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by Larry A. Quinn

SAMUELSON MARKS 60-YEAR ON-AIR CAREER AT WGN RADIO — As **Orion Samuelson** (WGN, Chicago, Illinois) retires at the end of December, he will set a record for the longest on-air tenure of a broadcaster at the same station.

“In 1960, I arrived at WGN, where I have been ever since, doing daily radio and adding the weekly television show syndicated on TV stations across the country,” Samuelson said.

“During my career, I have interviewed 23 Secretaries of Agriculture, four of them were ‘acting’ Secretaries. I traveled with several of them, both internationally and domestically. My travels took me to 44 countries, including 10 times to China and four times to Russia. I traveled with **Secretary Dan Glickman** in my only trip around-the world. Don’t ask me to name my favorite Agriculture Secretary because I respected and enjoyed them all.



“I also had the opportunity to interview eight Presidents, and I would share this story about my experience with John F. Kennedy. While I was working in Green Bay, Wisconsin, in 1960, prior to moving to Chicago, then-**Senator John F. Kennedy** was running against **Richard Nixon**. Senator Kennedy made a campaign stop in Green Bay. I attended his briefing at a news conference. During the conference, I asked two questions about dairy policy.

“As the conference ended, one of his aides approached me and asked if I would have a few minutes to talk to the Senator about dairy legislation. So, I sat with Senator Kennedy at the hotel bar, sipping a Scotch, and we discussed dairy farming, because they did little of that in Massachusetts.

“A follow up to that story: I was doing my noon radio show on WGN in November 1963 and, sadly, broadcast the bulletin that President Kennedy had been shot in Dallas.”



“The only President that invited me into the White House for an extended interview was **President George H.W. Bush,**” Samuelson said.



“In my travels, I had the opportunity to meet and shake hands with **Fidel Castro** and **Mikhail Gorbachev,** as well as the Prime Minister of India and the President of Taiwan,” he added.



Samuelson and **Pam Minick** also co-hosted live TV coverage of the Tournament of Roses Parade.

At the beginning of his career, Samuelson said he dropped out of the University of Wisconsin after three months because they were not teaching him how to be a radio announcer.

“Then, I enrolled at the American Institute of the Air in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Six months later, I was working at my first radio job at WKLJ in Sparta, Wisconsin, a 1,000-watt day-timer, where I was a polka disc jockey. It was the summer of 1952. The station was 17 miles from the farm where I grew up, so I would milk cows at 5 a.m., and then drive to the station. Before going to WGN, I worked at three Wisconsin radio stations.



“When I wrote my book, I titled it, *You Can’t Dream Big Enough* because I preface my background remarks at speaking appearances with the opening line: ‘Who could ever imagine that a cow milker from Wisconsin could have a street in Chicago named after him, travel as I have, met so many interesting people, and worked with so many gifted broadcasters, especially my partner and friend of 42 years, **Max Armstrong?**’”

“When they speak about Orion and his career, most people focus on his great voice, his signature delivery, and his knowledge of agriculture. But I would tell you, as the person who has worked with him longer than anyone, Orion’s

tremendous work ethic has also been key to his success. “He is tireless in his pursuit of making that connection with farmers and ranchers and their consumers. His drive to do the job, and to do it right, has guided him throughout his career,” Armstrong said.

“As his partner for more than four decades, I would also tell you that Orion is one of the most even-tempered individuals you could ever work with. In a rapid-pace business with hourly deadlines, this guy has been unflappable. Orion has set the bar so high for the rest of us. And, for that we owe him our eternal gratitude,” Armstrong concluded.



DEHN JOINS NAFB BROADCAST COUNCIL — Meghan Dehn (Farm Director, KMZU/KRLI, Carrollton, Missouri) is a new NAFB Broadcast Council member.

She was raised in Polo, Missouri, on her family's Angus ranch.

"My passion in agriculture started when I was little, and I showed heifers, steers, and market lambs at the local, state, and national levels. I served several office positions in my local 4-H and FFA chapters. I attended Stephens College in Columbia, Missouri, graduating with a degree in marketing, advertising, and public relations. Also, I played volleyball at Stephens College.

"While attending school, I had the opportunity to take several food sciences courses where I started my career in the agriculture industry.

