

**Minnesota Now (MPR) | Minnesota Now Freddie Bell and Cathy Wurzer on Broadcasting Hall of Fame induction 01GCRYFPYJ7HTFEJ1YAT4EBDBS**

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**CATHY** You know, every year since 2001, a short list of well-known and well respected broadcasters are inducted into the  
**WURZER:** Minnesota Broadcasters Hall of Fame at the Pavek Museum in Saint Louis Park. This year's five inductees will be celebrated at a ceremony this weekend. Now in the interest of full disclosure, I'm one of those to be inducted, and I am honored and blown away that I'm going into the Hall of Fame with other notables like Dave Lee from WCCO Radio, Dan Barreiro from KFAN, and our next guest, Freddie Bell.

Freddie Bell is a broadcast icon. He's a DJ and the general manager at KMOJ Radio in Minneapolis. He actually manages two stations and is the host of some three radio shows. Freddie is a speaker and an author. You hear him on this program for our Song of the Day segment. Freddie Bell joins us. Oh, what an honor. Congratulations to you.

**FREDDIE** Well, thank you and congratulations to you too, Cathy Wurzer, Hall of Famer.  
**BELL:**

**CATHY** Isn't that just something?

**WURZER:**

**FREDDIE** [CHUCKLES]

**BELL:**

**CATHY** I don't know. [STAMMERS] Well, what a well-deserved honor for you, for all of us that are being inducted. Where were  
**WURZER:** you when you heard the news?

**FREDDIE** I was actually sitting at my desk, Cathy, and a good friend of mine called me-- Dan Seaman from over across the  
**BELL:** waters. And at first I thought it was a joke, and I said, "There is no such thing as a Hall of Fame." And he goes, "No, no, no, no. Don't hang up. Don't hang up. This is real. This is real."

**CATHY** [CHUCKLES]

**WURZER:**

**FREDDIE** And from that date-- it was a few months ago, and I'm still trying to process this, Cathy. I mean, how do you act when  
**BELL:** you're inducted into the Minnesota Broadcasting Hall of Fame? I'm trying to find a script that tells me how you're supposed to react to this and what you're supposed to say, and I've yet to find it.

**CATHY** Yeah, I hear you. I'm with you. I kind of shook my head and said, "Are you kidding me? Me, what?"

**WURZER:**

**FREDDIE** [LAUGHS]

**BELL:**

**CATHY** You know. Yeah. Hey, let me ask you. I'm curious. Now, what was the spark that got you interested in broadcasting to  
**WURZER:** begin with? Was it in college?

**FREDDIE** It was in college. Believe it or not, when I was at Creighton University, it's known for its medical classes or its  
**BELL:** curriculum there, and I was going to be a medical technician of some sort. And I was walking into a building, and I was lost on campus. I was still a freshman. Walked into a building, and they all looked alike. And I was standing at the top of the staircase, and there was a gentleman down at the bottom of the case.

And I asked him for directions. He gave them to me, and over his shoulder, Cathy, I saw what looked like a broadcast studio. And I asked him. I said, "Do they teach broadcasting at college?" The look he gave me said, "Well, are you crazy?" And he goes, "Yeah, of course."

**CATHY** [CHUCKLES]

**WURZER:**

**FREDDIE** And so now, the whole thing starts to flip. My career flipped in college, and I changed my major that afternoon.

**BELL:**

**CATHY** Oh. I love that mental picture, by the way. I know you started your career at KETV while you're also working for KOWH

**WURZER:** FM in Omaha. What was that like?

**FREDDIE** [CHUCKLES] Oh, my goodness. Leave it to Cathy to bring up the ancient history. So [CHUCKLES] I'm telling you, well, **BELL:** it was an ABC affiliate, KETV-- still there, oddly enough, you know, even though it's dark ages. But while I was still at Creighton University, I was recruited to come into their news department, and that started my professional journalism career. And immediately, I went into Education.

I was an Education reporter, and I also found myself as the assistant bureau chief, the first four hour legislative coverage coming from the state capitol in Lincoln, Nebraska. So it was different. We called it a one-man band. I was doing the writing, I was shooting my own video, at that time editing my own film and narrating all of it, doing my own standups. And that was a feat to position the camera then run around in front of it and record standups for television news.

**CATHY** [CHUCKLES]

**WURZER:**

**FREDDIE** It's a lot of fun, but I learned a lot too within months of starting. I received another offer to do radio at a 100,000-watt **BELL:** clear channel radio station heard across the country. And I accepted that as well. And that's how Freddie Bell was born in radio broadcasting.

**CATHY** Well, I can see why you went to radio. I mean, your voice is just God-given. It is just smooth as silk. You were born to **WURZER:** do this kind of work. What do you like about radio?

**FREDDIE** I like the spontaneity. I love the creativity that you get. This like a wonderful tapestry. I'll go into different interviews **BELL:** and I've got my script, I've got the facts, I have my questions ready, and at the end of it, I look back, Cathy, and I'll understand that I didn't use anything that I had planned because I was so concentrated on how this story was unweaving in front of me. And that's the magic, I believe, of radio.

