VOLUME 4, NUMBER 9: HONORS FOR RADIO SPORTS LEGENDS • NOW YOU KNOW...

September, 2016

TRHoF E-Waves NEWSLETTER est 2010

ENTER THE TENNESSEE RADIO HALL OF FAME WEBSITE

OFF MIC

by TRHOF President Doug Combs

Normally I write this column just a few hours before it comes to you. This month is different. This article was composed in my mind during lunch in Jackson on August 12. TRHOF Past President Gary Beaty, board member Steve Bowers and I were having lunch following the memorial service for Hall of Fame Inductee Doris Freeman. As we reflected on the ceremony we had just attended, Steve began to relay stories about Doris (Cousin Tuny) and the influence her spirit and kindness had in Madison and neighboring counties. I heard about the telethons and how the efforts of countless individuals came together to benefit the children of the area. The charities may have changed over the years, but helping children and educational causes did not. This telethon continues in a time when many have lapsed into history.

I saw members of Doris's family that day and I thought of her extended family across the country. They are the family of broadcasters - both men and women - who carry the banner and work together with their neighbors and friends to benefit their communities.

I had similar thoughts after the funeral of Inductee Stacey Mott in July. I met Stacey many years ago through my wife, who worked for him at WHUB early in her radio career. Stacey was the definition of a solid community guy. He started at WHUB as an announcer when he was just a teenager, became the manager and remained there for 47 years until his retirement. His contributions to his community were made not only through his work with rodeos and other charity events sponsored by the stations, but also through his involvement in Rotary, the Jaycees, the state broadcast association and the other groups to which he gave his time.

Thanksgiving is still almost three months away, but I felt thankful that the world is blessed with people like Doris Freeman and Stacey Mott. And I'm thankful for the Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame, because without our group, I never would have met Doris, and I never would have learned all I now know about Stacey.

The great thing is — Tennessee is full of broadcasters with hearts like Doris Freeman and Stacey Mott. That's why our organization is so important. Keep sharing their stories.

Doug

Don Aaron
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Moody Castleman
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Spider Harrison
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Mike Keith
Cathy Martindale
Susan Collins Palladino
Gary Pickens
Richard Robinson
Loretta Stapp
Paul Tinkle
Paul White
Elva Marie Woodward
Sid Young

It's My Kenny Rogers Story, and I'm Sticking to It

by David Carroll

Recently I heard a Kenny Rogers song on the radio, and then I read a wonderful story about him. "The Time of My Life" is a book by Bill Medley, the deep-voiced half of the Righteous Brothers (with tenor Bobby Hatfield). Back in 1964, they recorded the most-played song in the history of radio. "You've Lost That Lovin' Feeling" sounds like no other song. Deejays wouldn't play it when it came out, because when Bill sang those opening words, *"You never close your eyes any more, when I kiss your lips..."* they thought it was recorded on the wrong speed!

Eventually they figured it out, listeners loved it, and it sold millions. The Righteous Brothers became one of the hottest acts in the nation. They befriended a newcomer named Kenny Rogers, and helped him in the early days of his career.

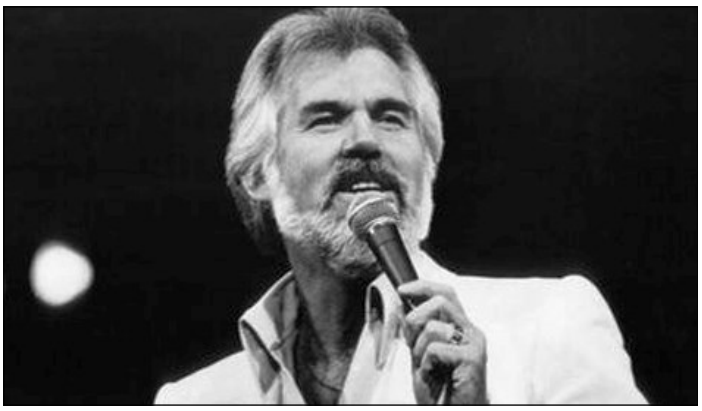
A few years later, it was Kenny having all the hits, while the Righteous duo faded from the charts. In Bill's book, he writes about falling on lean financial times, after making some poor investments. By this time, Kenny was pumping out gold records like "Lucille," "Coward of the County" and "The Gambler." Bill asked Kenny for a $20,000 loan. "I promise to pay you back as soon as I can," he said. Kenny pulled out his checkbook, and wrote him a check for $20,000. "This is not a loan, it's a gift," he said. Bill protested, but Kenny said in a non-boastful way, "Do you know how much money I'm making? You would do the same thing for me."

