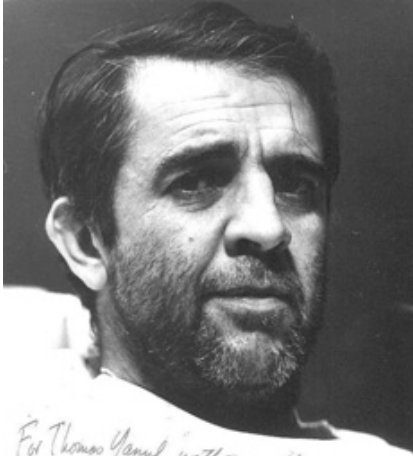


An Essay
by Vince Daniels



For Thomas Yarnal with many thanks
for delightful conversation, proving that the
quality of Mercy is not American Hospital

"I remember watching the CBS Morning News one day thirty-two years ago and hearing Hughes Rudd refer to something that had happened during what the Pentagon had described as a 'routine B-52 raid.' At the end of the item, Rudd looked up and said, 'There is nothing routine about a B-52 raid. From a mile away it looks like the end of the world; if you happen to be any closer than a mile away, it is the end of the world.' I knew even then that I would never, ever forget that moment nor how perfectly it illustrated the power of effective use of our language." -- "Reiser," Sept. 16, 2005, in Banned for Life.

April 11, 2009

AND I'LL BE BACK TOMORROW. THANKS. 35 YEARS AGO HUGHES RUDD SAVED MY SANITY

Nathans is a famous restaurant in Georgetown that also serves up some decent internet blogging. On a recent visit there I was reminded that telling stories about the dead is one way we keep them alive for a little while longer as we work through our grief. And even later, after we're healed, a good story about a departed friend or loved one brings them back for another dance.

These days, Carol Joynt is the proprietor of *Nathans*. In the late 60's and into the 70's she was a head writer at CBS News and a dear friend of Hughes Rudd, who anchored the *CBS Morning News* from 1973-77. Except for the occasional letter that I would write and that he would reply to, I can't say that Hughes and I were friends, but for those 4 years on television, he sure felt like one.

Hughes Rudd died in October, 1992 in a hospital in Toulouse, France of complications from an aneurysm in the aorta. He was 71.

So why would I pay homage to someone who has been gone all these years? Much less 16 years?

I always remembered Rudd's familiar sign-off at the end of every newscast. He would say, "and I'll be back tomorrow. Thanks." Sure enough, everyday in my life from the ages of 13 to 17, he was always back tomorrow, and the next day, and the next day.

One morning in 1977 he signed off in a different way. He said that "this is my last day as co-anchor of the CBS Morning News. Terminal fatigue has set in, caused by over more than 4 years of arising at 1am to get to the studio at 4am to prepare for these broadcasts. Richard Threlkeld will take over on Monday but I'll be trotting in here from time to time to close with some of my essay's."

Interesting how the mind works

I tried to watch the Threlkeld version of the *CBS Morning News*. I managed to catch Hughes a couple of times closing with his humorous anecdotes. After a month, I must confess that it was too much to sit through an hour waiting for him to come on. Years passed, my morning routine changed, and I didn't think about Hughes Rudd all that much anymore. I read that in 1979 he moved his essay's and special reports to ABC News.

One night in the Fall of '92 my brother knocked on my bedroom door and said, "you'll never guess whose on NIGHTLINE right now? Hughes Rudd!" I was too caught up in my own problems at the time to walk out and watch it. I was just happy to know that he was still around and doing work for ABC. In retrospect, my brother was so genuinely excited to see him on television, that he hurried in to tell me about it. What he didn't realize (nor did I that night) is that NIGHTLINE was doing a tribute on the occasion of Rudd's passing. He had long retired from the business in 1986.

Only rarely during the 90's and this decade would I think about him. One day I remember getting on the subject with my Dad and he asked me, "do you even know if Hughes Rudd is still alive?" Ignorantly I answered him, "oh yeah, he's still going." At that time, unless I actually went to the library and looked in the bibliography of every New York Times reference book, I really had no way of knowing. Even after the invention of the Google Internet Search Engine, I still wasn't really thinking about him.

