

## Chapter 01 – Introduction

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**Announcer:** During its halcyon days dominating the Northeastern Oklahoma radio market, KAKC-AM gave the world several memorable disk jockeys — it was the era of personality DJs and Top 40 radio. Happy Harry Wilson. Roger Rocka. Dick Schmitz. But the most memorable of all to Tulsa-area teens was George Basil Seagraves III. With a name like that (and coming from a family of lawyers), he was destined to become one himself — but at the age of nineteen, while a sophomore at the University of Tulsa, he started on the overnight shift on KAKC six nights a week with the name Scooter Seagraves.

His fast-paced patter, upbeat personality, and sharp wit endeared him to Tulsa teens, and he would go on to a successful career with stops at stations in Memphis, New Orleans, San Bernardino, and Lafayette, Louisiana.

For Scooter, it started with that midnight shift in September of 1959 on the top floor of the American Airlines Building, 910 S. Boston Avenue, in Tulsa, with 45 rpm records on twin turntables. Today, though retired from radio, Scooter B. rocks on.

Listen to Scooter tell his story on the oral history website and podcast [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com).

## Chapter 02 – 9:45 Why Scooter?

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**John Erling (JE):** My name is John Erling, and today's date is June 24, 2022. So Scooter, would you state your full name, please?

**Scooter Seagraves (SS):** George Basil Seagraves III.

**JE:** And then the obvious question is, where does the Scooter part come in?

**SS:** Well, the Scooter part is that I was too fat to crawl, so I scooted, and that happened. But I thought the other obvious question was going to be, with that name, why weren't you that third shingle on the small-town law firm?

**JE:** So it did come from...

**SS:** And that's simply because my father died at a time when, if he had lived another two years, I probably would have been that. But he died so that I no longer had the, "Your father is a lawyer, your grandfather is a lawyer, you will be a lawyer." And I happened to love radio and realized that I didn't want to be a lawyer.

**JE:** Yeah. So Scooter does come from childhood. You scooted along.

**SS:** When I was a child, when I was at midterm of my first grade year in school, we moved from Little Rock, Arkansas, to Stuttgart, Arkansas. I was one of four kids in my Julia Shannon school first-grade class with the name Scooter. By the fourth grade, the only other one that was called Scooter was a guy who is now about 6'7", and about 240. So he unscooted, and I ended up being it the whole rest of my life.

**JE:** My wife, when I told her I was interviewing you, she grew up in Tulsa, and a baby boomer, and she remembers you, and she said, "You can tell him that I never," she's saying this now, "I never knew who you were until I met you. But if your name had been Scooter Seagraves, I would have known who you were."

**SS:** Oh my goodness.

**JE:** That's my wife.

**SS:** You know, it's funny, I was just looking over all the quotations here, and I saw the one by the Scottish poet Robert Burns, "You give us the gift of seeing ourselves as others see us." I wish I could have done that on hearing myself, because very honestly, the reason I never went to any bigger stations than I did was that I could so little stand to listen to one of my tapes – that the thought of sitting with a program director who would

make me the kind of DJ that would make me the kind of money I wanted – I would have to listen to me every day.

And so I just – I took a shorter, much less productive way out, but I guess I helped some small stations be a little better than they might have been.

**JE:** No question. Your date of birth?

**SS:** January 24th, 1940.

**JE:** That makes you how old?

**SS:** Probably 82 years old. 82. I never thought this would happen, John.

**JE:** Yeah, I know, I know, I'm there with you. And we are recording this interview – I am in our Voices of Oklahoma office in Tulsa. Where are you right now, Scooter?

**SS:** I'm in a little retirement village on Bulls Hills Lake in North Arkansas called Diamond City. If you're familiar with Branson, Missouri, John, just get in Branson, go straight south, either have good water wings or a boat, and about 15 miles you'll be in my backyard.

**JE:** Okay.

**SS:** Unfortunately, the drive is about 58 twisty, hilly, bad miles.

**JE:** Where were you born?

**SS:** I was born at Trinity Hospital in Little Rock, Arkansas.

**JE:** All right. Your mother's name, maiden name, and where she grew up?

**SS:** Marian Louise Davidson. She was one of 10 surviving of 11 children, both Frank and, I can't tell you, my grandmom's name, Davidson, in Mabelvale, Arkansas.

**JE:** What was her personality like? Can you describe her for us?

**SS:** Mom, by the time I knew her, by the time I was sentient enough to know her, was frankly pretty bitter and for a lot of good reasons. My dad, as some of us males on his side of the family, tended toward alcoholism and was at the same time very driven, and he was very demanding. And as far as he was concerned, he said something, and we all said, "How high, sir?" And so by the time he died, after various fights over his hiding, his liquor, when his parents were coming to town, she didn't have a lot of good things to think about men or humanity in general, and sadly being A, human, B, supposedly a man, and C, a Seagraves man. Mother and I loved each other, but we had a lot of times we didn't like each other.

**JE:** Yeah. So then your father's name?

**SS:** George Basil Seagraves, Jr.

**JE:** And he grew up in Arkansas as well?

**SS:** He was in a little town in northeast Arkansas called Oh-sceola, or if you're in Florida or Kansas, Osceola. And he started the University of Arkansas at age 16 and was one of the youngest persons ever to graduate from the university. And he joined, I think at first he joined his father in a two-person firm there in Osceola.

Then he went to Little Rock for the federal group, the Works Progress Association or administration, whatever they were. And that's where we were living until he decided to get out of that, move to Sutton Garden and join a two-man practice there.

**JE:** So then maybe you've already described his personality, what was it like? And he struggled with alcoholism?

**SS:** He had a very serious tendency. He would come in on Friday night. Now first of all, you have to understand, we Seagraves all have light skin, very sensitive skin, very dark beards. I would see daddy using nothing but bits of hand soap, scrape himself up and down, have band-aids all over his face before he scraped himself and still would never not be at the office or in court on time, Monday through Friday.

Friday evening he'd come in, he'd head out, and sometime over the weekend one of the local policemen would bring him home and say, "Miss ma'am, he's in pretty good shape, but I think you might get him to bed soon, he's going to be sick." And then Monday morning he'd do it all over again.

John, he had been in World War II. He and my favorite uncle, the one I would have chosen for my father if I'd had that choice, they were both in the Battle of the Bulge. Uncle Leroy came back with a steel plate in his head, daddy he came back with what we now know as PTSD, back then I think they called it either shell shock or battle fatigue. So he was a very angry and very driven man. And didn't have a lot of tolerance of anything or anybody. I was a wimp, so you can imagine the crushing effect that had on any thought of me possibly having some worth somehow, somewhere in some entity.

**JE:** Yeah, did you have brothers or sisters?

**SS:** I have a younger sister, she's a year younger than I am, she's living up here about 15 minutes from me. She was a year behind me in school, she was the one that always heard, "Oh George was such a marvelous student and he always had such wonderful grades," which she took his meaning, "..and you're a dummy." No, George was lucky enough he could read anything once and ace the test. Sis, as we both learned when we hit college, had the better idea.

She studied and learned how to learn things. So she and I had, for years and years and years, in fact your radio station was a big part of the years and years conflict between us. She'd say, "Well Scooter, my kids at Foster Elementary want to know, what's going on at your little teeny bopper radio station? Andy and I listened to KRMG." And until, until a personally upsetting thing in my part of the family happened about 40 years ago, sister and I were as bad about loving but not liking each other as mother and I. And now sister would probably walk to a landmine to protect me.

**JE:** Yeah, yeah. Your education, where did you start your first school?

**SS:** Well I went to the first half year of my first grade year at Robert E. Lee Elementary, near the state capitol and near the zoo in Little Rock. Then at midterm that year we moved to Stuttgart. I went from there to Julius Shannon Elementary, then to Burkle Street Elementary, then to Stuttgart High, and then to the University of Tulsa.

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### **Chapter 03 – 7:45**

#### **First Radio Job**

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**John Erling (JE):** So let's bring you into high school, where you, and by the way, in your high school years, you were listening to radio, was radio important to you, even though you may not have committed? Where does that develop in your...

**Scooter Seagraves (SS):** John, it starts way before that. I used to drive people in my neighborhood crazy, walking around doing the thing, from "Mr. District Attorney, remember when Jay Johnson would start out?" and "It should be my duty as District Attorney," I'd walk around saying that. And I was seven, eight years old, and people would say, "Somebody kill him."

