

## Mike Joseph: A Top 40 Pioneer

More Top 40 program directors cite Mike Joseph as their inspiration than any other consultant. In 2002 Joseph celebrated his 50th year as a full-time radio professional.

Mike Joseph grew up in Youngstown, OH. During the week, following classes at St. Brendan's Elementary School, 9-year-old Joseph would tend bar at his father's tavern. "I would pick the songs on the jukebox," Joseph recalls. "Between that and my ability to entertain all these guys, I was destined for a career in radio."

Joseph's dad wanted him to study medicine, but after a year of pre-med studies, Joseph decided to switch to pre-law. Broadcasting programs didn't exist in those days, but Mike made up for it by taking courses in drama, speech and music history.

During college, besides acting and announcing part-time, Joseph was a radio groupie. His advisor was Chaplain Paul Holliman, a priest who later became the first Archbishop of

Atlanta. As Joseph's college years came to a close, he had to make a decision: broadcasting or acting. Holliman suggested radio, but finding a job in Joseph's hometown was difficult. Youngstown stations demanded that he have no less than three years' experience.

Joseph migrated to WJEF/Grand Rapids in 1952. It featured the likes of Arthur Godfrey, Edward Murrow and other radio stars of the day. The station also had a once-a-week countdown of the biggest *Billboard* hits. By 1955 Joseph had seen the future. Rock 'n' roll dominated the sales charts and teens flocked to record stores to buy the new music, but the radio industry largely ignored the genre.

Joseph knew it was time to find a station that would play rock music. He came across a four-station chain called Founders. One of the stations was WDAC/Flint, MI, a directionless, underperforming outlet. After convincing Founders to make the switch to Rock, Joseph practically lived at record stores. He relentlessly grilled store managers on what was selling and who was buying.

He then began to recruit an airstaff; then he had to build a format. He remembered the lessons he'd learned while directing radio dramas: Keep the action moving, don't leave a second of dead air, use jingles, and limit the talk segments to 10 seconds.

In the first Hooper ratings, WDAC jolted the entire industry with a breathtaking 85 share. Joseph was appointed PD for the entire Founders group and immediately dispatched to Honolulu to ready KPOA for a similar format.

In 1958 Joseph was sent to the company's New Orleans stations, where he came face to face with the two godfathers of Top 40 radio. WTIX was a Todd Storz station, while WNOE belonged to Gordon McClendon. The stations were beating each others' brains out, as Top 40 competitors did in those days, and Founders decided to initiate a three-way battle.

Joseph sat himself in a hotel room for about a month and a half and kept meticulous program logs of both stations. He decided the best offense would be to hit the competitors "where they ain't." All stations had enormous news commitments in those days. Joseph decided to play music when his competitors were in talk segments. If a station had a five-minute newscast, he would counterprogram a countdown of the top two songs.

Joseph also instituted dayparting, which allowed him to soften the station's sound while students were in class and assume a harder edge when they got out. The results were the same as before: No. 1 in one book.

Joseph subscribes to one basic tenet that informs all his other rules: "Give the listeners what they want, and the ratings will follow."



Mike Joseph

### RADIO

James Kennedy Cox Radio Chairman ... Paul Williams KPLX/Dallas

PD ... Dom "Domino" Theodore WKQI/Detroit

PD ... KRPW/Houston signs on as Urban,

Maurice Devoe PD ... WTMI/Miami flips to CHR/Rhythmic, Phil Michaels PD ... John Gehron Clear

Channel/Regional VP & Chicago Market Manager ... David Hall

Premiere Sr. VP/Programming; Robin Bertolucci Clear Channel/

Los Angeles Dir./AM Programming ... John King Citadel

Regional President ... Michael Martin Clear

Channel/San Francisco Bay Area Dir./

Programming & Operations ... Sam Rogers

Infinity/Washington, DC Market Captain;

Melissa Huston WARW/Washington VP/GM

... Steve Candullo Metro/Shadow Exec. VP ... David Lebow

Emmis Sr. VP/Operations ... Tracy Austin KRBE/Houston PD ...

Gregory Noack Premiere Exec. VP/Talk Programs ... Buzz Knight

WMGK/Philadelphia PD ... Mac Daniels WYCD/Detroit PD ... Tim

McCoy Hispanic/Houston Market Station Manager ... Chuck

Finney KLTY/Dallas Dir./Programming ... Marko Radlovic SBS/

Los Angeles VP/GM ... Jay Coffey KRTH/Los Angeles PD ... John

Ryan KMPC/Los Angeles GM ... Tim Sabeau WCKG/Chicago PD

... Johnny Chiang KTHT/Houston PD ... Tom Gjerdrum KALC/

Denver PD ... Jim Smith WJMK/Chicago PD ... Mary Ellen

Kachnske WTMX/Chicago Program Manager ... J.D. Gonzalez,

Arnulfo Ramirez Hispanic Regional PDs ... Michael Saunders

WTJM/New York PD ... Rob Roberts Clear Channel/Miami OM ...

Jeff Scott WQSX/Boston PD ... Brian Purdy Clear Channel/Dallas

Regional VP ... KNX/Los Angeles News Director Bob Sims

retires, replaced by Ed Pyle ... Beau Raines WZLX/Boston PD ...

