

The Superflex



A Publication of the Alabama Historical Radio Society

September 2019

NOTE FROM PRESIDENT DAVE

Greetings to all!

As we enter September, I hope all of you had a great summer and were able to get away for a time of vacation. The month of August saw several things of interest occurring at the Society: the new work station is now usable, even though the antenna connection is not complete, improvements in our library are on-going and we are considering enlisting the services of a skilled library science professional to recommend improvements to our library.

The Society participated in the Alabama Broadcasters Association Annual Conference and provided a display. The event was attended by hundreds of broadcasters, engineers, and station owners from across the state. There was a lot of interest shown in our display and many of the new and improved AHRS brochures were distributed. Congratulations to Sharon Tinsley, President of the ABA for sponsoring a very successful event. Our own Ed Boutwell received a posthumous award for Tom "Doc" Atkinson, an inductee into the Alabama Broadcasters Association Hall of Fame. Thanks to all who helped make this a successful event. We understand Ed was the star of the show t!!!



We closed out the month of August with another auction. Most of the items offered were sold. Another auction is planned for the September meeting on the 23rd. The items for sale are on display at the shop. You might want to look over these items before the meeting so you can decide which ones to bid on. Be sure to watch for e-mails and notices on the board at the shop for meeting times and any other important information.



Work is progressing in the complete redesign of the Society website. We have secured the services of a software engineer, Dave Lake who has extensive experience in website design. No date has been set for the roll out I

I wish to thank all the members for your support in my effort to serve as your president. I extend to all of you my wishes for a safe and health September.

See you at the shop.

Dave

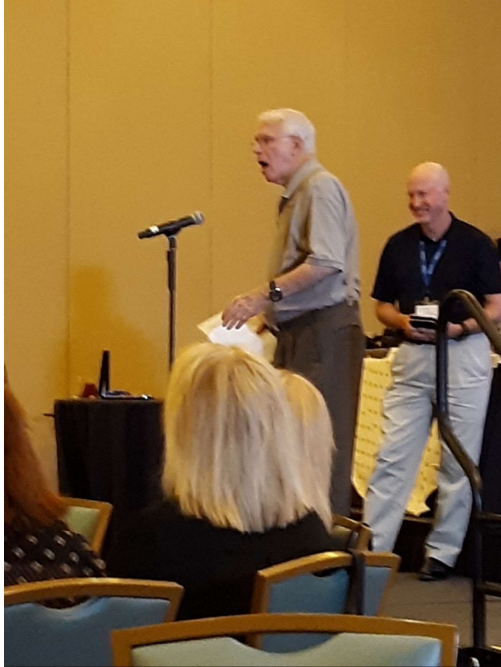
WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE SOCIETY

ERRATA: How the New Wireless Law Works: The publication date of the Popular Mechanics article should read October 1913, not October 2019 as reported in the August issue of the Superflex. The editor apologizes for the error.

Alabama Broadcasters Association Annual Conference

Submitted by Steven Westbrook

The Society was invited by Sharon Tinsley, President of the Alabama Broadcasters Association to attend their annual conference here in Birmingham and provide an exhibit. We based our booth on the first radio station in Alabama, WSY. The booth was manned by Society members; Tom Killian, Skip Leslie and me. Many new and exciting contacts were made for the Society. We spoke with a good friend of Joe Dentici who worked for Gates and assisted Joe with the original restoration of the control board in the DJ booth on display in our Workshop. We also spoke to several station owners and on-the-air personalities from radio stations throughout Alabama. Several individuals were very interested in the Society and expressed an interest in having a member of the Society as a guest on one of their live programs.



Our own Ed Boutwell and Dave Cisco attended the banquet where Ed posthumously represented Tom (Doc) Atkinson for his induction into the Hall of Fame, for his work with Patti Wheeler on the Patti & the Doc Morning Radio Show. Also receiving the honor where the family of Patti Wheeler and “Dollar Bill” Lawson. “Dollar Bill” Lawson is a regular attendee of our “Legends of Broadcast event. Since “Doc” Atkinson does not have any known living relatives, the Alabama Broadcasters Association requested the Society receive the award for display and safe keeping.

With the kind permission of Sharon Tinsley with the Alabama Broadcasters Association, I am reprinting the biographies of the three new inductees into the Alabama Broadcasters Hall of Fame.



