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by Larry A. Quinn



YOKLEY WINS 2019 HORIZON AWARD – Shannon Yokley (Brownfield Ag News, Jefferson City, Missouri) was named the 2019 recipient of the NAFB Horizon Award, which honors high-achieving farm broadcasters early in their careers. The Jefferson City native had not realized that her degree in science and agricultural journalism would lead her right back from where she came. Yokley grew up raising and showing livestock, with her passion focused on the Angus cattle business.

4-H and FFA were big staples in her youth. She was the first one from her Catholic high school to attend the public school's career center for agricultural education classes. Yokley served as high-school newspaper editor and freelanced for the *Jefferson City News Tribune* in her spare time.

The University of Missouri was always the school she wanted to attend; Yokley joked that her father might disown her if she went anywhere else. Her parents are alums; and her father, Wayne, made sure she never missed a Mizzou football game or alumni outing, parade, or tailgate. The College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (CAFNR) was a natural home for Yokley. When combined with her love for writing and storytelling, and her lackluster talent for math, the journalism school seemed like a great fit for her as well.

While in school, Yokley was an NAFB student member. She can recall the day she signed up for her membership from a flier on the bulletin board in the science and ag journalism lab. Involvement is important to Yokley. Some of her favorite college memories were serving as president of Sigma Alpha Professional Agricultural Sorority, being a Litton Leadership Scholar, studying abroad in France, and traveling on the Mizzou Livestock Judging Team. She was named CAFNR's Outstanding Junior in 2014.

In 2014, Yokley's cattle connections led her to Simmental producer and Brownfield's **Cyndi Young**, who was seeking an intern for the summer. She was accepted for the internship and continued to work on Fridays during her last two college semesters. While at Brownfield, Yokley received an NAFB Foundation Scholarship, which helped her in her last semester of college. When Brownfield's opening for the digital products coordinator position came open, she applied with no hesitation. She accepted Young's offer before her graduation in May 2015. Next year will mark five years for Yokley in this role.



Yokley describes her job as a lot of digital and a little radio. She manages the Brownfield website, social-media platforms, metrics reporting, client projects, video projects and editing, design work, and her AgriAmerica radio show. She also helps produce market programs such as the twice-daily Market Minute and the Weekly Livestock Market Update. Yokley also describes herself as a professional troubleshooter and problem solver.

In 2018, Yokley attended the NAFB and Friends Journey to China as the only female broadcaster. Her favorite parts of the trip were climbing as far as she could go on the Great Wall of China, experiencing the Wet Market in Guangzhou, and walking around Hong Kong and Beijing. She produced a video featuring a farmer and industry member, who both attended the trip, which won first place in NAFB's 2018 Marketcast Video Feature contest.

At the 2019 NAFB Convention, Yokley was honored with the Horizon Award. She said she shares this honor with her team and all her mentors who helped her start her career – **Cyndi Young, Meghan Grebner, Kent Faddis, and Christine Tew**, to name a few.

One of Yokley's favorite parts about NAFB is the camaraderie. With her team members including **Cyndi Young** and **Tom Steever**, she has heard many stories of the "old days" of NAFB. She enjoys hearing the wild tales of the past and looks forward to adding new chapters from NAFB's newer generation, the Young Gunz.



REFLECTIONS BY RUSS

PARKER – We invited **Russ Parker** (J.L.Farmakis, Inc., Lovilia, Iowa) to write his reflections on being chosen to receive the 2019 Dix Harper Meritorious Service Award.

