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Paul Harvey’s America: The Life, Art, and Faith of a Man Who Transformed Radio and Inspired a Nation

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Designed by Dan Farrell

Published in association with the literary agency of Esther Fedorkevich, Fedd and Company Inc., 9759 Concord Pass, Brentwood, TN 37027.

Scripture quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible*, King James Version.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Mansfield, Stephen, date.

Paul Harvey’s America : the life, art, and faith of a man who transformed radio and inspired a nation / by Stephen Mansfield and David A. Holland.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.


I. Holland, David A. II. Title.

PN1991.4.H34M36 2009

791.4402’8092—dc22

2009017624

Printed in the United States of America

15 14 13 12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02 01
“Paul Harvey was a true pioneer and the greatest ambassador—and perhaps performer—in the history of radio.”

RUSH LIMBAUGH
Nationally syndicated radio host and political commentator

“Paul Harvey was not one of the great American broadcasters; he was the gold standard of American broadcasters. He has no equals or peers—he stands alone as a classic icon. His patriotism, faith, and bedrock values were a source of stability and consistency in an otherwise unstable and chaotic time. His golden voice reassured us, entertained us, encouraged us, and challenged us. If God were to assume a human voice, I believe it would sound a lot like Paul Harvey’s.”

MIKE HUCKABEE
Former Arkansas governor and current host of Huckabee on Fox News and his radio commentary The Huckabee Report

“I’m like practically every broadcaster in America: an entire career spent emulating, respecting, and admiring the iconic Paul Harvey. Radio—and the country—have been enriched by the wit, wisdom, patriotism, charm, and impact of this most amazing man.”

MIKE GALLAGHER
Radio host of The Mike Gallagher Show

“The life of Paul Harvey was one of unfailing graciousness. He was the very model of an old-school gentleman, quick with a compliment or inquiry about one’s family or work. Paul endeared himself to me with what I believe was a sincere reaction to people: he was always grateful, yet somewhat puzzled, that there were so many who were anxious to meet him.”

JIM BOHANNON
Host of The Jim Bohannon Show
To our fathers,
LEE MANSFIELD & JOHN HOLLAND
CONTENTS

Acknowledgments xi
Foreword by Sean Hannity xiii
Introduction xv

CHAPTER 1 A Stubborn Reverence 1
CHAPTER 2 The Voice of Oklahoma 15
CHAPTER 3 Behind Every Successful Man . . . 25
CHAPTER 4 A Wide-Angle View of America 35
CHAPTER 5 My God, My Country, Myself 47
CHAPTER 6 Un-American Activities 59
CHAPTER 7 Cold War, Hot Emotions 71
CHAPTER 8 A Snapshot in History 83
CHAPTER 9 The Great Unraveling 99
CHAPTER 10 The Decade of Doubt 111
CHAPTER 11 Morning in America 133
CHAPTER 12 Finishing Strong 145

Conclusion: “Strictly Personal” 157
Paul Harvey Maxims 167
The Quotable Paul Harvey 169
Paul Harvey Awards and Honors 173
Suggested Reading 177
Notes 179
About the Authors 187
I discovered in the 1970s that love for radio that an older generation of Americans had long before found. I lived in Berlin, Germany, in those years, the son of an army officer during the Cold War. Satellite TV had yet to evolve into what we know now, so while my friends back home in the States were basking in the joys of cable TV, I was often to be found pressed against a radio to hear Casey Kasem count down the hits on Armed Forces Radio. This is when I discovered Paul Harvey. His voice became America for me, as fun as old men telling jokes on a small-town square and filled with the wisdom of ages gone by. And he did something I thought no one could do: he made me love the past. His The Rest of the Story helped me see beyond the numbing dates and dead people of history class to the dramatic nobility of generations before. In time, history became my passion too, and I live in the knowledge that it was Paul Harvey who first stirred this love. How very grateful I am.

David Holland has been a valiant partner in this project. His wisdom and gentle strength have been gifts to us all while we worked, and they remind me that he has earned the nickname “Yoda” for good reason. Beverly Darnall Mansfield is my partner in life as well as in literature, and her wisdom graces both these pages and my days. And Esther Fedorkevich, agent and friend, has tended our partnership with Tyndale House Publishers, assuring that this book would be as much a delight to write as we hope it will be to read. My gratitude to each of these.

Stephen Mansfield
PAUL HARVEY'S AMERICA

I am profoundly grateful to Stephen Mansfield for extending the opportunity to join him in telling the story of this extraordinary American. My thanks also goes to Beverly Darnall Mansfield for her support and her sensitivity to making this story accessible to the widest possible audience. Also to Jon Simpson for holding down the fort back at the offices of Cobalt Bridge Multichannel. And to my bride, Tracy, for her amazing encouragement and support.

