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by Larry A. Quinn

MSU TO AWARD HONORARY DOCTORATE TO BROWN — Montana State University (MSU) will honor **Taylor Brown**, a widely respected broadcaster, rancher, and former state legislator, with an honorary doctorate degree during commencement ceremonies set for Friday, December 17, 2021, in the Brick Breeden Fieldhouse in Bozeman, Montana.



Taylor Brown** herds cattle during spring branding at the LO Bar Ranch on Tuesday, June 8, 2021, in Sand Springs, Montana; MSU photo by **Kelly Gorham

The state's Board of Regents approved an honorary doctorate for Brown, a third-generation Montana rancher from Sand Springs and a two-term state senator. Brown also has had a prominent career in television and radio broadcasting, spanning more than 40 years.

Brown was born in Sheridan, Wyoming, and grew up on his family's cattle ranch in eastern Montana near Sand Springs. He attended high school in Lewistown and received a bachelor's degree in animal science from MSU, where he also served a year as student-body president.

After graduation, Brown returned to his family's ranch then started his broadcasting career in Billings as a farm broadcaster with Northern Broadcasting System. He and his wife, **Shannon**, later purchased the radio network in 1985 from future U.S. Senator Conrad Burns.

Today, Northern Broadcasting includes the Northern Ag Network, the Northern News Network, and flagship radio station KGHL AM-790 and FM 94.7. It provides radio, television, and digital content dealing with agriculture, markets, state news, and weather to approximately 70 stations in four states. As a result, Brown has been regarded for decades as one of Montana's most recognizable radio voices, particularly in rural areas.

"It would not be exaggerating to say that today virtually every farmer, rancher, and agribusiness person in the state of Montana knows of Taylor Brown and his involvement with agriculture and public education," Pat Hatfield, former head of the [Department of Animal and Range Sciences](#) in the MSU [College of Agriculture](#), wrote in materials nominating Brown for the honorary doctorate.

Brown served two terms as a state senator from 2009 to 2016, where he represented Montana Senate District 22. As a legislator, he chaired both the agriculture and education committees and served as majority whip. He was known in the legislature as a supporter of agriculture, Montana State University, [MSU Extension](#), and the [Montana Agricultural Experiment Station](#).

During his time in the Montana legislature, Brown helped to lower business equipment taxes and worked to significantly reform worker's compensation costs. He helped restore critical investment in ag research and worked to increase support for career and technical education. Brown also was a champion for the creation of the [WIMU Regional Program in veterinary medicine](#), which helps Montana resident students receive a reasonably priced veterinary education. He was important to passing funding to expand the [WWAMI Medical Education Program](#) for the first time in 40 years, allowing entering classes to grow from 20 Montana resident students per year to 30.

Brown led the effort for the Montana University system's first performance-based funding, and he supported holding tuition costs steady for Montana students and their families during the 2013 and 2015 legislatures.

Hatfield said Brown has committed himself to sustaining agriculture in Montana through service and outreach. Brown is an advocate for rural farm and ranch families and is a supporter of 4-H, FFA, the Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity, and the REAL Montana leadership program. In 2009, Brown launched an agriculture information website, northernag.net, and he is a past president of the National Association of Farm Broadcasting (NAFB).

“Anyone who knows or works with Taylor Brown in any capacity knows how much he gives personally to a great many causes and how he uses his own company as an example of the way business leaders can make a difference,” Hatfield wrote. “Not only does he donate generously of his personal time but he gives direct financial support to many worthwhile programs. He volunteers the powerful voice of his network and its many affiliated radio and television stations to generate unparalleled support for a long list of community service projects.”

Brown played a major part in securing private funding for MSU’s Animal Bioscience Building, which was completed in 2010. As the first chairman of the MSU College of Agriculture Development Board, Brown headed a grassroots effort to raise approximately \$9 million of the \$15.7 million needed for the building, rallying nearly 200 ranchers and businesses to help fund the facility. The building is now the permanent home of the MSU Department of Animal and Range Sciences.

“Taylor was an invaluable advocate for the Animal Bioscience Building,” MSU Alumni Foundation CEO and President Chris Murray wrote in a letter supporting Brown’s honorary doctorate nomination. “It was his loyalty, diligence, and time which helped to ensure this building became a reality.”

