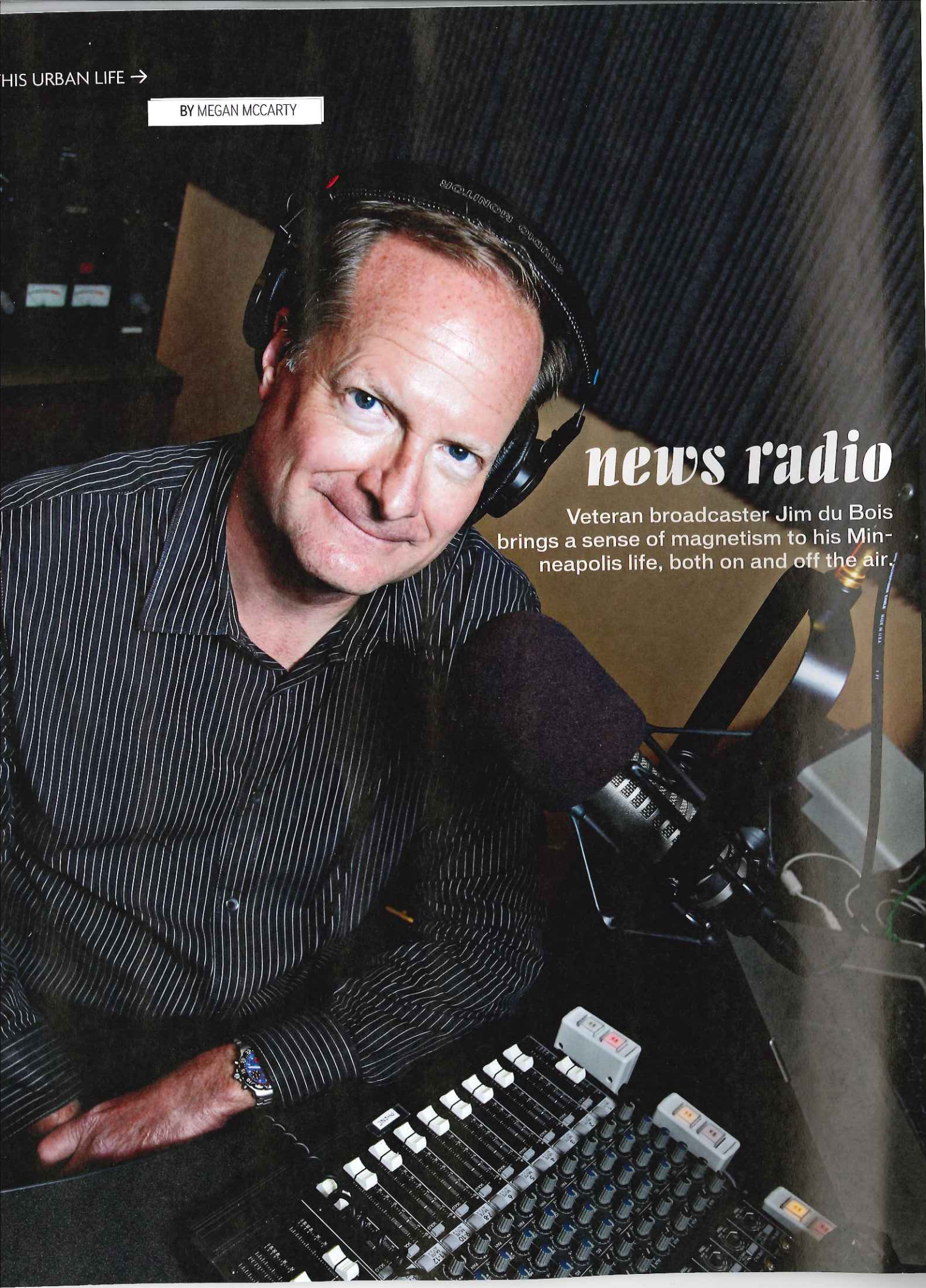


BY MEGAN MCCARTY



news radio

Veteran broadcaster Jim du Bois brings a sense of magnetism to his Minneapolis life, both on and off the air.

It's not difficult to pick veteran radio broadcaster Jim du Bois out of a crowd. In fact, his voice, his handshake, his poise and his boisterous laugh make it almost impossible. Heartfelt and genuine, but sound bite-short and contained, it's clear he has spent his fair share of time behind a microphone.

Born and raised in Minneapolis, du Bois has worked and lived here his whole life (other than a couple short stints out of state, including one semester of law school at the University of North Dakota). Radio, it seems, has always been in his veins. "I liked the idea that—before the Internet—voices could travel hundreds of miles," he says.

While still mastering multiplication tables, du Bois assembled his first pirate radio station. From there he climbed the radio ropes, first volunteering at Minneapolis Public Schools' KBEM and, later, at age 16, grabbing his first paying gig.

One Friday night, when most other 16-year-olds were probably less than concerned with their careers, Jim received a call from a family friend, the program director at a Twin Cities radio station. His three part-timers were all missing in action—one was recently pink-slipped, one was sick and one was on vacation. "I just need you to show up and keep it on the air," he told du Bois, who did just that. Ever since, he's been cultivating a career in the studio.