David A. Holland

Both of us, Stephen and David, wish to express our deepest gratitude to Chartwell Literary Group (http://www.chartwellsortal.com). Their skill and professionalism have made this book a joy to write.
IF YOUR EXPERIENCE IN LIFE has been anything like mine, you probably remember driving in your car or sitting in your home and hearing these words come over your radio: “Hello, Americans. This is Paul Harvey. Stand by for news!” Like me, you very likely leaned in, turned up the volume, and got ready for the trademark Paul Harvey experience.

What would follow was always entertaining. Paul’s signature voice would carry you on a tour of that day’s America, a tour that ranged from the critical newspaper headlines to Aunt Sissy’s candy shop in Topeka, from the doings of presidents to the funny thing that happened to Farmer Jensen when he went to his barn early one morning. This was what made Paul Harvey one of the great broadcasters of our time: his ability to bring both the grand and the commonplace of American life to his listeners.

Yet Paul did more than simply report on America. He also loved America, and he made certain we knew this in every broadcast, every voice inflection, and every lesson that he taught us through all those years.

Paul Harvey understood that America is unique in human history, a nation founded in a vision of freedom that was new in the world at the time. He was right when he located the greatness of America in the character of her people, in their industry, and in the goodness of their hopes. He knew that it was sacrifice and hard work that had made America strong. And he knew something else too. He knew what Alexis de Tocqueville had come to understand: that if you search
for the meaning of America, you must look not so much in her halls of government as in the pews of her churches.

Paul Harvey wanted us never to forget what it cost our forefathers to give us this great nation. And so in every broadcast, particularly in his famous The Rest of the Story series, he taught us what we often did not know of our valiant Founding Fathers and of the stalwart souls who have gone before us. He gave us broad shoulders to stand upon if we were willing, and he showed us the patriot’s way.

This was the way Paul Harvey had chosen. It was why he spoke out against communist usurpers in the 1950s, against the excesses of the 1960s, and against the hedonism of the 1970s and 1980s. It was also why he even got himself arrested for climbing the fence of a secret test facility to demonstrate that security there was not what it was supposed to be. He was willing to put his feet where his words were, whatever the opposition, whatever the price.

Now that he is no longer with us, there are likely to be many biographies of this great and beloved man. But what we need in our troubled times is something more: we need to rekindle our own version of his love for America, to awaken our own passion to protect her at any cost. This is what Stephen Mansfield and David Holland have given us a chance to do. They have told us of Paul Harvey the man, but they have also told of Paul Harvey’s vision for America. This is a vision we desperately need to renew today.

So pull aside and take some time to read this vitally important book. Our times are in crisis, and we need a people to arise who love their country more than life and who are willing to help rebuild the Founders’ vision wherever it is threatened. This is what Paul Harvey’s America can help you do, and believe me, there has never been a greater need.

Sean Hannity
INTRODUCTION

HIGH ABOVE BUSTLING MICHIGAN AVENUE—Chicago’s “Magnificent Mile”—on a crisp autumn day, a well-appointed conference room is buzzing. A handful of power-suited executives, lawyers, and administrative assistants are milling about, awaiting the arrival of the couple who are the focus of the day’s important business.

There is a contract to be signed, a contract that is the result of one of the fiercest and most remarkable bidding wars in the history of the news and entertainment industry.

As is often the case in the media business, this is a youngish crowd. There is scarcely a gray hair to be found, as the average age in the room is struggling to rise north of forty. Helping to pull that average upward just a little is Traug Keller—the middle-aged president of ABC Radio Networks. He heads the victorious company in the competition to sign this media star and his business-partner wife.

The female half of the power couple—the business and strategic brain behind her husband’s rise to world fame—once said, “We live our lives by the second hand of the clock.” So it surprises no one that at the exact moment the meeting is scheduled to begin, an impeccably dressed man and woman more than twice the room’s average age sweep through the mahogany doorway all smiles and energy and poise and grace. The chatter in the room hushes as all eyes turn to the pair standing hand in hand at the head of the long conference table. Then formality gives way to laughter, handshakes, and hugs all around.

It is November 1, 2000. Paul Harvey and his cherished wife of
sixty years, “Angel”—ages eighty-two and eighty-four, respectively—are there to sign a new contract with the radio network that has been their professional home for the previous five decades. It is a deal that will pay them more than $100 million over the next ten years.

You read that right.

One of America’s leading broadcast radio networks gave an octogenarian a ten-year commitment at a rate of $10 million each year. And did so happily.

In the face of these facts, you might well ask, “Who is this man?”

You see, it was not sentimentality or charity that drove this decision. Oh, to be sure, there was an enormous reservoir of affection at the company for the national icon who had made his professional home behind ABC microphones since the mid-1940s and whose broadcasting career had touched each of seven decades. But it was clear-eyed, calculated business logic that moved ABC Radio Networks to tender an offer that Traug Keller described, with only slight hyperbole, as “the biggest deal ever cut with a radio personality” and to extend it to the man he called “one of the most influential Americans of our time.”

This was the same calculus that moved three other competing networks to aggressively pursue Paul Harvey—a man who was born two years before the first commercial radio broadcast ever aired.

