

Brewster station celebrates 20 years of operation

By John Van Nostrand
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In Psalm 98 of the Bible it states to make a joyful noise. A place near Brewster is doing just that this month.

tions became more technical and the station occasionally interrupted his family's schedule.

"It was better than I ever dreamed," Quenzer said about the station's activity.



Quenzer

KGCR, a Christian-based radio station (107.7 FM) is celebrating 20 years of broadcasting this month.

The station, west of Brewster, offers a mix of Christian contemporary music and programs.

The station was initially started by Brewster residents Allen and Doris Quenzer. Allen wanted a station he could rely on that had Christian music or programs. Regional, secular radio stations in the 1980s had them, but changes in ownership or marketing took those songs off the air.

"I talked with the pastor in Mingo at the time about an interest in Christian radio," Quenzer said. "I and Herb Roszhart then met in Goodland to talk about that. I felt the Lord has blessed our farm and it was time to get involved."

Roszhart is affiliated with Praise Network which has Christian stations. Quenzer, 67, estimated it took at least three years to turn those discussions into a working radio station. Quenzer found the land to build the station. He and others went to Topeka and a place near Denver for equipment. Licenses had to be applied for, and applied for again.

"None of us had radio experience. I never dreamed it would happen," Quenzer said. "The Lord works in mysterious ways."

But when March 1, 1988, arrived, so did the sounds of KGCR.

"That first time on the air, you don't forget that," he said. "My Tribute" and "Find Us Faithful" were the first songs played.

Quenzer was active in station operations during its first 10 years. He watched the growth in the listeners, donations to keep the station operating and the employees come and go.

"I am thankful for the support of our audience and supporters," he said. "We are fortunate being in a rural area to have a Christian radio station. I know of people who have donated part of their Social Security check or pension."

As the station grew, so did the demands. Quenzer said the opera-

Because of the growth and the challenges that came with it, the Quenzers donated the station in 1998 to the Praise Network. Praise Network has stations in Hays, O'Neill, Norfolk and Grand Island, Neb. Praise Network has offices in Hays and Aurora, Neb. Quenzer is still involved with operations by sitting on the Praise Network board.

Station manager James Claassen has been with the station for 19 of those 20 years. He almost started his relationship with the station the same time he got married.

"We actually visited the station on our honeymoon, about two months after it was on the air," he said. "Then we came a year later."

James' wife, Brenda, also assists with operations at the station.

"We visited because we thought we might be here," James said. "The station was looking for some help, but Brenda still had a year of school left."

Claassen, who grew up near Wichita, attended Calvary Bible College in Kansas City, Mo., and developed an interest in Christian radio. He had worked at stations in metro-Kansas City.

"If things were still good, we would come back," James said about going to Brewster.

Although staff and the songs played have changed over the years, the station's mission has not.

"Our goal is exactly the same," he said. "Our mission statement is to glorify God and turning hearts to Christ. That was the mission when started and the mission now."

Claassen said about half the day's offering is music and the other half is programs.

"We wanted something to reach the span of the body of Christ. We have Bible-teaching programs and self-help programs from money to personal issues."

Claassen said the station complements listeners' faith.

"When people leave their church, there is still something to keep them on focus. We like to think we are an



From left, Herb Roszhart, Lloyd Mintzmyer and KGCR station manager James Claassen share some air time while at KGCR, located near Brewster. Roszhart and Mintzmyer are both involved with Praise Network, which KGCR is apart of. March marks the 20th anniversary of KGCR.

extension of church."

He said the listeners of the station give back. Held in the fall, KGCR has a Shareathon, its fundraising campaign. The money is the station's operating budget.

"We like to be as frugal as possible," he said.

The Shareathon goal last year was \$170,000, which it exceeded. This year's goal is expected to be \$175,000. Claassen estimated two-thirds of the funds are from listeners and one-third is from businesses.

Businesses who donate receive a primitive ad on the radio. Since

KGCR is considered a non-commercial station by the Federal Communications Commission, it can't have traditional, radio-like ads.

James is one of two full-time employees at the station, as has been done in the past. The rest of the staff is made up of part-time employees

who man the station during the evenings. When the station first opened, employees used turntables and reel-to-reel tapes. Now everything is digital or from a computer program.

"The technology has been huge," Claassen said.

The station's reception area is about a 75-mile radius. According to its promotional clip, the station can be heard along I-70 from Quinter to Stratton, Colo. During the past five years, the station has expanded its reach.

A translator was installed in Cheyenne Wells, Colo. Three years ago another translator was installed in Wray, Colo., and last year the translator for McCook, Neb., was turned on.

"People there were wanting Christian radio," Claassen said. "We already provide news and weather for the area."

The station will celebrate the entire month of March. The anniversary month will conclude with a free concert by Scott Krippayne at 5:30 p.m., on Monday, March 31, at Colby High School. To attend the concert a person must have a ticket. For ticket information, go online to www.kgcr.org.

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