



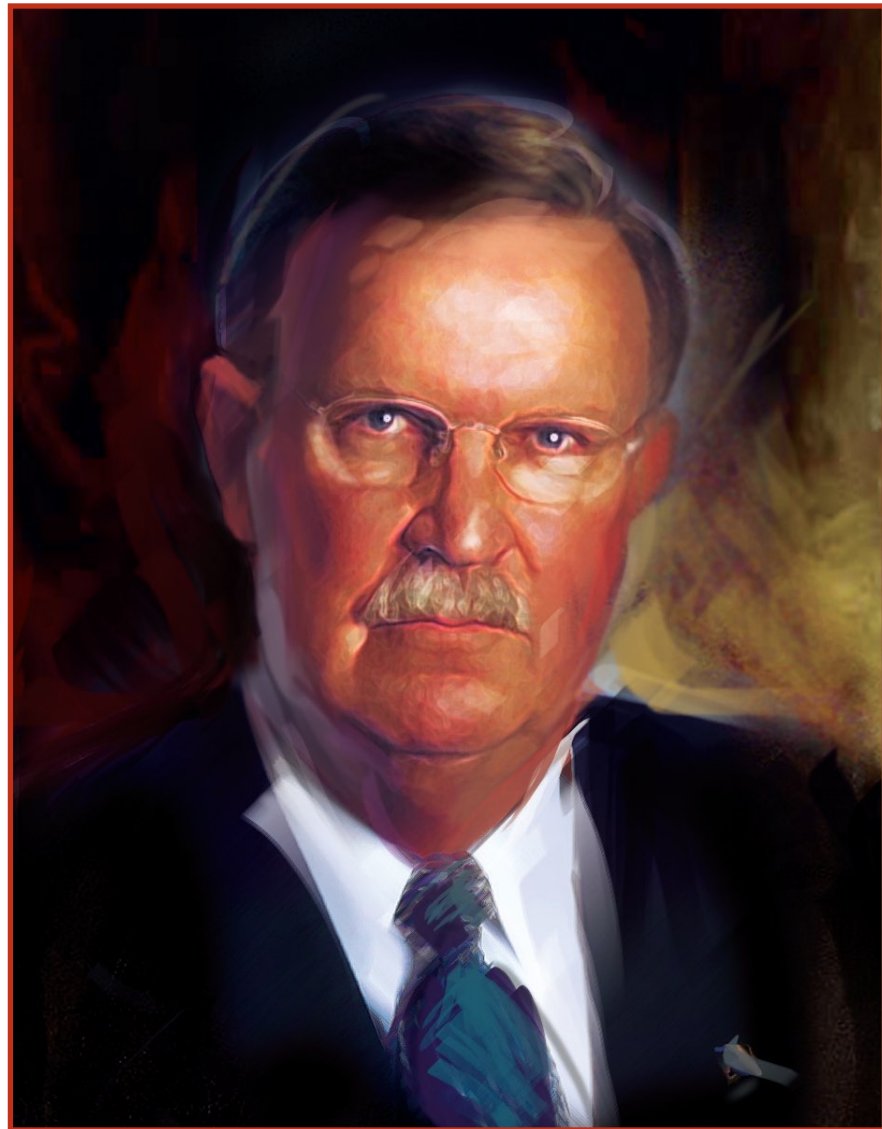
BILL BAILEY

Doing It The Listeners' Way



A larger-than-life, multiple award-winning broadcaster who programmed and hosted mornings on KIKK/Houston and crosstown KENR for more than 20 years, Bill Bailey took his name from a DJ who suddenly quit, leaving management with new jingles already cut and needing a successor. Among his many accomplishments, Bill led 250-watt daytimer KIKK to No. 1, and arranged for the first Country music tapes to travel into outer space. Widely regarded for breaking countless artists and hits, Bill retired from radio in 1982 to successfully run for county constable in the Houston

suburb of Pasadena, where he oversees a staff of 70. A member of the Texas Radio Hall of Fame, he still keeps close to the microphone as an announcer for the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo, to which he has lent his voice for 49 years.



I was born a radio guy. In the second grade, I was walking in downtown Houston with my mother, and she said, "Oh, my goodness! There's Ted Nabors!" She introduced me to Ted, an announcer on KTRH, and so I started listening to him. I thought, "Oh, boy, that was

KTRH/Houston called *The Chuck Wagon Gang* and another called *The Hillbilly Bandwagon* that played Hank Williams and Ernest Tubb. To then become part of it and to meet these people, it was like a dream come true. KIKK and WPLO/Atlanta were

Ladd and me – are in the Hall of Fame. It was just a magic time. Faron Young told me once, "You gotta let the drunks spit in your face." That's when they put their arm around you, and say, "Oh, God damn, Bailey, I love youuu" and slobber on you. They'll tell you what they like

family is there, all crowded into this double-bed room. Suddenly, Pete appears at the door and says, "Anybody got a cold?" He had snuck out and driven down to see his wife. Charley was pickin', and we were all singing and carryin' on. If NASA had known that, they'd have killed him.

