



# Indiana Broadcast Pioneers Newsletter

## Hangin' Up The Headphones

If you're a country music fan in central Indiana, you've heard his warm and friendly voice come through your radio speakers to introduce your favorite song, give away tickets to an upcoming concert or simply talk to you as if you were the only one listening.

J.D. Cannon, the afternoon radio personality on Country 97.1 HANK FM, is hanging up his headphones and retiring from his daily shift after nearly 40 years on the air in Indianapolis on Friday, April 28.



**J.D. Cannon**

But it first started for J.D. on a dairy farm in Iowa before he talked into his first radio microphone.

"I had a cousin who was involved in radio and I thought that's what I want to do, that would be a lot of fun," says J.D. who moved to Madison, Wisconsin in 1972 to pursue his dream.

"I started out as a news person, but that wasn't really what I wanted to do. I kind of felt like I was out of my element. I was only 19 years old at the time. And about six months into that, the evening show opened up at the station and I asked to try. I always wanted to be a disc jockey, so they gave me a shot at it. It was six to midnight, six nights a week and all-request." But the station's music format was unfamiliar to him. "It was a country station.

I didn't know a darn thing about country music at the time. I'd grown up wanting to be a 'Rocker'. I wanted to be a 'big boss jock' in Chicago," who aspired to be on a station like WLS-AM which played music from The Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin, as opposed to WSM-AM in Nashville, Tennessee which would have included country artists like Ray Price and Porter Wagoner as part of their Grand Ole Opry broadcasts. But "I learned to love country music and it didn't take very long." That led J.D. to the next step in his broadcasting career in Indianapolis.

"I put an ad in a broadcasting magazine and the people at the other country radio station here in town answered that ad. We interviewed over the phone, I took the job and I never looked back," which led to J.D.'s move to Indianapolis in Nov. 1977.

J.D. worked on-air as a morning show host, then afternoon radio personality at that station for more than 30 years until a new company purchased the station and made changes. His previous managers and co-workers, including Charlie Morgan, Bob Richards and Fritz Moser had started working at Emmis Communications at the competing station Country 97.1 HANK FM, which also owns 93 WIBC. It wasn't long before J.D. was hired by his former team to bring his personality, experience and loyal fan base of listeners from across central Indiana to the afternoon shift beginning in Oct. 2011.

"We knew how each other worked and I think it contributed a lot to our continued success," says J.D.

Throughout his broadcasting career in Indy, J.D. has won two CMA Large Market Personality of the Year Awards, as well as the award from the Academy of Country Music for Large Market Personality of the Year.

**In 2004, J.D. was inducted into the Country DJ Hall Of Fame.**



The the first Notre Dame football game broadcast by radio aired on South Bend's WGAZ (later WSBT). It was the 1922 homecoming game versus Indiana at Cartier Field. However, it is unknown whether anyone even heard the broadcast. Few households actually owned radios at that time and there was no rating system. In 1923 and 1924, New York stations broadcast the Notre Dame versus Army and Princeton.

The first Notre Dame home game to be broadcast outside of South Bend was the 1924 game versus Nebraska at Cartier Field on Chicago's WGN. The new medium would revolutionize game "watching. Previously students and fans heard the games from telegraph wires reporting the score. They would gather in downtown South Bend at popular hang-outs such as Jimmie & Goat's Cigar Store, the Palais Royale, and the Oliver Hotel, to hear the play-by-play.

Unlike other schools in the 1930s and 1940s, Notre Dame did not give any one radio network exclusive rights to broadcast the football games. Instead, the field was open to many different broadcasters around the country. This in turn helped strengthen Notre Dame's unique position of having a nationwide fan base, whose groundwork was started even before Knute Rockne. This open broadcasting policy also had some seemingly eternal consequences for Notre Dame: "Fan expectations for national championships and ... the Irish coach being scrutinized by fans all over the U.S.

Former Irish football player Joe Boland established the Irish Football Network on the radio through WSBT in 1947.



**Joe Boland, Broadcast Pioneer**  
**Hall of Fame**

Boland grew the coverage to include 190 stations, including the American Armed Forces Network, which broadcasted the games worldwide. Boland was a member of the famed Four Horsemen. His career continued into coaching, a year of radio sports at WCCO, Minneapolis, and eventually back to South Bend to WSBT in 1942. He had daily 15-min sports radio shows (and later TV) and did play-by-play of Notre Dame and high school sports. In 1947 Boland formed the Irish Network to broadcast Notre Dame football to 190 stations. He also did play-by-play of Chicago Cardinals pro football.

