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BROADCAST BEAT

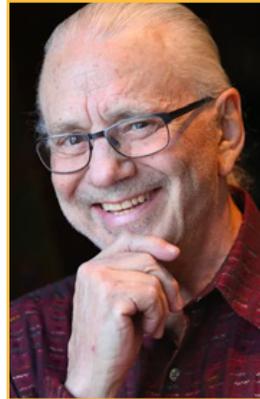
Letter from the Editor

by **Bill Shirk**

Indiana Broadcast Pioneers Broadcast Beat Editor

On October 28, I was awarded the “Lifetime Achievement Award”, from the Indiana Broadcasters Association. I am honored to have received this award.

None of this would have been possible without the outstanding dedicated talented broadcasters that worked with me at my stations. The following is a list of those individuals, many of them are in the Hall of Fame.



My father Robert Poorman, Art Angotti, Bill Mays, Tom Cochrun, Bruce Munson, Bernie Eagan, Paul Mendenhall, Larry McCabe, John Irwin, Dave Letterman, Joe Pickett, Glenn Webber, Carolyn, Churchman, Jim Gerard, Ed Roehling, Scott Uecker, Frank Powell, Melbourne Christopher, Dick The Bruiser, Robert Knight, Larry Batson, Scott Wheeler, Cris Connor and his wife Vanessa, Dick Wolfsie, Tony Lamont, Chuck Cunningham, Amos Brown, Doug Housemeyer, Chris Denari, Annie Martin, My mother Betty Poorman, My brother Bob Poorman and my sister Becky Walstrom and of course, my wife Liz and daughter Maxine.

Also, I would like to thank the people who help me raise the money for the new Indiana State Museum IBA Display:

Jeff Smulyan, Ken Beckley, Joan Kowalski President of Bob Ross Inc, J Chapman, Ken Speck, Dave Arland (Executive Director of the IBA) and Dave White.



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SPECIAL THANKS to Blaine Thompson of Indiana RadioWatch, which is an online publication that reveals what's new at Indiana radio and TV stations: Format changes, personnel, ownership, engineering, etc. *Indiana RadioWatch* subscriptions are free. To subscribe, send an e-mail to irw@well.com. You can follow Blaine on twitter at [@irwradio](https://twitter.com/@irwradio).

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Lynn Caldwell, 93, died November 23, 2025. Mrs. Caldwell was a school speech language pathologist, and an Indianapolis theatre supporter and leader. She was the spouse of Indiana Broadcast Hall of Fame member Howard Caldwell. Obituary link: <https://www.shirleyandstout.com/obituary/Lynn-Caldwell>



Jack Marsella, 89, died January 4, 2026. Mr. Marsella was Sales Manager for the WIFE (AM) in the 1970s. After that, he was GM for WNTS (AM) and then national sales manager for WIBC (AM) and WKLR (FM). He then served as EVP of Emmis Publishing. Obituary: <https://www.flannerbuchanan.com/obituaries/jack-marsella>



Robert (Bob) Wise, Jr., 76, died August 14, 2025. Mr. Wise was a broadcaster on Indianapolis radio stations WFMS and WIRE. He later became a standup comedian. He also had a career in advertising. Obituary: <https://www.gracelandfairlawn.com/obituaries/robert-wise-21/obituary>



Duane Lammers, 64, died July 19, 2025. Mr. Lammers once served as GM for WTWO-TV in Terre Haute. He later rose to EVP/COO at Nexstar Broadcasting. Obituary: https://www.columbiaindianian.com/obituaries/family_obituary/duane-lammers-may-14-1961-july-19-2025/article_922b2b29-51d4-4966-a6db-5a8dde4a585e.html



Don Hein, 85, died July 3, 2025. Mr. Hein was Sports Director and anchor at WTHR-TV in Indianapolis for 33 years and did play by play for the Indiana Pacers. He's an Indiana Television Pioneers Hall of Fame member. Obituary: <https://www.indianafuneralcare.com/obituaries/donald-hein>



Jerry Prince, 66, died January 2, 2026. Mr. Prince's career included stops at WTWO-TV in Terre Haute (video production manager) and worked for WHMB-TV in Indianapolis. He also owned a video production management company. Obituary: <https://www.journalreview.com/stories/jerry-w-prince.376617>



Dale Lowe, 63, died June 19, 2025. For 34 years, he did mornings at WHZR (FM) in Logansport. He also did a weekend Roots of Hoosier Country show on WHZR for 20 years. Obituary: <https://www.fisherfuneralchapel.com/obituaries/Dale-Lowe?obId=43025366>



Jay Johnson ("Super Jay"), 78, died August 30, 2025. Mr. Johnson programmed and did afternoons on WTLC (FM) in Indianapolis. His obituary notes, "Under his leadership, WTLC was named Black Radio Exclusive's Station of the Year in 1980 and 1984, and Billboard's Soul Station of the Year in 1981." He also worked in Indianapolis TV in multiple roles at WISH-TV. Obituary: <https://www.dignitymemorial.com/obituaries/dallas-tx/jay-johnson-12506205>



Debby Knox Hall of Fame TV Anchor Legend

by Debby Knox

Debby Knox, a 48-year broadcasting veteran and 4-time Emmy Award winner, realized her aptitude for news at a young age.

Growing up in a small Michigan town, she was always curious about what was going on around her and devoured the two newspapers her parents received daily in the driveway. As a 4th grader, the JFK assassination jolted her into noticing what was happening in the world around her. In 8th grade, she founded a current events club at her middle school.

Armed with a communications degree from the University of Michigan where she briefly worked on the Michigan Daily, she began her broadcasting career in 1976 with WAAM Radio



in Ann Arbor. She then moved to television in Notre Dame at WNDU and then to WSJV in Elkhart.

In 1980, WISH-TV in Indianapolis became her home where she was a medical and investigative reporter and co-anchor on the CBS affiliate's noon news. She soon became a beloved anchor on the 5, 6 and 11 p.m. newscasts until 2013 when she thought she was retiring after 33 years.

Instead, WTTV lured her back to the Indianapolis anchor desk in 2015 for another 8 years at CBS4.

Over her illustrious career, Debby has interviewed Presidents Barack Obama and Bill Clinton, Secretaries of State Madeleine Albright and Colin Powell, and former First Lady Barbara Bush.

Other notable sit-downs include former Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev; Nobel Peace Prize Recipient Desmond Tutu; Boston Celtics Coach Brad Stevens; and authors John Green and Anne Patchett.

