

## **WHUB RADIO STATION CELEBRATES 70TH ANNIVERSARY**

by Laura Gwinn

Stewart James, WHUB program director, and Helen Daniels, traffic manager, recall fond memories of WHUB-1400 AM at the Cookeville History Museum. WHUB turned 70 this year. Herald-Citizen Photo/Ty Kernea



**COOKEVILLE** -- It all began with one question nearly 80 years ago -- "Why don't you build a radio station?" -- and the rest is history. Literally.

WHUB 1400 celebrated 70 years this month with a big cake July 20, officially marking 70 successful years of broadcasting. And a lot has happened in that 70 years.

Helen Daniels has been at WHUB for nearly 30 years and can recall many changes in that time frame.

"When I came in, we had records," she said. "Now, everything is computerized."

When Daniels began her career in 1981, she recalled having a computer, but it was the size of a desk.

"It's amazing how much the technology has changed."

Most of Daniels' career was under WHUB's original owner, Luke Medley, who had an impact in the Upper Cumberland through many of his activities.

"Under the Medleys, (the station) was very family-oriented and even today I'm still in contact with a lot of them," Daniels said. "They are still family to me."

WHUB went on the air July 20, 1940, from the second floor of the Masonic Lodge building on the south side of the Cookeville square. They were there several months before moving to the Maddux Hardware building, where they stayed for a number of years. Four years after going on the air, it became a CBS Radio Affiliate.

In 1964, the station moved to a new building on E. Spring Street. Also in 1964, the FM station was launched, allowing WHUB to expand programming that could not have been done at one station.

"I became interested in radio as something that was needed in the area," Medley told the Herald-Citizen when the station celebrated 50 years. "It was the fourth radio station in Tennessee."

The year it launched was quite a bumpy year in the country. The United States was coming out of the Depression and World War II had been going on for nearly a year.

Most of the other radio stations were in the metropolitan areas such as Nashville, and others were in Jackson and the Tri-Cities area. WHUB was the sole radio station in the Upper Cumberland from 1940-1947.

"If it weren't for Luke Medley starting WHUB in 1940, radio would not be what it is today in the Upper Cumberland," Stewart James, current program director for WHUB, said.

Through the radio station, Medley devoted most of his time to promoting growth and development of the

area and went on to serve 16 years as county judge (now known as the county executive), two terms as mayor of Cookeville, first president of the Upper Cumberland Development District and prime organizer and first president of the Cookeville-Putnam County Chamber of Commerce. He was also one of the earliest advocates of joining with White County to create a regional airport.

"It truly is a pioneer station," Martin Medley, one of Luke's sons, said.

Originally, WHUB played bluegrass and big band-type of music, mixed in with local news, sports and farming presentations. The most popular feature was the "Swap-n'-Shop" show, where farm and household listeners gave local residents to buy livestock or fruits and vegetables. It ran three times daily with estimates of more than a quarter of a million telephone calls, as reported in 1990.

One popular early presentation was the WHUB Jamboree. The Jamboree featured a number of local talents, including the Tennessee Wildcats, who were the showpiece of the Jamboree.

The birth of the traditional local news coverage was also born with WHUB. Gene Davidson was the news director and he daily broadcast six local newscasts.

"Gene and Eldon Burgess were the local voices and influences," James said.

Luke Medley died in 1998 at the age of 91. The station was sold in 1996 to Paxon Communications, then to Clear Channel Communications and finally to Cookeville Communications in 2008. The offices are now on Willow Avenue.

"We wanted to be the caretakers of the AM station due to the history," James said. "We kept it the same as long as possible."

Now, WHUB-1400 is the Talk Radio station while 780 AM is classic country. It is also no longer a CBS affiliate, but still is dedicated to a number of local sports and news.

Thanks to Mike and Martin Medley, some of WHUB's history has been preserved and is on display at the Cookeville History Museum. On display there are the two microphones that were used on the first day of broadcast, among other items. Daniels even found herself in a photograph of employees in the museum.

"I'm a part of history," she said with a laugh.  
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\*See History WHUB Radio at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>