



Quite the Year for Shotgun Tom Kelly

(March 30, 2015) First it was a Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame for K-EARTH afternooner, Shotgun Tom Kelly. Over the weekend, he participated in the B-100 40-year reunion (first FM station in San Diego to achieve #1 status). And on Friday, Shotgun was presented with the Art Gilmore Career Achievement Award at the Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters luncheon at the Sportsmen's Lodge in Sherman Oaks.

During the luncheon, Wink Martindale was inducted into the Diamond Circle and his presentation will be covered tomorrow at LARadio. Hundreds of Shotgun's colleagues reminisced with him as a star-studded dais told stories. Jhani Kaye, Tom's former boss at K-EARTH, put together an incredibly fascinating 13-minute video that traced his life from gawking youngster watching a San Diego DJ in a glass radio booth to his recent successes.

On the dais: Seated L-R: Robert David Hall, Kerri Kasem, Honoree "Shotgun Tom" Kelly, and PPB Chairman of the Board, Jeanne DeVivier Brown., Standing L-R: Harold Greene, PPB President Chuck Street, Gary Bryan, Lou Waters, Neil Ross, Tim Conway, Jr. and Jhani Kaye



Commander Chuck Street, the President of the PPB, followed Tom's initial fascination in San Diego when he hung around radio stations to his time at KAFY-Bakersfield. It was Charlie Van Dyke who discovered Tom in Bakersfield and brought him "home" to begin his San Diego career, which included big Top 40 stations like KGB and KCBQ, but also winning two Emmys for hosting a children's program, Words-A-Poppin'. Charlie sent a 70-second audio message that was well received.



Shotgun and Wink Martindale



Tim Conway, Jr. and Shotgun



Chris Ebbott and Mike Salas



Christina Kelley



CBS Market Cluster Chief Dan Kearney



Commander Chuck Street

Harold Greene, former Los Angeles and San Diego news anchor for almost three decades, was the first on the dais to speak. His story goes back to 1967 when he first heard Tom's voice at 17 and decided at that moment he would get into TV.

Harold revealed that Tom was so gung-ho to get into broadcasting that he lived in his car for a month while attempting a crash course on securing a First Class FCC license at the Bill Ogden School. “For a time, Tom worked at KACY in Oxnard” said Green. “It was a 50,000 watt station where the signal went out to the Pacific Ocean and over the horizon. He was #1 among Portuguese fishermen.”



Shotgun and Bryan Simmons



Bobbi and Frank Breese.



Scott St. James

Veteran CNN news anchor Lou Waters admitted that he wasn't sure why he was on the dais. “I started out in radio and I loved it. In fact, I loved hearing radio stories in the ‘green room’ before the luncheon even though it was a white room with green table cloths. “I’m not sure why I’m here,” Lou said. “Maybe Brian Williams wasn’t available.”

Lou was influenced by a WDGY-Minneapolis DJ named Dan. “He loved what he did and that inspired me. Shotgun is the same way.”



Harold Greene, Jhani Kaye, Chuck Southcott, Shotgun, and Robert David Hall



Bob Fox and Wally Clark



Jim and Judy Duncan with Shotgun

Gary Bryan currently works with Shotgun at K-EARTH. Gary does the mornings and Shotgun does afternoons. "Fortunately we are separated by Jim Carson so we don't have to see that much of each other." Gary knows three truths:

1. Nobody knows what a chief engineer does but we all know we need one.
2. The cuter the girl sounds on the request line, the less attractive she's going to be ... when you finally pick her up ... at middle school.
3. If you have an interesting hat and a memorable DJ name, you can have a long and illustrious career with very little talent."

Bryan divulged the secret to Shotgun's success rests in three basic phrases:

"You better believe it baby" "Do wacka-do," and "Staying out of trouble in your automobubble."

In addition, Gary said Shotgun sometimes throws in those mouth noises that sound like a guy playing trumpet but doesn't have a trumpet. Bryan moved into a roast mode with a series of rhetorical questions:

“Shotgun is good for even seconds but any longer than that he’s lost.” “He’s so desperate for attention he faked a quadruple by-pass.” “How does a man with so little talent and looks like a Hasidic Rabbi end up with a Star on Hollywood Walk of Fame?” Gary ended with high praise for his colleague: “He had the unenviable task of replacing the great Real Don Steele and the process became one of the most recognizable names in LA Radio.”



Gary Bryan, Tim Conway, Jr., Kerri Kasem, Shotgun



Pat Duffy, Jhani Kaye



Christopher Lance



Gary Bryan and Robert David Hall



Joanna Morones and Randy West

Jhani Kaye produced a tribute of filmed highlights of Tom's life. Hopefully the PPB will put the production on its website. "If you have Shotgun as a friend, there will be no lack of entertainment in your life," said Jhani.

