

For more than 66 years radio broadcaster Bob Steele brightened the mornings of Connecticut listeners. **THE REAL BOB STEELE: CONNECTICUT'S RADIO LEGEND** traces the life and career of this radio legend. Previously unseen pictures and footage of Steele, contributed by his wife and sons, help create a unique intimate portrait. Archival interviews with Steele, new interviews with his fellow broadcasters and comments by some of his ardent listeners complete the program, which premiered October 2003 on Connecticut Public Television.

Narrated by Joanne Nesti of WVIT-NBC30, the documentary features archival interviews with Steele and new interviews with his broadcast colleagues including Gary Craig (WTIC FM), Brad Davis (WDRC), Mark Davis (WTNH-TV), Arnold Dean (WTIC AM), Angela Dias (WTIC AM) and Al Terzi (WFSB-TV3). Also appearing in the program are retired colleagues Bob Ellsworth (WTIC AM/TV), Bill Hennessey (WTIC Radio/TV) and Dick Robinson (WDRC).

When Steele died December 2002 at the age of 91, many Connecticut residents felt as if they had lost a close friend. His warm on-air personality was matched by his immense popularity. Beginning in pre-television days, when radio was king, and continuing for decades after television's advent, Steele was the most dominant radio broadcaster in the country. In his heyday, which spanned several generations of listeners, he hosted the most-listened-to morning radio show in the U.S. with an audience that reached more than a million people a day.

Born in Kansas City, Missouri in 1911, Steele took on responsibility early in life. He started working at age eight, delivering prescriptions at night in order to help his divorced mother make ends meet. It took him six years to graduate from high school due to his work schedule. After stints as a newsboy, salesman, motorcycle messenger and professional boxer, he was invited to Hartford by a race promoter to announce a motorcycle race. While spending his last day in town, he walked into WTIC-AM on a whim and asked to audition for a vacant announcer position. Beating out 12 other applicants, Steele became a junior staff announcer at WTIC in Hartford on Oct. 1, 1936.

He took over the "The G. Fox Morning Watch" radio show on WTIC Radio in 1943. Seven years later, it was renamed "The Bob Steele Show." By the time of his retirement from daily radio in 1991, he had created the longest running radio show in the country. Steele never fully retired, continuing to host a monthly radio show on WTIC-AM until his death.



Steele's immense popularity was due to many factors. The bottom line was that he was an eminently likable personality. On the air from 5:30 to 10 a.m. Monday through Saturday, his warm baritone was often the first voice that listeners heard in the morning. His voice was matched by his on-air persona -- intimate, witty, smart, yet accessible. Listeners got the impression of a man who enjoyed his work, who respected intelligence, and who enjoyed talking to you one-on-one.

The show was easy-going and comfortably predictable. Segments comprised weather (including world temperatures), sports (Steele was longtime sports director for WTIC), birthdays, anniversaries, local and national news, storytelling for children. And of course nothing brightened up a winter morning more for generations of school-age kids than when Bob Steele announced that there would be no school that day.

Quick with a pun (and a corny joke or two), Steele's respect for the spoken word was renowned. He regularly shared with his audience tips and lessons on grammar and pronunciation, including his "Word

for the Day,” a perennially popular part of his show. His unparalleled popularity was matched by a very responsive audience. He regularly received hundreds of letters a week from listeners.

Pictures of Steele posing with 20th-Century sports greats and celebrities reflect his longevity and popularity. Dozens of honors and awards came his way over the years, including induction into the National Radio Hall of Fame and the CT Sports Hall of Fame.