Paul Harvey was a coveted property at eighty-two because he was still—by every measure—the most-listened-to voice in America. And industry insiders estimated advertising revenues built around the twin franchises of Paul Harvey News and Comment and The Rest of the Story to be more than $40 million annually.

It was widely known that advertisers were lined up to pay a premium for the opportunity to sponsor just one of the daily Paul Harvey radio programs. But getting a place at that coveted table required much more than simply showing up with a fat checkbook. If the man the Chicago Tribune called “the greatest salesman in the history
of radio” was going to pitch your product, it, and you, had to pass muster. He never took on an advertiser until he had tried the product, found it excellent and beneficial, and had met the leadership behind the company that made it.

Adding to the allure of sponsoring Paul Harvey was the sheer scarcity of opportunity. There are only so many commercial slots in a short newscast. And those advertisers who got on board tended to stay a long time because of the product-moving power of Paul Harvey’s endorsement.

Bankers Life and Casualty was an advertiser for over thirty years. Neutrogena was a delighted sponsor for twenty years. “And I think they would both still be with us if the companies hadn’t been sold,” Harvey once lamented. Utilizing the play with words that was one of his hallmarks, he once told a reporter, “I am fiercely loyal to those willing to put their money where my mouth is.”

And they were loyal in return.

Thus, it was no surprise that other networks made every effort to lure Paul and Angel Harvey away from ABC as their contract expiration coincided with the expiration of the millennium.

Naturally, Angel, as Paul’s longtime producer and guardian of his professional interests, got a kick out of the fact that, in spite of living in a youth-obsessed media culture, they were still being pursued. In a day in which Hollywood writers were reckoned over the hill and put out to pasture at thirty-five, she and her husband were hot commodities in their eighties! She would later confide to one reporter, “It was fun. These other radio companies were coming to us and offering us so much. One man asked what kind of jet plane Paul liked, and said, ‘How would he like a Gulfstream?’

Paul, too, was gratified that these other companies thought enough of his vigor and vitality to place a big, multiyear wager on him.

But in the end, it was not perks, prestige, or pay that drove the couple’s decision. It was the intense premium they had always placed
on loyalty. So, after much prayer—“We both strongly believe in praying for guidance,” Paul told a reporter at the time—they let ABC Radio know they planned to re-up with the network that had delivered Paul Harvey’s unmistakable voice to Americans through five decades of war, recession, crisis, technological transformation, and cultural upheaval.

Of course, saying yes to ABC meant saying no to the other offers. Ever the gentleman—unfailingly humble, gracious, and grateful—Paul Harvey quickly followed that decision with hand-typed letters to each of the other major suitors. He thanked them for their interest and explained the reasons for the choice he and Angel had made together. One of the other network heads wrote back, promising, “We’ll reopen talks in 10 years. I’ll get you yet.”

Of that compliment, a smiling Angel Harvey wryly noted, “That shows a wonderful faith in our constitution.”

You already know what Paul Harvey would have called “the rest of the story.” That second opportunity to bid for Paul Harvey’s services will not come. It cannot. Angel Harvey passed away in 2008 after sixty-eight years of marriage to her beloved Paul. And as is so often the case with souls tightly braided together by strands of affection, devotion, trials, and time, Paul followed her a mere ten months later. He had, it seems, forgotten how to live without her.

His death on that last day of February 2009 put the punctuation mark on the final chapter of a most fascinating story. He died at a time much like that at which he had been born—with his nation wearily, reluctantly, at war. In between those opening and closing pages hides not just a chronicle of an extraordinary man’s extraordinary life but something more.

We took him for granted, of course. It was easy to assume that Paul Harvey would always be on our radios. After all, he had been a comforting fixture there as long as almost any living American could remember.
Tens of millions were intimately acquainted with the voice, as if it belonged to a close family member. For almost any person over the age of thirty, the words “Hello, Americans” were all they needed. Like several generations before them, they came to expect that whatever words followed that cheery greeting would be interesting, authentic, and delivered with a captivating, almost musical artistry.

Yes, many knew the voice. But surprisingly few know much about the remarkable life of the man to whom it belonged. After his passing, a Chicago Tribune columnist who knew him well remarked that Harvey’s “career—his whole life, really—was packed with the sort of surprises, superlatives, bold statements and seemingly small details that, woven together, also made up a great Paul Harvey broadcast.”

Born in 1918, the year World War I ended, Harvey lived through the birth of broadcasting and the Great Depression. His calling and influence made him both witness to, and often a key participant in, the historic dramas of World War II, the Cold War, the convulsive cultural turmoil of the sixties, the national malaise of the seventies, the renewal of the eighties, and militant Islam’s slow-motion declaration of war on the West in the nineties, which culminated in the worst attack on American soil since Pearl Harbor.

