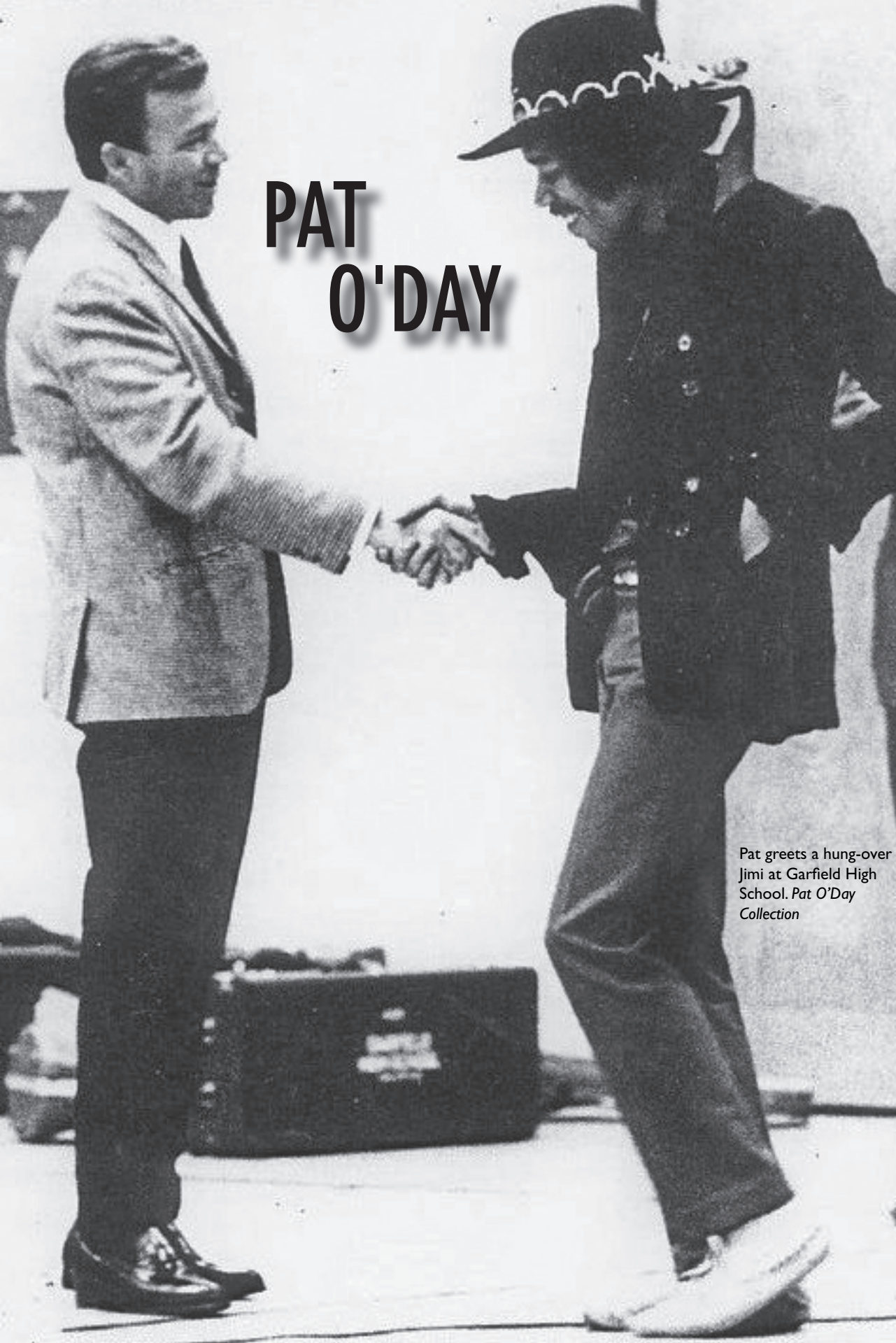


PAT O'DAY

Pat greets a hung-over
Jimi at Garfield High
School. *Pat O'Day
Collection*



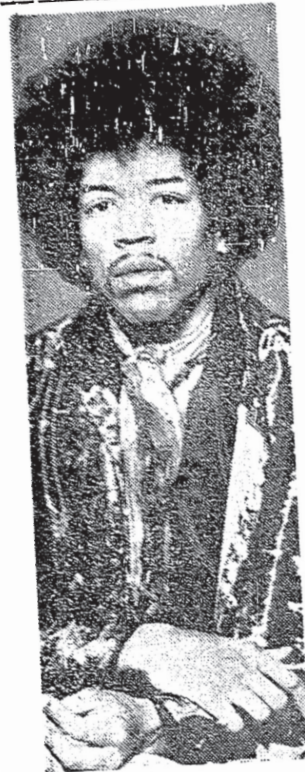
RING, RING GOES THE BELL!

