

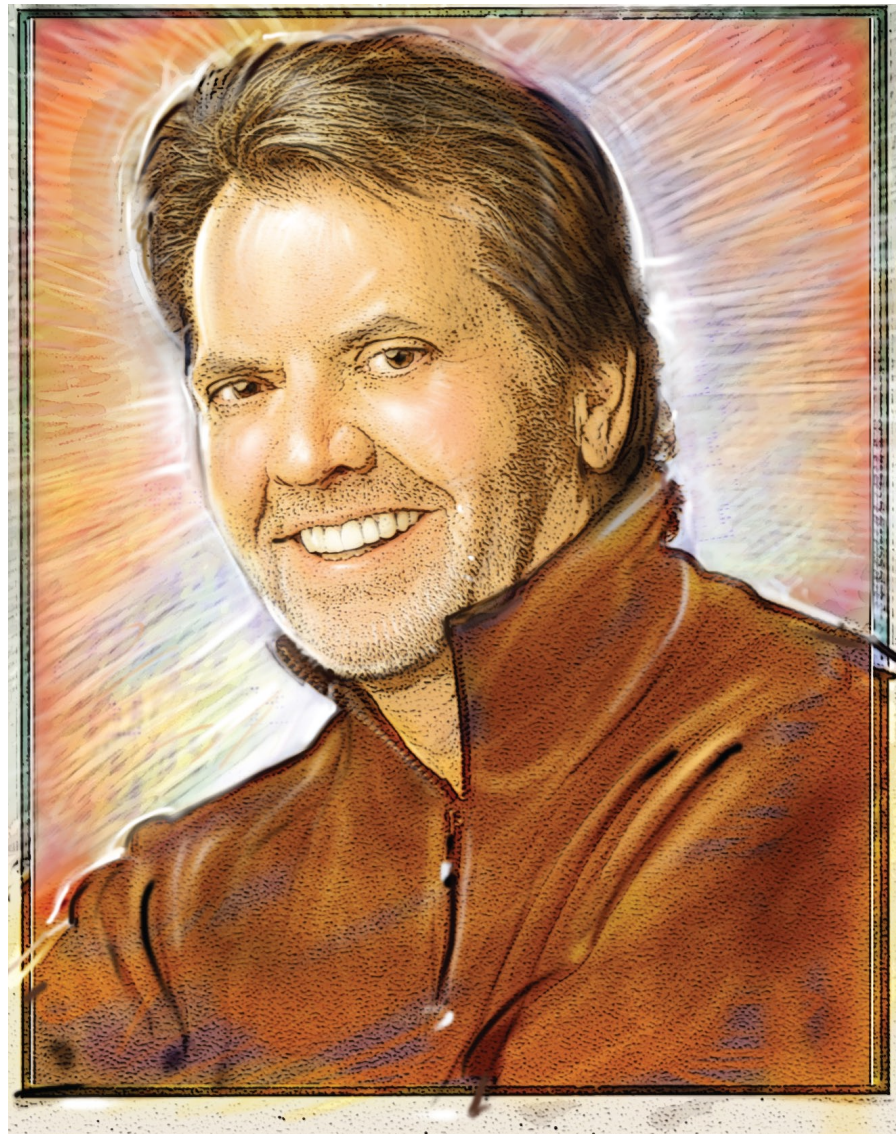


GERRY HOUSE

More Than Meets The Ear



Songwriter, musician, television writer and iconic morning personality Gerry House is a creative and complex man who almost defies description. Influenced by Cincinnati's many great DJs and supported through the years by colleagues including Geoff Armstrong, Randy Bongarten, John Cullen, Steve Hicks, John King, college instructor Jim Ridings and Dr. Bob Singer, House has anchored the multiple-award-winning House Foundation on WSIX/Nashville for nearly three decades. While working with Mike Bohan, Al Voecks, Duncan Stewart and producer Richard Falken, House also responds to the instincts and insights of his wife and childhood sweetheart, Allyson, and daughter, Autumn, a VP at Capitol/Nashville. He experienced a major health scare several years ago, but today is unquestionably at the top of his game.



I was a real radical in college. At the time, I wanted to burn down all the buildings. My first time in a radio station was as a junior reading an editorial on the air. I asked, "What'd you think?" The guy said, "I think your editorial sucked, but I like the way you read." I immediately threw all my politics out the window and said, "Great! What can I do?"