Traveling internationally, Debby interviewed Suzanne Mubarak, first lady of Egypt, and covered the Indiana National Guard's peacekeeping duties in Bosnia. In Mexico City, she reported on a global school started by Indianapolis philanthropist Christel DeHaan.

She has won two UPI first place awards for documentaries, is a first-place winner in the Society of Professional Journalists for medical reporting, earned a Silver Circle Honor from the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, and is a member of the AP Hall of Fame.





It's not every journalist whose personal story includes deadlifting 185 pounds at 58 years old!

One of her proudest accomplishments is competing in a powerlifting competition while reporting on her own 60-pound weight loss journey. It's not every journalist whose personal story includes deadlifting 185 pounds at 58 years old!

Married for 37 years to psychologist Richard Tirman until his death in 2019, she has two children, Michael Tirman, an attorney in Chicago, and Anna Kidwell, a nurse practitioner at Community Health, and one granddaughter. She enjoys traveling with her family, especially skiing in Colorado, and now shares her life with partner Richard Howard.

She gives back to the League of Women Voters and supports PANCAN, which increases awareness of pancreatic cancer, a disease of which her sister, Lisa, is a survivor. She belongs to Trinity Episcopal Church and supports St. Richards Episcopal School, Cathedral High School, and Butler University.



A recipient of the Sagamore of the Wabash Distinguished Hoosier Award, she has been honored six times as Indianapolis Woman Magazine's top choice for local female TV anchor. She received the Barrett Award from the Indiana Psychological Association and is in the Hall of Fame in her hometown of Edwardsburg, Mich.



Preserving the Past, Updating the Airwaves at the Indiana State Museum

by Damon Lowe

Senior Curator of Science and Technology and Curator of Biology Indiana State Museum

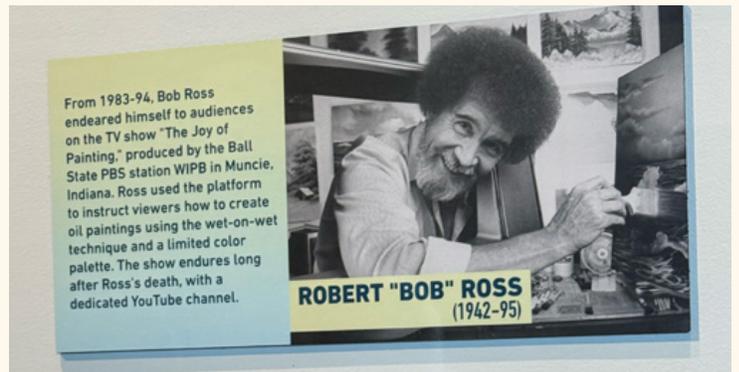
In December, a spirited group of Indiana Broadcast Pioneers gathered together to snip the ribbon on an enhanced Indiana Broadcast Pioneers Hall of Fame exhibit at the Indiana State Museum. First installed when the museum was built more than two decades ago, the exhibit refresh projected was spearheaded by Bill Shirk and now includes a more comprehensive roster of Hall of Fame honorees matched with iconic artifacts from the long history of Indiana broadcasting. Hall of Fame video biographies are now easily found at a new part of the Indiana Broadcasters Association website, including more than 100 video tributes. To read more about individual honorees, go to www.IndianaBroadcasters.org and click on Pioneers and then the Hall of Fame roster.

When I was first assigned to work on updating the radio and broadcasting exhibit at the Indiana State Museum, it was overwhelming because of how little I knew about the subject. I've always been fascinated with the technological aspect of the industry, but knowing the nuances of the timeline and keeping track of all the people seemed intimidating. Having to start somewhere, I began by reading the museum's copy of "In the Public Interest," by Linda Weintraut and Jane Nolan. This book was a great primer to get me started on my task, but it was just a steppingstone. Next, I reached

out to an occasional museum volunteer and former Indiana State Museum Chief Curator Dale Ogden for assistance. He served as the archivist for the Indiana Broadcast Pioneers and worked with the Broadcasters Association and the Indiana Broadcast Pioneers decades ago to develop and implement the original exhibit in the museum's former location on N. Alabama Street. He also developed the exhibit in the state museum's current location in White River State Park.

Dale was already volunteering to help catalog radio and broadcasting related materials, so he readily agreed to assist with this new project. As I was transcribing the original text and timeline that was on display, Dale started working on suitable additions to the timeline to bring it up to date since it stopped in the early 2000s, when the exhibit was originally installed. Like most industries, decisions are made by a team, so I submitted a rather large list of timeline entries to our exhibit team for review. I soon learned that we didn't have any additional space and we would need to trim the list. As you might imagine, this was a very difficult process since so many people have made important contributions to Indiana broadcasting over the last century.

It was a joy researching the entertainers and journalists I watched and listened to growing up in central Indiana, and it allowed me to reconnect with many early memories. We want this same outcome for our visitors, too. I also learned a lot about my fellow Hoosiers and their influence. It was surprising to me how much of a national impact Indiana has had on both radio and television, and it was exciting to learn about and share the stories with my colleagues, family and now, our visitors to enjoy. I am grateful that I had the opportunity to work on this project, and I hope everyone gets a chance to visit the Indiana State Museum and see it for themselves.





Origins of the Crossroads of Americana

by Robert Flott for John Rabold



It is a Monday morning, its time to make my way to the front room of the house after feeding the six kitty cats that own this space. Most have names after music acts or songs.

With show prep ready, the equipment is fired up, it is time to push the recording button.

Next, the flailing banjo of “Bethesda Breakdown” by the Wright Brothers Overland Stage Company fills the studio.

“Hey! how you doing? I am John Rabold, and this is the Crossroads of Americana!”

I started this show in April of 2022, motivated by many factors.

I had the idea of this show back in the 1990s. I used to work for a country station (WTHI Terre Haute, Indiana) and then went to a classic hits station (WCBH Casey, Illinois). I remember thinking a cool format could be created using only certain country songs and certain rock songs, and I thought it would work.

Unfortunately, lots of resistance came.

I was told No Way. Rock fans do not like country and country folk only like country AND western.

Obviously, I disagreed. Garth Brooks broke that ceiling. Besides, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Marshall Tucker Band, The Allman Brothers and even early Charlie Daniels Band already were crossover favorites. And the 1980s saw a surge of country crossovers.

