

Extra



NASCAR isn't just for good ol' boys

Sports

HURRICANES COMING

Miami comes to Virginia with two straight losses



POSTSEASON PERK

Frank Beamer will cash in on Hokies bowl game

THE ROANOKE TIMES

TUESDAY NOVEMBER 9, 2004

roanoke.com

ROANOKE, VIRGINIA 5

Former announcers reminisce about the radio station's heyday as its old building is torn down WROV lives on in memories



SAM DEAN | The Roanoke Times

Hoping to salvage a few more items before the building is demolished, former WROV disc jockey Bucky Stover navigates his way Monday through the debris around the old radio station building, even as demolition crews tear at the building.

Personalities such as the late Fred Frelantz, Jivin' Jackson and Jack Fisher all gained popularity with their shows.

By Lois Caliri

lois.caliri@roanoke.com
981-3117

You can demolish a building. But you can never tear down the bedrock of memories.

In its day, creative juices flowed from WROV, the AM radio station that rocked Roanoke from the late 1950s to the '80s.

The early years of ROV featured Jerry Joynes, who played "pop" records of Frank Sinatra, Perry Como and Peggy Lee. Radio personalities routinely claimed 55 percent of the Roanoke listening audience.

During the 1960s and '70s, ROV dominated the teen audience. Hot-rodding teenagers tuned in as

they cruised Lendy's, the hot spot for mixing and mingling amid Buddy Boy burgers and onion rings.

Personalities such as the late Fred Frelantz, Jivin' Jackson and Jack Fisher all gained popularity with their shows broadcast from the studio on Cleveland Avenue Southwest. On Monday, the old, double-wide-sized studio building — built around an original Quonset hut — was demolished.

"It's gut-wrenching," said former disc jockey Buddy Stover.

But it also has helped former DJs to spin stacks of memories from their time in the station's AM heyday.

The ROV of the late '50s through the mid-'60s was perhaps best known for its "chimes" format, which featured "Big Ben" chimes on the quarter hour along with voice-overs by Jess DuBoy.

"It was the kind of station you could put on in the background and you always knew what time it was," said Phil Beckman, a

@roanoke.com

Hear the voices of the WROV DJs of the past

Bedford native and former ROVER in the mid-'60s and again in 1971. "The chimes were one of the selling points of the station."

Over the years, personalities came and went. Managers shuffled the on-air lineup. The station won awards. Personalities garnered national attention. Ownership changed. Musical formats changed. Personalities clashed.

In 1981, the king of disc jockeys, Bart Prater, left ROV to join rival K-92, WXLK-FM. He then told The Roanoke Times that philosophical differences between him and station owner Burt Levine led to the parting.

WROV history

1952: WROV 1240 AM, the "Rock of Roanoke," went on the air in 1952. Burt Levine purchased the station in July 1955. Jivin' Jackson was the most popular disc jockey in town.

1961: Frederick David Wilson Mugler III arrives in Roanoke and takes the on-air name of "Fred Frelantz." Mugler and Jack Fisher joined forces on the "Fisher Frelantz Show" in 1966 and produced legendary material, such as their classic "Bonsack New Years Day Parade." During the mid-1960s other well-known disc jockeys included Jack Fisher, H. Gale Henley, Dick Brown, Buddy O'Shea, and Glenn C. Lewis. WROV boasted of having "more listeners than all other local radio stations combined."



Frelantz



Prater

1968: WROV hired Bart Prater, who would become the face of the station throughout the next decade.

1970s: Early in the decade the on-air talent included Prater, Robert W. Morgan, Fisher, Bill Thomas and Ron Tompkins. Later, Dan Alexander came on the air. The station on Cleveland Avenue was remodeled and expanded from its original Quonset hut.

1975: WROV had a special guest DJ for a night — Wolfman Jack.

1988: Levine sold WROV to Tom Joyner, owner of several stations in North Carolina.

1989: WROV 96.3 FM took to the airwaves in February.

1998: WROV-AM went from an oldies' format to an all-sports ESPN radio affiliate with the new call letters WGMN.

1999: WROV-FM and WGMN-AM moved from Cleveland Avenue to Brandon Avenue.

2001: WROV bought by Clear Channel Radio after several changes of ownership.

2004: A new transmitter building was built at the base of the tower on Cleveland Avenue to transmit signals for WGMN.