



# Newsbreak

## INDUSTRY NEWS

### Hurricane Katrina: One Year Later

#### Stations in the region reflect on the past and plan for the future

Television and radio managers in the Gulf have gotten through one of the toughest years possible. They led their staffs through the struggle of covering Hurricane Katrina and continue to manage stories of recovery from the devastation.

We asked them to update their progress since the storm and tell us what they have learned from the experience. Here are their edited responses to questions by freelance writer Paula Pendarvis. You can read their complete stories at [rtnda.org](http://rtnda.org).

#### Describe the hurricane damage to your station and how you are operating now.

**Anzio Williams, WDSU-TV:** The studio survived with very little damage. Our transmitter building was submerged under water for weeks. We are using a temporary transmitter while a permanent one is under construction.

**Bob Noonan, WGNO-TV:** Both transmitter towers suffered severe damage. Our transmitter building and equipment were a total loss. We are temporarily leasing antennas. Damage forced us out of our building, which the owners later closed. For eight months we worked out of two doublewide trailers, field-anchoring our newscasts. In

April, we moved into the World Trade Center, where we once again work out of a studio.

**Dave Vincent, WLOX-TV:** We lost the roof during the height of the storm and lost equipment and had to relocate the newsroom to a small studio in the building until March. Inside the building we have finished most repairs. We still need a new roof.

**Mimi Strawn, WVUE-TV:** Everything flooded. The transmitter was fixed shortly after the storm. We are working and broadcasting from a small studio in our building. We are in the process of rebuilding our station, and we expect it to be complete by the end of November.

**Dick Lewis, Clear Channel Radio:** The WNOE-FM/WRNO-FM site was flooded and rendered unusable. The structure was robust enough to survive, but all equipment and wiring had to be gutted and replaced. WODT-AM and WYLD-AM sites were surrounded by floodwater, making access impossible except by helicopter. WODT lost a tower that has been replaced. All stations are now operating at full power from the licensed site.

**Diane Newman and Dave Cohen, Entercom Radio:** Our offices and some of our studios (in a high-rise next to the Superdome) received serious damage. Windows blew out

and water blew in. Our transmitter fared well. Our broadcast operations are still in the tower, where we are virtually the only tenants. The building is pretty much in the exact same disrepair as the day after Katrina hit.

#### How did your people fare in personal loss?

**Anzio Williams, WDSU-TV:** A third of our photographers lost everything. They continued to work despite so much personal loss. They inspired the remaining staffers to work hard and count our blessings.

**Bob Noonan, WGNO-TV:** Ten suffered extreme damage; seven lost everything. Reporter Meredith Mendez delivered reports from the field despite learning her home and all her belongings were lost. Within a month of Katrina, Meredith and her husband moved to Washington, but Meredith returned to the staff in April saying she missed New Orleans and the challenge of covering the recovery.

**Dave Vincent, WLOX-TV:** Twelve employees lost everything. Sixty percent sustained major damage to their homes. All had some damage. When anchor Rebecca Powers got up that Monday morning the winds had already blown over several trees that blocked her escape. Then the water started

coming up and she and her husband had to jump into the water as their home was literally washed away. They were able to hold on to pieces of debris to survive.

**Mimi Strawn, WVUE-TV:** Several completely lost their homes and possessions. Every employee is dealing with an unusual circumstance, whether knocking down their home, rebuilding their home, or having family members living with them.

**Dick Lewis, Clear Channel Radio:** About 20 percent lost everything: homes, clothes, cars, pictures, pets. Clear Channel Radio provided housing for all New Orleans employees and their families needing housing from the date of the storm until mid-March.

**Diane Newman, Entercom Radio:** Many of our staff suffered extreme loss and damage to their homes. Talk host Bob DelGiorno found out his home in Bay St. Louis, MS, was demolished when a neighbor called him on-air to tell him his house was just a slab on the ground. I was directing our coverage knowing my parents lost their home for the second time and that my younger sister got 10 feet of water. I called the State Police begging them to rescue my uncle and aunt from the roof of the building they were evacuated to in a cemetery,



**Anzio Williams,**  
news director,  
WDSU-TV



**Bob Noonan,**  
news director,  
WGNO-TV



**Dave Vincent,**  
station manager/  
news director,  
WLOX-TV



**Mimi Strawn,**  
news director,  
WVUE-TV



**Dick Lewis,**  
general manager,  
Clear Channel  
Radio



**Diane Newman,**  
operations  
director,  
Entercom Radio



**Dave Cohen,**  
news director,  
Entercom  
Radio

where they lived among the dead for days.