I even had a name of the show picked out – ‘Smokestack Lightning!’”

Radio stations in the 1990s also wanted to keep things familiar. Few if any were willing to take chances on new formats, other than the Alternative Rock formats.

But an Alternative Country?

It was groundbreaking. Even the genre deemed

'Americana' would take years to gain ground. Fast forward to 2017, I am long out of radio and television and was taking a road trip.

While passing through Asheville, NC, I scan local radio stations as usual. I came across an NPR station, WNCW. It is a Friday night, and all of a sudden I hear a remarkable song set: Waylon Jennings, Bob Dylan, Gram Parsons, Margo Price, others.

The on-air personality introduces himself as Brad Watson and his show, "The Cosmic American Music Show" (Gram Parsons coined the term "Cosmic American Music" when asked if he was a country player or rock act)

I Thought, "He is doing my show!"

I listened as long as I could, and I made a point to listen online whenever I could. It made me wish I had a way to do a radio show again.

A couple of years later, I was invited by Russ Dodge help guest co-host a local syndicated show titled "Indiana Nocturne."

Man, I was out of practice. To this day I have not listened to that show. I was surprised he wanted me back to take over after his regular co-host stepped down.

Over the next four years, Russ and I put together a one-hour weekly show of eclectic and classic rock. However, occasionally, we would butt heads on something I wanted to play.

Russ wants to keep true to the rock feel. I felt now and then an Americana act or perhaps a classic country act, especially for an Obit, and for sure something that was very recognizable we could get away with. Russ felt the listeners would not relate, and more times than not, I got vetoed.

One Sunday morning, I woke up, half stewing over the last veto and wishing I had my own show to do exactly what my ear was telling me. At the time, Indiana Nocturne was recorded at a studio of an underwriter of 91.9FM WITT.

We were super blessed to have this place we

could come anytime and record. I finally thought, "John, stop fuming. Head down to that studio, record a show how you think it should sound, and send it out to stations and see what happens."

There was a minor problem.

I felt Smokestack Lightning no longer fit the sound in my head, it at the time was going to be southern rock feel. I was now going to play Alternative Country Classic Country, Country influenced Rock and Folk.

I kicked a few ideas around for a name and came up with "Crossroads of Americana." I wanted the idea of a crossroads the focal point of genre bending songs and artists.

Americana is hard to define, even folks in the industry cannot make their mind up.

Why?

Best way to put it, it is Roots Music with genres that branch out to all things Americana." It is a feel. It is a sound. I just cannot play anything just because it is by so-and-so.

That Sunday I put together a three-hour show and sent it out to several stations. In the first week, four stations were wanting Crossroads of Americana: Circle City Rock Radio, WYRZ Brownsburg, WMKI Terre Haute, and Mix 105indy.com.

That was April 2, 2022, and about two years later, we faced a situation.

WITT owner, Jim Walsh was dying, and there was uncertainty of what might happen to the noncommercial license after he passed. To complicate the issue, WITT's underwriter where the recording studio was, they were selling the business, and new owners were moving it. The potential of losing a studio was strong.

One of the many things my father taught me was make your decisions logically, not emotionally, and be proactive not reactive.

In 2015, I was notified that 107.9 FM WTPI was replacing its Pacific Electronics BMX-22 on-air studio board.



Origins of the Crossroads of Americana (continued)

They heard I collected local radio memorabilia, If I wanted it, I needed to come to their studio now or it was headed to the dumpster. Obviously, I made the trip to 9245 North Meridian Street and loaded it into a twenty-year-old station wagon.

For many years, it sat as a huge paperweight in the back of my house.

I wondered if it could come back to life. Good friend Don Worsham [of Radio Free Naptown fame – the underground pirate station in Indy 1968-1972] felt he should take a crack at it.

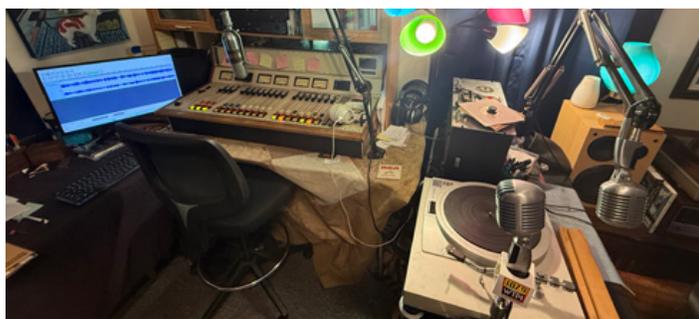
Worsham visited my home on a Sunday, spent six hours working on the old studio board. After some blood, sweat, a few choice words, a miracle!

The new Crossroads Studios at the coveted Rabold Estate in the heart of Brownsburg, Ind was born!

Now into my fourth year, CoA is still evolving and growing.

I am still learning. I have been going to Americana Fest in Nashville, TN, each September. Not only to meet up with up and coming acts and to introduce what I do to seasoned musicians, but network with folks in the industry.

There are all kinds of seminars to attend about the genre, the radio stations that have a like format, and even fireside chats with acts like Margo Price, Jack White, John C Reilly, Brandi Carlile, Larkin Poe, Joe Henry, Warren Zanes.



I certainly have found the experience enlightening. I am constantly networking, listening to others, stealing ideas, and making ideas of my own.

For example, I took the “Honky Tonk Drinking Set” from the Cosmic American Music Show. I also start every show with a song for which Gram Parsons was a part.

That is another idea I took. But I did come up with the Crossroads Outlaw Album Side idea. I encourage the listeners if they were a record producer and could name five songs that would make a great album side, send it, and if it is cool, I will play those songs on the show.

With all that, there is one thing for which I am unwavering.

I do the show in real time. I want to do it just like I used to do radio before voice tracking took over. If I can help it, I will never voice track.

There is more.

I also will never play anything heard on current modern top 40 country radio. Ever. There are several stations that do that. I do not need to. I am focused on those independent acts. Hayes Carll, Corb Lund, Charley Crockett, Ray Wylie Hubbard, Sunny Sweeny, Sierra Ferrell, Brennan Leigh. And those rock and folk artists that fit, John Prine, Townes Van Zandt, Todd Snider, John Mellencamp, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Neil Young. And Classic Country stars like Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard, Waylon Jennings, Jimmie Rodgers (the singing brakeman) Loretta Lynn. I also play Indiana acts: Wright Brothers, Kara Cole, Brett Wisconsin, Ken Tucker, Rich Hynes, John Bultman Jr, Ryan Ahlwardt. You might even hear an occasional Blues song

So far, I believe I’m on the right track.

