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by Larry A. Quinn

IN THE MONTANA LEGISLATURE...his farm broadcasting skill helps **Taylor Brown** (Northern Ag Network, Billings, MT) be a more effective Montana state senator. He says he's learned to "boil down" complex issues into a couple of paragraphs for his listeners and that experience equips him to better represent his citizens. "Because of mandated term limits, I am going into my fourth and final session in the Senate. It will be my second session to Chair the Senate Agriculture, Livestock, and Irrigation Committee. Our sessions are limited to 90 days, every other year. We start January 5 and go until the end of April." **How does he juggle both jobs?** "The State Capitol in Helena is four hours from our office in Billings, so during the session, I move to Helena where we meet five or six days each week. I have a great team to cover the bases back home. During that four-month period, my right-hand man, **Russell Nemetz**, and wife, **Shannon Brown**, manage the Northern Ag Network without me," and he modestly adds, "It seems to run a lot smoother without me!" **Taylor Brown represents Montana State Senate District 28, Huntley, MT.**



Raised on his family's ranch at Sand Springs, MT, **Taylor Brown** is well-known as an agricultural radio and TV broadcaster. He and his wife, Shannon, own the Northern Broadcasting System, and also KGHL AM-790, Billings' first

radio station. He is a strong supporter of 4-H, FFA, Alpha Gamma Rho and the REAL Montana

leadership program; and he chaired the Montana State University College of Agriculture's volunteer fundraising committee to build a new Animal and Range Science building. Elected to the Montana Legislature in 2008, he serves as a State Senator where he chairs the Senate Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation Committee, and the Senate Education and Cultural Resources Committee. He has also served on Senate Finance Committee, Senate Taxation Committee, and the Joint Legislative Audit Committee. Taylor and Shannon have been married since 1980, and are active in the Huntley Project community, where they have raised their three children **Travis, Courtney and Colter**.

Starting as a cowboy on his family's ranch, where he was active in 4-H and FFA, Taylor was hired by **Conrad Burns**, who after his farm broadcasting years was elected U.S. Senator from Montana serving from 1989 to 2007. Taylor joined NAFB in 1980, the same year that he purchased Northern Ag Network from Burns. Taylor earned an Oscar in Agriculture, was 1989 Farm Broadcaster of the Year and served as NAFB President in 1992. Also, Taylor was President of the NAFB Foundation for 10 years. He proudly notes that the NAFB intern program began during his tenure.

Taylor considers himself more of an advocate for agriculture than a journalist, but, he adds, "You have to decide how much advocacy to do. You have to choose." He considers himself pro Rural America. He believes farm broadcasters are "personal briefing officers" for farmers and ranchers. One of his listeners told Taylor, "You give us hope. You come on the radio to give us information that will make it better."

What does it take to be a farm broadcaster? Taylor believes the key is "you have to want to serve others. You need a servant's heart. You have to make your advertisers successful and your listeners successful."

CLASSIC FARM TRACTORS 2015 CALENDAR...is on the wall in farm homes and broadcasters' offices to help keep track of the new year. **John Harvey** reports, "The 2015 version is a great one, and my 2016 Classic Tractors Calendar is in the works. I've featured 82 different makes of tractors—and the beat goes on." About NAFB, he said, "What a great group of busy, interesting personalities. It's always been this way, and you and I have had the honor to have shared times and tales with many of the finest radio and TV people ever. The John Harvey Hootenanny at Historic Farm Days, Penfield, IL, in July was one of the highlights of my life. It was the 25th anniversary of the Classic Farm Tractors Calendar, and I was flattered to give numerous radio and TV interviews." About this newsletter, he adds, "Write on!"



INTERVIEW TRAINING FOR FUTURE AGRICULTURE SPOKESPERSON...Sam Knipp (Oklahoma Farm Bureau, Oklahoma City, OK) conducts a "training" interview with a student in the Oklahoma State University capstone class, "Animal Ag Advocacy and Policy." This marks the fifth year that Sam has worked alongside **Dr. Jerry Fitch** to teach students to

be advocates for animal agriculture. The course is taught in the Animal Science Department each semester. “We have approximately 90 students taking the class this semester. I focus on media training and interviewing techniques,” Sam said. “Part of the students' work involves producing ag advocacy videos. Many of these students do not come from a farm background. We are finding more of them come to OSU from urban centers to study veterinary medicine and this class helps prepare them to discuss their future careers. It is vitally important that we give these students the tools they need to tell the ag story and be an advocate for the industry.”

