

<https://www.wxyz.com/news/rick-hayes-go-to-guy-who-kept-wxyz-on-the-air-dies-at-62>

## Rick Hayes, beloved 'go-to guy' who kept WXYZ on the air, dies at 62

### Master control operator was a Broadcast House fixture

(WXYZ) — You never saw Rick Hayes on Channel 7 but, without him, you may not have seen Channel 7.

A master control operator for WXYZ-TV, Hayes navigated technical problems and stormy weather to keep the station's signal on the air throughout his 23-year career. He died Tuesday at the age of 62.

Colleagues admired Hayes for his MacGyver-like ability to troubleshoot technical problems while never losing his cool.

"He was always the 'go-to' guy for any questions or problems that might arise," said Brian Michalczak, who worked alongside Hayes in master control. "It could be 3:00 a.m. and I had a question on something, he would answer my call or text and always say he was glad to help and that it was no problem at all. He encouraged it."

As master control operator, Hayes worked in the technical nerve center of the station: a room filled with video monitors, transmission equipment and automation systems that station visitors often said resembled something out of Star Trek.

"Rick was one of the first people I'd take my family and friends to visit when they came to see Channel 7," said sports director Brad Galli. "His workspace was cool, but the real reason why he was everyone's favorite here was because his spirit and overall joy sent a spark into any room. I will miss our friend so much."

Throughout his career, Hayes displayed a deep pride in his work and care for his colleagues.



Vivian Hoze, a longtime colleague, and friend, called Hayes "a gentle giant with a heart of gold and patience for the job."

When wicked weather was on the horizon, he would often come into the station on his days off just to provide a second set of hands in case there were problems.

“Always kind (and) patient. Always made sure everything went okay,” said producer Amanda Allie. “And it did, because of Rick.”

Among a news station filled with big personalities and extroverts, few in the building matched Hayes’ warmth and ability to engage with his colleagues.

During his lunch break, he was often seen holding court throughout the building, checking-in with friends in the newsroom, sports department or sales offices.

“There was no one you’d rather bump into in the hallway on a bad day than Rick,” recalled reporter Ross Jones. “It didn’t matter how many things had gone wrong on a story. Five minutes with him changed the whole complexion of your day.”

When the pandemic took hold last year, the typically bustling station was largely empty as most employees worked from home. Hayes was among only a dozen people who regularly came into Broadcast House.



Lori Carriere, a longtime stage manager, recalled a recent night when she had to retrieve something from her car late in the evening.

Hayes, leaving at the end of his shift, saw Carriere in the mostly empty and dimly lit parking lot, turned around and shined the lights of his car to make sure his colleague felt safe.

“Rick was a gentleman,” Carriere said. “He wanted to make sure I was okay before he left.”

Hayes is survived by his longtime partner of 17 years, Rosemarie Russell.

A visitation will be held today, August 20, from 3:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at A.H. Peters Funeral Home in Warren. A funeral service will be held on Saturday, August 21, at 10:00 a.m. at the same location.