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by Larry A. Quinn



RECORD COLD AND SNOWFALL...

"February has been the coldest month on record for most of the Northeast. Many places across the region have endured record snowfall as well," reports **Tom Cassidy**, (Ag Radio Network, Inc., Barneveld, NY). "Locally, we haven't seen a temperature above freezing since January 28, and there are none in the forecast. Snow can be moved, pushed or piled but there isn't much one can do to prepare for the

wicked, bitter cold," he added. "Water freezing has been a big problem on farms. Many places have had to dig for new water lines (and then insulate them) to their water source." Fire companies are trucking water to some farms; bulk milk trucks are back-hauling water to others. Rural municipalities are having record numbers of water and sewer main breaks and frozen service entrances. "These cold temperatures are a true testament to the hardiness of farmers," Tom said. "Livestock need to be fed, milked, cleaned up after and cared for, not to mention the extra work required in the deep freeze like equipment that doesn't want to work and snow to move." (Pictured above: Finndale Farms which are run by Tom's cousins).

Tom's mother's maiden name was Finn. "I have never been a part of that business, other than sharing ownership of some equipment and an occasional swap of labor." Tom's farm neighbored theirs, and they purchased his farm in 2010. "My farm was Oseteadoqua (Oneida for "land between hills"), and the facilities no longer house much livestock," Tom said. Snow has been removed from the Finndale Farms' roofs twice this winter.



(**Tom** and his wife, **Holly**, are pictured by snow piles in the parking lot next to their Ag Radio Network office.) Those in the horticultural field are gearing up for planting season. Many are starting their crops inside. Cold temperatures have made keeping greenhouses at appropriate temperatures difficult and very costly, Tom reports. "Maple syrup production looks like it could have a tremendous year. The deep snow is making it challenging to set out taps. The cold temperatures are delaying the sap run. Long range forecasts do predict that March will warm up gradually, with mild days and freezing nights. That looks like ideal weather for an extended run of sap and good quality syrup boiled from it," he explained. "My family has lived in this area for well over 200 years. I am familiar with stories from the past 100, and none of them tell of these conditions. West

Canada River, which runs through land my family farms, is frozen." He had never seen it frozen over until this winter. Tom provides this link to a video of more than 50 people at an Ontario County, NY, dairy removing snow from their buildings: <https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=821703827902217> "I think it is safe to say that most are looking forward to the change of seasons. Thanks for the opportunity to share what is happening in Northeast Agriculture," Tom concludes.



PENNSYLVANIA FARM SHOW...The 2015 Pennsylvania Farm Show, January 9-16, drew an estimated 700,000 people, reports **Dave Williams** (Pennsylvania Farm Country Radio Network, Honesdale, PA). The majority of the attendees were not farmers, but consumers wanting a better understanding of where their food comes from, he added. The show offers the farming community of Pennsylvania the opportunity to help

the general public gain a much better understanding of modern production agriculture. Dave's farm radio network was assisted in its coverage by two interns working throughout the show

for nine days. “They did an outstanding job. Both **Rachel Salera** and **Sara Gregory** were a credit to their college, Delaware Valley College.”



(Right, Rachel Salera conducts farm show interview. Left, Dave Williams shows snow depth in front of his farm's fruit stand.)



Dave said, “For the last six weeks, the weather has been brutal here in the Northeast with temperatures in the minus twenties many nights—making it difficult for livestock farmers as well as for transportation of milk. As I look back to February 2, it looks like our famous Pennsylvania groundhog was right.”

FEB-“BRR”-ARY IN WISCONSIN... “As for the weather, we are glad to be saying goodbye to ‘Feb-brr-ary’. It has been cold with wind chills in that 20-30 degree below-zero range for several days and actual temperatures running below zero,” reports Mike Austin (WTAQ/WDEZ and WFRV-TV, Green Bay, WI). With the exception of a brief respite, February temperatures were averaging 15-20 degrees below normal. “But, farmers have been taking the cold in stride. (Matter of fact, better than that Packer loss to Seattle—the sting of that is still with many of them).” Mike adds, “This is the second year we’ve had a real deep freeze without a lot of snow which is the bigger concern.” He questions how this may impact alfalfa and winter wheat crops. In the counties he covers in northeastern and northcentral Wisconsin, they are running 15-20 inches below normal in snowfall totals. “I’m sure my travels are similar to farm broadcasters throughout the country although I just attended a couple programs that were geared more to this region and this state.” Those were on new animal husbandry law in Wisconsin and dealing with the size and weight of farm equipment on Wisconsin state roads. Other interesting topics were shared at the recent Midwest Manure Summit including manure processing and water recovery systems, manure irrigation, and odor control. Mike said he attended a workshop on soil health by the Natural Resource Conservation Service that “opened a few eyes of local growers on what can be achieved in soil health and increased yields.” He concludes, “All in all, it’s been a very cold, but informative winter.” Mike has been covering agricultural news and events for more than 30 years in northeastern

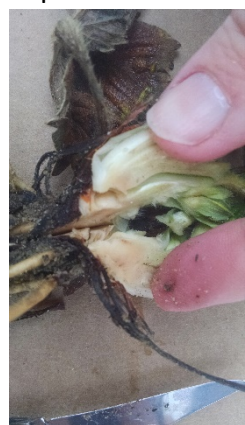


Wisconsin. A graduate of University of Wisconsin-Madison, he began his career in northeastern Iowa before coming to the Fox River Valley of Wisconsin in 1978. In 1980, he began doing agricultural reports on both radio and TV in Green Bay, WI.