**How many news staff members departed after Katrina... and how many new people have you hired?**

**Anzio Williams, WDSU-TV:** Twelve of our team members made family decisions after Katrina. Since the storm I have 13 new team members, including five producers.

**Bob Noonan, WGNO-TV:** We lost five news employees as a direct result of Katrina: three photographers (including our chief photographer), a reporter and a producer. We filled all positions including the return of one reporter (Mendez) who had left to freelance in Washington.

**Dave Vincent, WLOX-TV:** We lost four or five people. Most who left had heavy damage or lost everything. They just wanted to stay somewhere else.

**Mimi Strawn, WVUE-TV:** We lost a handful of people, but we've been successful replacing employees. We've had former New Orleanians

want to come home to cover the story.

**Dick Lewis, Clear Channel Radio:** About one-third of our staff transferred to other Clear Channel locations or left the company. As business conditions have improved we are adding staff to accommodate the growth. We have hired 20+ new employees.

**Diane Newman and Dave Cohen, Entercom Radio:** Our staff is pretty much intact. Sheryl Hart, a 28-plus-year veteran and our morning news anchor, is our most significant loss. Sheryl couldn't remain in New Orleans, as her husband is a heart transplant recipient.

**How many hours of regular weekly news coverage did you provide before Katrina, compared with today?**

**Anzio Williams, WDSU-TV:** Pre-Katrina, we produced 24 hours of news per week. We added 7 hours, bringing our total to 31 hours per week. We created the market's first one-hour noon newscast packed with live interviews, plus a 10:30–11 p.m. in-depth

program focused on Katrina recovery.

**Bob Noonan, WGNO-TV:** We were doing 9 hours of news per week pre-Katrina. We are now doing 12 hours of news per week with the addition of a Monday–Friday 30-minute newscast on our WB station.

**Dave Vincent, WLOX-TV:** Before the storm we did 25 hours of news a week and do the same today. We have done a number of specials since the storm and continue that today.

**Mimi Strawn, WVUE-TV:** The same as pre-Katrina, 21 hours per week.

**Dick Lewis, Clear Channel Radio:** Prior to Katrina our cluster was primarily music and entertainment. Katrina caused us to reevaluate our portfolio of stations and the needs of our community and our audience. As a result of the storm we are building a complete 24/7 news operation.

**Diane Newman and Dave Cohen, Entercom Radio:** WWL broadcast an unprecedented 71 days of wall-to-wall coverage from the Saturday before

Katrina until early November. Since then our focus, in news and talk, continues to be Katrina recovery and the rebuilding of New Orleans, 13 hours each day giving a voice to the community, talking about problems and issues, and finding solutions.

**What's the one thing you would change about your hurricane coverage plans having experienced this disaster?**

**Anzio Williams, WDSU-TV:** When the HR department evacuated, I had no way of contacting family members. Now I have copies of staffers' personal contact information and we update them monthly.

**Bob Noonan, WGNO-TV:** We have implemented better backup plans. We have changed the strategy of where we will place our personnel and live trucks should another hurricane come our way.

**Dave Vincent, WLOX-TV:** Making sure there is constant communication with the staff during the height of the storm. Sometimes you get so busy you forget that you need

to communicate with every person in the building to let them know the game plan.

**Mimi Strawn, WVUE-TV:** Utilize the Internet and webcasting more quickly. It became obvious the Internet became the primary source of information for many displaced residents.

**Dick Lewis, Clear Channel Radio:** Expect “Plan A” to fail early and “Plan B” shortly after that. Develop, communicate, train and test the plan, the people and the equipment regularly, routinely and often.

**Diane Newman and Dave Cohen, Entercom Radio:** Many of us plan for the “worse.” We need to plan for the WORST; for the unimaginable, for the biggest disaster in the history of the country. That means

multiple levels of communication, many layers of remote broadcast possibilities, becoming totally self-reliant with food, water, toiletries, bedding, medicine, etc.

**What advice can you offer other broadcast managers about covering a tragedy that counts staff among the victims?**

**Anzio Williams, WDSU-TV:** Real simple: #1. Take care of your people. #2. People will take care of the product. #3. Keep your eyes on the product.

