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by Larry A. Quinn



BRUNKER TO RECEIVE 2019 NAMA AWARD – Bob Brunker (J.L. Farmakis, Inc.; NAFB Management and Sales Council member) is receiving the 2019 National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA) Professional Development Award (PDA) of Excellence at this year’s NAMA Fall Conference, October 7-9, in St. Louis, Missouri.

The NAMA PDA awards honor members of the organization based on outstanding achievement in each of its professional development areas — sales, marketing communications, and public relations.

This year, NAMA recognizes Brunker, who is regional director of sales and marketing for J.L. Farmakis, Inc., in the sales category; **Douglas Reynolds**, marketing and digital communications leader for the United States Region for Corteva Agriscience, in the marketing communications area; and **Hannah Thompson-Weeman**, vice president of communications for the Animal Agriculture Alliance, in the public relations category.

NAMA noted Brunker is a respected and trusted sales professional who values relationships. He genuinely cares about clients and peers and is a resource for media buyers, planners, marketing executives, and coworkers. Brunker’s dedication to people over the past 15 years has helped lead to a three-time increase in business for J.L. Farmakis, Inc. NAFB Executive Director **Tom Brand** and Marketing & Communications Manager **Erin Nash** will attend the awards ceremony during the 2019 NAMA Fall Conference to represent the association.



GRAY JOINS NAFB RANKS – Shannon Gray (AlphaMedia USA, Amarillo, Texas) returns to KGNC-AM as the agribusiness news director, bringing previous knowledge and experience to the AlphaMedia team. Gray grew up in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, where she was exposed to diverse pastimes that included basketball, camping, and learning to play musical instruments.

She loved music and played trumpet throughout high school. Eventually, she followed that passion into her college career; in 2008, she attended West Texas A&M University (WTAMU) in Canyon, Texas, on a music scholarship. Music was always at the heart of her studies.

“My chair in grade school would always get moved because I talked too much to my classmates! And that really never changed,” Gray said.

While attending WTAMU, Gray realized she could use her communication abilities in a career and changed majors. In 2013, she graduated with a BA in mass communication.

Gray got her first job in radio as the receptionist for The Amarillo Radio Group. The ag news director at the time saw Gray was interested in ag and had some first-hand experiences that could lend themselves to farm broadcasting.

Before long, she was working as the ag news assistant for KGNC AM in Amarillo, Texas (2014-2016). Gray left farm broadcasting for a few years to pursue other opportunities but always felt that radio was her true calling. In July 2019, she was hired once again by KGNC AM, only this time she was brought on as the agribusiness



news director.



ROBINSON'S ROUTE TO BROADCASTING CAREER –

Tom Robinson (KSOM, Atlantic, Iowa) took a different route than most when entering the field of broadcasting. He grew up on a grain and livestock farm. In 1978, he headed to the University of Iowa as an education major.

“I was about halfway through when I married my high school sweetheart, and we returned to the family farm. I spent 19 years on the farm where my wife and I raised four children,” he said. “Selling cattle at the Omaha Stockyards is one of my fondest memories as a child and as a young cattle feeder.”

In the early '80s, the cattle industry began to change direction. Feedlots became much larger, direct selling to the packer became mainstream, and the Omaha

Stockyards went away. About that time, Robinson realized that broadcasting was his real passion.

“During my farming career, I volunteered as the public-address announcer at home football games and provided the local radio station with game wrap-ups afterwards. In the fall of 1998, I began broadcasting high-school football games as a color commentator on KJAN Radio. The turning point came the following spring after covering the state high-school wrestling tournament. I remember getting into the car and looking at my wife and telling her that I was going to make a career change.”

Two months later, KSOM Radio hired Robinson as its sports director and afternoon D.J. KSOM was a 100,000-watt FM country music station based in Atlantic. One year later, he was offered the job as news director and, eventually, farm broadcasting was added to his duties.

“I have covered numerous ag stories over the years. The most memorable was in December 2003 when BSE was diagnosed in a Holstein cow in Washington state. Many sale barns cancelled activity. However, one sale barn owner in the Cass County town of Massena plunged forward. The house was packed, and most of the people were there to watch. The cattle sold. I recall a young cow/calf producer sitting next to me. He exclaimed, ‘Did you hear the sigh of relief coming from everyone in this barn?’”

Robinson also covered numerous stories when the bird flu broke in 2015.

“I’ve walked through fields with agronomists, interviewed politicians, farmers, and FFA youth, and I’ve told the stories of Hall of Fame cattlemen. I have met so many interesting people in the

farming industry and learned from them along the way. Agriculture is the most critical industry in this great country. I am proud to tell its story.”

Robinson has worked with KSOM Radio for 20 years. He is a member and past president of the Iowa Broadcast News Association (IBNA), and he has won IBNA awards in farm and business reporting, news coverage, sports coverage, and weather coverage. He continues to do play-by-play announcing for high-school sports, and he hosts a coaches show on Saturday mornings. Robinson gathers and produces a newscast at the top of every hour from 6 a.m. to 12:50 p.m., and he provides a market report every hour up until 1 p.m.



“I have been married to my wife, Lori, for 40 years, and we have four children (who are all married) and eight grandchildren. I am getting up in age, but I still have the drive and the passion for this craft,” Robinson concluded.

