



# Indiana Broadcast Pioneers Newsletter

## IMS RADIO NETWORK



Originally, and for many years, the principal radio coverage for the Indianapolis 500 was provided by the Mutual Radio Network. Mutual was an NBC spin off which typically covered events in the town of an affiliate. Affiliates from each city were used to provide all of the engineering and announcing. Mutual provided New York-based Bill Slater as the "Voice" for the 500, Analyst Norman Perry and Commercials-Rand McFarland. "Turn Reporters" were WIBC locals. South turn E.Z Gwynn, Main stretch, Carl Page, North Turns, Jim Shelton, Pit/Garage, Gene Kelly.

Originally, the "500" coverage was comprised of 30 minutes at the beginning, Pre-race ceremonies and start, and 30 minutes at the conclusion which included the final laps plus the winner's interview in victory lane. Interspersed throughout the day with brief "updates." of the action. In 1948 locally raised 25-year-old Sid Collins was fortunate enough to be assigned to the south end of the track. No sooner had Mutual gone on the air for an update than, right in front of Sid, driver Duane Carter broke a rear axle, causing an elaborate spin which Sid was able to describe "live", establishing himself as capable and professional. In 1951, when advertisers balked at a dramatic hike in Mutual's rates, it appeared there may not be any radio coverage. Fortunately, WIBC management decided to cover the race themselves using its own Sid Collins as anchor, rationalizing that all of the recent productions had been theirs anyway. Meetings were scheduled with Tony Hulman and Wilbur Shaw. The result . . . the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Radio Network.



Sid Collins in the  
Pagoda Broadcast  
Booth

The Mutual Network program format was used the first year, but in 1953, WIBC teamed up with the city's four other stations to present the first-ever flag-to-flag coverage of the "500," presenting a continuous four-and-a-half-hour marathon interrupted only by commercial breaks.

From there, the Network grew by leaps and bounds, the station count climbing from 26 to 135 in the first year alone, assisted greatly by the broadcast being carried by the Armed Forces Network in Europe and the Armed Forces Radio Service in the Far East. In 1954, with a quartet of half-hour qualification wrap-up shows added, it was up to 210, and by 1963 the increasing use of short-wave radio pushed the number above 700, eventually topping out at a mind-boggling 1,200 stations. Sid Collins, by now a bona fide star, was a complex man: dynamic, charming and humorous (he was an outstanding emcee), but also extremely motivated and hard-working, bent on perfection and accepting not much less from anyone with whom he dealt. He liked to think of

himself as an orchestra conductor, the other announcers being his musicians. He stressed the importance of painting a "word picture" for the listeners, telling his colleagues, "If a car is red, tell the listeners that. If you know that it is specifically candy-apple red, then, tell them that too."

**WIBC and Sid Collins . Radio Pioneers of "The Greatest Spectacle in Racing."**



# HOF Pioneer Joe McConnell 1943 - 2018

Joe McConnell, long time Sports Announcer who served as the radio voice of Purdue football from 1994 to 2009, passed away April 9, 2018 in Indianapolis.

.He was 75. McConnell was a 1962 graduate of Franklin College. His broadcasting career began in 1962 at Purdue's campus radio station, WBAA. He later served as assistant sports information director at Purdue from 1965 to 1967 then enjoyed a long and very distinguished career in Broadcasting.. Beyond Purdue, his college basketball ties included Indiana State (1978-79), DePaul (1984-88), Illinois (1987-88), Notre Dame (1987-88) and Northwestern (1989-94)

He was with the Sycamores during their run with Larry Bird to the NCAA title game.

His career also included 23 seasons in the NFL as the voice of the Denver Broncos (1969), Minnesota Vikings (1971-76 and 1985-87), Chicago Bears (1977-84), Indianapolis Colts (1992-94) and Tennessee Oilers (1997-98), seven seasons in the NBA as the voice of the Phoenix Suns (1970-72) and Indiana Pacers (1972-77), and seven seasons in MLB as the voice of the Twins (1978-79) and White Sox (1980-84).

.McConnell also spent five seasons (1991-95) as lead voice for the NBA's National Game of the Week. He broadcast three Super Bowls, the NBA and ABA championships, the NBA All-Star Game and the American League Championship Series.

Additionally, McConnell broadcast Northwestern football (1988) and Indiana State (1978-79), DePaul (1984-88), Illinois (1987-88), Notre Dame (1987-88) and Northwestern men's basketball (1989-94). McConnell also spent five seasons (1991-95) as lead voice for the NBA's National Game of the Week. He has broadcast three Super Bowls, the NBA and ABA championships, the NBA All-Star Game and the American League Championship Series.