A few weeks later, Bill tried to pay him back. Kenny handed back the envelope. Bill said, "I'm paying you back, you loaned me 20 grand." Kenny emphasized that it was not a loan, and refused to take the money back. What a guy.

That reminded me of another first-hand report of Kenny's kindness. In the WFLI "Jet-FLI Spectacular" days of all-star 1960s concerts at Chattanooga's Memorial Auditorium, station manager Johnny Eagle recalled how difficult it was to get someone to open the show. They all wanted to be the headline act, and close the show. Johnny said, "Kenny Rogers made it easy for me. He was among the nicest stars. He even carried his own equipment. I'd go up to Kenny, kind of embarrassed, and ask him if he would be kind enough to open the show, and he'd say absolutely, whatever you need. He had more hits than anybody, but he didn't act like it. It was no surprise to me that he went on to be more successful than any of them."

In the early 1980s, when I was music director for KZ-106, Kenny released a new album on Liberty Records. Record promoter Bob Alou visited the station, and asked us to play Kenny's songs. Bob was well known in the industry as a bit of a wild man. Still, one afternoon, I accepted his invitation to take a ride through Chattanooga, just long enough to hear Kenny's new album (on cassette) on his car stereo.

As he drove through the downtown streets, he decided to light up a joint. He would take long, deep drags, and he was determined to finish the joint before we returned to the radio station. He'd crank up Kenny's songs even louder, saying "Wow that sounds good!"



Thankfully, we were not stopped by the police. Even though I wasn't smoking, I was probably high by association, and my clothes smelled like pot. My wife Cindy understood. She had been in radio too.

In fact, that record promoter scored big points with Cindy just a few weeks later. Kenny booked a show at the UTC Arena, and Bob arranged for us to meet Kenny backstage. Cindy, by then a seasoned news reporter, started thinking about what she would ask him. "What will your next record be?" "Tell us about your new baby boy." "What do all those Grammy nominations mean to you?" She was prepared, as always.

After the show, we were escorted backstage, and there stood Kenny Rogers. Tall, tanned and handsome in his white suit. We exchanged pleasantries, and he

(continued on page 3)

And Now You Know...Doug Combs

by Cathy Martindale

Was there a time when you first realized that something you were doing on the radio made a difference in someone's life?

I believe if you do something that continues after you walk away from it, you are making a difference. At one station I managed, we created a Career Women's Luncheon. The event would feature a guest speaker to inspire the attendees and recognize good work in the community from individuals. I noticed earlier this year that the luncheon was celebrating its 25th anniversary, about 20 years after I left for another job.

Has being on the radio all these years lived up to your youthful expectations?

Radio has changed since my first day on the air in 1971. I've worked every shift, worked in programming, sales, sports and I've even owned my own station for over a decade. I can honestly say it is still fun! In the last year, I have helped two stations gain FM translators for their operations and assisted others with promotions and programming. My work now is different, but I still love it.

When did you realize you'd "made it"?

One year at the NAB/RAB Radio Show, a friend of mine was presented the National Radio Award. During his acceptance speech, he thanked me for giving him a "chronic case of the radio flu."

Any promotion idea you would like to take back?

