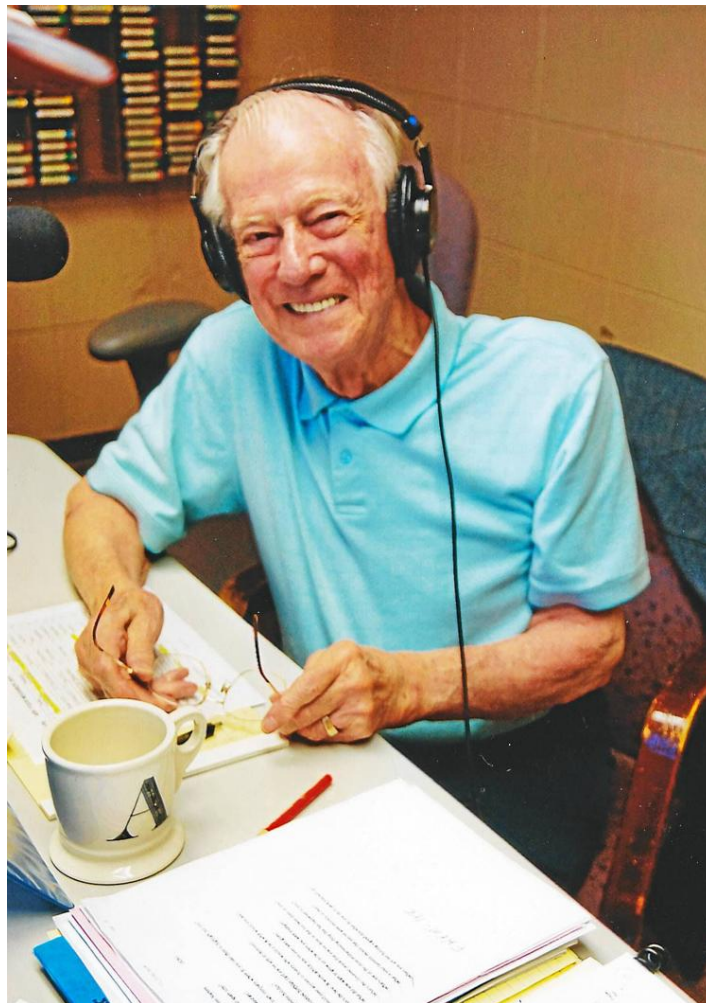


https://www.theoaklandpress.com/entertainment/neighbor-bob-allison-celebrates-years-hosting-detroit-radio-show/article_1602a714-8e09-5731-aae0-c26f8863348e.html

"Neighbor" Bob Allison celebrates 54 years hosting Detroit radio show

By Stacey Sherman For Digital First Media
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Bob Allison has been working in the Detroit radio market for 54 years.

Photo courtesy Dan Sullivan for News Service

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Bob Allison has been talking to his "Ask Your Neighbor" radio listeners like family for 54 years. Given the state of the industry these days, that's quite an accomplishment. But if you ask Bob, it's "just what I do."

He started hosting the program on WWJ-AM (760) in Detroit in 1962 and celebrates his anniversary today (Feb. 5).

Now he broadcasts live on WNZK 690-AM from 9-11 a.m., Monday through Friday. "Ask Your Neighbor" is two hours of old-time talk radio. From the opening notes of the music intro, you are reminded of a time when people sat around and actually listened to the radio.

There is a certain nostalgia to the whole thing, and Bob is the quiet force behind it. His call-in show is very simple — listeners (or 'neighbors' as Bob calls them) call in with questions or recipes. Then other neighbors call in with answers or comments.

Bob acts as a sort of Q&A traffic controller. He interjecting stories here and there, asking after a caller he has spoken with numerous times before, or offering recipe substitutions. Most of all, he makes sure his people connect with one another to get the information they need. His small-town roots and old-fashioned sensibilities shine through when Bob describes the show.

"People call in with questions and others call in with answers," he says. "I sit in the middle with the bologna."

Bob Allison was born Bob Allesee in LaPorte, Ind., and he started his career at a small station in his hometown right out of high school. He moved to Chicago a few years later because at the time, that was where the action was in broadcasting.

Bob had just landed the job of his dreams when Uncle Sam intervened, and he was drafted to serve in the Korean War. He did his stint, playing piano in the US Army Band, and ended up back in Indiana with his wife. His love of music and performing led Bob to try his hand at the L.A. music scene. Even though he had some decent success, fate had other plans once again.

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Their first child was on the way, so Bob headed back to Indiana to be with his wife. He drove 50 hours straight through and made it in time to be there for the birth of his son. The young family stayed in Indiana for a bit and eventually ended up in Detroit when Bob was offered the job at WWJ.

That first-born son is now a big part of the "Ask Your Neighbor" team. Rob (Jr.) has been working with his dad on the show for 19 years, co-hosting, handling website duties and fielding calls from the neighbors each morning. It really is like a big, comfortable household.

Originally brought on WWJ to fill space left vacant by the recently cancelled radio soap "My True Story," "Ask Your Neighbor" was targeted at the housewife audience, but has since grown to include a fair amount of male listeners. The audience that started with Bob stayed with him and is reflected in the predominantly older demographic. There are often tales of children who grew up listening to the show with their own parents.

Bob now owns the program. He pays for airtime on WNZK with money from advertisers and sponsors. While the increasing competition from major players in radio can be a challenge, Bob relies on his sales manager of 35 years, Al O'Neal, to keep the advertisers on board.

"Ask Your Neighbor" continues to be a success because of the unique audience it cultivates. There isn't any arguing, and no politics or religion. It's relaxed. Like the man who has been behind the mic for the last 54 years.

Bob Allison doesn't really have any plans to retire and doesn't want to sit around — in fact, he "hopes to continue until he packs it in." He looks at every day as a brand new day — an opportunity to meet a new neighbor.

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