

ACM RADIO WINNERS

Meet the only folks who went to Vegas knowing they'd be big winners



ACM Small Market On-Air Personality Of The Year:

Mike Lawrence and Dana Carole, KHKX/Midland-Odessa

A WEST TEXAS LOVE AFFAIR

It's rare enough to find a husband-and-wife morning show, let alone an award-winning tandem that is a community fixture the way PD Mike Lawrence and Dana (pron. "Danna") Carole are in West Texas. They won the CMA Broadcast Personality of the Year in 1996, the CRB Personality of the Year Award in 2000 and now the ACM Small Market On-Air Personality of the Year. With KHKX (Kicks 99.1) since its inception, Mike and Dana shared how they got together and have merged their talents so successfully.

Mike: I lied to get my first job. It was back when you had to have that Third Class FCC license with the broadcast endorsement. There was a job opening in Flint, MI 75 miles away from Detroit, where I lived. It was overnights on the week-ends, so we're talking real graveyard. The guy said, "Do you have your license?" I replied, "Yes, I do." It was the Tuesday after Labor Day. I ran out and bought the study book for the license. I slept with that book for two days, took the test on Thursday, scored a 98 and Friday I went back up there and got the job. Later, after working in Detroit and Toledo, I sent a resume to Ted Stecker at KSCS/Dallas, and he gave it to his wife, Doris Thompson, who was consulting a station down here. I've been in Midland-Odessa ever since.

Dana: I had a degree in journalism. When I moved here I took a broadcasting class and heard my voice over those big speakers for the first time. I started out in 1980 inserting news into a recorded Drake Chenault Country daytimer, and after winning a couple of news awards it was like, "OK, I think I'll do this." I actually tried to leave radio. I had been doing mornings here, but when my partner Jim Mantel (now at WGAR/Cleveland) left, I quit. But Mike started wooing me with flowers. When we started mornings together, the first day was my best day in broadcasting; it's been great ever since. Mike is so easy to work with and is so giving; he knows



it doesn't matter who delivers the punchline.

Mike: In 1994, we were taping a television show on a Wednesday called Mike and Dana's Inside Country to be played back on Sundays. Dana was actually in labor with our child Rachel at the time. At the end, Dana was saying, "And of course, you'll be able to see it again on Sunday," when a contraction hit her.

Dana: You could see it come across my face.

Mike: So she tosses it to me. Of course, on TV you're not really looking at each other. I started reading my story, and meanwhile Dana's over there going, "Uhhhhhhhh!"

Dana: And I gave birth two hours later – a close call.

Mike: But by God, we got the show in.

Dana: We've had two children together, and I've broadcast from the bedroom with the baby both times that day. Our listeners are part of our family, and you cannot be part of your community if you're not in it. That means helping out in every possible way. Love your listeners, and respect them enough to know what they want. For us, it's God, family, country. That's pretty much the attitude of West Texas.

Mike: Our GM/owner Tommy Vasocu got us here almost 18 years ago and has probably been the best mentor we've ever had, along with Michael Owens, Buddy Owens and Larry Daniels. They've recognized that we're all mentally defective, and despite that, have shaped our career. We can't thank them enough, and this award is a tremendous honor.

Dana: We were best friends and morning show partners before we were married; it's all our relationship has ever known, and now we're parents together as well. We see things the same way because we've been together for so long. There's a really big bathtub at home, and every evening Mike and I sit in it for about 45 minutes together and kind of get it all off our chests.

Mike: It's all part of our book, *We Go In As Humans And Come Out As White Raisins*.



Dana and Mike

ACM Small Market Station Of The Year:

WPAP/Panama City, FL

WHERE A COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER

Florida's oldest FM station could not have picked a better time than its 40th anniversary to earn its first major honor as ACM Small Market Station of the Year. Long recognized as a pillar of the Emerald Coast, 92.5 WPAP has been Country throughout its four-decade history, and for the past two years has been programmed via a committee comprised of MD/morning host Shane Collins, OM Eddie Rupp and Marketing/Promotions Director Benjamin

Bennett. The Clear Channel station is led by GM Pete Norton, with new PD Jay Cruze coming aboard recently.

