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by Larry A. Quinn

THE DOAN AWARD GOES TO...During *Washington Watch* (April 27), *The Doan* award, honoring excellence in reporting agriculture, was awarded to **Michelle Rook**, managing farm director at WNAX (Yankton, SD). This is the inaugural year for *The Doan*. Presented by the NAFB Foundation, through a gift from Agri-Pulse Communications, Inc., *The Doan* is named after **Stewart Doan**, a farm broadcaster and senior editor at *Agri-Pulse*, who passed away suddenly in May 2012. He was known for his passion for politics and determination for delivering breaking farm and rural policy news. Doan's reporting on issues affecting farmers and consumers is missed by the entire agriculture community. He served as NAFB president in 1998.



Michelle Rook receives *The Doan* from Senator Pat Roberts (R-Kansas) as Ken Root, NAFB Foundation, and Sara Wyant, Agri-Pulse, join in congratulating her.

Michelle's winning entry titled "Rail Crisis Costs Northwestern Corn Belt Farmers" outlines the crisis, the cost and some solutions – along with the railroads' response. The U.S. agricultural industry was crippled last year during ongoing railcar shortages, due to the oil boom in western North Dakota and other factors. This series helped listeners understand the facts surrounding the railcar shortage and serves as a call to action to reach out to lawmakers and the railroads. Also, judges awarded a *Certificate of Merit* to **Susan Littlefield**, farm director at KZEN, Columbus, NE, for her entry titled "Behind the Chutes," a special report on the rodeo cowboy.



Photo: Michelle Rook and Susan Littlefield



After an active day, Washington Watch participants enjoy a skyline view of the Capitol.



As **Ken Root**, left, introduced Senator **Joni Ernst** (R-Iowa) at an NAFB Washington Watch event, he asked her to autograph his "pig tie." Look for this unique tie in the NAFB Foundation Auction in November.

Orion Samuelson, host of *This Week in Agribusiness*, interviews **Chuck Connor**, CEO, National Council for Farmer Cooperatives at Washington Watch.



FIRST NAFB LEADERSHIP ACADEMY...convened in Washington just prior to *Washington Watch*. Farm News Director **Sabrina Hill** (AgNet West Radio Network, Sanger, CA) wrote about her experience in a blog which we are excerpting here. "This was my first year attending Washington Watch. I was the only representative of California in the group, and it's always fun for me to meet up with cohorts from the Midwest and other areas," she said. "This year was also the inaugural NAFB



leadership class, and I had the honor of being one of the nine people in the class." The NAFB Leadership Academy was developed to help identify members interested in learning about leadership opportunities within the association, and identify future NAFB leaders. "NAFB needs strong leaders in the future," said Tom Brand, NAFB Executive Director. "Washington D.C. and the Washington Watch program, provided for a perfect opportunity to bring future leaders of the association together." NAFB Broadcast Council members participating in the 2015 NAFB Leadership Academy included: **Lorrie Boyer, Tom Cassidy, Micheal Clements, Rusty Halvorsen, Jesse Harding, Sabrina Hill, Lane Nordlund, Ken Rahjes, and Bill Zortman**. The leadership group is shown at the Lincoln Memorial with NAFB President **Susan Littlefield**. "It was an amazing experience...We wrapped up the first day of our class with a trip over to the national monuments. If you want to really cap off a day of bonding, that is the place to go. Each monument meant something different to each of us, and I spent a lot of time watching my fellow group members experiencing the monuments." To read her full blog and see other photos, go to: <http://fromthegoldenwest.com/2015/05/02/agriculture-goes-to-washington-sunday-morning-coming-down/>.

WYANT TO BE HONORED AT NEW YORK CEREMONY...*Agri-Pulse* founder and President **Sara Wyant** will be named to the annual Folio: "Top Women in Media" recognition in the Entrepreneurs category at a June awards ceremony at the Grand Hyatt in New York City. Sara was the only agricultural media professional included in this year's awards, which also honored women from such mainstream media as *Forbes*, *Time* and *The New York Times*. Folio: says the annual list "celebrates the creativity and accomplishments of our female colleagues, sometimes against a glass ceiling, other times against the grain. These women have fearlessly moved their teams, brands, and companies forward, made strides in their respective markets, and created lasting impressions on their colleagues." Folio: is dedicated to providing magazine publishing professionals with the news,



insights, and best practices to keep them in tune with today's media industry trends. She gained her entrepreneurial spirit, along with first-hand knowledge of crop and livestock production from her parents, **Dean** and **Betty Wyant**, while growing up on a farm near Marengo, IA. About her honor, Sara said, "I am very humbled to be selected, along with so many other distinguished entrepreneurs in the media business. It's taken countless hours and a lot of hard work, but ultimately, running my own business has been a labor of love. When I first started *Agri-Pulse* out of my home 11 years ago, I never dreamed that we would have the type of success we enjoy today, with over 5,000 paid subscribers and a web site that's read by policy makers and key agricultural and rural influencers every day." She continued, "I was extremely fortunate to have some very loyal supporters who were willing to write those first subscription checks and encourage their friends to do so, too. Even though I have always been passionate about agricultural policy, I also benefitted from moving into the right space at the right time. *Agri-Pulse* was able to fill a void created when major farm publications and many highly-respected daily newspapers shut down their Washington coverage of farm and rural issues. Of course, I couldn't have done any of this without a very supportive family – my husband **Allan**, and oldest son, **Jason**, are both in the business – and a great staff. **Stewart Doan** was my first hire and his loss was a terrible setback for me – both personally and professionally. But we now have five full-time staff members in Washington, including broadcaster **Spencer Chase**, and five staff members in Camdenton, MO, handling web management, content agreements, sales and advertising."