Throughout the past few decades, du Bois has held a variety of positions in radio programming, from on-air to news to management to his current position as president and CEO of the Minnesota Broadcasters Association. His day-to-day provides du Bois with a variety of tasks, from producing the weekly public affairs show *Access Minnesota*, which airs on about 45 radio stations statewide, to assembling its monthly television accompaniment. That's what du Bois was working on this morning before our lunch at Buster's on 28th; he had just finished editing the recent show on community gardening.

It's not all roses, though. Twice, including last December, du Bois was embedded in Iraq with the Army National Guard with just a couple of audio recorders and a professional video camera on his back. He also spends a great deal of time considering the future of the industry and how to protect and promote broadcasting.

"I see a lot of interesting times ahead, perhaps in the Chinese-cursed sense," du Bois explains. "I get to monitor the ever-evolving broadcasting industry. We figure out how to survive and prosper in the years ahead, which is certainly a challenge, but the industry has had challenges before."

But what does du Bois do when he's not on the job or contemplating the future of his craft? He kicks back and relaxes with, well, radios. His current prized possession: A 1929 Atwater Kent, the vintage treasure of his house, that's built into a six-legged table, and—thanks to du Bois's restoring—is now clean of a crust of dust and dirt. Who says you shouldn't take your work home with you? +

JIM DU BOIS'S HAUNTS

BUSTER'S ON 28TH: For a nice neighborhood bar, du Bois goes to this south Minneapolis gastropub, where you'll want to buddy up with the bartender for beer recommendations. 4204 28th Ave. S., Mpls.; 612.729.0911; buster-son28th.com

PAVEK MUSEUM OF BROADCASTING: "Hats off to the Pavek Museum," says du Bois. The gem in St. Louis Park, a little slice of heaven for him, boasts vintage and amateur radio and television gear. 3517 Raleigh Ave., St. Louis Park; 952.926.8198; pavekmuseum.org

MCMNAMARA ALUMNI CENTER: As a University of Minnesota alum, du Bois now acts as one of the vice chairs of the Alumni Association, headquartered in McNamara. 200 Oak St. S.E., Mpls.; 612.624.9831; mac-events.org

MINNEHAHA CREEK AND LAKE CALHOUN: "We're fortunate to live in a very urban area," says du Bois, "yet you wouldn't know it when you wake up in the morning, look out the window and see Minnehaha Creek flowing just beyond your back yard." You also wouldn't know it if Lake Calhoun were your work's neighbor; the Minnesota Broadcasters Association overlooks the popular Uptown lake.

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PHOTOS: TATE CARLSON

THE TWIN CITIES' TOP 5 MOMENTS IN RADIO AND TELEVISION HISTORY, ACCORDING TO JIM DU BOIS



1912: "Wireless" experiments begin at the University of Minnesota's College of Engineering. The first signals are dots and dashes from experimental radiotelegraph station 9XI, but by 1922 actual broadcasting begins on WLB-AM, which later becomes KUOM-AM. In 1993, Minnesota's first radio station in continuous operation evolves into Radio K and is run by students with an innovative alternative-music format.

1948: KSTP-TV signs on as Minnesota's first commercial television station. In the ensuing years, KSTP is home to several significant broadcasting "firsts," notably its distinction in 1961 as the first station in the country to broadcast all of its programming in color. In the early 1980s, station executive Stanley S. Hubbard proposes a system of satellite-to-home broadcasting; in 1994, Hubbard Broadcasting launches United States Satellite Broadcasting, which is eventually acquired by DirecTV.

1960s through mid-'70s: The Twin Cities witnesses a classic battle between several Top 40 radio stations. WDGY-AM in Minneapolis is purchased by Todd Storz, inventor of the Top 40 concept, but he soon has a competitor across the river in St. Paul, KDWB-AM. In the 1970s, KSTP-AM and WYOO-FM (the short-lived but much-loved U100) enter into the fray. But by the early '80s, only KDWB remains in the format. (*Visit radiotapes.com to hear recordings of these stations during this era.*)

1950s through mid-'70s: The "Golden Age" of kids' TV programming in the Twin Cities. The sets are simple and the production is crude by contemporary standards, but a generation of young people is endeared to Axel, Carmen the Nurse, Clancy and Willie, Casey Jones and Roundhouse Rodney, Captain Daryl, Miss Betty and a slew of others. The last local TV kids show signs off for good in 1977 when federal rules prohibit the hosts from endorsing products on-air. (*See a 1950s broadcast of Axel and His Dog at youtube.com/user/PavekMuseum.*)

1965 and 1986: On May 6, 1965, the Twin Cities area is struck by a series of deadly tornadoes. WCCO-AM goes wall-to-wall with coverage, airing phone calls from listeners who are able to help track the twisters as they ravage the metro area. The station's broadcast is credited with saving countless lives thanks to the early warning of the approaching tornadoes. In 1986, KARE-TV broadcasts live video of a tornado in Fridley from the station's helicopter piloted by "Mad" Max Messmer. (*Hear WCCO's coverage of the 1965 tornadoes at radiotapes.com/specialpostings.html. Watch KARE-TV's live tornado video at youtube.com/watch?v=ekVcUhr56sY.*)

*The Pavek Museum of Broadcasting in St. Louis Park was an important resource in creating this list. The museum is home to a unique collection of radios, televisions, equipment and Minnesota broadcasting memorabilia. Each year, thousands of area children participate in its educational programs, and it is open to the public. Find out more at pavekmuseum.org.