

## **How My Column Got Its Name**



Many of you might remember a newsman on WCCO radio years ago named Dick Chapman. Dick was a great reporter for 37 years on 'The Good Neighbor'. He would close his newscast with 'that's the latest', a closing tagline that I've used on the radio myself for several years. I always thought it summed up the news much like Walter Cronkite's 'And that's the way it is'. When Dan Rather took over on CBS, he had trouble coming up with a closing slogan because he was following Cronkite. Rather would close by just saying 'Peace'. Or was it 'Peace and Happy Hunting'? Whatever he said, it was never going to beat Cronkite.

As far as I can tell, there are not many West Concord alumni who got into broadcasting. We've had doctors, lawyers, engineers, accountants and librarians among other professions. I'm sure there are other journalists who have their roots in WC. Richard Ray, WCHS class of 1968, is the biggest 'star'. He's been a reporter and news anchor in Dallas since 1983 after working in Rochester, Des Moines and Nashville. I got interested in radio back in 9<sup>th</sup> grade when we had to do a report on some job or profession for Mr. Doyle's social studies class. I remember standing in room 129, the study hall, talking to my classmates Louie Loosbrock and Dan Miller. I remember telling them I had no idea what I was going to do my report on. Suddenly Louie says 'How about disc jockey?' Instantly I go yes, that's what I'll do it on. And the match was struck and the fire lit.

After graduating from WCHS in 1971, I went to Brown Institute in Minneapolis when it was on the corner of 32nd Avenue S and E Lake Street. It was a 40 week course to learn all there was to radio. As I've explained to people over the years, the instructors would have you put several marbles in your mouth at one time and then you would begin to speak into the microphone. Slowly, maybe one at a time or four at a time, the marbles would start to fall out or be spit out. Finally, when you lost all your marbles, you were qualified to be a radio announcer.

So having lost all my marbles, I did some college radio in Mankato back when the school was known as Mankato State College. My first paying job, and I use the term 'paying' very loosely was at KOWO in Waseca, 1170 on the AM dial. I started by being the board operator for county fair remotes and high school sports. My claim to fame in those early days was that the country singer George Jones, who performed at the Waseca County Fair, was a no-show for my scheduled radio interview with him. But back in his drinking days, George did that to reporters

## **How My Column Got Its Name**

with a much higher pay grade than I had. As my radio career evolved, I did get to meet and interview some country singers who did show up including Dan Seals, Lee Greenwood, Kenny Rogers and Alan Jackson.

After working at KOWO for about a year, I came back to West Concord to farm with my parents. But you may recall the 80's were the times of low commodity prices and high interest rates. It was hard work for low pay. I have described radio as not so hard work for low pay. So in 1987, I heard from Dick and Mary Jo Floren at Dick's Repair that KDHL was looking for



**Dean Curtiss, KDHL**

a farm director. I went to Faribault to interview with Jack Hyde, the owner and co-founder of KDHL. In fact, his last initial is the 'H' in KDHL. Palmer Dragsten, the 'D' and Herb Lee, the 'L', were the other co-founders. By 1987, Jack was the sole owner. To say Jack was tight with his money is an understatement. Jack, I think, was out to prove you CAN take it with you. But the man had a heart of gold. And he hired me as the third farm broadcaster the station ever had since it went on the air in 1948. Hall of Fame farm broadcaster Dean Curtiss was the first and longest serving broadcaster. Dean had a sign on the outskirts of Elysian, MN that said home to Dean Curtiss. Rod Johnson of Cannon Falls was the second farm broadcaster.

When Rod left KDHL in the summer of 1987, that's when I interviewed with Mr. Hyde and got the job on September 1<sup>st</sup>. I left KDHL in November, 1990. Jerry Groskreutz, the current farm broadcaster, is only the fourth in the 72 year history of KDHL. Jerry is closing in on the longevity record set by Dean Curtiss.



**Emery Kleven won several NAFB awards during his career.**

As I was still living on the farm just north of West Concord, I would get up at 3:35am each day to make the 24-mile trek to the radio station in Faribault so that I could play the polkas and waltzes when we went on the air at 5am. Although it was not my kind of music, and I'm being kind in describing it that way, the radio experience was tremendous. Since September first of 1987 when Jack Hyde put me on the air, I've done a lot in radio but my main job has been that of a farm broadcaster. I'm still in the farm broadcast business today although the alarm clock is not set at 3:35am anymore. There had to be a perk in there somewhere for doing this for that many years.

*March, 2017 - That's the Latest by Emery Kleven*

### **How My Column Got Its Name**

When I left KDHL I moved on to Sioux City, Iowa where I worked at AM620 KMNS. Other stop in my career took me to KTIC in West Point, Nebraska, I was hired by the Waitt Farm Network in 2001. The first year with them they were headquartered in Yankton, South Dakota before moving to Omaha, Nebraska. Eventually I made my way back to Minnesota and for a couple years worked in downtown Minneapolis at the Minnesota Farm Network. As of this writing I work out of my home as the market reporter for the Iowa Agri-Business Radio Network. I was a long-time member of the National Association of Farm Broadcasting (NAFB). I was the NAFB president in 2005. As a side note, Dean Curtiss was NAFB President in 1971, the year I graduated West Concord High School.