WEDDING BELLS RING FOR NAFB COUPLES

Rachel Hafla & Russell Nemetz



On August 24, 2019, **Russell Nemetz** and **Rachel Hafla** were married in Billings, Montana. “It was a beautiful day, and the ceremony took place at the Hilands Golf Club,” Nemetz said. The newlyweds met more than 10 years ago at a hair salon where Hafla worked. Nemetz said she wasn’t his hair mechanic, but over time he became brave enough to ask her out on a date. As they say, the rest is history. What made their wedding day even more special was that their children **Isabelle**, 4, and **Tyler**, 18, participated by serving as a bridesmaid and a groomsman for their parents. The couple plans to stay in Billings where Nemetz produces ag programming for the Evan Slack Network, Ag Information Network of the West, Montana Television Network, NCBA’s *Cattlemen to Cattlemen*, *This Week in AgriBusiness*, and RFD-TV. Hafla owns and operates It’s a Bella Hair Design.

Sabrina Hill & Rusty Halvorson



Sabrina Hill and **Rusty Halvorson** were married in an intimate wedding with family and close friends September 28, 2019. Hill is from central California and now lives in Fargo, North Dakota. She is a reporter for the American Ag Network and Dakota News Network and is a nationally recognized public speaker. Halvorson is originally from Williston, North Dakota, and has lived in Fargo for the past 25 years. He is the farm news director for the American Ag Network. The pair met in 2015 while each was reporting at the Commodity Classic in Phoenix. He was reporting for the American Ag Network, and she was reporting for her previous employer, AgNet West of California. Hill is the

daughter of **Len Wilcox** of Sanger, California, and **Suzanne DeMarco** of Las Cruces, New Mexico. Halvorson is the son of **Lee Halvorson** of Rolette, North Dakota, and **Jan Follman Halvorson** of Williston.

Shannon Higgins & Michael Kennedy



Shannon Higgins (NAFB Events Manager) and **Michael Kennedy** met at a conference in Indianapolis when they were both working in higher education. After the conference, Kennedy reached out several times to get to know Higgins. “I would respond politely without spurring the conversation further. I was much too focused on my career to even think about dating. A year later, I had made an industry and career shift and was getting ready to move to Georgia when Michael reached out again,” Higgins said. “I remember thinking, ‘What the heck. I’m moving so there’s no harm in talking just a little.’” The rest is history. After a year in a long-distance relationship, they both moved to Kansas City to put down roots together. “By early 2018, I knew a proposal was coming — but when? After a long week putting on the 2018 NAFB Convention, Michael surprised me with the proposal and an engagement party with family and friends on Sunday, November 11. I like to joke that he strategically planned the proposal for when I’d be too tired to be suspicious. Since the engagement, we bought our first house and adopted our first ‘child’ (a German Shepherd puppy named Keva). It’s been a whirlwind of a year. We’re looking forward to celebrating our January 2020 wedding in Kansas City followed by a long, relaxing honeymoon in Jamaica!”

Megan Ternquist & Tanner Overby



The love story of **Megan Ternquist** (Red River Farm Network, Grand Forks, North Dakota) and her fiancé **Tanner Overby** started in the streets of Binford, North Dakota. Labeled as the “Biggest Little Town in ND,” the town hosts a professional bull-riders event every June. Neither are exactly sure how they ended up talking, but they are sure glad they stumbled into one another. The two drove around after the bull ride to check out the crop, disagreeing about the supposed “waist-high” corn with Overby testing Ternquist’s knowledge of every small grain field along the road. Little did he know he was talking to a born-and-raised farm gal. Needless to say, their future date nights involved romantic tractor rides in the hayfield and long walks through mud-filled pens chasing cows. The couple’s

future changed forever on a frigid, minus-30°F North Dakota day in January 2019. Ternquist was in New Orleans for the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association convention when she received a message from Overby’s brother: Tanner was preparing to feed cows by greasing the feed wagon when both of his hands became entangled in a chain. He was life-flighted to St. Paul, and Ternquist rushed there to be by his side. From that moment on, the two knew life would never be the same, and they became closer than ever. Next, fast forward to August 2019. After 13 surgeries, a month-long stay in the hospital, and countless follow-up appointments later, Overby is back to a semi-normal life back on the farm. And now, jump forward a few more months to August: it was a typical Friday after work for Ternquist, who was helping Overby haul hay. The first load had already been unloaded, but for some reason Overby needed help with the next. With an uncertain look on her face, Ternquist agreed to help and walked around the truck to find Overby down on one knee, proposing marriage. She said, “YES!” and the rest is history. The couple will wed in June 2020 and plan to make their home on the Overby farmstead near Binford.

Carah Hart & Nick Wold



Red River Farm Network farm broadcaster **Carah Hart** met fiancé and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) train conductor **Nick Wold** during a co-ed softball league game in Grand Forks, North Dakota. They also were neighbors. After two years of dating, Nick proposed on the softball field after a game. The couple will be married October 11, 2019, in Two Harbors, Minnesota. The photo was taken in a local farmer's soybean field. And here's a fun fact: That farmer-listener and his wife introduced Hart and Wold.

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***.