GREG AKAGI HONORED...Kansas Farm Bureau recognized members and friends at its 96th Annual Meeting, Dec. 1-2, in Manhattan. Their Friends of Agriculture award recognized eight individuals who made significant contributions to Kansas Farm Bureau and agriculture or rural Kansas. Among those recognized was **Greg Akagi**, farm editor at WIBW (Topeka, KS) and co-host of the *Morning Agriculture Roundup*. He is also a reporter for the Kansas Ag Network. He covers commodity markets and mainstream production agriculture in Kansas. Greg was NAFB President in 2010.



From left, 2014 farm broadcasting interns: **Trent Hovel**, **Tanna Petersak** with **Gale Cunningham**, (WYXY, Champaign, IL) and 2013 intern **Jesse Harding**, who now works at KRVN in Nebraska.

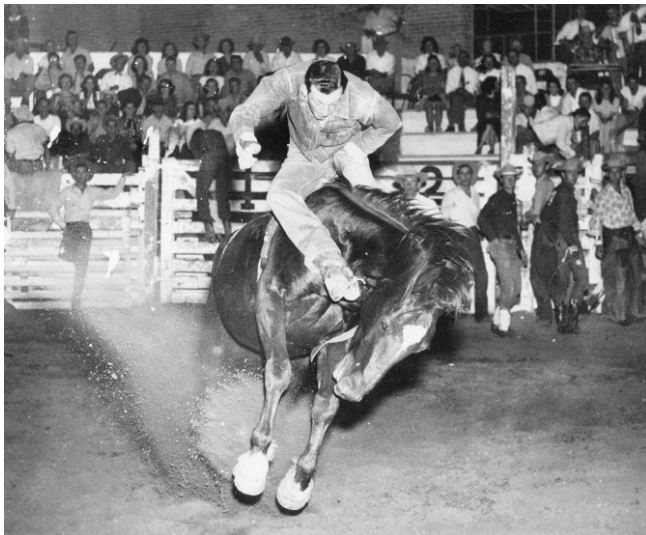
WITHOUT THE NAFB INTERN SCHOLARSHIPS...it would not be possible to give these and others the opportunity to experience farm broadcasting. **Gale Cunningham** said, “I’ve been blessed

with multiple interns, and some that have taken their experience to go on to be fine broadcast advocates for agriculture in their own professional setting.”

Trent Hovel is a senior at Illinois College in Jacksonville majoring in communication and rhetorical studies and psychology, with a minor in sociology. “My passion for agriculture began practically from the moment I was born. I grew up playing with tractors, and once I got old enough, I was able to help out on my family’s dairy farm,” Trent said. “My main area of knowledge going into this past summer’s internship was the dairy industry and the basic life skills associated with dairy farming. My first day on the job was one of the most amazing days of the summer. Not only did I begin to learn how to operate the equipment for the radio station, but I also began to learn about the agriculture markets, which is something that I knew nothing about coming into the internship.” He added, “From that day on, I was constantly learning something new every day, although not every day was as information rich as that first

day. Obviously one of the biggest things that I learned this past summer was how to read and interpret the agricultural markets, but I also learned many other things as well.” Overall, Trent said the internship has been one of the best experiences of his life. “I would not trade it for anything. It has helped me to open new horizons for potential areas of interest within the job market, and I have had the opportunity to not only learn, but to make new connections with people that no one can put a price tag on.”

Tanna Petersak is a junior at Illinois State University studying agribusiness. For the past two years, she was a farm broadcasting intern for WYXY Classic Radio. “I realized how uninformed I was on agricultural operations. I was uneducated on the Chicago Board of Trade and the market trading. Working for a radio station whose main focus is agriculture, it was a must for me to learn the functions of trade.” She added, “The speaking skills I received from the internship are useful every day of my life. I feel completely comfortable doing a live interview with just about anyone, and I would have never thought that I could.” As she plans for her career she emphasized that using the contacts she made has helped tremendously. “Looking back on my time at WYXY Classic, I am walking away with so much more than just an internship.”



A RODEO COWBOY...while a student at Texas A&M University, **Charlie Rankin** (Emeritus and retired, KURV, Edinburg, TX) proudly displays his 60-year membership certificate from NAFB on his apartment wall in Boerne, TX. In 1947, he won the all-around title at the Texas A&M Rodeo. He was part of the group of college contestants who organized the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association. But, he left rodeoing behind after graduation from A&M in 1950. After serving with the Navy in Korea, Charlie worked for the Soil Conservation Service in

Pecos, TX, for two years before beginning his career in radio and television. Growing up he had listened to **Murray Cox** (WFAA, Dallas, TX) and he personally sought advice from **Bill McReynolds** (WOAI, San Antonio, TX), **George Roesner** (KTRH, Houston, TX) and **Johnny Watkins** (KWTX, Waco, TX).