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Illinois (1987-88), Notre Dame (1987-88) and Northwestern men's basketball (1989-94).

McConnell was honored with the AP/UPI Play-by-Play Sportscaster of the Year Award five times and was the Indiana Sportscaster of the Year in 2000 and the Illinois Sportscaster of the Year in 1981.

Upon his retirement as the voice of the Boilermakers, Purdue Athletics named the visiting team radio booth at Ross-Ade Stadium for McConnell.

. His most famous call, however, came on October 7, 1984, when he announced Walter Payton's NFL rushing record-breaking carry against the Saints at Soldier Field. CHICAGO – For sports fans around the country, especially those in the Windy City, he was a recognizable voice through the years in both college and professional sports.

The announcement of a very versatile long time play-by-play broadcaster Joe McConnell invoked a number of memories from a large number of different fan bases, athletes and fellow broadcasters..



**White Sox game. L-R Jimmy Piersall, Joe McConnell, Don Drysdale,**



**Purdue dedicates Radio Booth to Joe McConnell**

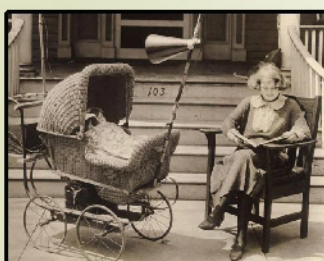




Around 1912, the brilliant Edwin Armstrong (December 18, 1890 – January 31, 1954) developed the regenerative amplification circuit to fully utilize a new technology that was developing rapidly. Armstrong's greatest contribution, however, to this emerging field came late in 1918 and it was the idea that made all subsequent developments in radio possible.

Enter the battery driven radio. In the early days this used wet lead-acid cells that had to be recharged every few days and were used to power the 'Farm' set (so called as they were often found on rural farms where there was no main power grid. via a vibrator driven PSU that took the 12v from the battery (probably the same battery that ran the Model T Ford or John Deere tractor parked outside) and converted it to the DC high voltage required... practical but still not very portable. The battery manufacturers eventually realized that an opportunity existed to produce and market radio sets. Armstrong was also credited as the inventor of FM radio in 1933.

The radio depicted is a wedding present for his bride, Marion MacInnis, it was the



Mom, baby, and a portable radio with a speaker

first portable superheterodyne radio receiver ever made. . . .and the "Fad" was on !

Portable radios for mom and her baby, street vendor with his portable "attention getter"

The Lyradion Manufacturing Company Mishawaka, Indiana, is credited with being the first American company to market a radio/phonograph combination back in 1922 called the Lyradion. They also manufactured and marketed their own

line of radios, also called Lyradion. Most of those radios used loop antennas.

This model is the only portable set that they made and is also possibly one of the last models that they made.



The Lyradion Radio/Phonograph

This Lyradion was once owned by the late James A. Fred (Jim) from Cutler, Indiana. Jim was a seasoned radio collector, editor and publisher of his own monthly publication "Antique Radio Topics" which was in national circulation during the early 1970s.

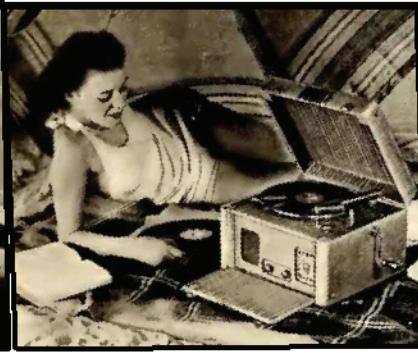
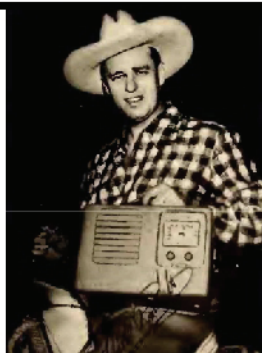
Eventually Portable radios evolved and people were able to lug around the "Clunkers" seen below.



Armstrong and his wife and portable radio on their Honeymoon.



A street vendor and his radio-equipped cart, 1928



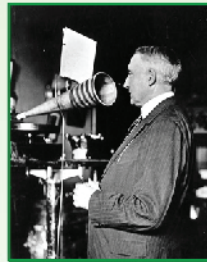


# I HEARD THAT !

In 1922, President Warren G. Harding, while addressing a crowd at the dedication of a memorial site for the composer of the "Star Spangled Banner," Francis Scott Key, became the first president to have his voice transmitted by radio. The broadcast heralded a revolutionary shift in how presidents addressed the American public. It was not until three years later, however, that a president would deliver a radio-specific address. That honor went to President Calvin Coolidge.

