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by Larry A. Quinn



KELLY LENZ TRADES MIC FOR FISHING ROD – Kelly Lenz (WIBW and the Kansas Ag Network, Topeka, Kansas) retired from farm broadcasting in August after eight years in Illinois and 41 in Kansas.

“I love talking to farmers and ranchers each morning, and I will miss having coffee with them every morning. My wife, Mary (with Lenz in the photo), now enjoys coffee and breakfast in bed nearly every morning unless I'm fishing,” Lenz said.

“I know Kelly’s planning on representing the station and network on some upcoming trips, and he says he’ll also continue on-the-air backing up **Greg Akagi** and **Dan Johnson** from time to time,” said NAFB Executive Director **Tom Brand**.

“I love the ag broadcasting industry, but I believe our legacy is not how many awards we've received or how many states or countries we have traveled,” Lenz added. “It's about how well you have served your audience. What have you done to serve your listeners?”

Lenz considers **Glenn Brunkow**, Pottawatomie County farmer and rancher, a great friend.

“I'll let his words speak for themselves,” Lenz concluded.

Tribute to Kelly Lenz by Glen Brunkow

There are very few constants in life, but the one thing that remained constant for me growing up and into adulthood was the morning show on WIBW with ag programming brought to our house by Kelly Lenz. I grew up eating breakfast while learning about the latest in ag news and notes, not just occasionally but every morning. He was almost like one of the family.

That was why I paused for a moment when Kelly announced he was retiring after 41 years on the radio. That was four decades of farm crisis, weather, embargoes, tariffs, and a few good times mixed in, all described by the warm, familiar voice coming across the radio on our counter. Mornings meant coffee, eggs, and Kelly.

When I was an Extension agriculture agent, one of my best moments came the first time Kelly asked me to be on *Ag Issues*. I felt like I had arrived. The truth of the matter was Kelly was a huge supporter of Extension, and he was always willing to help promote meetings or get timely information out to our producers. I also had the privilege of hosting several meetings with Kelly, and I always felt like my time with him was like being at the feet of a guru.

When I left Extension to farm, I wondered if he would remember who I was. After all, he met so many people over the years, and most were far more memorable or important than me. Much to my surprise, the first time I saw him after my career change not only did he know me but he cared about what I had been up to. That never changed over time. The secret to Kelly's success was that he was one of us – a farm boy from Iowa – and that was something he never forgot. He knew what it was like to get up way before dawn on a bitter cold morning to milk cows or to sit on a tractor seat in the blistering August heat. He understood pouring your heart and soul into the farm because that is what he did every morning in his studio.

I have known few who were as knowledgeable about such a wide array of topics involving agriculture. Farmers and ranchers were Kelly's audience, and he kept us informed. It's going to be hard for me to imagine the airwaves without Kelly. No one outside of a dairy farmer has more richly earned the right to sleep late. Although like most retired dairy farmers, I suspect Kelly will still wake up long before the sun each morning out of habit.

My friend, I hope you understand just how much you have contributed and improved agriculture in Kansas and, more importantly, how much we appreciated it. I hope you enjoy a long, happy retirement. It is well-deserved.

TOM RITER HONORED BY SOUTH DAKOTA STOCKGROWERS – WNAX

(Yankton, South Dakota) farm broadcaster **Tom Riter** was presented the Media Friend Award at the 128th Annual Stockgrowers Convention and Trade Show, October 31-November 1, 2019, in Rapid City, South Dakota.

“Tom has been a real friend and ardent supporter of the South Dakota Stockgrowers,” said Executive Director **James Halverson**. “He carries our message accurately and often calls us to get our take on current issues.”



Growing up in Rock Rapids, Iowa, Riter has always had an affinity for agriculture.

“My grandpa always wanted to farm, but being the youngest of 12 siblings, he wasn’t going to inherit any land,” Riter said. “So instead, he became a lawyer. However, he never lost his love of agriculture. Some of my fondest memories are when he would drive me out in the country just to look at the corn fields. Later in life, he purchased some farm ground and pursued his dream.”

Riter and his two brothers now own that farm ground near Rock Rapids today.

Riter has been in broadcasting for 38 years.

“I started out as a nighttime DJ at KORN radio in Mitchell in 1981, and at that time, we were using turntables,” he said.

