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by Larry A. Quinn

ILLINOIS AGRICULTURE BUILDING NAMED FOR JOHN R. BLOCK...

A crowd of more than 1,000 people packed the Orr Building in August on *Ag Day* at the Illinois State Fairgrounds to celebrate Illinois' number one industry. The morning started off with a breakfast, featuring the dedication of the Illinois Department of Agriculture administration building as the **John R. Block Building**. Illinois HB 5540, sponsored by **State Senator Darin LaHood** and **State Representative Don Moffitt**,



named the administration building after **John Rusling Block**, the only Illinois agriculture director to become U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. John Block said he was both “excited and humbled” that the Illinois Department of Agriculture building now bears his name. He said this would never have been possible without past **Illinois Governor James R. Thompson** naming him Illinois Director of Agriculture, which preceded his being appointed U.S. Secretary of Agriculture by **President Ronald Reagan**. Secretary Block actively participates in NAFB as an allied industry member and was awarded the Dix Harper Meritorious Service Award in 2000.



LIVE COVERAGE FROM MINNESOTA STATE FAIR...

Farm Director **Joe Gill** (KASM, 1150 AM, Albany, MN) broadcast “live” from the Minnesota State Fair this year at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. He spoke with Minnesota Ag Commissioner **Dave Frederickson**. “We spoke about many issues including a recent trade trip to Mexico, Avian Influenza, pollinators and more,” Joe said. “The Minnesota State Fair is truly a ‘farm fair,’ he added. “The *Princess Kay of the Milky Way*

kicked off the 12 days of the fair, and agriculture was highlighted with many different events such as: FFA Day, Minnesota Cooks Day sponsored by the Minnesota Farmers Union, Oink Day and

much, much more. From seeing animals being led around the streets of the fair to glass after glass of cold milk being consumed at the All-You-Can-Drink Milk stand, agriculture once again took center stage at the 2015 Great Minnesota Get-Together,” he said.

Another interview that **Joe Gill** conducted at the state fair was with Minnesota Pork Communications Director **Theresa Twohey** in the swine barn.



FOR NAFB PRESIDENT SUSAN LITTLEFIELD...It's been a busy summer and early fall. “From watching three kids show livestock at the county fair to finishing up the season at the Nebraska State Fair, it’s been packed with family memories,” Susan said. “All three kids show sheep and my son, Paul, shows hogs as well,” she explained. “I got the chance to announce again this year at the Nebraska State Fair for the 4-H and FFA sheep and goat shows. The FFA Sheep Staff took



it a step further, and we are starting to use #TeamSheep with the hopes of over the year promoting the show for FFA members.” (Susan is shown here with TeamSheep composed of Nebraska FFA Advisors who run the sheep show at the state fair.) New this year, the state fair added the Open Class Sheep Show announcing to Susan’s calendar. “It was great to be able to congratulate so many of my friends as they

showed. At one point I would announce a class and run across the show ring to grab a sheep, show it, then announce the class winners and next class and grab another sheep!” In mid-September, Susan attended Husker Harvest Days. “It was a great show but a bit windy. I broadcast from our KZ Country Cabin, and there was more than once that farmers joked it was a good thing I wasn't in Kansas and looking for Auntie Em!” She conducted interviews with exhibitors, commodity groups, producers and the Nebraska State Patrol with a focus on harvest safety. (At right, Susan talks with **Trooper Bill Price** about harvest safety for both agricultural producers and those non-ag drivers on the roads.) **ABOUT HER YEAR AS PRESIDENT...**“I was told



that my year being President of NAFB would fly by. I wish I could say it was slow as I have enjoyed being on the road representing NAFB and catching up with members at a variety of different events and meetings. I am looking forward to catching up with everyone in KC in November!”

ZIMMCOMM NEW MEDIA TRAVELS TO ITALY...The @AgriBlogger and @FarmPodcaster (aka **Chuck** and **Cindy Zimmerman**) had the opportunity to visit Expo Milano 2015 in Italy during September with New Holland Agriculture and farmers and ag journalists from around the world.



