



LARadio.com Current News

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Radio / TV Veteran Jim Hawthorne Dies



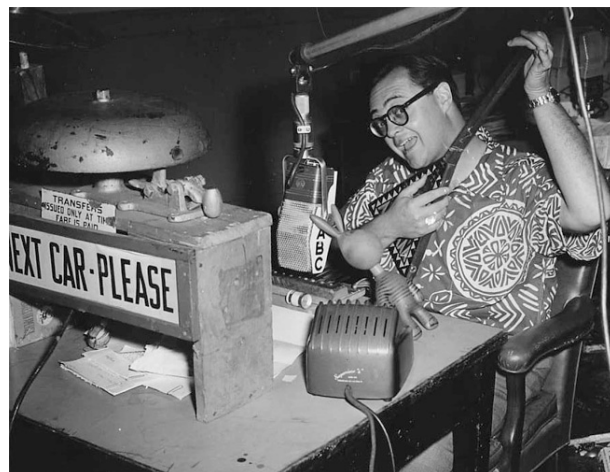
(November 7, 2007) "It is with a heavy heart that I inform you of the passing of my dad, **Jim Hawthorne**," emailed Jim's son **Darr**. "He died Tuesday afternoon shortly after I visited with him at the Buena Vista Care Center in Goleta. He was sedated, but was able to say a few words. It did not appear that he was in any pain, it was just his time. His 90th birthday would have been November 20."

Jim was one of the most creative talents L.A. radio and tv has ever seen. He was a frequent contributor to LARadio.com and penned a series, "Hawthorne's HISTory," for many years.

Jim started at KXLA-Pasadena (now KRLA). His humor established him as a unique broadcaster in the early days of personality radio, yet his major success came from television. In 1950, he created, produced and starred in the Saturday night coast-to-coast radio program, "The Hawthorne Thing," which was the final network radio show to originate in NBC's Hollywood Radio City.

At KLAC/Channel 13 in the early 1950s, he created the first late evening talk show on television, *This Is Hawthorne*. An article in the *LA Times* reflecting on early tv described the show as "predecessor of NBC's *Saturday Night Live*." On KNBC/Channel 4, beginning in 1952, he did a daily five-minute weather show. In 1958, Jim traveled to KYA-San Francisco and created "Voice Your Choice," which he brought to KDAY.

In the early 1960s, while doing *Instant Weather* on KTTV/Channel 11, Hawthorne joined KFVB as assistant pd and mornings, and eventually became vp, national program manager for Crowell-Collier Broadcasting. While still at KFVB he joined Sherman Grinberg Productions as a writer, producer, narrator. He produced *Jim Hawthorne's Funny World*.



In 1965, "ol Weather Eyes" moved to Honolulu to "retire" and ended up creating the *Checkers and Pogo* kids show for tv which ran for 11 years. He was also involved with programming KGMB -Honolulu and was creative consultant to morning legend Aku. As one of his bits, since the tv weather was so short, he would hold up cards and do a pantomime. He was elected president of the newly formed Disc Jockey Association in 1960. In 1970, Jim moved back to his hometown, Denver, to help his ailing mother. He stayed for 11 years and established a very successful career at KOA, eventually becoming gm. In the late 1980s, Jim returned to Southern California.

Time Magazine May 10, 48: Jim Hawthorne, a young Pasadena disc jockey, used to be bored with his job (\$85 a week). Sometimes he would sign off with a sneer: "This is KXLA, the 10,000-watt jukebox." But he is bored with his job no longer.

Bottom of Form



One night, without notifying his bosses, Hawthorne suddenly turned his show into a carefree, wit-loose "Hellzapoppin on the air." Next day, before the station had time to fire him, the place was snowed under with fan mail. By last week, the scattyboo platter session was being broadcast over five Southern California stations ("the net-to-net coastwork of the Oh-So-Peachy-Keen Broadcasting Company"). Both ABC and Mutual were dickering for national network rights. Hawthorne's salary is now \$450 a week.

The Hawthorne formula is a well-stirred ragout of one part Henry Morgan, three parts Arthur Godfrey and a dash of Colonel Stoopnagle; it is a blend of the outrageously unexpected and the shaggy dog joke. In the middle of a recording, a voice may suddenly announce: "I've got cole slaw in all my pockets. I'm cold." Sometimes Hawthorne heckles his lovesick records. "What are you in the mood for, honey?" he will ask during the opening bars of a song. "I'm in the mood for love," the record croons back.

Whatever adults—and sponsors—may think of such carryings-on, Hawthorne and his peculiar banana-split lingo have become the rage of Southern California's younger set. Most popular root word is "hogan" (example: "I was driving my carahogan in from Pasadena-hogan so I could get a hoganburger"). The young folks also overwork Hawthorne's favorite adjectives: keen, peachy-keen, and oh-so-peachy-keen.

In Hawthorne's hands, commercials get rough justice. When a plug is due, he bangs on his "attention getter" (a pair of crash cymbals) as a red alert to the audience. Most of the transcribed commercials are played at either very slow or breakneck speeds, so that they sound like either a foghorn or Donald Duck. On one occasion he treated his listeners to ten minutes of Bach, with interpolated comments and seal yelps. Conductor Mark Warndw, after hearing a Hawthorne show, said judiciously: "He's half haw, half thorn."

HAWTHORNE, Jim: **KXLA**, 1943-48; **KECA**, 1948-49; **KDAY**, 1959; **KFWB**, 1960-63, pd; **KHJ**, 1962-63; **KIEV**, 1991.