



Volume 3, Number 11, November 2, 2015

by Larry A. Quinn



**WHEAT HARVEST DOCUMENTARY FILM WINS REGIONAL EMMY AWARD**—Film maker and NAFB allied industry member **Conrad Weaver** of ConjoStudios, LLC (Emmitsburg, MD) reports that his 2014 documentary the *Great American Wheat Harvest* film received a Mid-America Regional Emmy Award for *Best Documentary – Cultural*. “The Great American Wheat Harvest is a story about American harvesters who risk everything to put food on our tables. Each year they travel from Texas north across the Western Plains harvesting wheat and other crops that feed the world. The film follows their journey and tells their stories,” Conrad said. The film aired on WQPT (Quad

Cities PBS) this past February, and qualified to be submitted for the Emmy Award nomination. As one of 19 regional chapters of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, the Mid-America Chapter is a standard-bearer for excellence in the television broadcasting industry and the gatekeepers of the prestigious regional Emmy Awards. It’s the first Emmy Award nomination and win for Weaver. "It's an incredible honor to be recognized in this manner. It truly was unexpected! First, I want to thank my family: my wife, **Jodi**, and children, **Laken** and **Spencer**, who supported me throughout the four years of production that went into making this film. Without their support and love, I couldn't have worked on a project like this! I also want to thank all of our sponsors who helped make this film possible and the staff at WQPT for airing the film on their PBS station. And last but certainly not least, I want to thank the harvesters who took a risk and allowed me to document their lives and work. I'm truly blessed to call them my friends," he said. Conrad is currently working on a new documentary film called *Thirsty Land*. It’s the story about the drought in the American West and its impact on agriculture, communities, and the environment. *Thirsty Land* is expected to be released in late 2016. Photos and videos are available on the *Thirsty Land* Facebook page, or go to [www.thirstylandmovie.com](http://www.thirstylandmovie.com).



## HOOSIER AG TODAY AWARDS COMMUNICATIONS SCHOLARSHIP

—At the 2015 Indiana 4-H Congress in October, **Gary Truitt**, President of *Hoosier Ag Today (HAT)*, presented the Indiana 4-H Foundation Communications Scholarship to **Emily Clark**, a 10-year 4-H member from Warrick County. Held at the State Fairgrounds, the 4-H Congress attracted more than 90 of Indiana's top 4-H youth for a day of training and achievement awards. Emily said 4-H has changed her life. "It has changed me as a person, especially my communications skills. I am a quiet person, but 4-H taught me how to express myself in a positive way." She is a college freshman at Samford University in Birmingham, AL, where she is majoring in communications. About the scholarship, Gary Truitt said, "Fostering good communication skills in today's youth, especially those in rural Indiana, is an important investment in the future for our state." HAT has been supporting the 4-H Foundation by sponsoring the communications scholarship for seven years. *Hoosier Ag Today* serves rural communities across the state via its local radio affiliates and, over the years, has recognized youth from these communities for their accomplishments in 4-H. "More than just a radio network, we are invested in the future growth and success of Hoosier rural communities," Gary said.



**DAN SKELTON ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT**—Long-time KICD AM/FM (Spencer, IA) Farm Director **Dan Skelton** announced that he will retire at the end of this year. Dan's career with KICD radio started in 1997 as a farm broadcaster and editor. In 2000, Dan became Farm Director. For nearly 19 years, area listeners have relied on his voice for the latest market information and ag-related news locally and nationally. **Dave Putnam**, President and General Manager of the Spencer Radio Group, said "Dan's knowledge of agriculture and his relationships with other professionals in the ag industry has been a tremendous asset to KICD and our listeners. He is a true professional and a class act!" Dan has been involved in numerous organizations and committees over the years. He is a member of the Clay County Farm Bureau and Clay County Growers, active with the Clay County Ag Committee, which helps plan the Northwest Iowa Ag Outlook Show in Spencer.

