

MY CAREER THEN AND NOW
By Fred Hobbs

These days little boys have a much more sophisticated and nuanced list of possible careers to consider when they “grow up” than were common when I was a five-year old. Fireman, cowboy, or soldier were the ones most talked about, anyway. But not by me. Oh, no. I wanted to be a radio announcer.

My older brothers had convinced me a year or so earlier when I believed everything they said, that the sounds of the announcers that came out of the radio were from little men inside the set (no women in that occupation back then.) I looked behind the Atwater Kent model in the living room and all I saw were red-glowing tubes, some wires and a loud speaker. So, I quickly determined that I could grow to full size and still realize my ambition to be one of the men who extolled the virtues of Ovaltine, Wheaties and Cocomalt.

As I began my school experiences, I enjoyed other pastimes; activities in the classroom, on the playground and after school just messing around. I played the usual kid games. And to be certain, my mother saw to that I did my chores, homework and learned the necessary social graces. Competitive sports were not among my priorities. I was, to put it charitably, not well coordinated, though I enjoyed watching sports events and more especially listening to them on the radio.

Consequently, I spent a good deal of my time pretending to be on the air, sitting at the kitchen table where the only electric clock in the house was located on the nearby wall, reading out loud from the daily newspaper the stories of the day interspersed with copy from the print ads for the commercials, timing it all on the clock at precisely fifteen minutes.

In high school, I joined a Junior Achievement radio group sponsored by a Denver station then called KFEL and appeared on a monthly teenage-oriented show. I gained experience at the University of Colorado radio studios followed by actual paid work at the local Boulder commercial station, an assignment in Armed Forces radio during my two-year Army stint and then various broadcast positions, including television, mostly in Denver.

I moved from in front of the camera and microphone into an office as a TV news director. Later, occasioned by an invitation to seek other opportunities (I was fired by a new manager at the TV station) I did venture into a related field, public relations.

But, I have never lost my love for broadcasting and specifically radio. Thanks to an historic preservation group and modern technology, in retirement now I can still be involved. Through the auspices of the Radio Historical Association of Colorado (RHAC), I produce and host a monthly program on the Internet called “Old Time Radio from the Rockies.” The program features a full-length show taken from the organization’s tape and CD library of more than 22,000 broadcasts from network radio in the 1930s, 40s, 50s and some 60s. Interviews with vintage radio enthusiasts and historians are interspersed with the actual programs, commercials and all. (Google “Radio Historical Association of Colorado” to give it a listen.) As they used to say: Tune in and stay tuned.

And, as to my career, well, I guess you could say then is also now.