

## PUTNAM RADIO PIONEER TO BE IN TENNESSEE RADIO HALL OF FAME

### 'LUKE MEDLEY'

by Mary Jo Denton

**COOKEVILLE** — The late Luke Medley, a man who played a major role in the growth and progress of this county and who founded the first radio station between Nashville and Knoxville, is among those being honored this year by the Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame.



Medley, who founded WHUB Radio back in 1940 and who also served as county judge and as Cookeville mayor, is to be inducted into the Hall of Fame later this year, along with several radio personalities and officials, including Pat Sajak, Tennessee Ernie Ford, and Dewey Phillips, a Memphis DJ who was the first to play “That’s Alright Mama” by Elvis Presley.

While the honor is for Medley’s long and distinguished career in radio broadcasting as owner of WHUB, he is remembered here for much more and as an iconic figure in all that is associated with progress and the good life in this region.

His influence in business, government, and civic affairs could fill more than one history book.

But he never boasted or called attention to himself. He was modest, kind, and devotedly loyal to friends, family, and citizens of this region.

“Never make a commitment to anyone that you do not fully intend to keep, and if you do make a commitment, you keep it,” Medley instructed the teenaged Stacey Mott, who went to work at the radio station while still in high school and ended up serving as WHUB station manager from 1955 to 1996.

Luke Medley was born in Buffalo Valley in 1907 and died July 24, 1998.

In those 91 years, he worked to improve life for everyone here in so many ways that it’s hard to collect all the information in one place.

Of course, a large piece of his legacy involves bringing local radio broadcasts to this area in a time when that media was in its infancy.

He had to overcome many obstacles, including figuring out how to operate a radio station in a small market, but figure it out, he did.

On July 20, 1940, the 250-watt station went on the air and became the first local station within 80 miles of Cookeville.

The station brought listeners entertainment from local singers and musicians, as well as recorded music, news and other useful information about everyday life here, and national and international news via CBS.

The local radio station was very popular, but the first few years, from a business standpoint, were not easy.

But the early lean years gave way to growth and prosperity, the same quality results that Luke Medley was striving for on the civic and political scene in Putnam County.

His achievements in public service reached beyond the generous contributions of time and effort through the radio station, which donated air time for armed forces recruiting, Red Cross blood drives, war bond sales, and all sorts of civic, education, agricultural, and other non-profit efforts.

His obituary, published in this newspaper on July 26, 1998, summed up some of his contributions:

“A visionary with a lifelong philosophy of public service, Medley was responsible for helping to bring electricity to the rural communities in the 1930’s and served as a driving force in organizing the Chamber of Commerce and the Upper Cumberland Development District.

“A lifelong Republican, he was repeatedly elected to public office in Putnam County, which was traditionally Democratic at the time. Some of the offices he held included Putnam County judge for 16 years, Cookeville mayor for two terms, and he also served as a justice of the peace.

“He also served as secretary of the Tennessee Republican Party for 20 years.

“His advocacy and influence is partly responsible for some of the defining characteristics of Putnam County, including the hospital, the library, the municipal buildings, and the fairgrounds.”

And the accolades go on and on in every written and oral account of the remarkable life and achievements of Luke Medley.

His legacy here in this community has richly benefited everyone, and that unselfish public service is also being honored along with his historical accomplishments in the world of radio.

His sons, Martin and Mike Medley of Cookeville, as well as many of his former

employees and friends are very happy about the news that in May, Luke Medley will be officially inducted into the Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame.

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\*Read more about Luke Medley and WHUB at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>