Also, he serves on the Executive Committee of the Clay County Fair Association and the Administrative Council of the First United Church in Sioux Rapids. Dan said his fondest memory working at KICD was in 2001 during an on-air fundraiser for the Clay County Regional Events Center. "**Troy Leininger** and I were both driving tractors on opposite routes soliciting funds to build the Events Center. Troy beat me back to Spencer, but only because I stopped at my mother's house in Sioux Rapids to pick up a tray of cookies!" Dan and his wife, **Karen**, have operated their family farm in southern Clay County for the past 35 years. They have four grown children and nine grandchildren. Dan is a graduate of Iowa State University with a B.S. in agricultural communications. About his tenure at KICD, Dan said, "I planned to stay three to five years and move on to something else. It's been nearly 19 years, but that time has finally come. I came to love the job because it was always challenging, always rewarding, never boring, and it was a good fit with my farming operation. I've enjoyed working with farmers, commodity groups, university experts in agriculture and, yes, even politicians in helping to tell agriculture's story. I have also very much enjoyed working with farm broadcasters from around the country." About his future plans, Dan said, "I hope to have more time and do a better job farming for the next few years, and I'll continue to stay active in local ag organizations. Beyond that, time will tell."



**RECORD YIELDS OF SUGAR BEETS IN MICHIGAN**—**Terry Henne** (WSGW, Saginaw, MI) reports the sugar beet harvest in Michigan is approaching record yields. "So far, processing has been going without a hitch. Tonnage of harvested beets on average has been running more than 29 tons, which has never happened in 100+ years," Terry said. The early harvest in Michigan generated more than 30% harvested acres. Harvest began August 20, the earliest ever in the 100-year



Michigan sugar beet history. Weather was very favorable with only a few warmer-than-desirable days to slow harvest. By conclusion of the expected 5 million+ ton season, tons per acre exceeded 31.5 tons, which is a record. With a record wheat yield, near record soybean yield, above average dry bean harvest, and corn harvest that was as good as ever, Terry said, "Michigan farmers had a very good year." Record yields helped offset low commodity prices. This is the 40th year of farm broadcasting for Terry on WSGW, and he will be attending his 40th consecutive NAFB Convention in Kansas City this month.



**LISTENING TO RADIO ON HIS GRANDPARENTS' FARM—** Duane Murley (KWMT, Fort Dodge, IA) developed his interest in farm radio as he listened to AM 540 KWMT on the tractor radio while baling hay, cultivating, plowing late at night, or whatever he was doing on the tractor (or combine). Duane was born and raised in Sac City, IA, where his parents, two brothers and their families still reside. Today, Duane calls Rockwell City his home. He lives there with his wife, **Darcy**, and daughter, **Brandi**, who graduated last May from South Dakota State University in Brookings and is now pursuing her master's degree in International Agriculture at Oklahoma State University. Brandi has been accepted into The Peace Corps and will be leaving for Uganda for 27 months. Besides his farm broadcasting duties, Duane is active on the Rockwell City Fire Department as well as other local organizations. Duane joined the staff at KWMT in 1985. With encouragement from longtime NAFB member **Doug**

**Cooper**, Duane started doing the markets when farm directors were away from the station. He became Farm Director in August 2012. He also serves as KWMT Program Director. Often, Duane can be found helping Rockwell City area farmers during the harvest season and driving his 1946 or 1951 Farmall H on area tractor rides.



At left, **Duane Murley** interviews **Ray Crilley** of Crilleys Chuck Wagon, the food sponsor for his recent Feed the Farmer activity. At right, Duane combines soybeans for Carver Family Farms this harvest season.



#### **WEEKLY NEWSPAPER JOB LED TO RADIO CAREER—**

**Susan Risinger** joined the WJAG/KEXL & KQKX staff in 1989 as assistant news director and has been the farm director since 1991. “As for how I got into this business,” Susan said, “totally by accident.” She explains, “In 1981, I started working as a typesetter (now an ancient job description) for the weekly newspaper in Neligh, about 35 miles west of Norfolk, NE. After less than a year, I also was doing most of the writing for the paper, the accounts receivable bookkeeping, circulation, and a little advertising sales, too. And part of that job included calling WJAG three times a week to do a five-minute news piece. In 1989, WJAG was looking for an assistant news director. I was one of 84 applicants, and got the job – somehow.” A year later, the farm director left and

Susan was doing fill-in stories in farm news and reading markets in the afternoon while they looked for someone else. “November came around, and we needed someone to go to the NAFB Convention to keep our membership. I got nominated -- and have been the station's farm director ever since (that was November 1991).”