During my first week at WAKQ (KQ-101) in Russellville, Kentucky, I was on remote with station owner Lon Sosh. As part of a fund raiser for a local charity, persons could purchase a pie in the face for $20.00. Lon thought it would be fun to welcome me to the staff by purchasing a pie for me. I didn't think it was as much fun as he did. To share the love, I bought a pie for him. I even chose to deliver it myself. Afterward he said that he knew I meant it in good fun, but he believed that the outline of his nose was now in the bottom of that pie pan.

Who was your early radio hero and why....or who was/were your radio mentor(s)?

Loved Art Roberts on The Big 89, WLS. Ralph Emery doing overnights on WSM was on my radio. I would always think: *How cool is that? Playing music and visiting with the artists who would drop by.* Anytime someone would drop by when I was working, the manager would always fuss at me for having visitors at the station.

Doug Combs

If you hadn't had been successful in radio, what career path do you think you may have taken?

My father was a gasoline distributor, and my grandfather owned a grocery store. I don't have a commercial driver license, but from time to time I still bag my own groceries and pump my own gas, just to sharpen my skills and keep my options open.

It's My Kenny Rogers Story... *(continued from page 2)*

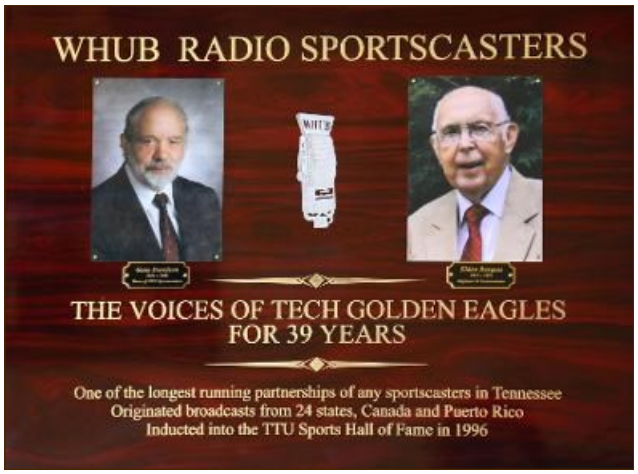
thanked me for playing his songs. I nodded to Cindy, as if to say, "Your turn." She was so taken aback by his good looks, she could not speak. A few words came out, but not in the right order. She was star struck. Kenny smiled and said, "Well, it sure was nice to meet you."

Cindy turned three shades of red, and said, "Kerfuffle perdunkin," or something like that. I'd never seen her speechless, before or since. ("I didn't expect him to be so handsome!" she would say later.)

Kenny Rogers then walked away, sporting a big smile. It surely wasn't the first time he'd made a pretty girl blush.

(From David Carroll's upcoming book "Volunteer Bama Dawg" published by Fresh Ink Press, available in October 2016. David is a former radio personality at WFLI, WGOW and WSKZ in Chattanooga, and is now a news anchor at WRCB-TV in Chattanooga.)

Sportscasters Davidson & Burgess Honored



Gene Davidson (left) and Eldon Burgess (right).

Two long-time Upper Cumberland sportscasters have received a permanent place at the university where they called scores of ball games. A news release from Tennessee Tech reads, “For more than 30 years, their presence within the Tennessee Tech community was undeniable. Three decades worth of storytelling and painting pictures through the air waves as their voices reverberated throughout the Upper Cumberland, bringing thousands up close and personal into the world of Golden Eagle athletics. The pair, which is as synonymous with TTU as the purple and gold itself, now has a new way for their legacy to be honored thanks to the latest addition in the Hooper Eblen Center. “

“Gene Davidson and Eldon Burgess, voices of the Golden Eagles from 1962-96, will once again have their places cemented within Tech lore as the dynamic duo is celebrated with a newly dedicated plaque in the halls of the Hoop. Donated by Martin and Mike Medley, sons of Luke Medley, founder of the long-standing WHUB radio station that carried Golden Eagle football and basketball games for many, many years, the plaque honors the broadcasting tandem that helped transcend sports radio across middle Tennessee for over three decades.”