One evening out of the blue, last August 13th, I thought about Hughes Rudd and I googled him.

No more cartoons for this kid

Carol Joynt's website curiously led me to other portals of the past. I was ecstatic to learn that CBS News had a video site dedicated to "Old News." I noticed the date for this one: August 6, 1973. It was 35 years plus one week ago. As long as I live, I'll always remember that morning just before 7am. I was 13 years old. For about a year I had outgrown the desire to get up and watch cartoons. I preferred sleeping in. On this day however, I couldn't sleep.

For some reason, unbeknownst to me, I remember I wanted to graduate from childhood to adulthood all in one fell swoop. I wanted to start grasping this adult concept called 'news.' On NBC there was the *Today Show*, but I refused to watch Barbara Walters, so I turned it to Channel 2 instead.

Walters became a news anchor 3 years later. At this juncture she was a features reporter/co-host on the *Today Show*. For some reason, I never got into her. I had read in TV Guide that CBS was taking a bold step by hiring the first female to actually anchor the news. That person was Sally Quinn, whom the network brought over from The Washington Post.

I watched this newscast when it first aired. How could I forget? This was the first time I watched a news show in its entirety and it was the day I became familiar with Hughes Rudd. It was also the day that the broadcasting bug would bite me for the first time. After that morning, I knew one thing. I wanted to be a T.V. newscaster.

The video below (to the right) features original commercials. The CBS Promo for the shows on television that year, including MASH; All in the Family; The Mary Tyler Moore Show; Sonny and Cher; Lucy and Kojak, is fun to see. You'll notice that they gave a lot of time for news segments in those days and how nice that we still understood the news, even without computer generated graphics.

Rudd also did a radio newscast for CBS. He was known for busting-up in the middle of a story, as you'll hear by clicking the device to the left. In these 30 seconds he accidentally refers to his place of employment as "The CBS Radio Nitwork."

"Good Morning this is Hughes Rudd

reporting on the CBS Radio Nitwork"[Download This Bloop](#)

Already with the network for 14 years, this was the day Hughes Rudd became an anchorman. He was joined by what was hyped all summer as the country's first female network anchor, Sally Quinn, who only lasted for 4 months. Rudd remained until 1977. Complete with commercials and a CBS fall promo, click the picture on your left to travel back in time.

Hughes' life

He was a native of Waco, TX and was born on September 14, 1921. Rudd attended the University of Missouri beginning in 1938 but quit 3 years later when he enlisted in the Army and became an Army Piper Cub pilot in World War II.

He always knew he wanted to be a journalist. His first job was that of copy boy at a newspaper in his hometown of Waco. He was fond of writing and in fact received a fellowship to study creative writing at Stanford University back in the 1950's. Rudd then newspapered for the Kansas City Star, The Minneapolis Tribune and finally in Rock Springs, Wyoming where he edited the Daily Rocket.

It was in Kansas City where he met Walter Cronkite, and the two became old drinking buddies. In 1959 Hughes Rudd landed at CBS News through the influence of Cronkite. He hired him strictly for his crack writing ability. Throughout the 1960's he held a number of foreign assignments, including tours as a correspondent in Bonn, Berlin, Africa, the Middle East, Vietnam and Moscow.

During this time Hughes wrote stories for the Paris Review, The Saturday Evening Post, Esquire, Harpers and other magazines. In 1966 he authored a best seller, "My Escape From the CIA and Other Improbable Events." That same year, George Plimpton called him a "wonderfully cynical student of human matters."

In the late 1960's most of his work for CBS News was on radio. In the early 70's Morley Safer wondered aloud why Rudd didn't get any time behind an anchor desk and commented to Cronkite that "perhaps his day has finally arrived."

Hughes once spoke to a meeting of Texas broadcasters. He said that any complicated or serious subject can't really be explained on T.V. He was very outspoken about his profession, calling it a "comic strip medium."

If you watched long enough, you learned that Rudd was a real aficionado of Chili con carne. He often mentioned that he would either attend or participate in local and national chili cook-off's. Thanks to his frequent morning mentions, our cupboard was well stocked with Dennison cans. As for homemade, it's too bad Hughes never met my mother. I think he would have agreed that she makes the best in town.

