Rock radio scrapbook

Dale Patterson is a treasure hunter. Only his quest doesn't lie at the bottom of the ocean or in some deserted cave. Nope, Dale's treasure can usually be found in attics, garages or packed away in long forgotten boxes in someone's basement.

You see, Dale collects radio air checks. But he doesn't just hoard them and listen to them in the privacy of his home. No way—he displays them proudly on his website www.rockradioscrapbook.ca.

Alongside on-air DJ line-ups, famous radio quotes, jingle packages and other radio related sections, there are special audio tribute sites to CKLW, 1050 CHUM, FM108, the late Tom Fulton from CKFH Toronto, Montreal DJ Marc Denis and many others.

Each week, Dale features a new *Air check*, so the site is always growing.

Patterson created the site in 1996 and, as of this writing, has some 575 audio memories to share with radio fans. Dale also founded the Southern Ontario/Western New York message board (www.sowny.ca), now managed by Craig Smith, who, along with Don Andrews, hosts an hour-long Monday night podcast that features live interviews with Canadian and U.S. radio legends.

As a Southern Ontario teenager in the 1960s, Patterson became a fan of Toronto radio stations CKEY, CHUM and CKFH, all of which, at one time or another, were playing the latest Top 40 hits.

"I fell in love with radio the instant I heard it. For me though, it wasn't just the music. It was what came between the songs—the DJs and the jingles. That, to me, was incredible."

Dale decided he wanted to be a part of this industry, so he enrolled in the journalism program at Ryerson.

"During my last year at Ryerson in '74, I saw an ad on the school bulletin board. CKFH needed an all-night operator. They were playing oldies by then. I was really nervous, but I got the gig. My shift was Friday nights, midnight to 7 a.m. Of course, I wasn't supposed to go to the air, but I did a little bit. I was awful, but I learned a lot. I was at 'FH a little over a year. At the same time, I was also compiling sports statistics for Canadian Press three nights a week, plus going to Ryerson. I didn't get a lot of sleep."

In 1975, Dale decided to go with CP full time. Later this year, he will celebrate his 33rd anniversary there. Radio, however, was never far from his heart. When an opportunity arose in 1985 to do the all night show once a week at FM108, an oldies station in Burlington, Ontario, Dale jumped at it.

"I usually pulled a double shift, driving from Burlington on Monday mornings to my CP job in downtown Toronto. Oh it was tough some days, but nothing could have kept me from being on the radio, I wanted it so badly."

It was former FM108 staffer Russ Horton who initially turned Dale on to the world of air checks.

"Until the early '90s, I didn't realize that people actually saved this stuff. I really had no idea. People like Russ, Sam Ward, Charlie Rittenburg and Bill Dulmage had all these amazing air check collections from the '50s right through to today. I did a lot of air check trading and that's when I decided to start my site and share all these wonderful memories."

Doug Thompson is an award winning writer/director for radio. He can be reached at dougt@aci.on.ca.

Dale doesn't charge to access anything on his website. For him, it truly is a labour of love.

"I don't make a dime off my site. It actually costs me money every month, but I wouldn't have it any other way. I love getting a new air check and putting it up. I'm constantly looking for more Canadian air checks… especially from the west. Winnipeg, Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver were amazing radio towns. Halifax and Montreal, too. I want to find whatever is out there."

So, sometime in the next week or two, rummage through those boxes of cassettes or reel-to-reel tapes in your basement, attic or garage. If you have something you want to pass along, send a copy to Dale Patterson. He'll probably put it up on his site…and share it with the world. And yet another piece of radio history will have been saved.