Johnny recommended Charlie for his first farm broadcaster job beginning in January 1954 at WACO (Waco, TX), even though he was in a competitive time slot to Johnny. Johnny Watkins and Murray Cox urged Charlie to join NAFB, and he's been a member ever since. He worked for WACO a year before becoming farm director on KRGV TV and radio near Weslaco, TX. His farm show aired on KRGV for 90 minutes each morning and 30 minutes at noon. He was farm director there until 1967, when he formed the Voice of Valley Agriculture in Edinburg, TX. In 1983, he and five other investors bought KURV-Edinburg and Charlie's farm show continued. In

1990, he sold his percentage of the radio station to his son and general manager while he stayed on the air until retirement in 1999. Charlie's son has his own "talk show" on KURV each afternoon. Charlie said his philosophy was "Sell yourself first, then sell broadcast time to advertisers."

In the fall of 2014, Charlie joined his longtime colleague and mentor **Bill McReynolds** and two other local radio personalities **Rickey Ware** and **Jud Ashmore** to interview **Bill Soyars**, a longtime south Texas rancher from San Marcos, TX, for an *Ol' Timers Radio Program*, heard Sunday afternoons on KULP (New Braunfels, TX). Soyars was a classmate and Aggie Rodeo Team member with Charlie in 1948-49. "We four had a blast taking turns asking Soyars about his life (about 88 years. In fact, Charlie is looking forward to celebrating his 90th birthday in June of 2015.



From left: Rancher **Bill Soyars**, **Charlie Rankin**, **Bill McReynolds** and standing from left **Rickey Ware** and **Jud Ashmore**.

Charlie Rankin with grandson **Charles Duncan Connely Rankin** as they celebrated his receiving a Texas Aggie class ring.

(Editor's Note: We offer a special "thank you" to Siri Stevens, Rodeo News/Publisher, www.therodeonews.com, for granting us permission to use the rodeo photograph and other biographical information about Charlie Rankin.)



LOOKING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD...We asked Past President **Janet Adkison** to look back and offer her reflections as NAFB moves into 2015:

Quicker than anticipated, 2014 came to a close. I was warned the year serving as NAFB President would fly by and it certainly did. As I look back at the year I believe it will always stand out as a highlight--A new home, a new job, and NAFB leadership combined into one bundle of excitement creates a memory that's going to be hard to match.

After years of work, fine tuning and numerous discussions, 2014 brought us the launch of the NAFB Media Planner. The online tool, www.nafbplanner.com, includes all the information media buyers and agency representatives need in one single source. For NAFB member stations and networks, the planner has raised awareness about services they provide their

audience. For media planners, the site is a one-stop shop where they can learn more about NAFB broadcast outlets dedicated to serving rural America and the agriculture industry.

In an effort to keep farm broadcasting ahead of the technology wave, the board agreed to invest in an expanded research effort. The research is multifaceted approach gathering information through a variety of avenues including phone, email and app usage. The initial wave of the research began in 2014 with other phases set to occur this year.

NAFB was able to purchase the building that houses our office and other professional tenants. The funds generated from the income rental will provide more opportunities for NAFB to continue to give back to the membership.

Our youth program continues to grow. A half-dozen years ago, the NAFB student membership was steadily in the teens. As the new year begins, we have more than 70 student members from a variety of colleges and universities across the country. Our outreach efforts have increased awareness of NAFB and have enhanced our relationship with students pursuing a career in agriculture communications.

Last, but not least, I want to mention that the NAFB Foundation is bringing back the Oscar in Agriculture award under a new, fitting title. The Doan Award, named after late NAFB president **Stewart Doan**, will be presented this spring to a deserving recipient. As someone who worked with Stewart, I can't think of a more suitable namesake for this prestigious honor. Please check www.NAFB.com as additional details become available.

I'm sure I've missed several points from the year. We had several great meetings that were only made possible by the work and dedication of NAFB members and our staff. I thank everyone who not only played a role during my time on the board, but also to those who have shared their friendship and offered guidance throughout my career. I'm a better person for knowing each and every one of you. Wishing you many blessings, **Janet**.

WANT TO LOOK UP A PAST ISSUE...of *Airing on the Side of Agriculture*? All issues are archived on the www.nafb.com website. Click on the Membership tab. **LET US HEAR FROM YOU...**Share your experiences when "airing on the side of agriculture." Stories and photos are welcome. Contact us at larryquinn@verizon.net or at **703-819-6532**.