At the end of his life, few people knew this about him. In fact, Andy Rooney recalled, "we were all surprised that he was buried in Arlington. Hughes never talked about it but he was a decorated Piper Club artillery spotter with two Purple Hearts that he acquired when he was hit by Wehrmacht rifle fire from the ground. " In addition he had also earned six Air Medals and a Silver Star.

Hughes Rudd was not what you'd call a soothing lead-in to *Captain Kangaroo*, the show that followed him. In addition to his wry wit, he'll always be remembered as the man who wasn't afraid to be his true self: the morning grouch whose bristly style resonated with probably 90% of his viewers.

Grant Burns of Michigan once wrote a regular blog called "Uncle Frank's Diary," and on December 2, 2004 had these brilliant observations as he pined for the good ol' days of Hughes Rudd in the Morning in comparing the standard fare of today's cable news networks, to yesteryear.

I get up, pull on some socks, go downstairs, turn on the television. There's the CNN insomniac-hour anchor, lookin' like she's about 23 years old, unlined, perky, perfectly made up, eyes the size o' saucers glowing in her unwrinkled, flawless face.

Christ. I don't want perky, perfect and unwrinkled at 4 a.m. I want to see a news anchor who reflects my own perspective of the moment: aggravated, haggard, and disheveled. I want someone, I don't care whether it's a man or a woman, whose appearance and tone match the gruesome, inhuman stories oozing out of the tube. I want someone with a suitable scowl, a whiskey & cigarettes rasp, and a big cup of coffee from which he (or she) takes regular long drinks, preferably in the middle of a sentence.

At 4 a.m. I want to see a newscaster who looks like he'd just as soon stomp on my instep as read me the news. Remember Hughes Rudd? He did the morning news on CBS back in the '70s, and was just about right for the job. He usually managed to sound as though he thought everything he was reading was nothing more than part of the tracking record of a crazed species committed to self-destruction. Which, one suspects, it was.



My first two years of college had passed and curiously enough, I didn't enroll in one Journalism or Communications course. It was not until my third year when I changed schools and began attending seminary that I enrolled in "Intro to Broadcasting" at one of the local junior colleges in Los Angeles county. It is there that I became acquainted with Craig Breit (pictured above), who was my instructor. Craig is also a treasure trove of Radio and T.V. history, as he is still there, approaching his fourth decade of teaching.

Breit offered an 18-week smattering of the important movers, shakers and moguls of the media. It really brought me back to my days of fascination with the crew of CBS News and my love of the old time radio shows of the 1940's. He also taught me about the evolution of radio from its golden age to the days of 'top 40' music formats. The following semester I enrolled in his Radio Production course, where I learned how to write commercials and how to time them properly to come out to exactly 30 or 60 seconds.

I also learned enunciation and diction; how to rip and read news copy, and within two weeks of that semester, how to go on the radio and host my own music show as an air personality. Craig thought of me as one of his students that showed promise. I enrolled in that same class again for a second semester, then a third, then a fourth. At that same time, I was on the air doing another music show from another community college in Orange County, and as well had re-enrolled in that class for two or three years longer than I needed.

Professor Breit is important because he sat back and provided me a comfort zone to remain for as long as I felt I had to be in his class. After my second year there he was often heard to remind me, "you should be out there gainfully employed in radio." My lack of confidence held me back from the real world. It would take five years in college before I applied for my first internship at an Orange County station, and two years after that before I worked my first professional on-air gig in San Bernardino.



After that came a long absence from the business. Years passed and I found myself back in Orange County at a talk station, K.P.L.S. AM 830 where I worked as a board operator. Once in awhile, one of the show hosts would allow me to chime in with a thought. The General Manager of K.P.L.S. was Alan Fuller (shown above-second to right). Occasionally he would listen to me on a show and then remark to other staffers, "I like his voice." So he had me start recording a few promo's and voice some of his client's commercial spots. In small ways my real abilities were put to good use. I'm happy that Alan at least recognized my talent behind a microphone.

