

Col Jon Phillips

Hall of Fame radio newsmen Paul Harvey would often interject into his newscast things that were what he called 'Partly Personal'. Well here's my partly personal. To Mike, hand the Messenger over to Patti so she can read this column first. I'm HER cousin, not yours. You'll get your turn. [** Editor's note* Mike did not hand the paper over to Patti when it came in the mail. He read it, laughed and then proceeded to read the entire paper before Patti got to see it.*]

Now then, my longtime farm broadcasting colleague Col Jon Phillips pictured to the right retired at the age of 80 at the end of October, 2021. I first met the Col when I left KDHL radio in Faribault to work in Sioux City, Iowa at KMNS. Col was the farm markets reporter for the station and together we were a team for the next 31 years with various stations and networks. Prior to his doing daily market reports on the radio, he was a



livestock auctioneer, hence the title Colonel Jon. The practice of calling auctioneers Colonel dates back to Civil War days. However I never heard his wife Mary call him Colonel. It's always Jon. I don't think she wanted to give him that much respect.



Col grew up near Wausau, Nebraska, population 720. He was an excellent athlete in his youth especially in baseball and boxing. He could have been a professional in either sport. In fact, he had an old scout for the New York Yankees that befriended him in his teenage years. His life seemed to be trending to play baseball at the University of South Dakota with hopes of signing at some point with the Yankees. But his throwing arm got injured in his freshman year in college and that dream ended.

His fighting career never materialized either even though he kept in close contact with those in boxing circles but his fighting career was mostly in bar fights and brawls. The stories from those days are to say the least fascinating. He won most of them

and the ones he didn't win were a draw. He was friends with fellow Nebraskan Ron Stander, who fought Smokin' Joe Frazier for the world heavyweight title in Omaha back in 1972. This was the only heavyweight title fight to ever be held in Nebraska. The fight poster you see is a prized possession of the Col. If you look closely, Ron Stander autographed it saying 'Keep punchin' Col, your pal, Ron "Butcher" Stander.

But it was the livestock industry that was Col's forte. He and I would broadcast from some of the World Livestock Auctioneer Championships that would be held at various Livestock Auction Markets around the country. Two in particular I remember were held in Dunlap, Iowa and Fort Pierre, SD. Col Jon himself could have and would have been among the list of champions but the contests did not start until he was done being a livestock auctioneer. At one time, Col Jon was the auctioneer at the three largest livestock markets in the world; Yankton, SD, Norfolk, NE and Sioux City. After auctioneering for many years, Col went on to become a commodities broker.

One of the many stories he has told me over the years included him being in Chicago for meetings and it happened to be 1985. He attended the Bears game the night Refrigerator Perry scored a touchdown as a 335 pound fullback. Col tells of getting invited up to the ABC broadcast booth to meet Dandy Don Meredith and Howard Cosell. Howard thought these guys coming in there were some kind of bigshots from the Chicago Mercantile Exchange but no, it was just Col Jon from Wausau, Nebraska. It was when Col asked Cosell for his autograph that Cosell realized that this putz was a nobody, at least as far as he was concerned and tore into him with an expletive filled tirade that included the word get and out. Needless to say, he did not get the autograph but he did get out.

At KMNS in Sioux City, Col Jon and I developed the 'Farmshow on the Road' program where we would go out and about the area broadcasting from various locations. They became like town events when we would go to places like Moorhead, Iowa or Newcastle, Nebraska or Hull, Iowa, which is home to the original Pizza Ranch. We would broadcast from elevators, restaurants, county fairs, casinos, saloons, you name it and we broadcast from there. In Merrill, Iowa one morning we were going to set up in a building that was a restaurant during the day and bar at night. Well there was one leftover drunk from the night before and Col arrived before I did and this drunken lady woke up and started chasing Col all over the bar until the owner finally got her out the door.

In Ponca, Nebraska, just down the road from Newcastle, we broadcast from the bowling alley which was run by the Lamprecht family. Wayne Lamprecht worked at the Sioux City Stockyards but also ran the bowling alley/restaurant. Wayne made thee best prime rib anywhere. He had a secret recipe and no one was allowed in to the kitchen when he was preparing it. For my 40th birthday, he invited my wife and me out for a prime rib dinner. That

was the best and biggest prime rib I ever saw. That 24 ounce side of beef was done to perfection. Wayne's mother, pictured to the right, was the pie baker and she was a grand champion at that. It was a family run operation at the time with as many as 11 family members working there during an average week.



Speaking of pies, we had a big celebration for our 100th Farmshow on the Road. We held it at the fairgrounds in South Sioux City, Nebraska. For the event, we had a pie baking contest where listeners would bring in their favorite pie. We had three judges and I was not one of them. I was disqualified because word got back that at the Monona County fair I was a judge for the county fair queen contest and I had a 15 way tie for first place. I'm pretty sure I would have done that with the pies too.

Col Jon and I attended Husker Harvest Days several times. It's Nebraska's version of Farmfest held in mid-September. We get to the motel in Grand Island at about 9 o'clock at night so we can get out to the show bright and early. We get in the room and it was about 95 degrees in there. We put the air-conditioning on full blast and fell asleep. I wake up early and exclaim to Col; HEY, it's like a meat locker in here, I can see my breath.

Col had cattle buyers and sellers who would give him market information. He did not want to disclose who told him the information so he would give them code names on the air. I'm going to miss hearing about the exploits of the Road Runner, Iowa Fats, Taco Tuesday and the One-Armed Bandit among many others. As he prefaced giving the futures markets out of Chicago, he would explain that the Chicago Mercantile Exchange was run by professionals and financed but us amateurs. And if you've ever traded futures, you can probably relate to that. I've only touched the surface of my time spent with Col Jon but I'll tell you it was a wild and worthwhile trip. I have lots of memories and a great friend for life. Enjoy retirement Colonel.

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Col Jon and Emery would attend the Governor's Charity Steer Show at the Iowa State Fair. Governor Terry Branstad is in this picture along with Col Jon Phillips back in 1996.

This was our taxicab at the Pierce County fair in Nebraska one year.



Scroll down for one more picture.

As I said, Col Jon and I loved pies while we were on the road. The best pie and cake baker was Sue Holton from Ireton, Iowa pictured here with her husband Doug and two of the biggest pie eaters around.

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