Yes, Paul Harvey helped us think clearly and with needed perspective about most of the colossal events of the twentieth century. But isn’t it interesting that he is just as fondly remembered for speaking to us about everyday people and their mundane, middle-American milestones? A mention of a peace treaty on the other side of the world was often followed by a small-town item, like one from Cassville, in which we learned that farmer White has “a Watusi cow with the largest horns anybody has ever seen.” A quick mention of the latest high-profile Hollywood divorce would invariably be dwarfed by a glowing tribute to a Wisconsin dairy-farming couple celebrating their sixtieth wedding anniversary.

Indeed, it is unfortunate, tragic even, that a storyteller as gifted
as Paul Harvey never found the time to tell us his own tale in vivid detail. No autobiography of Paul Harvey ever emerged from his beloved IBM Selectric typewriter. Perhaps his only son, Paul Jr., a gifted writer in his own right, will do the world that service one day soon. After all “Young Paul,” as his parents referred to him all his life, was the principal writer of The Rest of the Story feature for its entire thirty-two-year run.

It is clear that the life of Paul Harvey merits a full and thorough biography. That, however, is not the aim of this book. Here you will certainly discover a great deal about the key events in Paul Harvey’s intriguing journey. But what interests us is not only his life but also his times. And more important, what his words and values as projected through those times can tell us about the America he loved so passionately and championed so unapologetically.

Yes, it is fitting that the life of the twentieth century’s greatest American storyteller itself makes for a truly great American story. Yet as that story unfolds, you are likely to find that there is more than inspiration and perspective in the telling. There is truth. Forgotten, neglected, even rejected, truth.

There are some who suspect that something in America died with Paul Harvey—or is dying as time relentlessly claims the remnants of what has come to be known as “the greatest generation.” Something precious and noble and good. And though Paul Harvey is gone and his generation is now passing away, perhaps the flame of that American spirit can be rekindled in remembering who they were and what they meant to us. Paul Harvey, ever the optimist, would have believed so.

On the pages that follow, then, let’s gather round the fire of this amazing life and warm ourselves in its good-humored glow. Perhaps we’ll take away a few sparks and embers that can light our way in the gathering gloom of the twenty-first century.
A LITTLE BOY PLAYS IN HIS PAJAMAS on the floor by the freshly trimmed Christmas tree. His big sister, twelve, reads a book by the fire. Their mother, Anna Aurandt, is in the kitchen baking the first of what will be several waves of holiday pastries and pies that reflect her Danish heritage.

The Christmas of 1921 is only a week away, and life is pretty good. The “war to end all wars” is a fading memory. President Warren G. Harding, who had campaigned on the slogan “A Return to Normalcy,” has seemingly delivered on that promise. Mr. Marconi’s amazing invention is finally finding widespread application as the first commercial radio stations (and affordable radios) are popping up all over the countryside. Indeed, the twenties have already begun to roar.

Little Paul Harvey Aurandt would ordinarily be in bed well before this nine o’clock hour, but he has received a special dispensation to wait up for his father, who is expected at any moment.
Harry Aurandt is a police officer in the thriving oil boomtown of Tulsa, Oklahoma. At the age of forty-eight, he has risen through the ranks to become the assistant to Tulsa’s police commissioner. On this night, Harry and a fellow off-duty officer have slipped out to do a little rabbit hunting in the woods just beyond the east edge of town. When little Paul saw his father put on his heavy coat and swing the small-bore shotgun over his shoulder after dinner, he begged to come along but was given a firm “No, Son.”

“But I won’t be out too late,” his father said. “You can wait up, and I’ll show you what we got if we do any good.”

Half past nine comes and goes, and a disappointed but sleepy little man is sent off to bed. When her husband doesn’t return by 10:30, the boy’s mother starts to worry in earnest. Then comes the urgent knock at the door and a winded uniformed officer on her porch.

“It’s Harry, ma’am. He’s been shot. Some robbers . . . he’s at the hospital . . . it’s pretty bad.”

A neighbor is roused to stay with the children as Anna accompanies the officer to the hospital with a siren slicing through the still winter night. Her husband is alive and conscious when she arrives, but he is suffering badly from gunshot wounds to the chest, abdomen, and leg.

According to the ensuing investigation, Harry Aurandt and police detective Ike Wilkinson had been leaving the hunting area in their vehicle when they came across a stalled car on the rural road. Stopping to render assistance to a motorist they assumed was lost or having car trouble, they rolled down the windows and called out. In response, they encountered four handguns pointed at them through the curtained windows of a Buick touring sedan, along with a profanity-laced demand for their wallets. The moment the bandits spotted the officer’s shotguns, however, they opened fire. In the hail of .38 caliber lead, Detective Wilkinson was hit in both legs. He would survive, but he had walked his last field in search of game.

Two of the bullets that hit Officer Aurandt were later found to
have punctured his lung and liver. Nevertheless, Harry was able to drive both of them about a mile to the nearest farmhouse for help.

Two days later Harry Harrison Aurandt succumbed to his injuries with Anna at his side.

