Preface

In the following series of articles the author attempts to convey to the reader his own remembrances of events which occurred up to sixty years ago. There are bound to be mistakes because the author was less than five years of age when WJJM first began operation in 1947. Time can play tricks on the memory, especially over such a long period of time. Also, it must be stressed that the author left Lewisburg and WJJM in 1971 after working there for fourteen years to pursue other interests in Franklin and Nashville, Tennessee. What is written in these pages about events which occurred from 1971 to the present (May of 2007) is largely based upon the accounts of others who worked at WJJM during the interim and also newspaper clippings which chronicled the events. The author has also depended to a great extent on the ability of local citizens to recall names, places, and dates of persons and events relating to WJJM, especially during the years when he was living and working in Franklin. He was not employed again at the radio station until February of 2006. Still, the author hopes that these pages will help bring back happy memories of a grand old business in Marshall County and of the many employees who have worked there. May God bless you all.

Chapter 1: The Introductory Years

It seems almost impossible to believe that sixty years have elapsed since an engineer punched WJJM's transmitter on the air, inaugurating the company's era of public service to Marshall and surrounding counties of Middle Tennessee. However, mathematics and the old faithful calendar say it has to be so. Before we relate to you the events of that faithful morning of May 15, 1947, some background information should be provided.

In the late 1930's, the only radio stations that had been around for several years prior to that time were a few huge fifty thousand watt broadcasting behemoths scattered across the country and some other ten thousand and even five thousand watters here and there. The call letters are familiar: WLS and WGN in Chicago, WJR in Detroit, WCKY in Cincinnati, WSB in Atlanta, and WWL in New Orleans. There was even a station in Del Rio, Texas, XERA, which had a transmitter across the Rio Grande in Mexico that was broadcasting one million watts. It was said by some of the local residents that they could even hear the radio stations in their bed springs and when they flushed their commodes! It was finally shut down by the Mexican government in 1939. Nashville was fortunate to have two radio stations whose transmitters emitted fifty thousand watts: WSM and WLAC. Prior to World War II, FM Radio and television had just been invented, but both were still in the experimental stages. In the late 30's the government decided against allowing them to become commercial broadcasters because of the probability of war. Some were afraid that they could be used against us in actual war time, and perhaps they were correct when it is remembered that the Japanese pilots used a powerful radio station in Honolulu to hone onto Pearl Harbor. For that reason, television and FM radio were not to come to fruition until years later. Television did not get a real start until the late 1940's, and FM radio until the 1960's. Actually, FM did not become really popular until the auto makers began installing FM radios in their new products.

The United States did not experience a recession or depression after World War II as it did after World War I. The economy was humming and there was plenty of money for investment. Some began to ask, "Why don't we have radio stations in our towns as well as our larger cities?" It was a good question, and soon entrepreneurs in the business community began to investigate the possibility of having a radio station for each town in America which would be large enough to support it. Among the first communities in Middle Tennessee to have a local radio station were Clarksville, Columbia and Murfreesboro. Later would come WHAL in Shelbyville, WKSR in Pulaski, and WEKR in Fayetteville. Why couldn't Lewisburg also have a radio station of its own which would be dedicated to the public service of Marshall County? A visionary in Lewisburg had a dream of creating just such a radio station. Step forward Mr. Jimmy Joe Murray who was equal to the task.

Chapter 2: The Murrays

The Murray family had been living in Marshall County at least two if not three decades before the American Civil War. They became involved in the breeding and selling of horses and eventually produced the famous Walking Horse line. They also supplied horses to the Confederate cavalry during the Civil War.

There were several Murray sisters including Mary Ann, Martha, Ida, Emma, Lilly, and also at least one brother, J. O. Mr. J. O. Murray was the father of Mr. Jimmy Joe Murray, the founder of WJJM, and the person for whom the radio station was named. As a youngster, perhaps eight or nine years old, I remember visiting the Murray sisters with my then tap-dancing partner, Pam Lingner. Pam's mother, Martha Lingner, insisted that we do so because in her wisdom she realized that we would remember this visit all of our lives, and soon this window of opportunity would pass. Pam and I sat and listened breathlessly as the aging ladies told of their own personal adventures in the Civil War. The Federal Army had just marched through Lewisburg. It is my opinion that this would have been around October of 1863, for the Battle of Farmington (Tennessee) had just taken place and afterwards both armies were racing south towards the Tennessee River, first the Confederates and then the Federals. The Confederates were led by Gen. Joe Wheeler and the Yankees, by Gen. George Crook, the future commander of General George Armstrong Custer just before his disaster in Montana, thirteen years later. The Union Army had captured quite a few Confederate prisoners and they were obviously encamped near Lewisburg, because the surviving Murray sisters told Pam and myself that they took some food and nourishment down to the place where the Confederates were being held captive. The sisters also told us that to make sure that the Federals did not find the family's silverware, they stitched it inside their petty coats. It must have worked because the silverware is still in possession of the family to this good day

As has already been stated, Radio Station WJJM would be the brainchild of the Murray sisters' nephew, Mr. Jimmy Joe Murray. He carefully oversaw the planning and construction of the facilities, but unfortunately he would never be able to attend the sign-on ceremonies, because on April 19, 1947, Mr. Murray suddenly passed away. This was slightly less than a month before the projected sign-on date. Fortunately, Mr. Murray's nephew had been called down from Nashville in 1946 to oversee the construction of WJJM. As a matter of fact, the nephew was out in the field besides the gray stone building that would soon contain the studios of WJJM when Mr. Murray had his heart attack. The nephew was digging in the earth laying down copper wire radials which would be part of the antenna system. That nephew's name was Louis Donald Lingner, Jr.

Chapter 3: The Lingners

In May of 1947, Mr. Louis Donald Lingner, better known to his friends as Louis or even "Louie," was given the crushing responsibility of managing and operating WJJM. Guiding any business through its inception can be difficult enough, but a radio station is even more so because not only does management have to worry about pleasing its customers and, frankly, showing a profit on its ledger sheets, it also has to follow the strict guidelines and laws of the federal government and its own Federal Communications Commission. The FCC can be a hard taskmaster at times, and I personally believe that it was even more so sixty years ago, from what I have been able to read and study. Power and frequency had to maintain at absolute standards, and any appreciable deviation of either one could result in severe fines, and repeated offenses can even result in prison sentences. This is still true although modern broadcasting equipment with solid state and digital equipment present much less danger of this occurring. All of this was dumped in Louis Lingner's lap in April of 1947.

Louis Donald Lingner was born in Nashville, Tennessee, to parents of German heritage. His father was also named Louis Donald Lingner, and Louis, Jr. resembled his father very much. Their voices were identical. I had the pleasure of meeting him when I was a small boy. Mr. Lingner was raised in East Nashville, and attended Nashville public schools. He told me on one occasion that he was raised comfortably and did not want for much, but he also had to learn to be a real man at an early age because the streets of East Nashville in those days could be unforgiving. In many cases, he told me that quarrels were settled with fisticuffs.

Mr. Lingner graduated from East High School and also Vanderbilt University where he not only earned a Bachelor's Degree there, he also earned a Master's Degree in Economics. He once told me while at Vanderbilt that he became good friends with a lovely young girl who was singing part-time on WSM. Her name was Frances Rose Shore, a country girl from Winchester, Tennessee. After graduating from Vanderbilt, she went to New York City to sing at some radio stations in order to promote her career. On one visit she sang the popular song "Dinah." After its rendition, the announcer could not remember her real name, so he called her "that Dinah girl." The nickname stuck, and "Dinah Shore" was born to show business. Mr. Lingner liked to think that he encouraged her to become a star performer.

After Vanderbilt, Mr. Lingner served in the United States Army in World War II, and met his future wife, Martha, in Muscle Shoals, Alabama. They had one daughter, Pamela Jane Lingner. Pam would someday become a manager of WJJM as well. While in the Army it was Mr. Lingner's destiny to become acquainted with another famous celebrity, Clark Gable. He once said that Clark Gable was one of the largest men he had ever seen.

When he became manager at WJJM he gave it 110% as he did most endeavors in his life. He always made sure that his employees were treated with respect and were paid wages that were above the standard for the industry. I can recall a time when WJJM announcers were making a decent

living while employees at other radio stations in the area were barely making minimum wage. He was even paying his employees more than some stations did in Nashville. That was the kind of man he was. Mr. Lingner also made sure that his announcers and engineers at WJJM had the very best equipment to use. We were using Collins transmitters and audio sound limiters, the "Cadillac-class" of equipment in the broadcast industry, while other radio stations in the area were using much cheaper equipment. RCA microphones were purchased, which, of course were the best that money could buy. The microphones that were used during the early days of WJJM were the same models used by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt when he was delivering his "Fireside Chats." Our turntables and their accompanying tone arms were of superb craftsmanship. The quality of our audio signal was unsurpassed. I can distinctly recall back in the late 1950's some employees of another radio station in the area visiting our studios, and one of the first questions they asked was, "How on earth do you produce such a beautiful audio signal?" One of the visitors asked our Chief Engineer, R. C. Wiley, to show them around the station and he did so--we had nothing to hide. Mr. Lingner also hired the best engineers available, but we will discuss that in a subsequent chapter.

What kind of person was he away from his business? Louis D. Lingner was the most generous and kind-hearted man I've ever known, unless it was my own father, W. B. Massey. Once in the late 1950's one his announcers had his brother-in-law from to move in on him. The youngster was about seventeen years old and was raised in the coal fields of West Virginia. He went to Marshall County High School and also worked after school unloading coal cars down at the old coal plant near the intersection of Fifth Avenue and West Commerce Street. The young man had a very high work ethic as well as IQ, and Mr. Lingner recognized this. His family was too poor to be able to afford a college education, so Mr. Lingner stepped in. He paid for the young man's tuition to Vanderbilt for one year, but sometime during the year he dropped out of college to return to West Virginia to take care of his family. But this illustrates Mr. Lingner's generosity. He wasn't a perfect man, and sometimes could be a bit grumpy when pushed to his limit. It wasn't uncommon to be fired at WJJM, but usually the person who had been dismissed was re-hired a few days or weeks later, after "the boss" had cooled off. On one occasion, he and his wife Martha vacationed in Hawaii, and after he returned he presented each one of his employees with a present. My present was a beautiful silk tie, and I still have it and occasionally wear it today.

Chapter 4: The Early Engineers

The task of the early engineers was perhaps the most difficult of all because they were the ones who were entrusted to take Mr. Murray's concepts and turn them into a working radio station. Hundreds if not thousands of problems had to be encountered and solved before WJJM could take to the air waves, and the FCC did not give them forever to do this.

The earliest chief engineer of WJJM was Mr. J. Ernest "Pete" Sowell. Pete was raised in the Petersburg area and had learned a great deal about radio and electronics while in the U. S. Army in World War II. After getting out of the Army, he worked for a while for Butler Brothers, but also took advanced courses in electronic theory by correspondence, so by 1947 he was a federally licensed radio engineer. He was a soft-spoken, Christian man, and he and his wife, Gerry, raised two children, Tommy and Carol Ann. Tommy Sowell was one of my best friends growing up and he was instrumental in my getting into radio. More will be said about that later.

A second engineer who was hired to help put WJJM on the air was Mr. Merrill Preston. I can't remember much about him because he moved away when I was a small boy. I remember that he looked a great deal like Denny Walker except that he was a little heavier and wore horn-rimmed glasses. I also remember R. C. Wiley remarking one day that he was a joke-teller, and to make sure that he didn't forget any of them, he copied down all of the jokes that he had heard and told in a little spiral tablet that he carried in his shirt pocket.

A third engineer who was hired was Mr. Robert Cecil Wiley, better known to his many friends as "R. C." He was one of the finest men I've ever known. His character was impeccable. There were always some jokes and funny stories being told at WJJM by Denny Walker, Perry Gillum, and of course Merrill Preston and the others. I never heard R. C. curse or tell any of those stories, but he surely did love to listen to them. When he laughed, he laughed all over, and you could hear him laughing on the next block.

I never met R. C. Wiley until my early teens, but I can recall seeing him on may occasions helping the announcers set up the equipment for remote broadcasts and drawings which in those days occurred quite often. In those years of broadcasting, the "man-on-the-street" type of program was quite popular, and it was nothing uncommon at all to see an announcer on the square stopping people, usually attractive ladies and their children, and talking to them on the air. It was a big deal to be on the radio back then. Another favorite spot for a man-on-the-street broadcast was the front lobby of the Dixie Theater, or even out front. Behind the scenes, an engineer had to set up all of the equipment and establish phone-line or two-way radio connections back to the main studio and control room. In those days there was no such thing as a cell phone to facilitate that. R. C. Wiley was equal to any engineering task I ever saw which was given to him.

R. C. Wiley worked under a terrible handicap. When he was an infant he lost over 90% of his eyesight through an unfortunate occurrence, and he was

educated at the Tennessee School for the Blind. He later went to the Valparaiso, Indiana School of Radio Engineering. He had a brilliant mind and could remember virtually everything he read or heard. How did he read? By Braille, of course. Advanced electronics requires a great deal of calculation by mathematics, and he even had a Braille slide rule to help him do this. He showed it to me one time and to me it looked just like a round, black piece of celluloid with another strip of plastic stapled to the center so that the strip could revolve around the celluloid disk. Embossed on the disk were tiny raised dots which represented the numbers and their corresponding logarithms. I could never see (and still can't) how anyone could learn to do advanced mathematics with such a device...I had enough trouble learning to use a regular one at Marshall County High School. Of course the slide rule was replaced by the scientific calculator quite a few years ago.

The hearing in my left ear suddenly failed when I was about eight years old, possibly because my bad tonsils had been left in too long. My parents, of course, were frantic and I had to undergo two operations. My hearing never returned, but through an unusual set of circumstances I became interested in radio and electronics. To determine whether or not the surgeries had restored my hearing, my father asked his uncle-by-marriage, Mr. J. Rauden Rainey who had raised him, to build a crystal radio such as the ones used back in the 1920's. Those radios had earphones in order to hear the radio stations which would beam in at night. My hearing never improved, but I became very interested in the radio programs I was hearing. I can distinctly remember hearing Perry Gillum broadcasting a Marshall County High School football game back when the games were played at Wallace Field, just behind the school when it was located in the lovely old two-story building on Fifth Avenue. I had been bitten by the radio bug, and by the eighth and ninth grades I was putting together one and two-tube receiving sets which were powered by batteries. By the tenth grade, I was interested in getting my amateur radio operator's license, but I had no one to help me study. In those years a person had to know quite a bit about radio theory and mathematics to pass the licensing examination which was required by the FCC. My friend, Tommy Sowell, was also interested in becoming a "ham," and he suggested that we contact his father's friend, R. C. Wiley, by that time the chief engineer at WJJM. His father, Pete, had assumed an engineering position at WSM in the mid-1950's. R. C. took time off from a busy schedule to teach me the Morse code and also to help me understand the books which I had to purchase to pass the exam. Incidentally, prior to that time I had very little interest in mathematics in general and algebra in particular, and my grades showed it, but "ham radio" changed all of that in a hurry. I immediately realized that if I were going to pass the FCC exam, my skills (and grades) in algebra were going to have to improve, and they did just that. Soon I was making straight A's in algebra because I saw a definite need for it. Years later I would earn my living teaching high school algebra, geometry, and history in Franklin.

