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Paul Harvey

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Introduction

In the tapestry of twentieth-century American life, few voices resonated so familiarly, so deeply, and for so long as that of Paul Harvey. With a career spanning seven decades, Harvey carved out a singular place in the annals of broadcast journalism. His staccato delivery, signature dramatic pauses, and earnest tones provided clarity and companionship to countless listeners as they started their days, commuted to work, or gathered around kitchen radios. Even those unfamiliar with his full program recognize his legendary sign-off: “Paul Harvey... good day!”

But Paul Harvey was far more than a broadcaster with a memorable catchphrase. He was a cultural institution whose daily commentaries shaped, reflected, and sometimes challenged the heart of Middle America. He wove news, opinion, and stories into a fabric uniquely his own—one laced with patriotism, humor, and an ever-present sense of the extraordinary in the everyday. His opinions, which leaned into both conservative traditions and individualist assertions, offered listeners not just information, but a worldview to ponder, embrace, or contest.

Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, amid adversity that left a mark on his family from the earliest years, Harvey climbed from those humble beginnings through only grit, determination, and an unmistakable gift for communication. He made his first foray into radio as a teenager, rose steadily through the local and regional ranks, and ultimately landed in Chicago—where, with the support and partnership of his beloved wife Lynne “Angel” Harvey, he became a household name. Together, the Harveys navigated the evolving landscape of American media, shaping not only his career but also significant aspects of broadcasting itself.

Harvey’s journey was not without its paradoxes and controversies. Unabashedly conservative, he nonetheless startled loyal followers when, for example, he reversed long-held positions regarding the Vietnam War. His relationships with figures across the political and spiritual spectrum, including the likes of J. Edgar Hoover, Billy Graham, and Joseph McCarthy, reflected both the breadth and limitations of his era. His rhetorical style—telegraphic, witty, warmly personal—made him a trusted companion to millions, but also made him a target of critics wary of his populist, at times polarizing, approach.

This biography, while chronicling each stage of Harvey’s professional evolution, also peers into the quieter spaces of his personal life: his profound bond with Angel, his passion for piloting, his collaboration with their only son, and the simple joys and persistent challenges that defined his off-air world. Here, readers will discover not only the milestones of a media titan—his accolades, his innovations, his record-breaking

contracts—but also the vulnerabilities, values, and enduring humanity of the man himself.

To trace the life of Paul Harvey is to chart the course of American radio and, in many respects, the postwar heart of American society. This volume invites readers to journey through stories well-known and hidden chapters alike, to encounter the man behind the microphone, and to appreciate the indelible legacy of a voice that, for so many, told the rest of the story.

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CHAPTER ONE: Early Roots in Tulsa: Family Tragedy and Formative Years

Paul Harvey Aurandt's journey began in Tulsa, Oklahoma, a city bustling with the oil boom of the early 20th century. He was born on September 4, 1918, to Harry Harrison Aurandt and Anna Dagmar (née Christensen) Aurandt. Harry, Paul's father, was a man of civic duty, serving as a Tulsa policeman and also holding the position of secretary to the police commissioner. His mother, Anna, hailed from Denmark. Paul had an older sister named Frances Harrietta.

Tragedy struck the Aurandt family in December 1921, when Paul was just three years old. His father, Harry Harrison Aurandt, was murdered. The circumstances surrounding his death were grim; Harry, while off-duty and rabbit hunting with a police detective friend, was confronted by four armed men who attempted to rob them. During the encounter, Aurandt was shot, succumbing to his wounds two days later. This devastating loss left Anna to raise Paul and his older sister, Frances, alone. The burden of supporting her children fell squarely on Anna's shoulders, and she often rented out rooms in their home to make ends meet.

Despite the profound impact of this early loss, Paul's childhood in Tulsa cultivated a curious and active mind. Even at a young age, he exhibited a fascination with radio, a burgeoning medium that was capturing the nation's imagination. He would tinker with electronics, even constructing his own radio receivers, including one fashioned from a cigar box. This early hands-on experience hinted at the career path that would define his life.

His inherent talent for communication began to blossom during his time at Tulsa Central High School. There, his English teacher, Isabelle Ronan, quickly recognized the potential in his voice. Impressed by his clear, strong voice and oratorical skills, she encouraged him to pursue a career in broadcasting. Ronan's belief in his abilities was so strong that, in 1933, when Paul was only 14, she personally took him to KVOO radio in Tulsa.

At KVOO, Paul landed a menial job, initially helping with cleanup around the station. However, his eagerness and his teacher's recommendation soon paid off. He wasn't cleaning floors for long before he was allowed to fill in on air, reading commercials and news. This was a pivotal moment, providing him with invaluable early experience in a field he would come to dominate. His days became a blend of school and the exciting, nascent world of radio, a routine he embraced with unwavering enthusiasm.

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