

KNND from A1

Reiten, who has owned the station since 2013. "Over the years, it had been remodeled, changed and fine-tuned until it was a very smoothly functioning studio."

Last year, however, the station's lease with the Odd Fellows was up and the fraternity opted to do some work on the building. After conferring with their counterparts in the Metro area, it was suggested that the rent price was unreasonably low and it should be raised to a level the group felt was more consistent with current market conditions.

"Two to three times more than what I was paying," said Reiten.

The sudden proposed price jump moved Reiten to consider other options.

At this time, Richard and Brenda Conklin, owners of the AGS Automotive building on Main Street, had been trying to sell their building since the passing of Brenda's father, the previous owner, two and a half years earlier.

"Nobody wanted to buy it," Richard said. "We tried everything to sell it and nobody would buy it."

Richard saw an opportunity and offered the building to Reiten at a greatly reduced price.

"It was the best thing I could think of, to get rid of it and let him have it," he said.

When Richard came to Reiten with the idea, Reiten was at first skeptical.

"It's been a machine shop for 60 years," said Reiten. "It's this big, open building. It stinks. It's got all this uneven concrete in the back."

The potential price jump of the Odd Fellows building, however, was a motivating push and the Conklins' proposal became more



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

KNND station owner Cameron Reiten broadcasts from his new studio at 717 E Main Street.

appealing.

"They were willing to make me a really good deal on it that was significantly under what it was appraised at because they wanted to get out from under it and they wanted someone in here who was going to stay awhile and had an appreciation for the community, I think," Reiten said.

The deal soon went through to each party's delight.

"The family's all happy that we got rid of it - we had to move on because we couldn't afford it anymore," Richard said. "It worked out for everybody, really."

The purchase was a significant move not just for the station, but for Reiten himself.

As a 16-year-old high school intern, Reiten began his career at KNND in 2003.

"I wanted to get into radio. I've always had a love for all things radio and electronics," said Reiten. "When I was a kid, I'd tear

stuff apart and put it back together and fix stuff."

Reiten's expertise with electronics is noteworthy not only in itself, but also in light of his visual impairment. Reiten was born 100 percent blind.

"Ever since I was a kid, I've strived to make that as minor of an aspect as possible," he said. "That's only a hindrance as much as you allow it to be one. ... You've got to take what you've got and work with it and make the best of it."

Reiten worked his first summer making calls and doing interviews for news segments, willing to work for free.

When Reiten graduated from Cottage Grove High School in 2005, news director Paul Schwartzberg had just bought the station from previous owners Robert and Diane O'Renck, the latter of whom is still involved with the station to this day as a marketing consultant.

Under Schwartzberg, Reiten continued working

at the station until 2013 when he purchased the station for himself.

"I think I'm the only 32-year-old that's had only one job since high school," Reiten said.

Upon his purchase of the station, Reiten also took over as host of The Beeper Show.

"It's a lot of fun for me. It can be kind of challenging sometimes," he said of the show. "You just never know what's going to come up, especially when you do open forums. What I try to provide with The Beeper Show is kind of a sounding board where the whole community can get together and talk about issues."

Though The Beeper Show is often touted as the longest-running radio talk show program in Oregon, its precise age is something of a mystery.

"I don't know exactly what date it came on the air," Reiten said. "I've tried to find out over the years, but that's just been kind of lost to time."

Overall, Reiten ascribes the station's longevity to its strong community roots and dedicated staff.

"There aren't a lot of stations that still do radio the way we do," he said. "The station overall, the people here, all of us are really emotionally invested in making this all work. Me and my whole crew, we're dedicated. We're in for the long haul. We want to give the listeners the best product we can on a daily basis."

The Move

Prior to the move to the current building, Reiten was paying two rents: one for his apartment and the other for KNND. With

the new purchase, Reiten has been able to move in directly upstairs from the station he owns.

Though the station has only moved a few blocks down Main Street, the security of owning his own home and building has made a world of difference for Reiten.

"I started thinking, I'm going to be 33 in December. I've got to start thinking about my own future here, beyond that of the radio station, to have a piece of property," he said. "You know, walking in the door I've got some equity in this thing and never again be at the mercy of a landlord that's going to say, 'Well, sorry buddy. We don't think you're paying enough rent money here.' Long-term, it's going to be a good move for the station."

The process of making the new building station-ready was a task unto itself, requiring the cleaning of an oil-stained auto parts store and construction of a studio, production room and bullpen office cubicles.

"With construction, it always takes longer than you think it will," Reiten said, shaking his head at the multitude of factors he had to get pointing in the same direction. "I would describe it as herding cats."

The project wasn't completed without help, however.

"We had a number of very generous people come out," said Reiten.

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