K.P.L.S. was a 50,000 watt station that employed a lot of people and yet somehow it never really fit the image I carried around in my head of people rushing and hurrying about in order to quickly get a story on the air. Legendary news icon, George Putnam (above-right), then 89, came in to do his live Talkback show at Noon, Monday through Friday; but he was the only local news talent they had. I was honored to bump into George on the several occasions that I found myself working into the mid-morning hours. Even George knew that there were too many egos running around, stepping all over each other during the day. "Too many chiefs and not enough indians," he'd say.

The day the indians took over

As long as I live, I'll never forget working at K.P.L.S. on a day when Putnam was off and so for that matter was everyone else. It was a holiday. Only 3 people worked that day. Nick Anthony, Crystal Kroes (both pictured above-left) and myself.

It was an Independence Day unlike any other, with military jets patrolling overhead and unprecedented security in effect on waterways and on land, as America celebrated its birthday for the first time since the September 11th terror attacks and the beginning of the war on terrorism.

Although in most of the country, parades and fireworks went ahead with some jitters but no problems, the day was not without violence as the Los Angeles area suffered twin heartbreaks.

At L.A. International Airport, a man killed two people at Israel's El Al airlines ticket counter before an El Al security guard shot him. And in San Dimas, four people were killed and a dozen others were injured, when a small plane crashed into a park

crowded with people celebrating that 4th of July in 2002.

The FBI said it had no evidence that anyone except the gunman was involved in the LAX shooting, but terrorism had not been ruled out.

Shortly after the noon hour, our Program Director, Sarah Duarte called to talk to me. She said that Alan wanted me to switch over to the ABC News coverage. She also said that Alan wanted us to cut in with local updates. Nick was with me at the time. He didn't feel comfortable going on the air. He wanted me to go live instead. All Nick cared about was making sure that facts were reported correctly, so he sat in the newsroom and printed out AP copy off of the internet.

Ten minutes later Crystal arrived at the station. She saw how hard we were working and knew it was going to be a long afternoon. What goes better with the 4th of July than fried chicken? So she drove over to the local KFC and ordered a big feast with cole slaw, plenty of mashed potatoes, chocolate parfait's and rolls with honey. She also helped to proofread Nick's copy.

At one point I asked Crystal if she wanted to step up to the mike. She insisted that I carry on. With a sense of urgency, both she and Nick rushed into the control room every five minutes with fresh updates for me to read. Three hours later before switching back to regular programming, I thanked them on air for all their diligent work.

Later that night as I talked to people about that unforgettable afternoon, I remembered fondly just how refreshing it was to see ego's and attitudes set aside for the good of acting in the public interest. For a moment in time, my career in broadcasting lived up to that image of watching people scramble around a newsroom like I used to watch at the beginning of those CBS morning newscasts.

I'll always remember this as the best day I ever worked in radio.

Owning that feeling of urgency

Almost 4 years later I was back at a commercial talk station, following the lead of my compatriots, Howard Drescher and Nick Anthony, who had moved from K.P.L.S. to host their own talk show on K.C.A.A. AM 1050 called *H.T.O.S.* every Saturday afternoon from 1:00-3:00pm. In 2006 I decided to purchase three hours of airtime on K.C.A.A. and with Nick's help, was able to land the time slot prior to he and Howard's show. Between the 3 of us, we were able to feed off of that nutritious emotion that gave us this sense of urgency that always seemed to accompany the immediacy of news. What's more, management couldn't tell us what to say and not say. We purchased and owned our time.

Sally Quinn only worked alongside Hughes Rudd for 4 months as his co-anchor. The country's first network anchorwoman was ridiculed pretty much throughout the industry. The only person willing to stand behind her, was Rudd. It didn't hit me until very recently that I must have carried a bit of Hughes Rudd's spirit with me into my professional career, even if I was unaware of it at the time. Jay Boatman was the announcer on my show. Crista Curtis was my hand-picked pop culture reporter. Both had their own shortcomings when first starting out, but I was determined to stick by them until the day they were able to guest host for me if I needed to be away. Eventually they were able to, and did wonderful work.

People behind the scenes would tell me that my show was at its best when Jay and Crista were on with me. My own biggest shortcoming (and ultimately to the detriment of my show) was that somehow it became more important to me that I seek out and constantly add new talent. Rather than looking to my own and accepting that I could do the show solo, I would ignore weekly content and other priorities in favor of looking for others that I could take under my wing and help to mold.