In 1920, radio station KDKA in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, announced that Harding was the official winner of that year's presidential election. It was the first time election returns were broadcast live. Harding was an advocate for advanced technology. In 1923, he recorded a speech on an early "phonograph" that recorded and played back sound on wax discs. Harding was also the first president to own a radio and was the first to have one installed in the White House. According to the White House Historical Association, the way presidents have communicated to the public has changed with each advance in technology over the years. In early America, presidents such as George Washington and James Monroe traveled by horseback or carriage to address crowds in person and published statements in "broadsheets" and early newspapers. Lincoln had the relative advantage of traveling by locomotive or using the telegraph. Telephones appeared in the White House in 1877 while Indiana's Rutherford B. Hayes was president. Like Harding, President William Taft used the phonograph to distribute recordings of his speeches. However, the most rapid advancement in communication for presidents occurred in the 20th century.

With the invention of radio and television and then the internet, politicians can now transmit information instantaneously. Franklin Roosevelt proved a master at utilizing the radio during the 1930s and 1940s. Many credit John F. Kennedy's "telegenic" good looks and calm demeanor in televised presidential debates for his victory in the 1960 presidential election. Bill Clinton was the first president to set up a White House website.



Edison Records  
Pres.. Harding

## *The President and the Radio*

Although President Roosevelt was not the first

Chief Executive to make use of the radio, he was certainly one of the best. His first broadcast was



delivered from the White House when he gave a eulogy for President Warren G. Harding.

He continued and refined his radio talks in an effort to lead America through a difficult periods in his Presidency. He promoted the hopes and values of our country and the promise of democracy. His delivery was not only as a leader but as a friend with occasional humor.

His talks became hugely popular throughout the country and provided both information and hope through those troubled times.

The program aired at 10:00 p.m. Eastern time was carried by all of the national Networks. Listeners across the nation tuned in each broadcast and treasured the talks from the President.

To further serve and assure the Nation he suggested listeners write to him directly and

tell him their concerns. Millions of letters poured into the White House. This brilliant move by Roosevelt was an effort to make the



broadcast a personal conversation with each American. The chats became a form of conversation between the people and their President.



## Hilliard Gates Induction

The Indiana Journalism Hall of Fame inducted five new members at their annual luncheon on May 19, 2018.

The only radio broadcaster in that group will be a posthumous induction: Hilliard Gates.

Mr. Gates passed away in 1996 at age 80. Mr. Gates didn't begin broadcasting in Indiana, but in Muskegon Michigan in 1937. He came to Indiana in 1940, when he became a staff announcer for WOWO and WGL in Fort Wayne. When William Kunkel (Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette) signed WKJG on in 1947.

Mr. Gates became Station Manager and also did sports reporting. He later became VP/GM for WKJG-TV (Channel 33), an NBC affiliate. Mr. Gates also had a role in the 1986 movie "Hoosiers." and is a member of the Indiana Broadcast Pioneer's Hall of Fame.



Gene Allison began his broadcasting career at WAOV Radio in Vincennes, Indiana before joining WISH Radio in 1946 as News Editor. Switching to TV as announcer and on air host for "The Early Show", a M-F afternoon movie. He also hosted a Late Night Movie with Sponsor Ed Clark "The Used Car King". who slashed prices "on air" saying . . .

**"The King Don't Care !**

## Small Town - Big Radio

In a small town like Salem, Indiana, WSLM radio is like



WSLM Radio, Salem, Indiana

(Photo: By Pat McDonogh

a favorite neighbor. When you step through its doors the walls are packed with 45 rpm records. Pull out a disc

and you might find the vintage

New Orleans rhythm and blues hit, "Ain't Got No Home," by Clarence "Frog Man" Henry, or any number of Frank Sinatra, Roy Orbison or Brenda Lee tracks.

On Feb. 14, 1953, Don Martin fired up WSLM Radio for the first time at 250 watts. Over the years the station has expanded its output to "5000 Red Hot Watts." Martin, who saved money to start the station while teaching high school English. At times he personified TV's straight-laced, 1950s dad Ward Cleaver, and at other times he played the role of P.T. Barnum.

