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DOESCHOT GIVES BACK TO NEBRASKA FFA STUDENTS — Giving back to organizations that once poured into you and helped foster the growth of the next generation of agriculturalists is something many strive to do. **Bryce Doeschot**, farm broadcaster and video specialist at KRVN, is doing just that.

In his role as a farm broadcaster, Doeschot gives back to the National FFA Organization, a group that helped pave the way to his career. He was a Nebraska State FFA officer from 2013-2014; and through the connections he made, he found an internship with KRVN (Lexington, Nebraska), which is part of the Rural Radio Network (Nebraska). He said he found out about all the opportunities with radio broadcasting during a business and industry tour while he was a state officer.

Doeschot studied agricultural communications at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and graduated in 2017. Following graduation, Doeschot began working full-time as a farm broadcaster.

“Without FFA, I would not have known about the opportunities at KRVN that allowed me to then come back to be full-time,” Doeschot said.



Professionally, Doeschot works closely with the Nebraska FFA Organization to support the future of agriculture professionals. The Rural Radio Network sponsors the Agricultural Communications proficiency competition, as well as other monetary support to students.



KRVN hosts a “I Believe in the Future of Ag” campaign, where it runs fundraising spots across the state. The money raised then is given directly to the 200+ Nebraska FFA chapters. Because of its work supporting students, KRVN was awarded the Nebraska FFA Distinguished Service Award at Nebraska’s State Convention this spring.

“FFA gives us so many things, and I was grateful to take advantage of those opportunities. I am fortunate enough to be able to give back to an organization which gave me so much,” Doeschot said.

Doeschot said he looks forward to each opportunity he has to work with young people and help provide them with the same opportunities he was given. He also noted a sense of pride in seeing the passion these students have for the industry.

“Every time we get to work with students, it gives me a renewed sense of optimism about the future of the industry,” Doeschot concluded.

MILLARD RETIRES, REMAINS SOLID IN FARM BROADCASTING FOUNDATION — If you’ve ever enjoyed the sight of a century-old barn standing alongside a rural highway — historical monuments with faded red paint, expertly built with sturdy foundations and strong frames — then you might be able to relate to veteran agricultural broadcaster **Gene Millard**.

Millard grew up on a family farm in Osborn, Missouri, and went to a school with only 16 people in his graduating class. After high school, Millard attended Colorado State University in Fort Collins, majoring in general agriculture. After taking the accelerated curriculum and graduating in 1963, he moved back to Missouri in search of employment. Having heard a radio advertisement for an assistant farm director at KFEQ Radio Station (St. Joseph, Missouri), he applied and, “amazingly enough,” was hired.



After spending nine years in that role, doing farm segments on both radio and television, Millard was offered the farm director position, where he stayed for the next four years. He was eventually offered an opportunity to become general manager of the radio station, and, while admitting to a “little bit of fear and trepidation,” he accepted.

Having grown up on a small farm, Millard said, he had a good idea of what farmers wanted to hear. A large portion of the programming on his station focused on “how-to” information based around the evolution of technology that was taking place on small farming operations everywhere.

During the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, Millard witnessed some tenuous years for the U.S. agriculture industry, reporting on political issues and events like the embargo of grain sales to the Soviet Union and inflationary pressures, that much like today, went rampant.

As farm broadcasters, Millard said, he and his team “had a role to play in terms of communicating what issues were out there and the conditions that were evolving so that producers could make the best choices for their own sustainable operations.”

As the U.S. agriculture industry continued to expand in the 1990s, farm broadcasters remained important sources of information for agricultural stakeholders on all sides of the issues. Being a member of the National Association of Farm Broadcasting (NAFB) gave Millard and his colleagues access to a substantial network of information sources and an ability to gain access to many of the decision makers, both at the state and national levels, allowing them to report agricultural news accurately.

As the demand for agricultural news grew, Millard said his broadcast news team felt even more pressure to report the truth—to provide more than just an information stream. Their presence as prominent agricultural broadcasters had created a platform that served as a magnet for the attention of policy makers. As a result, Millard said, they began to realize the importance of reporting on agricultural news that affected the industry nationwide.