Perhaps I allowed my ego to get in the way. Several months prior to ending my show, I found myself overly tired, stressed and now with this feeling that the train had left

the station without me, and asking myself, "why am I doing this?"



Was broadcasting my true calling?

I ended my show, "The Many Moods of Vince Daniels" on August 4th, 2007. A full year later, I looked again at the question, "why?" Was I truly called to follow the path of journalism, be it television or radio? I mean, come on. Let's really look at this. You hear a lot of people claim that they have a "calling" in life. But how do they know that this calling, so-called, isn't self-ordained? I owe it to myself to be honest.

Who was Hughes Rudd? What did he represent to me? I mean, until last August, I assumed he was still alive. Why didn't I know that he died 16 years ago? This was a man that I woke up to for 4 years of my life. He meant something to me. Why wasn't I just a little bit curious to google him a long time ago?

That right there, is an interesting question.

Perhaps the answer, is that divine providence shielded me from thinking about Hughes Rudd all this time. At least until I was *ready* to think about him.

In August, when I read of his passing in 1992, I had a stunned reaction as if this were an obituary hot off the press. It made me go back. It made me think of all those years when I would wake up, sit in the family room with the volume down low, lest my Dad would be at the dining room table telling me, "turn that down. I don't need his grouchiness with my coffee!" What was it about Hughes Rudd that inspired me to be a newscaster?

Why would I want to be a newscaster like him instead of, say, Walter Cronkite? What would make me want to wake up early at 6:30 and stay awake for a whole half hour so that I wouldn't miss the start of the Morning News at 7am? I mean please, this is not normal adolescent behavior.

How about the most important question. Why couldn't I sleep?

For that matter, why shortly after I stated to watch the Morning News did I carry a tape recorder with me everywhere I went? Was it really to do 'man on the street' interviews as a way of breaking into news reporting? Or quite possibly, did it have something to do with why I couldn't sleep at night?

Rudd spent an entire hour each day talking about all the horrible things that took place, somewhere in our world. The way he scowled at the camera, he looked like he wanted to beat the hell out of everyone responsible for making the world a terrible place while we all slept.

With my eyes glued to a 19 inch screen, I sat with a secret that I was forced to keep. My secret prayer, was that this newsman would know what was happening to me and would tell the whole world, so that it would stop.

Who was I kidding? This was 1973. What network in their right mind would flash a picture of a beloved, trusted and charismatic Catholic Priest on the screen and talk about how he was doing unspeakable things to pre-pubescent boys, raping and sodomizing them.

I used to correspond with Hughes by mail. Somewhere in storage I still have two letters that he sent me back in 1975. Oh, I never talked about the priest or my abuse. I couldn't share that with anybody, especially my own family. Just the same, in his letters he would encourage me to pursue the news business, and said to study hard and to know a little about a lot of things. He even recommended some good journalism schools.

I treasure those letters and that he thought enough of me to write back. According to a lot of people, he wasn't very likable. I think that if I were able to tell him, he probably would have beat the hell out of the Priest.

Perhaps just keeping my eyes fixated on him every morning for 4 years and listening to how much worse the rest of the world had it, helped me to keep my sanity. Did all this mean that I was supposed to one day be a newscaster so that I could be the one reporting on all of what happened to me and others like me? Honestly, I still can't answer that.

I can't help but to think that I accomplished all that and so now, my task is completed. It's also very possible that there's more shows left for me to do. It could also be that writing, is my true calling. When I was young, my teachers always remarked to my parents that I had a flair for creative writing.

Like the elusive Mr. Rudd was for so long, it could be that the answer is being shielded from me until I'm ready to seek it out and have it revealed. They seem to always come in the strangest places. Maybe it'll come to me over a bowl of chili con carne. If it's like the kind my mother makes, I wouldn't mind that. Whatever the answer ends up to be, wherever and whenever it comes, one thing's for sure. I'll be ready, and I'll be back tomorrow.

Thanks.



[email Vince at commander@dnaradioshow.com](mailto:commander@dnaradioshow.com)