

March, 2015



TRHoF E-Waves NEWSLETTER



est 2010

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Ladies and Gentlemen, Your President

OFF MIC

by Gary Beaty



As we look forward to spring and leaving chilly winter days behind, the planning for our next induction banquet is well underway. Naturally, we hope for a sell-out for this fourth induction ceremony. I particularly want to encourage previous career inductees to consider ticket or table purchases and join us on this special occasion.

That brings me to this. Over the past few months, I've come to appreciate even more of the history of Tennessee radio. From fellow board members, and our resident, "unofficial" historian, Brian Craig of Memphis, I've learned that our radio broadcasting heritage has really been groundbreaking. The first station in America programmed specifically for African-Americans was our Legendary Station of the Year for 2012, WDIA. Two more "firsts" for Memphis radio: WHBQ was the first to play an Elvis record, and WHER was the first station with an all female staff. Brian has a great article on page 3 of this issue.

And, you have to appreciate the chain of history behind WNAV, Knoxville, Tennessee's first licensed station, which was eventually bought by Scripps-Howard, Dick Broadcasting, and other owners over the years. With changed "calls" to WNOX, the station gave us *The Mid-Day Merry-Go-Round* (hosted by one this year's legacy inductees, Lowell Blanchard), the program became a noontime institution in East Tennessee, and helped launch the careers of the likes of Roy Acuff, Don Gibson, Chet Atkins, Archie Campbell, Pee Wee King and many others, many of whom went on to become part of the (still going) longest running radio show in the country, WSM's *Grand Ole Opry!*

This radio history, although not obvious at first, indicates something deeper to me. We, as broadcasters – announcers, deejays, programmers, etc., have played a significant role in what urban theorist (how about that title) Richard Florida calls the "creative class" in creating and disseminating culture. We helped connect the arts, in a broad sense, to an audience eager to be informed and entertained. Technology has no doubt altered that

connection to society in that many other platforms now deliver the arts that are still significantly influential in culture, but in no way does it diminish our historical relevance. *Keep Calm*, buy a table for the banquet, and help us identify sponsors for the upcoming event in May!

The Biggest Night of the Year

Banquet Tickets on Sale!

Saturday, May 2

is the date 13 career broadcasters will be honored with induction into the Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame. Be there when these men and women are saluted for their many contributions to our state's rich broadcast history. **Information on how to buy banquet tickets, book rooms and enjoy this special event are on page 2.** Get your tickets now! May 2 will be a night you'll never forget!



March

Patty "Bell" Bellar
Nick Archer
Peggy Boatman
James Brewer
Alan Clark
Roger Ealey
Ralph Emery
Crissy Fredenberger
Matthew Hill
Jeff Jacoby

Frank Jolley
Garry Mac
Tom Mapes
Brian Mason
Chuck Morgan
David Mott
Jim Mott
Chris Protzman
Dallas (Todd) Rogers
Rich Schoedel

Jared Stehney
Larry Stone
Joel Upton
Ray Walker
Scott Walker
Chip Walters
Jeffery Wix
Jenni Wylie

What memories will *you* make?

The stories will begin before you leave the room. "That was the year..." Every year, new inductees are honored and every year, new stories and memories begin! Don't miss Tennessee radio's biggest annual homecoming!

4th Annual Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony

Saturday, May 2nd, 2015

Embassy Suites Hotel, Murfreesboro

Reception 5:00pm Dinner & Induction 6:30pm



Keith Billrey and Nan Kelley Host

Tables of 10 and individual tickets to the 2015 Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony and Banquet are now on sale to the public. There is an exciting slate of Inductees: seven in the Career category, six in the Legacy Category, and the 2015 Legendary Station of the Year, WLAC/Nashville.

Purchase your tickets now on our website:
<http://tennesseeradiohalloffame.wildapricot.org/>



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The Fascinating Firsts of Radio in Tennessee



by
Gary
Betty

by Brian Craig,
Memphis native
Program Director
WEVL 89.9/Memphis

Tennessee has so many firsts when it comes to radio broadcasting, from having the first commercially licensed FM station in 1941 (the original WSM-FM) to having the first gospel station in 1922 (WOAN in Lawrenceburg). And several of these firsts were in Tennessee's largest city, Memphis.

WDIA: In June of 1947, WDIA went on the air as the sixth radio station in Memphis. The original format of playing everything from country to classical was not working, so in October of 1948, WDIA hired high school teacher and newspaper columnist Nat D. Williams to host a show geared toward the African American audience which he called *Tan Town Jamboree*. African Americans were 40% of the Memphis market at the time, and no other radio station had any programming geared toward black listeners — so this program was a huge success.

Over the next couple of years, WDIA added more black programming, including shows hosted by Rufus Thomas and B.B. King. By 1949, WDIA was the number two station in town, so that fall, they switched to 100% black programming — becoming the first all black radio station in the U.S. WDIA is a Memphis institution and won the TRHOF's second *Legendary Station of the Year Award*. Nat D. Williams will be honored as a Legacy Inductee at this year's TRHOF banquet in May.

Sam Phillips: Sun Records founder Sam Phillips, who discovered Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis and many others, always said his first love was radio. Before getting in the record business, he had been an engineer and announcer at WREC in Memphis. In 1955, Sam got the license for his own radio station. He called it WHER, as it was the first station in America to have all female announcers. In an interview in 1960, Sam said this about the station: "When I started WHER...people thought I had rocks in my head. A girl could do a cooking show, but no one thought girls could handle hour-to-hour

programs and commercials. I felt differently. I had always wanted a radio station, but Memphis already had nine. I had to do something different. An all-girl crew, and pleasant, light music, was the answer."

