

Denny Goeres

This week we are happy to name Denny Goeres as the 134th inductee in Marshfield's 150: Heroes and Leaders, Past and Present register. Denny Goeres was nominated by Thom Gerretsen..

"When Denny was here, he ..."

Hayes Callaghan kept being told that when he spent 12 months as Denny Goeres' third replacement as WDLB Radio's sports director.

Hayes didn't need much training. His 1980's Marshfield tenure was a break from his own 40+ year career as a trusted sports broadcaster in western Wisconsin. But Denny gave his listeners what Hayes couldn't; a life full of Marshfield contacts and experiences for a station that radio consultant Ford Colley later said "super-served" its community.



One example: Hayes and Denny both called Columbus Catholic High School football games for WDLB and covered the Dons' legendary coach Walt Kroll. Both did well. But only Denny's voice reflected his own playing days as a left end and safety for Walt, who brought home the city's first state football title and two more when private schools still ran their own tournaments.

Denny Goeres was born in Marshfield and did lots at Columbus. Being part of a homecoming court. Student Council president. Helping start the school Letterman's Club. Captain of a championship intramural basketball team. It built the foundation for a stellar decade as WDLB's sports director before moving with others in his family to Southern California in 1982.

Before radio called, though, Denny was the data processing manager at Marshfield's former Figi's Inc., an international mail-order house of cheese and other gifts. While at Figi's, he was asked by the late station manager Jack Hackman to be a part-time analyst for Jack's live play-by-play of high school football. In 1972, Denny filled a vacancy to lead WDLB's heavy schedule of local and Wisconsin sports broadcasts.

Once you've gained Jack's trust, confidence and support it became easier to lead his charge in your own direction. He gave that discretion to me on the news side, and I learned from Denny how to exercise it.

How else could I explain what I heard on WDLB when I joined the newsroom in 1978? A live pool tournament from former Alderman Nick Terry's Roundup Bar. Local Golden Gloves boxing. Plus, the major fall, winter and spring high school sports from across the Marshfield area.

Then there was a live annual broadcast that had Denny Goeres' fingerprints all over it: The MAC Banquet, when the Marshfield Athletic Club presented numerous awards to athletes and community figures who supported and encouraged them. One big thing; the canary jacket Denny wore when he emceed this.

It helps to know the people you're covering and see them in person as much as you can. So about 5 hours into my new job at WDLB News on May 1, 1978, Denny Goeres had me go to the old Woolworth's (now Mittens). It's where I joined his "koffee klatsch" and gained insights into covering a new community. I also made immediate bonds with the people who made this place go.

Denny's lifelong Marshfield contacts helped bring in advertising revenue when he served as a part-time sales representative. More than most, he loved the 1970s disco music and played it on the air sometimes as a fill-in announcer.

Off air, Denny was a youth basketball coach and stayed close to sports in other ways. I didn't know why, but around 1980 he had me help him coach an eighth-grade Catholic girls' team. I never went inside the game as well as Denny: I ended up doing odd jobs but mostly cheering the girls on. It was more significant than I thought.

In 2017, he told the Hub City Times that one of the first things Jack wanted him to do was consider airing girls' basketball games. The federal Title IX had just taken effect when the girls' coaches at Columbus and Marshfield High demanded equal on-air treatment to what the boys had long received.

Advertisers had daughters playing. Marshfield's girls' teams were winning more than the boys were – thus providing more compelling programming to local fans. That made WDLB's decision easier. To Denny's knowledge, this station was the first in Wisconsin to broadcast girls' basketball games.

To summarize: "When Denny was here, he" ... never really left.

He still returns to Wisconsin to see family, friends, WDLB colleagues, etc. He plays in the Columbus Alumni Golf Outing most years and has renewed bonds as a member of the Marshfield Area Baseball & Softball Hall of Fame. Above all, Denny Goeres keeps in touch with people who've made his career and helped him seal a place among Marshfield's 150 notables for its first 150 years.