For 2026, the Recording Academy has announced that for the first time, there will be an



Americana category, and on the country side, there will be a Traditional Country category.

That is huge! I was told in 1999, when the Americana Music Association was formed, Emmylou Harris said to the founders 'Thank You for GETTING US.'"

To this day I do not pass the opportunity to remember how blessed I am.

All these radio heroes of my past, who have rallied around me, supported and encouraged me, gave services at no cost to get my home studio going, donated equipment.

I have to still deal with a passing siren or a cat fight while my mic is on, but that is radio! I somehow can work that in. It's a hobby. It is fun again for me.

I still have a real job -- I work for Indiana Donor Network. And DJ weddings time from time.

But who out there can say they have 100% control of their show without some national [program director] in some other city trying to make everything in the nation sound the same?

If I woke up tomorrow and found out all but one of my stations left, I would still feel blessed.

While always open to ideas, I refuse to compromise my core foundation of Crossroads of Americana. My way until I change my mind.

Around last count, Crossroads of Americana has over 50 stations and in 10 countries.

Indiana stations that air the program include:

Circlecitrockradio.com (Sundays at 7pm)

96.9 The Monkey Terre Haute (Sundays 9pm)

95.7 WELT FM Fort Wayne (Tuesdays at 9pm)

91.9 WITT Zionsville (Fridays 9pm, and Saturday 2pm)

Mix105indy.com (Saturday/Sunday 12am)

Archived shows can be found at <https://hearthis.at/jmrabold/>



For more information on those stations, visit the **Crossroads of Americana Facebook page** for days and times to tune in. If you'd like to add **Crossroads of Americana** to your station line up, reach John at **317-538-4396**

2025 INDIANA BROADCAST PIONEERS
HALL of FAME



We are honored to present the 2025 class of the Indiana Broadcast Pioneers Hall of Fame, which celebrates the trailblazers who have shaped broadcasting across our Hoosier state. Induction into the Hall of Fame is the highest recognition bestowed by Indiana’s broadcasting community, reserved for those whose work has left a lasting mark on our industry and the audiences we serve.

.....

Sandra Chapman

Growing up in Fort Wayne with three older brothers, Sandra Chapman developed a deep curiosity about the world, inspired by her father’s passion for the news. Her early interest in journalism led her to a decade at WICD in Champaign, Illinois, before joining WISH-TV in Indianapolis, where her investigative reporting shaped legislation, exposed corruption, and brought attention to cold cases like the 1968 murder of Carol Jenkins. She tackled personal stories—including her own father’s murder—while earning a reputation for impactful reporting on youth violence, public safety, and community issues. After nearly 35 years in broadcast, Sandra pursued graduate studies and launched Prince Media Group, producing award-winning documentaries and books. Married to Randy Taylor, Indianapolis Chief of Police, she is also a devoted mother and active community member with Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, RISE Church, and Northeasterners Inc.





Bob Freeman

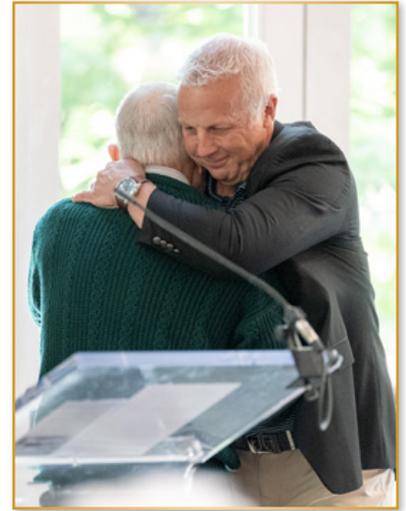
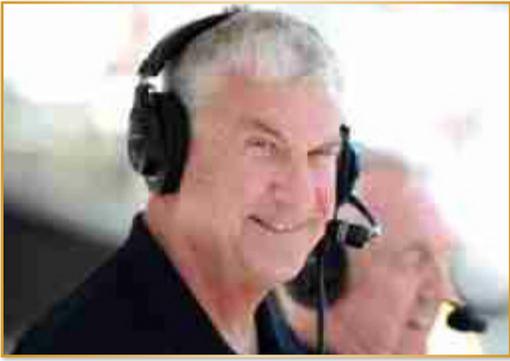
A news director and sales executive at Evansville television stations WFIE-TV, WEHT-TV, and WTVW-TV.

“Do it right. Do it big. Do it well.” Few phrases capture Bob Freeman better. From his early days in Birmingham TV and radio—where he once reported traffic live from a helicopter—to producing powerful specials like the 20th anniversary of the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing, Bob built a career defined by integrity and impact. As news director in Evansville, he grew ratings, launched new shows, and championed community causes, all while mentoring journalists who went on to



earn national recognition. Even in retirement, Bob couldn't stay away from the microphone, returning to Evansville radio to keep doing what he loves—sharing the news.





Bob Jenkins

Bob Jenkins liked to say, “I’m just a race fan that got lucky,” but to motorsports enthusiasts he was far more—the beloved “Voice of the 500.” A Liberty, Indiana native, his passion for racing began with childhood trips to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and grew into a career spanning four decades on radio and television. From the IMS Radio Network to ESPN’s Thunder series and SpeedWeek, Bob brought warmth, humility, and humanity to IndyCar, NASCAR, Formula One, and beyond. Even after stepping back from TV to care for his wife, he remained a fixture at the Speedway until his passing in 2021. Remembered for his iconic race calls and his love of music, dogs, and community, Bob Jenkins left a legacy as enduring as the race he cherished most.

Clyde Lee

Clyde Lee anchored WRTV-6 News in Indianapolis for 25 years, joining in 1976 as Howard Caldwell’s co-anchor and retiring in 2001 alongside his wife and longtime co-anchor, Diane Willis. Known for his trusted reporting and “Medical Matters” segments, he brought healthcare stories to viewers while championing community health initiatives. Though broadcasting became his career, his first passion was aviation—earning his pilot’s license in the 1980s and flying everything from family trips to Blue Angels adventures. After WRTV, they launched Lee-Willis Communications, where Clyde focused on production, PR, and media training. In retirement, they’ve traveled the globe and restored a 100-year-old Lake Superior cabin, blending adventure with cherished home life.