After some time in Mitchell, he went on to be the farm director for a station in Aberdeen and then Greeley, Colorado, for eight years. WNAX in Yankton, South Dakota, was the next leg of his lengthy broadcasting career.

“I came back to the area with WNAX and went to Sioux Falls briefly and then have been in Yankton with WNAX since 1999. I’ve done a little bit of everything in my career,” Riter said. “I’ve been the news director, farm director, sports play-by-play, night DJ, just about everything you can think of.”

When asked about what keeps him going after so many years, Riter says it’s the people. He loves the people he gets to talk to and still has a passion for agriculture.

“I enjoy coming into work. I work with some amazing people like **Michelle Rook** and **Jerry Oster**. We have a great station, and with our signal strength, we can promote agriculture to as many as seven states.”

His joy for his work shines through in his day-to-day.

“Tom has a huge heart,” Halverson added. “He’s just one of those people who lifts others up and is a joy to talk to every time I get the chance.”

After a storied 38-year career, Riter doesn’t plan on slowing down anytime soon.

“I’m going to keep doing what I am as long as they’ll let me,” he said.

He also is an active member of the Calvary Baptist Church and their Missions Committee. He has one son who lives near Yankton and enjoys family time, as well.



RILEY’S ROAD TO FARM BROADCASTING – Despite working in communications, **Kaitlyn Riley’s** (WI Farm Report Radio Network, La Crosse, Wisconsin) road to farm broadcasting was better described by the shoes on her feet than with words. Sporting a pair of work boots, Riley learned firsthand the passion and work ethic of farmers growing up on her family’s registered Jersey farm in Gays Mills, Wisconsin. She was not sure what career path her feet would follow until she was a senior in high school, recording a radio advertisement for June Dairy Month.

“I will never forget when our local radio legend in Prairie du Chien, **Norb Aschom**, turned to me and said, ‘You have a voice for broadcast.’”

Leaving her barn boots behind, Riley studied strategic communications and broadcast journalism at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

“I wanted to combine my walks of life and share the story of how agriculture unites us all,” Riley said. “We are impacted by the industry whenever we eat, dress, or even drive. It is certainly an inspiring story to tell.”

In college, she held officer positions with the Association of Women in Agriculture and Badger Dairy Club. She also founded the university’s first agricultural radio talk show, AgChat. After graduating with honors in May 2014, Riley served as the 48th Wisconsin Fairest of the Fairs, a one-year ambassador who promotes entertainment and agritourism opportunities throughout the state.

Riley’s start in broadcasting was as the farm news director at WPRE-WQPC Radio in Prairie du Chien, where she had the chance to work with and learn from Norb Aschom. She later became a multimedia journalist for WQOW News 18 in Eau Claire.

“Wearing high heels, I did everything from covering local events to interviewing **Donald Trump** during his candidacy for president,” Riley said. “However, the most memorable stories were those that required the pink rubber boots I kept under my desk, the stories that introduced me to farmers.”

In May 2017, Riley dusted off her barn boots and returned to the family farm where she managed calf and heifer care. She continued her work in communications by freelance writing for *Hoard’s Dairyman* and volunteering with agricultural organizations such as the Crawford County Dairy Promoters, Crawford County Livestock Camp Committee, and Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation.



Looking for a chance to expand her understanding of agriculture’s diversity, Riley applied for the position of Alice in Dairyland, a one-year, full-time public relations professional employed by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection. As the 71st Alice, she walked in the shoes of those producing dairy, cranberries, ginseng, mink, ethanol, and more. Riley attended nearly 350 events to deliver tailored speeches, educate urban and rural audiences, and answer media inquiries pertaining to Wisconsin agriculture.

Riley was inspired by the people she met as Alice, so it was no surprise she accepted a position as the farm news director at the WI Farm Report Radio Network in La Crosse to give a voice to the industry. Now back in radio, she is often reminded that it does not matter what shoes are on her feet, but she enjoys staying on

her toes to learn from **Pam Jahnke** and **Bob Bosold** as they work to grow the Mid-West Farm Report.

“It is my honor to become a member of NAFB and network with members who have walked more miles in the industry than I have so I can better serve our producers in agriculture,” Riley said.

WJBC BROADCASTER JOINS NAFB – Marc Strauss is the host of the Ag Hour on WJBC Radio in Bloomington, Illinois. The show airs weekdays from Noon to 1 p.m. Strauss delivers the latest ag news, commodity reports, and live interviews covering everything from ag tech to segments about McLean County ag history.

