

Mel Showers, broadcasting pioneer and legendary News 5 anchor, dies

 [wkrg.com/news/business/mel-showers-broadcasting-pioneer-and-legendary-news-5-anchor-dies](https://www.wkrg.com/news/business/mel-showers-broadcasting-pioneer-and-legendary-news-5-anchor-dies)

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October 19, 2024

MOBILE, Ala. (WKRG) — Mel Showers, a legendary [News 5](#) anchor who broke racial barriers and worked almost 50 years at WKRG-TV, died this morning. He was 78.

“The family at this time requests privacy and prayers and will release arrangements at a later time,” the Showers family said in a statement to News 5.

In the meantime, here’s a look back at Showers’ impact on Alabama broadcasting — and the News 5 family.



Being discovered and covering racial inequity

During America’s Civil Rights movement, WKRG-TV decided to be proactive about hiring new employees and integrating the station.

“WKRG said, ‘We’re not going to have any picketing outside our station,’” [Showers said in a 2019 interview](#) with News 5 anchor [Peter Albrecht](#). “We’re going to go out and find somebody Black.”

That search led them to a Bishop State Community College English professor, who recommended Showers.

The Mobile native was a TV news fan but never imagined himself on TV because it didn't seem like an option.

"I used to watch Huntley and Brinkley and Walter Cronkite," Showers said in the 2019 interview. "I used to think a lot about them. And I used to say to myself, 'I wonder if I could ever do that one day?'"

"But I couldn't look at that realistically because I didn't see any dark-skinned people on the air doing that."

That would change.

In 1969, Showers started working part-time at WKRK-TV as a booth announcer and became a full-time employee in 1970. He provided live station identification and read live commercials.

In 1974, Showers was named a "Newscenter 5" reporter. He covered racial inequity in Mobile's police and fire departments, Hurricane Frederic in 1979, and the KKK lynching of 19-year-old Michael Donald in Mobile in 1981.

"At that time, burning crosses was pretty common," Showers said in 2019. "They were burning crosses all over the place. All across the TV5 viewing area."

Through it all, Showers had said, he received unwavering support from the station and the Black community — and he had a strategy to win over everyone else.

On camera, he [always kept a smile on his face](#), he told the Alabama Broadcasters Association.

"It started to catch on with the viewing public, (and) hate mail changed to fan mail," he said.



Anchoring and entering the Hall of Fame

Showers was named co-anchor of “Morning Newscenter 5” in 1981. In 1990, he began anchoring the evening newscasts at 6 p.m. and 10 p.m.

In 2002, Showers anchored those shows with [Rose Ann Haven](#), who remembers him as a “Gulf Coast treasure.”



“Though a legend in the world of broadcasting, he set the tone in the newsroom with humility, kindness and fairness,” Haven said. “To be in his presence was a gift — one that resonated with WKRG viewers for five decades.”

But Showers was more than a co-worker or friend, Haven said.

“He was my family and that made me a better person,” she said. “For that, I am humbled, grateful, blessed. As heartbroken as I am today, I have peace knowing he is with his beloved wife, Linda, and their daughter, April, and his family will carry on his legacy.”



[Watch on YouTube](#)