The 1960s are known for outrageous radio promotions. And WSLM was no exception with "Mike the Mole," a man buried alive for 66 days and "Plates Over Salem," thought to be the inspiration for the WKRP in Cincinnati's Thanksgiving Turkey Drop skit."

Martin met his wife Charlotte Pruitt, a local singer, when she visited the station. Pruitt, Merle Haggard, Loretta Lynn and others had stood on the linoleum floor and belted out tunes at WSLM. Pruitt traded her Grand Ole Opry gigs for radio jingles and never looked back.

Today WSLM is an eclectic mix of ancient architecture and modern technology. Long-running live shows like the Coffee Club and the Swap Shop, as well as live sports are a staple of the station's schedule. WSLM consists of AM 1220 and FM 97.9, reaching throughout central Indiana and into Louisville. Television station WRLW is also part of the broadcast family.

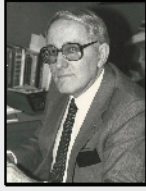
Martin's daughter, Becky White, has taken over the microphone from her father, who passed away in 2010, at age 90. White grew up at the station and hopes that one of her six daughters will keep it a family affair..

**Credit: Pat McDonogh, The Courier-Journal**



## Death Notices

**Francis Harold (Hal) Barron**, born on April 15, 1933 in Lake Jackson, Texas, passed away on March 19, 2018 in Carmel, Indiana. Hal graduated from University of Houston in 1955 and received his MS in Education at Butler University in 1973. He was a pioneer in the television industry, working behind the camera at the country's first educational television station, KUHT. He continued his career as a television producer/director at KTVI in St. Louis. His career brought him to Indiana when he became the News Producer at WFBM (now WRTV), then WISH-TV as a Television Production Manager. He supervised extensive coverage of the Indianapolis 500 at both stations. Hal was distinguished for directing President Lyndon Johnson's speech at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument in Indianapolis as well as V.P. Hubert Humphrey's visit to the George Rodgers Clark Memorial in Vincennes as Indiana transferred the site to the National Park Service. Hal moved from commercial television in 1968 to become Chief Instructor of the Broadcast Department at the Defense Information School, Ft. Benjamin Harrison. Through the Defense Department, Hal was asked to be the World Wide Network Pool Coordinator for the first eleven Space Shuttle flights, directing network feed from Mission Control at Johnson Space Center. For 29 years, Hal also taught Television Production and Management and Broadcast Law as an adjunct professor at Butler's Jordan College of Fine Arts. He retired from Ft. Harrison in 1995, enjoying amateur radio, the computer, and voraciously reading and exercising 3 days a week at St. Vincent Cardiac Rehab. Hal earned his private pilot's license at age 15 and went on to earn his private, instrument, instructor and commercial rating licenses. He was a member of Sigma Delta Chi Journalism Society, the Society of Broadcast Engineers, the National Association of Broadcasters, and was a Charter Member of the St. Louis Chapter of the National Academy of the Television Arts and Sciences. An avid ham radio operator, he volunteered with Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) at numerous events including the Indy 500 and the PanAm Games. He also earned the title of "Kentucky Colonel" from the Kentucky State Police. The accomplishment of which he was most proud was earning his Eagle Scout Award.



**Elizabeth A. "Beth" Sullivan, 80**, of Carmel, a retired publisher of weekly newspapers in the Indianapolis area and before that a pioneer of two TV stations, died Sunday, March 18, 2018. Beth was born in Detroit, the daughter of Daniel A. and Inez Sullivan, and moved to Indianapolis with her family when she was 7. She attended Broad Ripple High School and graduated from St. Agnes Academy. She then went to work in 1957 for Channel 13, WLW-I, which was at that time the brand-new ABC affiliate in Indianapolis, becoming a saleswoman. She worked with many well-known broadcasters of the time and went to New York City for network-affiliate meetings.

When Channel 59, then WPDS, began broadcasting in the 1980s, Beth joined its staff as sales manager. After the station was sold, she left the television business and purchased the Speedway Press, a weekly newspaper serving the Speedway City area. She later purchased the West Side Messenger as well, selling ads, reporting, and in the pre-internet era driving the physical pages to Franklin for printing. She sold them in 2015 and retired. As a saleswoman in the early days of TV broadcasting, Beth more than held her own in what at the time was very much a man's world. Her ability to tell stories about her life and her work in a hilariously sarcastic manner often had her relatives laughing uncontrollably. She was always curious about the world and in the 1970s and 1980s with her late brother Daniel and his wife took yearly trips overseas, including a visit to China in the 1970s when such travel was rare, and at another time spending the night in a tent in the Moroccan desert.

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