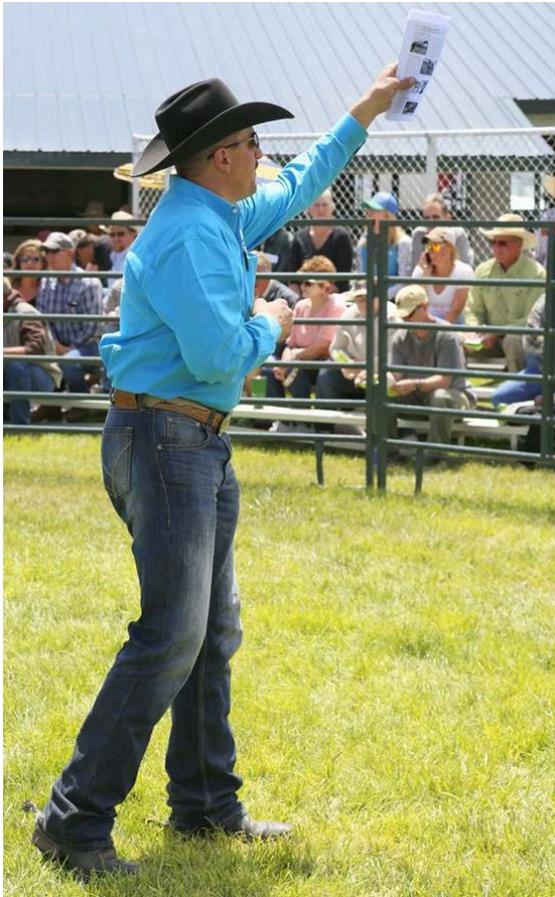
Strauss joined WJBC in 2017 after more than 30 years as an award-winning TV sports anchor and reporter at WEEK-TV, the NBC affiliate in Peoria, Illinois. While there, he also had the opportunity to do some ag reporting.



Prior to that he worked in radio at WTSO in Madison, Wisconsin, where he was the play-by-play voice of the University of Wisconsin hockey team. Strauss started in broadcasting as a high-school student at Lindenwood University’s KCLC-FM in St. Charles, Missouri. Also, he worked at KSD Radio and served as an intern in the sports department of KMOX Radio, both also in St. Louis. Strauss grew up in the “Gateway City” area and attended Lindenwood University.



MANY JOB HATS LED SCHWAB TO BROADCASTING – Andy Schwab (Northern Ag Network, Billings, Montana) grew up in Powell, Wyoming, on a small farm that produced race horses. He learned to ride horses, hunt, fish, and take pack trips to the backcountry at a very young age. He has yet to lose the passion. Through his high school years at Powell, he competed in sports and FFA, and he started his own farrow-to-finish hog business. He would add many hats to wear after graduation as he jumped right into the work force, oftentimes holding two to three jobs at a time.



For nearly 10 years, Schwab’s main vocation was working in the retail world for a local co-op and farm-and-ranch store. In that time, he would also add job experiences from the Wyoming Game and Fish as a technician and the U.S. Forest Service as a backcountry trail crew foreman, spending three seasons with each department. He also became a bartender for a local steakhouse in Cody, Wyoming, for three summers to prevent any boredom from setting in. But, his favorite hat was that from an auction business he started on his own and continues to operate after self-teaching himself how to be an auctioneer.



“It’s the one job that has taught me how to use my

voice properly, and opened a lot of new doors, including the door to Northern Ag Network and sports broadcasting,” Schwab said.

In May 2019, Schwab joined the Northern Ag Network as an ag broadcaster. One of his first interviews on-air was with Wyoming Governor **Mark Gordon** while attending a mid-year conference held by Wyoming Stockgrowers Association.

WE WILL MISS “TALL PAUL” ALEXANDER – “Tall Paul” has retired after more than 45 years greeting guests coming to the Westin Crown Center, Kansas City, Missouri. In fact, he was there to greet the first guests at the Westin when it opened in 1973. Alexander was with the Harlem Globetrotters prior to his hospitality career with Westin. He was a well-known host for local and out-of-town visitors. Since NAFB has been a longtime patron of the Westin for its annual convention, many members have an enduring friendship with him. “Tall Paul” is shown here with **Susan Littlefield**, 2015 NAFB President, and with grandchildren of NAFB Operations Director **Susan Tally**.



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***.