Brown and his wife, **Shannon**, have three children: **Travis**, **Courtney**, and **Colter**, who manage the family businesses: LO Cattle Company and Northern Broadcasting System.



*From left: **Courtney Kibblewhite**, **Jonathan Kibblewhite**, **Colter Brown**, **Taylor Brown**, and **Shannon Brown**.*

More information about MSU’s in-person and livestreamed fall commencement ceremonies is available online at montana.edu/commencement/.



NAMA NAMES 2021 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE WINNERS

— The National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA) has announced three marketing and agricultural leaders as winners of the 2021 Professional Development Awards (PDA) of Excellence.

These awards honor members of the organization based on outstanding achievement in each of the professional development areas. The awards were presented in conjunction with the NAMA Fall Conference, October 4-6, 2021, in St. Louis.

Amy Bradford, current NAFB Allied Industry Council board member, received the 2021 Public Relations PDA award for drawing attention to GROWMARK in the national conversation. She has aligned GROWMARK to be packaged as a company with an expanding future which is demonstrated by the expansion of the company's footprint into all of Canada and Mexico. Bradford has made sure GROWMARK is always a sponsor of NAMA events and activities, further advancing GROWMARK's position as a major player in U.S. agribusiness.

Bradford has been instrumental in GROWMARK sponsoring several other agriculturally based organizations, including Young Farmers and Ranchers, FFA, Women in Agribusiness, and Student NAMA, among others. Her presence also has heightened the visibility of GROWMARK by increasing business and personal networking opportunities.

"I have served on the Allied Industry Council for two years," Bradford said. "I have been a strong supporter of NAFB, participating in Trade Talk and sponsoring events at the national convention. I started my career at Illinois Farm Bureau, holding a variety of positions, including host of RFD Today, RFD Illinois Radio Network's daily general interest broadcast. I have traditionally been on the other side of broadcasting and media in a media-relations capacity, and the stint into radio was a way to broaden my experience and skills. It also gave me great appreciation for the hard work broadcasters do to bring the story of agriculture to listeners."

Bradford served on the NAMA executive committee and as its president in 2017. She was honored with the NAMA President's Award in 2018 as well as additional awards from NAMA for various communications and marketing collaterals. She also has received awards from the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives and Cooperative Communicators Association in communications. Additionally, Bradford has worked with students in the Agriculture Future of America program.

Bradford recently was named president/chair of the Agriculture Council of America (ACA) and National Ag Day events. It is not a new job since she will still be at GROWMARK, but it will be a volunteer leadership opportunity.

The two other recipients of the 2021 NAMA PDA of Excellence are **Susan Carney** of Corteva Agrisciences, who received the Marketing Communications award, and **Nicole Bechtel** of National Cattleman's Beef Association, who received the Sales award.

TRUITT CELEBRATES 40 YEARS IN FARM BROADCASTING — Hoosier Ag Today (Zionsville, Indiana) recently recognized its founder, **Gary Truitt**, as he celebrates 40 years in farm broadcasting.

It was September 1, 1981, at the Brownfield Network in Missouri where Truitt began his farm broadcasting career.

“I remember my first interview. It was with the executive director of the Missouri Nut Growers Association,” Truitt said. “I knew absolutely nothing about growing nuts, so my questions were rather basic. Over the past 40 years, I have done very few interviews with nut growers, but I have interviewed several individuals I felt were a bit nuts.”



In 1985, Truitt relocated to Indiana to create the Indiana Agribusiness Network, which was later named AgriAmerica Network. In 2006, he founded Hoosier Ag Today (HAT), currently the largest and most-listened-to farm radio network in the state. In 2019, HAT purchased and relaunched Michigan Ag Today, the fastest growing farm network in Michigan.

“Over the past 40 years, I have witnessed how technology has changed the way farmers farm and the way we as broadcasters report on agriculture,” Truitt said. “I used to carry around a cassette recorder and a set of alligator clips to feed interviews over the phone. Our programs also were sent to radio stations over telephone lines.”

Today, farm broadcasters use digital recorders with SD cards or their smart phones to capture interviews, and programs are sent to stations via the internet.