The Mutual Broadcasting System formed in September of 1934, aspired to be the largest radio network in history, as much in defense against the competition from CBS, NBC's 'Red' and 'Blue' networks, and ABC as for any other economic reason. The other three competitive networks of the day were very well funded, very politically connected, and had already carved out a huge chunk of the American Radio Market for themselves. Mutual was the David to the other stations' 'Goliath' in those days, but the scrappy, resourceful amalgamation of four of the larger independent radio stations (WOR, WGN, WLW, and WXYZ) began to set their sights on both a larger audience and the opportunity to expand out of the Northeast and into the Heartland. Detroit's WXYZ, especially, had 'The Lone Ranger' to contribute, and this early Western Adventure Serial already provided a lot of advertising and growing "outbid the Irish Football network for exclusive rights to the 1956 home season." Despite Boland's tireless work to grow the Irish Football Network and dedication to his alma mater, Mutual could offer Notre Dame more revenue and broader coverage on over twice the number of radio stations Also during this time, fans could see game highlights as part of new reels at the movie theater. Fans in select cities could watch the entire game in theaters for weeks after the game took place. Boland died unexpectedly of a heart attack February 26, 1960, at age 55. He had broadcast a high school sectional basketball game the night before.





# SINGIN' SAM



The son of clothing merchant Harry Frankel grew up in Danville, Kentucky, before moving to Richmond, Indiana, when he was nine years old. As a young man he began singing in various quartets in the city and joined Coburn's Minstrels in 1908 and later toured with Al G. Field's Minstrels. Frankel and friend Joe Dunlevy were known as the "Two Blackbirds" when they performed in vaudeville theaters during the late 1920s.



Young Harry's early training came via vaudeville, minstrel shows, and singing as accompaniment for silent films. By 1929, Harry was singing on WLW, Cincinnati; and was sponsored by the Great States Lawn Mower Company and started using the name "Singin' Sam, the Lawnmower Man."

In July of 1931 Harry met with the Barbasol Shaving Cream Company who offered him a job.

He moved to New York to broadcast on W2XAB, the key station for the Columbia

Broadcasting System. His broadcasts were presented Monday through Friday at 7:15 pm EST.

But Living in New York was not Harry's cup of tea. In 1934, he returned

to Richmond, married Helen "Smiles" Davis, so named because of her

identification with the (then new) song "Smiles" while singing to the troops during World War I. The couple married May 2, 1934 in Richmond



Helen Davis

and lived first on their 5-acre farm, known as "Just-a-Mere Farm", 11 miles west of town on the National Road ( U.S. Route 40.). They later lived on small farm on the southeast side of Richmond with a large colonial revival house with a pool and several outbuildings.

In late 1934, Singin' Sam returned to broadcasting after Barbasol arranged for him to do his show live from Cincinnati, an easy commute. Harry was with the Barbasol company for 12 years. On Sept 4, 1936, Harry's broadcasts originated at the NBC-Blue network studios, remaining there until



Mary 28, 1937.

In June 1937, Harry began a series of broadcasts for the Coca Cola Company. The shows were on 16-inch discs which were syndicated and distributed to radio stations all over the country. He would fly to New York twice a month and record 10 shows. Victor Arden was musical director, and Del Sharbutt was his announcer. Harry continued to do the Coca Cola Shows until 1942.



In 1945, Harry formed Transcription Sales Company and produced 260 quarter-hour broadcasts titled "Reminisce with Singin' Sam." Joining him for those broadcasts were accordionist Charlie Magnante and his sextet; along with Hilda, Kathleen and Mary--The Mullen Sisters. . In total, Harry made 260 transcriptions for the syndicated program. He retired in 1948, about a year before his death. in a Richmond Hospital. In February of 1951 his wife gave Harry's collection of thousands of pieces of sheet music to Morrisson-Reeves Library in Richmond, Indiana. You can hear Singin' Samat



Helen & Harry



## Amos Brown Honored Posthumously

Amos Brown, longtime community leader who spent 40 years in Indianapolis radio was honored recently. The 100 block of E. St. Joseph St. is now "Amos Brown Memorial Way." That's near the Radio One building where Brown started his popular show "Afternoon's with Amos."



Recognizing his service to the city and the black community he was

known as the radio warrior. Brown, a two time NAB Marconi Awards Finalist and a member of Indiana's Broadcasters Hall of Fame was known as an absolute champion for equal rights, an advocate for education and as someone who was not afraid to tackle the big and small issues of the community and beyond. Amos Brown died in November 2015 at the age of 64.

## 2017 HOF Event

The IBA Board has unanimously accepted the Indiana Broadcast Pioneers recommendations for the 2017 Hall of Fame, with the objective of inducting four individuals. The Nominees will be contacted and informed of their selection and announced following their acceptance. The event for 2017 will take place Friday, November 3. Please mark your calendars. Again this year, this will be a luncheon celebration event. Details will follow through a mailing.

## Death Notices

**Michael O. Day**, November 26, 1938-April 19, 2017. Mike was born in Granite City, Illinois. He passed away on April 19, 2017 in Marion, Indiana.