I finally passed the examination, and R. C. loaned me some old spare parts with which to build an antenna system. I was "on the air" as a ham radio operator for over a year when R. C. told me that they were looking for a teen-aged disk jockey at WJJM. He encouraged me to apply. Tommy Sowell and I had been hanging around WJJM at night answering the telephone on the "Pop

Shop," a popular request show at the time. (I'll have much more to say about the Pop Shop and Bill Humbles in a subsequent chapter.) During those months I learned a great deal about the operation of the control room at WJJM and broadcasting in general. Mike Davis had already secured employment working the Pop Shop on Sunday nights and was doing a good job. At any rate, I was hired to work the "1490 Club," another popular request show, on Sunday afternoons in 1958, and that was my very first job, let alone my first radio job. All of this was because R. C. Wiley took interest in a little teen-aged kid.

Chapter 5: The Sign-On and Early Broadcasting at WJJM

This chapter of Sixty Years of Memories At WJJM is based on a newspaper article from The Marshall Gazette and interviews with Wayne Owen, Mack George, and Betty Ann Ogilvie, who were three original WJJM staff musicians and who helped with the sign-on. The author also interviewed Wynonna Garrett Clark, an early employee of WJJM, who was a receptionist, secretary, copywriter, and bookkeeper as well as one of the first broadcasters. Again, there may be imperfections in this work...there probably are, for all of this happened sixty years ago, and that time span tends to dim the memory just a bit. For those imperfections, you have my apologies. Add the fact that most of the early employees are no longer with us, and the first musicians and entertainers were just kids--teenagers still in high school. The author was the ripe old age of four-and-a-half when WJJM hit the air waves. Still, it is much better to "take a stab" at sitting down and chronicling these events for posterity, than to leave them unrecorded and lost forever.

Based on my recollections, as sign-on day for WJJM approached, excitement in Lewisburg and Marshall County began to mount and soon approached a fever pitch. In other words, everyone was talking about it. As I stated, I was not yet five years old, yet I could feel the excitement in the air as I listened to the "buzz" in the community and the conversations between my parents and their relatives and friends. I was an only child and usually had my way, and practically every day, or at least two or three times a week, I would make my parents load us all in the family car, and drive up to the top of East Hill here in Lewisburg to see the big, three-story stone, castle-like building gradually rise from its foundations. Incidentally, other radio stations in southern Middle Tennessee, at first, made fun of WJJM for placing their studios in such a structure. They used what was called a "remote installation." That meant that their studios were located downtown, usually in the upper story of a building on the public square. The programs were then conveyed to a transmitter site outside of town by means of telephone wires. In summary, that usually meant a loss in audio quality over the primitive analog hook-up, and especially so on rainy days which almost guaranteed a hum or distortion. WJJM and the few stations like her had the last laugh, for our signal was conveyed to the transmitter, about twenty feet away in the same building, and then out to the tower by near-perfect engineering techniques. That's what made WJJM's signal sound so good, even back then on AM radio, and, I might add, still does. Our engineers, R. C. Wiley and Pete Sowell, performed "proof performance" on a regular basis to make sure our audio signal was near perfection and certainly within the guidelines of the Federal Communications Commission.

I can never forget that spring day when Mom, Dad, and I drove by WJJM just after Dad got off from work. Lo and behold, there was the tower! To a not-quite five-year-old, the structure appeared to be a mile high. I was so excited I could barely contain myself. Excitement over radio must be in the Massey genes because years later my former spouse and I carried our oldest son, Timmy, by WJJM in order to show him where his dad used to work. He was almost exactly the same age as I was when I first saw the tower. We saw his eyes get big with amazement. Later that evening, back home in Franklin where

we were living at the time, we saw Timmy standing in the middle of the den floor, straight as an arrow, with his eyes blinking every two or three seconds. For a moment, Gail and I thought our son had lost his mind until she realized that he was pretending to be the WJJM tower, and his blinking eyes represented the blinking red beacon light high atop the tower.

On May 23, 1947, the headlines of The Marshall Gazette proclaimed "Radio Station WJJM Goes On The Air." The sign-on occurred on Thursday, May 15, 1947. The story beneath the headlines continued to relate how WJJM had been built by the late Mr. Jimmy Joe Murray who had suddenly passed away on April 19, 1947, less than a month before sign-on. The newspaper said that WJJM signed on at 6:00 A.M. although the surviving musicians insist that the sign-on was really supposed to have occurred at 5:30 A.M., but because Denny had overslept, R. C. Wiley had to run upstairs to his apartment to wake him up. However, once Denny was awake, he became his usual bright-eyed, bushy-tailed self and he ready to go.

The newspaper lists the following persons as WJJM's original staff:

1. Louis Lingner, nephew of Mr. Murray, manager;

2. Daryl Laub of Minneapolis, Minnesota, formerly of WLAC Radio, program director;

3. Denny Walker, announcer;

4. J. E. (Pete) Sowell, chief engineer;

5. R. C. Wiley, engineer;

6. Jesse Tillman, operator;

7. Kathryn Patterson, traffic manager.

The Marshall Gazette went on to say that the station was formally dedicated that same afternoon at 3:30. Tennessee Governor Jim McCord, a Lewisburg resident, delivered the principal address. Many other dignitaries attended the program. The newspaper also said that on the following Saturday afternoon, May 17th, WJJM produced a remote broadcast from the Southland Cafe, a popular eating spot at the time, on East Commerce, just past Rock Creek. Several people were interviewed, apparently some even as they ate. Personally, I wonder how it would have felt to have a microphone stuck in my face just as I had chomped down on a chicken leg, but I suppose that's besides the point. Various prizes were given away including tickets to the Dixie Theater and corsages from Mildred Dugger's Flower Shop.

The author has tried to piece together the occurrences of that very first day, based on the memories of the surviving musicians. Again, they were Wayne Owen, Mack George, and Betty Ann Ogilvie. The other two entertainers that morning of long ago were Glenn Milam, whose nickname was Chiz, and Joe

Agent. Wayne played the fiddle; Mack, the guitar; Betty Ann played the piano; Joe, the bass fiddle; and Chiz, the steel guitar. They all sang.

One amazing consideration was this--they were all teenagers or very young adults. Wayne was eighteen and a senior at Marshall County High School; Betty Ann was fourteen and a freshman that year; and Mack, Joe and Chiz were only a couple of years older. They were just kids! Miss Betty Ann admitted in my conversation with her that she was scared to death. Mr. Wayne said that they had gotten up in the morning very early and were there at the station before 5:30. They probably didn't get very much sleep the night before because of their excitement. Afterwards, they would play from 5:30 until 6:00 A.M. every morning, five days a week, for six months and they worked for nothing--they were never paid. This seems incredible in 2007, but back then musicians were willing to go to great lengths to get a start in the entertainment business, and I suppose times haven't changed that much.

Wayne said on that Thursday morning he remembered that one of the engineers, either Pete or R. C. punched the big black button that started up the mighty 250-watt Collins transmitter, and bingo--WJJM was on the air! By the way, that transmitter is now resting in the big studio of the radio station. The Smithsonian Institute has tried to purchase it, but management has refused because the feeling is that it should remain back home in the original studios of WJJM. After the transmitter was fired-up, Denny made some opening announcements and then put the musicians on the air. He made some critical audio level adjustments on the brand-new Raytheon console, and then ran around through the small studio to the big studio where they were broadcasting and then did the announcing. He was using a new RCA broadcast microphone, probably a 77-DX. When the musicians were asked if they could remember any of the songs that were performed that morning, the only one they were fairly certain about was the old country-western standard, "Won't You Ride In My Little Red Wagon." Wayne Owen said that one of the first sponsors was Kerley Furniture Company. A while later Kerley would sponsor a very popular program on WJJM, "Kerley's Pops the Question." The idea was for the announcer to call a residence and ask the person who lived there a question. If the correct answer were given, a prize was won. Not too long ago I was given the same task of doing so here at WJJM, and I was "hung up" on several times. Times have indeed changed. Anyway, one day the announcer, probably Denny Walker, called Wayne Owen's wife and asked her the question of the day: "What was the name of the dentist who made George Washington's teeth?" (We all know that George Washington had false teeth, although they were NOT made from wood.) Well, the only thing that Mrs. Owen could think of was, Dr. Crutcher, the name of a local dentist whose practice was on the town square. Wayne said that for once in his life, Denny Walker was at a loss for words. There was a slight pause, and they both burst out laughing. For years later she and Dr. Crutcher took a terrible "ribbing" for that little incident, and it happened right here on WJJM.

What kind of reaction did the performers get from the listening audience? It was astounding. The following Monday a very happy and smiling Louis Lingner, the manager, produced a stack of cards and letters, known in the radio business as "fan mail," over six inches tall. Mail was pouring in from all

over the county and some surrounding counties from happy listeners. As Mack George pointed out, this was even more amazing when you consider the fact that back then many people did not even have electricity and were listening to WJJM over battery-powered and even crystal radios. For years and years the station continued to receive letters addressed to their local DJ and requesting that their favorite songs be played, again during an era when not everyone even enjoyed the ownership of a telephone. We were still getting fan mail in the late fifties when I first came here to work as a sixteen-year-old. Not all of the reaction was favorable. Betty Ann said that she often heard ridicule from her so-called friends and associates at Marshall County High School. She just dismissed it as jealousy. Back then country music wasn't "cool" and accepted as it now is, and country and western musicians were called "hillbillies" and even worse. Children can be cruel and she said that the criticism hurt, but she and the others kept on playing and didn't look back. She told me about the time they got up their courage and went to WSM and auditioned before "Judge" George Hay who was in charge of the Grand Ole Opry at that time. By this time Billy Joe Pope, Andrew Cooper, and Terrell Merrell who had taken Wayne Owen's place on the fiddle, had joined the group. She said that the judge listened and smiled, but told them that to be able to appear on the Opry, perhaps they needed a "little more experience." Actually, Wayne Owen did go on to Nashville radio broadcasting later on. He worked at WLAC with "Big Jeff and the Radio Playboys" as a fiddler for a couple of years and then moved over to WSM where he worked for Hank Williams, Sr. and Patsy Cline. Mack George worked as a professional musician for a while before becoming a sheet metal specialist. When asked about Denny Walker, he and his sister Betty Ann both agreed that Denny was one of the nicest persons they had ever worked with. He was always cheerful and had a big smile on his face. He had love and compassion for everyone. He could make you laugh at the drop of a hat--a true entertainer. A whole chapter will be devoted to Denny Walker later on. Miss Betty Ann Ogilvie soon began a career of working with children that was to last for many years. Jeff Haislip, present program director of WJJM, was one of her kindergarten students.

A paragraph or two has to be devoted to "Harmony Hall." This was a live radio program which was produced by WJJM Radio on Saturday night. It was WJJM and Lewisburg's answer to the Grand Ole Opry and for a few years drew about as many local listeners. It became very popular. "Harmony Hall" was actually the upstairs meeting room of the old Maccabee Insurance Building owned and operated by Mr. N. C. Wiley, R. C. Wiley's father. It was located across the street from the Southland Cafe. The Wileys had built a very successful insurance agency in their own right. The building later became the location of Dixie Radio and Television Repair, operated by Macadoo Bruington, Clarence Minor, and Bobby Haislip. In those years the bottom floor consisted of offices of the insurance agency and also housed a little record shop which was run by Chiz Milam and Frances Wiley. I can recall as a child buying my first record, "Buttons and Bows," by Dinah Shore. I loved that song, still do, and I played it until it became scratchy. Of course it was a "78" and one day I dropped it and it broke into a hundred pieces. I cried my heart out, but Mom and Dad didn't have a lot, and they told me that was just too bad. I learned a valuable lesson that day. Still later, that record shop would be moved across

the street and located in the Lewisburg Paint Store, owned by Louis and Martha Lingner at that time. During the 50's, 60's and 70's, many a teenager would buy their favorite rock and roll "45" and "33 1/3" there at the "Paint Store." I probably spent a small fortune there myself, even as a young adult.

"Harmony Hall" was an ideal location for a "live" radio show because as I remember it was a large room with a shiny wooden floor and great acoustics. It had a small stage on the south end, and that's where the musicians set up. Programming consisted of fifteen and thirty minute sponsored segments. Mack George told me that he could remember at least five groups that played at Harmony Hall: The Tennessee Variety Boys, the Sunshine Trio of Chapel Hill featuring Tex Smith, the Matt Le Croix Trio from Fayetteville, the Everyready Quartet, and the Coffee County Ramblers. Betty Ann told me about "Minnie and Joe" which consisted of Denny Walker, dressed up as a woman, and Joe Agent, the bass fiddle player, as a straight man. Mack said they were hilarious. One of the most popular acts was Denny Walker tap-dancing with a five-year-old Pam Lingner.

We cannot conclude this chapter on the early history of WJJM without mentioning some unsung heroes, the ladies and gentlemen "out front." I interviewed Wynonna Garrett Clark and was amazed at the clarity of her memory and her ability to recall the minutest details. Miss Wynonna told me that right after she graduated from MCHS that she went to work for Mr. Jimmy Joe Murray at Murray Farms. She worked there for at least two years before WJJM's inception, being involved in sales and publishing TheTennessee Walking Horse Magazine. When WJJM started up, Mr. Murray's desire was for her to work at WJJM because he knew he was going to need some "good people" there for the enterprise to work. He had just the right person. Wynonna worked tirelessly as a secretary, receptionist, typist, and as an accountant. She also composed and typed out commercials and even produced a daily fifteen-minute radio program called "Listen Ladies." Recipes and hints for fashion and housekeeping were featured. She must have been a very busy lady indeed to have done all of this. She admitted in our conversation that she was a "work-a-holic." Perhaps that is what has kept her mind so sharp. In 1982 Wynonna Clark Garrett was featured in the twelfth edition of "Who's Who of American Women." She later worked at Alford's Pharmacy and Cathy Furniture Company.

Other office workers and employees at WJJM included Katherine Patterson; Harold Twitty, who worked in sales and did some announcing; Jennie Cantrell Middleton from Cornersville; Barbara Matthews from Petersburg, who was working here in 1958 when I first started announcing; Patsy Reynolds Bensinger; and Sarah Smith White who first started as a secretary and eventually became a station manager. Miss Sarah and I enjoyed a very happy working relationship over the years. She always treated me with respect and kindness.

Chapter 6: Denny Walker and Other Early Announcers

When I first met Denny Walker as a junior in high school in 1958, somehow I felt that I had known him most of my life. In a way I had. WJJM signed-on in May of 1947, and I didn't even begin school until the autumn of 1948. I was quite a momma's boy during that time and I loved to cling to my mother's skirts while she was cooking lunch and dinner for all of us and listen to Denny Walker on WJJM. Sometimes Mom would grow a little weary of my clinging, so she would place me on the carpet in the living room with my toys, and she would turn on the big console-type radio and let me listen to Denny in there. Dad was very history-minded, and at the outset of World War II he raked and scraped enough money together to get the best radio money could by. It had foreign broadcast bands, and it was also capable of receiving broadcasting stations all over America. He wanted to know how the war was progressing because even though he worked in food production and had an occupational deferment, he realized that all of that could change with politics and that he might be drafted and sent overseas. Therefore, radio played an important part in my life, even from the beginning.

