



Ida Anding McNeil

Dakota Images

Ida Anding McNeil, born 8 September 1888 in Winona, Minnesota, moved to Pierre, South Dakota, in 1896, when her father, a steamboat engineer named Herman Anding, came to supervise the overhaul of the ferry *Jim Leighton*. Ida Anding graduated from the Pierre high school in 1906 and began working at the South Dakota Department of History, first as Doane Robinson's secretary, then as legislative reference librarian, and finally as assistant superintendent. During this time, she designed the first state flag, creating a blazing sun with the words "South Dakota—the Sunshine State" on an azure background.

In 1921, after fifteen years with the Department of History, Ida Anding resigned and married Dana McNeil, a conductor on the Chicago, Northwestern railroad. Dana McNeil owned an amateur radio station, and shortly after their marriage, Ida McNeil began broadcasting to him during his railroad runs between Rapid City and Pierre. By 1923, realizing that Dana was not her only listener, she began developing a format with regular programming, and four years later, a commercial license was granted to station KGFX. From 1935, when Pierre's full-time weather bureau closed, until 1942, Ida McNeil carried on the weather observation and data reporting because weather reports were important to local stockmen.

Ida McNeil believed strongly that the radio station should serve the community, not just provide entertainment. Even after she began selling commercial time in 1932, 70 percent of her air time was still given to public service announcements. Her most publicized program was "Hospital News." Originally dismayed, the doctors at Saint Mary's Hospital in Pierre thought it unethical to make public announcements about the status of their patients. Because of the difficulties of communication and transportation in the area, however, the hospital soon realized what a useful service it was and gave complete cooperation. In 1957, Ida McNeil was given national recognition for her service to the community when she received the *McCall's* Golden Mike Award, an annual presentation to women in radio and television. South Dakota State University recognized her as a broadcast pioneer in 1970 and in 1972 elected her to the South Dakota Broadcaster's Hall of Fame.

At age 74, Ida Anding McNeil sold KGFX and retired to Rapid City. She remained active in community affairs and organizations until her death in 1974.

by ROSEMARY EVETTS

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