"When I heard the news, I cried like a small child," says Collins. "I called my wife, my mother and father, and wanted to hug everybody here at the station. It was all a team effort, and so emotional. I guess that's what Country music is – it's all about real life, real people in real situations. And when you get an honor like this, it just humbles you."

"I have never held another job – never worked retail, a car wash or fast food restaurant. Since the age of 14 – from station to station, town to town – radio's all I've ever done. When I was about seven, I would take one record off my little record player and see if I could keep talking while loading on another. I wanted to be Bob Kingsley, Dick Clark and Casey Kasem. Growing



Shane Collins

up in Tuscaloosa, I listened to Patty & The Doc on WZZK/Birmingham. It so happens I do afternoons on The Bull there (WDXB), so now I get to work with Patty and Dollar Bill.

"My first week here I was almost fired because I'm the biggest practical joker. GM Pete Norton was our GSM at the time, and one day when he was out I opened a can of sardines and dripped the juice around the corners of his office. The aroma was everywhere, but you couldn't tell where it was coming from. Throughout the day, he emptied his trash can four times and went through two cans of Lysol. The whole sales staff was asking, 'Did you eat some-

thing? Are you sick? What's wrong? Your office smells.' He was totally embarrassed and not happy. But through that he became one of the best friends I've ever had in radio.

"One of our goals is to provide a great product – entertainment and music. But above anything else, we don't hesitate to step up and listen to our community and deliver: blood drives, the St. Jude's Radiothon – whatever they need, we do. We throw out the rule book

when it comes to raising money for charities or law enforcement. This morning I was on a high school campus raising money for our 'Project Graduation' so kids can have a party on graduation night in a safe environment off the streets away from drinking and driving. Parents and businesses donated thousands of dollars for games and prizes. Meanwhile, Mark Wills was here talking about his new album and entertaining the troops. It all happens on a daily basis around here – it's awesome.

"I have the utmost respect for our staff. One of my biggest blessings is to work with people who believe in and trust me to be their leader, such as morning co-host Tom Lewis, Pete Norton – a great coach – Ben Bennett and Chief Engineer Charlie Wooten. I close each show saying, 'It's not about how many breaths we take, it's about how many moments we create that take our breath away.' That's what we like to do: put a smile on your face; invite you to sing along; get you through the workday, that bad part of your life; and also celebrate the good times with you."

"During one hurricane everything in town was shut down, and because Charlie had installed a back-up generator, we were the only station on the air. We had to spend the night at the station, sleeping side by side on the floor, taking shifts to broadcast vital emergency information to save others' lives in our community. We had no water or electricity, but it brought us together as coworkers and as friends. It made us a family."



ACM RADIO WINNERS

**ACM Medium Market
On-Air Personality
Of The Year:**

Charlie James & Pam Wilder, WCOS-FM/Columbia, SC

WINNING THROUGH REAL, RELATABLE RADIO

If ever there were two people naturally suited to radio, Clear Channel's WCOS-FM/Columbia, SC morning duo of Charlie James and Pam Wilder would be at the top of the list. Both got their first airshifts serendipitously, and their passion for broadcasting and serving their communities has paid off with their first major radio award after seven years together in mornings along with their highly appreciated producer Tumbleweed (Phil Carter).

Pam: I've only had two jobs in my career – here and mornings at WMTZ/Johnstown, PA. I was very fortunate to stumble into that position. Growing up I wanted to do something using my voice. I went to a CMA Awards viewing party as a listener, and the station was holding on-air auditions, as the morning co-host was leaving. I had no clue who anybody was. I told them I'd love to try out, and had a blast. I wasn't nervous; it was just fun, talking, relating and obviously loving the music. Then I had to listen to *everybody else* for the next month who wanted the job. But they called me back and said, "We've had a cancellation. Do you want to come in again?" I thought, "Oh, my gosh, I could do this!" And several weeks later they offered me the job.

