



Hank Henry
1923-2003

Hank Henry was born Charles Allen Henry, Jr., Feb. 16, 1923, in Ft. Worth, Texas. His parents were 42 and 36, and he was their first child at a time when most of their peers were already grandparents. Both his parents had gone to Bible college and considered themselves missionaries to their communities. Hank's father, Charles Sr., worked as a day laborer in between preaching engagements. His mother, Effie, also did Christian outreach and often worked to help support the family. Hank was later joined by his brother Howard, known as Lee (who preceeded Hank in death). Both Hank and Lee had distinctive speaking voices, low and melodious, that served them well as newsman and actor, respectively.

When he was 17, Hank had his own Texas-wide radio show, *Youth and the News*. He then worked a series of short stints at radio stations all over the country. When he was 19, he slipped and said "Hell" on the air, then waited in fear for someone to complain to the



FCC and for the station to lose its license. No one ever did. Because of this, his children have never heard him swear.

In October 1942 he joined the Marines where he served as a radio operator in the Pacific Theater – Guam, Okinawa, and Guadalcanal. Because Hank was characteristically quiet, his children did not learn until they were adults themselves that he had only fired one shot during the war, after he thought he heard a sniper on his way to the latrine. Although he never killed anyone, he saw plenty

of death. Later, he was an Armed Forces broadcaster for station XABU in Tsing Tao in Occupied China.

When Hank returned from the war, he worked at a

variety of radio stations in several Western states. While working in Klamath Falls, he met Nora Meeker, who was a clerk in a record shop. (One of the women who also worked at the Klamath Falls



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A 國
B 陸
U 戰
電 隊
臺 第
廣 六
播 師
主 播
任 團

radio station would later go on to give birth to Hank's future son-in-law.) Hank later said he was "smitten at first sight." Nora says she married him "because he was kind." He was 31 and she was 19. They were married in 1954. At the wedding, Hank was so nervous he forgot to kiss Nora, until she teasingly said, "Aren't you going to kiss the bride?"

Hank worked at stations all over the West. In 1958, he had a show on KGW-radio in Portland, where he was known as "The Housewives' Delight." But

this was only clever ad copy that did not reflect the real Hank, who was never a flirt.

Hank made sure to tell his wife every day that he loved her. Unlike his parents, who had withheld affection in the belief it would prepare their boys for

the toughness of the world, Hank made a point of telling his children how much he loved them.



In 1963, he joined KMED (Channel 10, later KTVL) as a TV news anchor. At the time, the station was losing money. One of the salesmen had an idea of a half-hour special on area high school bands, to be underwritten by a music store. But the station didn't own a sound camera.



No problem. Hank made an audio tape of each band performing, then shot silent film from a distance that would be played along with the tape. Only the tape player

broke, and the desperate audio operator found an album of Sousa marches and played those behind the film cuts. So when Hank and the conductor talked about how students first learned music in elementary school, and showed some kids, instead of hesitant squeaks, the TV audience hear the magnificent sound of a 100-piece marching band.



Hank wrote his own copy – he was a 60 word per minute two-fingered typist -and also filmed many of his own stories. He was the first boss of Ann Curry, of NBC's Today Show. And for many years, he did the Jerry Lewis Telethon, even after he left the station, and it was difficult for him to stay up for such a long stretch.

His kids remember that having Hank as their father was like having a celebrity in the family. People came up to talk to him at gas stations, grocery stores, and restaurants, and even though he was quite shy, he was unfailingly polite, even signing autographs.

In 1982, he decided to run for Jackson County Commissioner. He ended up being elected to three terms in a row. As he was running for his first election, the then-publisher of the



Medford Mail Tribune, Eric Allen, wrote a moving column about his wife's death. Hank wanted to compliment him on the column, but felt it would look like he was currying favor. Only after Allen wrote an editorial endorsing Hank's opponent did he feel like he could mail his letter. Allen then wrote a column about how people sometimes were not at all like you had thought, and sent Hank a note saying the column was about him.



In 1994, Hank reluctantly retired at the age of 72. For several years, he wrote a column, *Over the Back Fence*, for the *Medford Mail Tribune*. He also read scriptures for KDOV. He was active in seniors' issues, and his voice is still heard on Jefferson Public Radio on the program *As It Was*.

Hank is survived by his wife of 49 years, Nora, and his children April Henry, Joe Henry, and Melody Swift, and five grandchildren: Sadie, Franklin, Tasha, Theodore, and Henry.



