



## BMCC awards first-ever honorary degree to Butch Thurman

PENDLETON, Ore. – Blue Mountain Community College awarded its first-ever honorary degree to Butch Thurman, a longtime Pendleton and rodeo radio personality who attended BMCC from 1979-1981. BMCC earlier this year adopted a new procedure to allow for nominations of honorary degrees. The award was a surprise to Thurman, who also served as this year’s Commencement Speaker.

Thurman studied radio broadcasting under the helm of Blaine Hanks at BMCC from 1979-1981, and credits BMCC as a major factor in his successful career in radio broadcasting.

This is despite the fact that Butch never graduated with a degree from BMCC.

Thurman earned a job with KUMA AM and FM radio almost immediately after starting classes at BMCC in 1979. He attended BMCC and worked at KUMA until 1981, when he dropped all but his radio classes – which he took in the mornings – and worked at the radio station in the afternoons. Hanks, who mentored Thurman up until his death two years ago, advised Thurman to “Be different, have a gimmick, because anyone can become a disc jockey or a news anchor. Create something that will let you stand out.”

Thurman worked for Pendleton Broadcasting until 1991, when he went out on his own with syndicated radio. At that time, Thurman took his mentor Hanks’ advice to heart and created “Rodeo Sports Update,” a radio show on professional rodeo that became syndicated on 200 radio stations nationwide. When the Capps family purchased Pendleton Broadcasting – renaming it Capps Broadcast Group – in 2004, Thurman returned to the station where he had started his career, this time as news director. Within a year he had been promoted to program director, at which time he was asked to reprogram KUMA into a news-talk format with a new morning radio show, the popular “Coffee Hour.” In 2014, Thurman was again promoted, this time to operations manager. He has now worked in local radio for a total of 21 years, and has spent 35 years in the industry.

In 2000, the Professional Bull Riders (PBR) presented Thurman with the George Michael Media Award for his coverage of the PBR Tour, and in 2006 he was presented with the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association’s (PRCA) Broadcast Journalism Award for his outstanding coverage of PRCA Rodeo. In 2014, Butch’s “Coffee Hour” radio show on KUMA was named “Best Radio Show” by the Oregon Association of Broadcasters.

Thurman is also active in the Pendleton community, having served on the Pendleton Round-Up Board of Directors for 13 years, including in the role of president in 2007-2008. He now serves on the Round-Up Foundation Board of Directors.

Despite not having a degree, Thurman took what he had learned during his time at BMCC and turned it into his personal dream as a broadcast professional. Throughout Thurman’s successful career, he maintained a strong personal relationship with his mentor, Hanks, from his time at BMCC, and never forgot those that helped guide him towards success. Thurman even started a weekly Sunday radio show, “The Big Band Show” with Hanks that has lasted more than 30 years.

“Butch’s accomplishments demonstrate that even just a short time at BMCC can lead to a lifetime of success and fulfillment,” said BMCC President Cam Preus. “The fact that Butch is the 2015 BMCC Commencement speaker brings his success full circle, where it all started back at the College. He deserves to leave Commencement with a special degree of his own to commemorate his remarkable achievements.”

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