*First, I have been blessed. The man who hired me, **Jack Farmakis**, told me to surround myself with good people. And that has proven to be sound advice. I have a wife (Vickie) who has stood by me through thick and thin for more than 40 years (see photo). The sales and support teams at J.L. Farmakis, Inc., have always had my back and these days, do a lot of leading too.*

Secondly, I love farm broadcasting and the personal relationships it

*offers. Local, quality ag content is a passion for me, and radio delivers that content every day. As I mentioned earlier quoting the words of my good friend **John Vasichek**, “90% of it is showing up.” Local ag radio “shows up.”*

*In my career, many people involved in farm broadcasting have had a great influence on me. Early on, my mentors included **Howard Heath, Bob Driscoll, Ed Johnson, Larry Steckline, Jim Yancy, Alan Jarand, Gary Truitt**, and several others. All had lessons for me to incorporate into my thinking from a broadcasting perspective.*

*Working with J.L. Farmakis also introduced me to people who taught me life-long lessons very early in my career about sales, including **Ira Way, Chris Czeskleba, Walter Lloyd, Bill Wernimont, Ted Haller, Dave Aeschliman, Patsy Comella**, and others.*

From a radio perspective, selling ag radio as a solution to a communications problem has always been a challenge I’ve enjoyed. Understanding people’s problems, considering the purchasing cycle, and being creative in ways to offer a solution has been something that has motivated me every day.

And to this end, NAFB has been an integral part of my career. I believe the organization has come a long way in understanding the role ag programming plays in a media mix. From the old days of the “blue sheets” to what we are able to offer today with the Planner and AMR, I think we are in a better position to present our medium in a way that can be easily incorporated into a communications plan. It will be interesting, and I think exciting, to see how the organization will be able to evolve moving forward as proof of performance on our medium continues to be a demand.

The other part of the NAFB that has great importance to me is the NAFB Foundation. Young people are our future. In the old days, Jack Farmakis would say, “Don’t worry Russ, you’ll outlive ‘em” – not so much anymore! I am honored to serve on NAFB’s Foundation Board and will strive to continue to find ways to offer young people a way to get into the business of ag broadcasting. And while we can’t be certain what the future holds, if the focus stays on serving others’ needs, then NAFB’s next steps will be good.”



CAREY MARTIN HEADS TO TEXAS – Carey Martin has packed his bags and headed west. On December 2, the long-time Louisiana farm broadcaster started a new phase of life as the general manager and farm broadcaster for the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network,

headquartered in Waco, Texas. Despite spending most of his life in his home state of Louisiana, Martin knew the time had come to make a move.

“It became clear to me a couple of years ago that I didn’t have a long-term future in Louisiana,” he said. “I needed to find a place to finish my farm broadcasting career.”

But he didn’t want to finish just anywhere. Martin was looking for just the right fit, and he found it in his neighboring state to the west.

“I’ve had a 22-year career with the Louisiana Farm Bureau and The Voice of Louisiana Agriculture Radio Network. The Texas Farm Bureau is the perfect place for me and my family to set down new roots and get a fresh start on life.”

In those 22 years with the Louisiana Farm Bureau, Martin accomplished a lot.

“I’m very proud of the work I’ve done in Louisiana,” he said. “They gave me the freedom to pursue several new ideas and watch them grow into successful ventures.”

One of those ideas was to start a completely new farm radio network. In 1997, Martin founded the Louisiana Farm Bureau Radio Network and grew it into the top-rated farm network in the state. Several years later, that network was merged with the Louisiana Agri-News Network to eventually become The Voice of Louisiana Agriculture Radio Network.

“I also had the fun of launching a new website and companion e-newsletter four years ago,” Martin said. “That was quite an adventure because I was somewhat digitally challenged.”

The website and newsletter have continued to grow into one of the top digital news sources for news about Louisiana agriculture.

“I also did a lot of experimenting with podcasting, which is an exciting field of growth for farm broadcasters,” he added.

In his new position, Martin will be responsible for the daily operation of the Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network, producing farm programming and maintaining relationships with the network’s 65 affiliated radio stations.

“I’m really looking forward to the new challenge,” he said. “We already have a great staff of farm broadcasters and communications specialists here at Texas Farm Bureau. I hope that I can maintain the level of excellence that is here and start to build upon it.”

