

AL SMITH

Veteran journalist Al Smith of Lexington, who is writing a memoir, is the retired host of KET's Comment on Kentucky and former owner of a company that published weekly newspapers in Kentucky and Tennessee.

A longtime activist for education, the arts and economic development, he is the cofounder of the Institute for Rural Journalism and Community Issues at the University of Kentucky and chairman of its national advisory board.

Under presidents Carter and Reagan he served in Washington as head of the Appalachian Regional Commission in the early 1980s. A native of Sarasota, Fla., he grew up on a farm near Nashville, attended Vanderbilt and Tulane universities and then, after military service, spent 10 years as a reporter and editor on two New Orleans papers before coming to Kentucky in 1958 to edit a weekly paper in Russellville which became the first of seven he eventually purchased or started.

Al has been a leader in several statewide organizations and is a founder of Leadership Kentucky, the Governor's Scholars, the Prichard Committee, and the Oral History Commission. He is a Fellow of the Society of Professional Journalists, the highest honor of that organization, and was named a National Rural Hero in Media at a National Rural Assembly sponsored by the Ford and Kellogg Foundations. Eight Kentucky universities and college have awarded him honorary degrees. When he retired from Comment on Kentucky in 2007 his 33 years on the air was the longest tenure of any PBS host in the country.