NEW FARM DIRECTOR...Joe Gangwish, right, will be taking over June 1 for retiring **Mike LePorte**, left, as Farm Director of KRVN and the Rural Radio Network. Mike joined KRVN/Rural Radio Network in October 1990 and was named Farm Director in 1995. Joe reports that he's been with the organization "off-and-on" as Assistant Farm Director since 1997. He returned to the broadcasting team in January 2014 after working three years for a

local cooperative. Other farm broadcasters on the staff include **Shalee Peters** and **Jesse Harding** at KRVN, **Chad Moyer** at KTIC and **Jeanna Jenkins** of KNEB, who begins work this month. KRVN AM/FM in Lexington, NE, KTIC AM/FM in West Point, NE and KNEB AM/FM in Scottsbluff, NE, are the only farmer and rancher-owned radio stations in the U.S. Soon to be added to the Rural Radio Association will be an AM/FM radio station in York, NE. Rural Radio Network powers the ag information at these stations. Other affiliates are located in Nebraska City, NE, and Chadron, NE.

90 YEARS...WJBC-AM (Bloomington, IL), is celebrating its 90th Anniversary this year. **Carrie Muelhling** reports, "While we are doing some special things all year long to mark the milestone, we recently enjoyed



some fun programming on *April Fool's Day* as we brought back a number of former show hosts, reporters and anchors to fill shifts on the air and deliver newscasts throughout the day.” Former WJBC Farm Director **Marla Behrends** and **Carrie** reminisced a bit on the air during the noon hour. Marla was at WJBC from 1995-2002. Carrie became WJBC Agribusiness Director in November 2004. Long-time farm director **Art Sechrest** preceded Marla, and **Jim Sauers** and **Josh St. Peters** filled the role after Marla left for her current job with the Midwest Dairy Association until Carrie began a little more than 10 years ago. **Photo: Marla Behrends, left, and Carrie Muehling, April 1, 2015**



80TH ANNIVERSARY OF BLACK SUNDAY...was observed April 14 in Oklahoma City when more than 30 survivors of the huge dust storm that swept across Oklahoma and propelled dust all the way to the East Coast gathered to remember that day, reports **Ron Hays** (Radio Oklahoma Network, Oklahoma City, OK). “That whole decade was known as the Dirty Thirties, but the Black Sunday event was the proverbial ‘shot heard around the world’ when it came to the Dust Bowl and the desperate need for conservation to counter the massive clouds of dust that enveloped the region. The Oklahoma Conservation Commission, along with the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts and the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service sponsored a panel of those who lived through memorable day to allow them to tell their story. Ron was there to cover the event and said, “Much of our modern Conservation movement, especially here in Oklahoma, has its roots in the hard times of that era.” It's said that a radio reporter gave the name Black Sunday to what proved to be the single worst dust storm to blow through the southern plains in the 1930s. One of the survivors was **Pauline Hodges**, who Ron interviewed for his coverage. As a little girl living in the Panhandle, she remembers April 14,

1935, as a different kind of day. She was almost six years old, and she recalls there were dust storms every day, but none like that "black cloud" that came in that Sunday. "You couldn't see anything," Hodges said. "It was the only day that I remember it was ever that bad." She said her father was convinced the dust storms were caused by plowing of the land. Two months after Black Sunday, Hodges said her family lost everything to bank foreclosure. They lost their farm, their house, all of the machinery and they had to move. "It changed us forever though, in what we did, how we felt and how we had to live and our attitudes," Hodges said. "It probably made better people out of us, but we didn't think that at the time." Oklahoma State Conservationist **Gary O'Neill** said the Dust Bowl was attributed to the dry weather and to the poor soil conservation techniques used at the time. The region had seen 15 - 20 years of prolonged drought, a lot of ground was broken out of prairie grassland into farm land without proper conservation practices. Growing wheat in one of worst droughts this country had ever seen, he said, didn't provide adequate ground cover, and the bare soil was exposed to high winds and dry conditions, which lead to massive dust erosion. Now, 80 years later, Oklahoma continues to deal with severe drought, but the state has not seen the massive dust storms like the 1930s. O'Neill attributes that to farmers learning new techniques of farming, new equipment and the adoption of new technology. **Jason Weller**, current Chief of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, called attention to the anniversary of the establishment of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) as April 27 (the day before when NAFB visited USDA during Washington Watch.) Ron said, "Weller noted the 80th anniversary of Black Sunday was the tipping point in the push to have the service established. Weller agreed with historians that the SCS (now NRCS) came about because of the graphic lesson that Black Sunday taught. Dirt was even seen in Washington from that storm."



