



March 24, 2008

Ex-radio personality recalls life in rock

By KEN HOFFMAN

Copyright 2008 Houston Chronicle

When I moved to Houston back in the '80s, Houston radio had stars up and down the dial.

It seemed every station had a big-time morning show with hosts who were characters and real celebrities around town.

There was Moby, Stevens and Pruett, John Lander and Hudson and Harrigan. Glenn Beck, now a popular TV talk host on CNN, was a hot rock jock in Houston on KRBE.

Of that crew, only Hudson and Harrigan are still on the air in Houston, doing mornings on country KILT-FM.

The most successful woman in radio during the '80s was undeniably Dayna Steele, who did middays on KLOL. No one was more involved in charity events than Steele.

Today, no longer in radio, Steele runs a successful consulting company called Steele Media Services. She is a businesswoman, motivational speaker, mom and, now, author.

Her new book, *Rock to the Top: What I Learned About Success From The World's Greatest Rock Stars* (\$17.95, Brown Books Publishing) is part self-help, but mostly just a ton of fun stories about superstars like Mick Jagger, Sting, Van Halen, David Crosby, Aerosmith and what radio was like "before corporations started buying up all the stations and turning radio from an art form where personalities thrived to a modern business that cares only about the bottom line."

"We were given so much freedom. We were a part of Houston life. We were allowed to be creative. I'm convinced that there was only one station like KLOL in the country. We couldn't have done it in any other city. The way radio is now, all the shows are the same. I think you can take any morning show today, pop it in another city, and nobody would know the difference."

When Steele started giving motivational talks about 10 years ago, she noticed that the question-and-answer session always evolved into KLOL stories and dish about rock stars.

"People would ask how they can start a successful business, and do I know Van Halen? Yes, I know Van Halen ... and lots more rock stars. I had a really great run on radio. When I left radio, I put all those photos and memories in a box in my closet.

"When I decided to write this book, I just went back into that box and dug up a lot of wonderful memories. The book is a combination of business advice and my personal story. I had an incredible life when I was doing the radio show," Steele said.

It took a lot of persistence to write the book, including "stalking poor Gene Simmons until he agreed to do the forward." It took a lot of guts to run some of those photos, too.

"Most of the pictures are me and rock stars. It's like a history of my and Jon Bon Jovi's hair. But my favorite is the one of me from second grade," she said.

The most famous photo is a Health & Fitness magazine cover from 1996. Steele is naked and seven months pregnant with son Dack. The photo, of course, was a takeoff on Demi Moore's famous pregnant Vanity Fair cover.

"I especially love that photo. It created a lot of attention, mostly because a Houston YMCA banned it from their lobby because they considered it pornography. The person who took the photo went on to make a lot of money taking photos of pregnant women."

She weaves rock-star stories with simple how-to advice in business.

"It's not surprising that the biggest, most successful rock stars are the ones who work the hardest and do the right things to get ahead. Mick Jagger and Keith Richards work harder at their craft than anybody. They do the right things and are always prepared. You don't have to be a rock star for lessons like that.

"For example, I can't tell you how many times I give a business speech and someone comes up to me afterward. We talk a while, and I'll ask for their business card. They say, 'I forgot to bring one.' You should always have your business card and paper and pen. You need to be smart, but you also need to have common sense," she said.

Steele says she doesn't miss doing a radio show, but does long to be behind a microphone when big stories break or a major artist releases "a new piece of music."

"That's when I get a little twinge about radio. But doing it day in and day out? No way. I much prefer running my business and doing field trips with my kids," she said.