

January, 2018



# TRHoF **E-Waves** NEWSLETTER



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## OFF MIC

by *TnRHOF President Douglas Combs*



We are all merely pebbles in the ocean of life. Sorry if I sound a little philosophical in this first column of the new year. As is one of my habits (hoping for change as a New Year's Resolution), I usually wait until the last minute to do this column. On Sunday, sad news arrived. Hairl Hensley, Hall of Fame Class of 2014, had passed away, not long after Class of 2017 Career Honoree Dr. Herb Howard. Both of these radio legends are profiled on page 4 of this issue.



I did not have the privilege of knowing Dr. Howard well, but I did know Hairl Hensley. What follows are my personal recollections and observations.

For two years, I was a regular part of Hairl's afternoon show on WSM. And to tell the truth, it was something I didn't want. For seven years, I worked in affiliate relations for the Tennessee Radio Network. One of my responsibilities was to assist stations with special programming. For larger markets, this meant providing programs and features. In turn, stations aired TRN inventory. I worked with Kyle Cantrell and John Malone at WSM. TRN supplied agri-business features for the morning show. WSM also requested a sportscast for Hairl's afternoon drive show. We provided a talent reel (actually, a cassette) of anchors from the network and I was surprised when John asked me to do the sportscast. I'm no sports expert! But the network manager quickly told me to give the client what they wanted.

For the next two years, the talented reporters at the network crafted the scripts and I was a sports

anchor. Hairl, always the professional, was the best of "co-workers." Although our exchanges each afternoon were brief, I looked forward to them. Staff members from affiliates of the network would call from time to time with Opry questions. Hairl was always helpful.

Later, I learned that my father had told some of his friends that his son was working with Opry announcer Hairl Hensley. This came as a surprise to me. But we all know that every son wants to make his father proud.

My daily work schedule was full at the network. Initially, I didn't want the additional duty. However, as I look back, I'm VERY glad it happened. The little detours along the way of our careers can produce some of the best scenery.

So, as we say goodbye to two honorees of the Hall, my hope is that you will continue to share your stories. To educate and inform are two of the main reasons you and your friends created the Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame. As we share, we all learn our mission is the same. Only miles separate us.

Doug



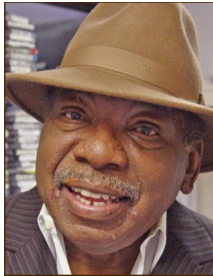
**Troy Ameen  
Dennis Banka  
Bryan Barrett  
Kenny Bosak  
Yvonne K. Chapman  
Carlos Clemente  
Leann Dider  
Billy Goodman  
Matt Haase  
James Howard  
Happy Huddleston  
Gerald Hunt  
Matt Lane  
MJ Lucas**

**Jeff Lyman  
Shannon McCombs  
Lou Meux-Solomon  
David Neal  
Devon O'Day  
Johnny Shaw  
Janet Shelton  
Joe Sullivan  
Vince Tapler  
Melissa Wagner  
Coleman Walker  
Christopher Wiseman  
James E. "Super" Wolfe  
Jerry Zimmer**

# TnRHoF Career Class of 2018



**Billy Kidd:** Charity is the center of what Billy Kidd does. WIMZ listeners are familiar with his work supporting veterans, law enforcement officers, EMTs and others who serve their communities. From his early years on WIMZ's *Phil & Billy Morning Show*, he has used his popularity to help others. His "Camping for Cans" food drive for Second Harvest Food Bank is a legendary annual event that has helped feed thousands of needy Tennesseans every year since 1994. His role in the East Tennessee Toy Run and similar events has provided toys for many children at Christmas. While using his work to promote good, he also remains a regular ratings winner. His work has taken him from Sparta to Putnam County to Knoxville, and his heart has carried him even further.



**Clarence Kilcrease:** His remarkable career includes 44 years on the radio in Nashville, starting at a time when people of color were just beginning to find their way onto the airwaves. Rising to the ranks of management, Clarence Kilcrease helped establish the careers of many young African-American broadcasters, including Oprah Winfrey. Throughout his careers at WVOL, WNSG and WENO, he has always had a strong sense of duty to the community, and has been instrumental in countless fundraisers for fire victims, the hungry, and the homeless. Kilcrease, who has been honored for his good work in the community many times, serves on the Advisory Board of Meharry Medical College and still holds down a three-hour daily air shift on 760 AM-The Gospel.

**Mary Glenn Lassiter:** In 1974, she started her career at "easy listening" WEZK-FM in Knoxville. But by 1991, she had become "Proud Mary in the Morning," Nashville's first female morning drive rock jock. In between, Mary Glenn Lassiter has co-hosted popular morning shows with other air personalities, including Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame honoree Coyote McCloud. She also served as News Director at the Tennessee Radio Network (TRN) and as the first female announcer/reporter on the Vol Network. Midstate fans know her from 92Q/WMAK, KX-104, WGFX, WRVW, and WNRQ. Besides Knoxville, she has also spent time at Z-93 in Atlanta and at KBBQ in Kansas City. But for most of her career, the Nashville area has been her home base.



**Joe Sullivan:** The scope of Joe Sullivan's career is too extensive to cover here. After beginning in radio at WMSR in Manchester and WJIG in Tullahoma, he worked in Alabama before landing at WKGN in Knoxville, where he became program director in 1965. In 1968, he arrived at WMAK in Nashville and topped the ratings with a "dream team" of future TRHOF honorees, including Allen Dennis, Gary Douglas (Beaty), Scott Shannon and John Young. His success took him to the national level, where he founded Sound Seventy Productions, managed artists like Charlie Daniels, and eventually served on the Country Music Association Board of Directors before moving to and establishing numerous entertainment shows in Branson, Missouri. He retired in 2014.

