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by Larry A. Quinn

**AIRING EDITOR TELLS HIS OWN CAREER STORY** — Larry A. Quinn is retiring as editor of *Airing on the Side of Agriculture* with this issue.

Quinn grew up on a wheat and grain sorghum farm during the Dust Bowl '50s. His parents and grandparents survived as farmers during the Dust Bowl '30s. At age 17, two weeks after graduating from Guymon, Oklahoma, High School, he was hired as an announcer/disc jockey by KGYN Radio, his hometown station. Station Manager **Herb Noyes** recruited him based on his 4-H public speaking achievements. On that day in May 1963, Quinn was returning from an invitation to present his award-winning talk on banking to the Oklahoma Bankers Association. Noyes auditioned Quinn and hired him on the spot to begin work in two weeks.



Noyes told Quinn that if the job didn't work out, they would part friends, but he warned that if Quinn got radio into his blood that he'd never get it out. Looking back, he sees that prediction was true.

During his four years with KGYN, Quinn earned his B.S. in agronomy at Oklahoma Panhandle State University, where he was named outstanding agronomy student his junior and senior years and was chosen Outstanding Graduating Senior. Following his graduation in 1967, Quinn accepted a civilian public information specialist position with the U.S. Air Force at Kelly AFB in San Antonio, Texas, where he developed a news beeper service for local radio stations.

**Christine Dany** was a student intern in that information office.

“Her desk faced mine,” Quinn said. “She was hard to overlook. She has been my wife for 51 years.”



In 1968, Quinn accepted a position with the Department of Agricultural Communications at Texas A&M University, first as field editor and then he became the department’s first extension radio-TV specialist. He revamped their radio services and created a TV news service.

On August 22, 1970, he and Christine were married. While they both worked for the university, they pursued their master’s degrees in educational public relations. They both wrote their theses at the same time and graduated together. Besides getting married in 1970, Larry joined NAFB and attended the final convention held in Chicago.

**Hal Taylor** and **Layne Beaty** recruited Quinn to become head of USDA’s Television Service in the Office of Information. He established a TV news service which required travel to 27 states during his first two years. He was a co-host to USDA’s TV programs: *Across the Fence/A Better Way* and *Down to Earth*. During his 35 years at USDA, he provided communication support to 13 secretaries of agriculture — from **Earl Butz** to **Tom Vilsack**. He was the regular host/moderator for tele-news conferences with broadcasters and reporters for his final four secretaries.

During his tenure, Quinn and his staff developed live, full-motion video conference capabilities. **President Ronald Reagan** came to USDA’s studio to broadcast information about the 1985 Farm Bill with **Secretary John Block**. Upon his retirement on September 30, 2009, the department renamed the facility the Larry A. Quinn USDA TV Studio.

For 15 years, Quinn wrote the “Off Mike” column on the back page of USDA’s Broadcasters Letter.

“That was a good warmup for editing *Airing on the Side of Agriculture*,” Quinn said.

**SAMUELSON GIVES STUDENTS ENCOURAGING MESSAGE** — Orion Samuelson, 60-year veteran broadcaster on WGN (Chicago, Illinois), recently spoke to students at Huntington University (HU) in Indiana.



“We’ll all be ok as long as farmers continue to persist through their long-standing trials and tribulations and places like HU continue to send quality students into the real world of agriculture. I am so impressed by today,” said Samuelson, who toured HU’s six-year-old Haupert Institute for Agricultural Studies facilities prior to delivering the keynote speech at its sixth annual Harvest Celebration.

WOWO Radio Farm Director **Rob Winters** shared the stage with Samuelson for the 2021 Harvest Celebration dinner at HU. But first,

Samuelson arrived early for a tour of the university’s ag facilities, including the new livestock barn, pasture, and hands-on classroom. After the dinner, Samuelson took to the microphone to reflect on his thoughts about careers in agriculture and offer some encouragement to the students in the crowd. Then Winters joined Samuelson to recount some funny stories of their most memorable moments as farm broadcasters.

