

Eddie Doucette: Rave of the 'waves

By Tom Wynn

The King. The Greyhound. The Electric Eye. The Cement Mixer. The Boulevard. The Toaster. The Skyhook. Bango!

To many, the aforementioned terms seem unrelated. But to long-time Bucks fans, the association is clear: They're the broadcasting legacy of Eddie Doucette.

As radio voice of the Bucks for the team's first 12 seasons (1968-80), as well as television voice for the next four campaigns, Doucette was a critical link in the club's evolution. Perhaps more than any other person in the organization, he helped form a bond between the team and its fans that remains strong to this day.

Although many broadcasters have forged strong identities with professional clubs, not many have been able to do so the way Doucette did with the Bucks. His inimitable style, one of the most colorful in all of broadcast sports, made him an instant hit with the fans.

"I was fortunate that the Bucks gave me a forum to be creative," Doucette said in a recent interview. "I remember that (former Bucks president) Ray Patterson told me to develop a style that would get people interested in the team. You've got to remember that there weren't many people in Milwaukee or Wisconsin who were familiar with the NBA at that time."

Those of you who can recall listening to Doucette that first season would probably agree that the Bucks were the most exciting 27-

55 team in NBA history. When Lew Alcindor (later to become Kareem Abdul-Jabbar) arrived the following season, the stage had already been set for the love affair between the fans and the team.

"There's no question that Eddie was instrumental in building our audience throughout Milwaukee and the state of Wisconsin, especially in the early years," said Bucks Vice President John Steinmiller. "In fact, he and Kareem were probably the two individuals most responsible for the following we developed."

You know the rest of the story. The Bucks acquired Oscar Robertson prior to the 1970-71 campaign and went on to win the NBA title that same season. As Milwaukee remained among the league's elite over the next three years, Doucette admittedly toned down his style. But he never lost focus of what he brought to the fans.

"My idea is that sports should be entertainment," said the affable Doucette. "You've got to give people a reason for listening or watching, especially if your team is not a contender. A lot of broadcasters give you plenty of information, but not much personality. Yes, a play-by-play guy needs to be a journalist, but I think you've also got to interject some color and entertainment to the broadcast."

"As the sports marketplace becomes more competitive, I think advertisers are looking for an edge when they're evaluating sponsorship opportunities. That's why develop-

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Former Milwaukee Bucks radio announcer Eddie Doucette gained a reputation as one of the NBA's most stylish and innovative 'men behind the mike'. He called the shots for the Bucks during their first 12 years in Milwaukee.

Radio voice won fans over with inimitable style

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ing a personality is so important."

Reflecting on the evolution of the team and organization, Doucette remarked, "It's hard to believe it's been 20 years since the championship season. Looking back at it, I thought the team would have won at least one more title during the Kareem-Oscar era. We certainly came close against the Celtics in '74. It's hard to believe we didn't do it, especially with the seventh game on our home court.

"But its wonderful how the Bucks have become such an integral part of the Wisconsin sports community. I've never seen fans nor an organization more deserving of a successful team. The Bucks have always been a hallmark franchise, and I think it goes back to the quality people they've always had in the organization."

Perhaps more impressive than the growth of Milwaukee's franchise has been the growth of the NBA itself. From a rather low profile 12-team

league in 1967 (the year before Milwaukee and Phoenix joined the circuit), the NBA has blossomed into a high-impact, 27-team juggernaut whose growth has still not reached its zenith. According to Doucette, the league has barely tapped into the international marketplace.

"I'm amazed at the growth this league has experienced," he said. "Yet there's still plenty of room to expand with respect to the international markets. When you consider that the NBA has become the pacesetter for sports marketing organizations, I have no doubt the league will continue to flourish."

That's not to say Doucette is enamored with everything about the current NBA. As he pointed out, many of the league's administrators have little historical perspective on its growth and development.

"You've got a lot of people who don't know the history and tradition of the league," he said. "A lot of

people are riding the gravy train of people who built this league, guys like Red Auerbach and some of the other legends."

Now based in San Diego, where he has been since 1980, Doucette remains fairly active in the broadcasting business. Although he won't be doing any NBA broadcasts for the first time in 23 years, you can still catch him doing Big West college football and basketball. In addition, Doucette is part of an investment group which recently purchased a radio station in Santa Maria, Calif.

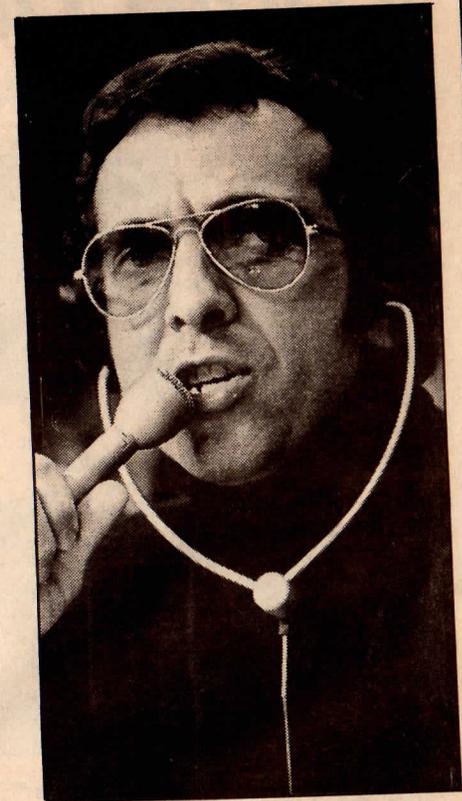
Despite his absence from the Bucks scene since 1984, Doucette retains several ties to the Milwaukee area.

"I'm still very close with Jon McGlocklin and John Steimiller, and I'm still very involved with the MAAC Fund," Doucette said. "I've also got some other business interests in Wisconsin, so I tend to stay in touch with a lot of people there."

McGlocklin, who spent nine seasons in a Bucks uniform and is still one of the team's broadcasters, offered a comment on Doucette's role in the franchise's development.

"Eddie had a tremendous impact on the way the Bucks were promoted and perceived," said McGlocklin. "He created excitement and imagery that people had never experienced before, but that has stuck with them ever since. I still see it today when talking with fans, especially those who listened to Eddie during their childhood."

Doucette may be gone, but he's certainly not forgotten. His feelings



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Bucks Vice President

toward the Bucks fans and organization are mutual.

"Had I not had to relocate due to personal reasons, I might still be doing games in Milwaukee," Doucette said. "I really miss the people and truly enjoyed my time in Milwaukee. I'm just thankful I had the opportunity to be a part of it for 16 seasons."