

'Voice of Tar Heels' loves work, in spite of long days

By ROSE WAGNER

WOO-DEE! WOO-DEE!

That cheer at Carolina home football games is proof that Carolina fans know that Woody Durham is the "Voice of the Tar Heels."

But how many know how Durham became the "Voice" and what being the "Voice" involves?

Few people realize how much time Durham puts into the football games on Saturday afternoons. He spent 15 hours alone preparing for the game against E.C.U.

Preparation involves making spotter boards, charts showing information about the three or four men who play each position. The spotter boards include weight, height, class, hometown and any unusual aspect about a player.

"It's a ready reference. Half the stuff I prepare is never used but I figure it's better to have it than not to have it," Durham said in a recent interview.

Durham also has to research and read about the other team's players, statistics and previous meetings with Carolina teams. "I'd like to make the players become more than just a number," Durham said.

The work is not done when the game is won for Durham because he does both the football and basketball coaches' shows. "I actually get involved in the taping at about 8:30 p.m. and leave Chapel Hill when the show is finished which is usually around 1:00 a.m."

Durham recently accepted a new job as Executive Sports Director for Village Companies Incorporated which owns Tar Heel Sports Network, WCHL radio, and Village Cable TV.

"It's difficult to explain the job because it's actually being created," Durham said. "It will involve initiating new program ideas and doing syndication."

Durham said one of the reasons he decided to take the job was because it will allow him to build up a certain amount of security and become a little more involved in the Network.

Durham's current job at Channel 28 involves a newscast at 6 p.m. and 11:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

As a child he used to come to Carolina games with his parents to watch Charlie "Choo-Choo" Justice play.

"It's kind of ironic," Durham said. "He became one of my best friends and it's been over 30 years."

Durham attended UNC-CH and worked on Channel 4 for three of his undergraduate years. When he was just a junior, he began announcing regional ACC basketball games.

Soon after college, he changed from Carolina athletics and announced Wake Forest games. He worked at Wake Forest when Brian Piccolo played there. "He was cut from a different mold as far as personality was concerned," Durham said of the famed Chicago Bears' player.

Durham's next big move was to Sports Director at WFMY in Greensboro. But then



DTH/file photo

Woody Durham (left), Carolina announcer, reads statistics for a Tar Heel game ... Jim Heavner and Bob Holliday, Durham's old sidekicks, look on.

he heard of an opening for a Carolina sports announcer. "Being an alumnus and always interested in Carolina football and basketball, I pursued the job and got it," he said. And it was eleven years ago that he started his role as "Voice of the Tarheels."

Durham spends many hours with his demanding career. "Soon I'd like to be able to put myself in a position where I can spend more time with my wife and children," Durham said.

As a result of his recent change in jobs, Durham will be spending more time at home because he will not be doing the News on Channel 28. "It gives me the freedom to spend more time with my family."

"She's unique," Durham said, referring to his wife, Jean. "She's done an exceptional job with Wes and Taylor (their sons). In our business, the divorce rate is high. Anytime you find two people who've been together as long as we have, it's unusual."

Mrs. Durham said, "You learn to adjust a schedule to fit the schedule of whom you are married to. The way I don't get upset is I think of all the advantages we have. We

travel a lot." The Durhams have been to Hawaii twice, to New York, and to the West Coast.

She said the children are used to not seeing that much of their father. "But now it's becoming more important for him to be with them," she said. "We'd like to spend time getting involved in Taylor's grade school activities and Wes would like his dad to be able to come to his JV football games," she said.

Durham said he had high hopes of his children going to college but not necessarily Carolina. "I hope they are qualified to go where they want to go. The thing that matters is that they get what they want in education," he said.

"I don't want to stand in their way when they make a choice of schools, but I know they would get an excellent education if they came here."

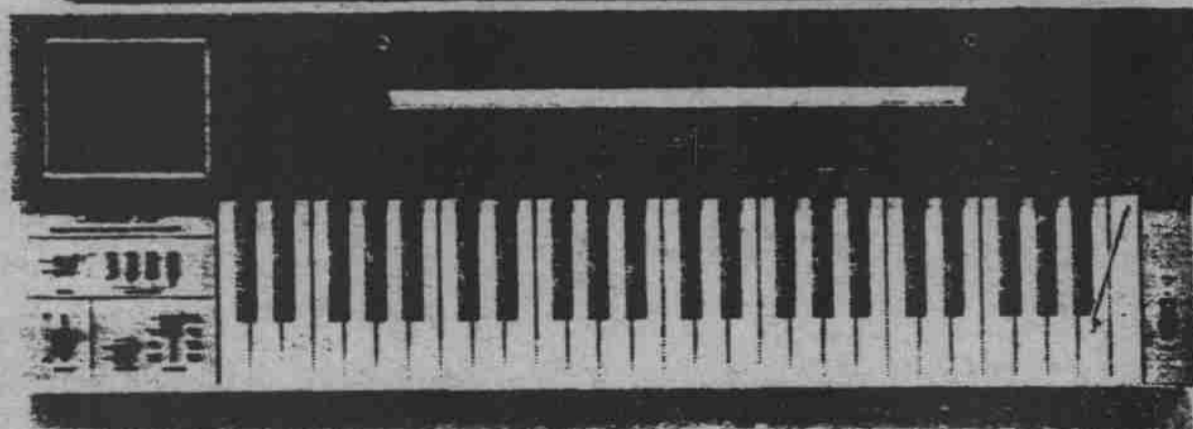
Durham said he enjoys his job and gets great satisfaction in hearing that people sometimes turn down their TV sometimes to listen to him on the radio. He said that he tries to create atmosphere but does not try to make the games more exciting than they are. "When the games get exciting, I get excited," he said.

He especially enjoys the play-by-play aspect of his job because of its spontaneity. "It's one of the few areas left in broadcasting that you can't predict what's going to happen. You just tell about it as it occurs," he said.

"I'd like to continue doing play-by-play for at least another ten years," Durham said. "To me it's a challenge every time I go out there. It's like playing a round of golf. I really, really enjoy it." [S]

Rose Wagner is a staff writer for The Daily Tar Heel.

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