

## Carl Koster – NFL Films

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

It's the Super Bowl in New Orleans. Time for the kickoff. The stadium is packed. Millions more are watching on television. Among the ones who are filming this contest is a man from rural Kansas. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Last week we learned about Carl Koster who is active in regional economic development as a city council member in his hometown of Cheney. Carl has had a fascinating career.

Carl's family has farmed near Cheney since 1891, and he still owns and manages that farmground today. As a young man, Carl was active in 4-H where he learned public speaking and parliamentary procedure. "I still call on those experiences today," Carl said.

One of his favorite 4-H projects was photography. He became the state 4-H winner in photography and went to the national 4-H Congress in Chicago.

Carl went on to K-State where he got a job as a photographer for the Collegian. "I was hired by Jim Richardson," Carl said. As previously profiled, Richardson went on to a career with National Geographic. "The Collegian was a great training ground," Carl said.

Carl had the opportunity to do his 4-H demonstration on photography at the state fair where he won a purple ribbon. That led to an invitation to appear on a Hutchinson television show, where he met the station manager. "I could use a film correspondent in Manhattan," the manager said. Carl hired on, but he had to provide his own camera equipment. "I cleaned out my savings and bought a Bell & Howell three lens film turret camera," Carl said.

The year was 1969. Penn State's football team was ranked number two in the nation, and came to Manhattan where they barely beat the Wildcats of Lynn Dickey and Vince Gibson. While filming this game, Carl met a professional cameraman from Arkansas. "This guy gets to travel the country going to football games and gets paid for it," Carl thought.

The man from Arkansas told him that the NCAA Films office was moving from DC to Wichita. Carl contacted this office and ultimately got a job helping with film. He moved back to the rural community of Cheney and worked on the farm while not doing video work. Cheney has a population of 1,807 people. Now, that's rural.

Carl was working on upgrading his camera equipment and was referred to David Marx, the general manager of NFL Films who helped him get a special lens. "What do you do when you're not shooting film?" Marx asked. "I'm a farmer," Carl replied. It turned out Marx was a farm kid from Wisconsin. "I could use a camera operator in the Midwest," Marx said. "Oh no, I'm not ready for that," Carl said.

"I later learned I was the only guy to have turned down a job offer from them," Carl said. "I think it mistakenly told him that I was a guy with common sense," he said with a smile. Later that year he met Marx in Kansas City and ran some film for him. This time he took an ongoing position as an NFL Films cameraman.

"It was the world's greatest part-time job," Carl said. He farmed during the week and ran the film camera on Sundays. For the next forty years, he would travel the nation

filming NFL football games. “I typically ran the overhead camera, tackle to tackle,” Carl said. He did regular season and playoff games and even the New Orleans Super Bowl, working with people like John Madden, Len Dawson, and Howard Cosell.

Carl enjoyed the flexibility of this position, which enabled him to farm and look after his aging parents. In 2006, the Kansas Department of Aging named him its Caregiver of the Year. “Mom made it to almost 95,” Carl said.

“I’ve had an exciting life,” he said. “The Lord’s been very good to me.”

It’s time to leave the Super Bowl, where a man from rural Kansas is running a camera for NFL Films. We salute Carl Koster for making a difference with a fascinating career and with service to his family and community. His type of service is super.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.