



By **Richie Zweigenhaft**

In 1974, when my wife (Lisa Young), my dog (the late great Throckmorton), and I piled into our Volkswagen (Elsinore) and headed from Santa Cruz, Calif., to Guilford College, where I was going to teach psychology, it never crossed my mind that I'd become a disk jockey on the college radio station (I didn't know the college had a station) or that I'd start a communications program that would last for more than 20 years. Here's the story.

During my first year, while I was still trying to figure out whether a secular agnostic Jew could survive in Quakerland, I had a student named **Robbie Millns '77** in my social psychology class. Robbie, then a long-haired hippie English major, now a neatly trimmed foreign exchange trader who has just moved from New York City to London, was the manager of WQFS, the college's 10-watt station housed in the dank and grim basement of Duke Memorial Hall. Within a few weeks, I had my own show (The Rockaday Johnny and His Girl Ramalamadingdong Show) and within six months WQFS was housed in its current second floor location in Founders Hall and was broadcasting at 1,900 watts.

The beat went on for about six years, and then, in 1981, some of my fellow jocks (disk jockeys) came to ask me why Guilford had no courses that focused on issues related to communications. This seemed to me to be a good question, so I asked a few faculty members to meet with me, we came up with a proposal for a communications concentration, and we took it to the curriculum committee (they

## Rockaday Johnny and Ramalamadingdong

*O-bla-di-o-bla-dah life goes on...*

approved it). In the process, I agreed to develop and teach "Mass Media," a course I've now taught about once a year for over 20 years.

For the first 15 years or so of the concentration, we offered a small number of theory courses (including my mass media course, a course titled "Journalistic Ethics" which former President Grimsley Hobbs taught many times and a course Tom Clark developed called "Media and Reality"), and a range of other courses, most of which focused [on] print journalism and speaking skills. Many students chose the option of replacing a course with an internship at a newspaper, magazine, television station, radio station or advertising agency in Greensboro or elsewhere (some were done in London while students were studying abroad).

By 1996, based on surveys I had sent to alumni and given to current students, two things became clear. One was that students saw their internships as extremely valuable. The other was that current college students love movies, and that they watch a lot of them (in theatres, and as video rentals and purchases). We, therefore, changed the requirements so that the internship became mandatory rather than optional. In addition, in recent years various members of the faculty have offered film courses and we now include these among the courses that count toward the concentration (including Jeff Jeske's "Classic American Cinema," Dottie Borei's "Contemporary China in Film," Jack Zerbe's "Gay and Lesbian Cinema," and April Soroko's "Visual Composition and Film").

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the communications concentration, we had two nice public events. The first, in February 2001, was a visit from Skip Caray, the voice of the Atlanta Braves. Skip's father was the legendary Harry Caray, longtime baseball announcer for

the Chicago Cubs, and one of his sons is also a sportscaster (formerly with the CBS TV station in Greensboro, now with the Cubs). Skip gave a public talk, "Harry, Skip and Chip: Impressions of the World of Sports Broadcasting as Seen From the Middle Generation." In May 2002, the graduation speaker was Guilford alum **Mary Ann Akers '92**, then a reporter for National Public Radio, and a product of the English Department and communications concentration. Mary Ann is but one of scores of Guilford alumni who are out there working in print journalism, television, radio and film. Our graduates work for, or have worked for, various radio stations (including WTOP AM/FM Newsradio), various newspapers (including the *News and Observer* of Raleigh, N.C.), various magazines, BBC America, Appalshop (a multimedia center in Kentucky) and even the National Basketball Association.

This past May, even though the graduating class was small, more students graduated with the communications concentration than ever before. Meanwhile, WQFS recently celebrated its 33rd year. The concentration is about to begin its 23rd year. Ramalamadingdong has become a hospital chaplain. And me, I'm still trying to figure out if a secular agnostic Jew can survive in Quakerland. O-bla-di-o-bla-dah life goes on...

**Zweigenhaft is Dana Professor of Psychology. For you youngsters out there, the name Rockaday Johnny derives from a Dylan song, "Talking World War Three Blues," in which he says, among other things, "It was Rockaday Johnny singing, 'Tell your ma, tell your pa, our love's agonna grow—wa-oh.'" Ramalamadingdong derives from the 1959 hit by the Edsels—their only hit—of the same name.**