Mike was a 1957 graduate of Granite City High School and later attended Millikin University, Decatur, Illinois. Mike was a pioneer in radio broadcasting. He managed stations in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Richmond, Indiana and in 1981 he moved to Marion to manage WMRI/WGOM. He retired as the President of BOMAR Broadcasting and was the Past President of the Indiana Broadcasters Association. Most of all, Mike will be remembered as a positive community champion. He promoted and worked tirelessly for many organizations to help propel the effort of making Marion a special place to live. He was the Chairman of the board for the United Way of Grant County, Chairman of the board and Past President of the Marion-Grant County Chamber of Commerce and served two terms as President of the Marion Philharmonic. President and member of Marion Rotary Club, and a devoted volunteer of CASA. Mike is survived by his wife, Liz Day, Marion; children, Carrie M. (William) Norris, Toledo, Ohio; Paul M. (Kelly) Day, Evans, Georgia; Thomas J. T.J. (Catie) Day.

## Erin Moran "Happy Days" Dies

Erin Moran, has passed away at the age of 56. The Harrison County Indiana Sheriffs Department in Harrison County reported. Moran skyrocketed to fame in the 1970's. She was already a veteran actress when she was



cast as Joanie Cunningham on the widely popular "Happy Days" program. The actress starred as Ron Howard's character's outspoken younger sister before landing a titular role in Happy Days spin-off



Joanie Loves Chachie alongside Scott Baio. Despite Joanie Loves Chachie's one-season run, Erin returned to Happy Days for its eleventh and final season in 1984. She went on to make smaller television appearances on series including Murder, She Wrote and The Love Boat.



Ron Howard responded to her death by saying, "She was always the kid on the set, in a way. When I think of her then, which is how I choose to think of her, she was this feisty, spirited little girl."

## Death Notices continued

**Richard (Dick) Paul Burkett, 90**, passed away April 2, 2017 in Greencastle, Indiana. Dick enlisted in the Navy at 17, trained in the Signal Corps and served in the Pacific during World War II. He re-enlisted in the Army and served in Japan as part of the 11th Airborne Division as a code radio operator. During the Korean War, he was assigned to the Seventh Infantry Division as part of the signal battalion. After Korea, he was an announcer on Armed Forces Radio in Japan. Back in the States, he helped setup and run a training TV station. He later used his radio and TV experience starting up TV stations in the early 1950s. He became the head film editor for Channel 8 TV in Indianapolis in 1954. During his time at WISH



**Richard Burkett**

he also hosted an early morning children's Cartoon program titled "Cowboy Clyde".



**"Cowboy Clyde"**



**Clyde" & the Kids**

To keep his time in the military, he enlisted in the Marines, then the Indiana National Guard 38th Infantry Division. He then worked full-time for the Active Guard Reserves as the chief operations sergeant until his retirement from the military in 1986 as sergeant major. He worked another 11 years as the state school manager for the Military Department of Indiana.

He was a member of St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church in Greencastle, and was involved with the local VFW and honor guard.

He is survived by his sister, Mary Lou Deemer of Apollo, Pa.; daughters Gretchen Robertson (Brian) of Flat Rock, Ind., Dr. Ann Sasaki-Madigan (John) of Coeur d'Alene, Ida., and Miriam Burkett of Indianapolis; sons Tom Burkett (Char) of Forest, Va., and Paul Burkett (Melinda) of Dumfries, Va.; grandchildren Mary, Daniel, Calli, Bradley and Aaron.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Barbara; sister Miriam Burkett; and brother Gerald Burkett.

Richard will be buried in his hometown of Apollo, Pa., with a grave side service and military honor guard..

**Ruth Hiatt, 91**, of Danville, Indiana

died February 10, 2017 in Ft. Wayne, Indiana where she had been a resident since 2014.

She was born March 2, 1925 in Indianapolis, Indiana. She graduated from Arsenal technical High School in 1942 and received her bachelor of Arts degrees in music and Theology from



**Ruth Hiatt**

Butler University in 1951. On July 25, 1952 she was united in marriage to Edgar E. Hiatt. Ruth worked nearly 41 years at WFBM/WRTV Channel 6 where she was Administrative Assistant to Eldon Campbell, the stations General Manager, instrumental in running the Call for Help Office, public relations and retired as Government Affairs Director. She served on the Board of the Indiana Broadcast Pioneers and was a member of the Indiana broadcasters Association.

**Robert "Bob" J. Foster Jr. 73**, of Indianapolis, passed away on March 21, 2017. Bob was born July 16, 1943 in Butte, Montana. Bob, a retired U.S. Army Master Sergeant (E-8) served during the Vietnam and Korean Wars and retired in 1981 after 20 years of service. He was awarded several medals during his career, including the Bronze Star Medal and the Department of Defense Meritorious Service Medal and Vietnam Service Medal. Bob was an author, newspaper editor, radio and TV news anchorman, TV sportscaster and weathercaster for WTTV channel 4. He graduated from the University of New York. Bob was a dedicated Legionnaire and served as adjutant since 1985. At age 15, Bob met the love of his life, Mary Anne Casebeer. He enjoyed spending time with his family, camping in Montana, and tinkering with his radios.



**Bob Foster**

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