**David Tower:** He was surprised when people commented on his voice. When he asked a radio announcer about it, the man suggested Tower enroll in Elkins Institute of Radio in Dallas. Before completing the course, he already had an on-air job. The rest, as they say, is history. He got a job in Nashville in 1969, and in 1970, became news director at WMAK, where the station won large market awards from the Associated Press in every year of the decade, including Best News Operation in both 1975 and 1976. After creating a program on the emerging successes of women, he was appointed to the Tennessee Commission on the Status of Women by then-Gov. Winfield Dunn. A leader among his peers, he also served as president of The Society of Professional Journalists.



**James "Super" Wolfe:** As an 18-year-old student at Lane College, Wolfe began a low-power FM station (WLCJ) to broadcast to the campus. By 1984, he and business partners put Kix96 (WFKX-FM), Jackson's first full time black programmed station, on the air. His community spirit blossomed with the founding of Feed the Need in 1985. It was established not only to aide the less fortunate, but to encourage youth to avoid drugs and refrain from using violence to resolve issues. Wolfe is a recipient of the distinguished National Association For Equal Opportunity (NAFEO) award, which is presented annually to an outstanding alumni of a Historical Black College. James and his wife, Denise, have recently launched The Unity Project, focused on "putting unity back in community."

# Howard and Hensley Leave Us In Last Month



Two of the greats Tennessee radio have passed away in the past month. Both were Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame honorees: Dr. Herbert Howard (TRHOF Class of 2017) and Grand Ole Opry legend Hairl Hensley (TRHOF Class of 2014).

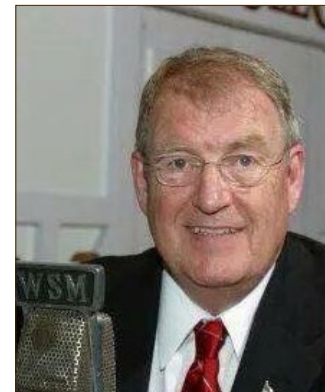
Howard's first job in radio was as an announcer at WJHL in his hometown of Johnson City. By the time he was a college senior, he was full-time manager of the station. But it was only the start. After earning his B.S. and M.S., he became a faculty member at the University of Tennessee in 1959. Over the next 40 years, as the school grew, he is estimated to have taught 6,000 undergraduate students, 900 masters degree students and 250 doctoral students. He also was recognized countless times for his work. But the greatest testament to his career are his students, who now work in colleges, newsrooms and other broadcast positions all over the world.



*Herbert Howard*

Hairl Hensley's career in radio actually began by accident. Like many boys, Hairl loved music, learned to play the guitar in high school, and joined a band, which landed him a weekly gig on WDEH/Sweetwater, where the morning DJ eventually was promoted and unceremoniously handed the broadcasting reins to his musical guests. Hairl's bandmates voted him to be the replacement DJ because he had the most education. He advanced to WNOX/Knoxville where he hosted the Tennessee Barn Dance and worked with many country stars, including bluegrass legends Jim and Jesse McReynolds, Don Gibson and Archie Campbell. Through his network of

contacts, Hairl eventually moved to Nashville, first at WKDA, then WMAK. He was PD at WLAC before joining WSM in 1972, playing records, announcing the Grand Ole Opry and becoming PD in the early 80s. In 1975, Hensley was voted the Country Music Association's top Disc Jockey of the Year, and was inducted into the Country Disc Jockey Hall of Fame in 1996. In 2000, he received the Golden Voice Awards Radio Personality of the Year, in recognition of his significant role in the preservation of country music's more traditional heritage. Among the shows he hosted on WSM were *The Early Bird Gets the Bluegrass* and *The Orange Possum Special*, which led the Society for the Preservation of Bluegrass Music in America to name him Bluegrass DJ of the Year in 1996. He later left his daily duties at WSM, but continued as the "Dean of Opry Announcers," and was heard daily on the Sirius Roadhouse Channel until health issues forced his retirement in 2007.



*Hairl Hensley*

To view Dr. Herb Howard's induction video, click here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ks48pOrATR8&feature=youtu.be>

To view Hairl Hensley's induction video, click here:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OL\\_DhHKZAU&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OL_DhHKZAU&feature=youtu.be)



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## REMINDERS



### What's Your Radio Story?

Do you have a radio story  
you'd like to share?  
It can be anything that is part  
of your radio history.

***We love radio stories.  
Please, tell us yours.***

Just email it to [starmagic@comcast.net](mailto:starmagic@comcast.net).

### Keeping Up With the Hall

Our newsletter is published the first of every month.  
Back issues may be viewed on our official website:  
[www.tennradiohalloffame.org](http://www.tennradiohalloffame.org)

Let Treasurer Garry Mac know of any change  
in your email address so you don't miss an issue!

### Collecting Our History

The Hall has a committee to collect and purchase  
Tennessee radio memorabilia, including old microphones,  
on-air signage, transmitter parts, promotional items and  
anything else related to radio stations in our state.

If you have items to donate (or purchase on Ebay,  
Craigslist, etc.) please contact Nick Archer via a  
message on the TnRHOF Facebook page.

Our Facebook page now boasts more than 1,200  
members, and our YouTube Page includes air checks,  
inductions and other audio/video memories.

## Check Your Calendar

January 20, 2018  
Board Meeting (Details TBA)



May 5, 2018  
Annual Induction Banquet  
Embassy Suites  
Murfreesboro, Tennessee



More Events Coming Soon!  
To check the TRHOF event calendar anytime,  
go to the home page of our website:  
<http://tennradiohalloffame.org>

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# It takes a long time to grow an old friend.

— John Leonard

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