“NAFB was a cohesive element to bring strength to every individual farm broadcaster around the country, giving them the opportunity to communicate on export and market development issues,” Millard said.

Millard has since retired, but he hasn’t lost touch with his broadcasting roots. He continued to host “Agri-Shop,” a live regional radio talk show, hosting call-in listeners on Saturdays for a number of years. He also was inducted into the Missouri Broadcasters Association’s Hall of Fame in 2019.



A self-described “ag man,” Millard has a historical monument of his own that continues to stand on his family farm today. Purchased by his grandfather and grandmother in 1905, the farm began with eighty acres. In 1920, with nothing but hand labor, they built a barn using salvaged wood from the original home that stood on the property.

Millard said the barn has maintained its integrity, because like many other things in life, “you must have a solid foundation, and that is exactly what this structure has.”



In 2010, Millard restored the barn, and it still stands strong and capable today.

HOWELL WORKS TO SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURE NETWORKS — What began as a study abroad experience in college led to a career supporting international agriculture for **Delaney Howell**, president of Ag News Daily.

Howell attended Northwest Missouri State University for her undergraduate degree, and it was her study abroad experience to Bulgaria that sparked her interest in international agriculture. She learned just how diverse the agriculture industry is and how many different types of farming operations there are.

During her time abroad, Howell learned how she could use her farming and journalism background to help add to existing messaging and grow the network of international agriculturalists.



“We need to do more to help tell their [farmers’] stories,” Howell said.

Most recently, Howell traveled to Germany for the Global Farmer Network meeting, where she led a workshop providing interviewing tips to farmers. Her background helped give her a unique perspective, being both a farmer and a journalist. Howell also noted she believes it’s important for farmers to know how to best talk to reporters and journalists to get their messages across most effectively.

The goal of the Global Farmer Network is to amplify farmer’s voices. At their regional meetings, 15-20 farmers are selected to attend where they learn tips and tricks to help grow their business. Howell said there are typically more than 200 applicants, and those farmers go through different rounds of judging to narrow down the selected participants.

Selected participants who attended the meeting in Germany represented roughly a dozen countries, providing insight into different international farming capacities.



“I loved getting to interact with and see how the different facets of agriculture are represented by all of the different countries at the meeting,” Howell added.

Howell also shared the Global Farmer Network is a resource anyone can use to interact with and learn about agriculture in various countries across the globe. The network can be reached on Twitter (@GlobalFarmerNet) or their website, <https://globalfarmernetwork.org/>.

ROOT RECOMMENDS SEEING WHERE LIFE LEADS — Few of us know exactly what we are going to be when we are growing up. Life changes and opportunities, both good and bad, present themselves in infinite ways, affecting our professional paths. **Ken Root** is no exception to this.

“I’m not sure any of us can plan our future employment. We can just prepare for a positive outcome and see where life takes us,” said Root, who is now retired after a long, successful career as a national leader in farm broadcasting.

Root’s words are not only a statement about his personal life but may also provide some inspiration for people who are still finding their way.

Root began to find his way as he attended Oklahoma State University, where he earned a bachelor’s degree in agriculture education.

“I graduated in 1972, taught vocational agriculture for two and a half years in a little town in Western Oklahoma called Union City. I then had the remarkable opportunity to be able to go to the biggest television and radio station in Oklahoma City,” Root said.



Under the tutelage of farm broadcasting pioneer Russell Pierson at WKY, Root’s work as a farm broadcaster began to take form.

“I worked there for seven years under Pierson,” Root said. “I learned a great deal from him and from the news department in television. Then that station shut down their farm programming, and I began moving around America.”

His next venture would be to work for Kansas Agriculture Network in Wichita, Kansas. His mentor there was Rich Hull.