The only downside to taking a new job is packing up and moving, something Martin is currently in the middle of doing.

“Moving during the holidays is no fun!” he said. “But it will be worth it. We’re looking forward to becoming Texans.” Martin will be moving with his wife of 29 years, C.J., and their 14-year-old daughter, Mary. They have another daughter, Molly, 20, who works for Disney World in Orlando, Florida. They also have three sons. James, 18, and Calen, 22, are both students at

Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, while their son Cody, 25, works for the East Baton Rouge Parish Library System.



ZORTMAN HIGHLIGHTS HIS 53-YEAR BROADCASTING CAREER – Bill Zortman

(KELO/KELQ, Sioux Falls, South Dakota) grew up as a farm kid in Onawa, Iowa, feeding sheep, hogs, and cattle with his family.

“I started writing for my hometown newspapers, and my writings won me a Hearst-Mills Scholarship to the University of Iowa.”

After two years as a Hawkeye, he left school to work for a small-town radio station for 16 weeks before moving on to KTIV-TV in Sioux City, where he did the morning news and live

weather in front of a map (not a green wall). That was in 1967. In January 1968, Zortman’s Air Guard Unit was called to active duty.

“While many went to Vietnam and Korea, 125 of us went to Clovis, New Mexico.”

He lived in the south for 31 years before returning to the Midwest in August 2000. In January 1970, Zortman was hired as the Man in Motion for KVII-TV in Amarillo, Texas. His job was to cover the area from Lubbock, Texas, to Liberal, Kansas, from Sayre, Oklahoma to Clovis, Tucumcari, and Clayton, New Mexico. He created a stringer system of individuals who would report and film local news events.

“In two years, I had 40 contributors who had bought their own cameras and served as our Pro News area reporters. When I arrived in Amarillo, we had only 7 percent of the news audience. It made **Stanley Marsh III**, who owned the station very happy that by the time I left in August 1980 to go to sister station KVIA-TV in El Paso, that we had reached nearly 70 percent of the audience.”

While in Amarillo, he had a chance to become a farm reporter (standing in the wheat fields of the Texas Panhandle); and in more than two years, he produced six or seven reports for **Orion Samuelson**.

“I learned to love doing the stories, seeing them on the national stage, and becoming somewhat of a farm reporter. I became one of the last UPI Texas Broadcasters Association Presidents. I hosted one of the statewide debates that elected the first Republican governor in modern times in the Lone Star State.”

In 1984, Zortman was hired as vice president of news operations for Beam Communications. It was at WDAM-TV in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. His duties included news supervision not only there but also in Tuscaloosa, Alabama; Traverse City, Michigan; and Yuma, Arizona. In 1993, he became news director of WAKA-TV in Montgomery, Alabama. The CBS Affiliate was licensed to Selma, as well.

“All along the way, I was involved in news, farm news, politics, and community affairs,” he said. “We decided in 1995 to do an anniversary on the march from Selma to Montgomery on Bloody Sunday. I organized and anchored a two-hour show from Selma with those on both sides that were a part of the unforgettable march.”

Next, he was sent to Sioux Falls to take over as general manager of KSFY-TV until a new manager could be hired.

“After I got here, they really wanted me to stay, but I opted to go back to Montgomery and eventually was dispatched to Knoxville, Tennessee, to set up a Fox News newscast inside the CBS Station’s newsroom.”

However, Zortman did return to South Dakota where for two years he ran the Nakota Red Cross Chapter for Nebraska and South Dakota. During that time, 911 happened.

“Virtually, all the funds we were raising were going to New York and Washington, D.C. When they ran out of money, I decided to turn to real estate.

