock station. “That was the pinnacle as far as I was concerned.”

“My hero at WBCN was a woman named Maxanne, and she was the only woman in Boston. There was another one in San Francisco. Then other cities starting having one or two.” There was an overall belief then that men didn't want to listen to women and women didn't want to listen to women. And if men did have to listen to a woman, she had to be someone they envisioned as sexy.

“I was 16—petite, short curly hair—and when men would meet me they'd say, ‘Oh, I thought you were tall and blonde.’”

After spending summers in Maine, she decided she'd make the move to a smaller market for a better quality of life. “I took a giant pay cut, but it was for the lifestyle.” Kirshbaum has been at Portland Radio Group for 35 years. In 2006, she was inducted into the Maine Radio Hall of Fame.



Sarah
SULLIVAN

LOCAL COLOR

wheel me out and I'm talking through my little voice box.

SARAH SULLIVAN, WPOR, 101.9

As a co-host of the WPOR morning show, do you feel like part of the local community?

There will always be a connection with local radio because we shop at the same shops, go to the same places, eat at the same restaurants. There will always be that connection of *I know her*.

When did you first connect with radio?

I was about eight...and I remember listening to a station in Nashua. They had some guy on who threw out the phone number, so I picked up the phone and said, *Hi, can you play Andy Glibb?*

He got on the air and said, *I want to say hi to Sarah...* And I freaked out. I couldn't believe he actually said my name on the radio.

When did you know you'd work in radio?

"I've always loved radio. I was a music major in college. My dad was a musician. We always had the radio on. I studied vocal performance. I was going to be an opera singer, but you can't make a living in New Hampshire as an opera singer."

Did you have any influences?

I always had the radio on behind me. Charles Laquidara was on at the time on WBCN in Boston, and he sounded like the biggest idiot. I thought, "I could probably do that."

There was another guy who was highly influential on Boston. His name was Dale Dorman. Uncle Dale. He would say things that were R rated if you thought of them that way, but to a little kid they were like, *oh yeah*.

What was your first on-air gig?

"I went to the Connecticut School of Broadcasting in Wellesley Hills, Mass. I got my first job as an intern at Rock 101 WGIR in Manchester. I interned for a little while, and then I thought I should get paid. I went to WSMN in Nashua.

When I got into FM radio, I thought it was the big time. That station really hooked me with radio. The music was cool—I met my first rock star at WMDK—Todd Rundgren.



**Patty
WIGHT**

You were eventually at WHOB where you did the morning show with Jeff Paradise. Was it hard having this career and being a parent?

I was a single mom. Did it all. Bought a house, raised a kid, worked morning radio. Woo-hoo. Where's my emblem? Where's my cape? Where's my prize?"

So it was hard?

No. I jump into things before I know what the consequences are. That's kind of a characteristic of mine. It's worked to my advantage and to my disadvantage... It was never really hard. You do what you have to do because you have to do it. It was just me and my son for a long time.

Were there many women working with you in radio in the beginning?

When I first got into radio, it was all guys. Certainly now in morning radio there are more females, but it never used to be that way. There was a specific formula to radio. You'd have room for one female on staff and that was it. That was 'enough.'

Wasn't there a time when you couldn't play two female singers back to back?

When I did the music for a Top 40 station in the '90s, that was the time when Christina Aguilera, Britney Spears, Jessica Simpson, when it broke. Because all of these blonde, young singers had hits and it was virtually impossible to create a music log without putting to females back to back."

What is the best part of your job today?

When a listener comes up to me and tells me *I listen to you every morning*.

I can be talking to somebody on the other side of the radio—maybe they have nobody or no one, just my voice. That's the best part about being on the radio, the listeners.

PATTY WIGHT, MPBN, 90.1

What drives you as a news producer?

I love sound. Some people say radio is the most visual medium, and I think there is some truth to that. When a radio story is done well, it engages you in a different way.

Did you always want to be in radio?

I went to school for wildlife biology and I loved it, but I was not a scientist at heart. I had a *National Geographic*, romantic vi-

“I want people to say ‘I can’t believe you said that!’”

sion of it.

I got an internship at Maine Audubon, so I thought I'd stay in Maine for the fall and go out West to explore. I happened to meet my now-husband, so that's why I'm here, but I also started to listen to public radio... I thought, wow, this seems really fun. It's what I wanted out of the *National Geographic* dream. It's an adventurous job where things are different every day, learning new things, meeting new people.

You free-lanced for a while after graduating from the SALT Institute. What was the transition like from freelance to a job at MPBN?