**How did she get her background in agriculture?** “Most of what I know about farming I learned from University of Nebraska-Lincoln extension staff and area farmers,” she said. “My first official year as farm director, we put together a board of farmers, extension personnel and agribusinessmen to advise us on programming -- what should we cover, how should it be presented and what time of day was it best to present that information. They were active for about 18 months while we revamped our farm programming, but many of them are still contacting us regularly with ideas for keeping our product relevant and timely.” In 1992, Susan received the Profitable Agriculture Through Conservation Technology (PACT) Award, and in 2007 she was honored with the New Holland "Oscar in Agriculture." Also, Susan has won numerous Nebraska Associated Press, Nebraska Broadcast Association and Northwest Broadcast News Association awards for agricultural reporting. Susan is a past president of the Nebraska Associated Press Broadcast Association. She has received the media award from the Nebraska Forestry Service and both the media award and the meritorious public service award from the Nebraska Cooperative Extension Association.

**About current conditions?** Susan reports, harvest is moving along rapidly. “Field fires have been a little bit of an issue since we have had lots of sunshine and warm weather, but little rain, since about the third week in September. Susan is working now on their January farm show. “We usually have about 3,000 farmers over the two days of the show, and more than 120 vendors. We offer educational programming, and that's what I am working on right now. And it looks like **Chip Flory** will bring his *Market Rally* program for at least one day – we are still working on the details of that.”



#### **INTERNSHIP LED TO FARM BROADCASTING JOB—**

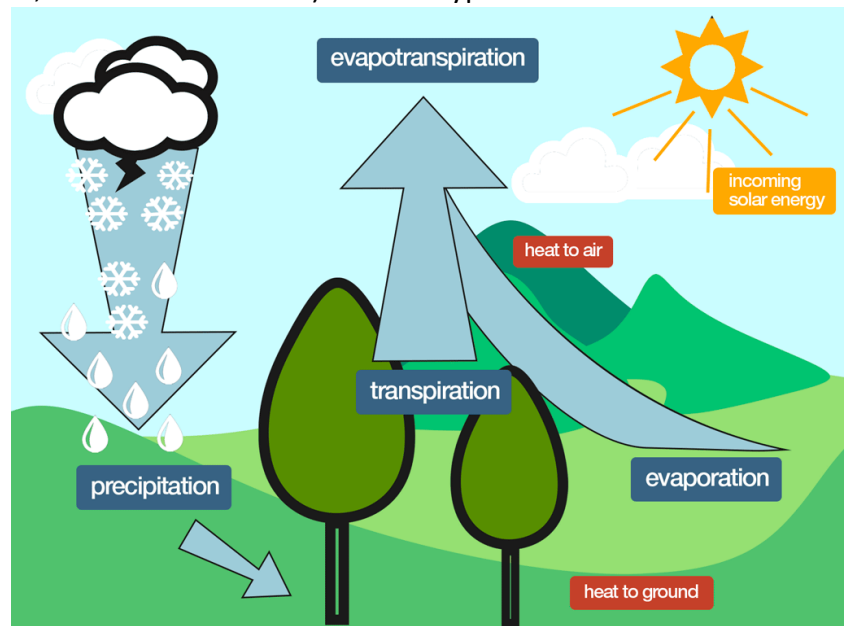
**Jesse Stewart** (KGLO AM-1300, Mason City, IA) was hired as a farm broadcaster in May 2013. He earned a BA in Multimedia Journalism from Simpson College in Indianola, IA. “I actually kind of fell into farm broadcasting by accident. I had never considered it as a career in the industry until having some conversations with some of the staff I knew in Mason City. I had interned with the station the summer before my senior year and got to know the whole staff. When my predecessor left, he along with some others reached out knowing that I would be looking for a job in radio. They thought I would be a great fit. Now, almost two and a half years later I am still doing it. I think they were right!” He added, “Getting up every day and reporting on the world of agriculture is very enjoyable for me. I wear many hats in the

building, including Program Director for our top 40 country station now, but I will never let my passion or drive subside for being a farm broadcaster. The service I am providing to our producers in the area is extremely important and appreciated. I hear it from them anytime I am out in the field.” Jesse reports that the past few weeks have been busy. “We have been out doing our Feed the Farmer program and fall harvest reports during harvest. One of my last Feed the Farmer stops was especially rewarding as I helped an elderly producer box up some meals for him and the others working on his operation. I carried them out for him to his tractor and handed them up to him as he settled back in the cab. The appreciation he showed for that gesture was very heart-warming to me.” Jesse adds, “I continue to grow and learn everyday as a farm broadcaster.” Jesse looks forward to his future as a farm broadcaster and aims to continue bringing key information to his KGLO listeners in years to come.