Patti Wheeler

The amount of space allocated here for Patti Wheeler’s biography, is, quite honestly, not nearly enough. Although no one’s bio includes everything of interest about a person’s life, when it

comes to Patti, this one isn't going to even come close. Which is the very reason why the ABA is inducting Patti Wheeler into the Alabama Broadcasters Association Hall of Fame ... because we may never again experience the larger-than-life, force-of-nature impact that Patti made on the broadcasting industry and on everyone she knew.

"Patti was a copywriter at Martin and McQueen," says Bill Lawson, who would become her second morning show partner. "They called her 'pound 'em out Patti' because you could give her an idea and she could pound out a 60 and a 30 second spot, and they were beautifully and creatively written. She could do it all day long and wouldn't be repetitive."

"Yes, I knew Patti because she did voice work at my studio," says Ed Boutwell of Boutwell Studio. "Account executives would call her after making a sale and tell her the ad had to go on the next day. They would tell her what should be in the spot and she would sit there on the phone and type out perfect copy."

Patti's cousin, Roger Wheeler, remembers how creative she was even as a little girl. "Even in like the sixth grade, she could just draw up anything," he says. "She could also read a book and tell you exactly what it said on any page and any paragraph. She was smart and I was always amazed by her."

In 1979, Ed Boutwell had the epic idea of pairing Patti with Tom Atkinson, another voiceover talent who recorded at the studio. "WZZK was looking for a duo to take over a morning show," explains Bill, "and Ed suggested that they should use Patti and Tom until they found permanent hosts."

Of course, there were no better hosts for the show, so Patti and Tom, who took the nickname "Doc", became the most highly rated show in Birmingham. After enjoying 14 years in the top spot, Doc sadly succumbed to heart disease in 1993. It was not unreasonable to assume the magic was gone. But "Dollar" Bill Lawson was already filling in for Doc so, he became Patti's next morning show partner. The new pairing continued to enjoy the same level of success. Patti's candid nature, along with her raspy voice and sense of humor, helped her connect with listeners. She was a larger-than-life character both on the air and off, and listeners identified with her.

In 2002, Patti and "Dollar Bill" moved their top-rated show to WDXB where they continued together until Patti retired in 2008. "She was such a dichotomy," Bill says of his former partner of 16 years. "She was brilliant - she graduated Alabama with honors. She was very, very smart. She was the smartest/dumbest person I've ever known in my life. She would turn around and do something that you would just make your jaw drop!"

"Patti had a soft side, too, though," remembers Roger. "She liked to help people, so she did lots of things through the station, but she also just gave things to people. Whenever she did something for the station at a McDonald's or something, people just lined up to see her."

It must have been Patti's soft side that led to seven marriages. "Yeah, she always said that she didn't want to hurt anyone's feelings," her cousin continues. "So, when anybody asked her to get married, she said 'yes!' She was something."

When Patti died in 2012, a spokesperson for the radio station said, "Patti Wheeler was as unique as they come. She truly marched to her own drummer," adding "it just got a little crazy in heaven!"



Tom "Doc" Atkinson

Listeners knew Tom Atkinson as "Doc", one half of WZZK's "Patti and the Doc Show" which conquered the Birmingham airwaves every weekday morning in the '80's. To fans, Doc was the classic grumpy old man, a persona that played perfectly to Patti's off-the-wall shenanigans. However, out from behind the mic, Doc showed his true warm-hearted colors time and again. For his contribution to the broadcast industry and for the care he showed to those in need, the ABA inducts Tom "Doc" Atkinson into the Alabama Broadcasters Association Hall of Fame.

"One day this man walks into the studio and says he wants to be an announcer," says Ed Boutwell, founder of Boutwell Studios, Birmingham's first commercial and jingle studio. "He says he's Tom Atkinson and that he was a Presbyterian preacher, but now he wants to announce ... and he had one of those rich, beautiful voices, you know? So, we made him a demo reel and all at a sudden he was doing spots."

A young ad agency copywriter named Patti Wheeler did some voice work at Ed's studio as well. In 1979, when he heard that WZZK was looking for a new morning team, he had a hunch.

"I had Tom and Patti come to the studio and introduced them," says Ed. "They were both quick-witted and were very cute together. So, I put them in the car and we got up there." The rest, as they say, was history.