Africa – with two from Italy. (Cindy and Chuck in front of the New Holland Sustainable Farm Pavilion at Expo Milano 2015.) “It was such a great opportunity to see the similar challenges farmers face around the world,” Chuck said. “Nearly all of them said that, just like here in the



The Expo is the current version of the World’s Fair. This was Chuck’s third visit as part of the New Holland Expo sponsorship. The New Holland “Heroes and Bloggers Days” included nine of the ten farmers chosen by the company to represent agriculture in their “Seeds of Life” series display at the Sustainable Farm Pavilion at the expo. The farmers came from Brazil, Canada, England, France, Germany, Russia, and South Africa – with two from Italy. (Cindy and Chuck in front of the New Holland Sustainable Farm Pavilion at Expo Milano 2015.) “It was such a great opportunity to see the similar challenges farmers face around the world,” Chuck said. “Nearly all of them said that, just like here in the United States, they are unappreciated and even vilified by the non-farming public in their homelands.” The event included a chance to interact with the farmers and journalists from their respective countries, visit the expo, and enjoy some great Italian wining and dining. Chuck and Cindy interviewed most of the farmers and did features about them on AgWired.com. (At left, Chuck interviews Zimbabwe farmer **Gerry Manuel**, one of the New Holland Heroes campaign farmers.) After it was over, Chuck and Cindy headed to Florence and the Tuscany region of Italy where they visited a “lovely”

vineyard and winery in Chianti for lunch and a tour. “That was the most relaxing part of the trip,” said Chuck, who really appreciates a fine Black Rooster Chianti. “We had the chance to sample several top notch wines and order some to be shipped home.” (Chuck and Cindy at Poggio Amorelli winery in Italy’s Tuscany region.) The trip concluded with a visit to Rome, which is one of the couple’s favorite cities. Unfortunately, they were not able to see the Pope, who left for Cuba the day they arrived, but Cindy headed off to DC the next day so she could see him there and get the papal blessing on a bag full of religious articles they bought in Rome. Two days after returning from Italy, Chuck headed to Canada for the Canadian Farm Writers Federation meeting, and in mid-October the two will be traveling to New Zealand and Australia with the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists (IFAJ).





THE TRUTH ABOUT WHEAT...The Oklahoma Wheat Commission teamed with OETA-TV (Oklahoma Educational Television Authority) to produce a 30-minute TV show, *The Truth About Wheat*. **Ken Root** (Iowa Agribusiness Radio Network, Dyersville, IA) was contacted by the Oklahoma Wheat Commission and **Jim Reese**, Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture to serve as moderator for the informational broadcast.

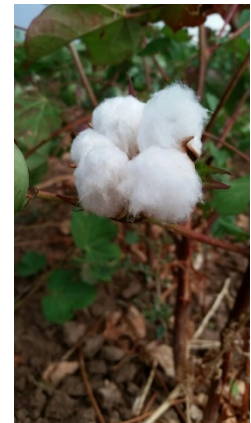


(Shown at the recording of *The Truth About Wheat* are, from left, **Ken Root**, and panelists, **Sara Olsen**, **Julie Miller-Jones** and **Brett Carver**.)

“The goal was to bring in a farmer, wheat breeder and dietitian to give the facts about wheat and primarily to address Celiac's disease and those who wish to have a diet that is gluten- free. The panel did a very good job of describing the genetics of wheat and how we have not changed it from the wheat of 100 years ago except in making the milling and baking qualities better. The dietitian said that about 3% of people, or less, have Celiac's disease, but many think they feel better when they eat less gluten products. The farmer gave her concerns about a shrinking market and what she would do if wheat were unprofitable to grow.” Ken thought the program was worthwhile as it put a science base under a cultural phenomenon. “People do ‘fad’ diets all the time and most of them have an impact on agriculture, good or bad. The efforts to vilify wheat are unfortunate, but this type of behavior ebbs and flows so all commodities should prepare for it.” Ken reflects, “I remember the Atkins diet of the late 1980's and into the 1990's. Beef was king! People ate way too much protein. Then the low carb diets that still exist and now the gluten free diets. Aren't we fortunate that we can pick and choose our foods as we try to lose weight and feel better!”



LARGE COTTON CROP EXPECTED IN TEXAS...Producers are expecting the largest cotton crop since 2010 this year if weather continues to cooperate, reports **Tony St. James** (All Ag Network, KDDD and KFLP, Floydada, TX). The Texas High Plains is the largest cotton growing region in the United States, and Lubbock is the hub of activity. Cotton farmers are expected to start defoliating (killing the crop) in early October, which begins the harvest process. "It appears some of the best cotton this year will come from the Dumas area in the Texas Panhandle." He adds, "Speaking of harvest, corn and sorghum harvest is underway. Corn has done really well this year, and sorghum has, too. For sorghum, the market experienced a downturn a month ago as domestic supplies ran out and the Chinese took a break. They are now back in the market, and prices should move back into a positive-basis compared to corn in the next few weeks." The biggest issue facing sorghum growers in Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas will be the sugarcane aphid. "The cost of control of the aphid at harvest is eating into profits which has frustrated growers. We can expect some sugarcane aphid-resistant varieties on the market next year." On the livestock scene, packers have been "in the red for quite some time, but it appears as though they may be moving to the black soon – with the recent drop in feeder prices," Tony said. "Of course, it will come at a cost to another segment of the cattle industry." Good and timely rains earlier this year have led to a good hay crop, Tony reports. "Heading into the winter feeding months, we may see a lot of alfalfa staying in the region - something we haven't seen in more than four years." Floydada, TX, claims to be the Pumpkin Capital USA – not to be confused with Morton, IL – the Pumpkin Capital of the World. "This year, more than 75,000 pumpkins, squash and ornamental gourds are being delivered to the Dallas Arboretum & Botanical Gardens for their annual award-winning Pumpkin Patch display and village. It's been recognized by Fodor's as one of America's Best *Pumpkin* Festivals," Tony said.