And I had no idea about radio. It was something I listened to, and I listened to that, and I listened to I Love a Mystery. I mean, I was listening to all of them, and I had no idea.

As far as I knew, I was going to be a lawyer, because that's all I'd heard from the day we started talking about anything I might want to be. "Young man, don't worry about what you want to be, you're going to be a lawyer."

So by the time that I actually happened to go into a radio station and saw how cool all that equipment looked, just sitting there waiting for somebody to do something every half hour, I was ready to be hooked, and the hook took me.

**JE:** Was that in high school?

**SS:** That was when I was ten years old, John.

**JE:** Oh, oh, oh, yeah.

**SS:** We had moved from one side of Stuttgart, which is not a very big town, but when you're a small person and that young, everything is big. We moved to the other side, and looking out my bedroom window, I could see the light at night flashing from the two blocks away radio station, KWAK, the Duck and Rice capital of the world.

And I'd look out there, and every day I'd go, "ah, that's that radio station I listened to I Love a Mystery on." That's as far as it went. Well, and one day in July of 1950, I got on my bike, and I could have turned left, instead I turned right and went up to Burkle Street a block away. And I thought, "I'm going to go in and ask them if I can see what a radio station looks like." And I did, and I went in, and it's an old rickety farmhouse.

It's got the kind of window units that before you could turn the microphone on, you'd have to turn them off, and you'd never hear the voice of the announcer. And nobody was in there. I'm standing in this big room looking at this room full of equipment and hearing Al Helfer and Dizzy Dean do the game of the day. And my hero, Ted Williams, hit a couple home runs, and that was air conditioned.

At home, we did not have air conditioning, John. And it was so much fun to stand there in air conditioned comfort. My hero hit home runs and watched some guy come in sweating from the backyard where he was mowing the grass every half hour, get the microphone just in time to get the station break in as they were starting the second part of the break. And that's how I fell in love with radio.

**JE:** Wow. That's a great story.

**SS:** I was an easy hook, John.

**JE:** What songs were you listening to back then?

**SS:** Okay, for this future crazy wild rock and roller, I was listening to things like June Christie's Something Cool, Stan Kenton's Artistry and Rhythm, Frank

Sinatra's Wee Small Hours of the Morning. I had the most 85-year-old taste in the world for a 10-year-old. And even when I kept listening, all my collection was like that. I bought the Stan Kenton Presents Jazz series with a bunch of people that never made it any further.

And I had little four-pocket, 45 EPs collections of what would be a 12-inch album if they'd been putting those out then. So just like most of my life, my music and what I would end up becoming had no match whatsoever.

**JE:** Well, then your first radio job in Stuttgart, I guess. Was that in high school, or when did that come along?

**SS:** Yeah, I started hanging out. Like I say, my dad died. He died about halfway through my freshman year in high school. And Mom, who was an excellent legal secretary, had been doing it for him and his senior law partner for free, thank you.

So they put her on a salary, which was nice of them. But everybody in town knew, "Oh, George left without a will, that poor family." And I think Mrs. Spann gave me a little part-time job just to pick up a little pen money as a pity thing. My first job was going in after school every afternoon, opening the new mail that had come in from the record companies, deciding which category they went in, giving them a number, typing the card, and putting it in. And for that I made 75 cents an hour and was allowed a maximum of six hours a week.

When Dad died, they had just lost somebody, and they said, "Scooter, we don't think you're really ready for it, but we know you want to, so we're going to give you the chance." And so I went on, and for the next three or four years, I was going to school from 8 in the morning till 3 in the afternoon, biking feverishly the mile and a half down to the station, doing 4, let's see how, 4-10:30 side off.

Saturdays I would do 1:30-10:30, and Sundays I'd do 2-10:30. We were a mutual affiliate, so we carried the game of the day, we carried Lucky Pierre, we carried Sky King Adventurer, we carried all the shows I'd listen to when I was falling in love with radio, but just not as many of them anymore.



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And I started out my day every afternoon at 4 o'clock with 30 minutes of the Western Roundup Program-E, not Program, Program-E. That was 30 minutes of the gut-bucketest hillbilly music you could imagine. Each one led into, and this song is for Agnes Deitch from DeWitt, from Willie Jones of Wabasika, here's one from John the Scooter, Say it Low, You're Not Made for Radio, and I'd do three or four of those and play the song, then after that I would go to Doris Day and Percy Faith for half an hour, then I would do half an hour of writing network news while putting together the half hour of live news that I would then do.

And this is a kid, 14, who has never had radio experience, John, and sounded about like I'm sounding now.

**JE:** Yeah, but man, you were born to do this, that's for sure.

**SS:** I was born at a lucky time. If I'd been born five years earlier with my voice, I would have never gotten on, and five years later with the way radio was becoming so nailed down and so inhuman by the end, I probably would have not made the cut or anything. Mama and Daddy timed it right. I didn't like them a lot of times, but I didn't like their timing on having me. And I did, by the way, love them and I respect them, and I miss the hell out of them.

## **Chapter 04 – 9:37**

### **Juggling School and Radio**

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**John Erling (JE):** You must have been kind of a hero in high school then. The kids heard you on the radio.

**Scooter Seagraves (SS):** Well, not exactly. That was about the same time that the Top 40 was coming in. There was this station in Memphis, WMPS, and all they played was the Top 40 songs over and over and over and over. And the standard line in school was, "George, we'd like to listen to you, but you play that dang old hillbilly crud, and we won't listen to the Top 40 out of Memphis, so when you get on Top 40, we'll listen to you." Profit was out without honor, and neither was a really bad disc jockey in his hometown.

**JE:** Okay, so what year did you graduate from high school?

**SS:** I got out in June of '58.

**JE:** All right, so then what happens to you?

**SS:** I spent the summer working there. Oh, okay, wait a minute. I did my freshman year at TU not working, took a 17-hour class load, got a 3.7 grade point. By the way, I was going to school on a strictly guest or mobile choice National Merit Scholarship by the Edwin T. Meredith Foundation. Edwin T. Meredith at the time was the owner of KRMG, which was the station that had made me fall in love with Tulsa.

Okay, and my dream, John, was always that one morning I would wake up with this kind of voice, and that night, Milt Haynes would get hired to go from KRMG to CBS in New York, and I would be hired to do music till midnight, five nights a week, for 100 minutes a night.

**JE:** Okay.

**SS:** And I had no idea what else I would do, but that was my dream. So naturally, I continued to hate Top 40. Come my sophomore year, I was there at home in the middle of the summer working a split shift. I would go in, John, sign the station on, do its morning show from six until eight, go home and take a nap, come back and do the midday thing, including the Delmarva Poultry Market, and all that small market stuff that you hear.

Then go home or go out to the ballpark and play a little baseball with my friends, and then come back in and do four to six-thirty. And one day while that was going on, it dawned on me that I really needed to get something coming in cash-wise, because even with the scholarship, college was expensive. So I wrote to this kid that I had – or not kid – he was a guy back, a veteran who'd been in the Korean War, going to TU with me on the VA bill, the GI bill, and I wrote "Pete," and I said, "Look, you know what I feel about the kind of station you're working for?" He was an Osage County transmitter engineer for KAKC.

I said, "But I don't think with these pipes, I'm really cut out for the KRMG job that I lost for, and I really need something. Would you mention to them if they need some part-time help to call me?" About two days later, Clayton Vaughn called, and I got hired to come to work doing weekends, two six-hour shows on weekends when school started again there on KAKC.

**JE:** Wow. Clayton Vaughn is the one.

**SS:** And then I got there, and they said somebody else had left, would I like to do the all-night show, and not having the gumption, God gave a gourami, I said, "Well, yeah, why not? I'm only taking 16 hours this semester." Came close to killing myself.

**JE:** So that was when you were a sophomore at TU?

**SS:** That was a sophomore at TU. I was taking, I'd say, 16 hours. I had classes Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 8 until noon. Tuesday and Thursday I had something, not till 11, but on Tuesday I had a five-hour chem lab from 1 until 6, and I've never been able to sleep very well. Guess who was running on pubes the whole time, John?