Jerdan Bullard met Tom, (whose air name was "Doc" thanks to his PhD degree), in 1980 when he became general manager at WZZK after an ownership change. It was clear Patti and Doc had something good going, so the team kept their show and time slot.

"Yes, we wanted to retain them and just improve the show," explains Jerdan. "We brought in a program director who worked closely with them. So, it was a good atmosphere with all these people working together. It was talent feeding on talent that grew larger talent and Patti and Doc turned into a top-notch, gang busters morning team who were nationally publicized."

"Doc was sort of the straight guy who played the role of a curmudgeon," smiles Jerdan. "He would always sound skeptical of things and he knew how to use a dramatic pause. And so, he made it easy for Patti to bounce things off him."

Although Doc kept up the guise of his on-air personality, away from the limelight, his kinder and gentler side came out in ways listeners never knew. For instance, Doc discovered that a listener and regular call-in was someone who could use a hand.

"This listener was terminally ill," explains Jerdan. "Doc took him under his wing, sent him things on his birthday and for special occasions... he kept in touch until the man passed."

Clearly Doc had not completely given up the pastoral side of his life either. "He had a group that met on Sunday morning at a local restaurant," says Jerdan. "These were people who were down on their luck and who were experiencing the darker side of life, and Doc met with them every Sunday morning giving them comfort, counseling and guidance when they needed it."

Doc knew had to have a good time, too. "He was known by the people in the field and he would laugh and joke and cut up with them," Jerdan smiles. "I've seen him at countless remotes and gatherings - he could be a great host at station events. At a couple of station events, he came dressed in a tuxedo. Of course, he was the only one who came dressed that way."

Doc retired in 1992 after an outstanding career in radio. However, Jerdan thinks that even though he officially left his job as a preacher, Doc just might have been most proud of the fact that he was, indeed, at one time a pastor. Tom "Doc" Atkinson passed away in 1993.

"You know, Doc's father was a minister and wanted Doc to go into the ministry, too ... and he did," says Jerdan. "And this is what I know: that one time he told me he was pleased with that accomplishment because he knew it had made his dad proud." Amen to that.



“Dollar Bill” Lawson

Bill Lawson was destined to follow in his father’s footsteps and become a dentist ... until his senior year in college. That’s about the time he had a heart-to-heart and told his father he had decided to become a radio announcer instead. The stunned Dr. Lawson took two slow blinks and asked, “For how long?” Well, sir, long enough and successfully enough for the Alabama Broadcaster’s Association to induct your son, “Dollar” Bill Lawson, into the 2019 ABA Hall of Fame.

“Yes, my dad was a dentist, and I was his only son and I thought I could be a dentist, too,” explains Bill. “I pretty much went all the way through college planning to go into dental school, but that little voice inside of me just screamed that I would be the worst dentist on earth! My patients would love me, but they'd have to go to another dentist to fix what I screwed up. I get impatient and I'm not good with my hands like that.”

“I understand why my dad thought I was an idiot,” smiles Bill. “It's hard work. And you struggle and you go from town to town and work up from weekends and nights, and you had terrible pay and all this sort of stuff. I mean it's an awful business for the first couple of years or so.”

“But I started doing pretty good and became well-known in Birmingham,” he continues. “Some of dad’s dental friends would tell him they heard me, and he told me, ‘You know, growing up you were known as Dr. Lawson’s boy, but now I’m known as “Dollar” Bill’s daddy.’ That was nice because I think I was going to feel guilty about not becoming a dentist until he went to his grave had he not told me that.”

Where did the nickname “Dollar Bill” come from? Bill says he picked it up when he was promoting a grocery store giveaway. His boss insisted all his DJs have nicknames, “He pointed at me and said, ‘You are Grocery Bag Bill,’ and I knew I had to come up with something fast, so I said, ‘No, I’m Dollar Bill.’”

Bill has worked in both radio and television doing a little of everything including production and voice work, but radio has always been his “main thing.” During Patti and Doc’s morning show on Birmingham’s WZZK, Bill would provide zany remote pieces, which added to the show’s appeal. When Doc became ill in the early 80’s, Bill filled in, which eventually led him to become the official morning show cohost with Patti, moving with her to WDXB in 2002. At the time, Bill says he was terrified of working with Patti full-time.

“We actually got along much better than she and Doc did,” laughs Bill. “We worked together almost twenty years and had the highest rated morning show in the market.”

