

Fort Hays State University

FHSU Scholars Repository

Buildings & Facilities

Campus History Collections

July 2022

Alumni News - Building Named for Heather

Fort Hays State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.fhsu.edu/buildings>

Recommended Citation

Fort Hays State University, "Alumni News - Building Named for Heather" (2022). *Buildings & Facilities*. 495.
<https://scholars.fhsu.edu/buildings/495>

This Clipping is brought to you for free and open access by the Campus History Collections at FHSU Scholars Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Buildings & Facilities by an authorized administrator of FHSU Scholars Repository.

Building Named for Heather

by Leslie Eikleberry and David Burke

The man who pioneered the radio-television department at FHSU has been honored with the naming of the department's headquarters after him.

What has been known for five years as the Radio-TV Building will soon be known as Heather Hall.

When M.C. Cunningham, Fort Hays Kansas State College president, hired Heather in 1950 to develop a broadcasting curriculum for the college, he told Heather that the college's students were diamonds in the rough and just required a little polish.

That thought has stuck with Heather throughout his 35 years of broadcast teaching at the University. During that time, he has worked to provide the best conditions possible for training broadcast students.

Heather's interest in broadcasting began while he was stationed in China with the 14th Air Force "Flying Tigers" during World War II. "Near the end of the war, things slowed down. My special services officer wanted me to take an announcing shift. I did and was relieved from all my other duty," Heather said.

After the war, Heather enrolled in what is now the University of Texas at El Paso, where he earned degrees in business and broadcasting. He went on to the University of Denver, where he got his masters degree in radio, television, and theater.

When he started work at FHKSC in 1950, Heather found that he had two classes to work with, radio speaking and radio broadcasting. "I developed and taught nine basic courses," Heather said. "I also taught speech courses."

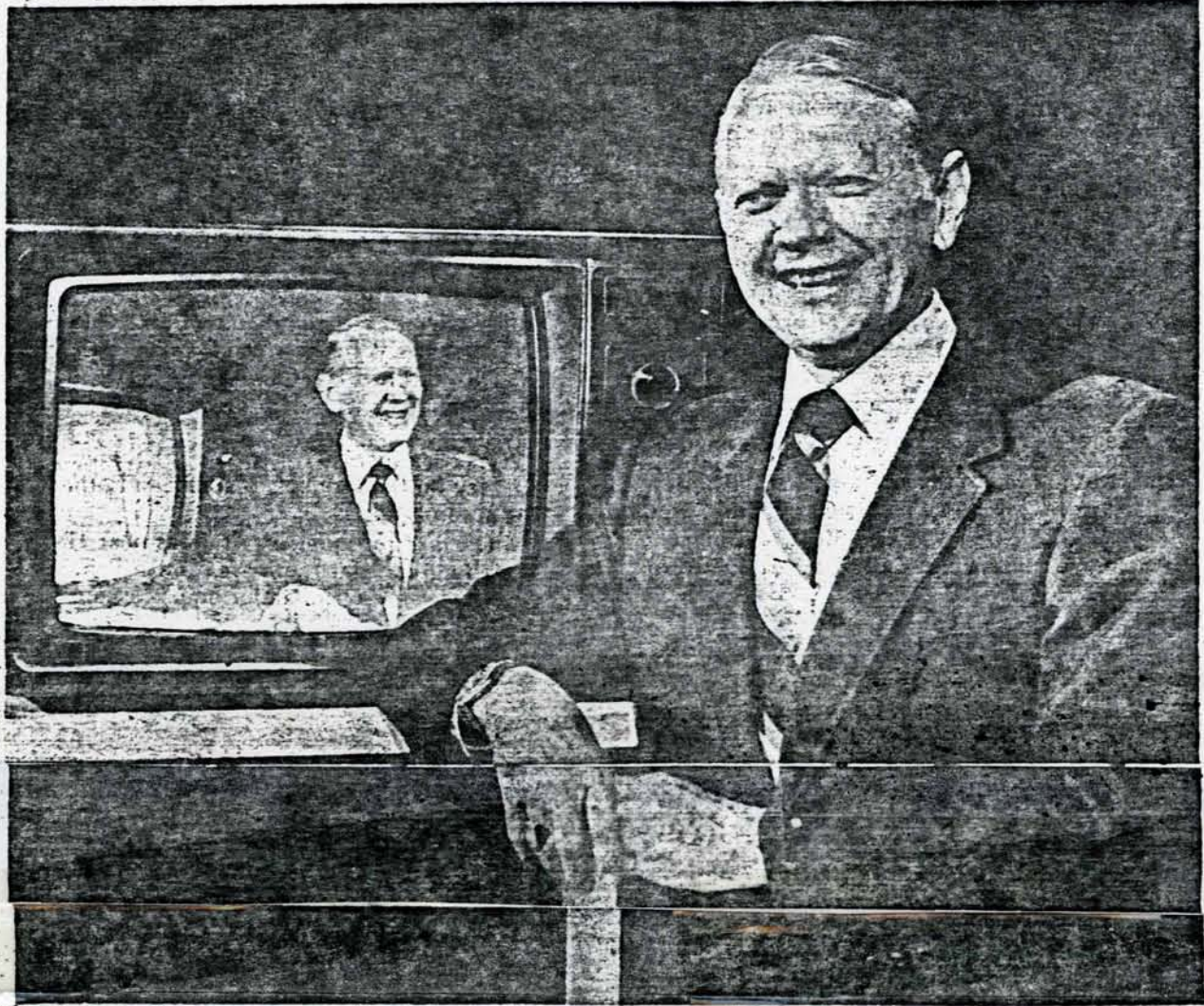
For the first 19 years, Heather taught all the broadcasting courses by himself. He also put in extra time at night, working with broadcasting students preparing for on-the-air shows.