After graduation, I worked at the Missouri Department of Agriculture as the northwest Missouri district meat and poultry inspector. For the past seven years, I worked as account development manager at CH Robinson in the Kansas City office.

"There was an opportunity to work as the farm director with KMZU/KRLI in June, and I jumped right on it to get back in the agriculture scene."

Dehn is living in Emma, Missouri, with her husband, **Scott Dehn**, and their Australian Shepherd dog, **Jade**.

"I enjoy attending livestock events in my free time, helping my husband on the farm, and golfing. My favorite part of the farm is watching the new baby calves being born each season," Dehn added.

ORWIG ANNOUNCES AGENCY RETIREMENT — From chapter FFA reporter to chairman of one of the most highly respected communications agencies in agriculture, **Lyle Orwig** (Allied Industry Council member, Hartland, Wisconsin) has left an indelible mark on hundreds of ag companies and professionals. The well-known ag communicator recently announced his retirement from the agency he co-founded with John Charleston in 1992 — then known as Charleston | Orwig and since rebranded as C.O.nxt.

Over a 28-year span, Orwig guided the agency’s growth, leading strategic communications, branding campaigns, reputation management, and corporate social responsibility programs for many agricultural and food companies. Along the way, he was a mentor and guide for anyone who worked with or for the agency.



Photo: Lyle Orwig received the Dix Harper Meritorious Service Award from NAFB in 2006.

In introducing himself, Orwig often says he was born and raised on an Illinois farm, but “I’ve yet to grow up.” That Illinois farm near Kankakee, Illinois, kicked off his passion for farmers, agriculture, FFA, and the University of Illinois.

“My communications career started as the Greenhand FFA reporter at Clifton Central High School,” Orwig recalled. “As a sophomore, I was elected chapter reporter and started sharing FFA news with local radio stations and newspapers. In the summer, one of the weekly newspapers hired me to cover the county fair, which led me to becoming the school correspondent for *The Kankakee Daily Journal*.”

Attending a state workshop for chapter FFA reporters opened Orwig’s eyes to the long-term potential of his part-time reporting gigs.

“The workshop was held at the University of Illinois. After touring the journalism department and seeing the photo and TV studios, I thought this would be a good career to pursue,” said Orwig.

In January 1974, Orwig graduated from the University of Illinois, armed with a degree in ag communications.

“My classmate **Ken Rinkenberger** told me he had decided to graduate a semester early to avoid competition from other highly sought-after grads like **Colleen Callahan** and **Jay Vroom** who were graduating in May. I followed Ken’s lead, which turned out to be a good decision. I had interviews that fall for opportunities with Kent Feeds, John Deere, National Livestock and Meat Board, and *Big Farmer* magazine.”

But Orwig had his sights set on a job with Reiman Associates in Milwaukee. Earlier that year, **Dr. Jim Evans** had taken Orwig and a group of other University of Illinois students to a NAMA meeting in Chicago where they heard a memorable presentation by **Roy Reiman**.

“Roy talked about taking the editors of the ‘seven sisters’ fashion magazines to cotton fields to explain the benefits of renewable cotton over the synthetic fabrics that were popular in the 1970s. That sounded like the kind of ag promotion and education that would be fun,” Orwig said.

After initially getting a “no jobs open” letter from Reiman Associates, Orwig received a call three weeks later from the agency’s PR director, **Gary Myers**, offering a job as a PR assistant account executive. That launched a successful career in public relations, advertising, and publishing.

Orwig’s first exposure to farm broadcasting came during what was earlier known in ag communications circles as “Hell Week.”

“The NAFB and AAEA annual meetings and International Livestock Show all were held in Chicago during the same week in November. That is where I met **Orion Samuelson** and many other broadcasters active at that time. This experience got me interested in understanding the broadcast side of PR and how to disseminate information through the airwaves.”

The young PR professional brought his interest in farm broadcasting to his next position as associate editor for *Agri Marketing magazine*. There, he had the opportunity to build even closer relationships with farm broadcasters, especially during *Agri Marketing*-hosted hospitality suites at the annual NAFB Convention. However, those relationships didn’t prevent him from being kicked out of his very first NAFB business meeting.