If every picture tells a story, this one from February 13, 1968, should be in a time capsule as evidence the times were changing. The 30ish guy in the tailored sport coat, black slacks and tassel loafers, his reddish-brown hair carefully brushed back Philly-style, is Pat O'Day, the legendary Seattle disc jockey and concert promoter. Pat was the king of Top 40 radio from 3 to 6 weekdays in the Sixties. The jingle he wrote for his station is nostalgic catnip to hundreds of thousands of aging Puget Sound Baby Boomers. They can intone it on cue: "KJR Seattle, Channel 95!"

Jimi Hendrix should need no introduction. The Garfield High School dropout is on the brink of international stardom. Miles Davis, another rebel with a cause, saw him as a masterfully original blues guitarist. Mick Jagger called him the "sexiest male in the world." Jimi has returned to his alma mater for a special pep assembly on the morning after a sold-out homecoming concert at the Seattle Center Arena.

Optically, O'Day and Hendrix are as incongruous a pair as Dick Clark and Little Richard (or Ryan Seacrest and Ozzy Osbourne). Jimi, who is 25, looks like a gypsy troubadour in moccasins and British pea coat, his electric hair stuffed into a jaunty Western hat banded with purple ribbon and silver hoops. His slightly bent left knee, downcast eyes and shy smile betray his what-am-I-doing-here nervousness, exacerbated by a raging hangover. He'd partied hard most of the night. But, hey, man, *Pat O'Day* was going to introduce him. Jimi's song "Spanish Castle Magic" was an homage to O'Day's prime concert venue in the 1960s—an old roadhouse with faux turrets midway between Seattle and Tacoma. A combo called the Rocking Kings, with 17-year-old Jimi on a \$49.95

14 The Seattle Times
Friday, February 9, 1968



Back Home

Jimi Hendrix, Seattle-born rock singer, will appear for a pop-music concert at 8 o'clock Monday evening at the Seattle Center Arena. Also on the program with the Hendrix Experience will be the Soft Machine. Hendrix recently completed a European tour.

Sears Roebuck guitar, opened for another band at the Castle in 1960.

"Look at him," O'Day says, studying the photo half a century later. "He's so cool. But when it came time to talk to a bunch of teenagers in the gym at his old school he was absolutely petrified. Scared spitless. It was really awkward. The Garfield student body was then predominantly black kids from the Central District, but Jimi's music wasn't exactly Motown. A lot of the kids didn't really know who he was. I grabbed the microphone



Pat and Jimi at Seattle Center Arena. Peter Riches/Museum of Pop Culture

and said, 'Standing before you today is a man who may soon surpass the Beatles in popularity!' Most of the kids applauded and cheered the idea a black musician from their school could displace an all-white British band. When I asked if anyone wanted to ask Jimi a question, one kid asked how long he had been gone. 'About 2,000 years,' Jimi quipped. Then a cheerleader with purple and white pompoms—the school's colors—asked him, 'Mr. Hendrix, how do you write a song?' Jimi mumbled something about 'Purple and white, fight, fight!' and said he always liked to hear the school bell. 'Right now, I have a plane to catch, so I'm going to say goodbye, go out the door, get into my limousine and go to the airport. And when I get out the door, the assembly will be over, and the bell will ring. And when I hear that bell ring, I'll be able to write a song. Thank you very much.' He waved goodbye with a sheepish smile and walked out the door without receiving an honorary diploma. The principal, Frank Fidler, shot me a look that said, 'Pat, you owe me one!' "

Jimi had left the building but not the stage.

