

Popular Broadcaster Took Roundabout Route to Success

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WRITER'S COMMENT: *This paper, originally written for my UWP 104C class, was one of the most enjoyable papers I have ever written. When my journalism instructor introduced the profile feature assignment in class, I knew immediately the direction I wanted to take mine. I am a San Francisco Giants fanatic and thought it would be amazing to write my paper on someone within the organization. I initially contacted Marty Lurie about being the subject of my paper with little hope he would reply, but to my excitement, he was happy to help. Throughout the process of interviewing, observing, and writing about Marty, I gained so much more than just a grade in a class. I was able to experience baseball from an entirely new and separate viewpoint, made valuable connections within the Giants organization, and got to know a truly wonderful person along the way. It is my hope that anyone who reads this paper will be able to experience, as I did, Marty's genuine kindness and great love of baseball.*

INSTRUCTOR'S COMMENT: *I ask each of my UWP 104C Journalism students to conduct a face-to-face interview with a person they do not know and then write a profile of their interview subject that presents a slice of that person's life. A longtime athlete and sports enthusiast, my student Teri interviewed Marty Laurie, the host of the San Francisco Giants pre- and post-game shows, and she wrote a compelling article that sheds light on Laurie's 60-year love affair with the American Pastime. Teri's article takes readers back in time and introduces them to Laurie as a boy following the Brooklyn Dodgers, zooms them through Laurie's law school years and ultimate departure from law, and puts them in the studio during his first radio broadcast. Teri's story is interesting and enjoyable, and it presents a Bay Area celebrity in a down-to-earth manner. Through this piece, readers have the opportunity to get to know this lifelong baseball fan in a light and meaningful way while being reminded of the passion that makes baseball such a significant American tradition.*

—Ken Andersen, University Writing Program

When he graduated from the University of Miami law school in 1971, New York native Marty Lurie had no desire to become a baseball broadcaster. Today, however, he not only hosts the San Francisco Giants' pre- and post-game shows, he is one of the most beloved radio personalities in the Bay Area.

Lurie was born in Brooklyn in 1946 and first became enchanted with baseball at the age of 5, calling it his "unconditional friend" after the passing of his father.

"It just made sense to me," said Lurie. "It was wonderful, it was sweet, it gave me a family."

As a Brooklyn baseball fan in the 1950's, Lurie was perfectly positioned to witness Jackie Robinson's historic breach of baseball's color barrier. Lurie, like many others, credits this experience as being one of the many things that led to his great enjoyment of the game.

Unlike many other baseball fans, though, Lurie's love of baseball was so strong that he was not satisfied by simply watching Robinson's notable story unfold. Instead, he began learning as much as he could about baseball. He read about it, he played it, and, consequently, he compiled an encyclopedic knowledge of the game he loved.

"Like a Rabbi studying the Torah, I studied baseball," said Lurie.

In the 1960's, Lurie attended the University of Florida and then the University of Miami law school. After graduating and becoming a board certified lawyer in 1971, he and a friend opened their own firm in Miami, where they practiced law for a year before moving their skills out west to California.

For almost 25 years, Lurie worked as a successful lawyer in the Bay Area. During the last 15 of those years, he practiced criminal law and handled over 100 homicide cases as well as a number of capital cases. But the stress of being a trial lawyer soon caught up to him, and Lurie decided that he had had enough.

"I just burned out," he said.

Despite being at the peak of his career, Lurie retired from practicing law in 1995 when he was 49 years old. At that time, he had no idea what he would do next. However, his great passion and knowledge of baseball, combined with the skill set he had acquired during his years as an attorney, allowed his professional life to start moving in a new and unexpected direction.

Some of Lurie's friends, who knew about his great love of baseball, were the first people to introduce him to the idea of starting a radio

show. Initially, it seemed like a wild notion to him, but, after some encouragement, he approached the teacher at his son's high school who was in charge of the school's radio station and asked if he could try the process out. After his first half-hour show, Lurie discovered that he had not only found something he enjoyed but something that he was well qualified to do.