Robert David Hall, veteran of KOST and KNX/FM and better known as the coroner on CSI, looked up and down the dais and said, "I know the people on the dais better than I know Shotgun."

Hall said he was glad that Jhani Kaye fired him, which allowed him to actively pursue acting despite a freeway accident that took both legs. During a period at KOST when he was hating everyone, including himself, Jhani had him hosting Love Songs where he had to read love letters while playing 'sappy songs.' "After a couple of nights I stopped reading the letters and made up stories with my own friends' names. I thank Jhani for firing me."

Hall turned his attention to the honoree. "I understand that Shotgun is more popular in San Diego than Shamu. Shotgun is legendary. He's the real deal. He has enthusiasm you can't manufacture. Makes it sound so easy and fun and that's his magic."



Richard Freifeld and Bob Maryon



Larry Huffman, Linda Irwin (Shotgun's wife)



Shotgun, Kerri Kasem, with 55 "Broderick Crawford" Buick owner, Gary Goltz



Karen and Bill Smith



The Insane Darrell Wayne

Voice actor and LARadio veteran Neil Ross talked about his own broadcasting resume. "My radio career was a total bust. My ratings were so bad I actually left radio owing the Arbitron rating service several hundred thousand listeners. I'm still trying to pay them back ... those blood suckers."

Most radio DJs lived a nomadic life in the 60s and 70s. "You could always tell the most successful DJ at the station" said Ross. "He had the biggest U-Haul. He was also the DJ with the most extensive wardrobe most of which had call letters on them."



Freddy Snakeskin



Ron Shapiro, Bryan Simmons;



Karen and Bill Smith



Michael Stark and Phil Hulett

Ross went on to say that Shotgun was his legal first name. “His parents were firearm enthusiasts. His sister is ‘Revolva’ and his two brothers are Smith and Wesson.”

Neil ended with some serious thoughts about Shotgun. “With Tom what you see is what you get. He really is that nice. If he has a devious bone in his body, that’s news to me. He’s the last of a breed with high energy a good-time DJ who loves this business his station his friends, his audience and most all his wonderful family. It’s such a pleasure to see a nice guy win.”

For over a decade, Tom co-hosted the Jerry Lewis MDA Telethon with the late Casey Kasem. Casey’s daughter Kerri Kasem, a personality in her own right was part of the tribute. “Shotgun is very important to me and my family. He even spoke at my father’s memorial.”

From underneath the podium, Kerri brought up a Shotgun bobble head, referring to “little Shotgun” and some of the advice he had offered to Kerri. “While my father and others counted down the Top 40, ‘little Shotgun’ thought I could make a name for myself by counting up the Top 40. Didn’t work out so well.

Kerri thanked Shotgun for his years of service.



Gene Price, Robert David Hall and Carson Schreiber

Shotgun with his wife Linda



Shotgun standing next to original Highway Patrol car, a series that featured voice of Art Gilmore

KFI nighttimer Tim Conway, Jr. was the last member of the dais to speak. Tim and Tom worked together at one stage in their career. Tim recalled the night when Tom heard the popular “What Did Jesse Jackson Say?” bit and complimented him, encouraging him to make it a regular feature. Tim told him that it was a regular feature. Tom wondered how long it had been on. “Seven years,” responded Tim.

Conway recalled the time that Tom confided in him about the trouble he was having with his name that the PC-society didn't like Shotgun. "Even the Washington Bullets changed their name." Tim asked if he used another name early in his career before adopting Shotgun. Tom responded, "Uncle Tom."

Despite the fact that Shotgun has been on K-EARTH since 1997, he still has a home in San Diego. This was not lost on Conway. "I love that Tom claims to love LA and the first thing he does on Friday night is get in his car and drives to San Diego."

As far as Tom's receipt of a Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, Conway read a list of personalities who have yet to receive a Star: Clint Eastwood, George Clooney, Julia Roberts, Robert Redford, George Lucas Angelina Jolie, Al Pacino Denzel Washington and even Robert DeNiro. "None of these have a Star on the Walk of Fame but Shotgun does."

Conway concluded with, "He is more popular in San Diego than Shamu ... thanks to Blackfish."

It was now Shotgun's turn. He received the Art Gilmore award from Commander Chuck Street. At the podium, Tom bellowed: "It's great to be alive." He said there were a couple of people he wished were on the dais, Gary Owens and Casey Kasem. There was applause for both.

"I love everyone talking about me," said Tom. "It just feels so good. It's so wonderful. Let's talk about you. Have you heard my show?"

Tom thanked everyone for being there and the PPB for the award. "Good night everybody" he bellowed.

And a long luncheon came to an end.

