

Looney

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Connecticut when he was drafted just after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He, and Chernault met on the troop train headed for induction, but were separated for the duration of the war.

Back in Roanoke in 1946, the two became reacquainted as

employees of what then was WSLS radio, now WSLC-AM, one of two stations in town. There, they began working with several others, including Burton, Jim Dickey and Mel Linkous, who later would be instrumental in the creation of WSLS-TV.

Hughes appeared on-air in numerous roles before and after "Uncle Looney," but it was the bearded, overalls-clad bumpkin that people remembered.

Even though the character hasn't been seen on the air for three

decades, his fans remembered him.

Chernault recalled accompanying Hughes to a dance marking the reopening of the Hotel Roanoke. "A woman in her late 30s or early 40s came up to me, noticing I had him with me, and wanted to know if I would introduce her" to Uncle Looney, Chernault said.

Hughes "was probably — even up to today — the most popular local TV personality ever," Chernault said.

Hughes remained with WSLS

until he retired in 1970.

He is survived by his wife, Myrtle; a son, Thomas Jefferson Hughes III; a daughter, Susan Hughes-Butler; three stepchildren and one grandson.

A memorial service will be held Saturday at 2 p.m. at Covenant Presbyterian Church. The family will receive friends in the church fellowship hall after the service.