Truitt was inducted into the NAFB Hall of Fame in 2020. In 2015, he was named NAFB Farm Broadcaster of the Year.

“Serving American farm families and working with some of the most talented communicators in the world has been the highlight of my career,” Truitt said.

TIMM WORKS WITH NEBRASKA’S BROADCASTERS — “Growing up in Wisconsin — America’s dairyland — I thought I had a decent sense of what ‘farming’ meant to those directly involved in it as well as to the people of a state that proudly billed itself as an agricultural leader,” said **Jim Timm** (Nebraska Broadcasters Association).



“As I was born and raised a city dweller, the occasional trips to my uncle’s farm while growing up in the ‘60s and ‘70s were always something to look forward to,” Timm recalled.

“While too young at the time to understand the meaning of ‘work ethic,’ thankfully it wasn’t lost on me that my relatives lived a very different life. They got up earlier, worked harder, and did so every day of the week with rare vacations, no holidays, and no complaining. It was a decidedly different way of life, but I was always aware of how much they enjoyed what they did.

“As much as local radio was omnipresent at the time, I also noticed how much my relatives relied on local radio stations — but for far different reasons than my own,” Timm said. “While I loved the music and the DJs, my relatives built their schedules around market reports, weather forecasts, and, of course, the news. And there usually was some discussion following whatever they heard. While these observations struck me somewhat at the time, I never thought my future might one day bring me back to those days, nor with such enhanced awareness.

“By the time I was a teenager I knew I wanted to work in radio,” Timm said. “Some of my friends shared the interest so we studied together to take the FCC Third Class license exam. Upon receiving my license, I began doing volunteer air shifts on our hometown college radio station. As much as I loved it, it quickly became evident that I would NOT become America’s next great DJ.

“Thankfully, my older brother, John, was making his way in radio, and he encouraged me to consider the business side of radio. Then in high school, I enjoyed the business and marketing classes I was taking and became heavily involved. My parents (God rest their souls.) would tell you that selling seemed to come naturally to me, so I decided to pursue a radio advertising sales career, with longer-term goals of station management,” Timm said.

“After graduating with an associate degree in broadcast advertising sales from Western Technical College in La Crosse, Wisconsin, I landed my first full-time sales job in Appleton, Wisconsin. After finding success there, I accepted offers to sell for stations in Minneapolis/St. Paul and then in Eugene, Oregon, before longing to get back to Wisconsin. I returned to La Crosse as a sales rep and 18 months later became sales manager. Several years later I moved to Milwaukee as a general sales manager before accepting a promotion and transfer to Omaha, Nebraska,” Timm said.

“While general manager for a radio company in Omaha, I was asked to serve on the board of directors of the Nebraska Broadcasters Association (NBA). Through board meeting discussions and other association activities, I found myself recalling my childhood visits to my uncle’s farm as I met numerous station owners and managers whose programming was significantly devoted to agriculture. These broadcasters had a very different mission than mine, and their passion for it was amazing. Before long, many of these fellow Nebraska broadcasters became good friends and were (and still are) among those I enjoyed talking with most. They gave me a completely different perspective on broadcasting and what serving your community of license truly means,” Timm said.

“When I was hired as the president/executive director of the NBA in 2014, building our political visibility at the state capitol was one of my first assigned priorities. The fact that 34 percent of Nebraska’s economy is based in agriculture took on an entirely new meaning. I had never fully realized how many NBA member stations (including TV!) devote significant programming and other resources to serving farmers and ranchers across Nebraska. Likewise, I had never fully realized how dependent Nebraska’s farmers and ranchers are on local broadcasters. And, I had never realized how many government officials share an appreciation for local broadcasters’ service to agriculture.

“My eyes are now wide open to the incredible impact agriculture has on Nebraska and to the critical role local broadcasters play in supporting agriculture. Supporting our NBA members is now my life’s work, and I am particularly grateful for our members who serve agriculture,” Timm concluded.

CAREER IN BROADCASTING STARTED IN FARMING — “I fully intended to farm after I graduated from college and spent time in the Army. However, the untimely death of my father ended that dream as I approached active duty and the farm operation had to be terminated. But since he was the smartest man in the world, and he had told me to get an education in something else, in case I could not farm, I headed into farm broadcasting once I was discharged,” said **Stu Ellis** (WHOW, Decatur, Illinois).