Not only did women announce the shows, they programmed all the music, edited and read the news and produced and sold all the commercials. This was a very radical concept for radio in the 1950s. After several years, as easy listening music became more of a FM concept, WHER evolved into all talk programming. But for several years, Memphis was home for what was called the "First All-Girl Radio Station in the World."

Dewey Phillips & WHBQ: In 1949, WHBQ gave Dewey Phillips, who managed the record department at Grants, a nightly radio show. The program called *Red, Hot and Blue*, was unlike any other heard on the radio at the time. Dewey did not sound like a typical radio announcer, but as one writer put it "...a speed-crazed hillbilly." But Dewey was in touch with what Memphis teenagers wanted to hear, so he played not only the pop records of the day, but also country, boogie woogie and especially, rhythm and blues.

On July 7, 1954, Dewey became the first DJ to ever play an Elvis Presley record. Elvis had recorded *That's All Right* on July 5, and two days later, Sam Phillips (no relation) played Dewey an acetate of the recording. Dewey played it on his show that evening, and the response was so positive, he ended up playing it 14 times that night. Later, the same evening, he was able to get Elvis down to the WHBQ studio and became the first person in the world to ever interview Elvis. Dewey Phillips was a TRHOF Legacy Inductee in 2013.

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Those Who Got It



by Paul Randall Dickerson
"Gray Eminence": WKGN (Knoxville), WSM, WMAK, WLAC (Nashville), TRN, and the Nashville Associated Press Radio bureau (along with gigs in Wichita, Charlotte, Terre Haute, Orlando, Buffalo, Indianapolis)

At its heart, radio is very simple. You provide programming that connects with listeners, be it music, talk, sports or information. You present it in a manner that listeners can identify with, sell out the spot load and bank the revenue.

The late Allen Dennis had the best intuitive understanding of radio that I ever encountered. Whether he was doing a jock show on WMAK or WLAC, delivering newscasts on WSM or doing a show on WDXB, Allen's "aw shucks" connection to his listeners and his on point topicality served him well.

Getting the basics right and consistently communicating the mission worked well for John Rook during the halcyon days of WLS. Rook's personalities never referred to The Big 89 as a "top 40" or a "rock station." In response to my question, Rook replied, "Yes, we concentrated on attracting a big cume, often more than three million listeners a week. WLS was bigger than a top 40 rock radio station; it was a station the entire family listened to."

Rick Sklar, who rocked New York with WABC, had a telling conversation with my childhood friend, Rick James, who was a newsman at the station. As Rick told me, Sklar once told him picking hits wasn't all that hard; you take a new record that you think has the right stuff, you play it for a couple of days on the radio and if nobody calls and requests it, you stop playing it.

Then came the day of the consultant. We used to describe them as any SOB who steps off an airplane while wearing a tie and carrying a briefcase, at least 50 miles from home. His track record seemed unimportant to owners. There are good ones, but there were a lot of shysters, too.

The most honest one I ever encountered was a sales consultant we hired in Buffalo. One day, he wandered back into the programming area and I handed him a cup of coffee and invited him into my office. I asked him what he brought to the table. Kevin, smiled slyly and said our general sales manager had a good handle on the market and he was backing up Larry's plan to the general manager. And making a pretty penny at it. He explained that the GM was unsure of Larry's plan, but bought it when Kevin sang the same song because he was paying him so much money for the advice. By the way, Larry and Kevin got along fine.

Now, I read statements like any business created before the Internet is inefficient, "marrying" audiences and advertisers, "monetizing" content, etc.

You know, they might be right. Maybe it's what Dennis and Rook and Sklar and several other very bright people just knew instinctively. But, beloved, it sure lacks the poetry, doesn't it?

GET GEAR! Visit the TRHOF Web Store

Show your love of radio with great clothing that bears the Tennessee Radio Hall Of Fame logo.

These items are now available via our [WEB STORE](#).

More items coming soon!



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 may be of interest to our membership. Just email it to any of the newsletter staff listed below.

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 Skip Woolwine know if your email address changes 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 which now boasts over 1000 members, and also our YouTube Page with over 150 airchecks (over 27,000 views!) and other audio/video memories

Looking for a gig in Radio, or do you have a spot to fill at your station? Post it [HERE](#) next month.

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Check Your Calendar

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is for the Board of Directors and Advisory Council.

It takes place Saturday, March 21, at University School of Nashville, 2000 Edgehill Avenue, Nashville.

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

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GET INVOLVED! HELP THE HALL!

DONATE YOUR TIME:

We NEED your help and participation with the Hall of Fame. Projects and tasks, like creating a scrapbook of newspaper clippings or a timeline, are vitally important to the organization.

DONATE GOODS OR CASH:

Because of our 501(c)3 IRS status, all donations to the Tennessee Radio Hall Of Fame are tax-deductible. On our home page, there is a button that says **DONATE**.

If you have items you want to donate (tapes, vintage equipment, vehicles, **ANYTHING**, contact Skip Woolwine or Nick Archer. Vintage broadcast gear is always welcome, regardless of age or functionality.