

Volume 9, Number 7, July 13, 2021

by Larry A. Quinn



**HALVORSON COMBINES FREELANCING, FARM BROADCASTING** — About seven months have gone by since **Sabrina Halvorson** stepped out on her own as a freelance writer and broadcaster. It is time, she says, that was very well-spent.

“I’ve always wanted to just give it a go and be a freelancer, so I just decided to do it,” Halvorson explained. “I set a goal of spending all of 2021 as a freelancer and making it work. Here we are well into the summer, and I have no regrets.”

“It wasn’t as sudden as it may seem,” Halvorson said.

In addition to freelancing for various publications over the course of her 30-year career, she also has tried to establish and maintain professional relationships, like those that started at NAFB.

“However, coming back to NAFB as a freelancer proved a little difficult,” she added.

“There’s not a membership option for freelancers to be broadcast members on their own. Fortunately, one of the stations I freelance for is a member, and I was able to gain membership that way just last month,” she said. “When I fill in at the station, it’s extremely helpful to have access to everything NAFB provides for broadcasters. It really is valuable when you take advantage of everything that’s available.”

Halvorson said there are many differences between freelancing for broadcasting and freelancing as a magazine writer.

“I’ve written for magazines for 20 years. I had my first major international magazine byline when I was 24. It was a hard news article about a court case happening in Central California. At the same time, I was working for a news/talk station in Fresno, California, and had a serial-killer story picked up by the network and go nationwide. It’s only been 20 years since then, but a lot has changed,” she said. “I think there are more opportunities for broadcasters to freelance now than there used to be. Twenty years ago, I don’t think it would have worked for me to send out my serial-killer story to radio networks as a freelancer. Maybe that wouldn’t work now either, but other avenues are growing.”

One of those avenues is podcasts.

“In December, when I decided to be a full-time freelancer, I sent out inquiries to people and companies I wanted to work for. One was the owner of several ag magazines in California that I used to freelance for. As it turned out, he was wanting to create what I call a ‘partner podcast’ for his magazines, and I was just the person to get it started,” Halvorson said.

She contracted for 12 months to be the host of the *My Ag Life Daily News Report*.

“I get to take his idea and make it work for him. It’s going great! We’re halfway through the year, and I’ve been able to get some really solid interviews on the show for him. And since I’m a freelancer, I’ve been able to explore some other things, as well. I’ve done some science writing and some holiday articles. My favorite non-ag writing is the writing I get to do for a beautiful travel magazine. That’s another thing checked off the bucket list – travel writing.”

She added there are a lot of opportunities for farm broadcasters in podcasting.

“Podcasting will never take the place of a farmer getting her or his ag news on the radio. It just won’t. But, when you think of it as a completely different product, it has a lot of opportunity for broadcasters. My husband, **Rusty**, and I sometimes get together to do fun interviews that we share on our *Ag on Tap* podcast. My good friend and former NAFB President **Lorrie Boyer** just started her *Ag Queen* podcast, and it’s fantastic. We all have different styles, which benefits the listeners because they get to find the style that speaks to them,” Halvorson said.

As for continuing in broadcasting, Halvorson is currently filling in on some stations when their farm broadcaster is out. NAFB Past President **Brian Winnekins** gave her that idea.

“He needs someone who can fill in for him when he goes on a trip, and it makes more sense to have a freelancer than to hire someone to work only a week here or there,” she said.

Halvorson is excited to once again be an NAFB member after spending several years actively involved in the organization. She served four years on the board of directors (two as West Region Vice President and two as the Marketing & Promotions Chair) and has served on the mentoring and news service committees. She said the organization has provided her with cherished relationships, professional training, and several opportunities.

“I’ve learned to always be open to new or unexpected opportunities,” she said. “I’m absolutely certain my next perfect opportunity is right around the corner.”



**RAHJES IS A NEWS MAKER, NEWS BREAKER** — You can be a news maker or a news breaker, usually not both, but on many days **Ken Rahjes** (KBUF, Garden City, Kansas) wears both those hats.