Even at a very early age, I was very fond of Denny Walker. His voice conveyed cheerfulness and optimism, and Mom told me years later that even as a four-and-a-half year old, I would try to imitate Denny. About a year later, around the time I started first grade, my great aunt in Detroit sent me one of the first little RCA 45 record players. We at first thought it was a toy, but it was far from that. It was RCA's way of introducing a moderately-priced record player, earlier called a Victrola. They realized that if the public had access to an affordable record player, they would purchase RCA records. Well, my great aunt purchased several records for me to play on my new Victrola, and I remember that one of them was "Little Angel With A Dirty Face," by Eddie Arnold. The timing couldn't have been better because Denny was also playing that same record on WJJM albeit his version may have been a 78. That was probably the very beginning of my radio career at age five, for I would sit there on the living room carpet, play the new 45 r.p.m. records on my record player, and pretend I was Denny Walker announcing on WJJM. In a way I suppose I still am. I idolized the man.

Allen Denny Walker was born in Campbell County, Tennessee, just outside La Follette. La Follette is a town about the size of Lewisburg, and nestled in the hills of East Tennessee just north of Knoxville. Most of this information about Denny's early life and also of his later years was provided to me by his widow, Marie Bailey Walker, and his son who looks just like him, Dee Walker. About the time I was a senior in high school, I already had read history and knew more than a little about the Civil War, still one of my favorite areas of study. Realizing that Denny was from East Tennessee, I asked him if he had any Union soldiers in his family tree. He turned around in his announcing chair and announced on the radio that Billy Massey had just called him a Yankee. I was embarrassed but we laughed about it. Only yesterday when I was interviewing Marie about Denny did I find out that his own grandfather, Libburn Walker, fought in the Union Army. In a way I've had the last laugh. Marie said that the old soldier was only four feet, eleven inches tall, so that may have been where Denny inherited his diminutive stature.

Growing up Denny did not know a great deal about his father, for his parents were evidently estranged. However, he loved his mother deeply and talked about her quite often on the radio, much as David Letterman does on television. Not much can be ascertained about his early life, but he graduated from La Follette High School in 1940. Marie said that he almost died from typhoid fever as a child, and while in high school he had a job delivering furniture. The United States entered World War II in December of 1941. We don't know much about his life from then until around late 1943, but one day he announced to his mother that he was going to join the Army Air Corps. Her reply was, "Now Denny, you can't pass that!" Well, he did. He joined the U. S. Army in Knoxville, Tennessee, and studied at Lynchburg College in Lynchburg, Virginia, and then went on to pilot's school at Craig Field in Selma, Alabama. He won his wings as a bomber pilot in 1944, and went overseas after that. When he was working at WJJM in the late 1950's, I remember that he had a beautiful bracelet which was made from his cadet's wings. He was very proud of it.

Denny served in the Pacific Theater of operations. His particular area was CBI which stood for China, Burma, and India. The name of his bomber was "The Impatient Lady," and he flew her into combat against the Japanese Army which was occupying those areas. That was known as "flying the hump" because they were flying their airplanes over very high mountains. I have read that they depended at least in part on the updrafts to get them over the mountains, and it was very dangerous work because the planes were very heavy, loaded to the max with bombs meant for the enemy.

Denny Walker was a war hero although he was too modest to brag about what he had done. He was awarded several medals and ribbons including the Chinese Service Medal, the Philippine Liberation Medal, the Asiatic Pacific Theater Ribbon, the American Theater Ribbon, and the World War II Victory Medal.

After his honorable discharge from the Army, he attended broadcasting school. He had probably gained considerable experience with radios and electronics while in the Air Corps. Denny would later prove to be an accomplished announcer because of his "gift of gab." He applied to Mr. Jimmy Joe Murray and was given a job at WJJM. This had to be his first radio announcing job. Marie said he lived with the Murray sisters before moving into the second story apartment over WJJM just before the sign-on. When the station finally went to the air waves, Denny was an instant success. His cheerful banter, incredible wit, and his winning ways won over the people of Marshall and surrounding counties immediately. As I have already stated, he and the kids who were broadcasting in the morning were drawing considerable fan mail, something that was unheard of back then for a small market station. Today people 'phone in their requests, but back then they used letters and post cards.

Denny Walker was a great country music fan, and he kept up with the latest hits. In those days being a disk jockey was tough because records came in three sizes: 331/3, 45, and 78 revolutions per minute. To change the speed on

those old WJJM turntables, the announcer had to grab a handle which was attached to the turntable motor, shove it forward, much like shifting the gears of a car, and bring it back in the correct slot for the speed of the record. He had to be careful to hit the correct slot, or the record would be on the wrong speed, and that frequently happened, especially if the announcer were being distracted by the telephone. Add to that the necessity of changing cartridges in the tone arms containing the needles, and it was even more harrowing. The reason for that was the fact that the needles, called styluses, for 78 r.p.m. records were much larger than the tiny 45 styluses, and they were incompatible. If an announcer forgot to change needles, the sound on the radio was awful, not to mention the damage he was inflicting on the record, especially the delicate 45's and 33 1/3's. In the early years of local radio, most of the commercials were read "live" because commercial tape recorders and playback machines had not been introduced to the broadcast industry yet. They did have wire recorders, but they were not quite of broadcast quality. Reading those commercials could be tough, too. About half the time the commercials lasted up to a minute, and before long the voice got tired. It was really a tough job, believe it or not, and even though WJJM paid standard wage and above, announcers and even engineers did not make very much money. Frankly, it was a low-paying profession. About the only way a person could make a great deal of money in broadcasting and later television was to land a good job in a major market, and that's still true today.

Besides his DJ work, Denny became known for his man-on-the-street interviews. The announcers, usually Denny or Perry, would set up their equipment with the assistance of Pete Sowell, R. C. Wiley, or a newer engineer who had just been hired, Wayne Davidson. Back in those days the downtown sidewalks of Lewisburg were very busy with shoppers, especially on weekends, and the announcers would try to interview various citizens and generate some laughs. Marie told me that when she and her mother went to town, they would purposely walk on the other side of the square to avoid what Mrs. Bailey called that "crazy old man-in-the-street" announcer. Little did they know that crazy radio announcer would someday be her husband? Marie told me that one day Denny was interviewing a lady named Della Caneer in front of what was then Alford's Pharmacy, and apparently one of them challenged the other to a foot-race because Denny dropped his microphone and down the sidewalk they ran. It was an outrageous stunt, but of course it even garnered more attention for Denny. By this time he was becoming a celebrity in Marshall and surrounding counties.

Just as Denny's popularity was at a peak, he decided to leave WJJM and go to Nashville and try his luck. He worked at WNAH in Nashville, but was apparently unhappy there, so he went back home to La Follette to work at Radio Station WLAF. Things didn't work out there, either, so by 1958 he was back in Lewisburg, and that was when I became acquainted with him. The first day I ever met him was in the summer of 1958 because I had been hanging around the station helping R. C. with some soldering jobs. Soldering wires aggravated R. C.'s asthma, and so I was happy to help him out and gain the experience of working around radios. I was also in a way paying him back for his help in helping me to pass my amateur radio examinations. Anyway, Denny came into the control room where I was sitting and introduced him. He

had lost quite a bit of weight from his pictures six years before, and had also lost much of his hair. I almost didn't recognize him, but when he opened the microphone and started to talk on the radio, I immediately was convinced that was Denny Walker. He looked at me, smiled, and said that he needed a good theme song, and he asked me if I would do him a favor, go into the record room, and retrieve a great instrumental by Les Brown entitled, "Take Back Your Mink." I did just that for him and we immediately hit it off and became fast friends. After a few paychecks he bought one of the raciest automobiles I had ever seen--a white 1958 Ford convertible. Denny loved that car and I can still see him driving around Lewisburg waving at everyone. About that time he came in one day and said, "Massey, I have a date with the cutest little telephone operator you ever did see...her name is Marie." Of course she was Marie Bailey, his future wife. He was very happy during this time and three years later in 1961, their son Dwayne, would be born. Dwayne would later go by "Dee."

Denny Walker was talented in many different ways, but I would say that one of his strongest talents was in the field of ad lib and improvisation. He was absolutely superb at it. I've seen him on many occasions go out, service an account, and bring back an ordinary flier with him to the station. He would sit down to do his air shift, glance over the flyer, and deliver one of the finest commercial announcements a person could imagine. (In radio we call them "spots.") Most of the rest of us would be happy just to be able to read a commercial that well, and there he sat adlibbing it. He was absolutely amazing. The only problem came was when the radio log told us to read a commercial at such and such time, and the only thing we could find in that designated sponsor's folder was one of Denny's flyers. We could never hope to deliver the "spot" as well as he could.

Time does not permit here to enumerate all of the stunts he was involved in with Perry and the other announcers, but they were numerous. More will be said about him in my chapter on Perry Gillum, because by now their careers had become hopelessly intertwined. Perhaps someday someone would like to pick up where I have left off and write a complete biography of Deny Walker's life. I'm sure it would be a best seller.

One incident that stands out in my mind almost has to be mentioned. One morning when he reported to work, a slight amount of snow had fallen the night before, but not enough to cancel schools. At first he was politely announcing that the schools would be open that day, but the more he announced it, the more the telephone calls rolled in. The announcer is in a dilemma and has to answer the telephones because it just might be a very important call from a school official or police chief. The situation worsened and soon it became apparent that 1) the people who were calling did not even have their radios on, and 2) many of them were enjoying tormenting Denny. Finally he lost it and opened the mic and told the mothers in no uncertain terms to get their little kids up, get them dressed, and get a certain part of their anatomies to school or they'd be late. You could almost hear a roar of laughter go up in the community because back then it was unheard of to say a thing like that on the radio or television. People talked and laughed about that for years.

Another occurrence involved something that all disk jockeys during those years dreaded. If a DJ had a sudden urge to go to the bathroom, there were few options available. Perhaps one of the best was to have a stand-by record or album with a very long play time. While that song is playing, the business could be taken care of, well usually. One morning the unthinkable happened to Denny. I think he was playing "El Paso," I'm not sure, but at any rate it was a long song and just right for what had to be done. He was about half way through with his business when, you guessed it, the record stuck. He died a thousand deaths as he tried to get through and get in there before the telephone started ringing or the boss called. It's happened to most of us who work in radio as well. Thank goodness for CD's although they can cause trouble, and frequently do at the most inopportune time.

I would like to say that he was also a very civic-minded person. He was a staunch Democrat although he and his mother, who was a Republican, could have some heated discussions. Most East Tennesseans are Republicans and she couldn't understand why he had sold out to the "enemy." Sometime in the mid 1960's he went to Nashville to a political rally and came back to the station the next day and proclaimed that he was not going to wash his hand because he had shaken hands, not once, but twice with President Lyndon Johnson. He was elated over that. Later on he served on the Lewisburg City Council and also the Marshall County Quarterly Court. Besides his radio announcing, I understand that he became involved in selling little trinkets for advertising purposes such as pencils, calendars, and memo pads. He also worked for Spot Advertising for a while. I left WJJM in 1971 to go to work at WLAC in Nashville, and I only saw Denny one more time after that, and that was when he visited the funeral home when my mother-in-law passed away. Marie told me in our conversation that he left WJJM in 1985 and worked for another radio station for a couple of years. He left there in 1987 to devote all of his time to selling his trinkets and also working at a car wash. She said he loved his job at the car wash because that gave him an opportunity to meet people. He was strictly a "people person," and not shy as many disk jockeys surprisingly are.

He had become even more civic-minded after I left and eventually joined the Lion's Club. One evening in 1990 he attended a meeting of that organization and had eaten heartedly. He loved onions and the next morning he complained to Marie that he had eaten too many pork chops smothered with onions the night before because he had a bad case of indigestion. All of a sudden, he bowed his head and passed out at the breakfast table. He died a few minutes later at the local hospital.

Denny Walker left behind a host of friends and admirers including your's truly. I'll continue to believe that he was the most gifted small-market disk-jockey I've ever known, and he served as an inspiration to me and the many others who followed in his footsteps. I still miss him.

At this point in time we should make honorable mention of some of the other early announcers at WJJM. I'm indebted to Wynonna Garrett Clark for this because I was frankly too young to remember all of them although I do recall some. The list includes Neal Clifford, son of Mr. Johnny Clifford at the

Post Office; Harold Twitty; Brent Lamb of Fayetteville, who tried every way in the world to break Wynonna up while she was announcing; Daryl Laub of WLAC fame who didn't stay in Lewisburg very long; Gill Green, a very talented announcer who would later on work in Nashville radio and TV; of course Denny Walker and Perry Gillum; and also a very talented announcer from Lawrenceburg named Ken Morrison, who stayed at WJJM a number of years. At the outset of the 1950's a new breed of employees would come to WJJM. They were known as the "combination men" because they were a combination of both engineer and announcer. As has been stated, in the early months and years of local radio it was an F.C.C. requirement that an engineer be on duty at all time, even for a 250 watt station. It was a ludicrous requirement, but the broadcasters had to live with it. It soon became obvious that the broadcasters could save a lot of money if they could find people who could both talk and be engineers. That was easier said than done because, in practice, most announcers and engineers are polar opposites. We will devote a chapter to the combination men three days from now.

Chapter 7: Perry Gillum

Perry Gillum was a very complex man. He could be a very sweet and considerate person but also a cantankerous and disagreeable one. However, I don't think anyone would ever argue that he wasn't extremely talented.

Orville Perry Gillum was a Marshall County product, born to Leondas and Emma Callahan Gillum. He had a sister named Sarah Lynn Gillum. He attended the public schools and graduated from Marshall County High School. Perry once told me that he wanted to go to Middle Tennessee State College (now University) but that his mother insisted that he go to David Lipscomb, so to Nashville he went.

When Perry and his first wife were married, it was considered one of the social events of the year here in Lewisburg. They were considered the ideal couple. He and his wife had a daughter in 1942, and she was a beautiful little girl. Her name was Allynn, and she was the apple of her daddy's eye. I knew Allynn Gillum quite well because we both started at Hardison School together although if I'm not mistaken she graduated in 1959, a year early. She didn't graduate with our class in 1960 at Marshall County High, I can be sure of it. My first remembrances of Perry, besides hearing his voice on WJJM, was seeing him walk up Third Avenue here in Lewisburg in the afternoons to pick up Allynn at Hardison School. Even as a young child, Allynn loved to brag about her daddy being Perry Gillum and she would often say that he was the best announcer at WJJM. Perry lost his first wife, Allynn's mother, to breast cancer when Allynn was quite young.