It was an adjustment to learn how to do a story in a day. You've got to go along with your gut. But there are times when I may be more happy with the results than a longer story.

When did it all click for you?

Those moments come whenever you do a

story you feel really good about. I covered Kaci Hickox, which was really exciting. Every day it's interesting to think, *okay, what will happen?*

What was it like hearing yourself for the first time?

It's a combination of excitement and that it's hard to hear yourself.

Some complained I had vocal fry. It was hard to hear, but there was also some truth to it. I think this issue is very focused on women, but men can do it, too. I wanted to improve my voice on air and that led to it.

When a big story isn't breaking, how do you keep the job interesting?

Whenever you look into something, even things that may not be initially that exciting, there's always something. It's trying to find a different angle or a new development.

Radio seems to be regaining popularity, especially shows like *This American Life* and podcasts. What do you hope happens in the industry?

It's great that so many people love radio, and I want that excitement to continue because when other people are interested, either as listeners or by doing it, it will push radio forward and keep it evolving.

HEIDI KNIGHT, FRANK FM, 107.5

How did you get your start?

I was working at a dentist's office, and I actually knew the host of the show, Bill Fox, because I sold Mary Kay cosmetics with his wife. He called me one day and said, "We're looking for someone to be my morning show partner. Would you be interested?"

Well, I was in line to order at Dairy

**Heidi
KNIGHT**



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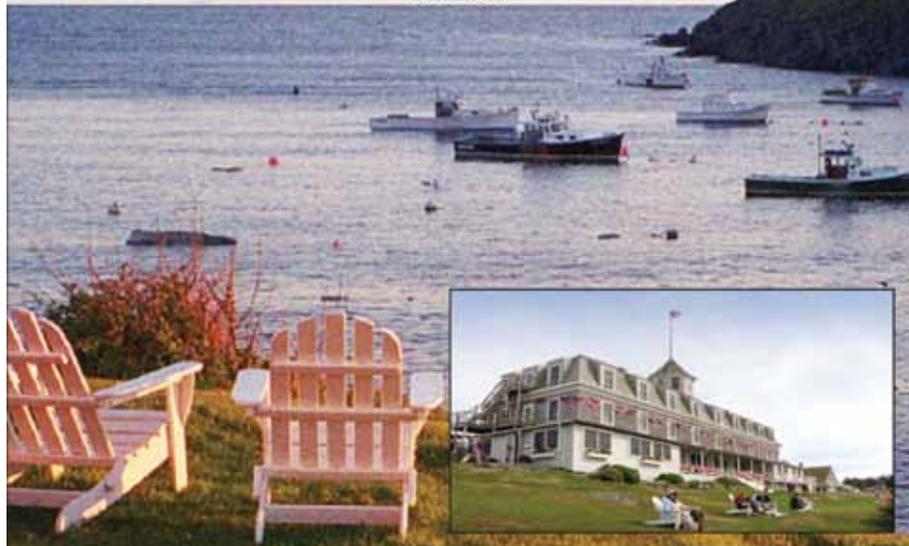


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**Eva
MATTESON**

Queen, and I said, *Are you kidding me?* Just as I screamed, *Oh my God*, the lady at the drive-thru opened the window.

What was it like go straight to the morning show?

I think when people listen, they think it's easy. I was one of those people. But they don't realize everything that goes into what we do behind the microphone. How everything is timed, how you have to be ready to jump in. If someone forgets what they're saying or doing, you've got to be ready to pick up that ball and run.

How did you deal with criticism?

I've had people say to me, *You're annoying. I hate your laugh.* Other people tell me, *I love your laugh.* It can get in your head, because people can be mean. But you're getting paid to do a job. It wouldn't be an interesting show if everyone agreed.

There are some days when I swear I could say it's raining oranges outside, and everybody listening would say, *Yeah, she's right. I'm seein' it over here in Poland. I got a few in Westbrook.*

There have to be good days and bad days when you're on air every day.

Radio, local morning radio in particular, sometimes feels like one of the most human mediums. It's real.

We talk about ourselves and what happens in our lives. When I first started, I was in a relationship that went south very quickly, and I tried to keep that from my job, but eventually I had to put it out there. I had to share. As a listener, you can tell if somebody is not their normal self. Listeners went through my daughter's wedding with me; they went through my divorce with me. I found a man. Thought he was great. He was having an affair. I shared all of that. I live my life through that microphone.

"I'm not dumb. I can be ditzy—it's part of my charm."

