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Quad-Cities native Spike O'Dell to hang up the mic at WGN

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William ``Spike" O'Dell, who entertained Quad-Cities listeners on KSTT-FM and KIIK-FM on-and-off from 1973 to 1987, is stepping away from the microphone.

Mr. O'Dell, 55, will retire from his current job as morning man for Chicago's WGN-AM 720, and presumably from the broadcast industry, according to several reports in Chicago media, as well as on-air commentary from Mr. O'Dell.



Photo:
Spike O'Dell, a native of East Moline, will retire from WGN Radio Jan. 1.

"Come January 1st of next year, somebody else is going to be doing the morning show," said O'Dell on-air, calling the decision "the worst-kept secret." He said he would leave the air in the second week of December. The remaining time would be filled with ``best of" shows or guest hosts.

"I've never really officially said anything about it on the air. Now I want everybody to know that this is not a knee-jerk reaction thing."

Mr. O'Dell's announcement came almost 22 months after O'Dell told the Chicago Tribune the contract he signed with WGN signed two years ago would be his last.

Mr. O'Dell has been with WGN-AM 720 in Chicago since May 1987, when he began the 3 to 7 p.m. shift. He moved to mornings in 2000.

He was raised in East Moline, the son of Dottie and Merle O'Dell. According to the WGN Web site, Spike O'Dell's first radio job was at WEMO in East Moline. He then was hired part time at Davenport's KSTT while still employed as a security officer at International Harvester in Rock Island. After leaving KSTT to accept a position at WBT in Charlotte, N.C., he was lured back to his hometown and went to work for KIIK in Davenport.

His various broadcast awards include a 1999 A.I.R. Award from the Chicagoland A.I.R. Awards Board of Governors.

"This is something we (he and his wife, Karen) have talked about for years and years, and I guess the magic number was 55 years old," Mr. O'Dell said during the on-air announcement. "I'm 55 and we always wanted to do that. Our plan was to hopefully be able to retire at that age and go off and enjoy the world while we were still young enough and healthy enough to do so, so we're going to do it."

WGN-AM was No. 2 in the 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. weekday slot among listeners age 12 and older in the most recent Arbitron ratings for the quarter ending in September, with 7.4 percent of the audience. Mr. O'Dell's show runs from 5 to 9 a.m.

"For 21 years, I have been very fortunate to enjoy quite a ride here -- some great times, some really sad times," Mr. O'Dell said. "I have worked with the very best in the biz here in Chicago."