

Country Radio  
HALL OF FAME

# Jim Denny

## Hometown Boy

*It's not just that Jim Denny has been in Indianapolis for his entire radio career, or that he's been doing mornings at WFMS for 25 years. It's that no matter what else has tried to pull his focus away, radio has always been the thing that kept his attention. And even better is that the woman who's been by his side for 25 years will share this honor with him in a very special way.*



**I always liked radio and listened to the disc jockeys** – some guys were really strong. A friend's dad was in TV and I asked him one time how to get in radio. He told me to just go find a small station somewhere, get on part-time and work your way up. I was going to college for psychology and got a part-time gig at a little station in Danville, IN. Within three or four weeks they offered me middays. I thought I'd try to do both radio and school, but I really fell in love with radio, so school became secondary. So did the grades at that point. There was just something about one person talking to and entertaining all these people.

**I'd been interested in going to 'FMS** for a while and got a call from PD Russ Schell inviting me to lunch. So I dressed up, bought his lunch and didn't hear anything for a while. I inquired again, and he invited me for lunch again. So I bought lunch again. The third time I paid for lunch I thought, "I don't think this is working right." Finally I saw him at an Alabama concert and mentioned I was thinking about moving down to WKIS/Miami and he said, "See me Monday morning." I showed up, he gave me the midday deal and I've been here 25 years. I did middays for about three months, they moved me to afternoons for a year-and-a-half, and then I moved

But it's kind of neat that thousands and thousands of people grew up hearing you every morning. And you get to hear how you made a difference in their life.

Maybe you comforted them during tough times, or made them laugh, or just said something that stuck with them. It makes you realize it's a big responsibility. But when you're doing it you don't really think of it that way. So watching this town grow and being able to be a part of it – that's very cool to me.

**My longevity is due to luck.** And changing with the times. Deb [Honeycutt] and Kevin [Freeman] and I have been working together for

important, but it's about the great fish fry going on down at the church this weekend, you know? That kind of stuff you can't get anywhere else.

**I'm way too young to be inducted** into the Hall of Fame. It was really very exciting and I'm still just shocked. When I got the call, my wife and I were down in Florida and it was the culmination of a great day. The weather was beautiful and we got to walk the beach. I got the call in the evening as the sun was setting. They told me and I knew it doesn't get any better than this. One of those perfect days.



**LBT Sandwich:** Kevin Freeman, Deb Honeycutt and Denny (center, l-r) are the meat in a Little Big Town greet.

“ Instead of wanting to pump my hand in the air, it makes me want to sit back and reflect, like Sally Field – they must like me! ”



**Famous In A Small Town:** Denny (1) and the team get some hang time with Miranda Lambert.

I was at the Danville station two or three years. Then I went to a little station in Crawfordsville and then back into Indianapolis. I worked at a couple of Big Band stations, which I loved: Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey and stuff like that. My grandparents played a lot of that, so I knew it.

**I'm also a bluegrass musician** and played for a year-and-a-half or two years with Alison Krauss. We were trying to do gigs on the weekends while I was working full-time. The problem we had was we'd have a gig in Pennsylvania and then one up in Wisconsin, so it was mostly on the road. And I just got a little older and you can't really have much of a life that way. In '86 or '87 I said, "I've got to do it just regionally or not at all." Alison was on her way up and it was time for her to separate from the guys who can't do it anymore. And she did pretty well!

to mornings with Charlie Morgan for about six years.

**During an early interview with Wynonna** as her solo career was taking off, I said, "You are huge." She just looked at me and said, "Huge, huh?" I had to backtrack. "No, no ... I don't mean ... " Oh, God, what have I done? She laughed it off and said, "I know you're talking about the career." I was so relieved! My face was red, and I knew she was just going to mess with me at that point. She probably felt sorry for me.

**I'm the most proud of the fact that** I was born in Indianapolis, raised here most of my life, started in radio here and have been able to stay this long. People come up and say, "Man, I was just a little kid when I started listening to you." It's only 25 years, give me a little bit of a break on that! I'm not that horribly old.

15 years. We're really good friends, which makes a difference. You can't just force relationships so the fact that we became friends almost before we were put together helps. And sometimes you just get lucky. Most people don't stay in a market that long, but both Kevin and Deb are from here, so it's very unusual for all of us. We know we're blessed.

**There are so many entertainment outlets.** Everything we do is faster now. You have to be shorter and get the point across a little quicker. The one thing radio still has that you can't get from other mediums is the local angle. I can get on the air and talk about the great high school game last night in Broderville or that great interception by Tommy Jones, or the local Girl Scout group. That's what keeps radio alive is that when people listen, they're hearing about their hometown. The music's very

We've been lucky enough on the show to get two CMA awards and an ACM, so it's neat that as a team we've been honored. It seems kind of weird to get an individual award like this. That's the thing that threw me. Instead of wanting to pump my hand in the air, it makes me want to sit back and reflect, like Sally Field – they must like me! I can't think of a bigger honor, it's the most exciting thing I've ever had.

**The biggest blessing is that my wife** of 18 years has been a traffic reporter at 'FMS for years. She was there before me, so I have worked continuously with her for 25 years. And she's going to do the induction. No one else has worked with me that long and no one knows me as well, so I'm excited about that. Obviously because she's my wife, but also because we've been together on the air every single morning.

CAC



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