**Bob Noonan, WGNO-TV:** If members need time off, give it to them. Working Katrina, they were in the middle of covering death and destruction each day while trying to figure out what was ahead for them personally. As a manager, you bet-

ter be aware of what is going on with your employees. Talk with them, offer them help in the form of outside counseling if needed. Stay on top of what they may be dealing with.

**Dave Vincent, WLOX-TV:** Allow plenty of time for them to take care of their own personal issues. Be there for them and let them talk to you about their situation. Also arrange for counseling. Many people who have lost so much need to talk to more than managers in the newsroom. Don’t forget the hugs. I saw more hugs in the newsroom following Katrina than I have in my entire career.

**Mimi Strawn, WVUE-TV:** Be compassionate.

**Dick Lewis, Clear Channel Radio:** The confidence of knowing the needs of your

family, including housing, food, medicine, clothing, continued paychecks and employment is the core essence of the ability to continue to perform at the highest levels when you are reporting on devastation to your home, your neighborhood, and your city.

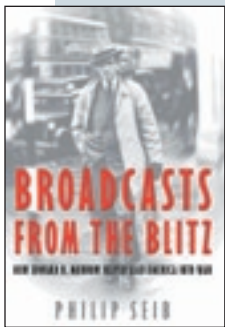
**Diane Newman and Dave Cohen, Entercom Radio:** When the biggest disaster in the history of the nation strikes and many of the victims are your staff members or their family or friends, our “humanity” becomes the epicenter of the story. Be ready to feel. Allow them to feel, to tell, to share, on and off the air. Weave their stories into “the big story.” Listeners will see, hear and feel themselves in the staff.

## BOOKSHELF

# Fresh for the Fall

**Broadcasts from the Blitz: How Edward R. Murrow Helped Lead America into**

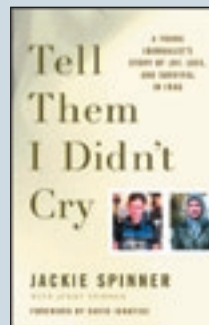
**War**  
By Philip Seib, 200 pages, hardcover, ISBN 1597970123, Potomac Books, Inc., \$24.95  
Marquette University



journalism professor Philip Seib writes in detail about the role that broadcast legend Edward R. Murrow played in keeping Americans informed of the Nazi threat.

**Fade: My Journeys in Multiracial America**

By Elliott Lewis, 306 pages, hardcover, ISBN 0786716681, Avalon Publishing Group, \$25  
RTNDA ex-officio board member and freelance television journalist Elliott Lewis tackles hot issues that surround multiracial people, sharing his own firsthand experiences as well as the accounts of others.

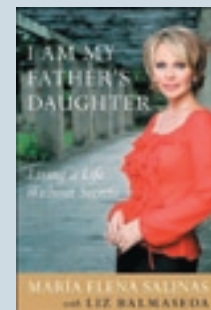


**Tell Them I Didn't Cry: A Young Journalist's Story of Joy, Loss and Survival in Iraq**

By Jackie Spinner, 288 pages, hardcover, ISBN 074328853X, Simon & Schuster Adult Publishing Group, \$23  
Washington Post reporter Jackie Spinner chronicles her personal story of being a young female journalist in Iraq, a country where women were marginalized and the press was no longer safe.

**I Am My Father's Daughter: Living a Life Without Secrets**

By Maria Elena Salinas, 256 pages, hardcover, ISBN 0060765054, HarperCollins



Publishers, \$19.95  
Maria Elena Salinas, award-winning news anchor

for Noctiario Univision, delves into the stories of her past, the secrets that helped shape her career and her life.—Melanie Lo

“In our town we have a commitment to covering local news. We get involved in the community.”  
—Jim Bodenhamer

INDUSTRY NEWS

# Near-Sighted and Proud of It

## Small station in the Ozarks stays true to its roots

Staying up-close and personal is the key to this small-market success story.

While most people have probably heard of entertainment capital Branson, MO, fewer may know of its neighbor just an hour and a half away: Mountain Home, AR, population 11,000, is not exactly a household name. But to the citizens within earshot of this fast-growing town on the Arkansas-Missouri border, it's recognized as the home of KTLO-AM, KTLO-FM, and KCTT Oldies, sister radio stations

local news is not all that important. In our town we have a commitment to covering local news. We get involved in the community,” says Bodenhamer.

