



Volume 10, Number 10

October 19, 2022

SMITH FINDS TRUE PASSION – Finding one’s true passion can be difficult, but not for **Riley Smith**, a digital editor and reporter for the Radio Iowa Agribusiness Network.

“When I got the opportunity to combine my passion for agriculture with radio, that was kind of the perfect thing that fell in my lap. It came down to being prepared and knowing where I wanted to go in life,” Smith said.

Smith grew up on a farm near Griswold, Iowa, and knew he wanted to stay in agriculture. He ultimately tried radio and stayed involved, even competing in FFA.

“For one contest, our local radio news director for KJN Radio, in Atlantic, was one of the judges. Then he offered me a part-time job. It wasn’t until a year after that I got interested in radio broadcasting,” Smith added.

He attended Northwest Missouri State University, where he majored in agricultural media graduating in December 2021. His last summer as a college student, May 2021, he interned with the Iowa Agribusiness News Network.



“They were looking for a full-time employee, but I asked them if I could intern over the summer, since I had one semester left and they brought me on,” Smith explained.

Since beginning to work full time in January 2022 for the Iowa Agribusiness News Network, he has got the opportunity to work on projects such as the World Pork Expo, the Iowa State Fair, and Farm Progress Show.

“I’ve been going to the state fair every year of my life, so it was really cool to be on the media coverage side of things. To get to go behind the scenes and be in the ring for the Governor’s Charity Steer Show was a great event,” Smith said.

He covered the Iowa Ag Expo and most recently the Merck Animal Health Beef Media Event solo.

“That was the first event for the network that I’ve had to go out of the state for. It was really neat to get that opportunity to go on such an involved trip like that,” Smith explained.

Smith also shared it was the first media event of its kind for Merck Animal Health. He got the chance to hear from some of the company’s industry leaders as well as go to the Kirkland Feedyard outside of Amarillo, Texas.

“That was very interesting because I grew up on a farm with cattle, and I’ve been around feedlots before, but I’ve never seen one that big. The employees talked about how they managed that many head of cattle and how they keep those cattle healthy. It’s a really efficient operation, and it was a very unique opportunity to get to go see it up-close,” Smith said.

“The coolest thing I have done here at the network is a new video project called Ag Matters PM,” Smith recalled.

Smith explained it is a daily video segment that Dustin Hoffman, supervising editor and farm broadcaster for Iowa Agribusiness Radio Network, had considered for some time, so they put both of their heads together to make it a reality; they now have posted more than 100 episodes.



“My favorite thing about this job is finding unique content and cool ways to put it out there for people to enjoy,” Smith described.

Smith feels blessed to be in the ag communications and ag media industry.

“I got lucky and found just the right thing that I wanted to do. I’m just happy to be doing what I have a passion to do,” Smith concluded.

JAHNKE EXPERIENCES INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURE UP-CLOSE — Every year for the past twenty years, **Pam Jahnke**, better known as the Fabulous Farm Babe, has hosted domestic and international farm tours.

Inviting listeners to follow along on social media and in-person, bringing along approximately forty people, Jahnke and her tour group recently visited Scotland and Ireland, touring working dairies and sheep ranches.

“It was truly a unique experience to see sheep everywhere! Everyone in our group, except one couple from Texas, was from Wisconsin. Sheep aren’t as common at home,” Jahnke said.

As a farm broadcaster since 1988, Jahnke finds international producers through her work history and, of course, her trusty Rolodex. One such producer was Kieran O’Brien, a dairyman with 126 milk cows rotationally grazing in Clonee, Ireland.

“O’Brien had 185 acres but no corn or soybeans, which is very different than Wisconsin. His grass, however, was very high quality and high protein,” Jahnke added.



O’Brien is a fifth-generation farmer who’s expecting his teenagers to take over the family business one day. Jahnke’s group was very interested in asking specific market questions to a fellow industry member and were glad to hear prices weren’t bad and were incentivized in Ireland.



“He [O’Brien] is only 20 minutes from Dublin proper. It was wild to see land values going up and the urban areas coming closer but not impacting his production yet,” Jahnke shared.

During the 12-day tour, she said the group unexpectedly got a history lesson. The Queen of England passed away while they were in Scotland; her funeral was held during their time in Ireland.

“Americans get excited for a few hundred years of history, but they have thousands. We got to see that history firsthand in the making,” Jahnke recalled.

