

Jinny Nathans: This is Jinny Nathans, AMS archivist, January 9th, 2019 in Phoenix at the AMS annual meeting. I'm here with Kevin Kloesel, who is going to tell me a story about I think maybe how you became a meteorologist?

Kevin Kloesel: Yes, the one cool thing that AMS through the years has allowed me to do is develop my passion for sports and be able to integrate that into Society professional activities. I grew up on baseball. I loved baseball. I could not understand why the soccer kids got to play if it rained, the football kids got to play if it, but rained the baseball kids, we couldn't play, right, we couldn't go out to practice, and in those days as a youth canceling afternoon baseball practice or a game was devastating, we looked forward to those activities after school. And so I have always been a lifelong baseball fan and growing up that led to my interest in meteorology. So it became a pursuit of, okay, is it going to rain tomorrow or we have a big game is it going to be canceled, and those kinds of things and so I would fret about clouds, to the point where my coaches were probably looking at the kid out there going, you know, "Kevin pay attention, stop looking up!" So if it was a flyball I was in great shape because I could see the baseball and the clouds simultaneously, it was all good. I hated ground balls, because I had to look down and that wasn't what I wanted to do.

I attended my first AMS meeting in 1993, and at that point, at least annual meeting, I had presented in AMS meetings, the sub meetings before as a grad student and things like that, but the 1993 annual meeting opened up this huge world of how many places there are to insert meteorological knowledge and the mentors through the years just have been phenomenal, the Warren Washingtons, the Bill Hookes, the Ken Crawfords, and even more recently, the Les Lemons who involved himself in this intersection of weather and venues, sports, etc. I'm thrilled that about five years ago I got to present a poster session on a baseball game that took place way back in the 1920s, but had weather impacts in such a way that there were fatalities at the baseball stadium, and how the plans that didn't exist at the time and how weather decisions were made in venues from the ability to present that paper as part of a Weather Ready Nation initiative, kind of comparing how weather ready are we now to back in the 1920s. In this space, the venue space, the event space, entertainment, sports, etc. That opportunity has now shifted my career completely from traditional academic pursuits to one where now I'm operationally involved with concert tours, with professional sports teams, with college athletics, and most importantly, baseball. All the way back to the beginnings when I was a little kid. AMS really provided the opportunity to intersect this passion of baseball with this aptitude for meteorology, and when you find that intersection of aptitude and passion, man, there's nothing like. And so AMS has very much rejuvenated the work that I do, even in my advanced age, now, so it's been fascinating.

JN: That's wonderful, that's wonderful to hear. May I ask you what was your first entry into working with a public event with weather?

KK: So the AMS conference of five years ago where I presented a poster led to the Society wanting to do a YouTube video interview of me at my poster, and they sort of felt that this was sort of a unique application of weather information to a societal problem, and then other people saw that YouTube video, and then I started getting contacted and the next thing you know I'm presenting at something called the International Association of Venue Managers, and out of that became the Event Safety Alliance and now I'm a weather lead for the Event Safety Alliance, and

the Event Safety Alliance is somewhat of the go to for entertainment venues, sporting venues, concert venues, you name it. So it was really all stemming from that one baseball poster that I presented five years ago, is where that journey began.

JN: Well that's very cool and I think probably everything went faster for you in terms of that trajectory, because of the web and YouTube.

KK: Oh, absolutely. I mean the ability to use the technological types of things that we didn't have back early on when I started my career, it's a wildfire type of thing now, and so to be able to come to this year's annual meeting and bring to the AMS crowd an individual who works for the St. Louis Cardinals who is in the Stadium Managers' Association, and to bring the preeminent venue lawyer who litigated the Indiana State Fair stage collapse case but is vice president of the event safety alliance, he was there, so having a panel of these folks and watching our Society members walk to the microphone and introduce themselves as a Cub fan or as a sports fan, you know, it's like you see this different side of the people that you rub elbows with in the Society all along and you've always known them as you know Jenny from Valparaiso, or Joe from State College or Penn State or whatever, and now suddenly it's Jenny, the Cubs fan, or Joe "I go to every Penn State football game, we lost this game because of weather, what you think about that," and so to see that different side of our Society, the human side, this has presented an avenue for me to explore how weather impacts all of those other pieces of their lives. And it's like me, right, I was a sports addict growing up, I still am, and to be able to intersect those has been fantastic.

JN: Here's my next question next year in Boston which Red Sox are you bringing?

KK: So that's a good question. We've already had that conversation, we've had the conversation about how we extend, because the feedback was like "wow I wish that would've lasted longer, we may need a whole session on that," etc. etc. I'm hopeful that maybe we can develop something, and then have folks from the Red Sox there. I think that's a very real possibility through Stadium Managers' Association. I don't know if we'll get Patriots folks there because I'm sure they'll be playing, but any sports, professional sports college sports folks from around that region, you can bet we will be in contact with.

JN: That's extremely cool. Very cool. So, so let's go back for a minute, and I have two questions. One is, are you involved or how you how are you involved with weather insurance?

KK: So directly I am not involved on the weather insurance side, but I am involved directly on the operational forecasting for these events. So at the University of Oklahoma I do the weather forecasting for every event on our campus, that's 300. You mentioned insurance, my office is in risk management. So I am working very closely with our insurance folks, although that's not my lane, but we work hand-in-hand on all of these issues. Every time we have to cancel something or move something or delay something, contractually there's some piece of that contract that's impacted, and then how is it impacted, who has to pay for it etc., our insurance folks do that, that's not my lane, but I work with them very carefully and closely.

JN: Very interesting. What I wanted to do was just to step back a little bit and though you were a big fan of sports, what led you then to go to school in meteorology and really really make it your career?

KK: When I went to school I wasn't thinking about meteorology so much, I chose my undergraduate institution, which was the University of Texas, because of engineering and I had an engineering scholarship, but as I worked my way through the program I found out that there were classes in meteorology and I was like, wow, this is right up my alley. So it sort of cemented that interest and then I had a faculty member, Dr. Lothar Koschmieder, who unfortunately passed away recently, who said Kevin, at this point in time, which was in the middle 1980s, if you want to really do this you want to be the best, and if you want to be the best you really want to go to Penn State. And so that was what I did. That became my goal, get my grades to the point where I could qualify for grad school at Penn State, I had some amazing mentors there and some amazing grad student colleagues, who were all sports fans, we all played baseball together, we all coached Little League baseball together, that camaraderie still exists today, I walked out onto the poster floor and there's one of my co-grad students and the first thing he says is "hey, coach!" So that's now 30 years down the road, but that's always stuck with us.

JN: That's wonderful. You've now gone 10 minutes, do you want to go anymore, or this is it?

KK: I'm good.