Seven months later, as a summer of discontent was fading into a bumpy fall, the Jimi Hendrix Experience returned to Seattle in unconditional triumph. *Electric Ladyland*, their new double album, rocketed to No. 1 on the Billboard charts as Election Day approached. The Nixon-Agnew ticket was pledging "Law and Order" and an "honorable" exit from Vietnam. Vice President Hubert Humphrey, the Democrats' nominee, struggled to free himself from Lyndon Johnson's tattered coattails and images of Chicago cops thrashing anyone without a crewcut. Hendrix's virtuoso version of Dylan's "All Along the Watchtower," a breakout single from the album, struck millions as an anthem for the year that changed the world. There was "too much confusion" and "no relief," Jimi lamented. Midway in the track, Jimi cuts loose on a soaring Stratocaster riff punctuated by a psychedelic slide up and down the frets. "It gave me chills," O'Day says, admitting that his tastes usually revolved—in fact



Pat surrounded by admirers at a dance party in the 1960s. *Pat O'Day Collection*

still do—around Elvis, Roy Orbison, Ray Charles and the Ronettes.

Early in his ascendancy at KJR, O'Day began promoting dances and concerts featuring Northwest bands like The Fabulous Wailers, the Ventures and Sonics, as well as traveling stars like Ricky Nelson. "Every local band wanted to play the Castle," O'Day says, sea-blue eyes brightening at the memory, "and big-time artists like Roy Orbison—one of my all-time favorite performers—loved the energy of the crowds. Northwest kids knew their rock 'n' roll. When he returned home in 1968, Jimi asked me if I remembered the wired kid who was a fixture at the Castle, always hoping he'd be asked to sit in as a side man with other groups. 'That was me, Pat!' he said. I was flabbergasted. To me, Jimi was a jewel—just the sweetest guy you could imagine. We would sit and talk

about hydroplanes and how he'd like to see the Woodland Park Zoo expanded. At heart he was just a Seattle kid."

BY 1968, O'Day's success as a concert promoter and high-key, wisecracking persona—not to mention KJR's Top 40 format—had bred contempt among the cognoscenti of the city's growing "underground." They branded him a greedy opportunist more interested in ratings and his piece of the action than "music that matters"—Buffalo Springfield, Dylan and The Byrds vs. "empty-headed crowd-pleasers" like the Beach Boys and Jan and Dean. Tom Robbins, writing in *Helix*, Seattle's underground paper, lamented that Jimi Hendrix had been "sucked into the Pat O'Day syndrome with all of the phoney baloney implicit in that milieu" of "big-deal promo."

Fifty years on, O'Day leaned forward over his clam chowder at the Washington Athletic Club (Sign says you got to have a membership card to get inside—hooh!) and observed that it was all rock 'n' roll. "But if you were a purist in 1968 you weren't supposed to like Elvis, the Righteous Brothers and





Jimi Hendrix.” Even after *Pet Sounds*, Brian Wilson’s brilliant Beach Boys album, left the *Little Deuce Coupe* in the dust, some people still didn’t get it, O’Day says. *Helix* railed that O’Day had the effrontery to stage a LOVE-IN and charge admission. “They had bumper stickers saying ‘Pat O’Day’s a shuck’ because music ‘belongs to the people’ and there I was, supposedly this crass promoter, charging \$5 for concert tickets. Well, I know one thing for certain: Musicians appreci-

ate getting paid. And you won’t hear anyone say I didn’t look out for the artists.”

FAST FORWARD TO 1970. “Bridge over Troubled Water,” fittingly, topped the charts as Nixon widened the war and the credibility gap became a crevasse. The Ohio National Guard mowed down four Kent State students during an anti-war protest, the Beatles broke up and Jimi Hendrix was dead at 27 of an accidental barbiturate overdose.

“Jimi’s dad, Al Hendrix, asked me to fly to London and find out what was happening,” O’Day remembers. “Tom Hulet, a Garfield High guy, was one of my partners at the time. We discovered the body was still at the morgue and nobody was doing anything. I had a letter from Jimi’s dad, so they allowed us to claim the body. We bought a coffin and brought him home. It was one of the saddest duties of my life. What a tragedy. In my view, he’s the greatest rock guitarist ever—a transcendent genius.”

Hendrix’s biographer, Seattleite Charles R. Cross, seconds the motion: “In rock music there has never been a guitarist as ground-breaking, original and impactful as Jimi Hendrix. Fifty years later he still ranks No. 1 in practically every poll. In modern rock he’s unmatched. And Pat O’Day’s impact on the Northwest music scene—booking shows, running KJR and influencing generations of listeners—is also unparalleled. He’s the original Northwest rock legend.”