"I realized that I can talk because I'm a lawyer," he said. "I can talk forever, and I like baseball. So the show started."

For the next two years, Lurie hosted a show called "The Sports Doctor" on a small Oakland radio station. During his broadcasts, he reported on a wide variety of teams, took phone calls from listeners, and began accumulating hours of experience behind the microphone. After becoming credentialed for the San Francisco Giants, the San Francisco 49ers, the Oakland Athletics, the Oakland Raiders, and the San Jose Sharks, his shows expanded to include interviews of professional players, which Lurie himself conducted after games.

Then, in 1998, Lurie's broadcasting career was further advanced when he was approached by Joe Buerry, the general manager of the radio station that carried the Oakland Athletics' games. Buerry had been impressed by Lurie's extensive knowledge of historic baseball and asked him if he would be interested in doing a short broadcast that would lead into the A's pre-game show. Lurie, who was somewhat surprised by the request, accepted it nonetheless, and, thus, his tenure as a pre-game host began.

For the next 11 years, Lurie continued to host the Athletics' "pre-pre-game" shows. During that time, he developed a short daily segment called "Memories of the Game," in which he would interview a prominent sports personality who had historical ties to that date. Today, more than 300 of these clips have been placed into the audio library at the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N. Y.

While doing the lead-in show for the A's, Lurie not only organized content for his show but was also charged with the responsibility of finding advertisements to fill its commercial breaks. For the first time since leaving his career as a lawyer, he saw himself as a businessman. However, the inability of the Athletics to remain with a single flagship station eventually began to cause financial concerns for Lurie.

"They changed stations like you change socks," said Lurie. "And every time they changed stations, I had to renegotiate. So eventually, I was paying over \$100,000 to be on the air."

When San Francisco Giants' team president Larry Baer inquired about Lurie's availability during the summer of 2009, Lurie agreed to bring his show across the bay to San Francisco. Beginning at the start of the 2010 season, he hosted weekend pre- and post-game shows on the Giants' flagship station, KNBR. For Giants fans, who are a devoted and knowledgeable group, Lurie was a perfect fit, and his audience grew exponentially. Patrick Connor, a producer at KNBR who commonly works alongside Lurie, believes there is a simple reason he became so popular.

"His passion for baseball is infectious," said Connor.

Today, Lurie's shows are more popular than ever within the Giants' community. Lurie has earned the nickname "Marathon Marty" because his shows, which started out airing for an hour before games and an hour after, now combine for around 8 hours of airtime each day. He spends this time fielding countless phone calls from listeners about that day's game and answering whatever questions they have in a knowledgeable and respectful manner. Carmen Kiew, who also frequently works with Lurie, claims that he is unlike any radio host she has ever experienced.

"He's really down to earth," she said. "He talks to you like you're his friend and describes baseball like a story. He is truly an expert in the field."

For Lurie, broadcasting for the Giants has paved the way to many additional opportunities. He frequently fills in as a host on both KNBR and Comcast TV, and has been invited to speak at many public events throughout the Bay Area. After the Giants won the World Series in 2010, he broadcasted the championship parade live on KNBR while riding in it on a float. That, he claims, is his favorite baseball memory of all time. He also received World Series rings from the Giants' organization after each of their titles in 2010 and 2012.

Despite currently being in his fifth year of work as a Giants' broadcaster, Lurie has still not gotten used to the acclaim it has brought him. Every weekend that the Giants are home, Lurie broadcasts the pre-game show live from the ballpark, during which he is bombarded by fans with requests for everything from pictures, to handshakes, and even hugs. Although he appreciates the fans' enthusiasm, this former lawyer from New York finds it all a bit overwhelming.

"It's crazy," he said. "I can't believe it. I'm just a guy who likes baseball."