The little boy who would grow up to give America a fatherly voice had lost his father. He did so without ever having the opportunity to get to know him, much less tag along with him on a rabbit hunt. In fact, Paul Harvey was left without a solitary clear, treasured memory of his dad.

What he got as consolation was a hero.

Fast-forward more than seventy years from that Christmas of heartache, and we find Paul Harvey standing before a large banquet hall filled with police officers and their families. He is addressing a meeting of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, a group dedicated to encouraging support for police personnel as well as maintaining a museum and memorial to fallen officers in our nation’s capital.

It is this group’s annual candlelight vigil, the somber culmination of Police Week 1992. Among Harvey’s words to the solemn assembly this night are these:

[It was] noted that my father was a lawman in the early dirt street days of Tulsa, Oklahoma. He was shot to death when I was three. So surely at least some of my stubborn reverence for a policeman’s uniform dates back to that night before Christmas, many lonely years ago.

In five decades on the news beat I have seen men defile that uniform and disgrace it; I have seen more than one fat hand on the end of the long arm of the law; but I have seen thousands wear that uniform with dignity and decency and pride.

A policeman is a composite of what all of us are: A mingling of saint, sinner . . . dust and deity.

A multiplicity of competing media x-rays any instance of
dishonesty or brutality because that is what news is: Something incongruous, exceptional, unusual.

If you forget everything else Paul Harvey had to say tonight, please remember this: Less than one-half of one percent of policemen and/or policewomen misfit that uniform. I said less than one-half of one percent of law officers misfit that uniform, and that is a better average than you will find among clergymen.²

His presence at that event was no random booking of a generic celebrity speaker. By 1992 Paul Harvey had long established himself as one of the most powerful media friends that police officers had. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of Paul Harvey’s life and work was the use of his platform to encourage support for law enforcement, especially the street cop. As a result, countless police organizations across the land considered him a friend.

He earned much of that reputation for what he termed a “stubborn reverence for the policeman’s uniform” in those convulsive years in the 1960s and 1970s when a culture of protest, covered by an increasingly sympathetic news establishment, put police departments on the defensive across the country.

By the midsixties, America’s decaying inner cities and college campuses were simmering pressure cookers of anger, frustration, and revolutionary zeal. In the cities, the civil rights movement had split into two adversarial camps over methods and values. One camp, headed by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was committed to pursuing a strategy of nonviolent resistance and high-profile awareness raising. The other, poisoned by a toxic infusion of Marxist ideology and radical Islamic theology, manifested itself in organizations like the Black Panthers.

Police efforts to keep order and enforce local laws often made them flash points of controversy in a volatile tinderbox. In 1965 it was a simple traffic stop for suspected drunken driving that somehow escalated into the Watts race riots in South-Central Los Angeles.
As the great unraveling of the 1960s progressed, a Left-leaning news media became increasingly prone to publicize claims of “police brutality” and cast law enforcement in a negative light. Paul Harvey, on the other hand, saw the vast majority of police officers in a no-win situation, valiantly doing their best under extremely difficult circumstances.

He spoke for tens of thousands of demoralized law enforcement officers and for much of Middle America when in 1970 he wrote a newspaper column that ended up tacked to the bulletin boards of police stations across the nation:

What is a policeman made of? He, of all men, is once the most needed and the most unwanted. He’s a strangely nameless creature who is “sir” to his face and “fuzz” to his back. He must be such a diplomat that he can settle differences between individuals so that each will think he won.

But . . . if the policeman is neat, he’s conceited; if he’s careless, he’s a bum. If he’s pleasant, he’s flirting; if not, he’s a grouch. He must make an instant decision which would require months for a lawyer to make.

But . . . if he hurries, he’s careless; if he’s deliberate, he’s lazy. He must be first to an accident and infallible with his diagnosis. He must be able to start breathing, stop bleeding, tie splints and, above all, be sure the victim goes home without a limp. Or expect to be sued.

The police officer must know every gun, draw on the run, and hit where it doesn’t hurt. He must be able to whip two men twice his size and half his age without damaging his uniform and without being “brutal.”

If you hit him, he’s a coward. If he hits you, he’s a bully.

A policeman must know everything—and not tell. He must know where all the sin is and not partake. A policeman must, from a single strand of hair, be able to describe the crime, the
weapon and the criminal—and tell you where the criminal is hiding. But . . . if he catches the criminal, he's lucky; if he doesn't, he's a dunce.

If he gets promoted, he has political pull; if he doesn't, he's a dullard. The policeman must chase a bum lead to a dead-end, stake out ten nights to tag one witness who saw it happen—but refused to remember.

The policeman must be a minister, a social worker, a diplomat, a tough guy and a gentleman.

And, of course, he'd have to be genius . . . for he will have to feed a family on a policeman's salary.3

It is no accident that when Paul Harvey passed away, some of the strongest and most heartfelt expressions of appreciation and loss came from the law enforcement community. Street cops knew they'd lost their most articulate and influential friend. He was not a knee-jerk apologist but a clear-eyed, understanding ally.