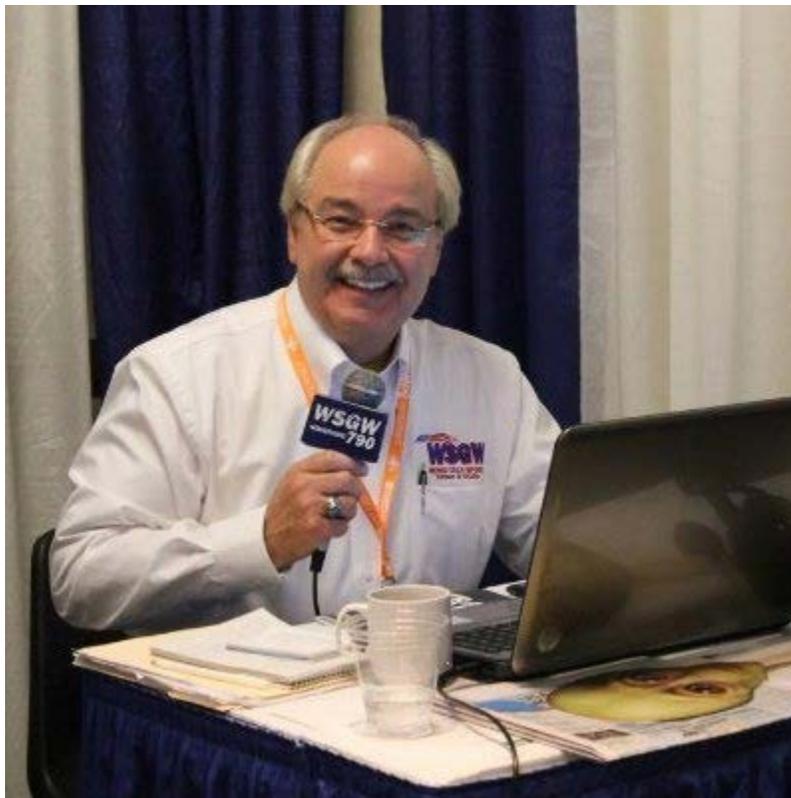
Since late in 2015, he has served as a member of the Kansas House of Representatives and has kept a full schedule of farm broadcasts on his AgView network. Almost four years ago, he began doing agricultural news for KBUF and other stations in the region. When **Lory Williams** retired from the on-air side at KBUF, Rahjes also picked up the market-reporting duties and has done those daily since December 2019 along with his other duties as a legislator and his other venture – Kansas Ag Report Television Show.

Also, Rahjes serves as chairman of the Kansas Agriculture Committee, and he believes that being a farm broadcaster gives him good insight on the impacts regional, national, and global agriculture can have on Kansas farmers and ranchers. He said many of the legislators know that if you want to find him, he will probably be in his office, especially when the markets are open, because he delivers seven commodity market reports starting with the overnights early in the day. Rahjes says there have been a few times that the legislature has waited on him if he is not on the floor because he was doing a market report.

“The markets wait for no one, and people rely on me and other farm broadcasters to give them timely and accurate information,” he said.

Rahjes also interviews industry leaders and other news makers every day to stay on top of trends and news important to the audience. He also believes in a clear separation between his elected legislative duties and his duties as a farm broadcaster. He enjoys helping educate his fellow legislators and the public on what he learns from the people he meets. He says that probably only a handful of people have made “pork sausage” and “political sausage.”

Whether breaking or making news, Rahjes believes those who produce our food, fuel, and fiber deserve reliable information and the ability to talk candidly with those who represent them.



**HENNE MARKS 50 YEARS AT WSGW RADIO** — On June 21, 2021, **Terry Henne** got a big surprise at his desk.

“My folks at work honored me for being at WSGW Radio for 50 years,” Henne said.

Henne started his half century of service to the station the day after his college graduation, June 21, 1971.

“When you have fun at work, the years fly by,” Henne exclaimed. “My years in radio now number 56!”

Upon graduating from Michigan State University with degrees in broadcasting, marketing, business administration, and agri-engineering, Henne figured he had all the bases covered. The family's farm corporation was appealing, but he wanted to establish a career in broadcasting first. Broadcasting won.

Henne started working in radio at the age of 15 along with going to high school, working on the farm milking cows, and doing his daily farm chores. Upon college graduation, WSGW Radio in Saginaw had a job waiting for him. He is celebrating 50 continuous years of work at the Saginaw radio station doing what he loves best — writing commercials for his clients, organizing events for the five radio stations he represents, producing programs for the Michigan Ag Today Network, and doing his four daily on-air and digital farm programs.

WSGW's Farm Service Radio was developed by Henne in 1973 and is Michigan's longest continuous-running farm program. He has been its farm director since it first hit the air.

He attended his first NAFB annual meeting in 1975 and became a voting member in 1977. Other than last November, Henne has never missed an NAFB meeting in Kansas City since 1975.

His loyal farm audience is happy to know that retirement is not in his short- or long-term plan. Alpha Media Saginaw General Manager **Mark Thomas** is happy, as well.

Henne has served on and chaired many boards over the years, including nonprofit and fraternal organizations. He has devoted much time and effort to his church, St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Richville, Michigan. And, he has been honored by many agricultural-based organizations for his efforts in promoting agriculture around the state.

He and his wife, **Sharon**, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary this past December. They have three children: **Stacy**, who runs a daycare in Ann Arbor, Michigan; **Scott**, a financial advisor in Mobile, Alabama; and **Steve**, national account executive for Comcast Inc., in Grand Blanc, Michigan. They also are blessed with seven grandchildren and another on the way this September.



**LINDER FARM NETWORK CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARY** — The Linder Farm Network is celebrating its 45th anniversary on the air this year.

“We plan to have festivities as part of Farmfest in Redwood County this coming August,” **Lynn Ketelsen** said. “I started the network for the Linder Family when the company owned four stations on the network. I brought much of what I learned as a farm broadcast scholarship winner at WMT (Cedar Rapids, Iowa) and as a farm editor at KMA (Shenandoah, Iowa),” Ketelsen said.