Bill hasn’t slowed down yet. He hosts a morning show, Dollar Bill and Madison, with Madison Reeves, and is so grateful to get to work in the state he loves.

The Country Radio Broadcasters named Bill the recipient of the **CRS 2019 Tom Rivers Humanitarian Award, which recognizes an individual in the Country Radio industry who has displayed a magnanimous spirit of caring and generosity in service to their community. For many years,** Bill has graciously donated his time to work with children’s charities, including Children’s Miracle Network, Easter Seals, Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) and St. Jude, hosting annual radio telethons. Since being introduced to the St. Jude mission in 2002, Bill has been the driver behind every radiothon, event, and walk that’s been done for the cause locally and, as of 2019, his support has helped raise over three million dollars for St. Jude in Birmingham.

“Birmingham is where I always wanted to be, because my family’s here,” explains Bill. “I never really wanted to go anywhere else. And so, you know, I turn around and realize I’ve worked in Alabama my whole life.”

And that’s what makes his induction into the ABA’s hall of fame so special. “Going into the Hall of Fame for Alabama, I just don’t know. It just means more. It’s just amazing to me. I’m just thrilled and humbled by it.”



Skip Leslie at the AHRS Exhibit

Quotes & Predictions from Great Men of Science & Radio

Submitted by Steven Westbrook

Lee De Forest

- "I foresee great refinements in the field of short-pulse microwave signaling, whereby several simultaneous programs may occupy the same channel, in sequence, with incredibly swift electronic communication. [...] Short waves will be generally used in the kitchen for roasting and baking, almost instantaneously" – 1952
- "So I repeat that while theoretically and technically television may be feasible, yet commercially and financially I consider it an impossibility; a development of which we need not waste little time in dreaming." – 1926
- "To place a man in a multi-stage rocket and project him into the controlling gravitational field of the moon where the passengers can make scientific observations, perhaps land alive, and then return to earth—all that constitutes a wild dream worthy of Jules Verne. I am bold enough to say that such a man-made voyage will never occur regardless of all future advances." – 1926
- "I do not foresee 'spaceships' to the moon or Mars. Mortals must live and die on Earth or within its atmosphere!" – 1952
- "As a growing competitor to the tube amplifier comes now the Bell Laboratories' transistor, a three-electrode germanium crystal of amazing amplification power, of wheat-grain size and low cost. Yet its frequency limitations, a few hundred kilocycles, and its strict power limitations will never permit its general replacement of the Audion amplifier." – 1952

- "I came, I saw, I invented--it's that simple--no need to sit and think--it's all in your imagination"
- "While theoretically and technically television may be feasible, yet commercially and financially I consider it an impossibility." - 1926

Edwin Armstrong

- I could never accept findings based almost exclusively on mathematics. It ain't ignorance that causes all the trouble in this world. It's the things people know that ain't so.

David Sarnoff

- Freedom is the oxygen without which science cannot breathe.
- I have learned to have more faith in the scientist than he does in himself.
- Let us not paralyze our capacity for good by brooding of man's capacity for evil.
- Man is still the greatest miracle and the greatest problem on this earth.
- Nobody can be successful if he doesn't love his work, love his job.
- Success, in a generally accepted sense of the term, means the opportunity to experience and to realize to the maximum the forces that are within us.
- The difference between our decadence and the Russians is that while theirs is brutal, ours is apathetic.
- The human brain must continue to frame the problems for the electronic machine to solve.
- Whatever course you have chosen for yourself, it will not be a chore but an adventure if you bring to it a sense of the glory of striving.
- Work and live to serve others, to leave the world a little better than you found it and garner for yourself as much peace of mind as you can. This is happiness.
- The thrill, believe me, is as much in the battle as in the victory.
- The will to persevere is often the difference between failure and success.
- We cannot banish dangers, but we can banish fears. We must not demean life by standing in awe of death.
- We hate those who will not take our advice, and despise them who do.
- What the Human mind can conceive and believe in can accomplish

Edwin Armstrong & David Sarnoff

- Edwin Aemstrong, the inventor of FM radio, dressed in his coat and hat, jumped to his death from the thirteenth floor of his New York City apartment building on January 31, 1954. His suicide note to his wife read: "May God help you and have mercy on my soul." Upon hearing the news, David Sernoff, head of RCA, remarked "I did not kill Armstrong."