LOUISIANA RADIO NETWORK HONORS FARMERS... Taking part in ceremonies honoring the 2015 inductees into the Louisiana Agriculture Hall of Distinction are, from left, Louisiana Radio Network Farm Director **Don Molino**; honoree and Avoyelles Parish farmer **Lucien Laborde**;

Commissioner of Agriculture and Forestry **Dr. Mike Strain**; **Erle Barham**, whose father, **Edwards Barham** of Morehouse Parish, was honored posthumously; honoree and Jeff Davis Parish farmer **Jimmy Hoppe**. Ceremonies were held March 5 in Baton Rouge. The Hall of Distinction honors outstanding contributions to Louisiana agriculture in farming, ranching, forestry, aquaculture, education and agribusiness and is presented by Louisiana Radio Network (LSN) in conjunction with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, and the LSU AgCenter. Founded in 1974, LSN provides 63 radio stations in Louisiana and Mississippi with news, sports and agri-news

NAFB HALL OF FAMER JOHN MC DONALD...was inducted into the Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame May 2 in Murfreesboro, TN. NAFB Executive Director **Tom Brand** responded to a request from the Tennessee Radio Hall of Fame for more information about John, who was 1956 President of the National Association of Television and Radio Farm Directors (NATRFD) and was named to the NAFB Hall of Fame in 1992. He was farm director at WSM (Nashville, TN) and had grown up on a farm in western Tennessee. He was hired by WSM in 1945 and his *Noontime Neighbors* radio show became a mid-day institution all over the mid-South. About the show, it was said that when the dinner bell rang on WSM and John McDonald said it's *Noontime Neighbors*, everyone within 100 miles of Nashville sat down to eat and listen. **John McDonald** was hailed by *Broadcasting* magazine as "America's best known Farm Director" for his work at WSM from the late 1940s through the 1960s. Listeners became familiar with him through his early morning farm report, his work on the Waking Crew and his role as host of the extremely popular *Noontime Neighbors* broadcast. He was in such demand as a commercial spokesman that he commanded a \$3.00 talent fee each time one of his recorded commercials aired. John testified before Congress on several agricultural issues.



DANCE MAN...Mike Hergert (Red River Farm Network, Grand Forks, ND) is shown in "action" shots with his dance partner, **Chelsey Marchand**, at the *Dancing with Special Stars* event in Grand Forks on April 14. Mike said, "It was so fun and fulfilling, as well over \$70,000 was raised for North Dakota Special Olympics. Eleven couples competed in the dance contest. Chelsey is a University of North Dakota student and dance instructor, who helped me a great deal. It was my first experience ever working with a choreographer!" He added, "Chelsey and I, with the help of her family's furniture and appliance business, and the Red River Farm Network, raised nearly \$3,000 for the cause." The link to Mike's site is still active if you wish to make a donation. Go to <http://www.firstgiving.com/fundraiser/MikeHergert/DFSS2015>.



RETIRED MICHIGAN FARM BROADCASTER COVERS URBAN AGRICULTURE...

After retiring from farm broadcasting, **Karl Guenther** wrote a regular column for the *Kalamazoo Gazette*. "About three years ago, there were some changes made, including dumping the division for which I was writing – the *Hometown Gazette*, which was published on Saturday," Karl said. However, before that actually happened Karl contacted **Peter Tanz**, operational vice president for Midwest Radio, which owns WKZO and dozens of other small and mid-market radio stations. Peter inquired as to Karl's plans. "I said I'd keep looking, maybe go to social media, and he said, 'No, just keep on what you're doing, only for WKZO.com' and so, I am!" Karl said. Among the topics Karl is covering is urban agriculture. "Michigan is not generally considered to be in the agriculture ballpark as, well, Kansas, for example. I'd be surprised if urban agriculture was much of an issue there, but here in Michigan it's coming to be." He explained, "The major problem seems to be keeping the urban farmer from transgressing on non-farm residential neighbors, without denying those urban farmers their rights." He adds, "I doubt they'll get all the rights they're demanding. For example, some of the urban famers – and those who haven't done it yet but are contemplating it, claim to be protected by Michigan's Right to Farm legislation," he said, "Not so. So far, the trend seems to be, let the county and township zoning people deal with it, so long as they don't make arbitrary, exclusionary decisions." He concludes, "Fortunately, so far objections have been fairly narrowly focused. Complaints arise out of the maintenance of goats and other livestock, but nobody complains about a few rows of carrots or a dozen hills of potatoes."

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.

Airing on the Side of Agriculture is included in the blog section of NAFB.com. [Click here for](#) all the *Airing on the Side of Agriculture* articles or [for a PDF click here](#).