When a person thinks of Perry Gillum, he/she automatically thinks of the word "local." That may seem a bit odd, but it's true. He was totally oriented and committed to covering everything of importance which was going on in Lewisburg and Marshall County. Perry was everywhere, carrying that heavy old brown reel-to-reel tape recorder as well as the various mics, transformers, and mic stands necessary to record everything from man-on-the-street interviews to picnics to church programs to poetry reading contests to Christmas band concerts at Marshall County High School. You name it--if it were happening, then Perry was there. Once he even interviewed my uncle, Buddy Musgrave, after Uncle Buddy bought a brand new system of milking machines. Something like that might seem extremely strange in 2007, but it wasn't in 1949. R. C. once said that he carried around the heavy equipment so much that it literally made him sick. I don't know about that, but i do know as he grew older he was plagued by various health problems and surgeries. I also remember that he was wonderful around children. Around 1953 Pam Lingner had a Valentine's Party at the WJJM studios and Mrs. Lingner and my mom helped to decorate the big studio with hundreds of little Valentines and one huge one for a backdrop. Many of our classmates from Hardison School and even other schools in the county were invited, and Perry served as master of ceremonies. He did a masterful job. I remember that he helped us play all kinds of children's games. We even had a fortune teller to entertain us in the smaller studio although she was spooky and most of us were scared to even go in there. Perry was a "lord of charm" and he had the ability to bring out the best in anyone and, in turn, win their gratitude and respect. I remember

once he returned to WJJM after managing a restaurant down on the north side of the square for a while. The restaurant was called "The Busy Bee," and Burrell Crowell, a math teacher at McCord School, used to infuriate Allynn by calling it "The Busy Buzzard." Of course he was just teasing, but I don't think Allynn and Perry either one appreciated it. Burrell Crowell deserves a chapter somewhere in the annals of Marshall County sports, but not here. At any rate, I remember driving up to the parking lot at WJJM with R. C. Wiley after running an errand somewhere in town late one afternoon. We flipped on the radio, and Perry was announcing. R. C. said, "It sure is nice to have Perry back home."

I don't like to say that one person is a better announcer than another, because it goes far beyond that. A person can be talented in many ways. I've already stated in a subsequent chapter that Denny Walker was one of if not the best disk jockeys who ever worked at WJJM, and I will stand by that assertion. On the other hand, it would be incorrect to say that Denny or anyone else was a better announcer than Perry, because he was so talented in at least two other separate but equally important fields--news and sports. I shall discuss each area briefly.

Perry Gillum was one of the best local newsmen I ever knew. He had courage, and it takes courage, or really just plain old "guts," to be a good news person. In many cases a newsman is required to publish or broadcast stories about prominent or influential people, and usually those folks don't appreciate the adverse publicity one bit. I think momentarily of how a lady journalist exposed a governor of Tennessee in the late 1970's and even feared for her life. Perry never batted an eye when he wrote his news stories. His basic philosophy was, "If the shoe fits, wear it." In that regard, he was fearless. He also worked part-time writing news stories for the Nashville newspapers.

Perry was also one of the best sportscasters that WJJM ever produced, and it seemed as he got older, he got even better. He was a veritable "walking encyclopedia" of Marshall County High School sports, and he can truly be called the first "Voice of the Tigers." I don't want to get into who was better or not. It might be argued that he was equaled, but I don't think it could ever be truthfully said that he was surpassed. Again, various forms of talent enter the picture. His voice was perfect for sports casting and also the intellect was there. In his later years as a sportscaster for MCHS athletics, he gained a valuable color commentator in Mr. Folk Lambert. Folk had taught and coached at Marshall County High School for a while, and he also had a mastery of sports knowledge for the institution. We used to chuckle to ourselves as they would talk back and forth on the air. Perry's style was "strictly business," and he rarely joked while on the air, and when he tried to, it usually fell flat on its face. He simply was not a comedian. His seriousness came through in his voice which was a deep, resonant baritone. Anyway, Mr. Lambert did not call him Perry, but something like "Purr." Back at the station we called him "Purr" and he growled and grumbled something under his breath, but then he usually smiled.

We at the station often laughed and said it was too bad that Denny and Perry could not have made a stand-up comedy act--Denny as the comic and Perry as the straight man. Sometimes the two didn't see "eye to eye," and it was always my own personal opinion that each was a little envious of the other's considerable abilities. When you think about it, WJJM was blessed at that time with having not only one of the best disk jockeys in the business, but also one of the best newsmen and sportscasters. It was amazing. In the mornings, Denny would play the records and go about his duties as a disk jockey, and Perry would read the news in the small studio. The only thing that would separate them would be a glass pane. They didn't always get along with each other, and you could always tell when they were miffed at each other because they would refer to one another as "Gillum" and "Walker." Once they nearly got into it, and the microphones were cut off for a couple of minutes while they "discussed" matters. Soon they came back on the air and everything was fine. Actually, I've wondered if it wasn't at least in part a publicity stunt, because everyone in town was later talking about it. The two of them knew that they had a huge radio audience.

Later on Perry remarried and had three sons: Perry, Jr., Timmy, and Charlie. I can recall a ritual every Christmas for Perry in that he was at the studios very late on Christmas Eve putting together bicycles and other toys for his sons.

As I understand it, years later when Perry was sick from having numerous very serious surgeries, he would call Denny and ask him to come out to his house and visit. Forever the gregarious one, Denny would agree and they would sit and talk for hours about the "good ole days" at WJJM and the stunts they used to pull. It does my heart good to know that they were the best of friends at the end.

Chapter 8: R. C. Wiley

When I look back upon my life, R. C. Wiley was one of my greatest inspirations, perhaps second only to that of my father. It was difficult to be around him and not feel the influence of positive good which always seemed to accompany him. He was well-informed about a LOT of topics, not just radio and electronics. He was a lover of history and politics, and he could also hold his own with practically anyone when it came to discussing religion. He also knew a great deal about classical music as the study of it was required at the Tennessee School for the Blind where he attended. I remember that R. C. possessed three strong loyalties: 1) to his family; 2) to the Church of Christ; and 3) to the Republican Party. Many if not most of his friends were Democrats, but he still faithfully showed up at Republican Party functions. He once told me that the Wileys had been strong Democrats for years, but that in the 1890's his grandfather had fallen out with Democratic President Grover Cleveland over his economic policies, and the Wileys switched over to the Republican party in their allegiance. R. C. once told me that it was very difficult to be a Republican in Marshall County back during the days of the Great Depression.

R. C. married Frances Neally and they had one son, Robert Samuel Wiley, known by "Sam" to his many friends here in Lewisburg and Marshall County. Sam was a joy to R. C. and Frances. Sam Wiley has continued the family tradition of working in electronics and is also an avid pilot. He's a fine young man and I always enjoy seeing him and reminiscing about his parents.

When WJJM was built, three apartments were constructed over the station itself which occupied the bottom floor. The Lingners and Denny and his wife lived in the two apartments on the second floor for a while, and then R. C. and Frances lived in the apartment on the third floor. R. C. installed an amateur radio station in their apartment and from that high altitude he delighted in talking to his cousin, Cecil Wiley, in Washington State. It was also in that little apartment high atop WJJM that he taught me electronic theory and also the Morris Code in preparation for my FCC exams. I was not a very good code student--my mind did not work fast enough and the dots and dashes all ran together, but I passed, barely. R. C., Frances, and by this time Sam eventually moved over into the Wiley home place, not far from the station. R. C. could walk from his back yard to the radio station in just a few moments. This was to his advantage because something at the radio station was forever breaking down, and he would have to come over and remedy the problem at any hour, day or night, besides those hours of his regular shift. Being the chief engineer at a radio station meant that you were on call 24/7, three hundred and sixty-five days of the year unless you had someone who could give you relief. Many times Pete Sowell provided that relief while R. C. and his family would go on vacation or just to rest. It was a crushing responsibility.

When I first became acquainted with R. C. and Frances, it must have been around 1956, because I passed my examinations in the spring of 1957. I was fourteen years old. During that period of time R. C. was theoretically on duty all during the working day as I have stated, but he also had an air shift from 6:00 until 10:05 P.M. When I first started hanging around WJJM with Tommy

Sowell in 1956 I remember that R. C. played country music from 6:00 P.M. until 7:00 P.M., which was really just a continuation of Denny Walker's afternoon drive shift. I believe they called R. C.'s shift "Corncrib Capers." Back then every shift had a name, and someone had to really think hard to come up with that one. From earliest times, the local news was run at 7:00 A.M., 1:00 P.M. 4:00 P.M., and at 7:00 P.M. Only recently was that last local newscast moved back to 6:00 P.M. and also run on the bottom of the hour for the AM station at 1490. WJJM FM continues to run local news during those time slots. There's another tradition that has never been broken during the sixty years that WJJM has been broadcasting, and that is, to run the obituaries first in the newscast. I know of no other radio station in the United States that does this, but it seems agreeable to the listeners of Marshall County, so we are happy to continue this practice.

At any rate, after the 7:00 P.M. Local News, WJJM joined the Mutual Broadcasting System for a program called, "Music Beyond the Stars." Incidentally, WJJM was a Mutual affiliate for many, many years, but eventually changed over briefly to the ABC Radio Network and then to the FOX News Network which is what we have today. The Mutual Broadcasting System was in existence from 1934 to 1999, an incredible sixty-five year run. Mutual carried "The Shadow," a favorite program for many years, and also it was the originating network for the World Series for a long time. WJJM carried those programs back in the late 1940's and early 1950's.

"Music Beyond the Stars" was incredibly lush. At least half of the songs played were orchestral numbers with violins and strings. However, the fidelity of the program was primitive by today's standards because it came to the station over a telephone line, and in bad weather the hum on the line was about as loud as the music. "High Fidelity" was just beginning to be talked about in those days and stereophonic sound was a dream in some audio engineer's mind, but certainly not in AM broadcasting. Nevertheless, we had many listeners because it provided a welcomed relief to the noise and racket that many people heard all day long on their jobs and driving home. It was truly beautiful music and I can distinctly remember Montivoni, Les Baxter, the Jackie Gleason Orchestra, the Mills Brothers, Eddie Fisher, Jo Stafford, Frank Sinatra, Perry Como and many more such artists performing on that program. R. C. loved to work during that time slot because he loved that type of music and it also gave him an opportunity to service the equipment because all he had to do was "hit" the network and they would play the music for twenty five minutes at a time until it came time for the next station break and the news. Mutual required that its affiliates carry the news twice an hour. Some folks complained that it was too much national news, but R. C. always said that it was a good thing because the news served to keep our listeners well-informed. Also, Mutual had very little bias, either from the left or right. It was good straight news reporting. About the only Mutual newscasters I can remember were Fulton Lewis, Jr., Gabriel Heater, and Jeffrey Forbes. Lewis and Heater were commentators and slightly conservative. WJJM carried "Music Beyond the Stars" until 9:00 P.M., when the tempo of the music drastically changed. After the 9:00 News, WJJM programmed a rock and roll request show called the "Pop Shop," and it became a phenomenon. I'll dedicate a whole chapter to Billy Humbles and the "Pop Shop" in a few days.

In the beginning, R. C. was the engineer for that program and ran the "board," while Billy Humbles did the announcing and chose the records. Before too long, Bill would assume the responsibilities of doing it all, and that would free R. C. up to spend more time servicing the equipment.

In the late 1950's that would change. Due to economic constraints, the management at WJJM decided to allow R. C. run a record show from 8:00 to 11:00 A.M. and also from 1:00 to 4:00 P.M. Bill Humbles worked the "1490 Club" during the week from 4:00 until 5:00 P.M., and then Denny would come in at 5:00 and work until 6:00 P.M. Jim Travis would then work the night shift from 6:00 until 10:05 P.M. when the station signed off the air. It allowed R. C. to be off at nights, but six hours a day on the air was quite a strain for him or anyone else, for that matter.

R. C. Wiley was a near-perfect human being, and about the only thing I could say about him at all was, he liked to put things off just a little. That procrastination led to one of the funniest incidents in the station's history. When the station was first built, all of the telephone lines from the different churches and other places in town were all situated in an open rectangular enclosure back in one corner of the control room. It was truly a mess. All of the incoming wires from the churches, etc. were over on the left side of the enclosure while all of the terminals leading to the master control console where the announcers sat were on the right side of the enclosure. When WJJM first went on the air, the engineers were supposed to have connected all of those wires to a neat little patch panel near the console, something like an old telephone operator's switchboard, but in their haste to get the station on the air, it was not done.

Now, lets leave the mass (and mess) of wires for one moment. Sunday mornings were the hardest shift to fill in those days for at least two reasons. One reason was, simply, no one wanted to get up early on Sunday mornings and go to work at a radio station. Believe it or not, several of us were regular church attendees. The other reason was that many of the announcers at that time liked to party on Saturday night, and much of the time they weren't even able to work on the following Sunday morning. Actually, the shift wasn't very difficult at all, it was just a matter of having to be there. Frankly, it was quite easy...I worked it many times later on myself. All the announcer had to do was to put one preacher on the air right after the other, read a little news, maybe play a few records, and then put the churches on the air at their respective times. On this fateful Sunday morning back in the mid-1950's, the Sunday morning announcer either didn't bother to show up or couldn't. Our owner-manager, Mr. Louis Lingner, had to come down from his apartment above to put the station on the air, and he wasn't feeling too well himself that particular morning. All went OK until around 11:00 A.M. At that time the Baptist church ended their broadcast and the Church of Christ began their services which were to be broadcast immediately thereafter. What the announcer was supposed to do was to play a one minute spot which was taped while he ran around to the enclosure of wires to perform a couple of simple operations. There were two wires which had to both be unplugged from the output of the Baptist Church amplifier and transferred to the output of the Church of Christ amplifier. The other ends of those two wires were supposed to be connected

to the input of the WJJM console and then out over the air waves. Well, that was supposed to have been the sequence of steps that the Sunday morning announcer followed, but that's not quite what poor Mr. Lingner did. Fumbling around in the mass of wires, he managed to connect the output of the Baptist Church amplifier into the input of the Church of Christ's amplifier. Up at Church Street Church of Christ, just as the song leader began to lead the first verse of the first song, organ music began to float out from the PA system. People began to look at each other in amazement, and then look up at the ceiling. It was said that R. C. Wiley broke all records of speed as he ran from the pew where he was sitting to the church office to call WJJM and tell Mr. Lingner to cease and desist whatever he was doing--pronto! Needless to say, that little patch panel which would have simplified matters considerably and probably prevented the incident from occurring was installed immediately thereafter.

In conclusion, I could tell many more stories about "Dr. Wiley," as he was often called, but time has put its constraints on us. Besides, we will be discussing the life of this fine man when we deal with some of the other air personalities at WJJM as the week progresses. I would just like to say that R. C. Wiley was a fine Christian man whom everyone loved, and one heck of an engineer. I think I can safely say that he did more to keep WJJM running for the better part of more than forty-three years than any other person I know.

Chapter 9: The "Combination Men"

This is a rather unusual title for a chapter in the history of WJJM Radio, but then they were an unusual breed of men, because they were skilled in both engineering and announcing. In many stations I've heard about, and a few I've worked at, the engineers and the announcers even had contempt for each other. They were just two basic subsets of humanity. Most radio engineers I've ever known were quiet, smart, and introspective men, whereas the announcers and disk jockeys--well, you could expect almost anything out of them. In many cases the engineers thought the announcers were shallow or even stupid, and the DJ's many times considered the engineers as elitist jerks. This wasn't always the case, but it was true in many.

In the late 1940's and early 1950's, the management and ownership of the stations knew that they had a real dilemma, for as I have previously stated, they just weren't garnering enough revenues to be able to pay skilled engineers, often college graduates, to remain at the stations seventeen hours a day--from sign-on to sign-off. That was a Federal Communications Commission requirement. At least two per station would have to be hired to cover those hours, and they didn't come cheap. Add to that the fact that announcers had to be hired for the same hours, plus other office personnel. Something had to be done. Step forward the "combination men." By this time it became obvious to many intelligent men that good jobs were to be had for people who could be both engineers and announcers. Women had not yet appreciably entered these two fields, but they would eventually.

