

Currently, he helps area people wake up every weekday morning, signing on at 6 a.m. and broadcasting from the Yankton station until 11 a.m. When not on the air, he stays busy helping local businesses and organizations find ways to promote themselves over the airwaves.

"There is a sense of lighting up the mike and changing a life," Randy said, describing what he finds exciting about his early morning "presence" in the region. "Somebody might call and say, 'I'm so glad you played that song,' or 'that made my day.' You're able to reach people on a personal level.

"I think that just being on the air, and communicating with people and being part of their lives and having them be a part of mine is great," he said. "Whatever form, fashion or time that a person decides to listen to the show – I'm thankful for that."

Randy has discovered that a modern era in which people can instantly become friends on Facebook or send short messages to each other via Twitter hasn't diminished the important roles that on-air radio personalities fill.

"For some people, the radio is a companion, and the voice they consistently hear becomes their company," he said. "I'll have people call up just to say 'how's it going? What's going on?' And the great thing is they actually can talk with us on the air, even if it's just for a short time. They become accustomed to you ... people know about my kids, they know a bit about me, because I blab this stuff on the air. It's personal."

There are certain rules that Randy follows that help explain his long-time popularity as a radio personality in the region.

"I was told a long time ago that if you make the listener the star, you will be the star," he said. "You need to try to treat people the best that you can.

"People like to be talked at. They don't like to be talked to," he said. "You should always put the listeners on a pedestal."

Randy grew up in Aberdeen, is a graduate of Aberdeen Central High School, and attended Northern State College (now university) for one year. He transferred to the University of South Dakota in Vermillion in 1982, with the intent to study computer science.

He ended up on the radio on New Year's Eve of '82, where he's chosen to stay.

"I did some radio in Aberdeen – I started at KKAA-AM 1570. It was three miles

north of town, and I rode my bike there. I was only 17, and didn't have a car yet," Randy said.

During his first summer at that station, in 1978, he worked the midnight to 6 a.m. shift.

"I kept busy spinning records, talking news, talking weather, just doing the overnight shift," he said. "I got the job by coming down and reading three pieces of news on a reel-to-reel (recorder) in a studio, and they didn't let me pre-read it.

"They gave me a call an hour after I got home (in Aberdeen)," Randy added, "and said 'Be here at midnight.'"

It was a job that would only last about three months. The owner of the station fired him because he didn't like the sound of Randy's voice at the time.

"It was cracking too much. I was 17, and going through puberty," he said. "I played out the rest of my shift that night bawling – I fell in love with radio right there and then."

Determined to fulfill a role at that station, he talked with its program manager, and learned that he could find work in the production department. A tower crew was also just starting to put up a 60-foot microwave tower near the studio, and they were looking for help.

By 9 a.m. the morning after he was terminated as an announcer, Randy was busy putting together wires for the tower. "I ended up on the tower, with the crew putting it up with a crane."

When that job was finished, Randy returned to the studio and asked, "What else can I do?"

Soon he found himself helping the studio's engineer putting together all of station's equipment.

"I learned how to solder. I learned what punch blocks were, and I learned that audio goes from here to there and from there to here," Randy said.

Those experiences as a teenager serve him well to this day, for his varied roles at the Yankton station include chief operator. "I'm not the chief engineer, but I take care of the towers and make sure they're running properly," he said.

During the time he's been dialed in to the radio industry – from 1978 to the present – Randy has witnessed a revolution in technology.

"You have to keep up with it, but I enjoy it. I've always been a gadget guy,



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