“In those days, farm broadcasters and farm magazine publishers were highly competitive and didn’t get along that well. When the NAFB business meeting started, I came in to report on the meeting for *Agri Marketing*. **Roddy Peeples** came up to me and said: ‘You’re not a voting member so get out,’” Orwig recalled.



Photo: L-R Lyle Orwig, Karen Potratz, PR Director at C.O.next, and Dave Harding, former PR director of Charleston | Orwig at 2019 Trade Talk.

Over time, farm broadcasters warmed up to him and all the NAFB Allied Industry Council members. Orwig became the first Allied Industry Council member to serve on the NAFB Board of Directors, as a non-voting member during his first term then as a full voting member the second term. In 2006, Orwig received the Dix Harper Meritorious Service Award and also has served NAFB as a Foundation Board member since 2009.

“Through the NAFB Foundation scholarship program, we’ve been able to attract college ag-comm talent to farm broadcasting. There are many opportunities at radio stations in rural America, and the Foundation has helped broaden the industry by funding scholarships, internships, and advanced education for current members,” Orwig said.

Via his involvement with NAFB, Orwig has observed many changes along the way.

“Years ago, broadcasters brought 20-pound recorders with microphones to interviews. Now they talk into iPhones.

“One thing has remained consistent: Broadcasters have always understood the value of working with advertising partners. Trade Talk solidified that relationship, providing broadcasters with several hours of programming in a half-day session, while meeting advertisers’ needs to communicate with their target audiences.”

As he enters retirement, Orwig looks forward to spending more time with his wife, Karma, and his three grandchildren as well as working on his golf game from his home in Chaska,

Minnesota. He also continues as an entrepreneur, working with his new partners to grow the Certified Agriculture Dealership program, originally created for Ram trucks.

“The program focuses on helping farmers save money when purchasing a new farm truck from a Certified Ag Dealer. The farmer is then eligible for AgPack, which is a partnership with 12 other ag companies which offer discounts/rebates on their products,” Orwig explains. “It’s a win-win for both. The farmer gets an ROI on his truck, and the company gets a new customer.”

With that entrepreneurial spirit still strong, there is no doubt farm broadcasters will continue to see Orwig at farm shows and ag events in the future, fostering the relationships that have served him so well.



STUDENT JOB LEADS TO CAREER

POSITION — After what will end up being a year-and-a-half part-time job, **Kolt Buchenroth** has accepted a full-time position at Ohio Ag Net. He will continue to be responsible for regular radio programming, coordinating the network’s live and produced video products, and writing for the company’s publication, *Ohio’s Country Journal*.

“I couldn’t be more excited to continue to serve Ohio’s number-one industry,” said Buchenroth. “I’m so thankful to Bart & Sheryl (Johnson) for taking the chance on the college kid and giving me such a great opportunity.”

Buchenroth, who cut his teeth at WKTN-FM during those same high-school years, was starting to find his footing in farm

broadcasting. He realized he could marry his passion for stories to his background in agriculture.

“I grew up showing cattle in 4-H and later in FFA,” said Buchenroth. “Mom raised horses, and Dad is an excavator specializing in farm drainage. While I did not grow up in the cab of a tractor, agriculture has always been a way of life for our family.”

Buchenroth started at WKTN as a board operator and reporter. It was several months before his voice ever hit the airwaves.

“Keith, my boss at the time, said ‘I need someone to cover these banquets.’ Really, that is where it all began,” said Buchenroth.

Those banquets were the county’s commodity association and FFA banquets. Being an FFA member and chapter officer himself, it was a natural fit for Buchenroth. From there, he started interviewing local farmers about their growing seasons, attending soil and water conservation district meetings, and visiting the county’s Ag Council breakfast put on by the Ohio State University Extension office.

“Looking back, I had no clue what I was doing. I am sure I’d cringe if I played those old interviews now. But those local farmers would talk to me. They believed in and trusted me. It meant a lot then and still does today,” he said.



His first experience with the Ohio Ag Net team (other than listening to **Dale Minyo** on the radio every day) was during the Ohio FFA State Convention.

“We do a student reporter program every year during the state FFA convention. Five FFA members get to do our jobs and cover the convention,” said Buchenroth. “I learned so much in those two days and met Bart and the team. The rest is history.”

He completed his freshman year at Ohio State at a regional campus while working at the radio station until he left for Columbus in 2018.