Davidson and Burgess were inducted into the TTU Sports Hall of Fame in 1996. To this day, it is the only time that a pair has been enshrined into the exclusive club together. The pair also called Cookeville High School (also known for a time as Putnam County Senior High) football and basketball games for many years.

Davidson, known as the “Dean of OVC Sportscasters” on the plaque, did play-by-play of football and basketball, while Burgess served as both color commentator and engineer throughout their years together — depicted on the plaque as “one of the longest running partnerships of any sportscasters in Tennessee.”

Natives of the region, the pair simply known as “Gene and Eldon,” worked their entire careers together since 1962 at WHUB (holding down air shifts, cutting commercials and performing other regular radio duties) and witnessed nearly every Tech football and basketball game for more than a quarter of a century. The news release noted that they traveled with Tech’s teams to countless states, Canada and Puerto Rico, in addition to all regular season contests. The duo also called three football bowl games and more than a dozen NCAA, NIT and WNIT basketball tournament games.

The Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame:

Working to Preserve
Tennessee’s Rich Radio History.

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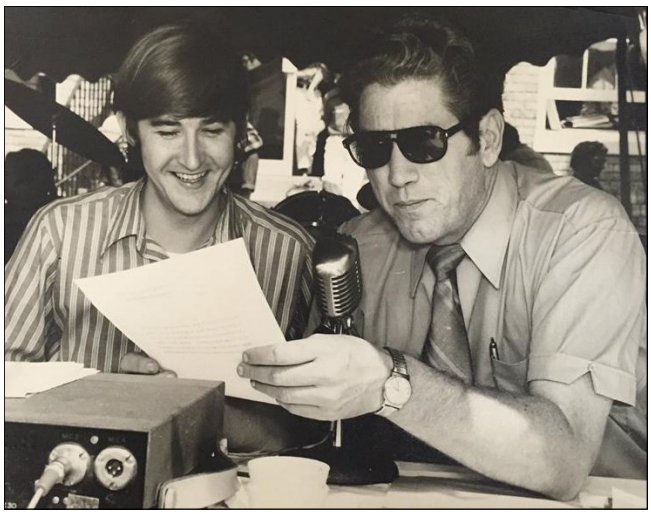
Around & About

Earl Freudenberg

After 55 years behind the microphone, 2016 Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame inductee Earl Freudenberg of Chattanooga is hanging up his headphones. He recently retired from full-time radio. Freudenberg has been at WDYN since 2005. Before that, he worked at WDOD. He began his career in his teens at WAPO.

Right: Earl Freudenberg (center) with pals Chip Chapman (left) and Ben Cagle (right).

Blast from the Past...



Left: Steve Turner and David Price of WHLP on remote in Centerville in 1973.

Right: Engineers extraordinaire Kirk Harnack and Watt Hairston doing some work. Year unknown.

Below, left: Vintage match-book covers from WBIR, Knoxville.

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Don't forget — (nudge, nudge)

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.

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
Let Treasurer Cindy Arnold 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 TRHOF Facebook page.

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

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Check Your Calendar

September 17, 2016
West Tennessee Meet n' Greet
The Carnegie Museum
305 East College Street, Jackson
Board Meeting at 11:00 am
Meet n' Greet from 12-noon - 2:00 pm

May 6, 2017
Induction Banquet & Ceremony
Details: TBA

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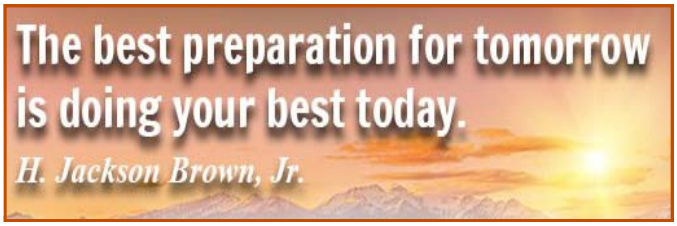
More Events Coming Soon!
To check the TRHOF event calendar anytime,
go to the home page of our website:
http://tennradiohalloffame.org



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Click here for details.

Write off your donation on your taxes!
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