In December, Fox Valley Technical College recognized him by re-naming their Ag Communicator Award as the **Mike Austin Ag Communicator of the Year Award**.

WINTER CHALLENGES IN THE CAROLINAS... "The last two weeks in the Carolinas have been challenging to say the least. The winter's excessive rains turned frozen, and North and South Carolina have had three major snow and ice events in the last two weeks," reports **Rhonda Garrison** (Southern Farm Network, Raleigh, NC). "Winter wheat was already struggling under the season's excessive moisture, and cool temperatures are postponing the crop breaking dormancy." She adds, "Many crops have a pink tinge due to micronutrient deficiency. The nutrients are there, but the plants aren't able to absorb them due to the saturated soils." Many



producers planted winter wheat simply as a cover crop, with the thinking that they'd manage it if prices recovered to make it profitable, she explained, but many won't have that choice now. "The strawberry crop is also in peril, and with last week's overnight lows near 0 degrees, freeze damage to the dormant crowns was a given (See photo at left). Many feel the plants will outgrow the damage at this point since they have yet to break dormancy. However, bramble crop growers and peach growers didn't object to the cold weather, as it insured the required number of chilling hours for a good crop come spring and summer," she said. Those chilling hours have been a challenge the past couple of winters. Rows of blueberry bushes (Pictured below on February 26, used with permission from Vollmer Farms, Bunn, NC). Rhonda said gardenias in her home landscape were weighed down with last week's snowfall,



which was about six inches. That brought many trees down, and thousands of homes were left without power.

WINTER EVENTS IN OKLAHOMA...Mike Dain (First Oklahoma Ag/Voice of Southwest Agriculture/Yancey Ag Network, Oklahoma City, OK) reports busy times in January and February on the Southern Plains. Events he's covered include: "Sorghum U" (Perryton, TX), Agrifest Farm Show (Enid, OK), the Red River Crop Conference (which alternates between Altus, OK, and Childress, TX), Canola College (Enid, OK), Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts Oklahoma City, OK), and Oklahoma Pork Congress (Norman, OK).



Mike was in El Reno, OK, January 30, to interview Agriculture Secretary **Tom Vilsack** and Former House Agriculture Committee Chair **Frank Lucas** when they celebrated the one-year anniversary of the signing of the 2014 Farm Bill.

About crop conditions, Mike said, "We learned that the canola crop in Oklahoma and Kansas has come through the winter at this point in fairly good shape, with some variability in stands and condition depending mainly on planting timeframe and moisture availability. The hard red winter wheat crop areas are still in the worst drought conditions in north Texas and southwestern Oklahoma." He adds that surface moisture is good in most areas, but subsurface in many areas is deficient. Timely precipitation is still needed to increase stored moisture for spring to make a crop. "Many producers have pulled their stockers from dual-purpose wheat fields as the first hollow-stem growth stage has been reached. On the plus side, there was a normal percentage of wheat acres being grazed during the fall and winter. (Right, Mike Dain interviews Travis Snaithman, a young farmer from North Central Oklahoma about diversification of crops).



HEINRICH NAMED FARM/RANCH DIRECTOR AT KFGO...Sarah Anne Heinrich began work February 23 as new Farm and Ranch Director at KFGO (Fargo-Moorhead, ND). "I can't tell you how excited I am that Sarah has decided to accept this position," said **Joel Heitkamp**, KFGO Director of Operations, when making the announcement. "Since KFGO first signed on in 1948, farm and agri-business reporting has been a huge priority for us. Farmers and others in agriculture trust us to

bring them this vital information daily. That's why we take it very seriously." For the past seven years, Sarah served as News Farm Broadcaster and Noon Show Anchor at KXMB-TV in Bismarck, ND. "Not only is Sarah a solid reporter, but she has always been part of a farm family and has truly lived the life. She has been a working farmer herself raising cattle, row crops and small grains with her husband, **Richie Heinrich**, at the family ranch near Medina. Sarah's personal experience gives her a unique perspective in understanding the role of today's farmer," adds KFGO News Director **Paul Jurgens**. In response, she said, "I'm extremely excited to join KFGO as the Farm and Ranch Director. I always strive to provide farmers and ranchers with the most up-to-date ag news. I don't just read the markets. I also explain why the markets are doing what they are doing. It's my goal to make sure farmers have the current information they need to make the difficult decisions they often have to make." Sarah's uncle, **Al Gustin**, was among the best known farm reporters in the Dakotas for 45 years, prior to his retirement in 2012. Heinrich also credits her early experiences with 4-H and FFA for further inspiring her to her current career as a farm broadcaster. She still is active in volunteering for both organizations. Sarah said, "I can't think of a better way to give back."

Airing on the Side of Agriculture is now included in the blog section of the new NAFB.com.

Let Us Hear From You.

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.