PAT O’DAY, a radio division honoree at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, now combs his silver hair forward, late ’60s Mod-style, to frame his apple-cheeked face. At 84 he’s alive and well, having survived a brain tumor and untold gallons



Pat today. Pat O'Day collection



The young deejay at work. Pat O'Day Collection

of Jack Daniels and Stolichnaya. Trim and nimble, he's a walking, talking endorsement for Schick Shadel Hospital's touted 10-day, get-your-life-back addiction cure. Pat is exultant over a new brain-imaging study that yields evidence of reduced alcohol-craving after aversion therapy: "It proves what we've been saying all along."

Even coming down with a cold he sounds like himself. It's the same sandpapered baritone that narrated the after-school

soundtrack of so many teenage lives in the 1960s. It was a stroke of George Lucas's genius that a disc jockey, Wolfman Jack, is a mostly unseen star of *American Graffiti*, fielding requests for "Runaway," "Surfin' Safari" and "That'll be the Day." After promising that "16 Candles" will be the next platter, the Wolfman asks a lonely teenager what's happening in his town. "All we got is you, Wolfman!" the kid says.

From Seattle, south to Olympia, north to Mount Vernon and east to the fast-growing suburbs across Lake Washington, Pat O'Day owned the afternoon airwaves, averaging 35 percent of the after-school and drive-time audience at a time when traffic was growing dramatically. Teenage car culture was in its heyday. Around the time the Lake City branch of the legendary Dick's Drive-In opened, Pat peaked at 41 percent. "Not only was he Seattle's No. 1 radio personality, with phenomenal market-share ratings, his company, Concerts West, became one of the major concert-booking agents in the nation," says Stan Foreman, a Northwest deejay and bandleader who went on to become Capitol Records' top executive in the Northwest.

MORE BALLARD than Belfast, Pat O'Day was born Paul Wilburn Berg on September 24, 1934, in Norfolk, Nebraska, the son of a coal miner turned preacher. His paternal grandparents, Johan Gustaf and Augusta Johnson Berg, were Swedish immigrants. O'Day's maternal grandfather, the Rev. Arthur Wilburn Marts, was also of Swedish extraction. But Arthur's wife, Zelda, appears to have Scots-Irish roots. Pat quips that this gives him some Celtic credibility. Without question, they were all uniformly devout.

Paul Emanuel Berg, Pat's father, worked in the mines in Iowa alongside his own father until the dust clogged his lungs and matted his eyes. "It was dark as a dungeon way down in the mine," as the song goes, but the Lord's light led Berg to the pulpit, as Pat puts

it. By 1930, when he was 28, Pat's father was an ordained minister of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Meadow Grove, Nebraska, population 483. When Arthur Marts, a missionary with the American Sunday School Union, was passing through one Sunday and stayed for dinner, Berg learned Marts had a lovely, God-fearing daughter named Wilma. Paul and Wilma's three sons, Paul, David and Daniel, grew up steeped in the Bible at the Havelock Gospel Temple on the outskirts of Lincoln, Nebraska. Grandpa Marts visited often. "Like my dad, he was a great preacher," O'Day remembers. "He was also a lead-foot driver, speeding from town to town for Sunday School visits in the small towns of Nebraska. Sometimes he would do several sermons in a day, with the State Patrol on his tail. One time they pulled the distributor cap out of his car while he was preaching to try and slow him down."

In 1942, when Pat was 7, his father accepted the pastorate of the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in Tacoma. "After church on Sunday, my parents would always invite missionaries, visiting preachers or the choir director over for dinner, the mid-day meal. And of course things would immediately turn to the Lord." Pat and his brothers understood they were to be on their best behavior. But Pat, talkative and mischievous, couldn't resist joining the discussions. Bible study had left him with a streak of unorthodox skepticism. "One day in the middle of one of those conversations precocious Pat says, 'Did you know that Jesus didn't know the Earth was round?' My father says, 'What?' And I said, 'Well, the Bible says you should go to all four corners of the Earth and preach the Gospel to every peoples and nation. *Four corners*. So Jesus didn't know it was round!' I was given passages of scripture to read to help me mend my ways."