He describes his staff as “people who know the area and are committed to doing good journalism with a focus on local government, the city council and the school board. Management has the same commitment.”

Assistant news director Richard Hester is another Mountain Home native, self-described as “interchangeable in many ways” with the boss. When Bodenhamer, a member of the Arkansas National Guard, was deployed for seven months at the start of the Iraq

war, Hester took the lead. Part-timers increased their hours to help fill the void, and sports director Brad Haworth took on extra duties doing news coverage.

Back in 1977, one person did both news and sports at KTLO. In the '80s there were four full-timers and two part-timers. In 1995, new owners joined and did some reorganizing, and now KTLO is back to two full-timers and three part-timers, but it seems to work. Occasional interns help carry the workload but admittedly are a double-edged sword. “Interns do offer help,

but training them takes quite a bit of time,” says Bodenhamer.

On the air 24/7, with daily newscasts at 7 a.m., noon and 5 p.m., and Sunday at 7 a.m. and noon, Bodenhamer and his small staff also produce three-minute newscasts on the hour 10 times a day, on all three stations. KTLO is automated overnight, utilizing an ABC satellite feed, but during severe weather staffers trickle in at all hours and do live coverage to keep listeners abreast of the situation. “Weather coverage is important here since we live in Tornado Alley. During storms we get out there and do remotes; our listeners depend on us for this,” says Bodenhamer.

Another opportunity for community involvement is their extensive coverage of all high-school sports, led by sports director Haworth. General manager and co-owner Bob Knight stands behind the local focus, which explains why listeners can tune in every day at 6:30 a.m. to hear the school lunch menu for that day.

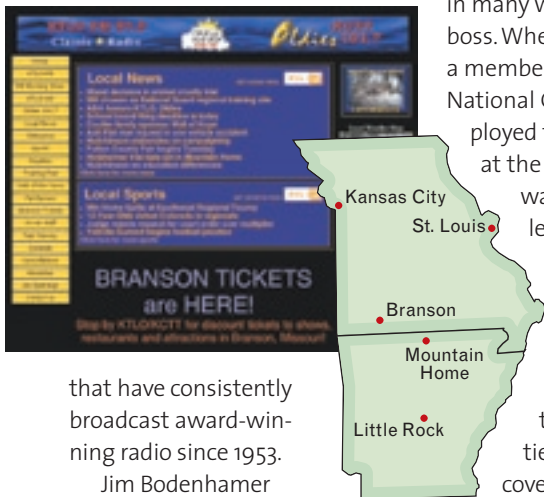
“You have to believe in your importance to the community,” says Hester, explaining the station's philosophy. “If we felt listeners didn't care, we couldn't stay motivated.” People frequently come up to him in the street and thank him for stories they've heard on the air, reinforcing his belief that the closer to home, the better the story. In addition, he cites Bodenhamer as the reason for

the station's success: “He is very diligent and has a way of keeping us focused.”

There's a friendly competition with the local Gannett-owned daily paper, which employs 10 staff reporters. “They keep us motivated,” says Bodenhamer, who along with Hester has a newspaper background. Another link to print journalism is part-time reporter Julie Stewart, Bodenhamer's wife of 10 years, who also works at the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*. “Sometimes, Little Rock will call us and ask what we know about a local story. It helps us both out,” says Bodenhamer.

Because of their newspaper backgrounds, Bodenhamer and Hester both tend toward writing stories that are considerably longer than what is usually heard on radio. “We try to limit them to three minutes, which is hard to do when it's about a city council committee meeting that may have lasted five hours,” says Bodenhamer. However, the longer stories are put to good use on the station's website, which is being updated all the time.

Bodenhamer diligently sifts through tapes at awards time. “AP allows three entries in each category, and I try to enter all of them to give everyone a chance,” he says. “I'm real tickled when we win for an investigative or enterprise story...We take a lot of pride in what we do.” —Andrea Rouda is a freelance writer in Washington.



that have consistently broadcast award-winning radio since 1953.

Jim Bodenhamer grew up in Mountain Home and has been the news director at KTLO-AM for the past 26 of his 30 years at the station. Under his direction, his team won 18 awards this year from the Arkansas AP Broadcasters Association. Modestly eschewing any personal credit, he attributes the station's successes to solid teamwork with a local focus. “I've noticed that at other small radio stations,