Charlie: People had always told me that I should be in radio. I was the class clown, doing impressions and things to make people laugh. I was a news photographer in my hometown of Augusta, GA and a friend at the TV station who also did the morning news on WKXC said, "I'm going on vacation for two weeks. Can you fill in and do the news? It's real easy, I'll show you how." After she was promoted they asked me to take over. I thought I was horrible. My bosses took sat me down one

day, and I figured, "This is the day they're going to fire me." They asked, "Why is our newsman funnier than our morning guy?" I said, "I'm sorry, I'll never do it again." They replied, "No, starting Monday you're our morning guy." "I said, "You gotta be kidding." They said, "Well, we'll double your salary." I said, "You got it!"

Mornings is the only airshift I've ever done. We went from No. 3 to No.1 in the first book and stayed there for six or seven years. Then some opportunities came up in Columbia, and I was doing Talk radio down the hall when Pam's cohost left. They told me on two or three different occasions that I couldn't have the job before we started working together.

Pam: I have a picture on my desk of one of the first times we ever did the morning show live. It was around the Super Bowl in January and so we did a remote outdoors and it was freezing cold. To win a video game system, people came out to dive their faces into ice cream Super Bowl "Sundaes" with whipped cream. You could tell how cold people were, including us.

Charlie: Pam's a wife and mother of three. I'm a father of two and a husband. We just bring all the things that affect our lives into the studio. A lot of people say, "Leave your home behind." Well, we can't do that, that's part of what the show is.

Pam: I'll say something on the air about something going on in one of my children's lives and a mother will come up and say, "Oh, my gosh, I remember when this happened to my child and my child is 40 now." So I think as a mom I can relate to any mother, no matter how young or how old their children are.

Charlie: Winning this award hasn't sunk in yet. We've grown up loving the ACM, and realizing you're right up there with those people is something a couple of folks from Columbia have a little bit of trouble putting their hands around.

Pam: It's almost like you want to wait until the ACMs air to make sure your name is there, that it's real, and that nobody's going to say, "Nah, we're just kidding!"



Pam and Charlie



**ACM Medium Market Station
Of The Year:**

WIVK/Knoxville

EMBRACING CHANGE FOSTERS EVERLASTING SUCCESS

Led by 34-year station veteran and OM/PD Mike Hammond, WIVK/Knoxville completed a "Grand Slam" in 2006, winning the Marconi, R&R, CMA and, for the fourth time, the ACM Award for Medium Market Station Of The Year, plus four RTNDA Edward R. Murrow Awards and numerous AP honors. Individual WIVK personalities are equally celebrated, with morning team Andy & Alison, partner/producer Jimmy, 20-year midday personality Colleen and afternoon driver Gunner all being major award-winners or nominees. Add in perennial 20-plus shares and huge annual revenues, and it's easy to see why WIVK is one of broadcasting's crown jewels. Mike shared his thoughts on how the 54-year-old station stays fresh and vital.

Community service is absolutely huge. We're always out raising money, helping everything from a school to a civic club to a charity like St. Jude. We also try to be cutting-edge and not repeat the same kinds of promotions. I don't want us to think like a Country station, but as a media outlet so we can attract not only the Country audience but also

others who might come to WIVK for the fun promotions. Because we also have a full service news department, it's kind of like a general store. We listen and learn from the people, and try to offer everybody a little bit of everything.

The talent we have makes my job so much easier. Back when I first started, we had a stellar staff too. Today everybody still brings something special to the table, not only for their show but also for the community. They're veteran pros, and they also give me good insight into their thoughts and feelings on what's going on. That helps keep the station sounding fresh and moving in the right direction.