Marilyn Schultz

Marilyn Rose Schultz, a Hoosier native, was a trailblazer for women in journalism and a devoted educator. After excelling at New Albany High School and earning a radio-television degree from Indiana University, she launched a pioneering career in New York at NBC News, where she earned respect in a male-dominated environment and led a landmark class-action lawsuit securing pay equity for hundreds of women. She later reported major stories in Washington, D.C., and Indiana before earning advanced degrees and dedicating nearly two decades to teaching journalism at the University of Texas at Austin and St. Edward's University. Celebrated as one of the "American Women Who Changed the Face of Journalism," Schultz is remembered for her groundbreaking work in broadcasting and her passion for mentoring future generations.



Doc West

"Who's rockin' ya?!" has been the signature call of Fort Wayne FM radio legend Doc West for more than four decades. Born Rick in Columbus, Ohio, Doc's passion for rock began at 15 when he saw James Brown live, and it's only grown since his early days at WCOL-FM in the mid-70s. Joining Rock 104 WXKE in 1979, he's guided listeners through the evolution of radio and rock, hosting concerts, interviews, and excursions while earning a reputation as a "musical waiter," making classic rock relatable for generations. Known for introducing legends like Jim Morrison, David Gilmour, and Alice Cooper, Doc has also nurtured talent, helping launch virtuoso guitarist Joe Bonamassa's career. Beyond the airwaves, he emcees events, hosts charity auctions, and shares his love of music with both his family and a devoted radio family, keeping rock and roll alive for listeners young and old.



Diane Willis

Diane Willis began her career as a teacher, earning master's degrees in English, education, and journalism, before moving into broadcasting in St. Louis and Boston. She made Indianapolis her home, co-anchoring WRTV's evening news for 15 years and earning six regional Emmys for reporting on education, social issues, international affairs, and health. A passionate storyteller, Diane produced immersive projects from classrooms in the Brazilian Amazon to famine relief in Ethiopia, and co-produced award-winning PBS documentaries in Guatemala and Morocco. Deeply involved in the community, she and her husband, Clyde Lee, adopted two sons from Asia, later founding the media firm Lee-Willis Communications, and now enjoy travel and time at Diane's family cabin in Wisconsin.



INDIANA BROADCAST PIONEERS

HALL of FAME

Nominations are now open.
Scan the QR Code





Surviving Naptown Rock Radio Wars

by David Fulton



Some time in early 2008, I was having lunch with Al Stone. I'd known Al since the mid-1980s, and we'd always kept in touch. I told him I was on the lookout for an idea for a documentary that could be a marquee calling card for my video production company. At the same time, I had noticed the passing of legendary WIBC newsman Lou Palmer, and regretted that his talent would be lost forever. Al said he had an idea. A documentary that would be called "Radio Wars", and it would be about the early days of WNAP.

Al Stone knew something about those early days.

In 1968, Fairbanks slotted Al to be a co-program director for a

new radio station they wanted to fire up. They were turning WIBC-FM into a rock station for the kids – WNAP. Al had his fingerprints on every one of those legendary disk jockeys who was hired – Big John Gillis, Cris Conner, Mike Griffin, etc.

With my video experience and Al's Rolodex, we had a start.

**"I PARTIED
SO HARD
LAST NIGHT!"**

My original concept was that we'd conduct eight or nine interviews with key players, tie the best bits together and *Voila!* A documentary! I'd produced hundreds of documentaries, and been a video pro for over 20 years. I knew what I was doing.

I needed an end game. I really didn't want to spend time and resources producing a documentary that would sit in a drawer. I met with Clayton Taylor at WFYI and described the documentary to him. Paraphrasing, he said "Build it and we will air it."

Early on, Al and I discovered there was another video out in the ether called "Radio Wars," and it was about AM radio versus FM radio – the technologies and marketing. We decided to call ours "Naptown Radio Wars." That oughta do it.

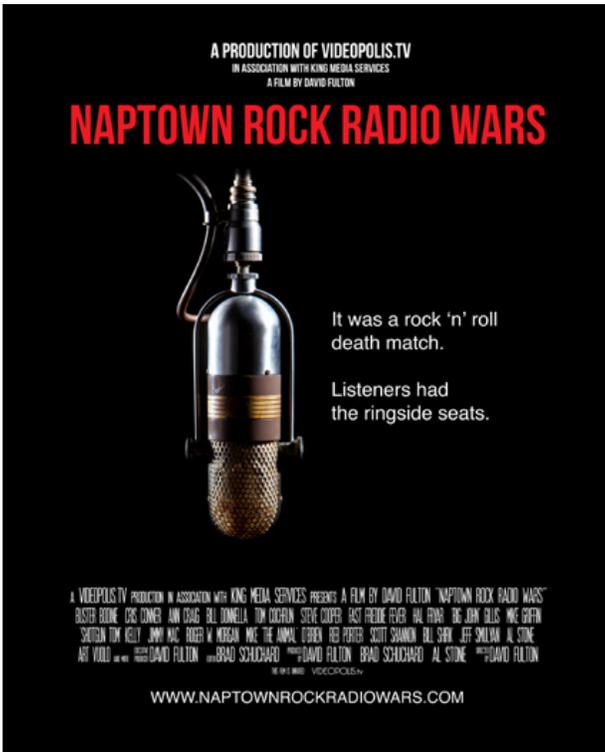
WFYI recommended that since it was about rock radio stations that we call it "Naptown Rock Radio Wars." Seemed long, but okay.

The first interviews were conducted on April 7, 2008, at Emmis Broadcasting on the Circle. Jon Quick, the Emmis program director, set everything up and we were able to use their radio studios as settings. We interviewed Dave Heck, Orly Knutson, and Scott Wheeler.

I later found out Scott Wheeler had done all of the voices on the WENS TV commercial, which included imitating Cris Conner ("I partied so hard last night!") and Gary Todd ("I played golf with the governor!"). The WENS commercial was the first time a competitor pulled the thread that unraveled Fairbanks' dominance in Indianapolis radio broadcasting.

From then on, the beast that would be Naptown Rock Radio Wars had a life of its own.