WJJM was fortunate to able to procure the services of several combination men. I cannot hope to remember all of them, and no records still exist to enumerate them, but I shall try to discuss a few.

Leon Harrison was a perfect example of the combination man. A Marshall County product, he was quiet, reserved, smart, and "strictly business." I remember that he had a resonant mellow voice...not deep, but resonant. He was no-nonsense type of individual. Once when Tommy Sowell and I were about twelve or thirteen years old, we were running, playing, and snooping around the facilities at WJJM. Leon stepped in and told both of us to either straighten up or leave the premises. Naturally, we were miffed at him as pre-adolescents would be, but later on I understood his wisdom. If we had tripped and fallen into a cabinet with high-voltage electrical wiring, we may have been seriously hurt if not killed. Besides, if Tommy's father, Pete, had caught us, he would have probably worn both of us out and rightfully so. Thanks, Leon, for looking after us. Sometime in the middle or late 1950's, he secured employment at Radio Station WMCP in Columbia, and I believe after that he worked at NASA in Huntsville. As we say in radio, "Leon knew his wires."

Wayne Davidson was another combination man. Wayne came to work at WJJM in the early 1950's. His brother, Bob Davidson, came to work with us in the late 50's. A whole chapter will devoted to Bob and a few others because 1) Bob played a much more significant role in WJJM's history that Wayne, and 2) he worked here several years later. Wayne was very quiet, religious, and thoughtful about everything he did. My family and I attended church at

Hickory Heights Church of Christ during those years with Mr. Davidson and his family, and later on, Bob and his family. Wayne's work was methodical, and it was said that he could "fix" almost anything. As a youngster, I can remember him helping Perry Gillum set up the "remote" equipment at ball games. The equipment was heavy and cumbersome, and many times they had to climb tall ladders just to get to the press boxes. Sometimes the equipment even had to be hoisted up with ropes. Today sports announcers can and do call games by using two-way radios or even cellular phones, but of course back then they didn't exist. Fred Mustain once said that was the hardest part of calling a ballgame. Wayne continued to hang his license in the control room at WJJM and even announce occasionally. He had a daughter named Sue Ann who was my age, and we attended school together here in Lewisburg all twelve years, from first grade through our senior year at Marshall County High School. She was a fine young lady of the highest character. They were a great family. After Wayne left WJJM he continued to earn his living in industry as an electrical engineer. Both he and his brother Bob were whizzes in science and mathematics. On more than one occasion they helped me with my homework.

J. W. Anderson was the consummate combination man. I first remember hearing him on WJJM around 1955 when I was in the eighth grade. When I interviewed him the other day, he confirmed that. His daughter, Linda had enrolled in McCord School during our eighth grade year, and one day I asked her if she ever listened to the "Pop School." That was the cool thing to do among kids our age, and besides, she was a very pretty girl and I was trying to strike up a conversation with her. She said that she did listen to the Pop Shop, but she also listened to the "1490 Club" because her daddy was the announcer for that program. Naturally, I started listening to the 1490 Club as well, and that's when I became acquainted with J. W. Anderson's air work. When he opened the mic, a wonderful voice rolled out, just like honey. It was deep, resonant, and he pronounced every syllable precisely. His annunciation was near-perfect. I could discern he was a real professional and a perfectionist at what he was doing. A while later I would go to WJJM with Tommy Sowell to meet him. He was a big fellow with a shock of brown hair combed back under his earphones which he was wearing. (Announcers usually wear earphones because that enables them to hear their programming when the mic is cut on and the speakers are killed.) He was smoking that day, but back then almost everyone did. In my interview with him he told me that a few years later he gave it up--that he realized that it was a nasty habit and couldn't be doing him any good. That was long before the surgeon general's report. He looked a great deal like Robert Taylor, one of the most handsome actors ever produced by Hollywood. Today that brown hair has turned silver, and he doesn't get around as well as he did, but the voice is still there, strong, deep, precise, and resonant. I tried to get him to come up for an interview, but he just didn't feel up to it.

Jay Anderson, as he later came to be known, was one of my childhood heroes. He reminded me a great deal of R. C. Wiley. He was intelligent, nice and friendly, and was in church every time the doors opened, being a faithful member of the Methodist Church. I never heard a curse word leave his mouth. J. W. Anderson was born in Belfast, Tennessee, of Scots-Irish parents, and was educated in the local schools. He graduated from Belfast High before

World War II erupted. He told me that he reported to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, but they rejected him for some reason. About this time he and his wife, Miss Gladys, decided to move to Lawrenceburg where he worked in the clothing industry for several years. Always one who wanted to improve himself, he enrolled in some correspondence courses in electronics, and was soon able to pass the First Radiotelephone License Examination administered by the FCC. Back in those years there was no multiple choice or true-false, and the examination was tough. All of the schematic drawings for the electrical circuits had to be drawn from memory, and they had to be exactly right. Jay told me that he had no intention of getting into radio at that point in time, he just wanted to learn electronics because he realized that it was the "coming thing." Of course he was right. However, he learned that a member of a family he had become acquainted with in Lawrenceburg, Ken Morrison, was about to leave WJJM. He and Gladys wanted to get back in the Marshall County area, so he came up to Lewisburg and applied for the job with Mr. Louis Lingner and was hired. Essentially, he inherited Ken Morrison's shift which consisted of late morning and afternoon work as well as evening shifts on the weekend. Back in those years everyone worked six days a week in radio, and if you got Sundays off, you were lucky. Jay told me that he inherited the 1490 Club, a request show similar to the Pop Shop, which was the brainchild of Jim Travis who had just left WJJM. (Jim would come back to the station about four years later, taking Jay's place when he left.)

Jay also told me about a funny incident which occurred one Saturday night. In those years we were carrying the "Game of the Week" from the Mutual Broadcasting System. Mutual tried to carry the best baseball game of the week for its affiliates. Incidentally, Mutual also carried Notre Dame Football for years. At any rate, for some reason which Jay could not recall, the game had to be delayed for an hour or two. Management tried to figure out a way to do this so that no one would know the difference. A system was devised whereby three tape machines would be used employing big reels of tape which would record one hour of baseball each at a slow speed. The first machine was used to record the game; the second, to rewind; and the third to play back. You know what is said about the best laid plans of mice and men. All was going well for a while, but somehow Jay was distracted, possibly by the telephone. On more than one occasion, the telephone has been a nemesis for radio announcers. It is a necessary evil in the control room, because important calls have to be answered, but it also tends to break one's concentration which can be disastrous for a conscientious announcer. Anyway, he somehow got the reels of tape swapped around, and all of a sudden the radio listeners of Marshall County realized that the ball game had skipped from the third inning up to the sixth and then back to the fourth. The telephone lit up like a switchboard and people were shouting, "Are you crazy or something...how does a baseball game go from the third inning to the sixth, and then back to the fourth?" Jay told me that he died a thousand deaths that night. About that time Mr. and Mrs. Lingner came in from being out on Saturday night and Mr. Lingner asked him what the heck was going on. Jay told him and Mr. Lingner just laughed. What else could he do?

J. W. Anderson worked for WJJM for four years, from around 1954 to 1958. In that year he followed Leon Harrison to work at Radio Station WMCP in

neighboring Columbia. For over thirty years he drove back and forth to work every day. Back in those years, gas was comparatively cheap, and he was able to do that. One of my best friends in college, J. Howard Johnson, also worked at that station, and still does, part-time. He told me that Jay became not only the rock of that station, but a rock of the community in Columbia as well. He could do or fix anything. Howard said that he set very high standards for the rest of their announcers. Jay was also their chief engineer for several years. He was just one of those individuals whom young people loved to emulate, and I was one of them.

A third combination man at WJJM who was an inspiration to me was "Chiz" Milam. His real name was Glenn, and I have no idea where he got the nickname, but it stuck. That seems to be a passing phase in American society. I've noticed that young people today are much more serious in certain ways than we used to be, and I hear very few nicknames, nowadays. Maybe they have to be with the kind of world they're facing. Anyway, Chiz was one of the first musicians to play here at WJJM, being one of the five originals on sign-on day, May 15, 1947. He ran the little record shop in the Maccabees Building for several years and also part-timed here at WJJM. Chiz was a very funny man. He was quiet and you scarcely knew he was around, but he had a very keen sense of humor and could find something funny in practically any situation. He was perhaps best known for reading the comic strips, then called the "funny papers," on the radio on Sunday mornings. He was a Christian man, and he and his wife, Sudie, attended Hickory Heights Church of Christ for many years. Later on he worked in the laboratory at Dr. Kenneth Phelps' office.

One week in the mid-1950's R. C. Wiley and his wife, Frances, decided to take a well-deserved vacation. Chiz was called in to work Dr. Wiley's shift at night. At this point in time the Pop Shop was already established as a popular radio show. All the young people in town were listening in at nights between 9:00 and 10:00 P.M. to hear the latest rock and roll hits and to hear Billy Humbles spin them with his warm and friendly banter. For some reason, R. C. was still engineering Billy's program, that is to say, running the board for him. Possibly it was just a matter of tradition or even habit that they'd gotten themselves into, and was hard to break. Actually, it could very well be considered as a two-man operation, for quite a bit was going on. The telephone had to be answered; the requests had to be written down and they were coming in at a rate of five or six a minute; the requested records had to be found, placed on one of the turntables and cued; Billy's mic in the other room had to be turned on and off; and the commercials had to be played. In those days many radio stations still had the DJ in the announcing booth, and put on the air by the engineer, and in union operations, it's still that way. In large northern cities, you'll never see a disk jockey run his own equipment...the labor unions will not allow it. At any rate, Chiz decided that it was time for Billy Humbles to run his own board and the Pop Shop all by himself. Billy said that he would at least like to give it a try, so he did and it worked out fine. Chiz went into the main office and took a nap on the couch, and for years Billy Humbles ran the Pop Shop all by himself. A whole chapter will be devoted to the Pop Shop, subsequently.

I would like to say one more thing about Chiz. I will forever be indebted to him for helping me to decide on what college I would attend, and he did it in an unconventional way. For about fifteen minutes on Sunday morning, recorded music had to be played between two religious services. Prior to that time, southern Gospel had been played, but one morning Chiz grew weary of that and he chose an album to play which was a recording of David Lipscomb College's chapel services. The a cappella music was beautiful and I started doing research on what kind of college David Lipscomb was. I was greatly impressed by their high standards, both academic and social, so I decided to go there when I graduated from Marshall County High School, and I never regretted it. Again an impressionable young man was greatly influenced by a WJJM employee and I shall forever be grateful.

Chapter 10: Bob Davidson and Other WJJM Announcers of the Late 1950's and Early 1960's

Bob Davidson was an icon of Middle Tennessee radio. He and his brother, Wayne, were raised in the Petersburg, Tennessee, area. He attended the public schools in Petersburg, and I'm fairly certain that he graduated from the old Morgan Preparatory School there. The reason I say that is because my aunt, Frances Massey, also graduated from there and she knew Mr. Bob although he was several years younger. He also graduated from David Lipscomb College in Nashville, Tennessee, and eventually got into radio. He was working at a radio station in Alabama when he was hired at WJJM around 1956 or early 1957. The reason I can say that is that he taught my Wednesday night Bible class at Hickory Heights Church of Christ during my early high school years which would have been about that time. I enjoyed his class there at Hickory Heights for several reasons. First of all, he was strict, and I appreciated that. We previously had some teachers who were weak in discipline and I'm ashamed to say it, but some of the teenagers would sit there and talk while the teacher was conducting his lesson. Of course this was very disrespectful, and I knew it. I can honestly say that I never disrespected any of my Bible teachers or many others, for that matter, but some of the kids did and were almost out of control. Enter Bob Davidson. He was a tall man who was prematurely bald and had a ring of red hair around his head. He was quite fond of sports and other physical activity, and he was built up--quite muscular. He also had a deep voice, and when he came into the class room, his presence was felt. After the lesson started, I remember some of the kids started the same old talking routine. He basically told them to shut up, and when he told them that, his voice was literally a rumble. He politely told the class that we were discussing God's lesson, not his own, and if there was any disrespect in that room, it was to God and not Bob Davidson. Furthermore, he stated that it anyone persisted in talking, that he was going to permit them to take their seat in the auditorium with their parents. We never had any more problems in that class. We came to love and respect the man very deeply. We would have picnics and other functions at his and his wife's home. I remember that her name was Lil and that they lived in the Fairview subdivision.

Another reason that I enjoyed his class, and a very important one, was that he knew his Bible. He was a scholar in religious studies and I perhaps learned as much under him as any other Sunday School or Wednesday night teacher that I ever had. That knowledge would someday prepare me for my Bible classes at David Lipscomb, some of which were very difficult. Finally, a third reason I enjoyed his class was that he emphasized music and singing. He had a beautiful voice and also led the singing there at Hickory Heights for several years. Many couples asked him to sing at their weddings. When it was our time for our young people's class to produce a program for WJJM's youth hour on Sunday morning, he made us practice so much that we could have performed blind-folded. I remember that he liked for us to sing our hymns up-tempo and with enthusiasm, and not, as Mr. Bob said, as if we were marching in a funeral procession.

Bob Davidson's knowledge of sports was encyclopedic. He was one of the best sports announcers I ever heard. His voice and delivery were superb, and

I've often thought that he could have made it to the networks if he had ever desired to do so. He was a little sensitive about his bald head, so he wore a golf cap. It wasn't like the ball caps of today, but more like the caps that men and boys wore back in the 1920's. They had resurgence in the world of fashion in the 1950's. He also preferred to wear a cap while he was calling a ballgame because if he didn't, the bands on the headphones he was wearing would rub his bare scalp raw. He also wore straw hats, quite like the ones that Frank Sinatra wore in his movies of that time. Bob was a flashy dresser, totally unlike his brother, Wayne, who was quite conservative in every respect. Some of his ties literally glowed in the dark. I also remember that he was very fond of bow ties.

Bob Davidson was a renaissance man of radio. He could ably perform any task assigned to him. He had boundless energy and I remember that he would walk rapidly everywhere he went. The rest of us would have to run to keep up with him. I remember that he had a habit of humming hymns as he went about his work. As I have said, he almost had the perfect voice for radio, and many of the local sponsors requested that his voice be on their commercials. By this time, most of the commercial announcements were prerecorded on little rolls of tape and arranged on a large panel of plywood behind our announcing chair in alphabetical order. To play them back, we used two Magnecorder tape decks behind us, and one semi-portable one besides us and to our right. It was heavy and cumbersome and was the one that R. C. Wiley said probably caused some of Perry's health problems. I hated that machine--it didn't even sound good but often warbled like a bird during playback.

Bob was technically a "combination man," because he had his "First Phone" license, as we called it, and could also announce. He was a competent engineer and helped R. C. with much of his work, but his two strongest areas were sales and sports announcing. Tommy Sowell and I worked for him and also Mr. Lingner, our owner/manager, as "spotters" at football games. I remember the four of us eating supper at a nice restaurant in Fayetteville before a football game. I didn't know what to order because I didn't want to appear presumptuous, but since WJJM was paying for it, I also wanted to have a good meal. Tommy suggested that I order a hamburger steak, so I did. I remember that I wasn't a very good spotter because I was too slow, and by the time I found the players' numbers and names on the board to assist Bob, they were almost ready for the next play.

