

WHUB's 50th ANNIVERSARY
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Medley Took Friend's Advice
And Built WHUB



A passing remark by a young Chestnut Mound man, Jesse Beasley, to an equally young Luke Medley sometimes in 1933 may have been the spark that helped to launch WHUB radio on its 50-year reign as the “Voice of the Upper Cumberland.”

Beasley, whose vocation was delivering mail from the Buffalo Valley Post Office, but whose passion was radio and electronics, approached Medley that year with (as well as medley can recall) the following query: “Why don’t you build a radio station?”

And, why not? In late 1933 or early 1934, Medley first contacted the Federal Radio Commission requesting information about filing an application for a radio station in Cookeville.

At that time, there were not any frequencies available for a station here. In 1937, Medley tried again with the newly-formed Federal Communications Commission—this time with more success.

A series of hearings in Washington and filing of all the necessary data, along with construction of the station tower, enabled WHUB to go on the air on July 20, 1940. As the original owner of the station and still president and owner of the company in 1990. Medley may well hold the record for longevity of a chief executive officer of a radio station in the nation.

“In those early days, Buffalo Valley was called the ‘biggest little town in the world.’ We had about six freight and passenger trains coming through each day. Buffalo Valley was a busy place, and as a store owner there, my father got business from people in Putnam, Jackson, Smith and DeKalb counties,” Medley said.

“I became interested in radio as something that was needed in this area. We were the 4th radio station in Middle Tennessee. There were no others except in Nashville in 1940,” Medley added.

The first studios for WHUB were on the second floor of the Masonic Lodge building on the south side of the Courthouse Square.

“We stayed there about seven months before moving into the Maddux Hardware building. Then in 1964, after we got the FM station, we moved into the present building here on East Spring,” Medley said.

In looking back over 50 years, the highlights of the stations are many to Medley. The first major one was affiliating with CBS Radio Network in 1944.

“That was important because it brought the world closer to home; then there was the FM station in 1964, my attendance at the yearly national radio conventions, the formation of the Tennessee Association of Broadcasters in the late `940’s, and my participation on the CBS Affiliates Board,” said Medley.

The opening of the FM station allowed WHUB to expand its program offerings and provide even more programming that could not have been done on one station. Medley’s attendance at the radio conventions kept him in touch with up-to-date radio technology. He helped form the TAB and served on its board; also, Medley’s role on the CBS Affiliates Board gave this area a voice in CBS’ national programming.

Beginning a radio station in the summer of 1940 was not a time to ensure instant success. And WHUB was not an exception, because the country was just climbing out of the severe Great Depression, and World War II was already underway, although the United States was not yet a belligerent in arms. Thus, the early years of the station are not a Cinderella story for Medley. In fact, it was after the long war ended that the station began to get a footing financially.

John H. Carr, in his research on WHUB radio case study, *Small Market Radio*, talks about WHUB’s diversified formate in serving several segments of the public in the Upper Cumberland.

“WHUB has continued to program a diversified format, maintaining its image among its listeners and advertisers. For this reason, when you ask anyone who resides in the eastern boundaries of Middle Tennessee what is the Voice of the Upper Cumberland—do not be surprised if the great majority answer you: “WHUB, Cookeville, Tennessee.”

And the man who made this radio voice possible was Luke Medley.

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