

**Stanley S. Hubbard, CEO, Hubbard Broadcasting Inc.**

Interviewed by Peter Myers at Landmark Center, St. Paul, Oct. 11, 2010

Q How did your father get into the broadcasting business?

A Well, my dad was a pilot and he flew for the Internal Revenue Service during Prohibition, had a successful company in Louisville and Mattingly-Hubbard Motor Car Company – Mattingly's grandson became an astronaut. And he and Mattingly bought used surplus WWI airplanes and rebuilt them and resold them. And then they tried to start an airline and that went broke about 1921 or 22, using surplus airplanes. In fact, in Louisville, Hubbard Field, my dad named the field, was there must have been til about 30 or 40 years ago and then it changed the name of it. Then the depression came, an earlier depression, and they went bust and he came home to Minnesota and he got excited about the possibilities of radio and so he built his own transmitter. The way he got into radio was that in the early 1920's all they played on the radio was, as he used to say, the fat lady singing opera to the accompaniment of the piano. And we had WCCO, which was owned by Washburn Crosby Company, which is now General Mills. And they had this radio station, which was an experimental station. And they'd play the fat lady singing opera to the accompaniment of the piano. And you couldn't at that time play records on the radio. You couldn't go from the needle, the stylus, to the transmitter. The only music that was on the radio was live music. So he had an idea. There was the Prom Ballroom in St. Paul and the Marigold Ballroom in Minneapolis and he thought you know, if you can make a deal with them, he could broadcast live popular music. And he made a deal with the Marigold in Minneapolis and every night there was a different dance band – Benny Goodman or Glenn Miller or whatever – and he'd broadcast the music live. And that's how it got started and was successful. Well then in 1928, St. Paul decided it needed a radio station because Minneapolis had WCCO and he made a deal with the people that...the Shields, and the Brown's who ran National Battery Company – and they bought into my dad's station and built a new one. He had 25%, Shields had 50% and Brown had 25% and they moved to the top of the St. Paul Hotel and had transmitters out on Highway 61 and started the radio station and became an NBC affiliate – one of the very early ones – and it was a very successful operation for a long, long time. And Mr. Shields died of a heart attack and he had agreed to sell my dad his share at some point and then my dad had 75%. And then Brown was killed in an automobile accident and my dad had 100%. So that's the way he got started and where we are.

Q I know that he bought the first TV camera. When was that?

A Yes. The first TV camera ever sold and he saw it at the RCA exposition at the World's Fair in Chicago and he bought the first camera ever sold and he got the National American Legion, to do a parade and did a pick up of the parade and Rock Almer was the announcer and he did the play by play so to speak. And they had, I think, 6 or 7 TV sets in the old Radisson Hotel in Minneapolis and

did a closed circuit telecast. People thought TV would never work; it's an interesting novelty. He made predictions about what they'd use TV cameras for – surveillance and they all laughed and that's just crazy. Well, it wasn't so crazy.

Q Talk about the property on University Avenue. I assume WAMD started elsewhere.

A WAMD was at the Marigold Ballroom in Minneapolis. They gave him a little studio, he had a little transmitter, he broadcast popular music and people listened to it. And then when he made the deal with the National Battery Company people – Shields and Brown – they put money up and they moved downtown St. Paul, built a big transmitter, went to 10,000 watts and later 50,000 watts and became the NBC affiliate in the Twin Cities. We had WCCO, which was a big station, and we were a big station. And that was in 1928 and 29. Well he had a great belief in television, what would happen if we'd get TV going. And in 1947 he applied for a license to build a TV station in St. Paul and he was the first one. Trouble was getting the license and financing it because everybody said TV won't work. But he said he wanted to be someplace central so he picked University Avenue, a vacant property, and he called it KSTP: Where the Twin Cities Meet. Remember this was before the Bloomington's and Edina's and all the suburbs. There was St. Paul and Minneapolis and this was where the Twin Cities meet. So the Twin Cities line runs right through our front door. On the west side is Minneapolis, on the east side is St. Paul. It runs right down the middle of the first TV tower. And he was able to raise money from the Mellon Bank in Pittsburgh. The people that owned the First National Bank, who we had been banking with for all the years in the radio business, tried to file and take his license away. So he said, I don't deal with them any more. So the Lillys were no longer our bankers and my dad was able to get the license in spite of the First National Bank trying to take it away from him. He got the money from the Mellon Bank in Pittsburgh. And I remember when he came out with the check and he said, you know that man, Mr. Euler said we'd rather bet on people than on horses. So that's how he got the money to start the television. But everybody said TV won't work. It won't work. Kids at school said it – your dad's crazy. He's going to lose everything. I remember going with him to a convention, radio convention that was in Chicago and he had a couple radio guys say, Hubbard you're crazy. You're going to lose everything. You've got a great radio business. Stick with it. And him telling them, you're going to miss the boat. And later on seeing those same type of people who were disgruntled old men because they didn't have the foresight. So I'm very, very lucky. My family's very lucky that my dad had the foresight to do what he did. Because he gave us a big head start in the world.