For some reason, probably just to fill a gap in the schedule, Mr. Lingner assigned him an air shift on Saturday mornings around 1959. Bob didn't enjoy being a disk jockey to start with and you could really tell he didn't want to be there. He even sounded "mad" on the air. But, as I have said, in those years most salaried small-market radio people had to work six days a week. Bob was probably tired from being out late on Friday nights calling football and basketball games, and it was drudgery to have to get up early and work at the station on Saturday mornings. Many times he would say, "I sure am glad to see you!" when I would relieve him at 1:00 P.M. I worked the 1:00 to 10:00 P.M. Saturday shift for many years.

I remember that Bob left WJJM in the autumn of 1960 because I came home from college one weekend fully expecting to hear Bob call the Friday night football game, and someone else was there, I believe Denny Walker. Perry was soon to come back from his hiatus managing the Busy Bee Cafe, but not yet. I asked around where Bob was, and someone told me that he had accepted a position as manager at Radio Station WHAL in Shelbyville. He worked there until his retirement. After he retired I understand that he enjoyed repairing antique clocks. Characteristic of Bob, he also took an active role in church work in Shelbyville, and he became the "Voice of the Golden Eagles" at Shelbyville Central High School. Bob Davidson was one of the best all-around radio men I ever knew. Besides being a great news and sports announcer, he also served as WJJM's sales manager. We often said that he could sell an Eskimo a Popsicle.

The second outstanding announcer I remember in this period in WJJM's history was Bill McConnell. Bill was born in Marshall County, and lived out in the Mooresville-Bryant Station area, maybe even over towards Berlin. I remember that he was a genuine "country boy," for he was about as home on a farm as at the radio station. However, he also lived for a while in Nashville where he attended Howard High School. He once told me that in Nashville he was able to shed a great deal of his southern accent. It's sad to say, but true, that it was very difficult back then as now to get a job as a radio announcer if a person had a southern accent, or any other accent, for that matter. Broadcasting management expected potential employees to be able to speak in what was called "General American." I've been told that the best radio speech comes from a region comprising northern Missouri and southern lowa--I wouldn't know. All I know for certain is, that I've always been told to speak clearly and distinctly. That early advice was given to me by none other than Perry Gillum. At any rate, Bill told me once that he made many friends there at Howard High including a man who was a band director at MCHS for a while, Mr. Cliff Fuller. Mr. Fuller was my band director from 1958 to 1960. He told me once that his salary was pitifully low and that he also tired of having to have candy sales to even buy sheet music for the band. After 1960 he moved back to Nashville and eventually became band director at Stratford High. The other friend that Bill mentioned was a fellow by the name of Bob Bell. That was his "air name" but not his real name. Bob Bell worked for years as the sports director at Channel 2 and also as a sports commentator for other Nashville radio stations.

After graduating from high school, Bill attended radio broadcasting school and obtained employment at a station in Thomson, Georgia, a small town near Augusta. He was happy there and only decided to relocate back to Marshall County to be close to home when WJJM beckoned. He was quite popular from the very beginning, especially among the lady listeners. His voice wasn't that unusual, and I once asked a woman why she liked to hear Bill on the radio so much, and her reply was that he sounded "so sweet." Huh? I was used to hearing the likes of Denny, Perry, Bob Davidson, and the others, and she liked him because he sounded "sweet"? Well, whatever he had, it worked. I remember that when he moved back to Lewisburg his wife was pregnant, and they had their first child, "Little Bill," soon after. When Little Bill was born, his parents sent out birth announcements, and on the front of them they had

printed, "A New Transmitter!" Right below that they had a sketch of an actual radio broadcasting transmitter. I thought that was so neat.

I remember Bill having one interesting on-the-air technique. Most of us would always load up the other turntable while the first one was in use. This would guarantee no "dead air" at a time when we didn't have computers or cart machines that could be loaded up instantly with music, a spot, or a public service announcement. Well, that wasn't for Bill. He would stack all of the 45's over on the left-hand turntable in the order which he intended to play, and he would play the actual records on the air on his right-hand turntable. When a song ended, he was able to fade down his volume control knob, or "pot" as we called it, while simultaneously talking to his listeners. He would stop the turntable, remove the record that had just been played, put the next record on the turntable, place the tone arm on the record, start up the motor which ran the turntable, and raise the level of his pot on the console again, thus putting the next song on the air. He was able to do all of this so smoothly that the listeners had no idea of what was going on. He did all of this while chatting and carrying on his friendly banter on the air. The man was "smooth." If I had tried that, I would have been a nervous wreck. Thank goodness we don't have to do that anymore. Technology has come a long way. All of our music now is either on CD's or in the master computer.

Bill McConnell was "larger than life," almost literally. He was a large man and more than a little overweight. He was a jolly fellow and when he laughed, he laughed all over. I remember he had blue eyes and a full head of blond, wavy hair. He drove an old car, and I once asked him what kind of car he was driving, a Nash? He laughed probably for a full minute and said, "Heck no, that's not a Nash, Billy, that's a Hudson!" He was proud of that Hudson car because it would get up and go. If I'm not mistaken, many rum-runners were using that same model car to deliver moonshine over in the Carolinas, and that was the beginning of stock car racing. Bill was very quiet and soft-spoken and his voice on the air was barely above a murmur or loud whisper, yet he could be easily understood--it was amazing.

Bill appeared to be very happy at WJJM. I've already mentioned the fact that the Lingners paid a whole year's tuition at Vanderbilt just so his brother-in-law could go to college, but something happened. Either his wife became homesick for West Virginia or the station in Thomson, Georgia, offered him appreciably more money, because in late 1959 he returned to that market. Years later he stopped by WJJM just for a minute, and then that was time I ever saw him. He was a nice, quiet, gentle soul.

Another announcer of this period, well actually in the early 1960's, was Howard Lawrie. I don't remember a great deal about him before he came to WJJM except that he was a professional musician and that he had fallen into broadcasting quite accidentally. He was from Chicago, Illinois, of Scottish ancestry, and had attended the Chicago Conservatory of Music. He was accomplished in his field and was for a while a music director at Lewisburg's First Methodist Church although actually he was a Presbyterian. He was so intelligent and doing such a good job at this that one of the local businessmen actually bought some time at WJJM on Sunday mornings so that he could

produce a program of Great Sacred Music. Being from a rural Tennessee background, I didn't even know what that was, but I soon found out. It was classical religious music which had been composed by Bach, Handel, and others. Mr. Howard did such a good job of it that when an announcing position became open, the first person Mr. Lingner thought of was Howard Martin Lawrie. I remember his first theme song was a big-band instrumental called "Apple Honey," by Woody Herman. While Howard Lawrie was an announcer at WJJM, the folks of Marshall County learned a great deal about good music. After two or three years at the station, he decided to become Marshall County High School's band director, and I lost track of him after that. What I do remember about him was that he was always kind to me and treated me with respect. He was probably one of the most brilliant musicians to ever reside in Marshall County.

Finally, I would like to mention a WJJM announcer named Tommy Garrett. He was the son of Mr. Tom Garrett and his first wife who was a Massey from Petersburg, but no close relation to me. The reason I want to mention Tommy was because he had more raw talent than practically anyone I can remember. He had lived for a while in Texas and had worked at a drive-in theater and had run the projectors there. It was the projectionist's job to make brief announcements about the upcoming movies and also to encourage the folks in the automobiles to come to the concession stand and purchase plenty of food. Evidently, he was good at what he did because he asked Mr. Lingner if he could run the Pop Shop in Billy Humbles absence one time, and Mr. Lingner asked him what kind of experience he had. Tommy told him that he had worked at a drive-in theater and Louis was reluctant to put him on the air, but finally did so. It was almost unanimous among the Marshall County citizenry that he was one of the best announcers that WJJM ever had. His voice was totally professional...he did not have to strain, put on a false air, or anything. He was just a natural. However, he was never hired full-time at WJJM and I remember that he worked at a super market in Lewisburg for a while. I also lost track of Tommy and I understand that he passed away several years ago. He was a good friend, a decent man, and he always had a smile on his face.

Chapter 11: Billy Humbles and the Pop Shop

The "Pop Shop" had rather obscure beginnings. From the early days of WJJM's history it seems that the late hours were reserved for what was then called "race music," later called "rhythm and blues." Around 1954 a band in Pennsylvania is generally thought of as inventing "rock and roll" by taking the African-American rhythm and blues, adding some chords and sounds from Southern country music, and playing it with a syncopated beat. That band was Bill Haley and the Comets, and in my opinion and that of many other disk jockeys, the first real rock and roll song ever recorded was "Rock Around The Clock." America's youth were first exposed to that song not so much through radio as by the movie "Blackboard Jungle," starring Glenn Ford, Anne Francis, Sidney Poitier, and Vic Morrow. I can vividly recall going to the Dixie Theater when I was in the 8th grade and seeing teenagers get out in the isle and dancing when that song was played as part of the soundtrack of that movie. It was an exhilarating experience.

I have reason to believe that Jim Travis probably invented the name "Pop Shop" just as he did the "1490 Club," another rock and roll request show which was broadcast between 4:00 and 5:00 P.M. daily. Jim also gave that program its name and when he left WJJM the first time in 1954, J. W. Anderson inherited it, and he was the host of that program for several years. Jim was spinning some rhythm and blues hits between 9:00 and 10:00 P.M. in the evenings when a young man named Billy Humbles dropped by the studios here on East Hill one night and asked if he could announce some tunes on the radio. Jim agreed, and Billy Humbles and the Pop Shop became one. When Jim left in 1954, R. C. Wiley inherited Jim's late-night shift and the pleasant task of running Billy's board for him. I first started hanging around WJJM--in the summer of 1956. I was seeking some help getting my "ham" radio license, and my friend, Tommy Sowell, suggested that I talk to R. C. Wiley. That resulted in two things: my long and lasting friendship with R. C. Wiley, and also my avocation with WJJM. Billy was already the announcer for the Pop Shop. He had all of the "pop" records, mostly 45's and a few 78's, in the small studio which had been converted to an announcing booth. Soon thereafter, R. C. would add a little console and two turntables in that studio so that WJJM could broadcast in there in case of a major breakdown in the main control room. I recall that at that time our music was always in two record stacks--rhythm and blues and rock and roll. In many cases the rock and roll stack consisted of many of the same tunes in the rhythm and blues stack, but were "covered" by white artists. Here we see that segregation was still a strong influence in American society. That was the way that broadcasters were able to make rock and roll more palatable to older white Americans and parents of the teenagers. Pat Boone recorded several cover songs which were originally recorded by Little Richard. That was just one example. Even Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis did a great deal to make the black rhythm and blues more acceptable to the white audience. When we answered the request line, in many cases we had to ask the caller which version they wanted to hear of that song, the rock and roll or the rhythm and blues, which really meant, "the white one or the black one?"

On a typical night, the routine was as follows. Billy Humbles and I would get to the station around 8:15 or 8:30 at the latest and start going through our records in both stacks to decide which ones we wanted to feature that night. We tried to not play the very same songs every night but to provide a general variety of music, yet still stay within the guidelines of the requests from our callers. Sometimes that was difficult to do. "Music Beyond the Stars" from Mutual was still on and R. C. was usually in the back shop repairing an old radio or piece of two-way equipment which had broken down. If he had neither, the station usually kept him busy by giving him a new project to work on such as a new and improved piece of equipment to be built and installed. As I have previously stated, WJJM has always tried to provide the listener with the very finest in audio sound. We've also tried to stay abreast of the latest developments in technology. In those years much of our equipment was home-made. It was much cheaper than "store-bought" equipment, and when an engineer such as R. C. Wiley or Pete Sowell built it, it was usually much better, as well. That's the value of having a full-time engineer on the staff. Anyway, after we went through our records and culled the older ones that weren't doing too well, if any time was left, we would open up the mail and audition any new records which had been sent to us. I'll have to admit; in some cases we played the records which had the prettiest labels. If they sounded fairly good, we would retain them in a third stack for a couple of weeks. If they never made a hit, we would throw them away. In those years a disk jockey was not bound to a "top forty" chart but still had a certain amount of discretion. Also, there was such a thing as a regional hit where a song might be popular in one part of the country yet not in other parts or regions. That was also before "cookie cutter" radio and even "payola" which was nothing more than the major record companies paying disk jockeys to play their records for them. I can never forget one night we opened up a cardboard box containing a 78 record. It was from Memphis, Tennessee. Billy and I auditioned it which means we simply put it on a turntable and checked it out to see how it sounded. We both shook our heads and said that the guy would never make it. Billy hated country music and said that the guy sounded like a hick, and so we decided to do the merciful thing and break the old 78 over our knees and toss the pieces in the trash can. Oh, by the way, the record was on the Sun label and the artist was some character by the name of Elvis Presley. The name of his song was, "Baby, I Want To Play House With You." Six months later when a new song became a smash hit called "Heartbreak Hotel" on a 45 from RCA, we knew we'd been had. I asked Billy if that weren't the country-sounding guy from Memphis whom we laughed at and whose record we had destroyed, and Billy sheepishly said, "Yes, I think it was." That was probably one of the greatest blunders in my whole life, and there have been many of them.

Every night, Monday through Friday and later on Saturday and Sunday nights as well, at 9:05 P.M. "sharp," R. C. Wiley would start the Pop Shop's theme song and immediately the phone lines would light up. For years we used the "Sewanee River Boogie" for a theme. Billy had heard it on one of WLAC's late-night shows and liked it. It was probably from John R., Gene Nobles, or Herman Grizzard's program. "Hoss" Allen hadn't started there yet, or just barely. We played that theme until we literally wore it out and the scratch was louder than the music. We then switched to "Tricky" by Gus

Jenkins and then wore that out. We would always close the program with "Teen Age Goodnight" by the Chordettes. Incidentally, in those years all over the country and not just at WJJM, every program had its own theme song. We kept the themes on a piece of metal tubing that was an extension of the announcer's mic boom. If a 45 fell off into the floor, we simply reached down, wiped the dirt off of it, and put it back above the mic. I'm ashamed to tell you how dirty (and consequently noisy) some of them became, but we used to joke that if we couldn't find anything else to scrape the East Hill mud off our shoes, we would use one of the theme songs and then wipe it on our pants and put it back. It may have been closer to the truth than could be imagined.

By early 1956 clearly a phenomenon had been created. We were doing at WJJM what Dick Clark would do on ABC Television one full year later. For some unknown reason, the local youth from Lewisburg and surrounding communities such as Chapel Hill and Cornersville started showing up at 9:00 P.M. or a little thereafter at the WJJM studios to dance to the Pop Shop's music. Pretty soon the big studio would not hold them all and the crowd would spill over into the front office. Word began to spread about what was going on in Lewisburg at 9:00 at night, and lo and behold kids with jackets from Shelbyville, Columbia, Fayetteville, and Pulaski were even sprinkled among the crowd. Many of the teenagers were already using the old High Hat restaurant over on East Commerce as a hang-out, and when the Pop Shop would go on the air, they would simply drift over. That went on for a couple of years and it was clearly a big headache for Mr. and Mrs. Lingner who lived upstairs although it was comforting to know that WJJM had that many listeners at night. It wasn't uncommon at all to get one hundred and fifty or even two hundred requests per night. I remember we had to be careful not include last names because many pranksters took delight in pairing up the wrong couples and even throwing the names of a few teachers in for good measure. Finally, the inevitable happened. The station started missing records and even office equipment, and management had to close it down, or at least the live audience part of it. We also began to notice that a rougher crowd began to come up and many of them had alcohol on their breath. We had to start locking the front doors, and that didn't go over very well. The Pop Shop continued, but it was never quite the same after that. It was a real shame that happened.