My first job in radio lasted one day. I was in mornings at WFPB/Middletown, OH and got a call from WCBR/Richmond, KY, which would allow Allyson and me to be together while she was in school. WCBR was a 250-watt daytimer paying \$105 a week. The owner, a minister, would ask each week I needed my check or if I wanted to give it to the Lord. And I'd say, "I think I need the check more than the

are like before, during and after being on the air. Everybody has their role. Al's a curmudgeon and drinks too much. Duncan's kind of disoriented, Bohan's very cheap and Richard's very nailed down. And it's all based on reality. I always envision people sort of eavesdropping. Allyson's vet actually said the greatest thing: "I love listening to those guys. They sound like brothers. They fight and they

I'm interested in finance, movies, world affairs, cultural things and I'm a big fan of Eastern religions. **Taylor Swift** made me a painting of a little heart flying away. On it, it said, "I want you to know that you made a difference." I wrote her back, "Don't be afraid to change. There's a Hindu proverb that says, 'If nothing ever changed, there'd be no butterflies.'" Well, apparently that just knocked

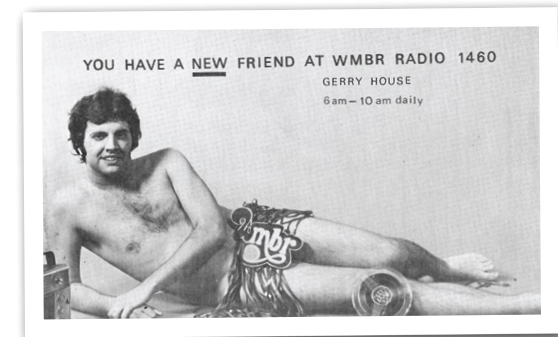
“ PEOPLE DO A LOT OF WEIRD THINGS. THEY MAY BE CALLING FROM A HOSPITAL BED OR STANDING KNEE-DEEP IN A SEPTIC TANK. ”

My dad looked at my college courses: Western Civilization, French, Political Science. He was an electrician, didn't graduate from high school and had no idea what that stuff was. "Son," he said, "do you realize you're not taking *one* electricity course?" And I said, "Yeah, they don't teach electricity." He said, "They don't teach *electricity*?! Well, how are you ever going to make a living?"

Lord does." We were just broke. I used to take promotional copies and walk around Richmond trying to sell them to make money.

don't agree, and they love each other." That's what I want.

her out. It was [only] because I read some Hindu poets — a lot of times looking for song ideas — but it surfaced there.



Barely Getting By: Inspired by Burt Reynolds' centerfold in *Cosmo*, House released his own version in 1973. "I thought I had bought all these up," he says.

"These are the weirdest songs I've ever heard." When I came to Nashville, I played my songs for a publisher who said that to me. I left, kind of dejected, and walked down to MCA Music. I went in and played them for what turned out to be **Ray Stevens's** brother, **John Ragsdale**. He said, "These are great!" and I signed with them. Right after that I wrote a song the **Oak Ridge Boys** recorded, and got an advance. Allyson and I lived in this little house out in Hermitage, and we opened the envelope on the porch. It was for \$1,500, and we were jumping up and down ... I'd never seen that kind of money in one check.

My best experiences have just been with normal people who call in — prodding them. People do a lot of weird things, and the funniest things pop out. When they're calling on a cell phone, they may be in a hospital bed or standing knee-deep in a septic tank.

The night my father died, I decided to do my show the next day. People were kind of mystified about it. They said, "You know, I would have fallen apart." But I needed that structure of seeing the guys, doing the show and then saying, "I have to go up to my father's funeral now." I needed to compartmentalize it, to get up and just go do it. It's an odd dynamic, but it really helped me.



Going Nuts: House with Ray Stevens and rodent friend plugging the song "Mississippi Squirrel Revival." "One of the most talented people I ever met," House says. "He also has one of the worst golf swings in America."

What you hear on *The House Foundation* is very much what our relationships and conversations

I used to get political on the air, and have a degree in political science. About five years ago a guy called me up, and said, "You know, dude, I don't listen to you to hear CNN. If I want that, I'll turn it on." At first, it kind of upset me. And then I thought, "You know, he's right." It's one of the best programming calls I ever got. Leading up to the election I had a call from a woman who said, "You're such a Republican. I'm so sick of hearing that crap, I wish you'd stop it." And the very next caller said, "You're such a Democrat. Why are you that way?" I thought, "Hmm, I've done my job. They were *both* upset with me."

My mom lived near Cincinnati. When I was on **WSM-AM**, a 50-kw clear channel station, it was the only time in my career that she was ever able to hear me, weather conditions being correct. I'd call her and say, "Did you hear the show? What'd you think?" She was on my show a lot in the '80s. And she said, "No, honey, it faded out. It just kept getting weaker and weaker. I guess a lot of people were listening to the show today between you and me." She thought that too many people were listening, and all the radios sucked the signal out of the sky by the time it got to her. She said, "There were a lot of people tuned in today because I could barely hear you."



Whoever's In Nashville: Autumn House, Allyson House, Reba and House on Labor Day 1999 at Reba's place. Splashing in the pool (not shown) was **Hillary Scott**, later of **Lady Antebellum**, who was about 12 at the time.

The luck involved with my brain thing was unbelievable. I had about 20 minutes left ... I was right down against it. I just happened to call Allyson, she happened to answer the phone. She never answers it, and doesn't even have it turned on half the time. She called 911 or I would have laid on the floor and died.

Being inducted is fabulous. I had some trepidation about it because it makes you kind of feel like you're *done*. But Allyson said, "No, dummy, it means that people really like what you did, so go down there and accept it with grace," which I will do. It's a grand moment and hopefully a grand night, and is something I'll feel good about forever. **CAC**