

**Florence Hedberg  
Narrator**

**Lee Tempte  
KMRS  
Interviewer**

**1976**

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- LT: 00:00 This is *Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota: a Saturday, KMRS News Feature*. Today, on *Reminiscing* we are talking with Florence Hedberg of KMRS Radio at Morris. Florence, this, of course, is the 20th anniversary of KMRS this week. I bet you a lot of people were around here maybe have forgotten when the radio first started and some of the things that went on before we actually did get on the air. What's the history about why the Hedberg family decided to get into the radio business?
- FH: 00:34 It all dates back to about 1954. Paul was very interested in—he had his ham radio, and he had built this with a little help from somebody. He was so interested in radio. We had thought of buying a newspaper. They were checking through a trade paper, Cliff and Paul, to find one that was for sale. There was a little ad down in the corner that said, “Maybe you editors who are interested in papers should consider radio.” Paul said, “Dad, that’s what we want.” It didn’t take much to convince Cliff because he was very interested in that too.
- LT: 01:21 I know that both Cliff and Paul were very, very interested in radio. How about you, did you have any hesitation, or did you think that might be the thing to get into?
- FH: 01:31 No, I really was thrilled. I thought this would be great. I really was never worried, but I didn’t have the big

responsibility either. I thought it would just be a real challenge.

- LT: 01:43 To go on for the first time, it took a lot of planning and quite a few months. What was the process in getting a license to go on the air? First you had to get a frequency, wasn't it?
- FH: 01:56 Yeah, we had to get a frequency. We had to get an engineer, first of all. Somebody in St. Paul—I don't know where he was, at a state office—recommended this man in Washington. So we got our frequency—or we got him looking for a frequency. At first, he wasn't sure if he could even find one. So in the meantime we were looking for a newspaper too.
- 02:20 Then Cliff said, “If we find a frequency, we'll forget all about the paper.” He got word the next day that he had found 1570. They weren't too thrilled about that, but it was the only one he could find—because, of course, this was a Mexican frequency, signing off at sundown and signing on a sunrise.
- LT: 02:46 He suggested that you get your foot in the door.
- FH: 02:48 Right. The engineer said, “Why don't you take it. Get your foot in the door.”
- LT: 02:54 So you got the frequency, and you had already decided that Morris would be the area. Why did you decide on Morris, Minnesota, as a place to locate?
- FH: 03:04 Well, we got out a map of Minnesota, actually, and also a list of radio stations. This area was about the only place in the state that didn't have a radio station. Morris, we decided was a growing, very progressive community and of sufficient size. So we just decided to go ahead with Morris.
- LT: 03:29 At that time, there was no idea that even a branch of the university would be located here.
- FH: 03:33 No idea at all, no. I remember though, after we'd been here a year or two, seeing a little booklet. I think it was printed by Clayton Gay, and it told all the reasons why Morris should have a university. I was very impressed with that booklet but never dreamed that it would happen.

- LT: 03:56 Well, after you chose a town, you got the frequency; you had to look for a site to locate the radio station. How did you happen to decide on the spot on Highway 28?
- FH: 04:09 It wasn't easy. I remember coming to Morris in the early fall. In fact, one time we were here, they were having a homecoming parade. We drove around town, and it seemed like this was the very last—going out on Highway 59, 28 was the last place we went to, and we were so happy when discovered this swampy area. The engineer who was with us said, "Oh, that is perfect," and, luckily, it was available.
- LT: 04:43 Yet a lot of people don't understand why a swampy area is a good place for an antenna. They think you should be the highest spot you can get on top of a hill. But there is a reason for that.
- FH: 04:52 There is a much better—I don't understand it, but he said we should have a swampy, low area, and we were lucky to find it.
- LT: 05:00 It's a better ground, is the way they explained it to me.
- FH: 05:02 Um-hum.
- LT: 05:03 Then you finally did get on the air back on September 16, 1956. I would imagine that people around this west central area had maybe some differing ideas as to whether we needed a radio station, whether one would succeed. What was the different reaction of the people?
- FH: 05:23 I think some people thought we were really sticking our necks out. A lot people said they were really happy that finally Morris was going to have a radio station. One man, I remember in particular said, "I was really surprised. I thought you were going to build a TV station.
- LT: 05:46 There was lots of different reactions. Well, ever since we did go on the air, you've had an active part in the operation of the station acting as treasurer, and writing checks, and this type of thing. But there has been some other times where I'm sure that you probably didn't expect to be working. I know for a fact that blizzards were one of those occasions. Many times when announcers just couldn't get out here, you were manning the telephones.
- FH: 06:16 That did happen a number of times, yes, that I came down to answer the telephone. I remember one Sunday

morning—I think it was a Sunday—we had gotten well-organized with me on the telephone and Cliff doing the announcing, and Bob Jordan walked in. We couldn't believe our eyes. We didn't see how he could ever have make it out here, but he had walked the whole way. Afterward, we were talking about it and he said, "You know, you really looked disappointed when I walked in the door." But we were just so surprised.

- LT: 06:50 Of course, on a blizzard day, the radio station is the busiest place in the world.
- FH: 06:54 That's right. It really is.
- LT: 06:58 Another area concerning blizzards is that we are not only a radio station, but you have had to put up kind of a make-to-restaurant and hotel on occasions when some of the employees couldn't get home because of bad weather.
- FH: 07:13 Yes, that happened a number of times, where we've had announcers staying overnight. I remember once having to serve three meals, and I was getting pretty low on food.
- LT: 07:25 It's always interesting out here. There's lots of things happening.
- FH: 07:28 That's right. It's an interesting life.
- LT: 07:31 Well, I know there have been a lot of changes. Now, of course, with the new FM on, people are listening for the stereo sound. But sometimes there used to be quite a bit of live music when the station first went on the air.
- FH: 07:45 Well, there was that first year. Because it was such a novelty, I remember people from the West Central School came out and they gave a program every week. They were under the direction of John Anderson, who was in charge of music out there.
- LT: 08:02 I've heard a story about Max Merath when he played live on KMRS.
- FH: 08:06 He came up to the front door—in fact, in those early days, I had a lot of people coming to my front door thinking that was the radio station. Of course, it didn't take Cliff long to arrange for him to be on the air and played our piano. It was quite a concert.

- LT: 08:24 Now, the piano, of course, is upstairs and all the controls are downstairs. How did they arrange that?
- FH: 08:30 Well, between Cliff and Jim Bollman, they strung a wire up through the windows and we got on the air.
- LT: 08:39 Well, with FM now, we're kind of starting a brand new era at KMRS radio. How was it that we are so fortunate that the starting date for the FM would be on the same date as the AM?
- FH: 08:52 Well, this is something that Paul had worked for and planned for a long time. It didn't look like it was going to happen, but he just persisted and kept calling the federal communications. He wouldn't give up. He said, "We are going to go on September 16th." He didn't get word to go on until 10:00 the morning of that day, but it happened.
- LT: 09:23 So we look to the future then of KMRS AM and FM, and I'm sure that there will be lots of changes and lots of new things to come in the future too. Well, Florence, there is one question I always end off these interviews with, and that's when I ask the interviewee their age.
- FH: 09:39 Well, as long as we've been reminiscing about KMRS, I will tell you, KMRS is 20 years old.
- LT: 09:46 Thank you very much. We've been talking with Florence Hedberg of Morris, on *Reminiscing in West Central Minnesota: a Saturday KMRS News Feature*.