Q He had the foresight and also the courage of his convictions.

A He had guts. Darn right he had guts.

Q That would have been in the mid-40s?

A That would have been 1948 when he went on the air from the University location. April '48. First TV station between Chicago and Los Angeles. And we would have been there in '47 if it weren't for the fact that the bank...

Q What are your earliest memories of University Avenue? I can imagine you going down there as a kid to work with Dad.

A My brother and sister and I were there a lot. One of my first memories of building a tall tower – you didn't need tall towers for radio but for VHF television you needed tall towers because it's line of sight. And I remember them building a 600-foot tower and throwing hot rivets, they'd throw at different levels and different levels and it was exciting as heck. And building the building. I remember when we opened up. It was a great experience. Very exciting.

Q Did you always know that you wanted to be in that business?

A Oh yeah. I always wanted to be in radio or TV business because we spent a lot of time – my brother and I – down at the St. Paul Hotel when we were just a radio operation. We had the whole top floor of the St. Paul Hotel. And I love broadcasting. Broadcasting's very exciting because you get involved in everything that's going on in the community whether it be the carnival, whether it be politics, whether it's what are we going to do to enhance the community – you're involved.

Q What do you remember about University Avenue in the late 40s-early 50s?

A Well, it was streetcars and it was islands in the middle where you'd walk on down and wait for the streetcar. It was busy. It was Brown and Bigelow, it was Waldorf Paper, it was Midway Chevrolet. Down on the other end it was University of Minnesota; it was a very, very busy thoroughfare because that was the main route between Minneapolis and St. Paul. We used to either come on University to get on down near the Capitol or we'd get onto Marshall Avenue and then come over to University later on. It was then what the freeway is today. It was busy, busy, busy.

Q I've seen pictures of Snelling and University which seemed really busy. What was happening there?

A Well that's where – you're right – that's where the streetcar shops were and that's where they did all the maintenance and all the work on them. They had streetcars piled up like buses and that was a very busy intersection.

Q Did you take the streetcar to the University of Minnesota?

A No, at that time I was driving. So I drove. But I used to take streetcars to school.

Q Where did you get on and off the streetcar?

A We lived down on Princeton and Woodlawn, quite near University of St. Thomas. And we'd walk up and catch it on the end of the Grand Avenue line and take it to Snelling and you got what you called a transfer slip, get off at Snelling, catch the street car to Como, get off at Como and catch the street car down to the city limits down to where Breck military school was. Breck was a military school back then. And once in a while we'd take the streetcar. We'd always take it to downtown on Saturday afternoon and go to a movie. Come down and have lunch at the Coney Island and go to a movie on Saturday afternoon. That was always fun. There was no television early on.

Q What did the area near the TV station look like back then?

A It looked pretty much like it does now. Yeah, it did.

Q What part of the street have changed the most in the last 50 years?

A I can't say what's all changed, I can't say. I'd say on University Avenue I'd say the east end where you have all the Vietnamese and Southeast Asian people have their businesses, which is wonderful and exciting. I don't like the idea of...think it's a total waste of money to have the high speed, what's going to be slow speed really, to have the transit system. I think it's just a waste of taxpayer's money.

Q Do you have memories of going to the great landmarks like the Prom Ballroom?

A Oh sure. Well I only went to the Prom Ballroom a few times. I wasn't a great dancer but I remember going there. And I remember the Blue Horse and the Criterion. Criterion where Joan Smith played the piano and she worked at KSTP and played the organ on a show we called Treasure Chest and that's where she met Ray Kroc and became Joan Kroc, you know, of McDonald's. He met her there. I remember those places, absolutely. We'd go to lunch there once in a while.

Q Another great landmark was Montgomery Ward, or Monkey Wards as some people called it.

