

KAB Mike Oatman Award for Broadcast Sales Excellence

The broadcast industry lost a leader when Michael C. "Ol' Mike" Oatman, Wichita, died in January, 2003. He was 63.

KAB established the Mike Oatman Award in 2003 to honor his memory and to recognize outstanding achievement in Kansas broadcast sales, sales management and mentoring others to sales success over a period of time. It was presented the first year, posthumously to Mike Oatman.

According to one KAB Board Member, "Mike Oatman was an incredible broadcaster who touched the lives of almost everyone in Wichita. Mike was an incredible on-air talent, executive, community leader, industry leader, family man, and the hardest working person I have ever met!"

Mike was a partner with Mike Lynch in Great Empire Broadcasting Inc. until his retirement and the sale of Great Empire's 13 radio stations to Journal Broadcast Group in June 2001. He continued to do his five-minute daily show of poetry and homespun humor on Wichita's KFDI/KFTI radio. He also wrote a weekly column for *The Wichita Eagle*.

Mike was born in the West Texas town of Marta, and began his broadcast career with a variety of radio jobs. Mike Lynch, who founded Great Empire, hired Mike from an El Paso station in 1964 to be program director and drive time anchor for KFDI AM. He later became co-owner of Great Empire with Lynch. They grew the company with the purchase of radio stations in medium size markets.

Mike served as president of Country Radio Broadcasters and as chairman of the Wichita Chamber of Commerce. He was named to the Country Music Disc Jockey Hall of Fame, America's Old Time Country Music Hall of Fame, and Kansas Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame. He received the American Broadcast Pioneer Award in 2002.

Testament to the affection for Mike held by his colleagues, employees, clients, and listeners, nearly 2000 attended his funeral in January. To the thousands of radio listeners and *Wichita Eagle* readers who read his weekly column, he was simply known as "Ol' Tee-legged, Toe-legged, Bee-legged, Bow-legged, Curly-headed, Pee-williker Ol' Mike".

In his newspaper column of September 26, 2002 – Life With Ol' Mike – he wrote: "Maybe, like the old spiritual says, we are all just passing through, and the ownership we seek lies not in accumulation of stuff but in how we choose to treat our friends, our families and our neighbors. Maybe this life is but a small part of the journey, and we should acquire character and compassion as well as material stuff. . . A character that is defined by compassion, love and kindness toward all living things might be our only chance at being remembered more than a few weeks after the funeral. We might be able to own that."

Mike Oatman lived a life worthy of remembering and honoring for a long time to come.

Nominations should be **emailed or an attached word document** to the KAB office kent@kab.net and should include a brief history, a description how they have been a sales mentor for an extended period of time, and contact information for the nominee. The deadline is **August 1**.

(see past recipients on next page)

Mike Oatman Award Recipients

- 2003 Mike Oatman, Wichita (posthumously)
- 2004 Mike Lynch, Wichita (posthumously)
- 2005 Mike Hill, KSKU/KXKU/KGGG, Hutchinson
- 2006 Danny Thomas, KOAM TV, Pittsburg
- 2007 Lance Sayler, KWXD FM/KHST FM, Pittsburg
- 2008 Ken Clifford, KWCH TV, Wichita
- 2009 Jim Allan, KTPK FM, Topeka
- 2010 Roger Dodson, Lincoln, Nebraska
- 2011 Rick Nulton, Eagle Radio, Great Bend
- 2012 Wayne Walker, KCSP AM, Kansas City
- 2013 Ken Greenwood, Tulsa, Oklahoma (posthumously)
- 2014 Brian McDonough, Springfield, Missouri
- 2015 Cheryl Dinwiddie, Hutchinson
- 2016 Monica Cline, iHeart Media - Wichita
- 2017 Tim Kolling, Alpha Media – Topeka
- 2018 La Nguyen, SummitMedia, Wichita