

April, 2017



TRHoF E-Waves NEWSLETTER

est 2010



[ENTER THE TENNESSEE RADIO HALL OF FAME WEBSITE](#)

OFF MIC

by TnRHOF President Doug Combs



This is not the *Off Mic* column I wrote for this issue of *E-Waves*. It appears on page 2 titled, *2017: The Hall Adds Twelve New Chapters*. This replacement finds its way to the front page the same way stories appear in a small town paper. You've seen those. The editor's name appears on four of the five stories on the front page. Good thing we don't use bylines in radio. Many stations would look the same way.



I changed the stories just before going to digital press because we had a death in the family. WFLI's signal went dark this weekend. WFLI is licensed to Lookout Mountain, but could actually be anywhere. We all had that one station in our hometowns where rock rang and the music of our youth called out to us! It was the kind of station that proved the radio is the most important item in a car.

I could fill this page and many more with stories about Jet-Fli, but that task has been performed by many persons who know more about the station than I could begin to know. You see, Chattanooga is a town that LOVES radio. I discovered this several years ago when Garry Mac invited me to attend the VRW, "Veterans of Radio Wars," gathering. This annual event draws folks from across the country to share a little food and lots of memories. Radio people who once were fierce competitors leave this gathering with sore throats (from laughter) as stories are told.

Chattanooga is the kind of town where Channel 3 news anchor David Carroll spends his spare time between a blog on the radio industry and reliving his youth with a weekend oldies show on the radio.

Channel 12's Chip Chapman spends hours upon hours tracking down audio, photos and video to produce the Hall's annual awards show in celebrations of the radio industry. And Chattanooga is the kind of town where Ben Cagle, after years of owning and operating radio stations, is known for attending radio gatherings with a video camera in hand because of his desire to retain the voices, the faces and the facts of radio. Chattanooga is also the kind of town where a boy named Luther set a record and became longest serving radio announcer in America.

The Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame could have easily started in Chattanooga or Knoxville, Memphis, the Tri-Cities, Jackson or one of many other cities. On a day when a station went silent, the spirit of radio was very much alive in Hamilton County. Former employees came to the station for a wake. Will Mr. Benns' massive 50,000 watt transmitter remain silent long on O'Grady Drive? I hope not! Radio lives in Chattanooga and all across the Volunteer State. See page 4 for more on WFLI.

Doug



Mike Allen
Jim Beasley
Lowell Blanchard, II
Scotty Brink
Fred Anthony Burton
Les Butler
Brad Weiss Carson
Katy Pat Bellar Clark
Lee Armstrong Clear
John Daugherty
George DeVault
Elinor "Lin" Folk
Dru Smith Fuller
Rick Govan
Jay Joyce

Teri King
Marcia Lee Lorance
Bobby Melton
Larry Melton
Marijo Monette
David Mott
Lindsay Payne
Joseph Richie
Bud Walters
Dave Walton
Alex Ward
Jeff White
Laura Wolfe
Jessica Zimmer

2017: The Hall Adds 12 New Chapters



ORGANIZED CHAOS! I guess that could be a description of the board meeting Saturday in Nashville. Board members of your Hall of Fame were assembled to address the final details for this year's banquet and induction ceremony. Part of the meeting could be described as a puzzle enthusiast event. Sources are reviewed to gather missing pieces for our celebration. A picture here or there, audio files to fill a slot, video interviews going on in the next room. We were all working to assemble memories to tell 12 new stories. The story of radio in Tennessee is coming together for another year.

With a new venue for the 2017 Induction Ceremony and Banquet,

there are new decisions to make about setting up the room to create the best experience possible for banquet-goers. Our goal is to make the event a memory-making evening.

The show will bring to life the stories of men and women across the Volunteer State and their contributions to our industry. We'll share the stories of six career individuals, five legacy members and one radio station. In a few short weeks' time, the proverbial curtain will go up on the 2017 show.

WHUB Radio in Cookeville was elected as the Legendary Station of the Year for 2017. With this selection, I believe our group has established a standard reflecting that service to

community is equally important as audience size. Every day in our state,



stations serve their audiences in a variety of ways. With an organization as young as ours, we are still in the "catch up" phase. Legendary stations exist all across our state. We have so many stories to tell and are limited to just a few each year. This is a prime example why our organization needs to continue to grow in all parts of the state. With growth comes more voices to bring those stories to life.

