

DAVE MOODY

In His Own Words

As told to **Lew Boyd**



- **Born March 25, 1961, in Barre, Vermont**
- ***Calls the NASCAR action from the turns on the Motor Racing Network, quarterbacked the spirited talk show Sirius XM NASCAR each weekday afternoon, and is quite possibly the most popular radio broadcaster in racing today.***

People ask me how in the world a kid from the Green Mountains could end up on top of the Sunoco Tower at Daytona with a microphone. It was simply a series of happy accidents. I kept falling down into piles of crap and finding diamonds.

First, I may have grown up in northern Vermont, but it was 10 miles from Thunder Road, Ken Squier's enormously successful little track.

Second, I had an uncle who drove an hour-and-a-half to be there every week—and actually took me to the races. The rest of the family was convinced I would go to jail or hell for hanging around with people like that.

Ken Squier noticed my writing in some columns for *Speedway Scene*, the local race paper, figured I had a good vocabulary, and grabbed me. I began helping announce a few warmups and heats. But, when he became busier and busier with CBS, he really started training me to take over the mic. I hung on every word. Before long I was in the booth at several tracks and working the American Canadian Tour.

Then in 1983, an opening for a garage reporter became available at MRN, and Ken recommended me. I could have fallen face down in the South with NASCAR, but a series of fortuitous breaks ensued—including

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ing Sirius, and I found my diamond ring, a reasonable career in the sport.

That first time my uncle took me to Thunder Road, we had stood in the ticket line. I heard the amazing sound of the motors, the lively announcer, and I was enthralled even before I saw the track and the cars. Racing was huge then, and I will tell you that the quality of the facilities and the competition was just as strong as anything in the South.

Of course, like any kid, I had wanted to be the next Richard Petty. But it turned out my proven talent was tearing wheels off cars, so I became a car owner. I loved that—all of it, hanging out in the garage with the guys drinking beer. Over the years I found myself getting sucked back a couple of times into owning a car against my better judgment, especially financially. More recently I've been able to control myself, but I'm still hoping someone will call me to help work on a car.

That column writing I did early on continued for a while, and I even wrote a book about Dave Dion. Like car owning, I loved it, but I knew to build a career in racing I had to concentrate on what Squier had been teaching me about announcing. It simply has to be your 24/7 obsession. I tell people who wish to become involved in the business of racing to go to their local track, tell them you will do *anything* they want free for a season or two so you can learn the ropes. Don't even bother if you are not willing to do that. You've got to make it your life.

When the MRN opportunity came along and I immersed myself in radio, the next logical step might have been television. Ken Squier beat the hell out of me. "Give it a try," he urged. I pushed back. I'm an ordinary-looking guy, while all those TV people were attractive.

I was also actually looking at TV in a different way. I could see those television contracts typically lasted only three years. That meant that every year and a half or so, everyone's scrambling for their next job. Will their network re-up? Will they be able to beat out others (often their friends) and re-up themselves?

I like security, camaraderie with people, and no back-stabbing. I've now been lead turn announcer for MRN for decades and have been running the Sirius XM NASCAR radio show as well. I'm quite comfortable and don't require seeing my dog face on television every week.

And there's something else. If I do have something unique, it's that set of pipes—my big mouth. By now it's pretty developed. My poor mom would read all my report cards from school: "If he would just quiet down and pay attention, he might actually amount to something." Thank God I never did. I've somehow managed to turn running my mouth into my own cottage industry.

There are some requirements to pulling off MRN announcing each week. One, of course, is a commanding but not unpleasant voice. Second is you need to be able to pick up immediately on the significance of what you are seeing in front of you. And, third, you must be able to process it all and present it quickly and cogently to the audience.

There have been highs and lows with MRN along the way. For me, the really great days come when I've been able to announce to the world how someone I have known since day one is achieving their dream. I remember years ago seeing Ricky Craven, a bright but unpolished 13-year-old, at Unity Raceway way up in Maine. Wearing a fire suit so ragged it had no seat, he told us ACT officials that he hoped to run the whole series the next year. He did. Five years later, he won the Busch title. I got to call his first Cup win at Darlington, one of the greatest races in history. For me, it never gets better than that.

