

In the 70 year history of KDHL, the Faribault radio station known at the Mighty 920, there have been only 4 farm broadcasters. To celebrate their 70th anniversary in 2018, KDHL brought back for a live broadcast at the Rice County Fair, some past broadcasters along with current ones to talk about the old days and about the current status of agriculture.



In 1987, I was hired to be the KDHL farm director. Up to that point, KDHL had only had two farm broadcasters. One was the legendary Dean Curtiss, a member of the National Association of Farm Broadcasting (NAFB) Hall of Fame and the first voice heard on the KDHL airwaves in 1948. Dean was president of the NAFB in 1971. As fate would have it, I was president of the same association 34 years later.

Rod Johnson was the second farm director at KDHL. Rod left in the summer of 1987. Just a year ago, Rod retired after being the PA announcer for the Minnesota Timberwolves for 21 years. In September of 1987, I was hired to replace Rod. I left KDHL at the end of 1990 to take my farm broadcasting career to Sioux City, Iowa, West Point and Omaha, Nebraska and Minneapolis where I was the farm director for the Minnesota Farm Network.



Rod Johnson

Jerry Groskreutz is the current farm broadcaster at KDHL having started in 1995. Between the time I left and Jerry started, Rod came back for a couple of years. Rod, Jerry and I along with news and sports director Gordy Kosfeld, had more than enough to fill a one hour timeslot.

Below is a picture of us broadcasting from the Rice County Fair. From left to right; Emery Kleven, Jerry Groskreutz, Rod Johnson and standing is Gordy Kosfeld.



Among the more entertaining stories, I reminisced about the time Gordy and I got a case of uncontrollable laughter right as I was to introduce his newscast. We were laughing so hard I could not get the sponsors name out or Gordy's name out so I just turned my microphone off and turned on Gordy's mic. All he could do was laugh so he turned his mic off. We had about 10 seconds of dead air, then went to commercial. After 60 seconds we were still laughing but somehow Gordy finally got some news on the air. I think the entire thing was my fault because over the years, I had that happen 3 other times. I just have a way of making people laugh, what can I say?

There was one story I did not share that night at the fair as we ran out of time. Dusek's Bakery in Faribault was one of our sponsors on the morning program. And two days a week, they would send over a box of baked goods for us to devour and to talk about during their commercial. So the one day I had a glazed donut along with some coffee in the control room. Jack Hyde, the sole owner of the station at that time (he's the 'H' in KDHL) came in to the room and said in his quiet but firm voice, "Emery, we don't allow food or coffee in the control room." When Jack said something at his station, it was the law. He walked out and he didn't need to tell me twice. Well maybe he did have to tell me again because one day a week to two later, I had another of the Dusek delights in the control room. I fortunately had a window to see him coming so I quickly put the donut on the floor under my feet and covered it with the newspaper. Some of the glaze from the donut I'm sure was stuck to my lips but he didn't say anything only to ask a question about sponsors. I thought I was about to get fired but survived. When I knew he was back in his office, that donut quickly left the control room. I wasn't going to waste it after all, it was a sponsored donut. So I wrapped it in a napkin and saved it for later outside the building.

Jack was not a believer in remote starts for equipment. When we had to start a reel to reel tape that would have a recording for us to play, we would introduce it and then roll back on the office chair and hit the start button on the tape player as we're rolling by. Well the one day I had the Zumbrota Livestock report with Gerry Webster all cued up and ready for air. I introduced the program, turned off the mic and rolled backwards on the chair to hit the start button as I whizzed by. Well that day I was going so fast that I hit the rewind button instead of the start button. The chair kept going until it crashed into the back wall. So I walked and rolled the chair ahead to the control board, turned on the mic and said "we'll have that report with Gerry in just a moment. I could have used a Dusek donut about then.

One story I didn't not share was my introduction of Gordy Hinck and the Lake City show which aired every day at 11:30am. Well I must have been tired and was not articulating very well that day. Perhaps I was distracted by the two people who were in the control room talking with me. Whatever the reason or excuse, I introduced Gordy with the Lake City show or at least another word that rhymes with city. You catch my drift. I asked the two in the room with me after the

mic was off and Hinck was doing his show, “Did I just say that?” They both nodded affirmatively. “I thought so,” I said. There was another time when the Joey Chitwood Auto Daredevil Thrill Show was coming to the Rice County Fair. Well just look at his last name and you can imagine how that came out. And I thought having a donut in the control room was bad.

When I was attending Brown Institute, people would ask how you become a radio broadcaster. Well I said it’s like this. They have you fill your mouth with marbles and then you begin to talk into the microphone and try to be articulate. Slowly and surely, the marbles start falling out of your mouth and you can pronounce and articulate better as each one falls out. And then when you lose all your marbles, you are a radio announcer.

Below is a picture of Jerry Groskreutz and Emery posing with Goldy Gopher at the 2014 Farmfest near Morgan, Minnesota.

