

George E. DeVault, Jr. Biographical Information

George E. DeVault, Jr., was born at Holston Valley Community Hospital in Kingsport on April 23, 1946. Although his family lived in Church Hill until 1960, he attended Kingsport City Schools graduating with honors from “the old” Dobyons-Bennett High in 1964. He then attended the University of Tennessee in Knoxville graduating with honors in 1968 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Radio/TV Journalism. In later years he attended summer post-graduate mini-programs at Harvard and Stanford universities.

DeVault enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserve in May of 1968 just before graduation from U.T. serving in the 844th Engineering Battalion based at the old Armed Forces Center in Kingsport. His basic training and Advanced Individual Training (AIT) as a Field Wireman took place at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, from November of 1968 through March of 1969.

In the summer of 1969 he was presented the opportunity to apply for a commission in the U.S. Naval Reserve, and in January of 1970 he received a commission as a Public Affairs Officer “shipping over” from Army Specialist 4 (E-4) to Navy Lieutenant Junior Grade (O-2). While he never had any extended active duty in the Naval Reserve, he spent a number of interesting annual two week long periods on active duty including several at the Pentagon in Washington, DC , and one at the Defense Information School, then located at Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indianapolis. His Pentagon tours were with the Navy Broadcasting Service (NBS). Thanks to NBS he had several “two-weekers” at Armed Forces Radio and Television Service (AFRTS) stations in Keflavik, Iceland; Naval Air Station Bermuda, two at Roosevelt Roads Naval Station in Puerto Rico, and two at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station in Cuba. On March 1, 1994, he retired from the Naval Reserve with the rank of Captain (O-6).

George DeVault’s greatest love has always been radio and TV broadcasting. He began working at WKPT and WKPT-FM (now known as WTFM) in Kingsport as an announcer in 1961 at age 15 while a sophomore at DB and continued working there after school and on weekends throughout his years at DB. While at U.T. in 1964 he began working nights at WUOT(FM), the University’s non-commercial classical music station. Summers and the Christmas holidays would find him back home at WKPT. When he returned to U.T. for his junior year he began working at what was then the ABC TV affiliate in Knoxville, WTVK(TV), and continued work there and at sister station WEZK(FM) until his graduation from U.T in 1968.

At that point he came back to WKPT full-time where he was employed until his retirement, which became effective February 1, 2017. One of the most exciting things during his decades at Holston Valley Broadcasting was putting WKPT-TV on the air in August of 1969. DeVault held several posts during my career at Holston Valley Broadcasting culminating in the office of

President, which he held from 1982 until his recent retirement. He is pleased to still maintain an office there and to continue to serve on the company's Board of Directors. In addition to WKPT-TV during his tenure Holston acquired or put on the air WKTP(AM) (formerly WJSO), WOPI(AM), WMEV-AM&FM, WRZK(FM), WVEK-FM as well as WAPK-CD (TV) and several other Class A TV stations located in Tennessee and Virginia.

Holston's parent company is Glenwood Communications Corporation (formerly The Home News Company) of which DeVault was also president for many years. In addition to Holston Valley Broadcasting, at various times Glenwood has owned other subsidiaries operating a daily newspaper in New Jersey, five weekly newspapers based in Connecticut, radio stations in Connecticut, California, and Washington state, and TV stations in Florida.

DeVault has also been active in professional organizations related to broadcasting and local non-profit organizations. He is a past president of the Tennessee Association of Broadcasters, the Rotary Club of Kingsport, and the Downtown Kingsport Association. In addition to serving on the boards of those organizations he has served or now serves as a director of a number of other organizations including the National Association of Broadcasters, the Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame, the Kingsport Chamber of Commerce, the Kingsport Salvation Army, the Appalachian Regional Fair, and the Sullivan County Fair Association. He is also a past president of the local chapter of the Naval Reserve Association.

Although he had been familiar with amateur radio since he was in the second grade, DeVault's real interest in ham radio peaked in the early 1970's as he listened to the VHF communications "high band" including the two meter ham band on a tunable portable radio. In 1973 he was given and passed the Technician's license test. In those days the written exam was the same as for the General Class license, but the code requirement was only five words per minute. The test was administered by "Bunky" Botts, K4EJQ, at the WCYB-TV transmitter atop Holston Mountain. Within a few years, DeVault traveled twice to Knoxville for quarterly FCC examination sessions. The first was to upgrade to his General class license. All that was required of a Technician class licensee was passing the thirteen word per minutes code test. Not long thereafter he took and passed the Advanced class written test, and he still holds an Advanced class license. A few years ago figuring he had been associated with WKPT a lot longer than he had been a ham, DeVault changed his call from the original WA4IVG ("instantly vocal George") to the present vanity call, W3KPT. DeVault is now serving as Vice President of the Kingsport Amateur Radio Club, a post he also held back in the 1970's.

DeVault and his wife, 'Nicie, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in December of 2016. They have two grown sons both of whom live in the Tri-City area and two grandchildren.