“I moved to Columbus to continue school. WKTN is an affiliate, and I just happened to keep in touch with the team at Ohio Ag Net through the years,” said Buchenroth.

It paid off. After Ty Higgins’ departure from the network, the team needed some help with programming.

“They redistributed Higgins’ responsibilities and brought me on to anchor afternoons and do some video,” Buchenroth said. “I was ecstatic. I remember calling my parents and saying, ‘You aren’t going to believe this!’”

He says he has most enjoyed meeting the “family” that is Ohio’s agriculture. Beyond that, Buchenroth has enjoyed his time in NAFB.

“I think NAFB is a fantastic resource for both students and professionals. I suggest a membership to all of my friends,” said Buchenroth. “As a professional, the networking component is just fantastic. Because of NAFB, I have been able to connect with folks to bounce ideas off them or just to chat. Agriculture is best served when we are all working together. NAFB fosters that.”

Buchenroth is set to graduate in May. In addition to his studies and work, he is a member of FarmHouse-ATZ Fraternity, Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow, and Collegiate Farm Bureau. He is the editor-in-chief of the Ag Communication program’s capstone magazine, *The AgriNaturalist*.

Additionally, Buchenroth serves as the marketing and communication director for the Hardin County Fair. He plans to move back to his hometown of Kenton after he graduates.



MCCAULEY LOOKS BACK ON HIS CAREER — “Looking back on my life I can truly say that I have always wanted to be a farmer,” said **Ken McCauley**. “That dream came true in 1965 when my brother and I started farming 160 acres that my mother owned. I was 16, and he was 14, but we soon found out we needed more than land. Dad was always good to let us use our own ideas but was always there when we needed him. One thing he taught us very early on is, ‘You have to know what your expenses are so you have to pay harvest and fuel.’ That was such a good lesson even today as our son takes over our operation.

“My wife, Mary, and I were married in 1972; and we moved to my great-grandfather’s farm where he had built his house, which is 20 miles from where I grew up.

We have been extremely fortunate and thankful for this as it opened so many doors in our young lives in a new neighborhood. We raised two children here, **Traci Biesemeyer** and **Brad McCauley**, and they have blessed us with seven grandchildren. Traci is a grain merchandiser for ADM in Kansas City, and Brad farms with us and lives close to us here on the farm (White Cloud, Kansas).

“Mary and I officially started farming on our own in 1991 when my dad retired, and my brothers and I each started farming on our own. Mary quit her job, and we did it all for several years, which really enriched our lives (stressful at times but still rewarding). 1995 brought an opportunity to get involved in the Kansas Corn Commission and that has continued through today, 25 years later.

“I credit Kansas and National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) for my relationship with the NAFB and the farm broadcasters who have welcomed me and become such good friends over the years. Being elected to President of NCGA strengthened my relationship with NAFB, showing me just how important farm broadcasters are to farmers and their messages. As communication became more important to farmers, NAFB members (as usual) rose to the occasion and helped farmers get their messages out, to not just farmers but consumers, as well.

“Being appointed to the NAFB Foundation has been very rewarding. To be able to see how NAFB members support educating future farm broadcasters and ag-media students through foundation scholarships, internships, and awards is fantastic. Support not only from NAFB members but from all of agriculture’s supporting industries has boosted the Foundation’s ability to help more students gain experience and help with their college expenses. The NAFB Foundation has given me a view into another area of agriculture that is much needed and



helped me in my transition into retirement from farming.

“Our son, Brad, has been on the farm since 2001 and has been growing his own farm plus taking over our rented land and making most of the decisions the past several years. Next year, he will take over our entire operation, and I will become a landlord for the first time in my life.

“This is an exciting time for Mary and me, watching our son take over the farm. We still live in the house my great-grandfather built 100 years ago and plan to stay here hoping someone in our next generation will want to live here in our farm home. I feel extremely grateful and fortunate for the things I have been blessed with during my life. As I look back, it is interesting that some of the things that I thought were bad actually turned out to be pretty good! We will have to see how the COVID experience plays out, but it definitely has not been good for some. Thanks to my family, friends, and everyone who has supported and been here for me to get me to where I am today; I truly appreciate you all.”

WE WANT YOUR NEWS — Send us your stories and photos for future newsletter issues. Contact Larry Quinn at larryaquinn@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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