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Popular Michigan DJ had prolific career

'Mr. Boogie' worked at many Michigan radio, TV stations

VALERIE OLANDER The Detroit News

Joseph "Joey Ryan" Pietruska was a fixture on Detroit airwaves for nearly 30 years, spinning records at radio stations, earning the nickname "Mr. Boogie" and working as a TV announcer.

The popular disc jockey, whose career spanned from the 1970s to 2000 at Metro Detroit stations, died of renal failure on Thursday, June 23, 2010, at the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans. He was 62.

Longtime friend Kenn Christopher recalled first meeting Mr. Pietruska at WAYN, Wayne State University's student radio station, when Christopher was station manager. At the time, Mr. Pietruska was a student at Osborn High School in Detroit and soon became the first Osborn student intern to work at the college station.

"I heard his voice over the studio speaker. The voice was better than any voice we had. I went to see who it was and here's this little 17-year-old kid with this big voice," Christopher said.

Mr. Pietruska had bribed the WAYN staff with some Top 10 records to get inside, Christopher said.

Born in Manchester, N.H., on July 12, 1947, Mr. Pietruska moved with his family to Detroit in 1950. He became involved in student radio at Osborn High, where he graduated in 1966.

Mr. Pietruska later enlisted in the Army, serving during the Vietnam War.

He started his professional radio career as a DJ in the early '70s at WHFI-FM (94.7), now WCSX, in Birmingham, and went on to work at WKNR (KEENER 13) in Dearborn. It was at WDRQ-FM (93.1) that he was dubbed Mr. Boogie. Later, he broadcast the 7 p.m. to midnight show from the top of the Renaissance Center in downtown Detroit at WTWR, formerly Tower 92, now WMXD Mix 92.3.

Based on his talent and adaptability, he worked at numerous other southeast Michigan radio and TV stations and in the Toledo area.

He was a voice and production talent on many local, regional and national radio, TV and corporate commercials and presentations, Christopher said. He also enjoyed mentoring many young radio talents who are on stations throughout the country, Christopher said.

Mr. Pietruska is survived by his sister, Deborah Pietruska Nathan, and her husband, Richard Nathan, of Burbank, Calif.; and cousins, William Modis of Amherst, N.H., Joan Parker Sutton of Prince Edward Island, Canada, and Constance Heatter of Miami, Fla., and their families.

He will be interred at the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans cemetery. The date is pending. A memorial is planned by fellow radio personalties at a Detroit radio reunion on Sept 25.