



The

Broadcasters' Desktop Resource

www.theBDR.net

... edited by Barry Mishkind – the Eclectic Engineer

Ken Benner

1937 – 2021

Remembering Ken Benner

By Michael Dudding

One of broadcasters' best friends is no longer with us. Ken Benner passed away peacefully in Tucson, Arizona on April 1, 2021 after battling pancreatic cancer. He was 83 years old.



Kenneth J. Benner

May 15, 1937 – April 1, 2021

Born in St. Paul, MN, and raised in Madison, MN, and never lost the Midwestern ethic of helpfulness. Ken's career included working at various radio stations from small to large, including time in the engineering department at WCCO in Minneapolis MN.

He was also a chartered bus driver and an active advocate for consumer affairs. Over the years, Ken wrote hundreds of articles on broadcasting matters, consumer affairs, and more.

However, among the accomplishments in which he took the most pride, Ken played a major role in setting up the FCC approved "Alternative Broadcast Inspection Program" (ABIP). After receiving the blessing of the FCC, Ken's goal in life was helping broadcast owners remain compliant with the FCC's broadcast Rules and Regulations. Over the years, he literally inspected thousands of station, most of the time he was accompanied by his wife of 59 years, Karen.

Because Ken wanted to help as many broadcasters as possible, the cost for broadcasters was "just enough for Ken and Karen's travel expenses." Multiple States Broadcast Associations hired Ken and Karen to conduct these Alternative Broadcast Inspections. Ken served as an ABIP inspector in many states, including, Montana, Wyoming, Alaska, Iowa, Arizona, North Dakota, Nevada, Colorado, Minnesota, and Hawaii.

When visiting a station, Ken offered more than just an inspection. He was a breath of fresh air as he helped countless broadcasters look at and correct situations that might have resulted in potential fines from FCC Field Agents. Ken even provided broadcast stations with a "self checklist," prior to his visits, as well as other information, forms, and tips to help them better comply with the Rules.

On the other hand, in the event he found a potential FCC Violation, Ken would not issue a Certificate of Compliance until a station showed proof of completion of restoring authorized operation. Nevertheless, he would answer any question asked and walk broadcasters through any measures necessary for them to correct the potential violations.

MEETING KEN

My experiences – and friendship – with Ken and Karen Benner started over 25 years ago at KDSN Radio Stations in Denison.

On Ken’s very first visit to our radio stations, we realized his wealth of knowledge regarding the FCC Rules and Regulations. In fact, Ken would make an annual trip to Washington, D.C. to visit with the Federal Communications Commission Staff to stay polished as an Alternative Inspector.

The second time KDSN was selected to have an FCC Random Audit, Ken really showed his interest in helping us do what was right.

We wanted to have a lily-white report. So, after sending my FCC-requested documentation to Ken Benner to review, we received his stamp of approval and forwarded the report to the FCC. However, weeks after my report was received, I was contacted via phone indicating the Director of the FCC’s Compliance Division thought I had “potential violations.”

Stunned, I hired a Washington Communications Attorney and wasted several thousands of dollars over the next 15 months. Then, I asked Ken to accompany me to Washington D.C. so I knew where and how to answer the allegations.

During this visit, Ken sat quietly and did not speak while I explained my case. Properly prepared, my explanation was accepted, “sins were forgiven,” no fines were issued, and we received a full license renewal. Unfortunately, some in the legal fraternity did not appreciate that I accomplished this with Ken’s guidance but without further legal fees.

In his last years, as his health started to fade, Ken Benner’s devotion to the broadcast industry continued. He still would offer his Alternative Broadcast Inspections to a limited number of “Ken Benner – friendly” broadcasters, often without cost. He took phone calls from long-time clients and continued writing articles that made clear what stations needed to do, such as a [recent one on the Issues and Programs](#) report due each quarter.

A week before Ken passed away, Ken sent an email, asking for a prayer because he was diagnosed with cancer. Coupled with life sustaining organs shutting down, Ken passed away a week after notifying me of his cancer.

I hope the broadcast entities who had contracted Ken and Karen Benner’s Alternative Broadcast Inspections over the years will remember him as a broadcaster’s friend seeking to help them remain compliant with the FCC Rules and Regulations. I wish other broadcasters knew the real Ken Benner – someone they would agree earned his wings into heaven.

Ken is survived by his wife, Karen, his sister Arliss, three sons and grandchildren, and a great many friends across the country.

We would like to sincerely thank Michael Dudding – a 50-year broadcast owner/veteran – in Denison, IA for his reflections on how Ken Benner made life better for many broadcasters.

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