WYXY INTERN...NICOLE CHANCE

is a sophomore studying agricultural communications at University of Illinois. This past summer, she worked as an intern for **Gale Cunningham** (WYXY-FM, Champaign, IL). About Gale, Nicole said. "His passion for the agriculture industry is one that is hard to put into words. His unceasing dedication to FFA and 4-H clubs is just the beginning of many contributions he has made to the youth in both Illinois and Indiana." Nicole continued, "Gale cares about each and every one of the people he interviews and his goal is to provide content that will allow listeners to be excited and encouraged about the

industry they represent." Nicole, Gale, and another intern, **Taylor Hardy**, traveled to different county fairs throughout the summer and interviewed 4-H'ers as well as members of Extension and the fair board. Also, they provided hourly market reports throughout the week. "My favorite part was staying back in the studio doing the hourly market reports and analysis," she said. "While reading and analyzing the numbers from the Chicago Board of Trade, I saw how quickly commodities can shift. I remember a specific day when the bean market shot up a whopping 60 cents after the monthly June USDA report came out." June had been a bad month for east central Illinois as well as west central Indiana with rain that just seemed to never stop. "Those numbers on that report reflected those conditions and what happened in the marketplace at that specific time. It was that day that I began to realize how important Gale's job really is." She concludes, "I am so appreciative that I had the opportunity to intern with Gale and WYXY Classic this summer. Through this experience I have gained a deep respect and admiration for a man who is not just another radio personality, but the heart and soul of the Region's Ag Force." Raised on a swine and crops farm near Lebanon, IN, Nicole's background in raising and showing pigs included participation in both 4-H and FFA. Presently, at University of Illinois, she works as an assistant in communications to the College of ACES (Agriculture/Consumer/Education/Studies). Upon graduation, she aspires to pursue a career with the National Swine Registry or a breed association. "Her love and passion for agriculture is very evident in her appetite to share the story of the livestock industry and the rural lifestyle that she grew up in and continues to thrive in. She represents what an NAFB Internship is all about, and hopefully she will be able to attend National NAFB Convention in November as a student member," Gale said.



JAHNKE LEADS TOUR TO GERMANY AND AUSTRIA... In September, Pam Jahnke (WOZN/Q106 Radio, Madison, WI) led a 33-member group on a 10-day tour of local farms in Germany and Austria. Most of the tour participants were either still actively farming, retired farmers or people that grew up on a farm. The group is shown in front of a five-star hotel that attracts its clientele with a stable of 22 Lipizzaner horses and 28 Fleckvieh milking dairy animals. Hotel guests there can ride the horses or watch in the riding arena open to the lobby. The hotel's restaurant allows people to enjoy their meal while watching the cows being milked. The farm/hotel was outside of Kitzbuhel, Austria. Pam said, "Farmers there are trying to acclimate to the world marketplace since the EU has removed many of their previous subsidies. Most that we visited with were trying to come up with value-added options on their farming operations to try and offset the subsidy losses."



Pam walks and talks with a farmer on his Brown Swiss dairy farm in Germany about 45 minutes from Munich. She is busy this week broadcasting from the World Dairy Expo. She began her broadcasts from the Expo the day before it opened. The show officially began on September 29.



PAST PRESIDENT ADDRESSES AG SENIORS GROUP...Janet Adkison, NAFB Past President, and Washington Bureau Chief for RFD-TV and Rural Radio, spoke September 21 to the Ag Seniors luncheon meeting held at the national headquarters of the American Farm Bureau Federation in Washington, DC. Janet gave updates about NAFB and described recent changes to studio operations of RFD-TV (Nashville, TN) to this group of retired agricultural executives who served in key positions of USDA or commodity and agricultural policy groups. Ag Seniors meet once a month in downtown Washington to explore latest happenings in agricultural policy or the agricultural industry. **Larry Quinn** is a regular participant with this group.

WE WANT YOUR NEWS...We'd like to hear your stories and receive your photos to share your experiences when *Airing on the Side of Agriculture*. Contact me at larryaquinn@verizon.net or call me 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."