As I have stated in a previous chapter, around 1957 or '58 Chiz Milam allowed Billy Humbles to start running his own board, and he did a good job although it was a tremendous task. I also worked the Pop Shop on weekends, but I think now if I tried to do something like that, I would be a nervous wreck. It was a lot of work, answering the phone, writing the names and requested songs down, finding the corresponding record, putting the records on the turntables and playing them, playing the spots, and getting the network news on the air exactly on time. I look back and I don't see how we did it. It was organized chaos. The Pop Shop continued until a few years after I left in 1971, and then it slowly faded out of existence. The music changed and so did the American youth culture. Actually, Bill Humbles left WJJM around 1968 and moved to Atlanta, and I noticed a discernable change even then. Over the years the Pop Shop and Billy Humbles became synonymous to the good folks of Lewisburg and Marshall County, Tennessee.

There were various spin-offs from such radio and television programs as American Bandstand. A popular Channel Four program known as the "Five O'clock Hop" featuring Dave Overton became very popular and it wasn't anything uncommon to see Lewisburg and Marshall County kids dancing on that show. Other Nashville Channels tried to emulate the Five O'clock Hop, and Noel Ball became extremely popular on the "Eight-Ball Show" on the old Channel Eight. All of these are now history, and even American Bandstand ceased broadcasting on ABC in 1987 and went off the air in 1989.

In 1968 the Pop Shop and WJJM, for that matter, received a new "shot in the arm." WJJM also acquired an FM frequency at 94.3 megahertz. This gave the station a much wider coverage area as well as a method of emission which provided a much higher fidelity of sound. Before too long, WJJM was broadcasting in stereophonic sound, a novelty back then. I had not heard this story until recently when Missie Haislip told me, but her grandfather, Mr. Lingner, once told her that several local businessmen in town laughed when WJJM went FM and said it was just a passing fancy and would not last. Little did they know! WJJM AM and FM simulcast the same audio feed on both stations until 2005 when the two stations were separated and started to broadcast different programming. Today in 2007, the FM broadcasts modern country music except for three hours a day when it features the "Rock and Roll Cafe." In a way, this program could be considered as a remote descendant of the old Pop Shop. Also, classic country music and old-time gospel are featured on Wednesday nights, and religious programming is featured on Sundays and briefly in the mornings during the week. WJJM AM features the "Best of Oldies" twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week except for religious programming on Sundays. Amazingly, we still hear from some of our listeners who never bothered to buy an FM radio but still just tune in to our AM signal on 1490 kilohertz on their old radios. That's fine, but we would prefer that they also tune in to WJJM FM occasionally and see what they're missing.

Chapter 12: Jim Travis

Actually, Jim Travis wasn't even his real name; it was James Wilson McClelland. Jim, like many others, chose to use an "air name." I asked him once why he didn't go by Jim McClelland, and his reply was something to the effect that McClelland was to hard to pronounce, and that his tongue collided with his teeth when he tried to pronounce his own name. Anyway, he thought that "Travis" sounded better, so he used that as an air name. He once used "Jim Dandy" as an air name, too, based on the title of an old rock and roll song by LaVerne Baker, but he soon tired of it and returned to his old stand-by of "Jim Travis."

I don't know a great deal about his early life. Jim was always somewhat of a "mystery man." He didn't like to discuss his past except when he brought it up, and I didn't press him. Born of Scots-Irish parents in Centralia, Illinois, he left there at an early age and spent most of his childhood in Cincinnati, Ohio. He considered Cincinnati as his home town, and he loved to play the song by Connie Smith named for that great Midwestern city. He once told me that he had quite a bit of German blood, and even a little Jewish. As far as his preferred religion was concerned, he was a devout Roman Catholic. He was a big man and stood about six-feet, two inches in height. We still have a picture of him along with some other WJJM announcers of the early 1960's period. I always thought Jim looked a great deal like Steve Allen and others have agreed with me. He reminded me of that great entertainer in other respects because they both had a very keen sense of humor. They had the God-given ability to make a joke over the least little occurrence.

I asked Jim once how he ever came to move to Lewisburg, and he told me that he had served in the U. S. Army in World War II and was stationed at Camp Forrest near Tullahoma. On weekends he and the other soldiers usually liked to go to Shelbyville to have a few beers, but occasionally they drifted over to Lewisburg. I quizzed him about being able to purchase beer legally in Lewisburg during World War II and he insisted that there was a beer joint on the north side of the Lewisburg square at one time. He must have known because Jim surely did love to drink beer. At any rate, he told me that he liked Lewisburg and thought it was a quaint little town. He never dreamed that he would spend the greater part of his life here later on.

Jim was probably one of the most creative persons to ever work at WJJM. He had a brilliant mind and could compose stories and even poems extemporaneously. When he applied for a job, Mr. Louis Lingner immediately picked up on his talents for being creative and thought that he would be a great commercial announcement composer, or as we say in the business, "copywriter." He was barrel-chested and had a beautiful voice with a slight Midwestern accent. I once jokingly called him a Yankee, and he said that he didn't consider himself a Yankee being from the lower Midwest, but preferred to call himself a Midwesterner instead. He had formal training as an actor in his youth, and as a young man he was a staff announcer and actor at Radio Station WGN in Chicago. WGN was a fifty thousand watt station and one of the finest in Chicago, and, for that matter, still is. He was always proud of that although I heard an old acetate recording of one of his programs which he cut

when he was working at a station in Centralia, Illinois, and he sounded like he was on NBC...he really sounded good. I remember that he and that station in Centralia were far ahead of their times because he had as a co-host on that show a woman who also had a beautiful rich voice and a gift for gab. I may be getting a little ahead of myself. He worked at WGN during the early years of his career, and didn't work in Centralia and Findlay, Ohio, until several years later. He once told me that he helped train a famous actor while at WGN and I replied that I didn't believe him. He said, "Just you watch." He pulled out his scrap book from his desk drawer back in the rear office of WJJM and showed me some old pictures. There he was behind a WGN microphone and besides a very youthful Dick York. The picture of Jim and Dick York must have been taken in the early 1940's because York appeared to be about twelve or thirteen years old. Years later Dick York would be known primarily for his role in playing the first "Darren" in the TV series "Bewitched," and it was WJJM's own Jim Travis who had helped train him.

Jim worked at WJJM twice. He first worked here for a while back around 1953 and 1954, but decided to return to his native Midwest and a little more prestige and money. He told me once that he missed Lewisburg and the friendly people here, so he decided to move back here around 1958, because I can remember him during my junior and senior years at Marshall County High School.

He was a gracious person and appreciated any attention that anyone would give him. I traveled to Mexico City during a Christmas break in 1965 when I was teaching at Franklin High School, and toured the great National Cathedral located in the central square. I knew Jim was Catholic, so I bought him a tiny crucifix there. I told him when I returned to Lewisburg that it was from the oldest Catholic Church still standing in the Western Hemisphere, and when I gave the crucifix to him his eyes welled up in tears. I knew that he was a sentimental and sensitive person because not too long before that his son, who was in the United States Navy at that time, was killed in a car wreck. I remember that his name was Ronnie. Jim would sit at his desk and cry his heart out for days at a time after that. I don't see how he was able to pull his air shift, but somehow he got through it. I think one way he was able to deal with his grief was through writing a song about his son. I recall that the title of the song was "Just A Boy." He put the lyrics to a sound track which he found here at the radio station, and it became a beautiful and touching song about the life of his deceased son. People began to request that he play it on his show, and I think that helped him to deal with his grief, but he never really got over it.

On the lighter side, I remember that he had an intense hatred for flies, and the fact that we were located near Murray Farms didn't help any. I can still see in my mind's eye "Big Jim" sitting behind the WJJM console and microphone with a fly swatter in one hand and a cigar either in his other hand or chomped down in his mouth. He was cursing those flies for everything he was worth, and it was a wonder that he didn't knock the tone arms off of his turntables and records when he was swatting those flies. Speaking of his cigars, I believe he bought the cheapest and most stinking cigars that money could buy. Once some of us approached Sarah, our station manager, and Mr.

Lingner and begged them to give Jim a raise. Our thinking was that if he had a little more money, maybe he could afford to buy a better brand of cigars. Besides, the cigar smoke was aggravating R. C.'s asthma from which he suffered greatly. This was years and years before "smoke-free" environments.

Jim's shift here at WJJM was 2:00 until 10:00 P.M. He loved those hours because he was a "night owl" and didn't like to get up early. He would come in at 2:00 P.M. and write and produce commercials until 6:00 P.M., and then he would work his air shift until 10:00 P.M. He played mostly contemporary country music. He loved the "Nashville Sound," and heavily promoted it although he was also for giving the newer artists a break as long as they deserved it. Jim had quite a few connections in Nashville and the music industry because we occasionally received visits from big-name stars who knew him and he would interview them on the air. WJJM has always tried to help up-and-coming young artists. When Bill Humbles left in the late 1960's, Jim also took over the near-defunct Pop Shop. By that time request shows were passe'. Jim didn't care for rock and roll, and he didn't care who knew it...all you had to do was just ask him. He re-named the Pop Shop the "Real Gone Grotto," but you can imagine how that went over in Lewisburg. He also referred to WJJM's control room from time to time as the "Chartreuse Subterranean Terrace."

I left WJJM in 1971 to work in Nashville and Franklin, and I don't believe I ever saw Jim after that. By the early 1990's, Jim was in his seventies, and his health was failing. He retired at WJJM and moved to Nashville to be in a nursing home. There he had a stroke and died. He had no family, and no place to be buried, so the Lingners graciously consented to allow him to be interred in their family plot. Thus, a great and talented man came to be put to rest in Lone Oak Cemetery near his boss and friend of many years, Louis Lingner. I don't think anything would have made him happier. He is greatly missed. Later on, in 2006, Tommy Allen would be buried in that same family plot.

Chapter 13: Fred Mustain and the Eighties

Who was this fellow whom some have called the third "Voice of the Tigers and Tigerettes"? (The late Perry Gillum is generally considered to be the first person to possess that title, and Bob Davidson, perhaps the second.) He doubtlessly left his mark on this community while he lived here. Others have even said that during his stay here in Marshall County, he did more to influence athletics than any other man of that period. After doing research on the man, I would say that is certainly possible.

Fred Mustain was not a Marshall County native; he wasn't even a native Tennessean, but hailed from Missouri. I never even met the man--he came to work at WJJM in 1973, two years after I left to pursue other interests. Yet everywhere I go, when the name of "Fred Mustain" is mentioned, I hear nothing but fond memories and glowing praise. I wish I could have met him...he must have been someone very special. I have heard his voice on a work of prose which he recorded at WJJM and has been preserved here in our archives, and all I can say after listening to it is, there was something authoritative and commanding there. It wasn't southern; it wasn't northern, either--just "General American," the quality which every good announcer would like to have. His voice was deep and resonant, yet there was also a great deal of friendliness and amiability in it, and I could tell by listening to it that I would have liked to have been his friend. He must have been a very charming fellow and a pleasure to work with. Every person I've interviewed agreed that it was impossible not to like him.

The following information about Fred Mustain has been pieced together from articles which appeared in the local newspapers and by a eulogy very skillfully written by his friend and colleague, Mike Keny. I have also been able to draw on information given to me by his close friend, Roger Barnes, and by other friends and associates including Jeff and Missie Haislip. Frankly, I wasn't interested in Marshall County sports during the interim from 1971 until 2006, and about the only time I really remember him announcing on WJJM was in August of 1997, when he was reading my mother's obituary. Tragically, he was also dead just a few weeks later. He died at the age of 50 of a heart attack.

According to Roger Barnes, Fred was born in St. Louis, Missouri, but spent his youth in Columbia, home of the University of Missouri, where his father was employed. Why did he come to Lewisburg? Roger said he met his wife in the service, and she was from Marshall County. They had a daughter. Roger thinks at one time Fred worked for Butler Brothers.

Fred Mustain's career in Marshall County sports broadcasting began in 1973 when he became a part-time color commentator and statistician for Perry Gillum. The article in The Lewisburg Tribune, published on October 24, 1991, said that it soon became obvious that the man's knowledge of sports was phenomenal and that he almost had instant recall. Coach Joe George, himself a legend at Marshall County High School and a specialist in the sport of baseball, told me not long ago that Fred Mustain knew more about that sport than any other man he had ever met including both coaches and sports announcers. Roger Barnes said that he played semi-professional baseball in

Missouri and knew the game "inside out." Mr. Mustain took over as the "Voice of the Tigers" in 1978 with his first sportscast being the football season opener with Mt. Pleasant. By 1991 he had logged up over 1300 broadcasts of Tiger games in various sports. I've never seen a total by 1997 when he passed away, but it must have been formidable.

We get a special insight into the man's work and also his sense of humor by reading the 1991 article in the Tribune. He made the comment that remote broadcasting equipment had come a long way since 1978 and the "green box" days. What he meant by that was, that in the old days all the telephone company provided for the sports announcers was a wooden box painted a drab shade of green with a telephone and loose wires inside. What the announcer and engineer, if he had one, had to do was to hook up the equipment to the wires, then use the telephone to call a Nashville switchboard, and hope and pray that someone would even answer on the other end. If they did, the telephone folks would then call the control room at WJJM where another telephone was provided back in the same corner where the mass of wires had formerly resided and got Mr. Lingner in trouble with the Lewisburg churches many years before. If contact could be made between the telephone company in Nashville and WJJM in Lewisburg, then the two lines would be switched together and semi-reliable communication would then be established between the sports announcer at the field or gym and the control room announcer at WJJM who could then put the game on the air. It's still not easy, but far simpler than it used to be. I remember answering that telephone back then. It was a piece of junk and it was difficult to hear Perry, Denny, or Bob who were screaming at me from the other end, trying to make their presence known. I remember on some occasions that I could hear them but they could not hear me, and they would go ahead and call the entire game, hoping that the circuit had been completed and that we were able to get them on the air. And then on a few occasions, we couldn't establish two-way communication at all and the game would not be carried. The announcers would have made the trip for nothing. That's what Fred was talking about, and it was a blessing to finally get good, reliable, and easy-to-operate broadcasting equipment. And as I have said, when all else fails, a cell phone can be used as long as the battery lasts. Fred said at the end of the interview with the reporter that the easiest part of the broadcast was the game itself...that was the relaxation time.