The group also toured the National Farm and Rural Life Museum, outside of Glasgow. The museum preserves ag heritage through a living history farm. The travelers had a chance to visit with its farm manager, Maggie, and learned how the museum will be entering a Clydesdale in the national

Clydesdale contest in Ireland. She was also very proud of one of their Ayrshire cows that was classified EX-89.

And again, there were always sheep.

“With four million sheep in Ireland, the trip wouldn’t be complete without talking to a flock owner. A well-rounded shepherd, James McCloy, is an accomplished shearer and fourth-generation farmer,” described Jahnke.

McCloy owns forty acres along with a nice brace of border collies that help with rotational grazing. He has also launched an agro-tourism opportunity for visitors to find out what it’s like to be an Irish farmer – Glenshane Country Farm.

Jahnke also found lamb is very common on Irish restaurant menus, and plentiful in grocery stores.

“Whenever I go to another country, I make a point of going to local grocery stores to get a feeling for their emphasis on agriculture,” Jahnke added.

One notable difference for Jahnke: how little space was used for dairy refrigeration. Grocery stores only seemed to stock as much milk as they would sell over several days, and then restocked.

Butterfat was another notable difference versus the United States. Here consumers are offered 2% milk. In Ireland milk containers routinely boasted 3.6% fat milk. Eggs are also generally brown in Ireland and not refrigerated according to Jahnke’s observations.

Next up for Jahnke will be leading a group to Iceland in March and to the Grand Tetons, Yosemite, and Glacier National Park in September. She has been a NAFB member since 1988.



ADAMS RECEIVES RUTH WHITE MEDIA AWARD — “When you work at a small market radio station, it’s the greatest experience in the world. It is the heartbeat of a community.”



Mike Adams, retired farm broadcaster and NAFB Hall of Fame member, was awarded the Ruth White Media Award in September and describes how lucky he feels to serve in the broadcasting industry.

Having grown up on a grain and livestock farm, a young Adams was unaware farm broadcasting even existed. He knew from an early age he wanted to be in radio but had no idea how far that would take him.

“It is truly such an honor to receive the award and stand amongst past recipients. It reflects on my years of covering agriculture and agribusiness stories and staying fair and

balanced,” Adams said.

The Ruth White Media Award goes to someone who has demonstrated evidence of consistent, objective, and accurate reporting on American agriculture.

“The best thing I’ve always found about radio is the relationship you had with your listeners. They count on you for good, accurate information,” Adams said.

The Mid America CropLife Association (MACA) recognized several people at its annual meeting held September 6, 2022, in St. Louis, Missouri. Rodney Schmidt, past MACA president, presented the award to Adams, Educator of the Year to Todd Gaines, and Industry Innovation Award to Susanne Wasson.

Now that Adams has retired, he has plenty of time to spend with his grandkids but still is “doing quite a bit of public speaking.” This harvest season, he is helping run grain trucks at a country elevator.

BUERKLE’S CAREER JOURNEY ROOTED IN AGRICULTURE — **Mary Jane Buerkle**, Haskell Drug Store, Inc. co-owner, may no longer work directly in the ag communications world, but that doesn’t stop her from continuing to advocate for the industry.



Having a more well-rounded experience in all areas of communications was important to Buerkle, and NAFB honored this aspect of her career with an honorary membership.

“I got involved in agricultural communications by doing agricultural news for our local radio station. I then began working for the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal as a reporter. This job taught me to have great attention to detail,” Buerkle said.

In 2004, Buerkle began her career at the Lubbock Chamber of Commerce, where she worked for six years. Although Buerkle was not technically working in agriculture, she still was able to help out within the industry.

“You don’t have to be working in agriculture to make a big impact. Sometimes those that aren’t directly related to agriculture can make the biggest impact, because we get to share our knowledge,” Buerkle explained.

Buerkle soon made her journey back to the agriculture community when she decided to make the move to Plains Cotton Growers, where she worked as the director of communications & public affairs.

“I met the people that I worked for at Plains Cotton Growers when I was still working for the local newspaper. Everything in my career has somehow been intertwined in some way,” Buerkle said.

Even if Buerkle’s job title might not include agriculture, she is involved and advocates for agriculture in all she does.



WE WANT YOUR NEWS —Send us your stories and photos for future newsletter issues. Contact Erin Nash at erin@nafb.com or phone 816/431-4032, x 107. *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*.

#