It was more of a conversation than a speech, not unlike the folksy delivery Samuelson used for 60 years for Chicago radio powerhouse WGN. His “National Farm Report” show was featured by 260 stations across the country, and “Big O” also was a regular contributor on RFD-TV.

The 87-year-old Samuelson promised HU would be prominently mentioned in his upcoming broadcast. He also emphasized ag’s importance around the world in a presentation that was part travelogue and part history lesson flavored with self-deprecating humor and insightful anecdotes.

He began the evening by pointing out the farmers in the capacity audience of about 200 persons, as well as those in related areas of interest — including educators, parents of ag

students, donors, and agribusiness owners and employees — shouldn't think of themselves in exclusive terms.

“For the past 60 years on WGN, I've tried to convince people that if you eat, you're involved in agriculture,” said Samuelson, who formally retired from WGN about a year ago.

As a member of the media, Samuelson has reciprocated by providing useful information to those in farming, and he didn't pass up the opportunity this time. He noted while flying over Indiana from his home base in Aurora, Illinois, he couldn't help but notice the ponding created in fields by days of steady, wet weather.

“As I go around the country with the television show and share the story of what farmers and ranchers and food producers put up with, besides markets and weather and everything else, there's so much challenging you.”

Samuelson even tapped into a topic of timely importance in the wake of fertilizer prices increasing by 60 to 85 percent over a year ago due to supply-chain issues.

As someone who went from growing up on a dairy farm in western Wisconsin

to being inducted into the Radio Hall of Fame in 2003 by his friend and broadcasting icon, **Paul Harvey**, Samuelson should know.

“I grew up milking cows, and then I decided it's easier to talk about getting up at 5 to milk cows than it is doing it, so I became a farm broadcaster,” he said, evoking a round of laughter.

Samuelson has traveled to 42 countries, including 11 visits to China, throughout his career. He has met and/or interviewed a plethora of politicians, policymakers, and foreign leaders (friend and foe, alike).

A source of obvious pride and accomplishment for Samuelson is the fact he interviewed nine presidents, starting with **Dwight D. Eisenhower**. Samuelson met with then-**Senator John F.**



**Kennedy** before he took office and later was tasked with announcing the breaking news of Kennedy's assassination in 1963 on WGN. He met with **Harry S. Truman** 20 years after he left the Oval Office.

"Whoever thought a cow-milker from Wisconsin would be able to meet nine presidents, and interview them, and as I've told young people, pick a few heroes and make them part of your life because they'll share," Samuelson said.

To those who ask Samuelson who his favorite president is, he said he tells them, "I have two: No. 1, **Harry Truman**; No. 2, **Ronald Reagan**," as the audience nodded approvingly.

With the National FFA Convention and Expo getting underway in Indianapolis as he spoke, Samuelson extolled the virtues of that organization and 4-H.

"I belong to both," he said. "As a matter of fact, FFA got me into the career I've enjoyed and that's broadcasting, because I wasn't much of a speaker. But the thing that FFA did for me was give me the guts to get up in front of a crowd and talk.

"If you have an opportunity to be a 4-H club leader, an officer of the FFA, or just members of both of those organizations and those that have followed, take it. The young people in agriculture need you. We all need you."

Samuelson's presentation wrapped up with 10 minutes of freewheeling banter between him and Winters.

"What's the most remarkable thing you remember over your career?" Winters asked.

"The driverless tractor," Samuelson responded. "I saw that at the Ohio Farm Science Review for the first time and remember standing with a group of farmers who said, 'Oh, that will never happen.' Now I know farmers in North Dakota who work all night and never spend a minute in the cab."

The faith-based agricultural curriculum HU introduced with the Haupert Institute is a glowing example of how interest in agriculture needs to be nurtured to meet the needs of a hungry world today and in the future, according to Samuelson.

