



CHUCK COLLIER

Big Dreams Do Come True



If there ever were a broadcaster who was truly passionate about radio and musical artistry, it would be Chuck Collier. "All my life I've wanted to be on the radio," he says. "Even if I win the lottery tomorrow, I don't think I could walk away from it." As WGAR/Cleveland's 38-year Music Director and afternoon personality, Chuck is renowned for his interviewing skills, preparation and especially making artists feel at home with his listeners.

That skill comes naturally, as Chuck was raised on country and bluegrass in rural south central Ohio, playing piano and accordion in a musical family, watching the Ozark Jubilee and the Midwestern Hayride on television and listening to the Grand Ole Opry. His experience spans WSRW/Hillsborough (at \$1.40 an hour) and WMWM/Wilmington (OH), WSAI/Cincinnati, WONE/Dayton and WCBS-FM/New York, but Chuck's career has been dedicated to WGAR. The 46-year personality's consistent professional excellence and enduring commitment to charity have already earned Chuck a Marconi Award and induction into the Ohio Radio & Television Broadcasters Hall of Fame.



I got my first three-speed record player in 1956, and I listened to music nonstop – an eight-year-old playing disc jockey in the garage. The radio in our car beat anything we had in the house, so I would get in and listen to it in the driveway. I can still remember my mother saying, "Charles, don't run the battery down!"

community bulletin board on the station, and he told him, "Bob, Charles is into radio now and taping himself. Could you take him out to WSRW and just show him around?" He said, "Sure."

I thought that maybe afterwards I could call to ask if I could come empty the trash cans. Bob introduced me to everybody and before I knew it, my mentor, morning guy

little news booth, and Will said, "You mean to tell me you've never been on the radio before?" I said, "Sir, I've never been in a radio station before." He said, "My goodness, boy, you're better than I am right now." What a great piece of confidence to give to a kid.

Because of that opportunity, I never turn down a chance to let any young person come in and shadow me. And when I hear talent, I

I wish I could get to know every listener.

One of the good things about WGAR is that we're all over the place with personal appearances. When I do go out, I treat my listeners like they're gods. My mom and dad raised my sister and me to treat everybody nicely. It's the simple Golden Rule; that's all there is to it. When it comes to the charities, I can't be guilt-free

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I wouldn't be in radio if it weren't for my childhood friend, Gary West. When I was 16, Gary told me, "I'm doing news on WSRW." This was back in the days when you could walk in and be given a chance to read a newscast for the disc jockey. I began to listen to Gary, and thought, "I can do that too." My father's boss at the bank, **Bob Hodson**, did a

Will Parr, stuck some news headlines in my hand, and told me, "Go in there and read 'em." So I did. Then they gave me a 60-second live commercial. Then Will said, "OK, you're going to read these headlines on the air at 9:30." And I'm going, "What?" But I knew if Gary could do it, I could, too. Not to brag, but I knocked it out, just perfect. I got out of the

always build them up as high as I can. By the way, Will is still doing mornings at WSRW, 53 years later.

You listened to everything the summer of '65 because you didn't get that much record service and you might find something you liked. I was 18 and working at WMWM/Wilmington, OH, a 1-kw station in a town of less than 10,000 people. One day, a copy of "Flowers On The Wall" by this group called the Statler Brothers came in. I put that thing on, and was taken by the incredible harmony of Lew DeWitt and Don Reid. I played it the whole summer.

When September came and I went off to college, I tossed it in the back, thinking it would never amount to anything. But that December, I turned the radio on, and there was the song I had played back in June! [Ed. note: "Flowers" charted September 25, 1965.] Of course, the rest is history: not only did it become a No. 1 country hit, but a huge Top 40 hit, too. All I can say is that I was for sure one of the first DJs, and could have been the first, to ever play a Statler Brothers song in the U.S.

and turn something down. If somebody asks, I'm there, and I feel good doing it. Bill Anderson once told me, "If you're lucky enough to do something you love so much that you'd do it for free, and by honing your craft somebody pays you a decent paycheck for it, you've really never worked a day in your life." Doing charity work is sort of a way of being thankful for the blessings I've had.

Winning the Marconi was special, but... I think they looked at the longevity factor and said, "Oh, my goodness. This guy has been there a long time. Maybe we ought to give it to him before he dies."

My all-time favorite on-air memory was when Lon Helton called last October 17 on a Friday afternoon and told me I was going into the Country Disc Jockey Hall of Fame. I'm pretty naïve, and Lon called to supposedly talk about the Reba concert coming to town. PD **Brian Jennings** and Lon really pulled one on me.

Being inducted is the highlight of my career. On my refrigerator, held by a little magnet, is the official invite that the CRB sent over. Last night, I took it out and read it again. I still can't believe it, after all these years in the business. I've always had pride in my work, but never really got into the business to win awards; I did it just to have fun. But I really appreciate it so much. It's like, is that a typo or what? It's been somewhat euphoric, to be honest. I've never been to the Hall of Fame induction dinner — this will be my first. I can only imagine what it's like. **CAC**

Rick Rockhill brought Kenny Chesney to see us back when he was on Capricorn. I always roll out the red carpet for the artists, no matter who they are. I know I would be scared out of my mind going to see radio people because you don't know how they're going to treat you, so I always try to put people at ease and give them encouragement. We weren't the first, but we were one of the first to play Kenny's records, and he's never forgotten that. When Capricorn went belly up, I remember thinking, "Aw, that nice little fella from down there in Tennessee. I'll bet that's the last we hear from him."



I Hear You Singing In The Wire: In 1973, with Glen Campbell. Note the handy comb in Chuck's pocket.



A Few More Years In Radio, And Your Hair Will Be Grey, Too: Kenny Rogers compares beauty secrets with Chuck in October 1989.



Love That Two-Tone Denim: Nothing could keep Reba from stopping by WGAR to see Chuck in the mid-'80s.