**JE:** Who was that?

**SS:** I got down to about 123 pounds. Now I'm not a big guy, but I'd start out at about 140, 142. I got down to 123, got to where if somebody dropped a pencil behind me, I came up ready to fight. That's when I went in, and Dick Schmitz had been so wonderful to me, and I said, "Dick, I hate to lose you down, but this is killing me. I'm going to lose my scholarship, and I've got to cut back." He said, "Well, if I could move you up to 9 to midnight. I could try that."

And we did that because they had a guy that his wife was a teacher, and as soon as she got through teaching that summer, they were going back to Pennsylvania, and they knew it, and he wasn't pulling all that good numbers in daytime anyway, so they moved him to the midnight, moved his slack guy somewhere else, and gave me the 9 to midnight, and it took off.

**JE:** So how did your studies go?

**SS:** They dropped to about a 3.2, but I still easily held on to my scholarship, and the next semester I was nowhere nearly as crazy about seeing how many hours I could cram in, and I also knew a little bit better what my schedule would be like, so I didn't schedule everything to start at 8 in the morning and stretch out until 6 in the afternoon.

**JE:** Didn't Jim Hartz work with you, or Jim Hartz that went on?

**SS:** Oh, Jim and I, we had classes at TU. Later we worked together during my one brief moment of actually going to my dream job. Jim was doing a nighttime disc jockey show on KRMG. I was his news voice on KRMG.

The only problem with that equation was that Jim was a good disc jockey, but until then we just ran around. There was a bunch of us from TU, Jim, me, a kid named Jim Hill, who later worked at KRMG, but at the time was working on KOME, Mike Miller and Gary Chu, both of whom were working at what was then called KTUL, later became KELI, and I'm sure it's something else by now.

We were in the streets after we got off at midnight, and when we were on together all at the same time, 7 to midnight, we would do things like, "I bet you could hear this song on just about every station in Tulsa." We'd play something like Theme from a Summer Place. I got in trouble with Schmitz one time. One of the few times he ever called me and said, "Close the door, Scooter."

I went, "Oh, Lord, it's Scooter. I know you guys have fun at night, I don't mind, but Bob Hoth woke me from a sound sleep to say, go down there and fire that little bleep bleep. He just told everybody, I think if you dial over to KRMG or KBOO or KTUL, you'd hear them playing it too."

Well, nobody ever said I was the smartest cookie in the jar.

**JE:** Yeah, we should say that Jim Hartz, of course, at KRMG, then he eventually went on and did the Today Show for NBC and was a chief anchor at, I don't know if it was in New York or whatever, and he died recently.

**SS:** Yeah, Jim passed away. He and I went through sprints of three or four days in a row sending these long, long emails like what would print out on three or four text pages. And we had been back and forth on whether it was something about the political situation and what it was like living where he still was in Washington.

And we just had a nice casual back and forth for three or four days, and then it stopped like they tended to. About two weeks later I get a thing from my friend Jim. I can't think of his last name. This is one of my senior citizen tricks. But I got an email from him, and it just said "Jim Hartz." I go, "Oh, Jim and I are good buddies." And then I opened it, and it was Jim's obituary. And I felt really sad that Jim and I had not still been in contact.

**JE:** Okay, so let's track you then. Did you finish? Did you graduate from TU?

**SS:** Actually, I managed to do that. I even signed up mostly as a draft of ordinance for a master's degree. But after about six weeks in there, we realized that wasn't going to happen. And so I took my chance and ended up being not acceptable for service anyway because I had an ulcer when I was a kid. And, you know, if I wrote my life down, people would say, you're making all that up.

And I think a lot of times I would probably agree with them, except I was there when it happened. And I felt all the discomfort you came from really living through it.

## **Chapter 05 – 10:00**

### **All Over the Ditch**

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**John Erling (JE):** You're at KAKC while a student. You graduate from TU and try the master's. So then did you become full-time then at KAKC?

**Scooter Seagraves (SS):** Oh, I've been full-time since I joined the All Right Show. In other words, what happened when I went to the All Right Show, all I did was the six hours overnight.

But I had to have a clean shave and a shirt and tie and a jacket with me because maybe when I got there at six, there'd be a mobile news story to cover and nobody goes out in the KAKC newsmobile without a jacket and tie.

And so I was working basically a 40-hour week then. And then when I moved up to the 9 to midnight, I was doing 5 to midnight news and a Sunday 6 a.m. to noon show. Then there was a time jime. Now think about this for a guy going full-time, not the sturdiest specimen in the species anyway. And when we lost not one but two people, I was for about 12 weeks working 6 a.m. to noon Saturday and Sunday while also working my midnights of 6 Monday through Friday.

**JE:** Okay, two things here. KAKC, I believe, really became known to Tulsa because in addition to your music, you were on-the-spot news coverage and nobody was doing that. Is that true?

**SS:** When I first started listening, in fact, the only reason I would listen to KAKC was because if I'd hear a siren, I'd hit it over to KAKC because I knew I was going to find out what it was. There's probably a lot more about it than I wanted to know because at the time, KOME was running a top 40. From my limited listening, I thought the KOME sound was much better, much easier for me to listen to, but they didn't have the news in KAKC.

I mean, Clayton Bond, Bud Curry, Will Jones, Don Kelly, and Harry Wilson, they blanketed that town, John. It was what you guys on KRMG later learned to do all the time and with everything and not just fender benders and murders and fires. But when I got to Tulsa, in fact, they had the award, and I don't know how bogus it was or how true, but the number one news station in the nation. And that's how they started every newscast.

**JE:** KRMG, is it?

**SS:** No, that's how KAKC. KRMG at the time was CBS. They had Marvin McCullough with a country show in the morning. Then they had a guy named Len Higby who had, to my ear, the finest voice that's ever been on Tulsa radio. They had him doing mornings. They had, I think they carried

Arthur Godfrey for a while. They had CBS. They ran the whole CBS lineup. On weekends, they would run the, what was the symphony show? Texaco Symphony or whatever.

And on Sunday nights, they would run another symphony show. But then at noon every day, they would have Marvin McCullough come back and with a studio audience, they would do one of the wildest country music live programs you've ever heard. And their news was good, but it was not, it was excellent news. It was very good real news, not sensational stuff like KAKC was doing. But it just, it's time hadn't quite come.

It was about five years down the road before it kicked off. And then when it did, it was basically all over. It was KRMG just really took the news thing over.

**JE:** Right. Okay. And then Clayton Vaughn, you said news and on-the-spot news. So how did you start stomaching rock and roll? You said earlier that you didn't like it. And so did you begin to like it?

**SS:** It wasn't that I didn't like it, John. It was just that because my friends wouldn't listen to me because of it, I couldn't admit to it. But in addition to my son Kenton and my Elvis Fitzgerald, I did have some pretty good Elvis Fitzgerald and some Clyde McFatter and the Drifters and all that. So once I started playing it, and then I started hearing some of the other stuff and some of the Tulsa stuff that was starting to come out then, I said, "Well, you know, maybe this rock and roll is not so bad."

And out of this day, if you got in my car and punched one of my, what I call trail mixes, you might go from a Stan Kenton to a blues singer, Joe Tex, to a June Christie, and then into four or five George Strait country songs. I mean, anymore, my taste is so eclectic that I call it all over the ditch.

**JE:** Okay, but who were you playing when you were on KAKC? Because you were given a playlist and you had to play from that. So what were the names? Who were you playing? And we should say, we're talking about the beginning of the early 60s in there, in the 60s, that decade?

**SS:** I joined KAKC on September 19th, 1959.

**JE:** Okay.

**SS:** And we would be playing Chuck Berry, put an asterisk by Chuck Berry and remind me to come back to the tape. We'll be playing Chuck Berry, be playing the theme from A Summer Place by Percy Faith, be playing Love Me Tender by Elvis along with Jailhouse Rock by Elvis.

We'd be playing Baby, What You Want Me To Do by Jimmy Reed, the Houston blues singer. We play, remember when the war protest songs came out and the DJ from Canada put out the song, I do not have, or the record, I Do Not Have a Son. Right. We were playing that. I mean, we played everything.

Top 40 was just, you know, you look at it and I look at it now and I go, how did we ever manage to mix that? You would hear stations go from Elvis Presley into Joe Stafford. You Belong To Me. I don't know. I look back at it now and I go, it's kind of like most of the rest of my life. It doesn't make any sense, but for some reason, thank you God for this. It did work at the time.

**JE:** Well, the audience was learning, too, about music, and they were beginning to learn like you and learn about Elvis Presley, you know, and everybody was conflicted. And so probably it wasn't as soon. It was your audience was growing with you, but then eventually you had to be top 40 rock and roll, I would imagine.

