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by Larry A. Quinn

For NAFB's 70th year, we are launching this column to acknowledge the work of today's farm broadcasters in our continued service to farmers, ranchers and rural citizens. To me, one of the best ways to describe what we do is "airing on the side of agriculture." From the first days of farm broadcasting, our predecessors not only reported news, markets and other helpful information, but they were advocates for their listeners who tilled the soil, milked the cows, grew the crops and raised the livestock, while also leading their churches and communities in their spare time. We want this column to be filled with your stories that advance the NAFB's Mission: "To lead, promote and support growth in agricultural and rural lifestyle broadcasting for the benefit of our members, audience and industry."



FCC COMMISSIONER LAUDS WISCONSIN AM STATION... While in the Nation's capital for Washington Watch, **Brian Winnekins** (WRDN, Reel Country 1430 AM, Durand, WI) sought and scheduled a meeting with FCC Commissioner **Ajit Pai**. "Brian talked to me about the invaluable service WRDN provides to the people in and around Durand and about some of the problems he faces," said the commissioner. "Brian also gave me a folder full of letters. The first letter described some of his ideas for improving the AM band." The rest were letters from Durand citizens expressing their gratitude to Brian and his wife, Karla, for buying the license to WRDN and bringing it back on the air in 2012, after five years of radio silence.

Commissioner Pai said, "These letters had a strong impact on me." He added, "It's no secret that I'm a fan of AM radio. And it's no revelation that I'd like the Federal Communications Commission to start an initiative to revitalize the AM band. I hope that the words of these Wisconsinites, along with the everyday hard work of AM operators, like Brian and **Karla Winnekins**, help illustrate why it's important for us to do so. There are so many people in the Durands of America who could benefit from that effort."

"To have a commissioner who is willing to listen is a great opportunity to benefit rural radio," Brian said. Stations need to relate to their community, he added. "If you care about your community, they will care about you." WRDN is a family operation. Karla sells advertising and their daughter helps out, too. Brian recalled that they wrote their first business plan as they were driving to the Kansas City NAFB Convention in 2009. They moved to Durand in 2010 and bought the station license in 2011. Through donated equipment and help from the community, they returned the station to the air a year later. Brian credits NAFB colleagues for encouraging them to proceed. Even though agriculture is the primary industry of Durand, Brian has proven that farm

broadcasters are also known for airing on the side of their communities.

WEATHER IS A CENTRAL TOPIC...in any agricultural discussion. Farmers often greet each other with, "Did you get any rain last night?" This year has been no exception. **Tom Steever** (Brownfield Ag News, Jefferson City, MO) said that much of the topsoil moisture has been recharged with recent rains in his network coverage area, but subsoil is still deficient in some areas. In his hometown area of southeast South Dakota, planted crops were threatened by ponding water in some fields. As a result, the corn crop ranges from barely breaking the surface to knee high or higher. Not much crop damage was measured from passing storms in Missouri and Iowa, but farm buildings were destroyed in affected areas.

As to the notion of "Airing on the Side of Agriculture," Tom says that because we are journalists first, we balance advocacy with accuracy in airing our reports. "We make listeners more comfortable because we speak their language. We cover our stories with knowledge and understanding and can differentiate what truly is a story and what is not."

OKLAHOMA DROUGHT WAS BROKEN...in most of the state by May storms that drew national attention, but some fields in the Panhandle are still listed in the "exceptional drought" category (including my own wheat acreage). The state's wheat crop often defies any "guesstimates" of yields at harvest time. **Mike Dain** (Clear Channel Networks, Oklahoma City, OK) said that yields in southwestern areas ranged from 5 to 15 bushels per acre with isolated reports of 25 to 30 bushels per acre. Further north, where more moisture was received, yields ranged from 30 to 60 bushels per acre.

Tornados and thunderstorms left several thousand acres of farm and ranch land west of Oklahoma City littered with debris. Two farm wives organized volunteers for a "Field of TEAMS" effort to clear land for harvest and for future use. Mike said the Oklahoma City West Livestock Auction facility was 'wiped out.' Persistent drought has increased acreage of canola to an estimated 250,000 acres in Oklahoma and Kansas. Used primarily for oil production, canola crops are being rotated with wheat in one of every three years. Feed byproducts are used for dairy feed.

"Oklahoma, where the wind comes sweepin' down the plain," is using that wind to turn an increasing number of large wind turbines that line the hilltops in northwest areas. Wind generation is not new to Oklahoma. On our family farm, my grandparents used a small wind charger to generate electricity that was stored in batteries to light the farm house after sundown. This was before rural electrification reached the area in the late 1940s.

Mike has been with Clear Channel Networks for 13 years. Prior to that he was with Quinstar Radio Network in Enid, OK, and with Mid America Ag Network in Wichita, KS.

A FOOD DIALOGUE...was hosted by the U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance in Chicago on June 19, reports **Susan Littlefield** (KZEN, Columbus, NE). She said the forum helped farmers and ranchers explain in layman's terms why they do what they do in raising animals and growing crops. Susan and Rita Frazer (RFD Radio Network, Bloomington, IL) represented NAFB at this event. Susan said that her "takeaway" was that it is important to be open and honest with consumers and to use understandable language in communicating. She also interviewed **Ellie Krieger** of Food Network's "Healthy Appetite" who was among the participants.

Also, Susan is participating in an effort by volunteer farm women who believe consumers aren't getting the real story about American agriculture. CommonGround is a group of volunteer farm women who are meeting and greeting consumers at local grocery stores to educate them with what really happens on the farm. It's a

conversation based on their personal experience as farmers, but also on science and research. Susan is enjoying the firsthand contact with consumers.

County fair time is coming for Susan. She will be doing her markets one day from the sheep and goats barn and another day from the cattle show. Her on-location coverage will let her observe her three children's showing of their sheep, cattle, broilers and rabbits. In her spare time, Susan is Vice President of NAFB.

FROM MISSOURI TO NASHVILLE... goes **Janet Adkison** (formerly Farm Director at KMZU, Carrollton, MO) to be a market news reporter for RFD-TV and Rural TV and as a radio host for a new SiriusXM Rural Radio channel. Janet began work in her new assignment on April 15. She will be hosting NAFB Report on SiriusXM radio as well as doing regular market reporting. On TV, she is one of the co-hosts of Market Day Report, and she joins **Mark Oppold** for the Rural Evening News. Janet began her farm broadcasting career with the Arkansas Radio Network (Little Rock, AR). After graduation from Missouri State University in agricultural communications, she joined the Brownfield Network (Jefferson City, MO) for four years and moved on to KFRM (Clay Center, KS) for a year before becoming Farm Director for the past seven years at KMZU. Janet grew up on a farm and sharpened her public speaking skills as a Missouri FFA State Officer. In this year of her new opportunity, she also serves as NAFB's President-Elect and is Program Chair for the 2013 NAFB Convention.

LET US HEAR FROM YOU...so we can share your stories of service to your listeners. Contact me at larryaquinn@verizon.net or call me at 703-819-6532.

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