I've been with the company since 1973. My biggest fear is that WIVK would become a dinosaur, that we would not stay relevant to the times. WIVK does not sound the same today as it did 10 or 20 years ago. What we've been able to accomplish is to be forward-thinking, to change with the times and embrace the new technology. We haven't fought change, we've embraced it.

I like to create what I call an atmosphere of creativity. That means anybody in the station who has an idea can come to me any time and not feel their idea is stupid. You never know when somebody's going to think of something that's going to mean revenue and ratings. Or someone else will come up with a slant on it, and before you know it, you've got some really neat ideas from people simply because they're free to think. It doesn't mean that we'll always take their suggestions, but at least they know they're going

to be heard and be given serious consideration.

But one promotion in the late '70s/early '80s called "The Gold Hammer" turned out to be a disaster. This was before there were many of the current rules and regulations in place. We hid a

golden hammer in the market, and it was a scavenger hunt for \$5,000. We had tied in a client, but unbeknownst to us, the client moved the hammer. So here we were giving out clues and people were getting so excited about this money that they were literally destroying property. We got calls from the police and everywhere else. We learned a lot from that promotion!

My most special memory is our 50th anniversary celebration in 2003. Dolly Parton, who got her start at WIVK, came back and did a great tribute to the radio station. We had Charlie Daniels, Kenny Rogers, Ray Price, Travis Tritt, and that's just a few of the artists who were here. Kenny Chesney gave a very moving speech on what WIVK meant to him. That day he announced his first stadium show [Neyland Stadium], and said he'd charge \$50 in honor of WIVK's 50th anniversary. It was a dream come true for him, and we were able to help him work that out. The way Nashville responded – not only the artists, but also a lot of the Music Row executives who came over – made it a very special night and one I will always remember.



FOCUSED GROUP:
The entire WIVK/Knoxville staff poses for...hey, wait. Who's on air right now?

ACM RADIO WINNERS

ACM Major Market On-Air Personality Of The Year:

Jim Denny, Deborah Honeycutt & Kevin Freeman, WFMS/Indianapolis

FRIENDS IN ALL THE RIGHT PLACES

There's no place like home, and that's especially true for the WFMS/Indianapolis morning team of Jim, Deb and Kevin, who all hail from the Indy City region and are in their sixth year together at the market-leading Cumulus station, ably supported by Executive Producer Roland "Gator" Norio. They've received numerous nominations, but this is their first major radio award. When Country Aircheck called, Deb was recovering from slamming her finger in a bathroom stall door; she had dunked it in the toilet to ease the pain. Colleague Kevin dryly observed on-air, "Good thing it wasn't your head." The trio talk about how they are so successful working together.

Kevin: Part of it is being from this area and that means something. And we've all got longevity at WFMS. I've been here going on 17 years, Deborah's got 13, and Jimmy has 20 years. So we've all worked together in some way for quite a long time, and that helps too.

Jim: Market Manager **Charlie Morgan** and I did mornings here at WFMS from 1990-1996, but before that we'd become friends when I was doing middays and afternoons. In fact, I'm the godfather of his son. PD **Bob Richards** was our morning producer for a long time, and he's become a great friend. And Gator has really come in and fit as producer. You know what the whole secret is? I know this sounds hokey, but we're all family and friends. Man, that makes a difference.

Kevin: I grew up next door to Charlie, so I've got pictures!

Deb: Bob and Charlie know that we know what we're doing and they offer some insights here and there, but they don't micromanage. They let us go out and enjoy our jobs. I don't think we could find friendships like these anywhere else. There's something to be said for being able to come in and just talk about your life and having it make a good show. We all seem to play off each other really well, and maybe that's what management picked up on and why they finally formed the three of us together.

Kevin: Charlie and Bob were on this side of the microphone before becoming Market Manager and PD. And Roland: You talk about voices, you talk about creativity ...

Jim: You talk about mentally disturbed!

Kevin: He could be a morning show just by himself. We're real fortunate to have someone like him.