“A short term at WITY (Danville, Illinois) dove-tailed into a 16-year stint at WSOY (Decatur, Illinois), where management allowed me to cover agriculture from six different continents. But WSOY was sold to someone who could see no reason for someone to only report on agriculture. And that began a checkered career that kept me in service to agriculture, but outside the broadcast industry,” Ellis said.

“Several years were spent in marketing for the American Soybean Association, where NAFB Allied Industry Council Member **Hugh Whaley** was a fixture. Then several years followed at Illinois Farm Bureau, where my educational offerings helped farmers make more money and stay out of jail. Then a transfer to the University of Illinois Extension began a 24-year career in publishing a weekly farm management newsletter to boost reader profitability (still my weekend enterprise).

“After some short-term jobs surrounding agricultural education, information, and the like, I delivered a short daily farm piece for a Decatur television station. Out of the blue, a call from the manager told me I was no longer wanted, but he would not say why,” Ellis said.

“When the line went dead, I called WCIA (television) in Champaign, Illinois, and asked if they needed a farm broadcaster. Within a short time, I was doing morning farm reports every day for the dominant TV signal in central Illinois.

“If the WCIA broadcast pattern was an individual state, it would be the fifth-largest corn growing state and the sixth-largest soybean growing state in the nation. WCIA had a great farm audience, and agriculture in the region was diverse, which made the job at WCIA a capstone for a bald and grey-bearded farm broadcaster,” Ellis said.

“When a new station manager arrived and wanted to visit because he had respect for agricultural programming on television, we reviewed the various programs I was doing, and he asked what else I would like to do.

“The light of opportunity quickly came on, and I recommended a half-hour weekly farm show focused on the WCIA broadcast area. He said we could start with that, but other Nexstar stations need agricultural programming, and once a good format for a weekly program is in place, it would be offered to other stations,” Ellis explained.

“While the additional travel to cover events and meetings is a downside, the upside is explosive opportunity. And here I thought my two-minute reports on the Decatur station were the epitome for a former radio farm broadcaster. I am now blessed with great folks with whom I work, a dream job, and a bigger capstone on a 50-year career helping farmers make more money and stay out of jail.”

COUNTRY MUSIC, FARM BROADCASTING WORK TOGETHER — Country Musician and Farm Broadcaster **Dale Eichor** spent more than 60 years in broadcasting and retired from Clear Channel Radio at the end of 2004. He remains on the air in the summer and fall, doing part time fill-in at 540 True Country KWMT (Fort Dodge, Iowa). He also emcees and plays music at various country and bluegrass festivals in Iowa, Nebraska, and Minnesota.



Eichor is self-taught on the guitar and bass, first playing in high school and later in country bands in Shenandoah, Iowa; Peoria, Illinois; Fort Dodge, Iowa; and the Rio Grande Valley of Texas.

He has promoted live concerts in Shenandoah, San Antonio, Peoria, and Fort Dodge; promoted listener bus trips to Nashville and Branson on behalf of KWMT; and served as a longtime reporter to the *Gavin Report*, *Billboard*, and *Radio and Records* magazines.



Eichor was named the Country Music Association's (CMA) DJ of the Year: Small Markets in 1974; served on the CMA Board of Directors in 1977-1978; named CashBox Programmer of the Year for Small Markets in 1983; nominated as Gavin Report's Music Director of the Year in 1983; named Billboard's Program Director of the Year: Small Markets in 1989; and was inducted into the National Traditional Country Music Association's Hall of Fame in Anita, Iowa,

in 1998. Eichor was inducted into the Country DJ Hall of Fame in Nashville in 2001. He is highly respected for always being there for the new artists, many of whom are the super stars of today.

Eichor's hometown is Casey, Iowa, and he graduated from Casey High School in 1956. He is married to **Caroline Sump** of Yorktown, Iowa; she graduated from Clarinda High School in 1957.



Over his 60-year career, Eichor cites many mentors and individuals who influenced his work as a DJ and farm broadcaster. He has been back at KWMT since 1972.

Dale Eichor and wife, Caroline, in Nashville

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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