A Montgomery Wards was a big thing on Snelling and University.... Montgomery Wards was a big deal. I remember the guy that ran it was named Futh. Mr. Futh ran Montgomery Wards and he was a good friend of my dad's.

And interestingly they'd weigh the mail every day and they could tell by the mail exactly how many dollars volume they were doing just by weighing it. And that was a big institution, Montgomery Ward.

Q Brown & Bigelow at one time was the largest printer of calendars...

A Yes, and playing cards Charlie Ward, who was the great artist that used to do Saturday Evening Post? What was his name? Covers? I can't remember. He worked for Brown and Bigelow; he was on the payroll. Anyway, Brown and Bigelow, Charlie Ward was bigger than life – he ran Brown and Bigelow. And it was the world's largest- they used to call it "remembrance advertising" – calendars, playing cards, things like that.

Q Other big companies?

A Onan Generators are on University Avenue. They were not too far from the city limits. They were in Minneapolis. And you've heard of Onan Generator Company? During the war they built the generators for the military and the Navy. And they were very big on University Avenue.

Q University Avenue is anchored at either end by our two most prominent institutions, the U of M and the Capitol. But almost everything in between has been the result of private entrepreneurial activity. What is it about this street that has always attracted businesses?

A Well, it was the main connector between the Twin Cities. Other than that, I don't know. Maybe good rental rates. I don't know. But now the University's doing their medical expansion along the buildings behind University Avenue, the new businesses. I know what attracted my dad because it was the main route, it's where the Twin Cities met and that was the big deal. Because we were a Twin Cities station; not a St. Paul and not a Minneapolis station.

Q Do you know about the horse barns in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century?

A Yes I know that and I know they sold horses to the military during WWI – a million dollars a week or something. But I don't...that was way before my time. Porky's has been there forever.

Q What do you remember about Porky's?

A I didn't go there very much. It was just an early drive in. You could go in there and get a hamburger and get out of there pretty fast, but it's still there. And it always seems to be doing fine. That's all I remember about it. It was a drive in.

Q Anything else about interesting people you met along University?

A I met a lot of people at our office. But there are a lot of businesses right off of University Avenue – Merchant's Freight Lines, belonged to Stan Wasie. Schnitzer's was a big scrap iron yard that was behind there. I remember Stan Wasie ran Merchant's Freight Lines, I'd go over once in a while and I asked him did you ever have to meet with Jimmy Hoffa? He said, oh yeah. Whenever the contract was up I'd meet him in a hotel and give him money, cash, and we'd have a new deal, which is pretty bad. And Bob Short then bought Merchant's Freight.

Q Trucking was a big industry then.

A Yeah. That was bigger. Then of course you had Memorial Stadium at the end of University Avenue, where the Gophers played football. The Gophers have won more national championships than any other school, believe it or not – six. Nobody comes close but that was the old days.

Q Have you been to the TCF Bank Stadium?

A Yes I have. Beautiful stadium. And a lot goes on in that stadium besides football. There's laboratories, all sorts of things under those bleachers that you don't realize are there.

Q We're going to delve into the University and Dale intersection, which was a tough place for quite a while. What do you recall about that area?

A It was a tough intersection. I don't know...they got rid of the theaters. Somebody forgot the First Amendment and they were able to get rid of it. I don't know if they'd be able to get rid of it today.

Q Talk about the more recent innovations that Hubbard Broadcasting has made. I can imagine that there were some skeptics when you launched satellite broadcasting.

A We heard a lot of that. Well, we were believers in satellite television and we applied in 1982 for a license to broadcast from a satellite. We were the first licensees for direct broadcast satellite. And the problem was raising money. Every place you'd go, the cable guys would be there because cable was fairly new and the bankers would not cooperate. It took me a while to figure out the reason they wouldn't cooperate was because they put so much money into cable that they weren't going to do anything – Morgan Stanley and the rest I heard from. I believe that had we got going when we started, there wouldn't be any cable systems today because it cost \$1200 to pass a home cable system and it cost us less than \$2 to pass a home. And as you know Direct TV, which we merged with, and Dish Network – are passing better than 30% and not just passing it but it's signed up more than 30% of all the homes. Which we're a great service and we'll all get along fine – cable and satellite together – but when