The sad days come when someone does not go home from the track. When I was still up in New England, we lost both Adam Petty and Kenny Irwin at Loudon. It was really an awful period. Everyone would walk in through that tunnel wondering what horrible thing might happen next. It took a long time to wear away.

When the opportunity to start the Sirius show arose in 2003, I really had to double down on my commitment to my career. Being on the radio all week all those

hours—plus MRN on weekends—there would be no hanging around the pool or holidays with the family, but I dug right in.

I loved listening to Rush Limbaugh early on. He made a million dollars compared to my one. I've tried to emulate his sense of humor. But what I didn't like was that he had only callers that agreed with him and referred to him as the smartest dude in the world. My parameters are different. Looking at the incoming callers, I'm always drawn first to the ones with opposing views. That's what lights things up for me. But I will insist on this: I tell everyone they have to give me *the facts* to support whatever they are feeling. Otherwise, they're out.

As you can imagine, Monday mornings are really busy for me. I have to read everything I can to be on top of things for the week's shows. But, honestly, the best part of my week is Sunday morning at the track. It's not a frantic time in the pit area, and I can go and talk with most any owner or driver and find out what's really going on.

Most of us have been together for so long that there's lots of trust. They will give me their real thoughts about the future knowing that I would never betray their confidence. That has been so helpful for me.

I'm often asked if NASCAR gives me talking points or tells me something I can't say. The fact is, I am totally on my own, and I wouldn't have taken this job if it were otherwise. The relationship is good, though, and I feel free to call them if I need their point of view on some dispute.

The Sirius experience really has worked well. It's kinda funny that when it all started, I was pretty much by myself organizing and planning the show. A previous Sirius announcer once said I was "The Godfather" who planted all the food so everyone could have Thanksgiving dinner. The next day the name was everywhere. It just stuck and became my brand. I was smart enough not to object. What is said on talk radio can never be unsaid.

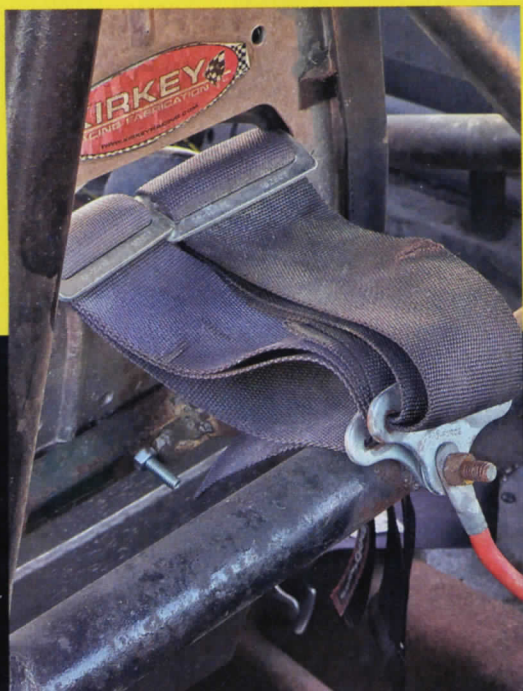
I'm now 62, evolving like the sport. We used to do 600-mile races without stopping

and now we do stages. I used to walk right up the steps in that Sunoco Tower each February. Now I do that in stages. But what hasn't changed a bit is when the cars come around for the pace lap on the first race of the season, scrubbing their tires, revving their engines. The hair on my neck still stands straight up.

I often think back on that first day I went to Thunder Road with my uncle, all wound up listening in the ticket line. Even back then I was an avid Red Sox fan, following games on the radio. But, when I went to Fenway to take in a game, I was actually bored. Then I looked around and saw that everyone with a transistor radio was having a ball listening to Ken Coleman call the action.

I have come to realize that this is just what I have come to do with my life. I provide excitement for people who cannot actually see it. People will call and say that having me in their ear gets them so passionate about the race that they rush home and turn on the TV. To me that's simply the greatest compliment I could ever get. **FSW**

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