Jim: There are so many stories, but one of the coolest moments was back in 1998 when Kevin and I got to go to Nagano, Japan and broadcast from the Olympics for a week or so. Instead of bringing up all the Olympics stuff, we tried to bring the culture of Japan back home through the radio. And, yes, I do love sake!

Deb: The day I came back to work after having my first child, I really thought I had it down. But somebody said to me on-air, "So how are you holding up?" And though I'd been fine for the first two hours after returning from my leave, I just started bawling. I literally sobbed. But the best part about it was that I got a ton of e-mails from all these other moms and listeners who said, "I was right there ... I was crying on the way to work right along with you." They knew how I felt, and that made me feel good.

Kevin: My best and worst day was September 11, 2001. I think people got a chance to see radio at its best. It was immediate. We could tell the story and were on the air for quite awhile. I was real proud to be part of radio during that time. It's a tragedy the nation faced, obviously, but I felt like we were serving the community at its best.

Jim: I think our listeners have always enjoyed our show, and we appreciate it when they come up at remotes and talk to us. But there's a lot of great talent out there all across the country, and to have people in your industry say, "You guys do good work, and this year you're the best," it's like, "Wow."



Jim, Deb, Kevin

ACM Major Market Radio Station Of The Year:

WSIX/Nashville

RADIO MATH: PERSONALITY + COMMITMENT = WINNING

Arguably Country radio's biggest pressure cooker is Nashville, where four competitor stations battle for the attention of both Music City and the labels and artists of Music Row. Under fourth-year PD Keith Kaufman, WSIX has won the ACM Major Market Station of the Year in 2003, a CMA nod in 2005 and now the ACM award again for 2006. Kaufman shared his thoughts on what makes WSIX Nashville's top Country broadcaster for the third straight book and such a legendary station.

It's personality, personality, personality. And **Gerry House & The House Foundation** [Mike Bohan, Al Voecks, Duncan Stewart, Richard Falken] is the cornerstone, without question. The amount of material that Gerry and his team bring to his show every day is amazing. **Big D and Bubba** do some 30 morning shows and then come back live on WSIX in the afternoons. They don't have to do that - they want to. I've got a former PD in middays [Dennis "Newman" Hughes], another former PD at night [Slam Duncan], and both are musicologists. These guys know all of these artists; they're friends with them, and that brings an advantage to this station. I don't know of a group of people who work harder. And Market Manager **Tom English** is a fan of the format, the music and the artists. He knows the players involved, and there's good chemistry between us. Of course, now that I say that, he's going to whack me next week!

I grew up in a radio station my dad owned with a couple of his buddies outside Orlando, so there was no question that I wanted to be around radio. At one point while in college fulltime at Austin Peay I was GM of our campus station, doing afternoon drive at AC WCVQ/Clarksville, TN and also interning at WGFX/Nashville. Just a complete radio geek.

On the way home I dream that one of these other stations here will start playing R. Kelly. And on the way in every morning I think about how I'm going to kick their butt because they're all still playing Alan Jackson records. I think I put more [pressure] on myself than anyone else, but there are enough people pointed in the same direction that we will win. And I've never been in a situation where morale was so good so often. These guys truly love what they do, and right now, everybody's doing the hallway "high five." There were some incredible stations up for this award. I'm intimately familiar with several of them because I steal stuff from them all the time.

There have been two particularly special moments in the 12 years I've been here. The first was the day Gerry House came back from brain surgery, it was a parade of friends, both on the phone and in the studio. And it wasn't about disc jockey-artist. Beyond anything, it was about friends.

The second was the day **Hoss Burns** decided he was going to leave WSIX. To come on the air in a Country format and say, "Guess what? I'm gay and I have AIDS." That was just remarkable. And again, a parade of friends came through here and helped raised so much money for St. Jude. *USA Today*, the AP, CNN were all here. We set up a press room upstairs and brought artists in through the alley to go on the air with Hoss and then talk with the media. Those were two absolutely incredible days, not only for me but for WSIX. These are two very courageous men.

