

Many thanks to everyone who made this possible

Written by Bob Brooks

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This has been an unusual week for yours truly. Instead of interviewing sports personalities, for a short period of time I became one of them.

There are so many everlasting thank-yous to give, this space or any other could never provide enough space for my gratitude to the athletes, coaches, administrators, parents, fans and everyone interested in the world of sports who have followed along with us through the years.

To them, I am eternally grateful. It's been a privilege to touch so many lives over a long period of time, and now it will be a great honor to have my name on the press box at Kingston Stadium and to enter the Kingston Hall of Fame.

With that said, I do get asked how I ever got started in this business. I'll start off by saying that my father and my uncle were in the ready-mix concrete and lumber business here in Cedar Rapids.

Nobody in our family had ever been in the radio sports business, but my father was on the baseball board of directors for the local pro team and was an avid sports fan. And I accompanied him to a lot of games at old Hill Park.

At that time I was in Franklin High School, where I'd gone out for the basketball team and the golf team and ran in one track meet that made me sick for about a week. I'd also done some speech work for a teacher named Geraldine Greene, who knew the program director at radio station WSUI in Iowa City. And her name was Pearl Bennett Broxman.

It was during World War II, and in the summertime with men at war, WSUI needed somebody to be a gofer. And so a contact was made by teacher Greene to program director Broxman for me to become what today would be known as an intern.

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That would have been in 1943, and in that summer I worked at anything available in radio and took the interurban train from Cedar Rapids to Iowa City and back each day.

I had an opportunity at that time to cover University of Iowa sports, the Iowa Seahawks Pre-Flight School teams and take on responsibilities that would not have been available to me had it not been for the war.

When I went back to Franklin in the fall of '43, I continued my work at WSUI and also did some spotting at Iowa football games for WMT and their announcer, Pat Patterson. Also, I got an opportunity to do a broadcast of a Marshalltown-Iowa City High football game because of illness to the Marshalltown sportscaster.

I had been asked by the Marshalltown general manager if I had any experience in broadcasting, and I told him I was very experienced. He said how much do you want for that game? I said, 'Oh, \$25.' He said we pay \$15. I said, 'I'll take it.'

And so I went out to what is now Bates Field in Iowa City and did the game. And I can tell you that I never sweated so much in my life. I had the cold sweats for about 2 1/2 hours, but somehow we got through it and that was the start of the long trail that leads to today.

(Bob Brooks is sports director at KMRY and has been one of the leading voices of college and prep sports in Eastern Iowa for more than 65 years. He is a 10-time winner of the Iowa Sportscaster of the Year Award, and was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in South Bend, Indiana in 2004. His sports reports can be heard weekday afternoons at 4:30 and 5:30, and Saturdays at 6:40 for the Hawkeye football wrap-up.)