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something I want to do." My teacher used to play these semi-classical records in class, and I would direct the music, which got me noticed by the girls. At school programs, I was always the announcer.

Management never knew this, but I'd have worked for free. At KTEM/Temple, TX, I adopted the name "The Lone Wolf." That started the long trip into my chemical dependency ... on adrenaline. Several years later on KTHT/Houston, I worked weekday mornings, plus a six-hour morning weekend shift. One time I was really cooking, and when the guy came in at noon to relieve me, I asked him, "Don't you have something to do? Let me just take it a little while longer!" He looked at me like I was nuts. But I loved radio so much that I would get on a natural high.

KIKK was the only Country station in town, and everybody looked down on us. But all the guys who worked at the petrochemical plants along the ship channels in Pasadena had their radios on KIKK. We had news live at :55, rather than at the top of the hour. We had two colorful news characters, Richard Dobbyn and Milton Alan Graves, and they would say [in booming voices], "A-ticket, a-tasket – a dead babe in a basket!" And, "This morning, he's under arrest in the city jail. She's under a sheet in the city morgue!" Real sensational stuff. The plants would change their 10am and 3pm coffee breaks just so they could hear our news. We were all characters and owned the market.

I'm not a musician, but from the earliest days I used to listen to a 15-minute show on

the two breakout stations in America [for new music]. I would guess we programmed more stations than anybody before or since. We worked the joints – Gilley's, Dance Town USA, the Esquire Ballroom – different clubs every night. KIKK is probably the only radio station where all three of the broadcast-day guys who worked together – Arch Yancey, Joe

and what they don't like. That was our focus group. We didn't have all the stuff they've got today. We just listened to our listeners.

Astronaut Pete Conrad and I were friends, and when he went to the moon, his friend Charley Pride was at Cape Canaveral for the launch. I was there, too, and we were staying at a nearby Holiday Inn. The night before lift-off, Pete was in quarantine at the Cape. It's raining, and Pride's sittin' on the bed playing guitar. Pete's whole

I miss the bully pulpit from being on the radio, staying up on current events and things happening in the community that you have an opinion on. I also miss the money! These guys today are making a lot more than we did. But it's always a rush when you're out at the grocery store or service station, and people point at you, and say, "That's Bill Bailey." You feel the "specialness," whether it's real or imagined, that they bestow upon you. That's a great encouragement.

Being inducted is humbling, and I'm not sure I can get through my remarks without becoming emotional. My mother was the one who said, "You can do this" and got me up in high school to be on the radio at 5:45am. I'm 70 years old and to this day I would never do anything to disappoint my mother and father. People asked me what I wanted to do with my life, and I said, "I want to be a man worthy to be a servant at my father's table." On a plaque over my back door at my home it says, "All I want is to enter my house justified." When I first heard that line in the movie *Ride The High Country*, I didn't understand what it was talking about – to be proved right, in the Biblical sense, as a good man who's done the right thing. I don't want to be a great man, and I'm not going to be. But I want to be a good man.

Even if I didn't go into the Hall, I was still friends with Ernest Tubb, still sat next to Tex Ritter at the CMA board meetings, still was there when Bob Wills went into the Country Music Hall of Fame, and was in the studio with him when [producer/label executive] Paul Cohen recorded him. None of that stuff can ever be taken away. I don't need a plaque to show I did that; I was there. When the lights are out, I've got it. But I didn't do it my way. I did it the listeners' way. **CAC**



Captive Audience: Here's Bill Bailey with Merle Haggard at the Texas Prison Rodeo. It was at one of these star-studded annual fundraisers where Bailey, who served as an announcer, met his wife, Janis, an administrator at the prison. Bill says the men and women inmates watched from opposite sides of the arena behind high, barbed electrical wire. "I'd call out to the men, 'Say hello to the ladies.' They'd all cheer, and I'd say, 'Yeah, that's as close as you're gonna get for the next 99 years.'



Fly Me To The Moon: Bill Bailey, shown at top left with KIKK's Arch Yancey, Buck Owens and Bill's astronaut friend Pete Conrad, prepared music tapes, jingles and special shows for multiple Apollo space missions; those recordings are archived at the Country Music Hall of Fame & Museum. Thanks to Bill, Bob Wills' "San Antonio Rose" was the first Country song played from space.

Tanks For The Memories: In one of his most famous stunts, here's Bill Bailey atop a secretly borrowed Ft. Hood battle tank he brought in to a sold-out Astrodome to seek "revenge" for his car, built by friend A.J. Foyt, being "kicked out" from an Auto Thrill Show demolition derby. Bill was "disqualified" again and exited the tank just before it crushed two cars at 35mph, injuring the tank crew and Foyt. The national story led to an apologetic call from alarmed Pentagon officials.