

Radio and Television Icon Wink Martindale Passes Away at the Age of 91

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- Wink Martindale, the legendary radio and television icon, died in Rancho Mirage, California on Tuesday, April 15, 2025, at the age of 91. The king of game shows who was perhaps best known for hosting the beloved "Tic-Tac-Dough" and "Gambit," had a remarkable 74-year career. He was surrounded by family and his beloved wife of 49 years, Sandra Martindale.

Winston Conrad "Wink" Martindale was born in Jackson, Tennessee on December 4, 1933. From a very early age Wink was fascinated by the voices coming from his family's radio and despite having no connections in the entertainment industry persevered with his talent, booming voice and all-American good looks. He started his career as a disc jockey in Jackson at the age of 17. He quickly ascended to the powerhouse of the south, WHBQ in Memphis, where on the evening of July 10, 1954, a fellow DJ Dewey Phillips played Elvis Presley's very first record, "That's All Right," on the radio for the very first time. Due to overwhelming demand, Dewey played the song again and again while Wink phoned Elvis's mother and asked if Elvis could come down to the radio station. Elvis soon arrived at WHBQ for his first interview, and music was changed forever. Wink was the last living witness to "Presleymania" and the birth of Rock & Roll.

Wink also found gold record success as a recording artist. His rendition of the spoken-word song "Deck of Cards" went to #7 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart and #5 on the UK Singles Chart, selling over one million copies in 1959. That same year, Wink moved west and became the morning man at KHJ in Los Angeles, California, moving a year later to the morning show at KRLA and finally to KFWB in 1962. He also had lengthy stays at KGIL-AM from 1968-1971, KKKO-FM/KJQI and Gene Autry's KMPC from 1971-1979 and 1983-1987, KABC in 1989 and KJQI from 1993-1994. The influential disc jockey broke some of the biggest hits and artists of the 60's and 70's, spinning



Wink Martindale

iconic songs for the very first time on his radio shows.

His additional radio credits include Hit Parade Radio and the syndicated programs "Music of Your Life," "100 Greatest Christmas Hits of All Time," "The History of Rock 'n' Roll," and recent recurring appearances on the most successful radio show of all time, "The Howard Stern Show."

His first break into television was at WHBQ-TV in Memphis, as the host of "Mars Patrol," a science-fiction themed children's television series, and then as host of "Teenage Dance Party," where his friend Elvis made an appearance on June 16, 1956. His first game-show hosting job was on NBC's "What's This Song?" (1964-1965), followed by NBC's "Words and Music," CBS' "Gambit," and his biggest success, "Tic-Tac-Dough." Wink also went on to host such popular game shows as "Headline Chasers," "High Rollers," "The Last Word," "The Great Getaway Game," "Trivial Pursuit," "Debt," "Instant Recall," and many more. In recent years, Wink made appearances on such programs as "Most Outrageous Game Show Moments," "The Chase," and "The Bold and the Beautiful," and appeared in commercials for Orbitz, KFC (alongside Rob Lowe) and more.

In 1985, Wink added the title of producer to his resume with the launch of the TV game show "Headline Chasers," produced in association with Merv Griffin and syndication giant, King World.

An avid philanthropist, Wink supported numerous causes and produced and hosted annual telethons for Cerebral Palsy and St. Jude Children's Hospital, among countless other charities.

In 2006, Wink received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and in 2024, he was honored with a Beale Street Note on Memphis, Tennessee's Beale Street Walk of Fame – not far from where in 2015, he was presented with the Distinguished Alumni Award by his alma mater, the University of Memphis. He was also one of the first inductees into the American TV Game Show Hall of Fame.

Wink is survived by his wife Sandra, sister Geraldine, his daughters Lisa, Lyn and Laura and a large extended family full of grandchildren and great grandchildren, his honorary son Eric and his beloved Chihuahua Dude!

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