

## Edward F. “Red” Rogers, Sr. Advertising Federation of Greater Hampton Roads 1979 Silver Medal Award Honoree



Many of today's generation of Hampton Roads newspaper and advertising people will acknowledge a debt to Edward Franklin Rogers, Sr., for his example, his counsel and his guidance.

The 1979 AAF Silver Medal Award recipient represented the second of three generations of newspapermen in this market. His father, Wilmot J. Rogers, was with the *Norfolk Virginian* and *The Virginian-Pilot* for 45 years. His son, Eddie, Jr., was assistant managing editor of *The Ledger-Star*. His wife, Kitty, was a newspaper librarian for 22 years.

He began his career in newspapering and advertising in 1916 with *The Virginian-Pilot* and *Norfolk Landmark*. World War I was responsible for separating him from the newsroom. Returning home from ROTC training at the University of Virginia and finding no reporting jobs open, he turned to advertising.

In 1920, Rogers moved over to Norman Hamilton's *Portsmouth Star*, serving variously as retail ad manager, national ad manager and the newspaper's representative in Norfolk. During those years, his ever-inquisitive mind led him into areas beyond advertising.

When photographic coverage became popular, Rogers built the newspaper's darkroom and a primitive enlarger with his own hands. He trained the fledgling photographers that followed him. When the newspaper decided to do its own photoengraving, he learned the process, bought the equipment, built the plant and hired the engraver. When a new press was needed, it was Red who helped shop for it and supervise its installation.

In the late 1940s, a new form of static-free radio broadcasting known as "frequency modulation" was being talked about. Rogers sought out its inventor, Major Edwin H. Armstrong, visited with him and learned about the technology. Returning to Portsmouth full of enthusiasm, he sold his publisher on applying for the license to Virginia's first FM station. The construction permit was granted and the call letters WVOP (Voice of Portsmouth) assigned. The publisher, however, had second thoughts and what would have been the area's pioneer FM station never went on the air.

When the Norfolk papers acquired *The Portsmouth Star* in 1955, Rogers stayed on as Portsmouth advertising manager. He later moved to assistant manager, general

advertising for *The Virginian-Pilot* and *Ledger-Star*, from which position he retired in 1963.

His post-retirement job as advertising and public relations manager with the Portsmouth Gas Company continued a relationship begun many years earlier, when Rogers took on full responsibility for the company's advertising program while on the staff of the newspaper.