

Michael Robin Jackson, legendary KABC Radio host, dies at 87 after battle with Parkinson's disease

LOS ANGELES (CNS) -- Pioneering talk radio host Michael Robin Jackson, who spent more than 32 years at KABC Radio in Los Angeles, has died following a 10-year battle with Parkinson's disease. He was 87.

Jackson's death at his Los Angeles area home was confirmed to Variety Saturday by Lyle Gregory, his close friend and producer of 30 years.

On Twitter, and in subsequent statements Saturday, KABC Radio remembered Jackson as a "Titan of Talkradio" and a "Radio Hall of Famer" who was inducted in 2003.

"Michael Jackson was a leader in the advent of the talkradio format-and KABC Radio," the station tweeted. "We honor his memory and extend condolences to his family."

His KABC radio show aired from 1966 to 1998 and was syndicated for nearly a decade on the ABC Radio Network,

largely before the era of "shock jocks" and political polarization that characterizes much of today's talk radio.

The London-born Jackson's show covered arts, politics and human interest features plus interviews with film and television stars, authors, musicians, artists and public figures including Presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

Time Magazine praised Jackson's ability to maintain a calm demeanor no matter what the subject or the circumstances of the interview.

More than 2,000 of his interviews are now housed in the Library of Congress.

"It was a testament to Michael, that so many of the guests and celebrities preferred to actually come in studio, rather than do phoners," Gregory said in a statement to Variety.

"With his British accent and boyhood charm, Michael made people comfortable, they opened up. That was his gift.

"Michael molded an interview into conversation, news and information. Like two people sitting at a kitchen table talking. A table, an open window, where millions tuned in daily across the nation, so many of them referring to Michael as their personal university."

Former California Sen. Barbara Boxer, a frequent Jackson guest, remembered him fondly in a statement Saturday.

"The world knew and adored our Michael Jackson," Boxer said. "But Michael's home was California, Los Angeles, America. For that we are grateful."

Jackson began his career as a disc jockey in South Africa after his family moved there following World War II. In 1958, he and his family relocated to the United States and Jackson continued his career as a DJ in San Francisco before moving to Los Angeles where he worked at KHJ and KNX prior to joining KABC.

Throughout his career Jackson also made appearances as an actor on television shows including "The Munsters," "Police Story" and "The Rookies."

He earned four Golden Mike Awards and in 1997 the Los Angeles Times named him the "Number One Radio Talk Host of the Year."

Other accolades included receiving a star on The Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1984, being made a Member of the Order of the British Empire, the French Legion of Merit Award and an honorary Doctorate of Laws from Western School of Law.

After Jackson left KABC in 1998, he hosted talk shows for KRLA, KLAC and KGIL before retiring in 2007 at age 73.

He was married to Alana Ladd, the daughter of actor Alan Ladd, from 1965 until her death in 2014. Jackson is survived by his sons Alan and Devon; daughter Alisa Magno; and five grandchildren.

On Monday, the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce will place flowers on Jackson's star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at Vine Street and Sunset Boulevard.

In his memory, Jackson's children asked that people honor their father's "time-honored legacy by being polite and good to one another. To unite as one people and to uphold Democracy in the America that our Father so cherished and promoted throughout his life on-air and at home," Deadline.com reported.

"We are grateful for our Loving Father ... and those of you who loved him too."

They encouraged his admirers to make a donation in his name to the [Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research](#).