Ken Fearnow Waitt Radio President, Mark Todd VP/

Programming ... Carl Hamilton Radio One VP/Regional Manager

... Jim Donahoe Millennium CEO ... Sean Demery KITS/San Francisco PD ... Jerry

McKenna Entercom/Denver VP/GM ... Tom Calococci KBXX/Houston PD ... Kevin

Robinson WZFS/Chicago PD ... Troy Hanson Clear Channel/Miami Dir./Rock

Programming ... Tamara Knechtel Radio One VP/Operations ... Mark Hannon

Infinity/Boston Market Captain ... Maurice Tunick WOR/New York VP/Programming

... Maria Elena KLVE/Los Angeles PD; Harold Austin KSCA/Los Angeles PD ... John

Candelaria KBFB & KTXQ/Dallas OM/PD ... Eric Logan WUSN/Chicago OM ... Chuck

Bortnick WW1 COO ... Earl Jones WLJB & WMXD/Detroit GM ... Charlie Rahilly CC

Sr. VP/West Coast ... Tyler Cox KRLD/Dallas OM ... Ed Salamon Dir./Country Radio

Broadcasters ... Max Dugan KEGD/Dallas PD ... Steve Kosbau WDRQ & WDVD/

Detroit President/GM ... Keith Hastings WAAF/Boston PD ... Andy Schuon Infinity

President/Programming ... Sam Weaver KRNB/Dallas OM ... Kenny King WJZW &

WRQW/Washington OM ... Rick Strauss WMGK/Philadelphia PD ... Carl Anderson

WJZW/Washington PD ... Buzz Knight WROR/Boston PD ... Steve Stiles WNUA/

Chicago PD ... Ted Stecker KSCS/Dallas OM ... Jaye Albright joins Michael O'Malley

for new consultancy ... Christie Banks WARW/Washington PD ... L.J. Smith

Regional Dir./Programming Clear Channel/Southwest ... Brian Bridgman WIOQ &

WSN/Philadelphia ... Vince Richards KTBZ/Houston PD ... Steve Williams KKSF/

San Francisco PD ... Brian Bridgman KHKS/Dallas ... Paul Fiddick Emmis Int'l

President ... Todd Shannon WIOQ/Philadelphia PD ... Paul Agase WKSC/Chicago

Station Manager ... Darren Davis Clear Channel/Detroit OM ... Martin Raab, Lark

Hadley, Eileen Thorgusen Exec. VPs at Premiere ... Neil Portnow NARAS President

... Mary Quass, Tammy Gilmore, Lindsay Wood Davis form NewRadio, buy 22

stations from Marathon.



Tracy Austin



Tom Calococci



Rob Roberts



Kevin Liles

Julie Greenwald Island President; Greenwald

and Kevin Liles add Exec. VP duties for IDJMG

... Craig Kallman, Ron Shapiro co-Presidents of

Atlantic ... Greg Marella MCA VP/Pop Promo ...

Will Botwin Columbia Records Group President ...

Ronnie Johnson Atlantic Sr. VP/GM, Urban ... Tony Brown, Tim

DuBois form Universal South ... Ron Goldstein Verve Music

Group President/CEO ... Mark Abramson Roadrunner VP/Promo

... John McMann Sr. VP/Pop & Crossover Promo, Morace Landy

Sr. VP/Urban Promo for Atlantic ... Rick Sackheim Arista VP/

Rhythm & Crossover Promo ... Michael Williams J VP/Crossover Promo ... David

Munns Chairman/CEO EMI Recorded Music; Matt Serletic Virgin U.S. Chairman/CEO,

Roy Lott Virgin President/COO ... Bryan Switzer Universal South Sr. VP/Promo ...

Michael Johnson Motown Sr. VP/Marketing & Promo ... Cynthia Johnson J VP/Urban

Promo ... Benny Pough MCA Sr. VP/Promo, overseeing Urban ... Mitch Mills Artemis

VP/Promo ... Tom Gorman Gold Circle Sr. VP/GM ... Bob Jamieson RCA Music Group

Chairman ... Valerie DeLong Universal Sr. VP/Promo ... Randy

Acker GM, Matt Signore GM/CFO at Island Def Jam; Stu Bergen

Exec. VP of Island; Mike Kyser Def Jam/Def Soul VP ... Pete

Rosenblum Elektra VP/Alternative ... Sky Daniels Redline

Entertainment VP/Promo ... David Haley WB/Nashville head of

promo ... Jim Caparro WEA Inc. CEO ... Mike Curb Word

Entertainment Chairman ... Lisa Velasquez Lava Sr. VP/Promo ...

Luke Lewis to oversee MCA/Nashville as Bruce Hinton retires ...

Sony/Nashville merges Epic, Monument; Larry Pareigis Sr. VP/

Promo ... Phil Quarteraro EMI North America Exec. VP ... Neil

Foster RCA Music Group Exec. VP ... John Strazza Jive VP/Rhythm & Crossover

Promo ... Michael Powers UMG/Nashville's Mercury, MCA & Lost Highway Sr. VP/

Promo; Royce Risser VP/Promo.

### RECORDS



Mike Curb