**HOW TRANSPIRATION RELATES TO CROP IRRIGATION**—Patrick Cavanaugh (California Ag Today Network, Clovis, CA) said to respond to current debates on water use by agriculture their radio network is educating listeners about transpiration of moisture by plants. Almonds and all other crops transpire most water they take up, he said. **Allan Fulton**, an Irrigation and Water Resources Farm Advisor with UC Cooperative Extension in Redbluff, CA, has been their network’s resource person. Fulton said, “The truth is, plant transpiration is a necessary biological process. The water cools the tree so it stays healthy, the water exits the leaves, and the special cells that the water exits are called stomata. While they are open, allowing water to transpire, carbon in the form of carbon dioxide is coming into the plant to be used in photosynthesis, making sugars and carbohydrates. That’s what is used to make the fruits and the nuts that we eat.” If plants are not adequately watered allowing them to transpire, they don’t get enough carbon dioxide causing defective fruits and nuts (smaller, shriveled or cracked) that the typical consumer does not want to buy. Fulton continues, “As we converted to pressurized systems, micro sprinklers, and mini sprinklers, we have a lot more control over how much water we put on at any one time.” It is much like when rainfall comes. Water applied can be measured in tenths, or 1 or 2 inches at most. “We do not put water out in acre-feet, or depths of 4 to 6 inches at a time anymore. As a result, the water doesn’t penetrate the soil very deeply, maybe only

1 or 2 feet each irrigation. We are very efficient with the water, but we have to irrigate very frequently because we put it out in small doses. That is why we see irrigation systems running a lot. So, definitely we are using systems that try to stretch water and not waste it.” Fulton explains, “Most of the time, at least 90% of the water that we apply is being transpired – taken up through the tree and being transpired so that photosynthesis can happen. We do get a little bit of loss from surface evaporation from the wet soil, but we try to control that with smaller wetting patterns or with drip confined wetting patterns. When you think about it, during the heat of the day in the afternoon, many systems don’t run because of energy costs. There are incentives not to pump in the middle of the afternoon. Those that do try to confine the wetted area to limit evaporation. The hot hours of a day make up about 4 hours of a 24-hour cycle so we irrigate at night-time or in the early morning hours to lessen evaporative loss.” With his educational effort about transpiration, Patrick’s goal is to improve the public understanding of why water is so critical to producing the food we eat.



1 or 2 feet each irrigation. We are very efficient with the water, but we have to irrigate very frequently because we put it out in small doses. That is why we see irrigation systems running a lot. So, definitely we are using systems that try to stretch water and not waste it.” Fulton explains, “Most of the time, at least 90% of the water that we apply is being transpired – taken up through the tree and being transpired so that photosynthesis can happen. We do get a little bit of loss from surface evaporation from the wet soil, but we try to control that with smaller wetting patterns or with drip confined wetting patterns. When you think about it, during the heat of the day in the afternoon, many systems don’t run because of energy costs. There are incentives not to pump in the middle of the afternoon. Those that do try to confine the wetted area to limit evaporation. The hot hours of a day make up about 4 hours of a 24-hour cycle so we irrigate at night-time or in the early morning hours to lessen evaporative loss.” With his educational effort about transpiration, Patrick’s goal is to improve the public understanding of why water is so critical to producing the food we eat.

**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*. **Please note the change in my email address.** Contact me at [larryaquinn@outlook.com](mailto:larryaquinn@outlook.com) or call me at 703-819-6532.

*Airing on the Side of Agriculture* is included in the blog section of [NAFB.com](http://NAFB.com). For an archive copy of any past issues, go to Membership and click on "Airing on the Side of Agriculture."