

Kellar Radio Talent Institute

APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Art Kellar

After serving in the Army during World War II and graduating from American University in 1946, Brooklyn, New York, native, Arthur C. Kellar, was trying to determine what he was going to do in life.

One day Kellar was listening to the Arthur Godfrey Show on the radio. Godfrey had two guests on the show, and he had each of them read a commercial. “The first one did a good job on it, the second one was terrible, and I thought I can do better than that,” Kellar said.

Kellar graduated from a broadcasting school in Chicago and became a disc jockey in Ronceverte, West Virginia. He told an interviewer, “I got off the train and walked the two blocks to the [radio] station, and when I walked inside my very first thought was, I’ve got to own one of these.”

Kellar founded O.K. Broadcasting in 1956 and that year purchased his first radio station, WEEL-AM in Fairfax, Virginia. In the 1960s and 1970s, WEEL was one of the Washington area’s most popular Top 40 stations.

“If there ever was a real gentleman, a person who said ‘I’ll do this’ and who always did

it, it was Art Kellar. He was a man among men, if I might use that old cliché. I was so enthused when I heard the idea of this institute that I wanted to do anything that we could possibly do to make it successful, because anything that Art Kellar had his hands on was always done to perfection.”

George Beasley - Founder - Chairman and CEO - Beasley Broadcast Group

In 1967, Kellar bought WEZR in Manassas, Virginia, and founded EZ Communications, Inc., which eventually owned and operated 26 AM and FM stations across the United States. At WEZR, Kellar helped popularize the easy listening format of largely instrumental or soft, laid back music on an FM station.



In 1970, EZ Communications used the easy listening format to much success on its newly acquired FM station in Richmond, Virginia. In the 1980s, the company, through further acquisitions and format changes, acquired ownership and operations of stations with various formats across the country from Miami to Seattle.

In 1996, after the easing of deregulation rules, EZ Communications merged with Boston-based American Radio Systems, Inc. (ARS), sealing a \$655 million deal that made the resulting company the second largest station operator in the country. Kellar retired shortly afterward.

Besides his leadership and success in the radio industry, Kellar was a true civic leader. Kellar had settled in the Northern Virginia area. He served as a trustee for George Mason University and the Fairfax Hospital Association, which later became Inova Health System. He also was a board member of many Washington area companies.

A longtime Washington Redskins ticketholder, Kellar enjoyed golf and played in many charity tournaments.



Kellar Radio Talent Institute

APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Art Kellar continued

Kellar and his wife, Elizabeth Patton “Betty” Kellar, established the Kellar Family Foundation to support health-care organizations, education, human services, and the performing arts. The foundation’s efforts include the Helen A. Kellar Institute for Human Disabilities at George Mason, named in memory of the Kellars’ daughter who died in 1998, and two family theaters that bear Kellar’s name -- at the Potomac Stages and the Center for the Arts at the Candy Factory in Manassas. With the foundation’s assistance, Inova Health System founded the Inova Kellar Center in 1991 to provide mental health services to children and families regardless of their ability to pay.

Kellar, who was president of the foundation, helped start the Kellar Radio Talent Institute, a summer program at Appalachian State University in North Carolina to bring young people into the radio industry. He stated, “There is a need to bring fresh talent into the industry at every level, to contribute to make the industry even more dynamic, and there are plenty of people in the industry that want to help young people enter the industry and be successful.”

Woody Allen of Allen Financial Services and formerly comptroller of Art’s company, EZ Communications, said, “He built and sold companies, founded and funded charities, sat on and chaired numerous boards, started and funded endowments and invested in many local businesses, all the while providing the context for thousands of careers, both in and out of broadcasting.

His radio stations entertained millions of people, from Seattle to Miami, from Philadelphia to Phoenix. With very little capital, and lots of work, foresight, vision, and talent, he built a company worth more than \$500 million.

A mark of his greatness is the number of people who have better lives because of him; an even greater mark is that, oftentimes, the recipient of his generosity never knew that it was Art who provided it.”

“Art was always reaching out to help others, and would go out of his way to do it. I always appreciated his willingness to give through what God had blessed him with. He cared.”

Joe Gibbs, Former Washington Redskins Coach and three-time winner of the Super Bowl, Owner of Joe Gibbs Racing

But Art Kellar was much more than his accomplishments. He was a warm, generous, open, wise, dignified, funny and caring man; never concerned with social status or wealth and power for it’s own sake. He was always willing to help the least among us, as well those more fortunate. And he was a leader in every sense. You always knew where the center of gravity was in the room, even if he was sitting quietly in the corner.