



Guess the names



These are some of the guys—and one very nice lady—I worked with while I was employed in advertising copy and production at WDAY Radio in Fargo from 1967 until 1975. The above photograph of the radio-personality staff in 1972, taken that year by Roy “Pete” Pedersen’s Promotion Department, was part of the station’s 50th anniversary celebration. WDAY Radio went on the air in 1922.

If you were a radio listener in the 1970s, you very likely remember these faces; however, if you’re having some difficulty, let’s run through the names: There’s the late **Dave Bateman** on the far left. He was the Farm News Director for many years, a southern boy who never lost his accent despite decades of living in the North. **Don Dresser** is next. He and **Morrie Carlson** (not pictured) and, later, Earl Williams held forth with some great morning shows—a far cry from what passes as morning radio in this market today. Next is **Rod Miller**, long-time air personality who doubled—for many years—as the popular racing announcer at the Red River Valley Speedway in West Fargo. **Earl Williams** is next in this line-up; he, of course, worked with Don Dresser for a decade or more, offering his famous “punch lines” to the jokes he and Don would offer up. **Verna Newell** is the only lady in this photo, and she passed away recently at the age of 89. Verna was popular for over 22 years on both WDAY Radio and TV (see *Wordchipper* #225). The fellow with the Buddy Holly glasses standing on Verna’s left is **Glenn Douglas**, a name many of you will remember from his WDAY years. It was Glenn, in fact, who provided me with the photo. And on the far right is **Bob Aronson**, the host of WDAY Radio’s first call-in talk show, *Viewpoint*. He currently lives in Jacksonville, Florida, and is still active in motivational communications despite undergoing a heart transplant a few years ago. I talked to Bob a couple of weeks ago and he’s doing fine.

John Erling (not pictured) hosted *What’s Your Opinion?* during this era. His show was the popular afternoon counterpart to *Viewpoint* during the late 1960s and ’70s. Later, John spent 30 years as the top-rated morning talk show host on KRMG Radio in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He’s now retired but still involved in producing and hosting broadcast and web projects in the Sooner state.

The group pictured above—and others—represented a time when radio and all other media was not as fractionalized as it is today. When there were only a few AM stations and a handful of FMs in the Fargo-Moorhead market, it was somewhat easier for each station and/or personality to capture a sizeable audience segment. Today, local radio and TV have to compete not only with more stations but also with a deluge of “new media,” including iPods, YouTube, satellite radio, websites and even broadcast stations on the Internet. I suppose, 50 years from now, young people today may look back at these times as “the good old days,” just as we look at our past today. However, as imaginative as I try to be, I simply can’t project what media will look or sound like in another half-century.

LATE NIGHT TV WARS: I don’t want to say “I told you so,” but I will. I predicted last fall that Conan O’Brien wouldn’t last as host of *The Tonight Show*. In July of 2009 I said that O’Brien wouldn’t make it through September. I was wrong on that nuance; he survived until January of 2010. To me, the late Johnny Carson still owns that show and David Letterman should have had it instead of that corporate-climbing, groveling-and-grabbing Jay Leno. When they looked for a replacement for Leno (which, apparently, NBC shouldn’t have tried—it was working, why “fix” it?), Conan O’Brien wouldn’t have been on my list. Not anywhere near it. However, he’s walking away with over \$30-some million for himself and another \$10 million or so for his staff. Plus, there’ll be some network that will probably pick him up and pay him more millions. So we don’t have to feel too sorry for the guy with the funny-looking hairdo and, in my opinion, a very limited bank account—in the humor department, that is.