With rare exception, everyone we talked to wanted to be part of this project. However, Jerry Baker turned me down flat. Jerry had been a WIFE Good Guy, he worked at Fairbanks, he's articulate and a raconteur, and he introduced the Beatles at the State Fair (afternoon show). Nope. Not interested.



been lodged by WIRE because the proposed new call letters were just one letter apart. Legend has it that one of the lobbyists was at a social function and an FCC commissioner was there. The lobbyist approached the commissioner and innocently asked, "How is your wire doing?" The commissioner was puzzled. Again, "How is your wire doing?" More puzzlement. The lobbyist then played

Second, they had outlandish promotions and giveaways. A 'Big Kahuna' mascot was a very tall local college kid who dressed as an island native and would appear at events. They always had a giveaway going on, which culminated in giving away a 'luxury' home on the northside.

The WIFE-AM radio frequency was 1310AM, so there were endless plays on Lucky 13, and the famous billboard by the airport that said, "While you were away I've been spending time with your WIFE."

The station had a terrific tailwind from the British Invasion, which would sweep across the U.S. just a couple of months after the sign on.

In the 1970's, Burden ran afoul of the FCC with dubious giveaways, and slanted news coverage of Sen. Vance Hartke (D-IN) campaigns. None of Burden's licenses were renewed, there were new owners, and before long WIFE disappeared.

•••••
"MEET THE RADIO PLAYERS."



WIFE: In Fall of 1963, Don Burden flew into Indianapolis and revolutionized radio. It was the first of two revolutions in Indy. Burden bought WISH-AM and WISH-FM. FM meant nothing at the time, and that station was just thrown into the deal.

He tasked his lobbyists in D.C. with getting the call letters changed from WISH-AM to WIFE-AM. A protest had

his hand. "I'm sorry, I meant your wife. I guess there's a big difference between wire and wife." The new call letters were quickly approved.

Once he had his new call letters, Don Burden came in guns a-blazing. He had a two-pronged approach.

First, he was going to make the station very community oriented. They raised major funds for local charities. They had Easter egg hunts for the kiddies. They had the WIFE Businessman Of The Day promotion. They had a 24-hour news department. They were all about their listening area.





INDIANAPOLIS RADIO WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN WHAT IT WAS WITHOUT BILL SHIRK, THE P.T. BARNUM OF OUR BELOVED AIRWAVES.

WNAP: The story goes that WIBC-AM was a ratings success, but that WIBC-FM was an automated classical music station with almost no listeners. One day, the classical music tape broke on WIBC-FM, and no one noticed. Fairbanks didn't see a downside to switching to a new format, which they did in July 1968. Initially it was Top 40, but on FM. The engineers cobbled together a studio from abandoned equipment that the AM station wasn't using.

This new station was the antithesis of WIFE. Whatever WIFE did, WNAP would do the opposite. Whereas WIFE had

surfing the new British Invasion in 1964, WNAP would tap into the youth counter culture for an audience. Its reputation grew quickly. Fairbanks Broadcasting managed to join the youth zeitgeist by hiring air talent that "were too young and too stupid to know it couldn't be done."

WNAP played the Beatles' White Album from start to finish before promo copies had even been sent out. The Raft Race was a sensation, as were the Free Fair, the Fantasy Park weekend, the

Smokin' Weekend, and so on. David Letterman, Tom Cochran, Buster Bodine, Cris Conner, Adam Smasher, Mike Griffith, and Ann Craig, among many others, are all personalities from WNAP who are still remembered today.



WXLW: Indianapolis radio would not have been what it was without Bill Shirk, the P.T. Barnum of our beloved airwaves. Shirk wore all the hats, and was charismatic and flamboyant enough to pull it off. He hired Gary Gears (WLS) to be his 'booth announcer'. When Gary's deep voice would say "WXLW has balls" or



"Something big is coming to WXLW" or "WXLW wants to give you \$20,000!" (the largest cash giveaway in Indiana broadcast history), the audience would listen.

Shirk set wheels in motion to raise money for disaster relief for the tornado destruction in Monticello. Air personality Joe Pickett stayed on the air until they'd raised \$78,000.

Sure, it was daytime only, but Shirk's programming of that little

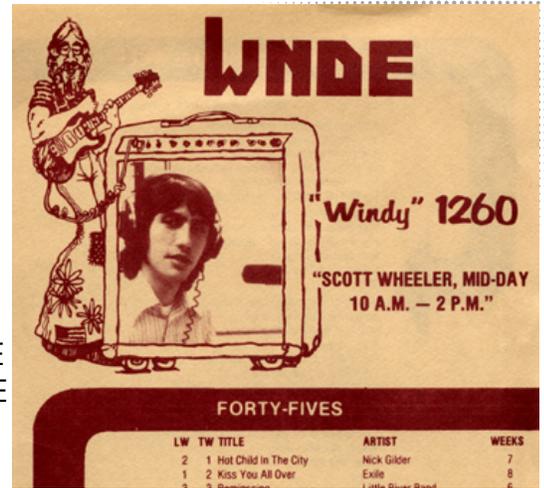
Top 40 powerhouse grabbed Indianapolis by the lapels and wouldn't let go. Sets were tight, the music was catchy, and the air personalities were likeable. However, as noted it was only on the air from sunrise to sunset, and it eventually became impossible for the little station to compete with the 24 hour stations – WNAP, WIFE, WTLC and WNDE. The last ratings book for WXLW was a 6.9 share – amazing. Then, it went from Top 40 to MOR.

WNDE/WFBQ: For years, WFBM, nicknamed Woof Boom, was a staple of the state's #1 market. The AM, FM and TV stations had been owned by Time-Life Broadcasting, but in 1972 McGraw-Hill bought the family of stations, and immediately put the radio stations up for sale. WFBM-AM, a direct competitor of WIBC, became WNDE. WFBM-FM became WFBQ.

WFBQ was rebranded as an automated format called "Rockin Stereo!" I called it 'robot radio' where a song would be played, then a radio voice would say something like, "That was..."

Olivia Newton-John. Before that... the Doobie Brothers!" Urgh.

WNDE went on the air as a traditional Top 40 station, but then went to Hot Hits when Bill Hennes became program director. Hot Hits was a high energy Top 40 format. WNDE went directly up against WIFE and WXLW (in the daytime). I say it was high energy because the air personalities were expected to scream their transitions between songs. If the pukers at WIFE were an energy level of 8/10, at WNDE they were expected to be 11/10. Steve "Super" Cooper told me



that when his 4-hour air shift on WNDE ended, he would be covered in sweat from head to toe, and his voice would be hoarse.

WTLC WELCOMES
SUPERJAY JOHNSON To INDIANAPOLIS
Check Him Out! – 3-7 p.m. Daily!!