And those race riots that set large swaths of Los Angeles aflame in 1965?

Forty-four years earlier, policemen in a little Oklahoma boom-town were struggling to contain that incident's inverse corollary—rampaging whites burning down black-owned businesses and killing all those who got in their way.

Yes, seven months before he fell victim to an outlaw's bullet, Harry Auranrt was among those Tulsa police officers trying to rein in what became "the costliest incident of racial violence in America's history."4

* * *

The Tulsa, Oklahoma, that welcomed the birth of Paul Harvey Auranrt on September 4, 1918, was a complicated and contradictory place.
The city sat at the intersection of America’s Midwest, Southwest, and Deep South, and displayed characteristics of all three regions—an exotic hybrid blending of Kansas City, Dallas, and Montgomery on a raw, more concentrated scale.

In 1900, Tulsa had been little more than a smattering of wooden and brick buildings on the north bank of the Arkansas River. Oklahoma was seven years away from even becoming a state. Then in 1901, wildcatters discovered oil just across the river at Red Fork. Four years later, nearby Glenpool became the site of the largest oil strike the nation had yet seen, and the boom was on.

As oil overwhelmed cattle as the primary driver of the thriving economy, great fortunes were being amassed by local oilmen with names like William Skelly, Waite Phillips, Harry S. Sinclair, Erle P. Halliburton, and Jean Paul Getty, and those fortunes in turn financed a robust arts and culture scene in Tulsa.

By 1918, the city’s population had swelled to nearly seventy thousand. But amid the shiny, new multistory buildings, Greek revival mansions, and breathtaking technological advances of the time walked the ghosts of the Civil War. Some of those ghosts were living, breathing men.

In most American cities in 1918, Fourth of July parades invariably featured elderly Civil War veterans in fraying old uniforms of either blue or gray, many with artificial legs or missing arms. This was the case in Tulsa as well except that one was likely to see both blue and gray colors in the parade. The bitter and bloody, slavery-centered rivalry between nearby Kansas and Missouri had spilled across the border as soon as the Tulsa area opened up for settlement.

Here, former Union loyalists from Kansas lived next door to ex-slaveholders from Arkansas. Meanwhile, elderly emancipated slaves and their sons and daughters lived a separated existence “across the tracks.”

In fact, Tulsa had one of the most vibrant and successful black
communities in the nation. Though segregated from most of white Tulsa by both force of law and cultural habit, the black Greenwood district of Tulsa thrived commercially, culturally, and spiritually. The area that had already achieved a national reputation as the “Negro Wall Street” seemed to be a living, working validation of the self-reliance philosophy of Booker T. Washington. Greenwood’s autonomous success even tempted some to believe that the “separate but equal” approach to dealing with the issue of race and public education—the one the U.S. Supreme Court put forth in its controversial Plessy v. Ferguson decision of 1896—might actually work.

All of that progress and promise was obliterated on May 31, 1921, when escalating rumors that a white girl had been assaulted in a department store elevator by a black youth set segments of the city on edge. It ultimately led to a rampage that left thirty-five blocks of the Greenwood district in ashes and more than three hundred citizens—the vast majority of them black—dead.

Sadly, the Tulsa of Paul Harvey’s childhood was home to men who perpetrated one of the most horrific crimes of racist mob violence in our nation’s history. But it was also a city that contained a significant segment of white citizens who were truly horrified by the hatred and violence. They were profoundly shamed that their neighbors and coworkers could be capable of such cruelty, and they did what they could to protect, assist, and restore the victims.

Prominent among the latter were the leaders and members of the Aurlands’ family church, First Presbyterian. In fact, on the night of the riots, as an angry lynch mob of thugs gathered at the courthouse demanding that the accused young black man, Dick Rowland, be handed over to them, the Aurlands’ minister ran to the scene and bravely confronted the armed crowd, pleading with them to go home and let the legal system do its job.3

That pastor, Dr. Charles W. Kerr, had come to the Indian Territory in 1898 as a Scots Presbyterian missionary to the tribes. He
had taken the helm of First Presbyterian in 1900. Seven years later he cofounded the University of Tulsa. But on that night in 1918, he assumed the mantle of fiery Reformer John Knox and tried to face down a seething, hate-filled mob. He did not prevail, but the courage and conscience Kerr displayed on that awful night are remembered in Scotland to this day.\textsuperscript{6}

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It is impossible to know for sure, but Harry and Anna Aurandt must surely have found Tulsa's racially charged undercurrents and persistent antebellum baggage bewildering.

Anna Dagmar Christensen was born in Denmark in 1883 and immigrated with her parents to the United States when she was very young. Her family eventually settled in the St. Louis, Missouri, area.