One day last fall, I returned a call from Hoss, who was at his mom's house. She answered and said, "Keith, when are you gonna start playing my boy's record on the radio?" Turns out Hoss's little brother, Rhea Boyer, is the lead singer in Carolina Rain. So here we go, from the "Only In Nashville" file: getting worked by the artist's mother! Talk about being on the spot. What do you do? I just kind of froze, and said, "Well, you know, um, it shouldn't be that much longer ... you'll start hearing that *real soon* on the Big 98!" And I did start playing "I Ain't Scared."



Keith Kaufman



ACM National On-Air Personality Of The Year:

Bob Kingsley

THEY CALL HIM MR. COUNTDOWN

Country Music DJ Hall of Famer **Bob Kingsley** is unquestionably one of radio's best and most beloved one-to-one communicators, winning two ACM honors, two CMAs and 16 Billboard trophies. He's now the first recipient of the ACM's award for weekly national personality as host of Bob Kingsley's Country Top 40 on 315 stations (as well as Bob Kingsley with Today's Hit Makers) via Jones Media Group and KCCS Productions, after 27 years hosting ABC's American Country Countdown. We could fill a book on Bob's career, but until then, here are a few insights on this remarkable broadcaster.

I loved listening to the radio growing up, and was fascinated by the three-hour Saturday morning countdown with **Joe Yokum** and **Al Jarvis** on Top 40 KFVB/Los Angeles. At the time, I was working as a box boy at a supermarket in Van Nuys. In those days people didn't lock their car doors, and so I would sneak out in the parking lot and get into one of the cars. I'd slide way down onto the floor where people couldn't see me through the windshield, turn on the radio and listen because it just killed me to miss the Top 10. I would stay through No. 9 and No. 8 before having to go back in and take out more groceries. Then I'd go find another car. I probably could have been shot for doing this! But everybody had their favorites and I needed to know whether mine went up or down and what was No. 1. It's always been a fasci-



Bob Kingsley

nation of mine, and interesting that it's what I do for a living today.

While in the Air Force in Iceland, somebody told me they were looking for an announcer for TFK, the Armed Forces station in Keflavik. They gave me some copy and I just murdered it; nobody could have been worse than me. Yet they actually gave me the job and put me in Special Services. But after two weeks the major came in, saying, "I don't think this is going to work out too well, Kingsley. However, we're not going to transfer you back to the motor pool. We'll put you in Armed Forces Television and once every half-hour you can say, 'This is TFK TV Iceland.' You think you can handle that?" I said, "Yes, sir, I think I can." And I'd go in after midnight when they were off the air, and practice all night.

Tom Rounds at Watermark was a tremendous influence on me and one of the smartest radio men I've ever known. **Gene Weed** was a huge inspiration and so was **Don Howard**, down in San Diego. I would emulate their mannerisms, and by virtue of doing that, my own personality started evolving.

There's still a whole bunch of stations out there looking for people to come into the business. For younger broadcasters, you must not worry about the dollar, but you have to find a place where they'll let you work at being a personality. And if you stay with it, it'll all come around.

With CT40, it was a huge change going from ABC to suddenly being on our own. We talked with many people, and it came down to who really wanted to work with us. The Jones people just so impressed me, and a year and five months later I'm still overly impressed. Everybody's worked so hard on this thing, and when I heard the news about this award it was a pretty happy day. Just so sweet.

To this day I think about one person to talk to and get his face in my mind; I always see that person driving in their car or truck. I'll go into a break with a tease like, "Dierks Bentley and his first Grand Ole Opry appearance - that story in the Top 10 next." I see this person saying to himself, "I need to hear about that!" and when I get to that bit, he'll be reaching over and turning up the radio. A lot of people tell me they listen while on the way to church ... I envision a tease that will make them late to the pew! **CAC**