**CATHY** Mm-hmm. You got to listen more really than you talk, I think, you know. And you do that so, so well. And you really **WURZER:** connect with your guests. Let me ask you this too about your leadership. Now, when I'm on the air, I say, you know, Freddie Bell is a DJ and general manager at KMOJ. That's an interesting combo there, you know. Tell me about working at a station which is so rooted in the North Minneapolis community and being a leader there.

**FREDDIE** It's an interesting walk, and I'll just say that it's really interesting. I was recruited to come on and help with their morning show. And a couple of years later, things changed and they asked me to leave the radio station. And it's not--  
**BELL:** for one, I've led a couple of other radio stations here in the metro, but to ask to come to help at KMOJ at a time when it was in some peril at that point, I just did not want to be the person that, where the headlines would read and Cathy Wurzer would call and say, why did KMOJ fail? I didn't want that to happen.

And the key is to be really sensitive to the needs of our community and to answer the call before the call is brought to us. It was difficult to get the people to understand that this fellow who was a broadcaster was now their leader, and there are some people who are still trying to wrap their heads around that, but we've got a fine group of folks. I'm just in love with our community. They've really embraced the work that we're doing.

**CATHY** Mm-hmm. See, I need to, of course, know that you are the second Black broadcaster to be inducted into the  
**WURZER:** Minnesota Broadcasters Hall of Fame. Robyne Robinson is currently the only person to this point to be inducted who's a person of color. What do you make of that?

**FREDDIE** Robyne's the first, a good friend of mine, in television, and I'm the first in radio. And I've got this wonderful picture of  
**BELL:** us from a New Year's Eve party in downtown Minneapolis. Both of us are wearing red. She's in a wonderful cocktail dress and I'm in a tuxedo. We're just having a great time.

**CATHY** [LAUGHS]

**WURZER:**

**FREDDIE** But it's just really interesting that a good friend of mine and I share something that's called Minnesota Broadcasting  
**BELL:** Hall of Fame.

**CATHY** And you were coming up through the ranks as a person of color. Did you feel pressure to-- this is a very difficult  
**WURZER:** business, as you know, and you have bosses that you run into that try to-- and program directors, and, you know, music programmers who try to kind of bend you to what they think you should sound like. Did you run into that, and how did you battle that?

**FREDDIE** [CHUCKLES] The answer is yes. Even in the very beginning, I had to shave my mustache in order to conform with the  
**BELL:** look that this program director, in this case a news director, wanted his people to look like. And I said, well, what am I going to do next? Do something to alter my color? There are people who just don't know how to manage people of color. They don't know how to manage the differences and to embrace the gifts that these individuals bring to the business.

It is the diversity of thought. It is the diversity of writing that really helps to tell the real stories that we're trying to uncover as journalists and as broadcasters in this industry. It's been difficult. I've been benched because of the way that I happen to look. I can't change that. I've never tried to change it.

But the whole idea is that I've never strayed away from what it is that I've been trained to do-- to tell the true story, tell the right story, do it in an objective way that arms people with the information that they're looking for and helps them to make cogent decisions about their lives.

**CATHY** Amen. Sounds like good advice to the next generation of broadcasters, too.

**WURZER:**

**FREDDIE** Maya Angelou told me several years ago that the key to communicating is to be completely present. And I'm sharing  
**BELL:** with you what she shared with me-- nothing else matters right now other than the conversation that we're having. There's a lot of things going on around both of us, I would imagine right now, making sure this connection is clear for our audiences, but Cathy Wurzer is the only individual that I'm concerned with right now. So what are you going to do with this Hall of Fame title, Cathy Wurzer?

**CATHY** I don't even know. [BOTH LAUGH] I don't even know, Freddie. Oh, for goodness sakes, I guess, what do you do, put it  
**WURZER:** on your resume? I guess you put the plaque on your wall and you look at it and go, well that was, yeah, that was OK. You know? [BOTH CHUCKLE] I don't know.

You know, since you are-- and thank you for being a regular contributor to this show. You know, you share music with us for a song of the day. What song would you play to commemorate this achievement?

**FREDDIE** Well, it would be Diana Ross.

**BELL:**

**CATHY** Ah.

**WURZER:**

**FREDDIE** And it would either be "Upside Down" [BOTH LAUGH] or "I'm Coming Out," and I want the world to know.

**BELL:**

[MUSIC - DIANA ROSS, "I'M COMING OUT"]

- I'm coming  
out. I want  
the world to  
know, got to  
let it show.

**CATHY** I would go with that one for sure. Well, you know what, I've told you this privately, but I am a huge fan. When I think  
**WURZER:** of a true broadcaster, you are it, and I'm just so honored to be going into the Hall of Fame with you. Thank you so much, Freddie, for everything you've done for this community.

**FREDDIE** Well, the pleasure is mine, and thank you for making a difference in the lives of the people that you touch. Folks just  
**BELL:** love you, and I see why-- because you're the consummate professional with a wonderful voice. And such-- it's so cool to go into the Hall of Fame with you.

**CATHY** Aww, I appreciate it. Freddie Bell, thank you.

**WURZER:**

**FREDDIE** Thank you, Cathy. Thanks for asking me to be a part of your show.

**BELL:**

**CATHY** That of course, is the incomparable Freddie Bell, general manager and DJ at KMOJ Radio in the Twin Cities, and a new  
**WURZER:** Minnesota Broadcasting Hall of Fame inductee.