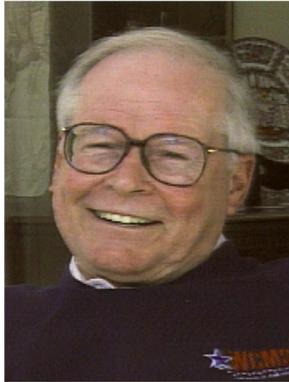


George A. and Marjorie S. Crump Advertising Federation of Greater Hampton Roads 2004 Silver Medal Award Honorees



For many of us, country music began when we first heard it on the radio. In Hampton Roads, that meant WCMS. During its heyday, it was the longest continuously operating all-country station, not only in Hampton Roads, but anywhere.

WCMS-AM 1050 signed on as an all-country radio station on July 1, 1954, broadcasting from sunrise to sunset. This was the first time that a radio station had

dedicated itself to playing nothing but country music.

George A. Crump would be the first to admit that, back in 1954, a country music format in Hampton Roads was a big gamble. But George believed in the station's listener appeal. So did his wife, Marjorie S. Crump, both assuming active roles in the station's operation. George was there from the beginning, even before they became sole owners in 1961.

The Advertising Federation of Greater Hampton Roads honored them together with 2004's Silver Medal Award.

The early days of WCMS were defined by live concerts, many performed on flatbed trucks at local shopping centers. As the popularity of the concerts grew, they soon were moved to the old Norfolk Arena (now the Harrison Opera House) and later the old Virginia Beach Dome. Jimmy Dean, Patsy Cline, Hank Snow, Kitty Wells, and then little known performers Elvis Presley and Willie Nelson, all appeared in WCMS sponsored shows.

No strangers to creative thinking, the Crumps were among a small group of about 12 who, as the Country Music Association, took "hillbilly" music to town, repackaged it as Country Music and made it a nationwide success.

"We began the country music trend which we now see all around us as something then was unique and different and many people thought it wouldn't work. The immediate reaction from the listener was excellent. The advertiser was a little more dubious. They were a little bit more sophisticated sometimes," George recalled.

Once used only by the likes of naval tailors and pawnshops as an advertising medium, George and Marj fashioned country music into a dynamic marketing vehicle.

In 1961, the first WCMS Cruiser appeared on the streets of Tidewater. Accompanied by medic-garbed drivers, this fully equipped ambulance proclaimed WCMS' marketing mission: "We Cure Sick Businesses." In the process, Marj and George helped a small ambulance company grow into a paramedic service, later purchased by the City of Norfolk. They became paramedics, rode in ambulances, worked in Norfolk General Hospital's emergency room, and were even licensed to perform autopsies.

They also founded the first local full-color slick advertising magazine, giving advertisers an opportunity to use something other than newsprint to graphically advertise. It was an innovative marriage of electronic and print advertising designed to serve client needs.

Under their ownership, WCMS made a large commitment to covering local news and was the first radio station in Virginia to produce on-air editorials.

In 1962, a national survey proclaimed that WCMS (now dubbed "The Radio Ranch") was "America's Number One Country Music Radio Station" with a larger audience, per capita, than any other station in the US specializing in country and folk music.

For its tenth anniversary in 1964, the Crumps launched a new station on the FM dial. WCMS-FM, at 100.5, became the area's first 24-hour country radio station.

Using the slogan "Where Country Music Swings," WCMS received its first CMA Award as the Country Music Association proclaimed it the Number One Radio Station promoting country music in the United States, large market category in 1973.

From the beginning in 1954 to the present day, WCMS continued to be known for its promotions. Among the most memorable were the "Write it Down" contest and when actor Howard Hesseman joined the air staff for a 3-day promotion. In fact, the CMA retired its "Best Station Promotion" award when WCMS won it four years in a row.

In 1987, as President/General Manager of WCMS, Marj was named Large Market General Manager of the Year by the Country Music Association. George served a stint as president of the Tidewater Sales and Marketing Association. Both have served on numerous councils and committees.

"We both loved the business and wouldn't change anything in our lives," Marj said. "It's been a beautiful business to be in. It's great when you can have fun doing your job."

Marj Crump sold the stations in 2000. George Crump died on February 3, 2005. Marj died on January 1, 2010.