**SS:** Well, by the time I finally left there, we would play an Elton John, This Is Your Song. Yeah. Then we'd play a Led Zeppelin, A Whole Lotta Love. Then we'd play a Paul Anka, You're Heaven, My Baby. And it was again, just all over the road, but it was all songs that were selling or getting a lot of requests.

**JE:** Absolutely. Plus –

**SS:** I don't know when, because I had gotten all over into country music by the time pop radio became so segmented that it's no longer broadcasting. Everybody calls it niche broadcasting anymore. It does it, and I don't know any others who did it that will even listen to it anymore.



**JE:** Right. You told me to put an asterisk by Chuck Berry. Why?

**SS:** Okay. Growing up, I listened to a lot of different stations, and one of my favorite ones from close to home was KLRA out of Little Rock. Unfortunately, at night, they went on a real lower power and directed beam signal so that I could barely hear them. Well, I had a little jack in the back of my four-tube Arvin table model radio, so I could put the earphones on so that if it was really bad, I could try to dig it out.

Cliff Ford did the Seven of the Dutch show on KLRA, and he would play all over. He didn't have a format. He might play some Sam Kenton. He might play a blues band like Jay McChann out of Kansas City and all this. Then he would play three or four June Christies.

He'd play something cool by June Christie, and then he'd play something by Ella. So this one night, John, I kept hearing him say, "I was in St. Louis over the weekend, and I heard something.

I came to the center. It was the best thing I've ever seen or the worst thing I've ever seen. I'm going to play it for you later." He kept teasing this, and I mean, the static was god-awful, and it was getting to be 9:30, or 10, and I needed to get to sleep, and I was determined I was going to stay up and hear that.

And finally, about 10:30, he said, "Okay, I've been telling you about this all night long. It's time if I play it. I was in St. Louis. I went to a concert, and I saw this guy, and I brought back this record, and he told me, Is this the best thing I've ever played you or the worst? And he played Maybelline, and the hook was in on Roger O for me."

**JE:** Yeah, yeah.

**SS:** I even started admitting to my friends, I said, "Kids, I'm going to admit to you, I do love some rock and roll, and if you don't listen to this one, you're missing the best you've ever heard."

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**Chapter 06 – 12:56**  
**Scooterisms**

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**John Erling (JE):** You know, Scooter, yeah, you played songs, but you became a personality, and there was something about you and the way you spoke, and unfortunately, I didn't live here, but people loved Scooter Seagraves. Why was that?

**Scooter Seagraves (SS):** Well, getting back to that Robert Burns quotation, John, I listened to me, and I couldn't hear it. I mean, I literally could not listen to it. I got so discouraged. If I would listen to a tape before I went home at night, I slept so badly that the next day, I didn't even want to come to work, and every day when I went to work, I thought, "This is the day they're going to call me and say, 'You know, Scooter, you should be George III and be on that small town of Chingo. We're letting you go back to what you're really built for.'"

And to this day, I don't understand it. I'm so thankful it happened, and I just wish that I had been able to relax and enjoy it. On the other hand, I knew enough people who were kind of marginal in things like I was and had to rely on some luck or something, that they thought they were so great, and they would tell you how great. And I saw most of them crash and burn, so maybe if I'd agreed with everybody else about me, nobody else would agree with themselves about me.

**JE:** Yeah, but you knew that you were doing something great. There's no question about that. So you really dominated, KKC dominated in the 60s, maybe, I think it's about 10 years, as the number one station in Tulsa.

**SS:** Pretty embarrassing thing there, John. We were coming up on the end of the 10th year, as according to Hooper Ratings, which was the thing back then, the dominant number one station. And I mean, when I say dominant, you know, we have 44% of the audience, and the closest would have maybe 19, all this.

And so the station decided to put out this little braggadocio newspaper stuffer for the Sunday Tulsa World. A decade of dominance. And that all

came out of the hell, all this. It was a full-page insert, and it was stuff about each of us, and our pictures, and things about our background, but just mainly about what a wonderful station KKC was, and how Tulsa just had to lock it in forever.

Next month's ratings, KQL had turned to KELI, and they kicked our butt. Decade of dominance. I remember KELI, one of the things, the king is dead, long live the king. But we had to live with that for about three, oh, somewhere along the way in here, somewhere after that happened, we did get it back, and we were just seesawing back and forth, but I got moved up to PD because the general manager just couldn't stand the fact that Dick Schmitz really was a PD and would say no on idiot features that were guaranteed to drive away listeners and drive down ratings.

So he found him someone who was a yes man. Unfortunately, I didn't know what I was saying yes to most of the time, so I let the station get really, really down. That's when Mr. Bart brought in the Bill Drake consultancy, and instead of doing what they should have done, which was throw me out, they actually kept me as the program director and let Bill Drake and company teach me what a PD really does.

**JE:** Right, and we should point out that Bill Drake was a Los Angeles radio consultant, and he had become known for programming in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston, and other large cities. So he was recruited to help after you got beat by KELI. So Bill Drake apparently would have to come to the station. Do you remember the day he came?

**SS:** At the time, and again, showing how little I knew about being a program director, I had moved me, who is the world's worst person about sleeping and getting up and stuff like that, and on top of it just doesn't have morning man chops. He had put me on the morning man, John. And so here I am getting up every morning at 5:15, driving the half mile to the station, doing my show, going home, scraping my beard, getting the bleeding to stop, getting my tie just right, going back to the station and doing my office work.

I get off the air this one Monday morning, and as I'm walking out, the secretary says, "Bob Holt wants to see you in his office." Bob was the

general manager. And I hope, "Okay, well maybe I won't have to shave today."

So I go walking back in there, and there were these six guys sitting there, John and I – if you'd walk in and see them, you would have probably been as freaked as I was. I mean, this one guy was about 6'7", had on aviator sunglasses, black leather jacket, beetle boots, flared jeans. There was a guy who looked as businesslike as anybody I worked around and was supposed to look like in the next hour. There's a guy named Bill Watson who had on also pretty hip shades, had a high point collar, just all of them dressed differently.

And Bob handed me this note from Mr. Moore. "Oh, well, this is embarrassing. I'm going to get my dismissal notice with all these people to wave and kick me out the door." I open it and he says, "Scooter, I'm sorry I couldn't be here in person to walk you through this, but I feel bad we have not given you the kind of support we needed. We threw you in the program director without you knowing what a program director should do. And so we are bringing in this group to assist you." And instead of firing me, John, which they really should have done, as bollocks as I had made that station, they let me stay in and these people taught me basically what a program director does.

Although, to be honest, I never had the commitment to the nuts and bolts that it took to be a program director. And it showed because none of my jobs really paid fully off. I got some front-load stations to do pretty well, but I just did not have the, "I'm going to be at it 24 hours a day, that's all I'm going to do. I don't care about anything else." And that was how I became program director of Rockin' 97.

**JE:** But didn't you meet Bill Drake in person?

**SS:** Oh yeah, Bill Drake was the guy that was 6'7" with the cool aviator glasses on and the beetle boots. He was there for only one day. Oklahoma was still dry at that time, and other than being able to go to just about any club in town with your own bottle, which he gave up and then drank from somebody else's bottle, you could get drinks, but he didn't like it that way, so he wanted to fly down to Dallas, and then he just didn't come back.

**JE:** Yeah. So they taught you how to be a program director, so did it work?

**SS:** We, in the first book after we cut back from almost unlimited commercials and stupid features in Afternoon Drive and things like that, we cut back to 30 listed records, 8 or 10 up and come, or what we call them, hit bounds, and a few goldens, which were the oldies. And within the first month, we had knocked Kelly totally out of number one, and about four months later, they started modifying their playlists and modifying back from what they'd been doing.

**JE:** But you continued to beat Kelly.

**SS:** Oh, yeah. From then on, we just wiped them out because they were still running a lot of commercials and a lot of features that compared to our features were just audience-killing, but were audience-killing enough for what we were doing now. And so we just basically waxed them and went from there.

**JE:** Do you remember a name that was still popular? And Kelly, did they have anybody that was a standout?

**SS:** They all used the Kelly name. Okay? Bill Miller from Coffeenville was Bill Kelly. He was their assistant program director. When they first came in, Joe Henderson, who was Joe Kelly, was the program director. He did six to nine. I don't know if Joe came back and did another three or not, but everybody else did three hours, and then a few hours later, Joe came back and did another three. And they were all using the last name Kelly.