Heather said that it was during these first years that students were required to be very creative. "We had to develop our own sound effects manually because we didn't have effects records at that time. When they did come out, they were not of very good quality," Heather said.

To compensate, students shook a piece of tin to simulate thunder and used coconut halves to make the sounds of horses' hooves beating on the ground. When echoes were needed, the ramps in Sheridan Coliseum were used as echo chambers.

"One time we had to have the sound of someone chopping wood, so we hauled a big log and an ax to the studio and chopped wood," Heather said.

Early in the television productions, Heather would take a class to the NBC affiliate in Great Bend to air live programs. An average of six shows a year were produced there. Later, as KAYS-TV began operations, Heather moved the student broadcasters to that facility.



Heather held a television production course in the KAYS studios at 6 a.m. Sundays, where their equipment could be utilized.

Years later, a closed circuit facility, the first extensive system of any college in the state, was added. Through the system, video tapes could be shown to any classroom for their use.

Heather also developed broadcasting internships in 1970 for interested students.

KFHS Radio, broadcasting to residence halls, and KFHS-TV for Hays, Ellis and WaKeeney cable subscribers, were also formed during Heather's 35 years at FHSU.

Because of the growth of the program, a third instructor was added in 1976. In 1979, color television equipment was added to the program. During the 1981-82 school year, the radio and TV program moved from its quarters in Malloy Hall to the building that now bears Heather's name.

During his 35 years at the University, Heather has taught hundreds of students, many of whom have gone on to broadcasting careers in all parts of the United States. Heather said that some of his students now own their own stations, some work for independent production

houses and one is employed by ABC News as a cameraman.

However, Heather is not sure where all of his former students are. "They just don't keep in touch," Heather said. "It's a shame. We'd really like to know where they are."

Heather attributes his students' success to two things, an internship program and his staff.

Heather developed the internship program in 1970 to give students experience in the broadcasting field. He said students are placed at radio and television stations for eight weeks, usually after they graduate from the University.

"That way, the stations can see what they (students) can do," Heather explained. "Then, if something opens up, they are free to take it."

Although Heather is being honored for his work at FHSU, he said that he could not have done it without his staff. "We could never have had the program we have now if we didn't have such a good staff," Heather said.

An open house in Heather's honor was held Nov. 1. Formal building name festivities will take place during Homecoming next October.