we started out it was like everything else. And when TV finally got going, everybody predicted it would kill radio. And when cable got going everybody said it'll kill TV stations. And on and on. And when DVS got going, it's going to kill the cable systems. Well we all live and we all get along just fine. In fact as of today – which is October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010 - more people are watching television than ever before in history. And more young people – contrary to what the internet guys have you believe – are spending more time watching TV than ever in history. So life goes on. But we started the first direct broadcast satellite system in partner with Hughes General Motors and then we sold out to them and we own one third of the system, they own two thirds. And during that period we started what's known as satellite newsgathering – all the big trucks with the dishes – and everybody said that wouldn't work. It'll never work. If it rains it won't work, blah, blah, blah. It works fine. And every TV station in the country now has a satellite dish, don't they? And we have a business where we interconnect – we have 163 affiliates – and then the networks decided they wanted to do it and there's no way we can compete with them. So we had a nice 18-year run doing that. Then we closed that business. We call it CONUS, which is a term for Continental US. But we got it going and it worked and it still works. So we've had fun. We've been lucky.

Q Can you give a brief summary of all your broadcasting operations?

A We have two TV stations in the Twin Cities – Channel 5 and 45. We have Channel 10 in Duluth, we have a Channel 13 in Austin/Rochester area. We have a high-powered computer out near Redwood Falls. We've got two stations in New York State, Rochester NBC, Albany NBC. We have three stations in New Mexico – KLB in Albuquerque, KLBF in Farmington, KLBR in Roswell, New Mexico – so we cover New Mexico very well and we cover all of Minnesota. And we've got the production company – F & F Productions. If you watch an NBC hockey game, we'll be doing it. We do a lot of NFL football games, we do the World Series, we do all sorts of things that the networks hire us to do and we don't get any credit for it. We're an independent production company. We've got Reelz Channel which operates out of the Albuquerque movie studio which is on Dish and it's on Direct TV and it's on Comcast and it's on Time Warner systems. We're passing 60 million homes, we're going into 60 million homes. And we have controlling interest in another cable satellite channel called Ovation, which is the arts channel. Reelz is all about movies and we've got some new things we're working on that I can't talk about. But we have fun. As I say we're very fortunate. My dad gave us a big head start so we're really lucky. And it was great growing up with a man who had the courage and the conviction and he had guts and he was absolutely honest. He never cheated anybody and that's important to us. I remember in the old days you shook hands and it was a deal. You didn't have to have everything written down in contracts. That's right – you shook hands and you kept you word.

Q I know your kids are in the business now.

A Oh yeah. They run the businesses, really. I call myself the chief cheerleader. I'm chairman of the board and chief cheerleader.

Q What is your official title?

A Chief Executive Officer of the company. But these other companies that we own, their chief executives – Ginny Hubbard runs all of our radio stations and so on.

Q You are the only independently owned TV stations in Minnesota, and I'm guessing one of the few stations of this size nationally. Why do you think there are so few non-network-owned TV stations in the country?

A Well, two reasons. Back in the '60's people weren't sure about the future of television and they sold their stations, people would build them. My dad was kind of going down that road and I said we haven't even scratched the surface yet. And he went along with that and stayed in the business. But some of these people become frightened and they just want to get out. And they get attractive offers and they're gone. And we've had plenty of attractive offers but we're still here because we believe in the business. In fact Comcast is buying NBC as you might know. And Comcast is the biggest cable company and they're very good, straight people. And they told us at an NBC meeting that they're buying it because they see a great future over there in network business.

Q You were an NBC affiliate for many years...

A We were NBC's very first TV affiliate.

Q When did you change to ABC?

A '78.

Q Was it unusual for a station to change affiliations like that?

A No, back in that era people were changing affiliations and most of them were doing it for money. ABC would come in and offer them more money in affiliate fees and ours had nothing to do with money. NBC was mismanaged at that time, it was going down the chute and then they offered us money to stay with them. And that really offended us, because to us a partnership's a partnership and it's built on trust and friendship, not just on the money. So we switched to ABC and ABC said we can't make any promises, we're not offering you any more money, we're just saying that we're building a great organization and we joined ABC. But we still have a bunch of NBC stations and NBC is a very different company today than it was in '78. It's a very good company today.



Q Is there anything else you'd like to add?

A No. Love the Twin Cities, we're Minnesotans. We're staying here, we're keeping our headquarters here, we believe in Minnesota and the good people of Minnesota. That's all I can say. We're Minnesotan and darn proud of it.