The program began with 17 students and finished that first year with 10 or 11. Six years later, there are 60 HU students with an ag major or minor, or a concentration in pre-veterinary studies. Those students hail from multiple foreign countries, eight states, and 25 Indiana counties.

**WYANT PRESENTED AAW WOMEN IN JOURNALISM AWARD** — The American Agri-Women (AAW) presented **Sara Wyant**, of Missouri, the “AAW Women in Journalism Award” at their recent convention in Phoenix, Arizona. Wyant has been a long-time member of AAW since her



work with Illinois Agri-Women in the 1980s, and her demonstrative commitment to agriculture and AAW over time is second-to-none.

“Sara is so exceptionally talented and a credible journalist. We treasure her as a member, a friend, and a sister in agriculture. She is a true champion of telling the story of agriculture and reporting the state and national ag issues that affect daily farm policy,” said **Karolyn Zurn**, past president of AAW.

Wyant has served on many AAW committees over the years and has been helpful at many AAW fly-ins to Washington, D.C., where members from across the country meet with legislators and share AAW position statements. She was a previous recipient of the organization’s highly esteemed *Veritas Award* for giving public witness to “the pursuit of truth” in accordance with the principles enunciated in the AAW State of Philosophy: The

Call to Power. She also has received the *AAW Leaven Award* for her outstanding efforts for agriculture and service to AAW.

Wyant started Agri-Pulse in 2004 to report weekly to legislators, national media, and the entire agriculture community. Her newsletter and website, [www.Agri-Pulse.com](http://www.Agri-Pulse.com), includes the latest updates on farm policy, commodity and conservation programs, trade, food safety, rural development, and environmental and regulatory programs. In addition, she publishes an early morning news summary, *Daily Harvest*, *Agri-Pulse Daybreak*, and the *Agri-Pulse DriveTime* podcast.

Wyant now lives in Missouri with her husband, **Allan Johnson**. She is the mother of two sons, **Jason** and **Jordan**. She maintains a Washington, D.C., office as well as one in Sacramento, California.

“AAW members have been advocating for agriculture since 1974. Any woman with interest or ties to the agriculture industry are encouraged to join. Learn more at [americanagriwomen.org](http://americanagriwomen.org).

“Since launching Agri-Pulse as an all-digital, subscription-based company in 2004, I’ve been fortunate to tackle some of the toughest, most controversial subjects in American agriculture. But I couldn’t do all of this without a very talented and dedicated team of editors,” Wyant said.

She is the 2021 NAFB Foundation President and is a member of the NAFB Management Sales Council.

**PEARSON NAMED NEW HOST OF AOA** — Effective January 3, 2022, **Mike Pearson** will become new anchor/producer for *Agriculture of America* (AOA), formerly known as *Adams on Agriculture*. Past Anchor/Producer **Mike Adams** is retiring, and Pearson will transition programming to the new network.

Pearson is a 10-plus year broadcast veteran and has a strong agricultural background having grown up on his family’s hog and cattle operation in South Central Iowa. After graduating from Simson College, he moved to Grinnell, Iowa, to work as an ag lender at a community bank. Also, he purchased a cattle feedlot at that time.

Pearson left the banking industry for the media industry, hosting *Market to Market* on public television, producing the *Ag News Daily* podcast, and leading seminars for farm groups across the country. Most recently he has been behind the anchor desk of *This Week in Agribusiness* alongside **Max Armstrong**, co-host and co-founder of the program.

AOA is a one-hour content-driven show with a mix of commentary on key ag issues plus interviews with decision makers including members of Congress, USDA personnel, and leaders of national ag organizations. AOA can be heard in Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Colorado as well as Sirius Rural Radio Channel 147.

“Mike Pearson’s background is in agriculture and ag journalism. His experience makes him the right person to conduct a daily conversation on the issues important to agriculture and rural America,” said Adams.



“Whether it’s the complexities of the ag economy or the issues that really matter in farm policy, Mike Pearson shares this information with his listeners in a knowledgeable and personable way. Farmers look forward to each visit with Mike,” said Armstrong.

