

## Paul McTear

Paul McTear, at this point in October, is in the midst of doing what he does best: building a television station.

While the Raycom chief executive is also tackling bigger-picture issues like shaping Raycom's digital strategy, contemplating acquisitions, and figuring out how best to grab the lion's share of advertising revenue from the presidential hopefuls, McTear finds himself dabbling in the most elemental aspects of the broadcasting business these days: ordering steel for a broadcast tower, working out affiliation agreements, adding station staff.

McTear was in New York recently, talking to NBC brass about WMBF Myrtle Beach, S.C., which is slated to be up and running by late summer 2008. "We're creating a business and trying to attract an audience amidst some entrenched stations in the market," he says. "It's no easy job."

He's tackled countless less-than-easy jobs over the course of his career, which spans 20 years at the Providence Journal Co. and the past 10 at Raycom. Promoted to president/CEO in 2001, the Philadelphia native has guided Raycom to become the largest privately owned broadcaster in the U.S., with 42 stations across 18 states.

McTear's broadcast career kicked off when he was crunching numbers for WPHL Philadelphia in the late '70s. The UHF station represented the Providence Journal Co.'s lone broadcast outlet at the time. When then-Journal Co. Executive VP Jack Clifford showed up from headquarters to scream about a budget he felt was lacking, the station staffers sat in stunned silence, until McTear slowly rose to his feet. He gave it right back to Clifford-telling him loudly and forcefully that if he wanted the budget done a certain way, he should be there to show them how to do it.

The pushback made an impression on Clifford. "I thought, this McTear is a snotty, streetwise kid, but by golly, he's got guts," he says. "I didn't need yes men, I needed help, and this was someone who would tell me the truth."

Clifford tapped McTear to be VP of finance, and the Journal Co. quickly moved beyond newspapers to cellular telephones and cable television. Thanks to McTear's leadership, the company increased its holdings to 12 stations, launched 24-hour news channel Northwest Cable News, and created another channel in 1993 that became as much a fixture in the cable world as any. He launched the Television Food Network, which became the Food Network and spawned the TV careers of numerous chefs, such as Emeril Lagasse and Mario Batali.

"It was very hard in the early days," McTear recalls. "We built a studio with cooking facilities on the west side of New York, and stayed the course."

When Belo took over the Providence Journal Co. in 1997, it traded the Food Network to Scripps for San Antonio station KENS and a modest pile of cash. "Today, it's worth billions," says McTear.

After the Journal Co.'s sale, McTear says he received a great offer to work for Belo in Dallas. He also was invited to interview for Raycom's CFO opening. While that post intrigued him, relocating his wife, Denise, and four sons to Alabama did not.

He interviewed nonetheless, and after two hours with David Bronner (the CEO of Retirement Systems of Alabama, from which Raycom was hatched), says he was sold. Calling on his well-honed sales skills, Paul pitched the rest of the McTears with the promise of a bigger house and a country club membership.

A decade later, the move has been good for the whole family. "There have been far more positives for my family, including the warmth and openness of the people," McTear says. "Plus, I can play golf in January."

After Raycom's blockbuster acquisition of Liberty Corp.'s 13 stations last year, a billion-dollar deal that COO Wayne Daugherty calls "a terrific strategic move for us," McTear has his hands full these days keeping Raycom in steady growth mode.

Besides building WMBF, he's helping educate viewers about the 2009 digital transition, looking to acquire more stations, keeping powers like WXIX Cincinnati and WIS Columbia (S.C.) ahead of the game, and figuring out how to keep broadcast TV relevant for today's young viewers, with his sons as a focus group.

"It's not that they don't watch TV, but they're very selective and focused," he points out. "I'd watch the same news station my parents watched, but they don't have that same brand loyalty-you have to go out and earn it."

### TOUGH BUT FAIR

Throughout his career, McTear has built a rep as a tough but fair manager, one with a warm demeanor but one who, as Jack Clifford can attest 30 years later, is not afraid to lower the boom. His colleagues mention a quick wit that's just dry enough to keep people on their toes.

"I've seen Paul scare the bejabbers out of new employees [with his humor]," says Bill Applegate, who runs Raycom's Cleveland duopoly, "while I'm in the background laughing."

His colleagues also mention an unparalleled head for strategy. WTVR Richmond's Peter Maroney saw this firsthand when he interviewed for his general manager job five years ago. "Paul took out a pencil, and on the back of the envelope, explained the economics of the industry in a way I'd never understood it before," Maroney says. "I'll never forget that."


Several colleagues also describe McTear as a lifelong friend and confidante. Raycom VP of Marketing Anne Adkins mentions several examples of McTear being by her side over the course of their 20-year friendship, though none stand out more than when he accompanied her to Arlington National Cemetery for the burial of Adkins' son Matthew, who was killed earlier this year in Iraq.

"Whenever I have truly, deeply needed Paul, he's always been there for me," she says. "That's the real Paul McTear."

McTear has built a reputation as a savvy operator with a knack for seeing the next big thing, whether it was cellphones, a food channel and cable news decades back, extending a station's reach through digital channels, or building a station because the needs of the market are not being fully met.

"With his ability to cut through and see the future, he's the perfect CEO in today's world," says COO Daugherty. "Nobody knows what the future holds, but Paul's got as good an idea as anyone I've seen."

-Michael Malone

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