

Thomas B. Matthews Advertising Federation of Greater Hampton Roads 1970 Silver Medal Award Honoree



While “the best and the brightest” of Norfolk’s men were away from the home front during World War II, a bright young man at Maury High School was getting his first taste of writing news.

Tom Matthews, the 1970 recipient of the Silver Medal Award from the Advertising Federation of Greater Hampton Roads, started working for *The Ledger-Star* as a sportswriter in the 1940s. It was a position he filled after school and summers, while more experienced journalists were at war, and the first of many positions that Tom describes as coming into with no experience and learning on the job.

From there, he learned copywriting at radio station WNOR, moved on to WLOW, a then-independent radio station, and entered television in its pioneering days as a writer with the station that eventually would become today’s WHRO-TV.

Citing his media experience, Matthews applied at the Public Relations Institute - Norfolk, and was hired by another future Silver Medal Award honoree, Bev Lawler. There he not only learned the intricacies of public relations but also met a young beauty, who was to become his wife, Pat.

In 1959, Matthews started his own business, The Matthews Agency, and ran it for 17 years. During that time, he served as national president of MAAN, the Mutual Advertising Agency Network.

In 1976, he sold his business to yet another future Silver Medal Award recipient, Arthur Polizos, and was with the Polizos Agency for three years. Matthews then became manager of The Martin Agency’s Hampton Roads office, where he remained until becoming an independent advertising and marketing consultant in the mid-1980s.

Some of the work for which he gained awards and national recognition included naming and creating the game plan for the Virginia Beach Neptune Festival, and launching ad campaigns for Virginia Beach’s first enclosed mall, Pembroke Mall. Matthews led marketing efforts for the Pembroke area’s planned complex of residential and commercial development, which later became Virginia Beach’s Central Business District.

He also managed advertising and public relations for the election of G. William Whitehurst, the first Republican congressman to represent Virginia's Second Congressional District in 40 years.

Tom Matthews' career began with a Maury High School boys' sports column and culminated in more than four decades of helping to shape the resort, business and residential future of Virginia Beach. Like King Neptune, whose festival he helped found, Matthews holds a place of honor in the hearts of all who love the sea and the city that grew up beside it. He and wife Pat reside in Virginia Beach today.