Above: Super Ray and Super Jay



WTLC: On January 22, 1968, Indianapolis had its first full time 24-hour station for the black community. WTLC filled that void. WTLC-FM was known as "Power 105.7" and had a roster of air personalities who were tied into Indy's black community. Programming would include music, issues and conversations that brought the community together.



“WOULD YOU LIKE TO TALK TO ROGER W. MORGAN?”

Once word got out about the documentary, there was an outpouring of interest. People started contacting me to get involved. Two in particular deserve mention. John Rabold was a radio guy from way back who had moved on to other things. He frequently stopped by our studio with WIFE and WNAP artifacts and curiosities, and he researched people to talk to. He connected me with Roger W. Morgan, which was very helpful.

The other was Art Vuolo. Art had grown up in Indianapolis, and is known as ‘Radio’s Best Friend.’ He knew dozens of air personalities, and had video air checks to prove it. Art was a treasure trove of knowledge and video clips.



“IS THIS ‘FAIR USE’?”

As we started piecing it together, we hit a crossroads, and this decision would influence the success of the documentary. We could either use needle drops from a production music library, and own the licensing to the music bed. Or, we could use the original period music in the soundtrack and worry about licensing later.

The needle drop idea did not appeal to me at all. I opted instead to stick with my original vision and use the actual period music. We used dozens of music selections throughout the 90 minutes. I felt strongly that one needs to stick to the vision, and follow through with a product that will be satisfying. Needles drops would never do that.

I consulted with one of Indy’s best Intellectual Property attorneys about whether the use of that music would be ‘fair use.’ I discussed it with him at length, and he and his partner reviewed the documentary from start to finish. Their opinions were that most but not all of the music could be considered ‘fair use’.

Our Good Guys

 ROGER MORGAN 5:30-9:00 AM	 T. J. BYERS Production Director
 REB PORTER 9:00-NOON	
 LEE PERKINS NOON-3:00	 RON HOFER WEEKENDS
 BOBBY SIMON 7:00-MIDNITE	 JAY REYNOLDS 3:00-7:00 PM



“THEY STILL DO.”

MY FAVORITE QUIP DURING A FOCUS GROUP WAS FROM PAUL POTEET. THERE’S A LINE IN THE ORIGINAL VERSION FROM DALE OGDEN ABOUT THE ORIGINS OF RADIO PROGRAMMING. DALE SAYS, “THEY EVEN HAD TAP DANCING ON THE RADIO.” PAUL QUIETLY QUIPPED.

Once we had the edit pretty much roughed in, I started having mini focus groups at the studio to see what people thought. After each focus group we would tweak the edit.

For example, movie critic Ed Johnson-Ott said he liked it a lot, but thought it needed more explanation at the very front. That’s why we added the pre-title prologue with Allen Deck coming into the studio, sitting down, and explaining the innovative history of WNAP.

My favorite quip during a focus group was from Paul Poteet. There’s a line in the original version from Dale Ogden about the origins of radio programming. Dale says, “They even had tap dancing on the radio.” Paul quietly quipped, “They still do.”

“YOU WANT ME TO BODYPAINT WHAT??”

For promotions, I started calling in favors. I had a photo studio, so I would be doing all of my own photography. I needed a couple of iconic photos to use for the ads and posters.

Milo S. Miller had an RCA 77DX microphone, and drove from Terre Haute to Indianapolis with it. He sat patiently in our client room while I took photos of his beautiful microphone in my studio. That microphone became the visual focal point of the promotions.

But I wanted a second ‘go-to’ image to use. I knew a model who didn’t mind doing edgy projects. I asked her if she’d pose for me, and she immediately accepted. Then I called in a favor with another friend who did bodypainting. We met at the studio one evening and started bodypainting a concept of radio towers with the Indianapolis skyline. We strategically placed 45’s on her, well, you can figure that out.



"IT'S SHOWTIME!"

The original edit ran almost two hours. I contacted Craig Mince at the White River IMAX to see if he'd be interested in hosting it at his theater. He jumped at the chance, and gave me carte blanche to do whatever I wanted, as long as it would put butts in seats.

Local media took an interest. Al Stone and I did a few local TV appearances. The Indy Star and Nuvo wrote stories about the documentary. Promoting it on Facebook was pretty easy and free. I'd drop short teaser excerpts from the documentary on different Facebook pages, and those had a lot of hits. This thing was building steam.

A dear friend, Susan DeVine, asked to be involved in promoting the premiere, and this time it was my turn to jump at the chance to say, "Yes!" She arranged for the VIP party at Loughmillers Pub and Eatery, which is convenient to the IMAX. She had programs made up. She brought all the details together for an unforgettable premiere.

The first showing had sold out well in advance, so Craig Mince (IMAX) added a late night second showing, which nearly sold out.

"NAPTOWN ROCK RADIO WARS" TOOK FOUR YEARS TO SHOOT AND EDIT. WE INTERVIEWED 37 PEOPLE FROM COAST TO COAST. AFTER THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF WORKING ON IT, I CAME VERY CLOSE TO ABANDONING THE PROJECT BECAUSE IT SEEMED OVERWHELMING, BUT DECIDED TO CONTINUE ON. I WOULDN'T TAKE THE COWARD'S WAY OUT.

"THE END GAME."

Selling out the IMAX was huge, but was never the real end game. Never go into a big project without an end game. Mine was to have it broadcast on WFYI in prime time. The IMAX premiere was in January 2012, and the first broadcast on WFYI three months later.

But the documentary wasn't quite right. To air it on WFYI, it would need to be trimmed from 110 minutes down to 88 minutes. Urgh. Also, there were holes in the story. I arranged to fly to Pompano Beach, Florida with my son,

Rob, who ran camera, to interview George Johns and Jim Hilliard. Not only were they both in the eye of the WNAP hurricane, they were the architects of the hurricane. Those two interviews were just what we needed.

We made painful revisions to the original, then shoehorned the best of those two interviews into the documentary. The documentary was now much tighter and much better for WFYI.



Top: T. J. Byers, Joe Light, Reb Porter, Jim Wight, Jack Sunday, Bob Lyons
Bottom: Jay Reynolds, Tom Mathis, Bill Donnell, Ron Hofer

"A SPLENDID TIME!"