**JENKINSON RESTORES ANTIQUE TRACTORS, FLIES PLANE, BROADCASTS ON RADIO/TV** — “I grew up on a 5,000-acre irrigated and dryland grain farm in southwest Kansas, and always knew that I was going to be a farmer,” said **John Jenkinson** (KBUF). “I was very active in 4-H and FFA and got my degrees in agriculture and aviation. However, in 1994, I was offered a news/on-air position at a radio station in Hutchinson, Kansas. I took the job, sold my equipment, and moved. While working there, a friend told me about farm broadcasting and told me there was an opening at KFEQ in St. Joseph, Missouri, with **Tom Brand** and **Gene Millard**.



“From there, I went west to Ft. Morgan, Colorado, and got more experience under the leadership of **Todd Whalen** at KSIR. After making a name for myself there, I was invited by **Kelly Lenz** to join him and **Greg Akagi** at WIBW and the Kansas Agriculture Network in Topeka. It was there I also got experience in front of the television camera at WIBW-TV and KSNT-TV.

“After that, it was on to KMZU in Carrollton, Missouri, and then back closer to ‘home’ as farm director at KBUF in Garden City, Kansas. During my time there, I created The Ag Network that served seven states with farm news and markets. I also was asked to provide two agriculture reports a day for the KSN television network of stations,” Jenkinson said.





“While sitting at home one evening, I received a call from **Gary Kanofsky** at RFD-TV. He wanted to know if I would be interested in filling an open position as anchor of news and markets at RFD-TV and Rural Radio, Channel 147 on Sirius XM.

“That was a turning moment because six years earlier, I had the chance to visit RFD in Nashville, and told myself at the time, ‘I’d sure like to work here

someday,’ but never dreamed I would stand a chance. The time there was undoubtedly the highlight of my farm broadcasting career.

“I spent four years with that organization, before going back to Garden City and taking over again at KBUF and The Ag Network. Today, I provide two television reports a day for seven NBC affiliates in Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Nebraska, and Colorado. Also, I provide market and newscasts for 33 radio stations from Springfield, Missouri, to Denver, Colorado,” Jenkinson said.

“This job has never been about me. It’s always been about telling the story of agriculture. While I was in FFA, I was making speeches about the rural lifestyle and was an outspoken advocate for farming and ranching, so I guess it was a good fit. I’d love to be farming full-time, but I didn’t choose this career. God chose it for me. I’ve always kept my feet in the family farm because I believe that it’s important for me to know what I’m talking about, rather than just reading it from a computer screen. I still find time to enjoy restoring antique tractors, semis, and flying my airplane. I’m also a colonel in the Commemorative Air Force and spend some of my spare time as crew member of a C-45,” Jenkinson concluded.



**MURPHY IN THE MORNING JOINS RURAL SPACE** — Kyle Murphy (KSJB, Jamestown, North Dakota) produces and anchors Murphy in the Morning.

Murphy started his radio career in 2006 in Salt Lake City, where he worked for KBER 101 for a total of six years, four and a half of those doing overnights.



*Murphy, left, with the late Charlie Daniels of the Charlie Daniels Band, in 2019*

“Then I moved to southern Utah, near Vegas, to a town called St. George. I spent roughly four years down there working for KZHK, eventually moving up to mornings and becoming the assistant program director. To follow, I briefly moved back to Salt Lake City and worked in television for about eight months. I got a call from Los Angeles, asking if I wanted to move to Butte, Montana. I spent the next two and a half years there and was ultimately laid off due to COVID. Then, a couple months later, I was picked up in Gillette, Wyoming, and spent only a year there,” Murphy said.

“Now I’m here in Jamestown, North Dakota, my first market that is as rural as it gets. I had the chance to attend the 2021 NAFB Convention in Kansas City, and I learned a lot. It’s my first time in an agriculture market, so I hope to spend a lot of time here. I’m tired of moving around the country,” Murphy concluded.

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