LOS ANGELES — When Micah McFarlane's career brought him to Minnesota for a few days, he took the opportunity to reconnect with some former classmates from Worthington.

Those longtime friends not only got a chance to reminisce with McFarlane, but also to meet his current client, country music star Dwight Yoakam, when Yoakam performed recently at Jackpot Junction Casino in Morton, MN. McFarlane currently serves as tour manager for Yoakam.

A few days later, during a telephone interview from his headquarters in Los Angeles, McFarlane reminisced about his days growing up in Worthington and a career path that has him rubbing elbows with celebrities such as Yoakam, Bob Newhart, Cyndi Lauper and Deborah Harry.

McFarlane moved with his parents and 11 siblings to Worthington in the 1960s. He was just five-years-old, and his family was among the city's first African American residents. He attended school at Central Elementary, Worthington Junior High and briefly at Worthington High School before his family moved back to Missouri in 1975. He graduated from high school in Raytown, MO, a suburb of Kansas City. However, he's stayed connected to the Worthington High School Class of 1977 through friends such as Blas Gonzalez, Mike Brower and Doug Hansen. He returned to Worthington in 2007 for the 30-year class reunion.

"For me, it was really a formal time of my training, from age five to 16½," McFarlane said about his time in Worthington. "It was great, great childhood memories."

After serving in the U.S. Army Military Police for three years, McFarlane moved to Minneapolis with the notion of joining the Minneapolis Police force. But those plans got derailed by his interest in music, and he started working at some music clubs instead.

"I just have this absolute love and passion for music because of my family," he explained. "I was one of those kids who sat up in my room and read the back of every record, cross-referenced who played on what. My brother, Wain, was my idol."

Older brother Wain was a musician who performed with his first band during high school in Worthington. While Micah was working at Duffy's Nightclub in the Twin Cities, Wain came to him with the idea of starting a band. Ipso Facto, a reggae group based on their Dad's Jamaican roots, was born in 1983.

“He recruited my brothers, Julian ‘JuJu’ and Greg, and got my sisters involved at that time. I said, ‘OK, I’ll be the manager,’” McFarlane recalled. “So that’s where my training came from. I couldn’t get fired — they were my brothers. … I was just the guy who was on the phone, trying to make things happen, organizing and promoting, putting posters up.”

Throwing himself headfirst into the effort, McFarolane organized his first music festival, the Midwest Reggae Fest, hiring a national act as the headliner and “Introducing Ipso Facto.” The tactic worked, and soon Ipso Facto was touring college campuses and opening for national acts.

“Because of working at Duffy’s, I had befriended the guys in UB40, and they came over to the Ipso house in Minneapolis where all of us lived and rehearsed in the basement,” McFarlane said. “They came over to hang out and got snowed in; their trucks of equipment couldn’t make it, so we loaned them our equipment. Out of the friendship, the repay was the next year we got to tour with UB40. We did five shows with them in the Southeast and put out our first record.”

Eventually, the McFarlanes “decided we wanted to be brothers again instead of business partners,” and went their separate ways. They perform as Ipso Facto occasionally, such as for the 2004 Windsurfing Regatta and Unvarnished Music Festival in Worthington.

Wain is still active in the music business, although health problems in recent years have sidetracked those endeavors. Due to complications from hypertension, he has undergone a kidney transplant and is currently recovering from his second liver transplant, the first one rejecting.

During those years with Ipso Facto, McFarlane also took on gigs as a stage manager and/or production manager for events such as Riverfest, the St. Paul Winter Carnival, the Minnesota Black Music Awards, Taste of Minnesota and Taste of Colorado.

“It gave me a whole other group of connections, and I learned how to network more and more. … It was on-the-job training,” he said.

In the 1990s, he began working as a producer, promoter and event coordinator for Prince at Paisley Park. He also helped develop a new project called the New Power Generation Dance Company that featured Prince's then-wife, Mayte. Unfortunately, the endeavor was not a great success.

"We built this million-dollar dance company and then did five shows. We had to put the rumor out that Prince was going to show up to sell tickets," McFarlane recalled.

McFarlane's résumé from the last 10 years details working as a tour manager for bands and performers including Sonia Dada, Lifehouse, Michelle Branch, Joe Firstman, Revis, Cyndi Lauper, Bob Newhart and Blondie. There is also a long list of festivals and special events in which he's been involved in different capacities.

Now, McFarlane is ready to move into a new phase of his career, joining Monarch Entertainment Group, a marketing company operated by Joseph Bon Jovi.

"We're partnering up," he explained. "He does entertainment marketing, I do artist management. I'm moving away from the touring as we speak. The reason I took on Bob (Newhart) and Dwight (Yoakam) is they don't tour (on a big scale); they only work on weekends and special event stuff. This next phase is into artist management, which is actually going back to my roots, what I started doing with Ipso Facto."

Newhart is McFarlane's "ultimate favorite" client.

"He's just in a whole other category," he tried to explain. "Bob is cool to the point of where I'm pinching myself because of the people I get to be around — Don Rickles, John Landis — having dinner with these guys. The whole time, I'm not really saying anything, I'm just listening … kind of in awe."

McFarlane also praises Lifehouse, which he guided through a first tour experience; Cyndi

Lauper, who he said “beats to her own drum” and “wears her emotions on her sleeve”; and Deborah Harry — “if they needed a definition of the world ‘cool’ in the dictionary, they should put her name behind it.”

It’s the people connections that McFarlane enjoys the most about his career, as well as the constant variety. His ability to communicate and attention to detail are traits that have helped him to succeed in a competitive business.

While working in the entertainment industry has its perks, spending a decade touring almost non-stop takes a toll on family life. McFarlane is divorced, although still close with his ex-wife, Elizabeth. He doesn’t have any kids himself, but is close to his many nieces and nephews, and, of course, to his siblings.

“We’re talking about doing another Ipso Facto record,” he shared. “We want to see if we can make a strictly reggae-styled album. It’s something we want to do, and we’re trying to get everybody on board.”

And at some point when his hectic schedule allows, McFarlane hopes to pay another visit to Worthington, the place he still considers home.

“When people ask me where I’m from, I don’t say Minneapolis. I say Worthington,” he said. “It was the greatest place on earth to grow up.”