Along the way, I was asked to do a talk show for KELO-AM radio. It would be a business show. Later, a farm show was added; and today, I’ve done almost 2,800 shows. With my time in news, it was different to be a business and farm advocate. I’m still a businessman (real-estate agent) doing a business show. With my farm background, it’s easy to be an advocate for agricultural organizations and work on bringing them together. I’ve done my show from Washington, D.C., on a manufacturing trip to Kentucky, from NAFB, and from farm shows in

Iowa, Minnesota, and the Dakotas. It's not about me. It's about our guests and what they need to know and how our listeners can understand issues a little better. Agriculture secretaries in the Dakotas, Minnesota, Iowa, and Nebraska talk with us. We use farmers doing live reports in combines and planters. I ride along for planting and harvesting, too. In addition, we promote Groundworks in South Dakota. Today, they have 6,000 fourth graders who tour farms online. The FFA of South Dakota shares its leaders with community events. We have planned some broadcast training I'll do with those leaders in 2020."

The Sioux Falls Area Chamber has a leadership class each year. This year, the 32 members of the class will join Zortman for a live interview on his ag or business show. They are becoming his correspondents for the show.



"You might be surprised how much the businesses and those going through the class appreciate the opportunity to communicate with us and their own companies."

At a time when much of our communications today is left- or right-biased, it is nice to do a show that allows me to be an advocate for agriculture and business. In my show, I'm fortunate to include two farm directors with Midwest Communications: **Rick Shields** in Kalamazoo, Michigan (who worked with me in the Texas Panhandle), and **Sarah Heinrich** with KFGO in Fargo, North Dakota.

I've been in the business since 1966; and even at 73, I enjoy being able to make a difference and define what my hour-long shows are. If you are going to be an advocate, why not agriculture? Why not business? Why not something that can make a difference," Zortman concluded.

Zortman's wife, **Carolyn**, retired this year after 43 years as a GI nurse.

"Carolyn and I have three kids, 10 grandkids, and two great grandkids. Along the way, we helped build and serve on seven parish councils. We can say our prayers were answered!"

NEBRASKA RURAL RADIO ASSOCIATION TO ACQUIRE SEVEN ADDITIONAL STATIONS – The only farmer-and-rancher-owned radio association is expanding its reach. The Nebraska Rural Radio Association (NRRRA) has reached an agreement to purchase seven additional radio stations in Nebraska. Legacy Communications has agreed to the deal, which includes six stations in the Scottsbluff market and one station in Holdrege.

“We are very excited to add these stations to our other 10 stations and translators across the State of Nebraska,” NRRRA Chief Operating Officer **Tim Marshall** said. “I appreciate how Legacy Communications worked with us on this project.

“The sale includes KMOR (93.3 FM), KETT (99.3 FM), KOZY (101.3 FM), KHYY (106.9 FM), KOAQ (690 AM), and KOLT (1320 AM) in Scottsbluff, and KUVR (1380 AM) and translator 96.9 FM in Holdrege.

“There are still some details to work out but, we are excited to be moving forward,” NRRRA Chief Executive Officer **Craig Larson** said.

The NRRRA has begun operating the stations under a local marketing agreement with Legacy while waiting for the Federal Communications Commission to approve the sale later this year. The association is the only radio group in the nation owned by a cooperative of farmers and ranchers. Along with flagship station KRVN in Lexington, other NRRRA stations include KNEB in Scottsbluff, KTIC in West Point, KAMI in Cozad, and KAWL/Max County in York. In addition to the radio stations, the NRRRA has production studios on the Nebraska Innovation Campus in Lincoln. The NRRRA-owned Rural Radio Network reaches six states with additional affiliates in Chadron, Sidney, Nebraska City, Beatrice, and Fairbury.

WE WANT YOUR NEWS – Send us your stories and photos for future newsletter issues. Contact Larry Quinn at larryquinn@outlook.com or phone at **703-819-6532**. *Airing on the Side of Agriculture* is included in the blog section of NAFB.com. For an archive copy of any past issues, go to **Membership** and click on ***Airing on the Side of Agriculture***.

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