"Naptown Rock Radio Wars" took four years to shoot and edit. We interviewed 37 people from coast to coast. After the first two years of working on it, I came very close to abandoning the project because it seemed overwhelming, but decided to continue on. I wouldn't take the coward's way out.

I often hear from people that they still have the WFYI broadcast saved on their DVR, and they watch it frequently. I made many new friends along the way, some of whom have become very close friends.

The documentary's reputation spread nationally. A highlight was a call I received from Columbia University that they wanted to have a screening at the campus, and they wanted to fly me out to host it.

I wrote a book which is still available on Amazon, and published by Arcadia Publishing, about Indianapolis rock and roll radio history. We put together two more short programs about 'Naptown' for WFYI, which they aired.

I regret that so many participants have passed away since then, especially Al Stone, my co-producer. But I'm very pleased to have preserved each person's stories in the documentary. In this way, these legends of Indianapolis radio will continue to live on.

"WHERE BETTER THAN CLEVELAND OHIO...??"

The documentary broadcast on WFYI had a decent audience. Although WFYI didn't subscribe to any of the ratings services, they were told the viewership was typical of a Pacers game. I could live with that.

A few months later, Clayton Taylor contacted me and highly recommended that I submit "Naptown Rock Radio Wars" for an Emmy Award, which I did. Susan and I drove to Cleveland for the ceremony, with little confidence we would win. We were up against a documentary about the Cleveland Browns, financed by the billionaire owner, and a slick documentary put together by a network affiliate. I was neither

of those. But I bought a new suit to wear just in case.

At the Emmy awards, we sat at the WFYI table. Ours would be one of the last awards given.

When they got to my category, in my head I heard them announce any name except 'Naptown.' Then, they announced the winner was 'Naptown.' I couldn't believe it. I didn't really have any speech in mind for my 15 seconds of fame. I walked up to the podium, held the trophy aloft and yelled, "Where better than Cleveland Ohio to win an Emmy for a documentary about rock and roll!???" The place erupted. I guess I said the right thing.



by Katy Barnhart

The 2025 Indiana Broadcasters Association Spectrum Awards were a night to remember for Hoosier radio and television stations. Held in Indianapolis at the beautiful Cabaret venue, the annual celebration brought together broadcasters from across the state to recognize outstanding work, meaningful leadership, and careers that have helped shape Indiana media for decades.

The Spectrum Awards recognizes the best in broadcasting from daily newscasts and sports coverage to creative storytelling and community service. While more than 50 awards were handed out throughout the evening, two of the most meaningful honors focused not just on great work, but on lasting impact – the Lifetime Achievement Award and the Tom Severino Leadership Award.



Five of the college students who have received Indiana Broadcasters Foundation scholarships were on hand to assist with handing out trophies to winning broadcasters.



Shirk's career spans decades and includes roles as a broadcaster, station owner, and media innovator. Throughout his journey, he has remained deeply committed to local broadcasting believing in the power of radio and television.

From starting as a janitor at his family's station WERK Radio in Muncie to becoming the youngest station owner in Indianapolis at age 27, Shirk's career has been marked by bold moves and record-setting achievements. He launched stations including WHHH FM 96.3 as first new Indianapolis FM station in 30 years and expanded into TV with two low-power stations carried on local cable services. Shirk's entrepreneurial spirit led to several landmark sales, setting price records in Indiana radio and television. Beyond business success, he has given back by supporting the Indiana Broadcast Pioneers with ongoing projects including serving as editor of Broadcast Beat magazine, and preserving Indiana's broadcast history at the Indiana State Museum. His legacy reflects both creativity and commitment to the broadcasting community.

The IBA Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes individuals for exceptional service, contributions to, or achievements in the field of broadcasting in Indiana over the course of a career. This is the IBA's highest honor and is presented to an Indiana broadcaster whose work is uniquely beneficial and of superior value to their community and to the Association.

This year the lifetime achievement award was presented to Indiana broadcasting legend Bill Shirk.



TOM SEVERINO LEADERSHIP AWARD:
Brad Williams



The Tom Severino Leadership Award (named after the respected broadcasters Tom Severino) is given to an individual with at least 10 years of service with ties to radio and/or TV broadcasting in Indiana who has demonstrated passion for broadcast media with an emphasis on serving the public, a portfolio of leadership activities within the broadcast industry and/or within the communities served by the broadcast properties this individual worked for during their career.

This year's recipient, Brad Williams, Chief Operating Officer of Federated Media, exemplifies those qualities. Williams began his career in 1984 as an intern at Federated Media's WTRC-AM in Elkhart. Rising through the ranks, he became General Manager of the South Bend cluster in 2000 and Chief Operating Officer in

2011. Known for his leadership philosophy that "this is radio, we can do anything," Williams has built strong teams, fostered innovation, and guided colleagues with integrity and professionalism. His emphasis on mentorship and service has left a lasting mark not only on Federated Media but on Indiana broadcasting as a whole.





More Than Awards

While trophies and titles were handed out, the Spectrum Awards were just as much about getting everyone in the same room. The 2025 ceremony gave broadcasters from across Indiana a chance to step away from their daily routines, catch up with colleagues, and celebrate the work being done across the state. Even the next generation of broadcasters played a role in the celebration, as Indiana Broadcasters Foundation Scholarship recipients helped throughout the evening and were recognized for their early contributions to the industry. Their involvement served as a reminder that the future of Indiana broadcasting is already taking shape.

As the night came to a close, it was clear that Indiana broadcasting remains in capable hands led by professionals who care about the stories they tell and the communities they serve. With another Spectrum Awards in the books, stations across the state are already looking ahead to the coming year and the opportunity to raise the bar once again.



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Support the Next Generation of Broadcasting

The Indiana Broadcasters Association is delighted to have the active engagement of an entire committee of Indiana Broadcast Pioneers who help our organization by recommending honorees for the annual Hall of Fame and also edit the “Broadcast Beat” magazine. We’re grateful for their support.



This is a tremendous opportunity to make a difference in the life of a young person by supporting our scholarship program. For the past several years, we’ve awarded **ten \$5,000 scholarships** each year to deserving students enrolled in Indiana broadcasting, journalism, and production programs at Hoosier institutions. Our Pioneers contribute annually to the Reid Chapman Scholarship, with contributions matched directly by the IBA to insure that one of those scholarships is issued each year.

You can contribute by sending a check made out to the Indiana Broadcasters Foundation or by making a payment on our website at the link below.

<https://tinyurl.com/futurepioneers>

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