The Rev. Berg soon landed a regular radio ministry show on Tacoma's KMO, 1360, one of the state's pioneer stations. "Sometimes I'd go with him to the station. Regardless, I'd always listen. He didn't pound the pulpit, but he could move people emotionally. I knew then that I wanted to be on the radio. Every night I'd go into the bathroom and practice announcing into the bathtub because it made my voice resonate."

When O'Day enrolled in broadcasting school and began perfecting his delivery, he says he realized the secret to his father's success was being "one-on-one" with his listeners. O'Day points to Franklin D. Roosevelt's mastery of the medium during the darkest days of the Depression. With his patrician yet warm, reassuring voice, FDR used his "Fire-side Chats" to communicate directly with the American people. "You felt like the president was right in your living room talking to you," O'Day says. One of his idols, Johnny Carson, told him no one summed things up better than Billy Graham:

"I had lunch with Johnny at the Brown Derby in Beverly Hills around 1966. I had always wanted to meet him—not just because he was a star but because we were both from Norfolk, Nebraska. I always joked that there was a mix-up at the hospital and I was supposed to be on NBC and he was supposed to be on KJR. That Johnny was born nine years before me ruins the story!



Holding a new Elvis record at KUTI-AM, Yakima, in 1958. *Pat O'Day Collection*

“We talked about communications and he said something that just hit my heart because I was a huge fan of Billy Graham. Johnny told me that when he met the famous evangelist, Billy told him his philosophy was ‘Talk to one person and you talk to everybody. Talk to everybody and you talk to nobody.’ Billy could be at L.A. Memorial Coliseum, with 120,000 people, using an echoing public address system, and make a guy in the back row think that he was talking just to him. Whenever I was on the air, I’d look at the microphone and envision one person and talk to her or him. My father always understood the concept. It’s why he had such a following.”

THREE DAYS after Christmas in 1948, O’Day’s father died of heart failure linked to TB and the damage coal-dust had done to his lungs decades earlier. The Rev. Berg was only 48. “My mother is now a widow with young three sons and virtually no money,” O’Day remembers. “And I was 14 years old.”

They moved to Iowa, near relatives, to regroup before landing in Bremerton in 1950. Wilma Berg began working in a Bible bookstore and immersed herself in child evangelism. Pat’s earnings from an after-school job at a supermarket helped out. Then, during his junior and senior years, he left school at noon every day to work at a downtown de-

partment store. "We were poor. I had to work but I didn't resent it. I was glad to help. My mother, who lived just short of 100 years, was an amazing person—a true Christian lady. Her middle name was 'Grace.' "

O'Day graduated from Bremerton High School in 1953. He sang in the choir, but his claim to fame was being voted the classmate with the "best sense of humor." He attended Olympic College in Bremerton before enrolling in the broadcasting program at Tacoma Vocational-Technical Institute—now called Bates Technical College. His dream, from the beginning, was to be the afternoon deejay on KJR. In his Tacoma boyhood, it was the NBC affiliate, with an array of after-school adventure and mystery shows.

KVAS in Astoria, Oregon, in the fall of 1956, was the first stop on the backroads to a major market. "There, in between reading lost dog reports and funeral home ads, he developed his 'Platter Party' concept, which meant broadcasting rock hits from remote teenage sock hops on weekends—thus turning the previously sterile medium of radio into an 'event,' " wrote Northwest music historian Peter Blecha.

The young deejay—still going by Paul Berg—perfected his snappy, "faintly ironic" patter at KLOG in Kelso while staging teen dance parties at the National Guard Armory to supplement his \$350 a month salary. That was actually a fair sum for a deejay in a market that size, O'Day says. The dance business, meantime, was generating \$100 a week.

He arrived in Yakima in 1958, lured by the promise of the program director's slot and a hundred-dollar raise. It was there that he had one of the most bizarre experiences of his career. He was hosting the Saturday afternoon show on KUTI ("Cutie") when...