“Since that time, I became the owner of the network, and we have grown to more than 30 stations across the state of Minnesota. When we started, our farm audience was pretty small. It took attending literally thousands of ag events, developing creative and in-depth farm programming, and just plain hard work to grow both numbers of affiliates and our audience. We determined long ago that our geography would be the major corn and soybean areas of Minnesota, an area we could super-serve and travel,” Ketelsen said.

“We have had some outstanding farm broadcasters work for us over those many years, and our current team of **Linda Brekke** and **Dan Lemke** are as good as there is in the industry in my view. Our sales team of **Jeff Stewart, Matthew Hughes, Matt Ketelsen, David Legault,** and **Klane Dushek** are outstanding, as well. Recent ag surveys show the Linder Farm Network is the top-rated network in the state of Minnesota, something we are all very proud of. We feel the future is bright for farm broadcasting and continue to grow our business and look ahead eagerly to the future,” Ketelsen concluded.



**HOFF JOINS NAFB, MID-WEST FARM REPORT** — **Stephanie Hoff** recently joined NAFB after beginning her farm-broadcasting career with Mid-West Farm Report (Madison, Wisconsin).

Hoff is a native of Northwest Wisconsin, where she grew up in small towns around Thorp. She and her partner, **Conway**, now reside in Madison.

Hoff's passion for agriculture began in grade school, when she and her family spent a summer together putting up fences and a small barn. She and her younger sister farrowed their own pigs for the Clark County Fair. Her family also raised beef and a few fainting goats. (A fainting goat is an American breed of meat goat. It is characterized by myotonia congenita, a hereditary condition which may cause it to stiffen or fall over when startled.)

Hoff was active in her FFA chapter, serving as the reporter for her officer team, traveling to various leadership conferences, and competing in speaking events.

She took her passion for agriculture to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she graduated with a degree in life- sciences communication from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Some of her campus highlights include working for *Grow magazine*, the Wisconsin Farms Oral History Project, and the Babcock Hall Dairy Plant. She also hosted her own radio show on campus called *Women in STEM*. (STEM is an immersive orientation experience for underrepresented and first-generation incoming students interested in science, technology, engineering, or math.)

After graduating in December 2019, Hoff was selected as a finalist for the Alice in Dairyland program. She received a certificate from the state of Wisconsin for agricultural communications and marketing as part of that experience.

Prior to joining Mid-West Family Broadcasting, Hoff was the editor at WisBusiness.com. There, she covered a wide range of Wisconsin industries, including health care, manufacturing, infrastructure, and, of course, agriculture.

By only her tenth day of work, Hoff knew she was where she belonged.

“I’m hooked. I love telling the story of Wisconsin’s iconic industry with those both new and familiar to everything agriculture encompasses,” she said.

**COWS AND RADIO LED STEPHAN TO HIS CAREER** — New Broadcast Council Member **Doug Stephan** has been around cows all his life, and he has been on the radio since he was 17. Those two experiences came together a few years ago along with a realization that many American family farmers were getting the short end of the stick. Over the years, this led Stephan to do lots of different things on the radio and in various other media.

He started a syndicated morning show in October 1988, three months after Rush Limbaugh went national. Prior to, and since, he has been doing local radio in small to huge markets and working in hundreds of markets with various talk programming on networks.



Stephan seems to have found the secret to good radio is being a good listener. Also, he has figured out how to run a radio business. He now produces a daily morning show, called *The DJV Show*, with three millennial female hosts. On his own, he produces and hosts weekend shows on health, how the mind works, and the relatively recent *American Family Farmer*. He has no partners, no churches, no big-business, and no corporate-radio-company ties. It seems Stephan values independence and independent operators who like to do business with people who are happy to take programs with no strings attached.

“The farm show presents new ideas impacting the family farmer, such as how to survive in an era of corporate and government unfriendliness and profiles of people running all sorts of smaller, family-farmer operations,” Stephan said.

“You can hear the contents of nearly all the shows by checking out [AmericanFamilyFarmerShow.com](http://AmericanFamilyFarmerShow.com). The complete show is there for stations to download and play when it works for them. You also will find a podcast at the same web address every week with fresh material,” Stephan added.

Stephan's motto has always been, "We are all here to help." He seems to have gotten that from observing how things were done on the New England farms he grew up around and worked on during his formative years.

"My favorite exploratory question when I'm talking to someone new is 'Were you a farm kid?'"

Stephan says it is lots of fun to hear the stories from some of the newer, brighter beginners and then the seasoned veterans, just to compare their realities.

No matter what, Stephan hopes his membership in NAFB will lead to great connections to the individual farm stations, their owners, and listeners.

**WE WANT YOUR NEWS** — Send us your stories and photos for future newsletter issues.

Contact Larry Quinn at [larryquinn@outlook.com](mailto:larryquinn@outlook.com) or phone at **703-819-6532**. *Airing on the Side of Agriculture* is included in the blog section of [NAFB.com](http://NAFB.com). For an archive copy of any past issues, go to **Membership** and click on ***Airing on the Side of Agriculture***.

# # #