



Keeping Up with Pete

Although he's written five drafts of his obituary and is now working on his sixth, **A Roy C. "Pete" Pedersen** is very much alive—and still kickin'! He's 92, but his mind seems to be going 90 miles an hour, recalling his 45 years at WDAY (North Dakota's first radio station), his 16 years as a Fargo City Commissioner, his passionate loyalty to North Dakota State University athletics and the time he spent in the military during World War II. I visited with Roy at his residence in the Golden Living Community in Moorhead.

Roy started as an announcer at WDAY Radio in 1938, while attending North Dakota State University. He graduated in 1941 with a degree in English and a minor in dramatic arts. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on that "day that lives in infamy," Pete joined the U.S. Army in 1942 and was sent to the European theatre with the Third Armored Division. He fought in five campaigns, including the "Battle of the Bulge."

I asked Roy what he remembers most about the war at that time, and he said, "The weather." He recalls it was cold and wet. As the snow melted, the foxholes filled with water, resulting in very wet shoes and socks (no boots). They couldn't leave those cramped, damp holes in the ground because the danger of getting hit by German small-arms fire was ever present. Some of the soldiers contracted what is called "trenchfoot," caused by soaked footwear. Toward the end of the battle the GIs were finally issued warm and dry fur-lined waterproof combat boots.

After three years of military service, Roy was discharged from the Army with the rank of Captain and returned to WDAY. He was then named Promotion Manager, a position he held—and loved—until his retirement in 1983. The radio station expanded into television in 1953, operating the first TV station serving eastern North Dakota and west-central Minnesota out of a makeshift studio in a two-stall garage next to the transmitting tower. This aerial landmark is still located on South University Drive in Fargo, just beyond the south end of River Drive.

When Channel 6 went on the air, Roy put his promotional skills to work helping appliance dealers market TV sets. In order to sell advertising on this new visual medium, there first had to be an audience. So, Roy offered incentives to dealers to push sets. He gave them lots of free publicity on WDAY Radio, which carried the message to people who didn't have, as yet, a TV set in their home. Pete also started and edited a monthly listener/viewer tabloid: *Mike Notes*, a publication I've been reprising over the past year especially for WDAY alumni, a group of which I'm very proud to be a part of.

Roy was—and still is—one of the NDSU Bison's greatest supporters; note the "Bison Hall of Fame" plaque at the top of the photo, shot recently at his residence. He founded the TeamMakers group in 1950, having also started the NDSU Athletics' "Hall of Fame" in 1970, into which he was inducted in 1977. Roy's wife, Joyce, also a WDAY employee for many years, passed away in 1988; his daughter, Karen, lives in Columbia, SC.

Remembering his days on the Fargo City Commission, he especially enjoyed frequent coffee klatches with fellow commissioners, including then-Mayor Jon Lindgren. He says the former Fargo Mayor is still a valued friend who has helped him with a number of errands and medical appointments.

It's fun to visit with broadcast pioneers such as Roy—and others, now in their 80s and 90's—who founded and helped build the broadcast industry in our region.