Roger Barnes told several funny stories about his and Fred's adventures over the years including the one where they started driving down I-65 from Brentwood and got so wound up that they didn't even realize where they were until the got to the Cornersville exit. They had completely missed Exits 37 and 32. And then there was the time when Fred got carried away and was driving down the highway without either the heater or defroster on. Roger was scared to death because he couldn't see anything and he knew Fred couldn't see much. He finally suggested that Fred at least pull over and scrape some of the ice off. And then how could they forget the time when they were calling a game in Hickman County and Fred nonchalantly mentioned to one of the natives that he sure would like to interview "Minnie Pearl." (Fred was sharp and knew that Minnie Pearl was from Hickman County.) Well, guess who climbed the ladder to the top of the press box to meet Fred Mustain and

answer his request? None other than Sarah Cannon herself--Minnie Pearl. She even gave him a kiss. Fred never forgot that.

Perhaps the funniest Fred Mustain story of all was when they went to Marion County to call a game in Jasper, Tennessee. As soon as they started to unpack the equipment and set up, the local school officials told them that no radio broadcasts were allowed in that county. Evidently, they had experienced some trouble with radio people in times passed. Fred said that it was OK, but would they mind if they could at least tape delay it for a future broadcast. The old fellow scratched his chin and said that he thought that would be OK. What he didn't know was that Fred and Roger immediately went over to a near-by motel and rented a room. There they called back to WJJM and told the announcer to keep that line open whatever he did. Fred would tape the game in thirty minute segments and then Roger or someone else would make a mad dash for the car, drive over to the motel, and play the tape back over the other recorder so that the folks back home could hear the game, only a few minutes delayed. That was one of the slickest tricks in broadcasting I've ever heard.

Roger Barnes said it wasn't always fun and games, though. Real tests of endurance came when the Tigers or Tigerettes would be in tournament action fifty, seventy-five, and even a hundred miles away. That would mean up to a two-hundred mile round trip, and this could go on for days. They would have to drive back to Lewisburg in the wee hours of the morning, try to get a little sleep, and be ready to go for the next day's work. It was especially grueling for Roger who didn't even work full-time at WJJM and had to work a day job some other place. Still, Roger and Fred made a great team and they worked together for thirteen years. They were fast and true friends, and I could tell that Roger was choking up on the telephone even as he was relating these stories to me, but he kept on talking. I think he adequately summed it up when he said that Fred was "a good un."

One of the most eloquent eulogies I've ever read was written by Dr. Mike Keny about Fred Mustain. Keny said that "The Voice of the Tigers had been silenced" when Fred passed away. He said that Mustain had a positive impact on the community (Lewisburg) that won't soon be replaced. Mike called Fred a "man of honesty integrity and fairness and knew the game backwards, forward, and sideways." He also said that Fred was very knowledgeable about current events and national and world issues. Keny said that Fred was just as comfortable interviewing a gubernatorial candidate as a high school coach. When speaking of the transplanted Missourian, he said, "The Voice of the Tigers has gone silent. The silence will be deafening."

A personal remark here...Mike Keny is being modest. It's true that neither Perry nor Fred could ever be replaced because they were their own individuals, but I will go out on a limb and say that Mike Keny has also made a place of his own in this community, not only being still another Voice of the Tigers, but also a pharmacist and businessman of the highest caliber. Mike has built a successful business in his own right and I haven't been back in Lewisburg very long, but I have seen that people in this town know, love, and trust him. Here's to Mike Keny with hope that he will have a long and successful career in both areas.

Chapter 14: Tommy Allen and the Nineties

I only met Mr. Tommy Allen on two occasions in my entire life, so it is extremely difficult to write a detailed history of his career here at WJJM. I have to draw on the knowledge of those who knew and worked with him. The first time I ever met Tommy was around 1978 just after my mom and dad had taken my wife, kids, and me to a wave pool at Point Mallard Park, located just outside of Decatur, Alabama. Ironically, that was the home town of Tommy, although I didn't know it at the time. I had left WJJM in 1971 but had still maintained contact with my old friend, R. C. Wiley. I was talking to him one day and mentioned the fact that I surely would like to stop by the studios someday soon and spin records for an hour or two. R. C. graciously said yes, so right after we had returned from Point Mallard, I came up to the studios here at WJJM and worked my old 1490 Club shift from 4:00 until 5:00 P.M. R. C. went back in the shop and did some work while a played a few songs on the radio. When I got off at 5:00 P.M., Tommy Allen walked into the control room. He was friendly enough although I could discern a bit of shyness in him. We talked only for a few moments because I could tell that he was about to begin his air shift, and this transition period is difficult for any disk jockey, even an old pro such as Tommy. As soon as the DJ sits down in the chair, the transition begins. The announcer just getting off must collect his/her records or CD's, scraps of paper, coffee cups or what-have-you, and anything else which might distract the new person. Commercials have to be lined up which will be played in just a few moments after the news is over, and the first song has to be chosen which is an important decision in itself, for many times that first song will set the mood and tempo for the rest of the shift. Therefore, I did not carry on idle chatter with Tommy that day almost thirty years ago, because I knew that he was under a strain and had to concentrate on what he was doing. I said "Goodbye" to him and R. C. and drove back out to my mom and dad's home. I forget now, but we may have even driven back to Franklin that day in the late summer of 1978.

I heard Tommy announce on WJJM several times over the years, but I did not meet him again until January of 2006. This is a summary of the events that lead to that second encounter. I had continued to live in Franklin even after I had taken an early retirement from the Williamson County School System. I worked a part-time job as a doorman and ticket ripper for Carmike Cinemas at Cool Springs Mall. My mom passed away after a long battle with leukemia in August of 1997. When Dad passed away in 2002, I was faced with a very important decision. Since I was the only child I had inherited my parents home here in Lewisburg. I was forced to spend quite a bit of time and money fixing up the old home place here on Oakwood Drive, as Dad had allowed the property to fall into disrepair. He literally fell apart after Mom died. I had to make a decision to either sell the property or try to buy a place in Franklin, or move back down here and live in my house. To be quite honest about it, I would have preferred to continue to live in Franklin because it had been my home for almost forty years and practically all of my friends were there...many of them still are. Franklin is a wonderful town, filled with history, and I do love history. That is the reason I moved there to work in 1964 after graduating from David Lipscomb College. However, I soon realized that the value of property is much higher in Williamson County than in Marshall County, and I wouldn't

have been able to afford much of anything in Franklin or surrounding areas for what I could have sold my house for. Therefore, the decision was made for me...I was to move back to Lewisburg, like it or not.

For about nine months I continued to work at the Franklin movie theater, but by mid-2005, as the price of gasoline climbed to over $3.00 a gallon, I realized very quickly that I wasn't making anything after having to pay the exorbitant prices for gasoline and also experiencing wear and tear on my car over the seventy-six-mile round trip. Therefore, in November of 2005, I resigned at Carmike. For two months I basically sat around the house and did nothing, but that was not for me. My good friend and former colleague at Franklin High School, Dr. John C. Offutt who taught English there, had also retired, and he expressed a desire to keep on working although not in education. He thought it would be good to keep our minds active and also make a little extra money in case the economy faltered. I thought that it would be nice to work a part-time job somewhere and save my money for my grandchildren's education. Suddenly the idea occurred to me to apply at WJJM where I had worked so long ago. I thought that might be fun and enjoyable, so in January of 2006 I came up and filled out my application. Jeff and Missie Haislip explained that there weren't any openings, but that they would keep me in mind. I said that was fine and came back home. While I was at the station, filling out my application, I noticed an older fellow reading a newspaper at a desk several feet away. I observed that he was holding the paper up but peeping around it to see what I was doing. I would look over in that direction, trying to recall every place I had worked, and his head would disappear back behind the newspaper. Finally, his curiosity got the best of him, and he got up out of his chair, came over, extended his hand, and said, "I'm Tommy Allen. Didn't you used to work here a long time ago?" I replied that I did and was interested in coming back on a part-time basis. I really didn't want a full-time job. I felt like I had paid my dues over the years at Franklin High School. Anyway, we had a nice conversation, and I mentioned that I had met him years before when I was up here to visit with R. C., and I think he may have faintly remembered. It was almost 2:00 P.M. and time for him to go on the air, so he said "Good-bye" and headed back to the control room. That was the last time I ever saw him.

About a month later Pat Cook called me and said that Jeff and Missie Haislip were trying to get in touch with me. I called them and they explained that Tommy was sick again and was probably going to have to have surgery. They asked me if I would be willing to come back and work until Tommy was feeling better, and I replied that I would. Tommy Allen never regained his health, and on May 10, 2006, he passed away. He was laid to rest in the Lingner family plot close to his old friend and boss, Mr. Louis Lingner, and Jim Travis. I was left with the crushing responsibility of trying to carry on the work of one of the most popular radio announcers in Middle Tennessee, and frankly I wondered if I could measure up to the task. I made the statement one day on the air that I was not here to take the place of Tommy Allen; no one could ever do that, but that I was trying to make a place of my own. I was humbled by the magnitude of his following.

Since I only met Tommy twice in my life, I have tried to piece together some stories from newspaper clippings and interviews with fellow employees and Lewisburg residents, just as I did in writing the chapter on Mr. Fred Mustain. I can now see why Tommy was one of the county's most beloved citizens.

Tommy was born and raised in Morgan County, Alabama, and worked at a radio station in Decatur, a small city whose present population is about 55,000. Ironically, the only two stations that he ever worked at was the station in Decatur, and the one here at WJJM, and they were both on the same frequency of 1490 kilohertz. As I understand it, he was a scrappy little athlete in high school, and although he was a small person, he did quite well on the basketball team. He grew up to be an avid University of Alabama fan. He was married and had four children--three boys and a girl, but he divorced later in life. He was employed at WJJM in 1974 and worked here until 2006. He left for a while and worked as a bail bondman, but came back home to WJJM afterwards.

There are still many funny stories concerning him that abound here at WJJM. He was a consummate practical joker and they still laugh about the time that Perry Gillum was coming in one morning, obviously not feeling too well. Somehow Tommy found out that he was on his way, so he went in and turned the air conditioning up in Perry's office as high as it would go, and it was in the dead of winter at that. Perry was sitting there freezing and shaking and wondering aloud about what the "heck" was wrong with the heating in that place. Louis and Sarah Smith White were both in on it, but they didn't bat an eye and kept on going about their work. Finally, R. C. was called in to fix the heater and he said, "Perry, you're sitting under the air conditioner, not the heater!" What Perry said for the next few minutes cannot be printed here.

Tommy and Missie often worked remotes at the old Sullivan's Department Store and he was quite fond of telling Missie a joke just to get her laughing real hard, and then ducking out and leaving her alone with the microphone. That can be terrifying to anyone, much less someone who is new in radio. He was the master of the one-liner, and it's been said that he could make a joke out of practically anything, not always a clean one, but nevertheless a joke.

Tommy was very good in the production room where we record our "spots," or commercial advertisements. It's been said that he usually had to record a spot just once. In other words, his first "take" was the one that was used. Frank Sinatra was the same with recording his songs. I'm the very opposite. It's nothing uncommon at all for me to record a spot eight or ten times until I get it just the way I want it. He had a beautiful radio voice. Many people loved to hear him on the air, especially women. He also loved women as well. He sounded like a big man on the air, but actually he was a little fellow. However, there was a very big heart in that small frame. I have heard from employees at the station and about town that he gave away practically everything he had. He was a "sucker" for a person who was down and out. He left this world almost as he entered it, with practically nothing. When it was discovered that he had cancer in 2004, he found that his extended family was indeed his radio audience, and it was a large one. When Tommy experienced surgery that same year, he was funny even under sedation. As he was coming and

going under the influence of his pain medication, he kept yelling that it was 72 degrees! The nurses looked at family members and asked why Tommy was doing that, and they replied that he was a disk jockey and that he was dreaming that he was giving the weather forecast. They asked who it was, and his family replied, "Tommy Allen." They said, "You mean THAT Tommy Allen?" He even had a sizable listening audience in Columbia.

Tommy was given the job several years ago of running the Trading Post. He had managed to avoid it all of those years by getting off at 5:00 P. M., but when he asked for more hours, he was given that program. He absolutely hated it, for several reasons. First of all, the switching and the electronics of answering the phone and putting the listeners on the air confused him as it did me when I first came here. The best way I can describe it is this...it's very similar to juggling. The announcer has several different tasks to do at the same time while continuing to talk. It's no easy task, believe me. Add to that the confusion that is often created by illegible handwriting and impossible to read sentence structure and grammar, and yes, sometimes the Trading Post can be a formidable task. I finally got used to it and so did Tommy, but he still didn't like to do it. He was the most comfortable and in his element by playing the listeners' favorite songs each and every day on his air shift, and he was quite good at it. He also loved his job as much as anyone who ever worked here.

When I first came back here to work, filling in for Tommy, an elderly gentleman called and said, "Young fellow, you're pretty good, but you're not as good as Tommy Allen." He didn't realize that I'm not exactly young, but that's beside the point. Somehow, that remark didn't offend me because I knew that I had some VERY big shoes to fill. It was almost as if he had paid me the ultimate compliment by even comparing me to Tommy Allen. As long as there is a WJJM, Tommy Allen will always be a part of it.

Epilogue

After writing this little book, I now see what a daunting task I undertook. The more research I did, the more I realized how much I had to cover. I also realized the great possibility of error by omission, and I apologize for any which I may have committed. Many announcers and office managers worked at WJJM, and it would be impossible to list them all, but then that was not my original intention. I started this work to convey to the reader and potential radio historian my remembrances of WJJM over the past sixty years, or at least the portion of that period when I worked here. Allow me to mention just a few key persons who labored here over the years, either as announcers, station managers, or office personnel who perhaps haven't been mentioned before, or at least mentioned in a different context.

First of all, here is at least a partial listing of the office managers and sales personnel: Louis Lingner; Pam Lingner; Sarah Smith White; Doug Cheek; Amy Biggerstaff; Gwen Fuller; Lisa Whitefield Savage, who introduced WJJM to advanced computer technology; Dana Headden; and Missie Haislip.

Here are some additional announcers who worked here over the years: Tommy Curry, Mark Graham, Melvin Troop, Mike Smiley, Evelyn Ewing, Andrew Wood, Brad Willis, Kenny Nix, Ron Ogle, Don Coleman, Kenny Harper, Jennifer St. John, and Andrew Williams. There have also been many sports announcers including those who worked with us this past year: Mike Keny, Bobby Brown, Leon Finley, Mike Wiles, Eddie Dale, Randy McQueen, the Lintz brothers, Billy Lanier, Sam Lanier, Bubba McBee, Ricky Sweeney, Larry "Roho" Chapman, David Fagan, and Danny Tate.

As of May, 2007, our staff consists of the following people: Missie and Jeff Haislip, owners and managers; Don Roden, chief engineer; Jeff Haislip, who also works as the program director and morning drive announcer; Stephen Christopher, mid-day announcer and rock and roll archivist; Bill Massey, afternoon drive announcer and staff historian; Doug "the Wildman" Hazelwood, music director, production assistant and night-time announcer; and Cory Barnett, relief announcer. This list will doubtlessly change, as time goes on.

Well, here they are my remembrances of WJJM over the past sixty years. Perhaps at a future time someone will pick this up, read it, and may even be intrigued by its contents. Maybe even that person will decide to add to it or even build on it to write a much better or more inclusive work than I was able to do. Be my guest! If it happens, I just want that potential author to know that you are dealing with a remarkable institution and one that will perhaps never be equaled, at least in certain aspects. May God bless all of you is my prayer.

William R. (Bill) Massey,
May 19, 2007