Claude Gray

- “Hello! (5) times”
-

Leon Theremin

- “There was one man who was interested in the color of music, the connection between light and music, and that was Einstein.”

He Loves the Broken Things Part 2

Submitted by Jerome Lewis

In this part I want to describe the process for repairing a white bakelite case. The radio, a 1940 Emerson DB 301 was broken into 3 pieces. Two large pieces broke the radio diagonally with a small piece in the front of the radio (see photo).

The case was taped together with friction tape and ,upon removal, the radio fell apart (see photos).



The process for repairing a bakelite or modern plastic case is the same. The necessary items for doing this repair are listed below.

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- Gorilla glue
- Two part quick set epoxy (Tractor Supply)
- Fine cotton cloth (old bed sheet or pillow case)
- Automotive spot putty
- Fine sandpaper (wet or dry)
- Tack rag
- Lacquer thinner
- Aerosol can gray primer (Dollar General)
- Aerosol can ivory enamel
- Cd case
- Razor pen
- Sharpie

- Ruler

Use lacquer thinner to thoroughly remove the tape (in this case) and other impurities from the surface. Use a pen knife to scratch the dirt from the cracks. The case is now ready to be glued. Apply Gorilla glue and tightly hold pieces together until parts are bonded. Use 500 grit sandpaper to wet sand glue till flat with radio.

Cut a piece of cotton cloth 2-3 inches wide and lay aside.

On a paper plate mix the two part epoxy and immediately saturate the cotton cloth in the epoxy mix. Quickly apply the epoxy cloth on the inside of the radio at the breaks. Push bubbles out with pen knife (see photo)



Allow to set over night.

Take the spot putty and ,using you finger, overlay the cracks. Let sit for at least 30 minutes (see photo).



Use 500 grit sandpaper to wet sand the putty. Wet sand entire radio and allow to dry. Wipe radio with tack rag. Apply a coat of gray primer followed by a second coat 10 minutes later. Wet sand radio with 1000 grit sandpaper and allow to dry. Spray a light coat of ivory enamel to radio. Spray a second coat keeping the radio wet with paint but not enough to cause a run. Let sit for one hour.

This radio had a cracked dial glass. Take an old cd case apart and cut a replacement glass (plastic). After measuring the exact size to fit the dial opening use Sharpie to outline the cut. Take ruler and place on line and make several cuts with pen knife. Do all four sides. Carefully bend and break plastic at the cuts. Use 500 grit sandpaper to sand edges of plastic.

Place one drop of Gorilla glue in each corner and hold plastic in place until it bonds. Repair is now complete (see photo).



SATURDAY MEETINGS

We meet every Saturday (unless a Holiday weekend) at 9:00 a.m., at the one-story AHRS Shop at the corner of 8th Avenue North and 18th Street, (1801 8th Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203). Birmingham, AL 35203). Use the rear (Southeast) entrance.

TUESDAY MEETINGS

The Shop is open on Tuesdays at 9:00 a.m. until around 11:30 a.m. when we go to Marilyn's Deli and Dog for lunch next door. Note that parking can be a problem on Tuesdays, so you may have to find street parking occasionally.

REGULAR MEETINGS

We meet on the fourth Monday night of each month, too, at 7:00 p.m. Please come join us!

FREE ELECTRONICS CLASSES

One more great benefit from becoming a member of AHRS--free Electronic classes!

Classes are taught the first Saturday of each month (except when something special is taking place, then we agree on what Saturday).

We start from the beginning Ohms Law, inductors, resistor and Capacitors color codes, as well as what each component does within the radio circuits. We also teach how to use test equipment used in the repairing of radios. We teach troubleshooting radio troubles, as well as how to read a radio diagram. There are coil winding classes, and one-on-one repair help. Come join these classes!

Class Schedule For The Remainder of 2019

Oct 5h First Saturday

November 16th Third Saturday

Dec 7th First Saturday

M E M B E R S H I P D U E S

Membership dues are \$25 a year, payable beginning in January. If you have questions about your dues, you can contact Treasurer Mike Woodruff at 205-823-7204. Dues can be mailed to AHRS at P.O. Box 131418, Birmingham AL 35213.

W E B S I T E

Be sure and check out our website at <https://www.alabamahistoricalradiosociety.org>, which has copies of all newsletters from 2006 to the present (click on News), videos, photo galleries, museum, Old Time Radio columns, Projects, Reading Rooms, Archives, and Contact Information

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