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**Paul Cochran set for induction into Georgia Music Hall of Fame  
By Jackie Kennedy**

(Sept. 12, 2011) Troup County resident Paul Cochran doesn't sing or play a musical instrument, but he'll be inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame Saturday, Sept. 17, earning a spot alongside music legends and fellow inductees like Ray Charles, Alan Jackson and The Allman Brothers.

"I came a long way for a fella with no talent," said Cochran, whose 50-year career in music centered on publishing, promotion and management. His trademark humility belies the dogged determination he utilized for a half century, a pursuit of purpose that led Cochran to book the Rolling Stones on their first American tour, become lifelong pals with Roy Orbison, and publish hits for an impressive list of artists.

A native of Johnson City, Tenn., Cochran and his wife, Helen, were living in Clearwater, Fla., as newlyweds when he launched his music career at age 27. He'd quit a high school teaching gig to work for the recreation department as director of the Youth Maritime Center on Clearwater Beach. As part of his job, he hired local bands for teenage dances on Saturday nights. He said he was "hooked" on the music business from then on.



Paul Cochran was nicknamed "Old Man" when he was a young man living with roommates who bemoaned how he demanded they clean up the kitchen. "They should have called me Old Woman, but they were nice to me," he said. He bought his first "Old Man" license plate in 1971 and used the moniker in his businesses, Old Man Productions and Old Man Music.

In the summer of 1961, he “convinced the city fathers to let me have a big rock and roll event as a reward for the kids,” Cochran recalled. A Tampa radio station gave them free publicity and for the “Stars Spectacular” show, the young promoter booked national acts including Dion and Bobby Vee.

“That concert was such a big success we turned away more people than we could put in the auditorium,” said Cochran. “There were great bands back in those days.”

Through the early 1960s, he booked shows with Del Shannon, Ray Stevens, the Beach Boys and many others, including the Rolling Stones during their first American tour.

“They did two songs and then there was a riot,” Cochran recalled. “Kids started throwing toilet paper and ran out on the field and the police overreacted.”

The Stones kept on playing.

“I stood in front of them waving my arms but couldn’t get them to stop,” said Cochran. “Finally, I had to pull the plug on them... The police were fighting with kids and the whole thing ended up in a big brawl. I’m surprised I didn’t have a heart attack that night.”

Shows featuring Roy Orbison were more laidback.

“Roy became a regular and we became real good friends,” said Cochran. “Anytime he wanted a vacation, I’d book him in Florida and he’d come down for four or five days and we’d visit. He was a very funny man, soft-spoken, and he could sing like a bird. I watched him every night and never knew him to miss a note. He’d make the hair stand up on your arms.”

Orbison introduced Cochran to Alabama music promoter Buddy Buie and the two formed Buie-Cochran Management Company and handled acts like the Classics IV and the Roemans.

In the mid-1960s, Cochran and Buie moved to Atlanta where they partnered with Bill Lowery and J.R. Cobb to form Low-Sal Music, a publishing company whose first record was “I Take it Back” by Sandy Posey, a hit produced by their friend Chips Moman. The numerous records published by Low-Sal included a string of hits by the Classics IV: “Spooky,” “Stormy,” “Traces” and “Everyday With you Girl.”

In the late ’60s, Cochran, Buie, Lowery and Cobb opened Studio One in Atlanta where acts recorded included the Classics IV, Joe South, Atlanta Rhythm Section, Marshall Tucker Band, B.J. Thomas and numerous others.



Paul Cochran poses with photos of artists he worked with during his 50-year career as a music promoter, publisher and manager.

Among the many artists he's worked with, Cochran names Billy Joe Royal as a favorite. Low-Sal published Royal's hit record, "Cherry Hill Park," and Cochran managed Royal throughout the years.

"I can't remember not knowing Paul—that's how far back we go," said Royal. "Everybody loves Paul. He's the sweetest guy in the world, and he meant everything to my career."

Cochran was instrumental in landing Royal a spot on "The Ed Sullivan Show" in the early 1970s, according to the singer.

"He was a hustler," said Royal. "He worked his tail off for me."

Royal will return the favor Saturday night when he performs "Cherry Hill Park" and "Down in the Boondocks" at the Hall of Fame induction ceremonies at Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre in Atlanta. Buie will be there, too, introducing Cochran as his friend receives the Pioneer Award. And in the audience, Moman will be applauding.

"Being inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame is something I'm proud of, to be recognized as a contributor to Georgia music," said Cochran. "I've been in the music business for 50 years and I can't sing. I didn't create any of it, but I contributed. Being one who was behind the scenes makes this sweeter—it means somebody looked beyond the stage and found me."

"Paul has a love and passion for music today just as he did when he promoted music, managed artists, and made singers' and bands' dreams come true," said Troup County Sheriff Donny Turner, a close friend of Cochran's. "For years, we've enjoyed the music that Paul brought to us from behind the scenes, and now he's on center stage being recognized for his accomplishments. I am thankful for Paul's music and the fact that he and his wife, Helen, are part of our great community."

After being invited (“hounded,” says Cochran) by Turner and Moman to move to LaGrange, where they both live, the Cochrans finally packed up and left their house in Canton, downsizing to a more manageable and modest home in Troup County in late 2010.

“I’d met Donny when I helped with a concert to raise money for the Sheriff’s Youth Home and we just hit it off,” said Cochran. “And Chips was calling everyday saying, ‘You ain’t here yet?’ We love it here and have a good network of friends.”

Moman credits Cochran’s success in the music business to his eternal optimism.

“He can’t see nothing wrong,” says Moman. “For him, it’s all good.”

Helen Cochran, who taught school and retired as a librarian, said she knew early on there was something special about the man she chose to marry.

“I knew one day he was going to be president of the U.S.A.—or in the Hall of Fame—and I wanted people to believe me when I said I knew him,” she said. “There’s never been a dull moment.”

It’s been a blast, Cochran agreed. But he offered a word of advice for anyone dreaming of a career in music.

“You better have a lot of talent and be real lucky,” he said. “It’s a tough business, not for the faint of heart... I loved every minute of it.”

*Others to be inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame on Sept. 17 include Toni Braxton, Mother’s Finest, Kenny Leon and Jan Smith. Former students of Smith, Usher and Justin Bieber are among those scheduled to perform.*