Suddenly something struck me. I turned around and there was this fellow standing there with a club, so I slipped off the chair and crawled under the turntable stand and into the next booth where I grabbed a microphone boom for protection. It turned out the guy was schizo-paranoid and had just broken up with his girl. He came after me because I kept playing "their" song—something called, get this, "Crazy Love"—and he thought I was mocking him. But the wildest thing came later. A few months afterwards he came to the station to apologize. I said, "Buddy, we've all got our faults. Let's just work on them together." We shook hands, and he left. But a little while later he came tearing back into the station and did a flying swan-dive leap over the turntables at me. I finally got him down, and it was a good thing I did. When they hauled him away they found a loaded shotgun in the front seat of his car. He'd gotten so mad he forgot the gun!

As "Pat O'Day," he made his Seattle debut on KAYO in the winter of 1959:

I told Ted Bell, the program director, that I wanted to change my name because “Paul Berg” didn’t have any magic to it for a radio personality. I felt more like a Pat than a Paul, though I did have some mixed emotions because I was proud to be Paul Berg’s namesake son. I thought Pat was a great name for me and my personality. So we kicked it around. If it was going to be Pat maybe something Irish would be good. I don’t remember if it was Ted or me, but we settled on O’Day. It had to be spelled different from the big Seattle high school—O’Dea— so it wouldn’t be a rip-off. I legally changed my name to Pat O’Day soon thereafter. My mother, bless her heart, made the switch and began calling me Pat.

When KJR announced it was switching to a Top 40 format, O’Day landed his dream job. “On New Year’s Day 1960, I went on the air at KJR for the first time,” he recalls wistfully. “Little did I know it would be my home for the next 15 years.” The rest is broadcasting history. O’Day was named the top program director in the nation in 1964 and 1965 and “Radioman of the Year” in 1966. He began announcing hydroplane races on Lake Washington in an era when rooster tails meant summer. By 1968, O’Day was such a household name that he was recruited to run for lieutenant governor on the Republican ticket. O’Day’s friend Jim Clapp and Clapp’s formidable father, Norton, chairman of the Weyerhaeuser Company, promised to spearhead fundraising if he’d enter the race. “It was a fascinating moment. I told them I was flattered, but politics wasn’t me. So they recruited my friend Bill Muncey, the famous hydro racer.”*

O’Day ascended to station manager, all the while expanding his concert business and investing in real estate, cutting deals and hobnobbing with the stars. Notably, he recalls a pool party where he says Pete Townshend and Roger Daltrey of The Who told their wildman drummer, Keith Moon, to lighten up a bit because drum kits were more expensive to replace than guitars after the obligatory set-ending bash-fest.



* Muncey was swamped in the GOP primary by a charismatic African American, Arthur Fletcher, who went on to lose narrowly in November but became a key player nationally in Affirmative Action.

O'Day dabbled in cocaine and marijuana, but his drug of choice was whiskey:

When I decided I was drinking too much Jack Daniels, I switched to Wild Turkey. Next, it was Stolichnaya vodka. I was a happy drunk all the while. Never got angry. It would turn my creative juices loose. I would forget business and become an artist. The drinking allowed me to get business out of my mind and write material for my radio show. What's the saying—'wooden leg'? I could drink enormous amounts of booze and never lose my equilibrium, oblivious to what it was doing to my body. A lot of times I went back on the air after a four Jack Daniels lunch and no one could tell. I was capable of drinking a fifth of whiskey a day. Then came the intervention. Schick Shadel Hospital changed my life—maybe saved my life.

I had a dear friend, Dan Sandal, who owned Daniel's Broiler restaurant. I did all of his marketing and advertising. I came up with some fun things and his business was booming. My deal with Dan was that aside from a small fee I could eat and drink at his restaurant with my other clients free of charge. One day his bartender said to him, "Do you know that Pat drinks half a fifth of Stolichnaya at lunch." Dan said, "Oh my God" and started keeping an eye on me. So it was Dan who put together an intervention in May of 1986. My father-in-law had graduated from Schick five years before. So there I was—embarrassed and humiliated and pissed off. I went to Schick vowing I would beat the system, thinking I'd go in for two weeks and get them off my back. Well, I walked out two weeks later and never had another drink. I felt like a new human. The beauty is that you leave there and it's over with.

If the old deejay sounds like an evangelist, it's because he is. Cured, O'Day became the voice of Schick Shadel's radio and TV commercials and invested in the Burien hospital, now owned by a Texas-based health care provider. He still gives the welcoming address to each incoming group of patients. "I've sent hundreds of addicted people through the program—everyone from radio guys to Seahawks. A lot of people who've heard my testimonials over the years think it's hype. The 12-step, talk therapy people hate us. But it's scientific and it works."