“Mr. Hull was much closer to my age and a very different reporter than was Mr. Pierson. He was the farm director, and he was more involved in the community activities of the area that we were broadcasting in,” Root said. “Rich was more of a news reporter about agriculture, and we got into all the issues of agricultural journalism.”

This work would also lead Root to faraway places that he never expected to go.

“We went all over the world trying to get more people to be customers of the United States farmer, to buy US products and to learn more about the differences,” Root added. “We went to China, the Soviet Union. We went to South America. We went to countries in Europe and Asia, and it was just a remarkable time to say the least.”

In 1984, Kansas Agriculture Network was sold, and Root, along with Hull, moved to KWCH Television in Wichita and Hutchinson.

“We established a farm department there, and I did more traveling and reported on a broader range of journalism,” he said.

In 1987, Root moved to American Cyanamid, a company specializing in the manufacturing of agricultural products.

“I was in the public relations area there for a brief period of time before I moved over and started a new organization of agrochemical retailers called the National Agrochemical Retailers Association,” Root said. “I then moved it to Washington, D.C., to a place that was a lobby organization for the people who were small ag retailers in rural America.”

Root’s next career decision would bring him back to the Midwest, where he started a new radio show with Rich Hull and Mark Vail.

“AgriTalk was a type of long form talk radio,” Root said. “We had a one-hour program each day that was from 10 to 11 a.m., and we discussed issues that were important to people who lived and worked in rural America, and for the next seven years I did that.”

After becoming executive director of the National Association of Farm Broadcasters (NAFB) and working at WHO Radio in Des Moines, Root went on to start the Iowa Agri Business Radio network, working with Russ Parker.

“Mr. Parker and I put that network on the air in 2010. I also worked for the Agri Business Association of Iowa at the time, which became a very strong supporter of the network; and along with that, I started a daily television program, 6:30 a.m. and Noon each day on WHO TV,” Root said.

The television program was a success and continues to produce content to this day.

“We hired a number of awfully good people, some of them still involved with NAFB; and in 2020, I officially retired from farm broadcasting,” he said.

The winding river of life can have some unexpected turns, but Ken Root is a great example of how we can make the best of the time we have here on earth.

“I would have to say that in my career I’ve been extremely fortunate to have people that I interviewed, or I worked with that, I remain friends with to this day.”

Root currently has two podcasts, *Better than Nuthin’* and *Root of the Matter*, both of which can be streamed on standard podcasting services.

SCHUMACHER CELEBRATES 26 YEARS OF SERVICE WITH KTRS — David Schumacher, farm broadcaster for KTRS (St. Louis, Missouri), began his career working for the St. Louis National Stockyards. At the start of his career, he was one of the youngest licensed livestock buyers in the country. He later became a commission man and auctioneer at the stockyards.

Pivoting his career to be a farm broadcaster was not in Schumacher’s original plans, but he said when the newly formed St. Louis radio station contacted him to be their “farm guy,” he accepted.

“Working at the stockyards gave me the experience I needed to be comfortable with being on the radio. I was never mic-shy, so it was an easy transition into learning farm broadcasting,” Schumacher said.

With his agriculture and public speaking background, farm broadcasting came naturally to Schumacher. He said the only thing he really had to learn was the intricacies of hosting a radio show, like knowing what not to say at the wrong times.

He said that the farm broadcasting community has always been welcoming and willing to teach newcomers how to become successful in their role.



“There’s not a lot of competition in the broadcasting industry. We’re a tight-knit community and we’re all working together to share the common mission of agriculture,” Schumacher added.

Schumacher is the longest standing employee of KTRS, and the only one still there who was a part of the original staff. He said the station is unique, because roughly 50% of its listeners are not involved in the agriculture industry.

“I’m able to bring the message of agriculture to individuals who may have never experienced rural life,” Schumacher concluded.

While it was not in his original career plans, it is evident Schumacher found his natural fit in the world of farm broadcasting.

WE WANT YOUR NEWS — Send us your stories and photos for future newsletter issues; please contact Erin Nash at phone 816/431-4032, x107 or email erin@nafb.com. *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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