Part of our check list today came a quick review on ticket sales. This year we are seeing a faster pace in reaching a sell out for our May 6th event. I would suggest that you go online today and reserve your seats NOW. Rooms are still available at the Marriott and our first backup location, The Residence Inn. **The window for special rates will come to an end this coming Friday, April 7th, 2017.** If you want to take advantage of those rates, be sure you reserve your rooms before then.

We look forward to seeing you on Saturday, May 6th at the Marriott Airport Nashville for the 6th annual Induction Ceremony and Banquet of the Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame!



Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame
2017 Induction Ceremony and Banquet

Saturday May 6th 2017
Marriott Nashville Airport
TICKETS GO ON SALE MARCH 7th

A large photograph of the Marriott Nashville Airport building, a tall white structure with many windows. In the foreground, there are green trees and a paved area. The text is overlaid on the top and bottom of the image.

Is There Meaning Behind Those Call Letters?



by Brian Craig
Historian, Elections Coordinator

I have always been fascinated by radio station call letters, especially if they had meaning. I loved finding out that the two iconic Chicago stations, WGN and WLS, stood for *World's Greatest Newspaper* and *World's Largest Store*, as they were owned at one time by the Chicago Tribune and Sears, respectively. Here in Tennessee, Nashville's two largest stations, WSM and WLAC, were both started by insurance companies. WSM stood for *We Shield Millions*, the slogan of the National Life and Accident Insurance Company. WLAC stood for *Life and Casualty*. In this article, we will take an in-depth look at the call letter meanings of stations in Memphis.

From the 1920s to 1946, Memphis had four radio stations: WMC, WREC, WHBQ, and WMPS. WMC, like a lot of early stations, was started by the local newspaper.



The *Commercial Appeal* signed WMC on the air in January 1923 with the call letters standing for *Memphis Commercial*. In 1925, Hoyt Wooten moved his Coldwater, Mississippi radio station to Memphis and took the call letters WREC, for *Wooten Radio Electric Company*.

That same year, St. John's Methodist Church started a radio station called WHBQ. Because gospel quartet singing was popular on Memphis radio, legend has it that the call letters stood for *We Have Better Quartets*. A week after WHBQ signed on, First Baptist Church started their own station called WGBC, which stood for *World's Greatest Bible Class*. They later sold the station to the *Memphis Press-Scimitar* newspaper, which changed the call letters to WMPS. Since the *Commercial Appeal* and the *Memphis Press-Scimitar* were both owned by the same company, the FCC forced them to sell WMPS. The

station was bought by Plough Inc., which retained the call letters to stand for *Radio Memphis*.

One of the interesting things about WMPS was that when First Baptist sold the station in the 1930s, part of the agreement was that the Sunday morning church services had to be carried on the radio for the next 99 years. To this day, through several owners, multiple call letters and multiple format changes, you can still hear the First Baptist Church services every Sunday morning at 11:00.

In 1946, Memphis got a fifth radio station, WHHM. It was started by an auto dealer, so the call letters stood for *Herbert Herff Motors*. Sadly, this station eventually went bankrupt and off the air for good at the end of 1962.

The next year, one of the most important stations in U.S. history signed on the air. The call letters for WDIA were in honor of owner Burt Ferguson's daughter, Diane. WDIA was the first station in the country to gear programming to the African American audience, and to this day, is one of the highest-rated stations in Memphis. In 2013, WDIA was the second station honored by the Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame with the *Legendary Station of the Year* award.

Sun Records founder Sam Phillips started his own station in 1955. This was the first station in the country to employ all women DJs, so he called the station WHER. In 1959, West Memphis, Arkansas station KWEM (which stood for *West Memphis*) changed their license and studio location to Memphis and changed the call letters to KWAM. Since the tower site remained in Arkansas, they kept call letters starting with a "K" instead of switching to "W" like most stations east of the Mississippi River.

WLOK also signed on in the 1950s. They were owned by a chain of radio stations geared toward the African American audience which all had OK as the last two letters. No one knows why they picked "L" as the second letter for their Memphis station.

In 1964, WMQM came on the air. The station originally aired an easy listening format, so the call letters stood



(continued on page 4)

Is There Meaning... (continued from page 3)



for *Memphis Quality Music*. Later, after many years as a country station, they went to a religious format and said the call letters stood for *Memphis Quality Ministries*. In 1986, Bott Radio acquired WMSO and changed the call letters to WCRV, which stands for *Christian Radio Voice*. That same

**WMQM
1480**

**MUSIC
AMERICAN
STYLE**

**MUSIC LINE
523-1480**

year, Memphis radiologist George Flinn started his first station, WGSF, which stands for *George S Flinn*.

