

Longtime local radio host Bill Edwardsen, 78, dies

Reach Gazette reporter Jeff Wilkin

Bill Edwardsen was part of breakfast for many Capital Region radio fans during the 1950s and 1960s. Edwardsen was known for his popular "Breakfast with Bill" show, broadcast on WGY (810 AM) from 1954 until 1970. He also worked at several other local stations in a career that ended in 2004.

He began his career in 1948 at WNLK in Norwalk, CT. He made stops in Bridgeport, CT, Albuquerque, NM, and Fresno, CA before heading back east.

He played all the standards - Rosemary Clooney, Nat King Cole, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, and the Four Freshmen.

In 1970 WGY wanted to modernize with the new sounds of rock. Edwardsen refused and took his music to Cleveland's WJW. He was back in the Capital Region by 1972, making conversation on WQBK from 1972 until 1982. He made another move to Mechanicville's WMVI in 1983. From 1984 until 1995 he was behind the microphone at WABY. He also entertained Saturday mornings on WGNA's AM dial from 1996 until 2002. His last radio gig was a Sunday morning show at Siena College's WVCR. His final programs were heard during the summer of 2004.

He was his own man. He was not about to give in to anyone who tried to bring pressure on him to play certain music. He stuck to his guns and he succeeded.

Jean Stern, Edwardsen's wife, said they were married in 1981 - on Dec. 12, Frank Sinatra's birthday. Survivors include daughters Melody and Elizabeth, and three grandchildren.

Note from Barbara and Charlie Dana, W. Palm Beach, FL: Bill was a long-time member of FFS. He introduced the Freshmen in Albany and Schenectady when they were there years ago. Flanigan was with them at that time. He played their songs over the airways for as long as he was a radio personality and "DJ."

He played taped interviews he had made during cruises and at their performances in the northeast. He was a personal friend of ours and he will be missed.

He didn't have much good to say about the "new music" that is being played these days. He was a true Freshmen supporter and a devoted fan!

WE GET LETTERS

From Harry Podlesnik, South Park, PA

The first time I heard the Freshmen was in the early 50's on the radio singing with Stan Kenton. What a great sound!

A friend and I were in downtown Pittsburgh listening to a fine group - Tommy Turk and the Deuces Wild. Tommy was a fine trombone player.

We knew the Freshmen were appearing at the "Lenny Litman Copa," about 5 blocks away. We walked to the Copa. There were two seats at the bar. We sat listening to this fine group. I have been a Freshmen fan since.

I talked to Bob Flanigan at Sun Coast, Las Vegas, where the Freshmen were appearing. Talked about Pittsburgh area. They performed many times - Rose Calderone's Twin Coaches and Lenny Litman's Copa.

A Freshmen Fan Always

April, May, June 2006

"Moments To Remember" on PBS

by Jerry Richardson

The music was mostly from the "50's." "Moments To Remember" was a big hit for the Four Lads. Also music from "Four Aces," and the "Four Freshmen." Our man Flan did the introduction of the FF and they were excellent as usual. Patti Page was there as was Frankie Laine doing his thing on "That's My Desire." Frankie is 92 years of age and still singing and singing very good. My desire at age 92, if I get there, will probably be my next breath.

It was a great show with the greatest music of all time. There were many groups and individuals that you would recognize. PBS will probably run it again sometime soon.

My sister and her husband joined Sue and me in a trip to Branson MO last summer. They feature about any kind of music that one might desire. We were there in 2000 for two days on our way to the Col. Springs convention. We saw "The Sons of the Pioneers" show, both times, and I met Gary Lemaster who was almost a member of the Four Freshmen. He is a very talented individual as he plays many instruments and also is a good singer. At one time he was a member of the FFS - don't know if he still is. Andy Williams has a big theater there and puts on a good show. It's an easy place to get around and very reasonable hotel rates.

Hope to see all at the **Pittsburgh Convention!** Fresh regards.

Our Story

by Jerry Johnson, Nocona, TX

On May 1, 1956, my fiancée, Lucia Painter, and I attended Baylor University's annual May Day evening concert on the campus in Waco, TX. The featured entertainers were the Four Freshmen. They were great and we loved their performance! We married one month later, and during the next 44 years while we finished our education, served in the U.S. Army, raised our family, and made a living, we lost track of the Four Freshmen.

Early in 2000, Lucia's cousin, Dr. Jim Malone and his wife, Nancy, informed us that the Freshmen sound was still alive and well and going strong. They gave us an FFS membership, and the four of us attended the annual convention in Colorado Springs. Since then the four of us have enjoyed three more conventions together, and a performance in Ardmore, OK. Lucia and I have also enjoyed two Freshmen performances in Thousand Oaks, CA.

Even though our grown children and their families (a total of 7 grandchildren) have never seen or heard the Freshmen in person, all of them realize how much we enjoy the Freshmen and want others - extended family and long-time friends - to learn why Lucia and I brag so much about the fantastic Four Freshmen and their sound that we first heard 50 years ago this May 1st.

Thanks to our daughter, son and daughter-in-law, the Four Freshmen have been engaged to perform at our 50th Wedding Anniversary celebration on June 3rd - we are so excited and couldn't be more pleased!