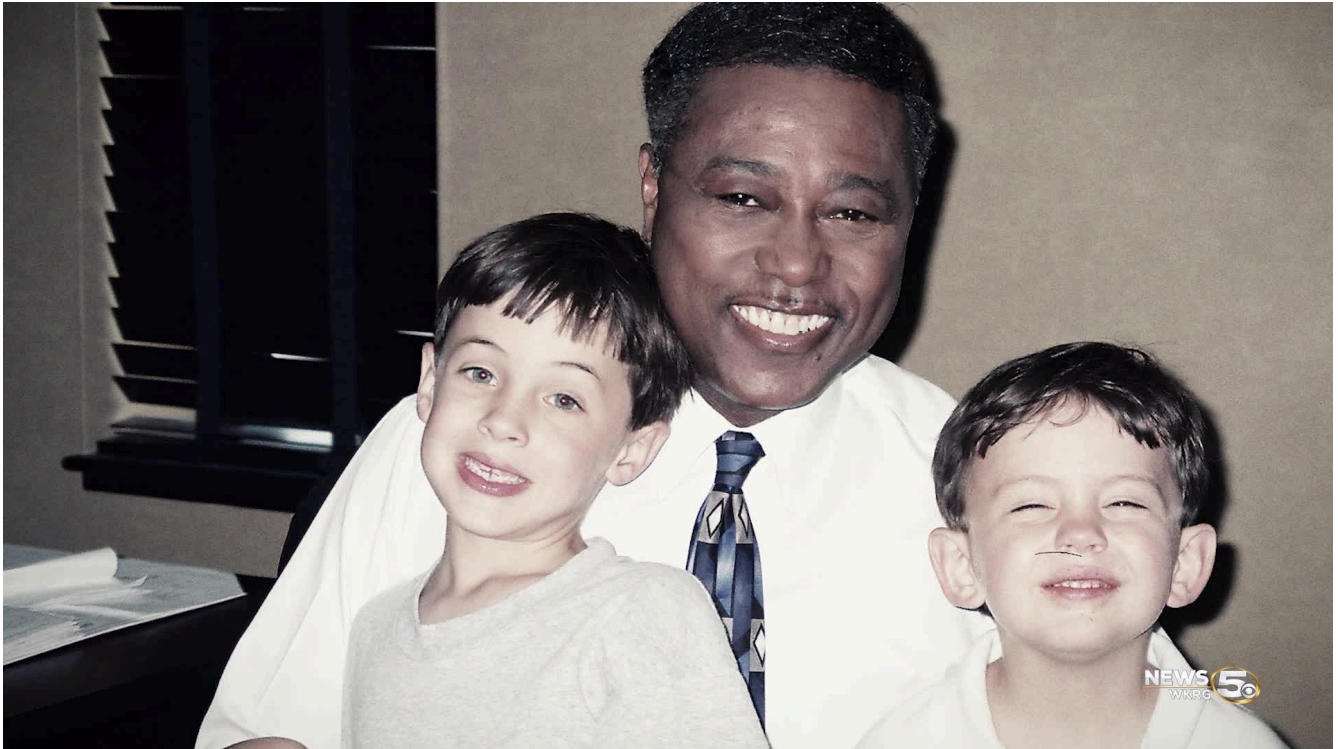
That legacy includes the distinguished status as a broadcasting icon.

In 2016, Showers was inducted into the Alabama Broadcasters Association Hall of Fame. His acceptance speech touched on his persistence during the early years when he experienced racial prejudice — but kept on smiling. It earned him a standing ovation at the Birmingham ceremony.

In 2019, he received the National Association of Black Journalists' Journalist of Distinction Award, and Haven covered the ceremony in Miami.

“In disbelief, almost,” Showers said, reacting to the honor. “But I’m thankful ... this is something I will remember for the rest of my life.”

'His legacy is kindness, professionalism'



News 5's staff quickly reacted as WKRG-TV News Director Gene Kirkconnell announced, regretfully, the news about Showers' death in a Saturday afternoon email.

WKRG-TV General Manager Jesse Gear described the newsman as a legend.

"He broke many barriers and won over the hearts and minds of every household on the Gulf Coast," Gear said. "God bless him and his entire family. He will be missed but always remembered."

News 5 anchor [Chad Petri](#) said Showers was "a warm and kind man who was a blessing to our staff and our newsroom."

"Mel was a teacher and a comforting voice and guide. I'm sad to hear this, but I pray for peace for his family and his soul."

[News 5 meteorologist John Nodar](#) described Showers as "humble, funny, strong-willed, and a role model for our newsroom."

"He was beloved by his viewers and his colleagues," Nodar said. "He was also a gifted athlete, a reasonably good mechanic, and a dear friend. I'll miss him very much."



[News 5 anchor Devon Walsh](#) said, “Words cannot express what a wonderful man Mel was. He was my first co-anchor and mentor. He treated everyone with respect. His legacy is kindness, professionalism, and always wanting to make sure what we reported was correct and unbiased.

“He cheered people on. He celebrated their success. His laugh....oh that laugh! He retired from WKRG after 50 years, and his memory set the foundation for the kind of work we do today.”

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