



Renowned 'Radio Voice Of Agriculture' Into Kansas Broadcasters Hall Of Fame

"He's the farmer's best friend."

Farmers and ranchers throughout the Midwest depend on Kelly Lenz' complete, unbiased, accurate information for profitable agriculture business.

Saying "turn the radio on" never required as the morning Ag Roundup is wakeup call, and knob set push immediate market update.

So trusted is reporting and analysis, many acknowledge it "gospel."

In recognition of unrelenting, dedicated service to the world's most important industry, agriculture, Kelly Lenz has been inducted into the Kansas Broadcasting Hall of Fame.



Serving as Ag director for 580 WIBW since 1978, Lenz is recognized throughout the Midwest, the country, and the world as a leading farm news broadcaster, according to Larry Riggins, Market Manager at Alpha Media Topeka, of which WIBW is an affiliate.

Induction ceremonies were at the Kansas Association of Broadcasters meeting Sunday in Wichita.

In making the honor nomination, Riggins assured, "Kelly Lenz deserves the recognition of being not just a farm broadcaster, but an innovator of programming that reaches, not only Ag producers, but consumers as well.

"Kelly has created a product that tells a story and keeps people interested in an industry that drives our Kansas economy," acknowledged Riggins during the induction presentation.

"Everybody knows and appreciates Kelly Lenz," Riggins added.

"I grew up on a diversified Iowa farm, so I know about what those in agriculture need and want to know. I've always tried to report the news and markets so everybody, including the consumers, can understand," Hall of Famer Kelly Lenz said.

Fondness for radio began when Lenz was ten-years-old and received a transistor radio as a Christmas gift. "It came with earphones and a naugahyde case. I became fascinated with radio right then. I could listen to KCIM in Carrol County; WGN in Chicago; WCO St Louis; Omaha. The whole world," he smiling remembered.

"I was fascinated by radio," Lenz repeated.

Yet, career destination came a bit later. "I took speech as a high school junior, and the nun who was my teacher, assigned us to write a radio news script and deliver it to our class," Lenz continued reflection.

"Then, she entered me in a state radio broadcasting contest. I won it and \$500. That was a lot of money in those days," Lenz said.

His future was set. "Before that my greatest fear was speaking publicly, but that nun helped me overcome it. She was directly responsible for where I am today. That's the role of a good teacher," he appreciatively credited.

After high school, Lenz studied broadcasting at Brown Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota. "It was very intense, specialized, a tough school with outstanding instructors. Twenty students started, and eight finished," Lenz informed.

He was in that 1970 graduating class, and started work at WIOK in Normal, Illinois, on the air. When the farm editor took other employment in 1973, Lenz' agriculture background made him qualified choice for that position.

"I was hesitant at first, but there are lots of news people. The future in broadcasting was farm reporting," he contended. Farm programming and listeners expanded under Lenz' tutelage, bringing promotion to develop a farm department at WJBC in Bloomington, Illinois.

Then, in 1978, the call came from WIBW in Topeka, Kansas. "There was an opening in the three-person farm department, and they wanted me to apply. I wasn't really interested in moving from Illinois' farm prime country," Lenz verified.



But, his reputation preceded him. "They found out I love to fish, and kept calling, and finally sent a plane ticket. So, I came, saw all of the farm ponds, lakes, and took a tour of the Flint Hills. I was sold. They offered me a job on the spot," Lenz smiled.

Shortly after arrival, the broadcaster was in demand on the air, actually in a dual position. WIBW was owned by Stauffer Communications, and included AM 580 and Channel 13 television.

Soon, Lenz was recognized host for 580 morning listeners with the Pleasant Valley Gang's live old-time music vestige from the 1930s through '50s.

Noon time, Lenz covered agriculture news as host of Mid-Day in Kansas on Channel 13.

"Kelly has always believed that everyone, no matter whether they farm or have never been on a farm, should be able to listen to his Ag Issues program and understand how Agriculture affects their daily lives," Riggins said.

"Kelly doesn't push numbers, but rather, topical information anyone listening to the program can understand. That's why the morning Ag Issues program has been one of the most listened to, and highest rate demand, programs on 580 WIBW, for many years," the station's manager stated.

With affiliate radio stations across the state through the Kansas Agriculture Network, Lenz is rightfully referred to as "the radio voice of Kansas agriculture."

The 580 WIBW Farm Profit Seminars each spring in four different communities across the WIBW listening area were developed by Lenz.

"At each program, about 200 farmers and ranchers enjoy a catered meal while agriculture leaders present information directly affecting the agriculture industry," Riggins said.

A Beef Producers Information Seminar as breakfast kickoff to the Flint Hills Beef Fest at Emporia is also planned and hosted annually by Lenz.

While there have been changes in farming during his 43 years serving the industry, Lenz was emphatic: "I've always been a strong advocate of agriculture, and telling the agriculture story, impacting everybody."

The number of farms has decreased, while individual operations have increased. "Although the family farm glitter may be gone, agriculture is an industry affecting the state and nation's economy. While agriculture has huge efficiency today, there have still been vast improvements in conservation practices," Lenz said.

Receiving many awards for his career service, including several national recognitions, Lenz is only the third farmer to be inducted into the Kansas Broadcasting Hall of Fame.

"It's very humbling and meaningful for me to receive this special award, and especially to be with George Logan and Sonny Slater, who both worked in the farm department at 580 WIBW during their careers," Lenz said.

Attending the induction ceremonies with Lenz were his wife, Mary, as well as a strong contingent of 580 WIBW staff, and several friends closely tied to the agriculture industry.

In accepting the award, Lenz remembered as a very young boy how farm neighbors came to harvest crops on the family farm more than six decades ago when his dad was incapacitated.

"I've never forgotten that, and today farmers are neighbors near and dear to me always ready to help each other. I thank them. It is a privilege to be a part of this important business of farming," Lenz said.

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