Harry Harrison Aurandt hailed from an area of central Pennsylvania that had received many waves of German immigrants over the first hundred years of European settlement. Harry was born in Martinsburg, Pennsylvania, in 1873 and was most likely the descendant of Germans who came to the American colonies fleeing religious persecution in the early eighteenth century. To this day, far more people with the German surname Aurandt (or the alternate spelling, Aurannd) live in Pennsylvania than in any other state.

Most biographical sketches of Paul Harvey note that he claimed to be the product of “five generations of Baptist preachers.” This may be accurate, but it’s also a little misleading. When most modern Americans hear the descriptor “Baptist,” they think of Billy Graham or Jerry Falwell.

In fact, most of those Germans making the hazardous crossing to the New World between 1719 and 1729 were German Baptists or “Dunkards,” an Anabaptist offshoot of the German Reformed movement. It is out of this tradition that Harry Aurandt surely sprang.
Other nearby branches on this complex family tree of sects include the Brethren, the Amish, and the Mennonites, groups as well-known for their pacifism as their piety.

Regarding his spiritual heritage, Paul Harvey once wondered out loud if he had perhaps inherited “an overdose of righteousness.” He never admitted to personally feeling a pull toward the ministry, though. “The pulpit is a responsibility infinitely higher than any I aspire to,” he once told an interviewer.

Nevertheless, he brought a circuit-riding preacher’s zeal to his calling, along with an evangelist’s flair for painting word pictures. A strong sense of morality also characterized his commentaries right up to his last day on the air. Rejecting the moral relativism that permeates most news coverage in our time, he said, “I can’t separate goodness and badness from any day’s news and make sense of it.”

At some point Harry Aurandt made his way to Missouri, where he met and married his Danish bride. And they, in turn, headed for the freshly minted state of Oklahoma to begin their lives together.

How wild and foreign a place Tulsa must have seemed to them both, and yet the record indicates they wasted no time in putting down roots and establishing themselves in the community. A search of the newspaper archives of that period reveals numerous mentions of Anna Aurandt in the society columns—participating in luncheons, teas, and high-profile church events. Meanwhile, her husband rose to become the right hand of the police commissioner, a role we would call administrative assistant today.

They shared a modest but tastefully appointed two-story home on East Fifth Place, a middle-class street of turn-of-the-century bungalows lying immediately east of downtown Tulsa. The house stands to this day.

When Paul Harvey passed away, one longtime Tulsa resident who grew up in the house next door to the Aurandt home posted a wonderful picture on his Web site to accompany his tribute to the
broadcaster. It was snapped by his father in 1957. In the photo we see a familiar smiling man in a dress shirt, suspenders, and necktie sitting on a porch swing. His arm is around a weathered but attractive older woman in a stylish polka-dot dress with a lace collar. He looks confidently into the camera. She looks shyly away. It is Paul Harvey sitting on the porch of that old house with his mother.

The place must never have been the same after the heartache of Christmas week 1921. Hundreds of miles away from the nearest family member, Anna was on her own with two children. To make ends meet, she built some apartments behind the house and began to take in boarders, a source of income she maintained right up until her passing in 1960 at the age of seventy-two.

The family’s financial straits impacted Paul in interesting ways and tended to color his childhood memories of Tulsa in darker shades. After a 1994 visit to Tulsa in which he returned to many of the landmarks of his early days there, he wrote an essay he called “Homecoming.” In it he says:

Over my shoulder a backward glance.

The world began for Paul Harvey in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Ever since I have made tomorrow my favorite day. I’ve been uncomfortable looking back.

My recent revisit reminded me why. The Tulsa I knew isn’t there anymore. And the memories of once-upon-a-time are more bitter than sweet.

Of the lawman father I barely knew.

The widowed mother who worked too hard and died too soon. And my sister Frances.

Tulsa was three graves side-by-side.

Recently I came face-to-face with the place where a small Paul Harvey’s mother buttoned his britches to his shirt to keep them up and it down.
Tulsa is a copper penny which a small boy from East Fifth Place placed on a trolley track to see it mashed flat.

It’s a slingshot made from a forked branch aimed at a living bird and the bird died and he cried and he is still crying.

That little lad was seven when he snapped a rubber band against the neck of the neighbor girl and pretty Ethel Mae Mazelton ran home crying and he, lonely, had wanted only to get her to notice him.

Somehow he blamed Tulsa for the war which took his best friend, Harold Collins . . .

And classmate Fred Markgraf . . . And never gave them back.

In Tulsa, Oklahoma, he learned the wages of sin smoking grapevine behind the garage and getting a mouthful of ants.

Longfellow Elementary School is closed now; dark.

Tulsa High is a business building.

The old house at 1014 is in mourning for the Tulsa that isn’t there anymore.

It was in that house that a well-meaning mother arranged a surprise birthday party when he was sixteen; invited his school friends, including delicate Mary Betty French without whom he was sure he could not live.

He hated that party for revealing to her and to them his house, so much more modest than theirs.