**JE:** All right. I guess that didn't work, but at any rate –

**SS:** It was a way to help. Well, they kept doing it for years. In fact, the first time that they didn't use it, and it's probably one of the things that saved my bacon after I had gotten typically stupid on a Christmas party on the air and gotten fired, and Bob Holtz was determined I'd never set foot in that station again.

We had an afternoon guy, Jerry Adams, who was just illegally

good-looking, and Jerry was one of the coolest people you ever met, one of the nicest people, and he was doing afternoon drive.

He got called up for active duty down in Fort Bliss, and somehow the word got out that when he came back, he was going to work for Kelly and was going to come back on as Jerry Adams.

Kelly at the time, or Kelly Casey at the time, I guess. Yeah, we had a six-month no-compete contract, and so he couldn't come back immediately as that, so he was going to go to Woodshaw Falls and work for six months and then come back. But in the meantime, I was working Jim's Night News Show at KRMG, and I get a call from whoever their PD was at the time asking me if I could meet with him and the general manager one day next week.

I said, "Sure, name it," and he said, "We'll get back to you on that." Same day I get a call from Dick Schmitz saying, "Haven't had a drink with you in a long time, Scoot. Let's meet down at the stables tonight." Okay, we meet at the stables. He said, "Scoot, you know, you really messed up bad." I said, "Dick, I know I did." He said, "I didn't have any choice." I said, "No, you didn't.

If you hadn't fired me, Hoth would have fired you, and we would have both been gone."

"But Jerry's coming back, and Hoth is scared. And I don't know, but I think if you come in and just really, really get on your knees to Bob Hoth and promise to be a good boy and to knock off these Scooterisms, I think we can get you back in." And the reason that happened, John, is that a kid named Alan Abbott, who went on to become big jock at several stations all over the country, he was doing an all-night show, and he was going to move up.

And Alan would have been a killer after a new disc jockey. But at the same time, Chuck Dunaway was putting KBOX on the air down in Dallas, and he had hired Alan to be his all-night man. He calls Alan and says, "Okay, I need you here Monday." Oh, no, I've got to give him my two-week show. No, it'll be here Monday. Well, that's it. So Alan just walked in and told Bob Hoth and Dick Schmitz, "I'm sorry, guys, this is too good a chance. I've got to

leave.” So all of a sudden, they've lost their guy that would have been the perfect afternoon man for them.

They've got Jerry Adams coming back, and that's how I managed to slip-slide my way under the door and get back in to do the afternoon drive show.

**JE:** Wow.

## **Chapter 07 – 10:00**

### **Summer of Love**

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**John Erling (JE):** Okay, so let's talk about in the 60s. I think you had a promotion, the Summer of Love in '67.

**Scooter Seagraves (SS):** Okay, that was right after we had gone to the Drake thing, and that was when the Summer of Love thing was really big out on the coast. In fact, the hippie thing was pretty much spreading all over, and Kelly was saying, “Oh, that's a little hippie format. That will never work around here” until it was working around there.

And we did a promotion where we had the listeners choose Tulsa's all-time top 300, and we'd open the request lines three or four times a day and take them down, and we wrote them down. In my slip-slide secretarial science way of doing it, John, I came up at one point where I had one Elvis song that was all the all-time top 300 in four different places, including one from the top 20. Fortunately, I had massaged all that and I got it put together, and we played that on our Summer of Love.

We counted them down from 300 to number one, and then we gave away something to do with that. I don't remember what. We were always giving away stuff.

**JE:** During that time, I believe, that long song, Light My Fire by The Doors, it was a seven-minute song.

**SS:** Seven-minute song, and we played the full seven minutes. I'm trying to think. There were a couple other things that night we would play the full thing, but that was the one everybody else planned a little two-minute, 45-second cut-down version. We'd say, "Okay, time to hit the pool."

I'd start that seven-minute record, already have my bathing suit on, go to the trade winds, dive in, take a sip on some lady's beer, come back, towel off, and come in just as it ended and hit the next one. It became a set piece around the same. "Get out of the race, let's go to the pool." I mean, it was so non-propositional and so childish, but it was also so successful. I can give me all sorts of bad marks for conduct, but I can't give me bad marks for distance and score.

**JE:** Did you ever have a record run out on you and you weren't in the studio?

**SS:** Who didn't?

**JE:** Right.

**SS:** I'm trying to... Not so much at KKC, although we had a couple of really funny ones at KKC, but I had one one time when I was working in Lafayette, Louisiana. We were in a bank building with no bathroom at our own station. Our station was at the farthest end of the building from the bathrooms. There were no speakers in the bathroom. I was doing three to seven Monday through Friday, but on Saturday they may be coming in at six till noon, which meant that I didn't get out of the station about midnight or one.

No, I got out of the station at seven on Friday, but then I went out and partied till midnight or one. Then I had to be back in for six. I came in this one morning, and I mean, I was paying the dues because I had partied really stupid. I looked up and coming up at the top of the hour was the Robert Palmer song, Sneaking Sally Through the Alley. That was on an LP that started out with Hey, Julia, then something else, and then Sneaking Sally.

What was normally about a three-minute song came out to be close to an eight and a half minute song. I took my little stopwatch. I started it. I



grabbed my newspaper. I ran around to the bathroom. I sat down. I read the sports page. I read the comics. I got back with 40 seconds left and walked in, and he was still about 20 seconds left into the first song. I had been telling the bosses, "Look, you're wasting me in the morning. This is an Album Rock station. On Saturday morning, nobody's up. The phone never rings."

I walked in and every phone in the building was on. It took me another two years to get off that darn Saturday show.

**JE:** Did you Payola? Did that ever affect you at all? Were you offered money to play?

**SS:** The closest I ever came, John, when I was in Memphis, I had an MG, a sports car. My lady and I were driving back to Tulsa for a friend's wedding, and something blew out in it. I had to take a renter car, and we had to drive the rest of the way doing renter car. Then I had to get the car fixed and had to get somebody to go get it.

Because my gold medal flaked MG was quite the talk of Memphis radio, and especially the radio people. Everybody said, "[Unitelligible], we heard that your car got a problem, and you had to pay for it. We think that's unfair." I said, "Well, I probably didn't take care of it. It's my fault. It's okay."

He said, well, and this guy came over to my house, John, at like 7:30 in the morning, a promoter for one of the smaller but very influential labels. He said, and so, "Scooter, we've got this group that thinks pretty highly of you and thinks pretty lowly of people who would rip you off that way. So we put together this little fund, and he laid an envelope down there and said," I won't say his name. I said, "Sir, I am so touched by this and so honored, but I'm going to go in and take my shower and shave and get ready for work. So I trust when I come back, neither you nor that envelope will be here, and we'll never hear about this again."

And we never did. And I don't know if he gave the money back to the other people or if it was his and his bosses or what, but that was the only time that I was ever even marginally offered anything. I guess the word went out, this guy ain't going for it, and he was happy for me because I didn't

want to have to hurt anybody's feelings, but I also didn't want to be Alan Freed 2.0.

**JE:** I still have dreams every once in a while, and I wonder if you do, that you're on the radio, and somehow you can't get in the studio or you can't, and you're working all night, and it's such a relief when I wake up in the morning that I'm not on the radio. Is that happening to you?

**SS:** Oh, it hasn't happened in a while, John, but it does happen. In fact, when it first happened at the time, I was in a radio forum group online, and I mentioned it, and then it was just like over the transom, billions of, "Oh, here's how mine went," and they were all the same thing. You come back from the bathroom, the song is about ready to end, you come running in, and there's not only not a song on the turntable, there's not a rack of music to pick songs from, and there's not another turntable.

**JE:** Right.

**SS:** But now that I'm saying that, and I've had that dream off and on, I haven't had it in a few years now, so I'll email you tonight if I have it, as it touches it off, but I had a thing actually happen one time at KAKC that was the dream, only it was real. Freedom 7 capsule was going around on the tour when that was the big coup one summer, and it came to Tulsa, and they had the thing on a display down by Central High.

