

Bob Allison, Detroit radio staple, 'Bowling for Dollars' host, dies at 87

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Bob Allison, who started in radio in 1950, enjoyed a longtime stint on WWJ-950 doling out daily household tips and recipes and continued to host a daily local radio show until two weeks ago, has died, WWJ announced Wednesday night.

Allison was 87, and recently had been moved to a nursing home, WWJ reported. (<https://wwjnewsradio.radio.com/articles/news/longtime-detroit-radio-tv-host-bob-allison-dies-at-87>)

Allison also hosted the popular "Bowling for Dollars" TV show in the 1970s.



His radio career spanned 70 years, and he often was asked what he was going to do in retirement.

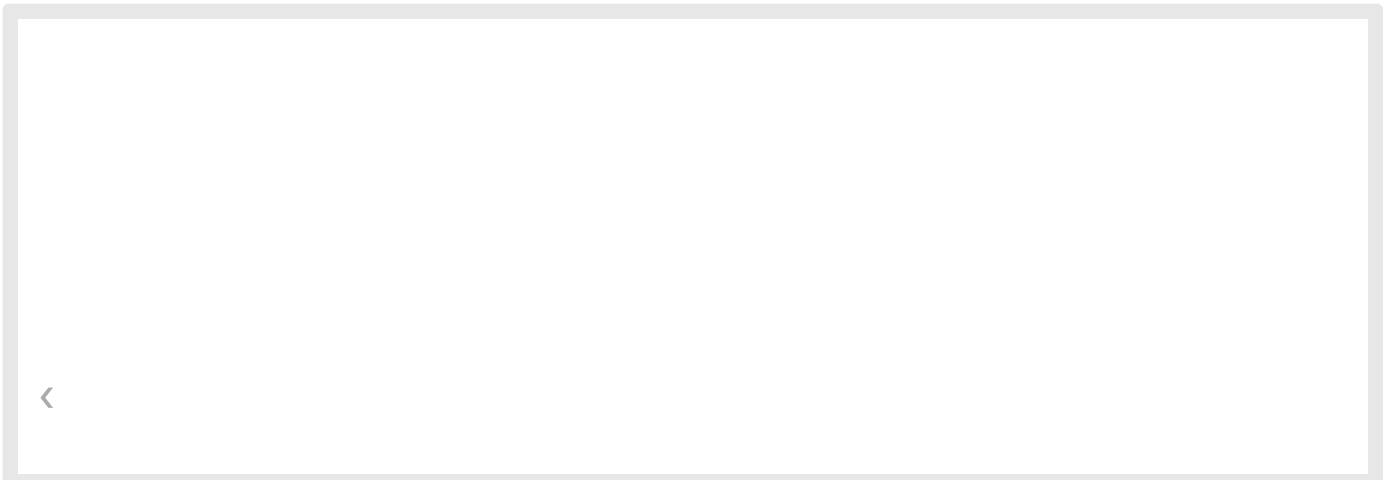
"I don't know. I never worked," Allison said with a smile, during an interview with WWJ last year. "I don't work. I do what I want to do, which is perform, and radio's a great vehicle for that. And that's the way it was here at WWJ. I was somebody who liked radio, and I did and I still do.

"I am a performer."

Allison, born Bob Allesee in LaPorte, Indiana, started in radio in 1950, right out of high school, and years later, he found a niche at WWJ in the 1960s, thanks to a program that was popular in Baltimore.

Bob Allison had a seven-decade radio career, spent mostly in Detroit. (Photo: Detroit News)

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Allison was pitched "Ask Your Neighbor," and wasn't immediately enthused. But he made it his own, and within two months, the ratings showed the program No. 1 in the market.

Essentially, he served as a sounding board for women — admittedly, he told WWJ two years ago, many women who couldn't get through to their own husbands.

"We would talk about things like that," Allison said in 2019, "and get different comments from other women who had solved those problems with those guys."

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Of recipes, he said those "perhaps were the No. 1 things ... I put out little recipe books."

Allison also had acting in his background, and music. But it was radio he fell in love with right away — a love affair that lasted until the very end.

He learned early that he had a voice for radio, and he maintained it through the years, setting up the microphone about 10 to 12 inches from his mouth.

"I could project," he said in 2019, noting how listeners often would tell him his voice sounded just like it did on the radio — not always the case. "I don't mug the mike."

After his 17-year run at WWJ, Allison took his show to WNZK 690, where he was doing shows up until earlier this month.

Allison's son Rob served as co-host and producer on the show, and will host the show Thursday, commercial free, WWJ reported.

Allison's TV career included such credits as the Twin Pines Dairy milkman on the kids' show, "Milky's Party Time," and was host of "Bowling for Dollars," which ran in the 1970s from Thunderbowl Lanes in Allen Park. Local contestants would take turns picking up pins for a dollar amount, with a weekly jackpot running in the low hundreds of dollars. Bowlers also could win prizes, like Buddy's Pizza if they picked up a difficult spare.

The Detroit version of the show was briefly relaunched in 2013.

Allison also enjoyed golf. At Oakland Hills Country Club, he became known as "Bombay Bob," breaking the gin on the second tee.

Allison and wife Maggie also were significant philanthropists in the area, donating millions to local universities, including Wayne State.

He is survived by his wife and four children, WWJ reported.

Funeral arrangements are pending.

tpaul@detroitnews.com

Twitter: @tonypaul1983

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