That party wasn’t the first time he had felt shame about his station in life. In his 1954 book, Autumn of Liberty, Paul tells of the day he left school early and then walked sideways, with his back to the buildings, all the way to downtown Tulsa. The reason for this was that the seat of his only pair of trousers had torn during school.

He had called his mother, and she had instructed him to meet her at a downtown department store. There she would take the
eleven dollars and ninety-five cents she had been putting aside for taxes and instead purchase Paul a new suit of clothes with two pairs of pants.

But before he reached his mother, the boy of ten battled intense embarrassment and self-consciousness as he slowly made his way down the long mile of blocks between school and that store. And as he watched the fancy cars of Tulsa’s upper crust drive by, he felt something new—a rising, agonizing bitterness:

In that long mile . . . many liveried chauffeurs in their great limousines had passed . . . unmindful of my predicament. But the feeling to a half-frightened, half-ashamed youth was that they knew and didn’t care.9

That night, one of Paul’s favorite teachers from the elementary school happened to be visiting his mother. Paul loved and trusted Miss Harp and took the opportunity to pour out his angry heart to her. The kind teacher may have sensed in Paul’s words and emotions the making of a formative, life-altering moment. Or perhaps the hand of Providence, moved by a praying mother, inspired her to say just the right words. In any event, she didn’t laugh or dismiss his concerns. As Paul remembered it:

Miss Harp, in quiet kindness, said something I am sure she never dreamed that boy would write into a nationwide broadcast . . . or into the text of a book. She said, and I recall the words almost exactly . . .

“Paul, never feel resentment in your heart for those who have more than you. Just do all that you can as long as you live to preserve this last wonderful land . . . in which any man willing to stay on his toes . . . can reach for the stars.”10
The lesson of that watershed moment never left Paul's soul. He would later say that from then on, he vowed never to be tempted to try to make himself feel bigger by tearing someone else down. “From that day . . . I was never one who sought to make the small man tall by cutting the legs off a giant.”

In the meantime, Paul's mother did the best she could for her children, particularly the precocious little boy who had quickly developed a fondness for books, a love of wordplay, and a knack for building “cat's whisker” crystal radio sets out of cigar boxes. Oh, and he had a flair for salesmanship, too. He'd take those radios he built for a quarter and sell them to neighbors for a dollar.

The sounds those radio sets magically pulled out of the air captivated the fatherless little boy. And through the crackling static—behind the tinny voices from unseen places—Paul Harvey Aurandt seems to have heard something others didn't.

It was the sound of destiny calling.
PAUL HARVEY
AWARDS AND HONORS

2005—Presidential Medal of Freedom awarded by President George W. Bush

2003—Radio & Records News! Talk Lifetime Achievement Award

2002—Received the Marconi Award for the fifth time

2000—Tex McCrary Award for Journalism from the Congressional Medal of Honor Society

1999—Broadcasting & Cable magazine included Paul Harvey as one of “The Men of the Century”

1998—George magazine included Paul Harvey as one of “The Twentieth Century’s Most Significant Americans”

1998—Gold Angel Lifetime Achievement Award

1997—Radio Mercury Lifetime Achievement Award

1996—The Marconi Award, Network Personality of the Year

1996—American Spirit Award, United States Air Force

1995—Broadcasting & Cable magazine Hall of Fame Award

1994—American Advertising Federation Silver Award
SUGGESTED READING

*Remember These Things* by Paul Harvey (The Heritage Foundation, 1953)

*Autumn of Liberty* by Paul Harvey (Hanover House, 1954)

*Our Lives, Our Fortunes, Our Sacred Honor* by Paul Harvey (W Publishing Group, 1985)

*Destiny: From Paul Harvey's The Rest of the Story* by Paul Auranlt (Paul Harvey Jr.) (Bantam, 1984)

*Paul Harvey's The Rest of the Story* (Doubleday, 1977)

*More of Paul Harvey's The Rest of the Story* edited by Paul Harvey Jr. (William Morrow, 1980)

*Paul Harvey's For What It's Worth* by Paul Harvey Jr. (Bantam, 1992)


NOTES

Introduction
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

Chapter 1: A Stubborn Reverence
PAUL HARVEY'S AMERICA


6. Ibid. A Scottish composer, Lindsay Davidson, has written a three-act opera featuring orchestral bagpipes in honor of Dr. Charles W. Kerr and his efforts to avert a human tragedy.


10. Ibid., 43.

11. Ibid.

Chapter 2: The Voice of Oklahoma

1. Philip Crane, Congressional Record 140 (August 5, 1994).


5. Ibid.


180
ABOUT THE AUTHORS


DAVID A. HOLLAND is an author, speaker, and media consultant who fell in love with radio as a boy; started working in radio stations in college; and subsequently worked as a news director, on-air personality, and director of affiliate relations for a national news-talk network. He is a founding partner of Cobalt Bridge Multichannel (http://www.cobaltbridgemultichannel.com) and a creator, producer, and syndicator of talk radio programs. David lives in Dallas.