

GOODBYE TULSA: JOHN CHICK (1932–1986)

by Clara Nipper

John Chick is widely remembered by most Tulsans as the host of the children's shows *Cartoon Zoo* and *Mr. Zing and Tuffy*, which ran on KTUL as the #1 children's show in the 1960's until Uncle Zeb replaced it in 1970. Even his daughter, Elizabeth Chick, if she wasn't at the television studio, watched *Mr. Zing and Tuffy* after school.

John Chick came from a long line of Oklahoma philanthropists. His grandparents moved to Tulsa in 1909, and his grandfather, William Stahl, was one of the founders of the Boys' Home and on the Red Cross Board of Directors. John attended Horace Mann Junior High and Central High School when both buildings were downtown and worked as a DJ at KRMG at age fifteen. He then joined the Air Force and afterwards attended college at the University of Tulsa, where he obtained an MA degree and was in over 60 plays. John was also a professional country and bluegrass musician, gaining fame and adoration as he toured the state "a pickin' and a grinnin'." He was a left-handed virtuoso of the six and twelve-string guitars as well

as the five-string banjo. He began work at KTUL, Channel 8 in 1955 and retired in 1979 due to the onset of Multiple Sclerosis. John's local activism began much earlier. In 1966, he began hosting the *Muscular Dystrophy Telethon*.

In the 1970s, he was host of *The John Chick Show*, a daily hour-long feature of local talent and musicians. It was so popular and influential that when the president of ABC visited KTUL to see why *Good Morning, America* was pre-empted for Chick's show, he recognized the wisdom of such a programming decision and left it alone.

Among all his other gifts, he could also ride the unicycle, which endeared him to his youngest fans, those children who counted the minutes until the *Mr. Zing and Tuffy Show* came on television each day. He even mentored teens interested in radio from the studio at KRMG, being kind and generous with his time and guidance and influencing

at least two generations of musicians, radio announcers and Tulsans.

John Chick's favorite thing about his beloved hometown? The people. John Chick died at age 54, on May 20, 1986. His ashes are buried along the banks of the Illinois River, per his wishes.

Clara Nipper is a writer based in Tulsa, Oklahoma.



Courtesy of Elizabeth Chick