**JE:** Now let me just ask you, is that the Mercury 7?

**SS:** Yeah, Mercury 7, but then they called it, when they sent it out, they did something, they called it the Freedom 7, and so we changed our group name, because at the time we'd still been the Big 7 DJs, we changed ours to the Freedom 7 DJs, and we were down there, and I was doing my Saturday midday show from a trailer sitting in the, basically in the shade of Central High School, and doing it with actual turntables, and the turntables we had, had the little ridges that came up, I think there were eight of them that went around, so that if you put a 45 on it, you could definitely get it settled down there.

And so when I went back to the studio for news at 12:55, I queued up my

next record, and went to the port-a-potty, and took care of business, and came back, just as he said, it's the World's Jones, it's 12 to the beep, and I hit the thing, and I looked over, and the record had melted into the turntable.

Don't ask what happened next, because that's a blank, that part of the dream is when I woke up.

**JE:** But that was a real one.

**SS:** When I first started having the dream, I thought it was because of that, and everybody said, "Oh no, you actually had the dream in real life, what did you settle for dreaming?" I always did have to get the real time.

**JE:** That's great.

## **Chapter 08 – 11:40**

### **Tulsa Became Home**

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**John Erling (JE):** Let me bring you into the 70s, and you returned to Tulsa, I think, '72, '75, and you were really kicking, what was the line-up from morning till night, personalities at KAKC?

**Scooter Seagraves (SS):** When I first came back there, which was in August of '72, a guy named Simon Train, who had been at one of the big stations in Washington, was doing mornings, but he was getting ready to leave to go back to the big station in Washington.

Kid named Johnny Lane, whose real name was Gary Dark, born name Gary Dark, but because there were two Gary Darks in the market, using that name under false pretenses, he called himself Johnny Lane. He was doing the morning show, so he moved up to it. Kid named Michael Grant, using the name Gary, although Stevens was doing middays, Jerome Stone Cannon, who I had worked with two years earlier in Bakersfield under the name Steve something, Steve Cannon, he was doing seven to midnight, and I came in to do the afternoon show.

**JE:** Didn't Mike McCarthy do mornings?

**SS:** Mike came in, in fact, Mike came in when I was gone the last time, in fact, by the time I came back, when Gary Stevens was PT, and I was just the afternoon jock, right before going to New Orleans, Mike had come in during that time, and Mike was probably the first real morning man, a guy like you, or like Chuck Adams, or like, you know, you guys who really are born to do morning drive, Mike was the first one of y'all I ever worked with.

**JE:** Wasn't he known as Morning Mouth?

**SS:** Yeah. Yeah. He had all the features, and I mean, he got it going. I loved him. Half a dozen times I almost killed him, and a couple of times we almost came to blows, but I would have killed for him, and he would have killed for me.

**JE:** Denver Fox, who I worked with, still is at KRMG, by the way. He was part of that lineup.

**SS:** Denver was working, I don't remember exactly when Denver came to us, but he came, and he was doing nine to midnight, and I remember I got Denver in a very bad, bad trouble with Gary as the PD of something. Marvin McCullough, when he was doing the KRMG Noonday Show, had a trick he would pull. He had a studio audience full of people, and he would put his hand down under the desk and hit the cough switch, well, because the engineer, no, he would hit the cough switch, and the audience wouldn't notice that the mic on went off, and he'd say something really wrong, and then put it back on and keep going.

The audience is losing it. How does he get by with that? Well, one day, Ed Bloder Vogel, the engineer, decided he was going to have some fun with Marvin, so he took the auxiliary mic in there, put it on audition, and hit it on, so that when Marvin hit the cough switch, he thought he turned it off, right, stayed on, and Marvin said his whole thing, looking at this, and realized it, and he lost it. I mean, he was that good for the rest of the show.

Okay? So I picked up on that little stuff from him. We had the kind of, my

part that you could click it all the way down to audition, so I won't say the song, but it was an Elton John song that had a suggestive lyric, a suggestive title, and I would do a thing with people in the studio where I'd go, that's Elton John, and click down. On the other hand, and say the line that made it really raw, and pick it back up and keep going.

Denver was in there one day showing some people the station when I did that. Denver didn't know about that. Denver almost got fired when he did the same line one time, but without parting down.

**JE:** Oh, my.

**SS:** I had to call Gary and explain to him, I said, "No, that's on me. That's on me." But Denver was a great guy to work for. In fact, I saw him about three years ago, a bunch of us met out at Goldie's when Harry and Clayton were both still alive, and Denver came, and it was great seeing him again.

**JE:** Yeah. You began to treat Tulsa like your second home. What was the appeal for Tulsa for you?

**SS:** When I first started listening to KRMG and KBOO, and Kelly when it was still KTUL Boulder on the park in Tulsa, something about Tulsa just sounded like a great city. I first started listening to John Schick doing music till midnight. I heard Don Wallace do hits on the record before he went to WKY in Oklahoma City and became one of the best top 40 DJs the city's ever had. And I listened to Larry Strain for a while. He did music till.

And then I listened slavishly, slavishly, to Doc Hull and Gurgle and Gertie. I just fell in love with Tulsa from that. And then when I got the Edwin T. Meredith Foundation scholarship, I thought, well, wow. Oh, and I'd heard that T.U. had a great radio school. I'd heard that even before I got the scholarship. So I said, well, I love KRMG and I love KBOO and I love KTUL. I love what I've seen of Tulsa because I've been through there one time. Maybe I'll just go to Tulsa, go to Tulsa University Radio School. Then I got the scholarship and that nailed it.

**JE:** Did you listen to Johnny Martin?

**SS:** I loved Johnny, except I thought with that marvelous voice and that music ability put together, why do you keep using the same cliches over and over? If he could have just said what he had to say without those, oh, I'm sure that two Martin addicts, that was probably part of what they listened to him for.

**JE:** His Martinisms, oh yes. Keg Night in the City and all those sorts of things.

**SS:** "I'll meet you by the water cooler."

**JE:** He had a lot of great sayings, great following. There's no question about that. I got to work with him for a while. I came in '76 and the two of us hit it off. I enjoyed it.

**SS:** He came right after I was there because I was trying to figure. My sister, like I say, always was talking about the adult station. They listened to KRMG. She told me, she said, "Scooter, this guy, John, something in the morning, John Erling," I think she said. "He did a thing about Oral Robertson, that 900-foot doghouse, and I thought they were going to blow up the station."

**JE:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. We had fun with that. But I also want to point out here on the ratings that while KKC was strong, in the mid-'70s, I think is when KRMG began to make its move, there was many tornadoes that came on June 8th of 1974. The station went wall-to-wall coverage on that, and that's when KRMG was put on the map and the weather map. And then in '73, they started the Great Raft Race. So that era then began to put – project KRMG into the number one news talk radio station.

They weren't news talk then, but became the news station and became number one for many, many, many years.

**SS:** I remember even probably the first person I've met, impressed me as going to do something over there, was one of your morning predecessors, Chuck Adams.

**JE:** Yes.

**SS:** Came up from Houston, I think it was. And he was getting a lot of talk and I think getting pretty good ratings. But also, there in the mid-'70s, that's when FEM started getting rock on it and KMOD and KRV and those other stations started doing something with it. And sadly, KKC risked the boat and messed around too long and just never had a chance to get in on that.

**JE:** Right. Well, our competition was KVOO because they were country and we tried to mix country and to compete with that. So sometimes it would be KVOO number one, sometimes us back and forth and the demographics would change. So that was our target was KVOO when I came there and remained that target for a long time. But then KMOD, of course, came up and they became very, very strong and at some times would defeat KRMG. And now the whole scene is much, much different than it ever was back then. But KRMG today, News Talk, ranks lower than number one, but it still is considered the weather station they've been able to hold on to that.

**SS:** Oh, yeah. I know anybody I know in Tulsa says as soon as the clouds get, we punch 74 or what is it, 92.9.

**JE:** Right. And I need to give credit to Ken Greenwood. I don't know if you've ever met him or not.

**SS:** He was the manager when they said they wanted to talk to me and I came to find out they were going to offer me afternoon drive. And I look at it now and I go, that would have been my dream and it would have turned into a nightmare because I would have sounded so sore thumb on KRMG.

**JE:** Yeah, it's amazing now that I think about it that they would even call you. You're absolutely right.

**SS:** Well, I was doing a weekend show along with 2 & Jim's, the nighttime news through the week. And I never did anything. I didn't do funny bits. I didn't do topical bits. I didn't do great. I just did a show and for some reason, they called me and said, we know I called him and told him I was going to have to quit because I was going back to KAC. "We were getting ready to ask you if you would like to do our afternoon drive show." Okay, well, we're going to put this one down and on to it way later on because it's just too much head spin right now.

