

We are happy to name Thom Gerretsen as the 64th inductee in the Marshfield's 150: Heroes and Leaders, Past and Present register. Thom Gerretsen was nominated by Pat Sternitzky and Mike Warren.

Thom Gerretsen is to Marshfield what Walter Cronkite was for the country – a longtime trusted voice that the public turned to when they wanted to hear about the news of the day and how it impacted them and their families personally.

For more than 21 years, central Wisconsin radio listeners would tune in to 1450 AM to get the latest news and information from the WDLB newsroom, in which Thom served as a reporter, then news director, from 1978 through 1999. He was also the producer of Marshfield's only local radio talk show, called Insight, where he would interview guests and take calls from area residents about issues and topics they cared about.

Under Thom's direction, WDLB (along with its sister stations WLJY and WOSQ) was always the go-to source for everything from local election coverage to an interview with the student who just won the school district spelling bee. Thom and his reporters covered every city council meeting and other events in the area to make sure the audience was kept informed about all the happenings in local government, as well as area civic organizations and the local school board. State and national lawmakers couldn't pass through Marshfield without being noticed either. And if you were a criminal, Thom made sure his audience knew what mischief you had been up too as well. His professional mission was to provide more local news to the community than any other station in the surrounding markets.

A native of Fox Lake, Illinois, Thom attended college at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, where he got involved in the campus radio station covering news events. He worked in local radio in Janesville and Portage before coming to Marshfield to join the Goetz Broadcasting Corporation and has remained part of the community ever since.

In addition to his local news department obligations, Thom was very active in the company's statewide radio networks. This included providing news copy and sound bites that were shared with scores of other Wisconsin radio stations to be used in their own newscasts. He also had a passion for sports and would cover Wisconsin Badgers, Milwaukee Bucks, Milwaukee Brewers and Green Bay Packers games for the network. This part of his job provided him with the rare honor of personally covering the Packers' Super Bowl appearances in 1997 and 1998.

This broadcaster has interviewed many of the nation's top dignitaries while covering events around the state, including Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, Al Gore, Hillary Clinton



and Henry Kissinger, along with every governor and U.S. Senator from Wisconsin since the 1970s. While covering sports, he has interviewed Michael Jordan, Brett Favre, Reggie White, Leroy Butler, Paul Molitor and Robin Yount, just to name a few of the biggies. And he had the opportunity to cover appearances from celebrities ranging from Paul Harvey to Alex Trebek.

After his long career working in radio, Thom tried his hand at print journalism. In May 1999, he accepted a position as regional reporter for the Marshfield News-Herald. His experience and contacts elevated him quickly to become managing editor of the daily publication in just over a year. This lasted until 2002, when he was recruited by his former broadcast colleagues to take on the role of chief editor of Wheeler News Service, which is the state's largest and most popular news wire service used by many radio stations across Wisconsin for statewide news and sports content.

Although Gerretsen retired from journalism in November 2017, someone with his passion and energy couldn't totally stay away from the public spotlight. He's made appearances on local radio and in newspaper columns over the years to bring perspective when local community leaders pass away or when a major issue of the past re-emerges in the headlines. He's also become active on social media and uses the platform to share his expertise and experiences with the community.

Thom continues to be involved with the community as a member of Kiwanis Club of Marshfield, Central Chamber Chorale, Leadership Marshfield Alumni, and Faith Lutheran Church. He is also a regular contributing writer for Hub City Times. And occasionally, you'll hear Thom's voice come out of retirement to provide color commentary on radio broadcasts of local high school football games.

In 2021, Gerretsen was inducted into the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association's Hall of Fame for his many years of service to the profession