How do you deal on air with real-life tragedies—for example, the Paris attacks?

You have to address it. You have to talk about it. It's on everyone's minds; it's on television. To not acknowledge it would be foolish.

In something like the Paris attacks or

shootings at schools, you have to do it in a very human way. You address it, and you move on. They're getting it everywhere else. We've got to give them what they're used to hearing, and we've got to make them laugh.

Sometimes it's hard. You have to come up with something to distract them. It's what we're paid to do.

What are some of your best moments on air?

I'd say my proudest moments at Frank have happened working with the Barbara Bush Children's Hospital.

We meet these kids—you really take them with you. We're there for three days and the next Monday you come back to work, drive by the hospital, and you think, *Oh, surgery today, I hope it's okay.* Or, *Oh, they get to go home today.* It's difficult, but it's the highlight of my job.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

Radio is volatile. Nobody gets into radio thinking they're going to *not* be doing radio. It all goes by. Your ratings. They could say tomorrow they're changing to a country station.

We all know that coming in, so you ride that wave as long as you can. I hope I don't get too old and become irrelevant.

I don't know how relevant I'd be going back to the workforce. It's frightening. I couldn't do nine-to-five again. I'm up at 2:30 in the morning ready to go.

EVA MATTESON, COAST 93.1

You've been at Coast, now as co-host of the morning show with Blake and Eva, for 11 years.

I can honestly say I love my job. That's not to say I haven't had periods when I felt stuck, out of gas, or unfocused. When Blake joined the show two years ago, he brought an intensity of passion and ideas that recharged me and made me realize if I lose that desire to learn, grow, or improve, I'm probably done.

How did you get into radio?

I fell into this ass backwards. I always dealt with radio peripherally. I did pop-promotion in Los Angeles, where I grew up, and

“You bill yourselves as a progressive radio station but have no women on air. Why don't you hire me?”

then I moved to Nashville to oversee a country music chart, which involved me compiling charts based on country radio airplay [for the music industry trade magazine *Gavin Report*].

When the magazine closed in 2002, I got a call from a radio station in Oklahoma City and they said, “You know everybody in town and you go to all the stuff, and you know what's going on... Can you be our [on-air] *Eva the Country Diva*?” I called in to the station every day [during a live show] and did a country music report for them. I hadn't realized what my life had been like as a music magazine editor in Nashville. I mean, I went to parties at Reba's house. I was in the studio with Shania...

Another station called and asked about the *Country Diva* reports, so I ended up with five or six stations.

Then one of my mentors got a job at WSM FM [in Nashville], which are legendary call letters. He said he had a guy coming to do afternoons, and *If you can stand to be in the same room as him, you could do an amazing show.*

Of course, I lasted about nine months and I got fired. Which, everyone in radio can attest, you gotta get fired. And I did. You know, they were *going in a different direction...*

I remember lying in bed, thinking, I don't know what I'm going to do. So I got out a book, *Creative Visualization*—it's about visualizing what you want. I wanted a radio partner I liked, a company that valued me, and I wanted to live back near the water. Within five days, I got a call from Randi Kirshbaum at WMGX. Six days later, I drove up here and arrived January 21st, 2005, right before a huge blizzard.

Do you think radio found you? It's a place where

you're able to have this big personality...

Especially when you're allowed to. I can't speak for other companies, but from the day I got here I've been allowed to be myself—I've never been told to tone it down or dial it back. It's better to get in trouble than to not do something because you're worried about getting in trouble.

How does it feel to have people consider you a friend just from hearing you on air?

I didn't get hired because I have a great voice or production skills. I got hired because I have a personality, and for whatever reason, I engage people. God gives everyone their gifts, and I got the engagement gift. I think people kind of relate to me. I'll ask a question that might not be the smartest...but someone in their car is going, *I didn't know that.* I know I'm not dumb—I can be ditzy, it's part of my charm. I'm never embarrassed to say I don't know something.

Proudest moment on air?

In October of my first year, I had a mammogram, went back for more imaging, had to have a biopsy. [Matteson was diagnosed with breast cancer and shared all of this with her listeners.] Luckily, all my doctors came on air and talked about it.

A lot of people went on that journey with me. That was maybe my one chance I got to do something of real value. That was something you can't manipulate.

When do you feel you're where you're meant to be?

My validation comes when I meet people and they say, *I love listening to your laugh*, or *I love you and Blake*, or *How's your sister*?

These are people who have very busy lives, but for some reason, they've connected with us. ■