In 2012, good friends and Pat's wife of 37 years, Stephanie, were increasingly alarmed by his memory lapses—more like abrupt black holes than Alzheimer's. Stephanie, a land use attorney in San Juan County, "is nothing if not tenacious," Pat says, so he was marched to the Emergency Room. A CAT scan revealed a massive tumor. "The doctor

in the ER department told me I had inoperable cancer and only a short time to live. But another doctor ran in and said, 'We better do an MRI and be sure,' and 2½ hours later they told me, 'It's benign! You can be operated on!' The Center for Advanced Brain Tumor Treatment at the Swedish Neuroscience Institute gave me a new lease on life. I walked out of the hospital four days later feeling like a new man."

ASKED TO share something most people don't know about him, O'Day thinks hard for several seconds before saying, "*That I'm conservative. I'm a traditionalist. Patriotic. I cry at the Star Spangled Banner.*" Above all, he says he hates dogmatism and the decline of civility. Those who branded him a low-brow "shuck" back in the day, will consider the following soliloquy proof positive they were right all along:

I despise the quirky areas America has turned since the drug-infested days of the late '60s. I hate it that the entire generation that was in college and academia at that time was so poisoned by drugs and leftist propaganda. *And now the students are the professors.* I had my doubts about Vietnam, but I hated the vilification of our troops—and that all cops were being called "pigs." I'm appalled at ingrained bias. I would say it was alarming if 90 percent of the professors were Republicans, so it's equally alarming to me that 90 percent are Democrats. It makes me feel bad that it happened in my lifetime. ... And now we're legalizing marijuana. Where did it say that America needed another intoxicant? And one that's so easy to hide? People driving cars totally intoxicated yet they don't show the signs like with alcohol; kids going to school eating marijuana cookies. So we have done a great disservice to our youth by decriminalizing it. It's part of the mentality that came out of the late '60s. And academia today encourages all kinds of lunacy and "freedoms."

OK, Pat. Tell us how you really feel. So how about afternoon radio today? "I don't listen to music stations with any enthusiasm. I listen to a lot of talk radio," he says with a shrug. Unsurprising, in light of the last paragraph, O'Day says he finds KIRO's Dori Monson—the sworn enemy of bureaucratic nincompoopery and taxpayer-fleeing schemes—compellingly provocative. "He talks to people one on one" and does his homework, O'Day says. And he "really enjoys" KIRO's 3-7 duo of Ron Upshaw and Don O'Neill and their witty sidekick, Rachel Belle. "*She's good.*"

When it's music he wants, O'Day tunes to "countrified stuff because they're still using block chords and harmonies, recording with real instruments, and the songs are all about storytelling."

To Pat, the oldies are still goldies. His all-time favorite is "Be My Baby," one of Phil

Spector's "Wall of Sound" hits for the talented Ronettes. "One weird guy. But a great producer!" O'Day says, laughing. "Roy Orbison's 'Only the Lonely' still moves me every time I hear it after all these years, and 'Georgia On My Mind' is Ray Charles at his most brilliant. I still love a lot of the Beach Boys tunes."

Best concert ever? "Led Zeppelin at Tampa Stadium. May 1973. Sold out show. 57,000 fans. Great band. Fireworks. Four-dozen white doves. Robert Plant was turned on like you can't believe and the crowd was stunned. So was I."

Proudest achievement? "The success I was able to design and orchestrate with KJR. We were breaking ground. TV had destroyed radio, but then it had a rebirth in the '60s. We were making it up as we went along. We set standards that have never been topped or equaled, and that's a shame because radio is still capable of such things today. There's no regard for real programming. People haven't changed. Radio has changed."

Any advice from the vantage point of 84? "Stay busy! You only get one shot on this earth. How can you waste one day of it?"

Could he sing a certain jingle for the State Archives?

"Sure." Pat O'Day leans into the tape recorder and intones "KJR, Seattle..."

He interrupts himself, saying, "I'm not in good voice today. Let me try it again."

He clears his throat and nails it:

"KJR, Seattle, *Channel 95!*"

John C. Hughes
Legacy Washington
Office of the Secretary of State

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