Most of the FM stations in Memphis originally signed on the air with their AM counterpart's call letters. One exception was WTCV, which came on the air in 1968 with a gospel format. The call letters stood for *Tennessee's Christian Voice*. They later went easy listening with the call letters WAID, which was their sister AM station's call letters backwards. In 1975, after switching to an adult contemporary format, they became WQUD, which stood for *Quad*, but they never actually broadcast quadrophonic sound. In 1981, WQUD's owner, Viacom, decided to move the call letters of their New York station, WRVR, to Memphis. To this day, the station is known as *The River*.

WMPS went disco on their FM station in 1976, and changed the calls

from WMPS-FM to WHRK. These call letters honored a long-time executive with the station, Harold R. Krelstein, who this year will be inducted into the Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame in the legacy category. Memphis had several stations over the years where the call letters stood for their format, such as WODZ and KRNB. Perhaps the most successful was WEZI, which for many years aired an easy listening format. When Sam Phillips started an FM station in the late 1970s, he picked the call letters WLVS to honor Elvis Presley.



As for noncommercial stations, Memphis has WKNO, which stands for *Window of Knowledge*. It shares these call letters with its sister TV station, a PBS affiliate. For many years, Southwestern at Memphis (now Rhodes College) owned WLYX, named after their sports mascot, the Lynx. In the 1990s, Rhodes gave up the station and it was acquired by the Memphis Public Library. It was then renamed WYPL for *Your Public Library*. The University of Memphis station, WUMR, has call letters that stand for *University of Memphis Radio*. In 1976, WEVL, a station that primarily uses volunteers for DJs, began broadcasting. Its call letters stand for *We Volunteer*.

In future issues, we will look at the call letter meanings for other stations in Tennessee. If you know the story behind any call letters in the state, please email me at brianleecraig@gmail.com.

**OF THIS BE SURE:
YOU DO NOT FIND
THE HAPPY LIFE
... YOU MAKE IT.**

**StorPlace™
SELF-STORAGE**

Out and About



Above: Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame Archivist Nick Archer and his wife, Melissa, living large among the bluebonnets in Texas.



Above: Steve Bowers was visiting the legislature recently and ran into students from Jackson.



Above: Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame President Doug Combs attended a recent taping of the Sutton Ole Time Radio Hour. The show, produced in the Sutton General Store in Granville, airs on 47 radio stations across the country each week. At left, Combs is pictured with emcee Jimmy Bilbrey. At right is a picture of Travis Alltop & Friends, the band playing the evening of Combs' visit.



For more on Chattanooga radio please check:

David Carroll's Chattanooga Radio and TV
<http://www.chattanoogaradiotv.com/>

Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame YouTube channel
<https://www.youtube.com/user/TennRadioHOF>
on the Hall's search section.
Enter Chattanooga or WFLI

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 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.



GABRIEL
REVENUE SPECIALIST *Media*®

If you would like to add 10% of your annual revenue in 8 working days please contact:
John Padgett at 615-403-0336

Check Your Calendar

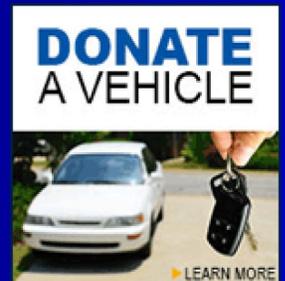
May 6, 2017

Induction Banquet & Ceremony
Marriott Nashville Airport
600 Marriott Drive, Nashville



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

Donate your RV, scooter, boat, car or motorcycle to the Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame.



Click here for details.



Write off your donation on your taxes!
TRHOF is a 501(c)3 entity.

Always Remember...



...It's On the Radio.

NEWSLETTER STAFF & GROUP INFORMATION

Editor: Melissa McDonald starmagic@comcast.net

Reporters: Buddy Sadler sbuddy@bellsouth.net
Cathy Martindale cathymartindale@comcast.net

General email: TennRHOF@gmail.com



© 2017 The Tennessee Radio Hall Of Fame, Inc.
P.O. Box 158921
Nashville, TN 37215

An IRS 501(c)3 Entity
All Rights Reserved.

You are receiving this message because you opted in at TennRadioHallOfFame.org