**JE:** And then in addition, I know this is about you, but it's interesting, Tulsa Radio, that Ken Greenwood did all these editorials and he would involve himself in local issues and local politics. And so it began to make KRMG very much of the everyday life of Tulsans and beyond.

And so that's how it scooted along until I'm in '76. And I was just lucky I got to walk onto that. I knew that I was standing on a news station platform and it wasn't me they were coming for, but they were coming for news and weather. And then I got to participate with that audience. And so that worked for me and for the station, of course, for many, many years.

**SS:** How long did you stay on there, John?

**JE:** 30 years. I've been gone 15 now.

## **Chapter 09 – 11:10**

### **Radio Names**

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**John Erling (JE):** Local businesses or places that you used to hang out in the '60s and '70s in Tulsa, like Pennington's, that seems to come to everybody's mind. What are some of the places that appeal to you?

**Scooter Seagraves (SS):** At Pennington's, you had Barney's Hub downtown at, I think it was about 11th and Main? Boulder? I don't know. Somewhere down around there. I did a little bit of hanging out around the corner at a club called the Fondolite, the Fondolite next to a bowling alley, where I also spent a fair amount of time.

I was not basically a social kind of a guy. I was not. I would go to the Fondolite and sit there and listen to Charlie Daniels, who was running a little rock cover band called the Jaguars. I'd sit there and listen to them and drink by myself. Then go next door to the bowling alley and get a beer and ruin a couple of frames of bowling and go home.



**JE:** You know, let's bring up, Charlie Derrick certainly played a big role in Tulsa. Did you work with him or near him?

**SS:** I hired Charlie. I had been going to hire, or I had been trying to hire a kid from Muskogee named Greg Embody, whose dad had managed KGG up in Coffeyville and later owned maybe a rant and maybe owned KBIX in Muskogee. He's using the name Coyote Calhoun, but I just couldn't afford him. So I got Charlie Derrick. He was working over at Kelly, and he came over to do a night show.

And Charlie, let's put it this way. If I had had the dedication to making things happen that I wanted to happen, that Charlie had, my program director would have been in much bigger cities. He had the determination, the drive, and the willingness to put in the elbow grease and the nose to the grindstone to do it. I didn't.

**JE:** I think when I came here, Charlie was in KRAV. When FM was just beginning in '76 when I came, and I heard his name every once in a while. But let me say this, though, that to you and to all of your cohorts in rock and roll radio, I could never have done what you guys did. I wasn't born for that, nor did I like rock and roll. I came from news stations, WDAY in Fargo, WCCO in Minneapolis was my station.

**SS:** Oh, good station.

**JE:** And WLS, and those were the stations.

**SS:** Pretty fair little station there too, John.

**JE:** Right, and so those were the stations. I was a middle-of-the-road music kind of guy, and the news would lean toward the news. So when I came here from WOW in Omaha, they were music, but I came here, and then it was more news talk, and we pretty soon dropped our music. And then I could do things. I'd have a whole hour basically to myself, and I could just, and phone calls were a big drive for me. If I was good at anything, I was good with phone calls, and I'm talking about myself now because I'm complimenting you.

I could never have done what you did. My shtick was to do what I did, take phone calls and do silly things with them, and then of course with Oral Roberts and Tulsa Mountains and all that kind of stuff. I did, that was, that was.

**SS:** What I can tell you is my bomb-out weakness, of all of them, the biggest was my inability to do phone calls. When I got over to Fayetteville, they replaced a guy who was a good morning man. I heard about him. I thought, "Why are you replacing him?" Well, turned out the general manager never met a morning man he liked, never met a program director he liked. So they fired him, brought me over. Me, an afternoon guy, tell me I'm gonna do mornings. And then everything that I would try to do. "No, why don't you do phone calls? Do this."

So I couldn't have done what you did. It's probably a good thing there are two different kinds of pull-backs, John.

**JE:** There's no question, it gave us both.

**SS:** God took care of those of us who couldn't and those of you who could.

**JE:** It gave us both a paycheck. And then of course I like politics and then interviewing the news makers of the day and all that. It just fit me perfectly and I was so fortunate to get this job. Ron Blue brought me on and Gary Swanson. Are those names of interest to you, like Ron Blue?

**SS:** I worked with them both. Okay, tell me. In fact, we had a media basketball team that we played nurses and social groups and stuff like that. And Ron was on our basketball team and Ron could play some serious basketball. Big as he was.

**JE:** He played for OU.

**SS:** I did not know that. Well, okay. He probably wasn't as shapely as him when he was at KRMG at OU, I'll say that. With Charles Barkley, maybe he was. Right.

**JE:** But you came back to Tulsa in the late 80s, I think, early 90s and you worked at, was it KQMJ, Magic 99?

**SS:** Yeah, I came back in August of 87. KQMJ was, I think, the only station that Gary Swanson was not able to sell in the group when whoever bought all of his group, Queen and King and KRMG and all the rest of them. Right. And he had that station and they were trying to do the same thing KRMG was trying to do. The problem was that they had a signal that was kind of like KKC's a.m. night signal.

We never had a chance, but I got to have pretty good time there and got me back in the market for three years so that I could at least have some more time in my beloved Tulsa. Although when I come back there now, I look at it and I go, and to think I almost came back here and would have had my heart broken for sure. You're still in Tulsa, I'm presuming?

**JE:** Oh, I love Tulsa. Absolutely. I have absolutely loved Tulsa. But we should bring names up that you worked with when you came back again. Gary Reynolds?

**SS:** Gary was the program director. Mike Crusham was the general manager. Howard Price was the sales manager.

**JE:** And Mike Crusham was KRMG's manager too, or sales or whatever. Rick Allen West was there?

**SS:** Rick Allen was doing a midday show and killer production, and unfortunately, just about the time that we were starting to have some things happen, he got hired to come to whatever Kelly was becoming as they'd become a country station. And we also lost our morning man, and again, briefly for about six weeks until Johnny Rivers became available, I did a morning show that probably left a bunch of people lying there dead just waiting for you to come rescue them next year.

**JE:** That's right, I forgot about Johnny Rivers.

**SS:** Yeah, Johnny had been on, I think, KLAV, and I don't know what had happened, but he was out. And then all of a sudden, he became available. They kept beating on me to do the morning show, and I said, "No, I'm not a morning man. I will hurt you. I will kill me. It just ain't worth it."

They finally talked me into it, gave me a very nice pay bump, and I'm going, and I'm starting to almost kind of get a rhythm, although I'm not really feeling I'm making anything happen on the radio. And they come in and say, "Scoot, Johnny Rivers is available." And I said, "Well, okie dokie, put him on there."

And I got to go back to Afternoon for another couple of years, and that was much easier on me, although still ended up with my having to leave because the station was obviously going over, and it was clear they were getting ready to sell it or to change the format or something. So I made the mistake of going to Fayetteville.

**JE:** Well, then you and I were actually competing in the mornings for a period of time.

**SS:** I wouldn't say that, John. I would not say that about a nice man like you. I was over there chasing people as fast as I could away from 99.5. And the fact that they might accidentally come to the AM instead of the FM, or we're simulcasting in, too.

**JE:** Thank you. And Steve Clem, too, was a name that worked.

**SS:** He was our, he's the Swiss hunting knife of every radio station.

**JE:** Explain that.

**SS:** He can do a little production. He can do a lot of research. He can do some great music scheduling. He does a decent disc jockey show. He's like me. He doesn't have the big voice, so he can't do your really big bombastic productions. But he could probably go in and do trafficking if he had to.

**JE:** And then he wrote a history of KAKC Radio.

**SS:** Yeah, yeah. He was very kind to me. He said some things about me that were way over the top, and inspired some other things to happen. And I hope his reputation survives all that.

**JE:** Oh, it certainly has. You've come back to Tulsa to MC events at Cain's and other places, haven't you?

**SS:** I came back in, I think it was the start of 2014, maybe 2014 to MC the induction of some Tulsa musicians and the Oklahoma Music Hall of Fame, that was a thing at Cain's. Then a year later I came back for some kind of a 50th anniversary celebration for a group that had played Teen Hops for us at KAKC, the Roast Five. Those have been my two big returning MC gigs in Tulsa.

**JE:** When did you retire from radio?

**SS:** The last time finally was in about 2012 or 2013, working just a little part-time thing at a station 30 miles from me here in Arkansas. They weren't using me often enough for me to keep up with the formatting changes and the fact that it was an all automated thing. I'd go in for a six-hour shift, screw up the sound of the station for three seconds, and my gut for two days, and I finally decided it just ain't worth it. I retired from, as far as I was concerned, I retired from radio for real in September, no, October of 2005, I came up here.

## **Chapter 10 – 6:27**

### **It Was Never Work**

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**John Erling (JE):** What have you been doing since your retirement?

**Scooter Seagraves (SS):** Well, I don't even call it retirement, John. I call it the 116-hour weekend.

**JE:** Yeah?

**SS:** And basically, I watch my Forensics Files, and My Investigation, Discovery true crime shows. I go in and use my computer software to mix up my own road mix tapes and make some CDs for friends, knowing what they like. Oh, and a bird just tried to fly through the window on us. Hello? I do a ton of reading. I probably read three books a week.

**JE:** Wow. That's great. At the outset, Scooter, I mentioned that I was going to talk to you and so many people said, "Oh yes, we remember Scooter." And so you jumped out from that radio station. What do you think when people remind you fondly about your days at KAKC?

**SS:** Well, first started, John. I thought, oh, that's how somebody remembered. And then different things kept getting forwarded to me on Facebook when I was still wasting time there. And they kept getting forwarded to me on Facebook about Tulsa radio memories and I would always show up and I just thought, "Well, the dream continues. I'm going to wake up some year, but until it does, it's pretty nice." And now things like this happen and I'm going, I still didn't hear it, but I'm fortunate that other people had a lot different ears than I did.

**JE:** You know, I suspect it was – I was so smitten with radio as you were as well. And I remember I just had to get in, walk up to a radio station and say, "Can I walk into your studio and just stand there?"

**SS:** And that was me that very first time. I walked in and I probably still have nose prints and something else on the window. I was standing there, pressed against it, watching all this equipment, doing nothing in this room for half an hour until the guy came in from mowing the lawn or whatever he was doing, made him sweat so much and slammed the mic on KAKC. And by that time the ballgame was playing again.

**JE:** And we didn't know what was happening to us because not everybody was smitten with wanting to be on the radio. And so it was just, you know, some of us who just loved it and could hardly wait to be able to do that one day. And we were very fortunate. So it never was a job to me. I'm sure it wasn't to you either. Some people go-

**SS:** I told you, I said, I never made any money at all. This is going to be embarrassing and I'm going to admit it for all of the Voices of Oklahoma listeners to hear. The highest salary I made in my 55 years in radio was the equivalent of thirty seven thousand two hundred dollars a year. That was my last 17 months working. Okay. Like I say, I never had the confidence to go for the big paying job. So I never got the big paying jobs.

But I said I never made any money and I played and loved every minute of it. I think the problem was that I played more than I loved. Well, let me ask you this. Let me ask you a question. Did you bring your own little radio control board in your room at home and sit there with a couple of turntables and practice?

**JE:** No, I wasn't that advanced in my thinking, but I'm sure you did.

**SS:** I wasn't that advanced, but I was pretty good with a bolt cutter and masking tape and a cardboard paper box.

**JE:** Yeah. Yeah, that's fun. You know, there's so many kids down through the years and kids today, they don't know what they want to do and they don't want – they just don't know. And eventually they find it. But you and I were lucky that we knew what we wanted to do. And it drove us. And that as I look back, I realize that was a blessing to both of us that we had this drive and we wanted to be on the radio.

**SS:** Let me ask you this, though. Did you know before you walked into that first station you wanted to do it or you walked in and then it hooked you?

**JE:** I just it – was a fascination. I didn't know where this thing was going to go. And then I was a guy that I'm still in touch with today. He had been in radio and he'd say way, way back out a year out of high school. "John, with that voice of yours, you ought to be in radio." And I just said, laughed, you know, even though I'd been fascinated.

And but then again, he'd say, well, "John, you want to be in radio, you ought to be in radio." And his name was Chuck. And he'd been in radio and then he went into the ministry. So then I said, "Well, how do you do that?"

How do you get into radio?" "Well, I went to radio school and you didn't." And I went to radio school and Brown Institute in Minneapolis.

**SS:** And I think I knew a guy that taught there once.

**JE:** Yeah. And I remember Jimmy Valentine had been a big star and WCCO radio in Minneapolis. And he was one of the teachers. And so I was there for about eight, nine months. And then I graduated and then I went to Grand Forks and Fargo and Omaha and here. But I had to go to radio school because I went to KOL And I'm not saying I forgot KILO in Grand Forks. And I told them, "I'm thinking about going to radio school, but I'll audition for you and you tell me whether I should go to radio school or not."

And he came back after listening to the audition tape. And he says, "I think you ought to go to radio school." Right. Right. Right. So I did. And then I came back and got hired. So anyway, kind of enough on me. But it is interesting. We're sharing these stories as as old radio guys and how we eventually got there. But I could never have jumped in like you did in high school. That had never – I would never have the confidence to be able to do that at all. But we got there by different ways.

**SS:** The confidence they just offered it to me and it was there. And it was something I've fallen in love with. I said, "Well," using a line from a guy I later worked with at the station, "Might as well. Can't dance and it's too wet to plow."

## **Chapter 11 – 3:55**

### **Radio Advice**

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**John Erling (JE):** Right. Let's give advice to young people here. What would you say to the young people who are listening? They either want to be in broadcast, but they cannot be on the kind of radio that you and I were in. That will never happen today. don't believe maybe some rock station



would be the same or any other profession. What kind of advice do you give to them?

**Scooter Seagraves (SS):** I John, I honestly don't know, because I'm going to tell you a story about a friend of mine who is the son of my Lafayette boss when I went there in 80. Young Tom Mitchell loved radio. He'd been around all his life. His dad was a disc jockey and then manager of our station. All this. They had sold our group, bought another.

And Tom went on and did their nighttime love song show. Now, here's this 22 year old guy, good looking, good pipes and doing love songs. And I was friends that I'd say, "George, we hate that. Here's the music. You play that music. Why don't you play some Zeppelins, The Black Sabbath?"

So he goes to the album station in Baton Rouge. Well, comes the afternoon drive guy works from there up to Clear Channel Station in Austin. Their top 40. They like him so well there, John. They take him out to their station in Los Angeles, which was what they called at the time Alternative Rock. And he's in about three months and he comes to the end of the year and the annual Clear Channel Radio annihilation of staff to keep bonuses for management. And after all this time working his head all the way up to all these really great stations and great shifts, he's out of work. He knows he's an extra in movies down in Louisiana. So I don't know that I would advice anybody anything.

**JE:** Yeah. Right. Okay.

**SS:** Which is a shame because I mean, for guys like you and me, we had a dream and it came true for us. And I know a lot of others did. I know some, I knew a couple of guys I worked with and it broke my heart that they just never could quite catch the spark that I was lucky enough to. I thought both of them were at least as good as if not better than I would. That's the way the listener heard it. And thankfully for me-

**JE:** I like that phrase. "That's the way the listener heard it." That's good. So I ask my people that I interview, how would you like to be remembered? How would you like to be remembered, Scooter?

**SS:** I would like to be remembered, John, as somebody that left them feeling so good about the overall time we spent together that they would forget the real clunkers I laid and some honestly real bad stuff that I played and did for them. That looking back now in retrospect, it seemed so cool at the time, but I'm frankly ashamed that I did it when I did it.

I would hope that despite of all that, that people would generally have the kind of opinion of me that at least some of them show signs of having.

**JE:** Yeah, well, I'm quite certain that's the case. I, of course, had heard your name a long time ago. The only sad thing about this is we're not doing this in person because I would like to have met you in person. But I thank you very much for giving you – giving us time like this and for both of us to reminisce as old radio guys now.

**SS:** Hey, right.

**JE:** Right, right. Yeah, we are old radio guys. And so thank you.

**SS:** We're old radio guys and old radio guys.

**JE:** Right. Exactly right. So thank you, Scooter. I appreciate it very much.

**SS:** Thank you. Have a great summer and God bless you.

**JE:** And God bless you, too. I appreciate it. Bye bye.

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