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by Larry A. Quinn



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD – Orion Samuelson received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) at the 2016 Cattle Industry Convention in San Diego at the Best of Beef Breakfast on January 29. The award was presented for Orion’s lifetime of work on behalf of the beef industry. NCBA Communications Director **Chase Adams** presented the award. **Gloria Samuelson** joined Orion on stage, and **Russell Nemetz** (Northern Ag Network, Billings, MT), left, was moderator at the event. In presenting the award, Chase said, “His is a name synonymous with ag media. Since 1956, Orion Samuelson has served agriculture as a broadcaster, supporter and a leader throughout the industry. Widely known for hosting the *U.S. Farm Report*, Orion now co-hosts *This Week in Agribusiness* on RFD-TV, and still finds time to visit his thousands of friends and fans throughout the country. Orion’s influence across the cattle industry is widely felt, having served listeners with six decades of news while mentoring generations of aspiring farm broadcasters. NCBA is proud to recognize the work of Orion through the lifetime achievement award.”

NCBA EXCELLENCE IN AGRICULTURAL JOURNALISM AWARD – Susan Allen of Ag Information Network of the West (Walla Walla, WA) reports that **KayDee Gilkey**, ag news reporter for their radio network, “was selected out of all the hundreds of print, television and radio journalists who report on the cattle industry to receive the prestigious *NCBA Excellence in Agricultural Journalism Award* at the recent 2016 Cattle Industry Convention in San Diego.” She added, “KayDee was instrumental in educating cattlemen and women about issues impacting the cattle industry using her *Open Range, Farm and Ranch Report* and *Colorado Ag Today* daily radio programs. Both Oregon and Washington Cattlemen’s Associations expressed appreciation for her candid and poignant reporting on the wolf crisis facing Northwest ranchers including her ability to share their story articulately on air with the general public.” **Kayli Hanley**, Communications Director for the Oregon Cattlemen’s Association, said, “KayDee provides timely, accurate information regarding events affecting the cattle industry and agriculture in general. KayDee is fabulous to work with. She is never looking to “dig” pre-conceived notions out of people, but rather encourages them to help her understand the facts behind whatever issue might be going on. Radio reporting can be difficult when you only have 30 to 90 seconds to provide an accurate story. KayDee does a wonderful job of finding the individual who is at the heart of a story, and helping them share their story with her listeners.” KayDee is an “advocate” for the beef industry as an Ag-Chat Volunteer and routinely conducts media training seminars for ag industry companies and associations. The Ag Information Network of the West is made up of more than 85 Radio Affiliates throughout Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Colorado.



KayDee responded, “When I heard I was to receive the NCBA Excellence in Ag Journalism award, I was excited. The beef industry has always been an important part of my life and I have a special place in my heart for ranchers and the challenges they face. I was humbled to be nominated — let alone to be recognized with the award. I’m passionate about sharing my radio platform with ranchers and industry leaders in order to help them get their message out to fellow beef producers as well as consumers. I like the challenge of taking complex ideas and research and having to boil it down to a 90-second radio story.”

While attending Washington State University, KayDee had the unique opportunity to provide two weekly 60-second radio stories for about 50 radio stations across the West for two years. She used WSU News Releases from the College of Agriculture and Home Economics, did interviews with their sources, and then produced the stories. “I really enjoyed doing farm broadcasting but figured that

there wasn't much opportunity in the Pacific Northwest to be a farm broadcaster. So I focused my studies more on journalism and public relations, rather than radio." Her first job was with the Washington Cattlemen's Association as Administrative Assistant. Like many small member-associations, she answered the phones, got the mail, did clerical work, helped plan their convention, wrote news releases, and produced the member magazine. About two years later, she moved to Idaho to become Member and Services Coordinator for the Idaho Cattle Association. "I really enjoyed working in the beef industry. I guess you could say the beef industry is in my DNA — both of my parents grew up in the cattle business and many of my extended family have been involved in the county, state, regional and even national level of the beef industry," KayDee said. She was raised on a purebred Angus ranch and showed livestock in both 4-H and FFA. She served on the National Junior Angus Board and was the Western States Angus Queen. Following her time in Idaho, KayDee moved back to Washington to work for Northwest Farm Credit Services in their Marketing Department for the next 16 years. "The feeling that I'd missed an opportunity in radio had not really left me since my college broadcasting experience, so when the opportunity with Ag Information Network of the West opened up about four years ago, I jumped at the chance to give radio broadcasting a try. I've so enjoyed telling ag's story and bringing my audience information that will assist them in their day-to-day operations." About KayDee, Susan said, "I know KayDee will attest that broadcasting didn't come easy, but she has worked hard to find her 'voice'. It was also a new challenge for her to learn to write for radio, come up with fresh programming every day, and make 90-second reports appealing to both ag audiences and the general public. Being a reporter for Ag Information Network of the West has provided her a platform to attend numerous events throughout the nation and given her opportunities to offer media training for groups like the Oregon Cattlemen's Association.



NEW NAFB MEMBER – Terry James (News and Ag Director, WJBC-AM, Bloomington, IL) describes how his career as a farm broadcaster has evolved during the past 10 years. "In 1996, I began interviewing farmers, 4-H leaders, and emceeing the Friday night 4-H auction at the Mercer County Fair in Aledo, IL. I continued this until I was promoted to Program and Farm Director at WHHK and WGEN in 1999 in Henry County, IL." He hosted an expanded noon farm show updating commodity prices from the local grain elevators and auction sites and hosted numerous farmers from Henry County on his morning show. He broadcasted live from the Farm Progress Show in Springfield the following year. "In 2002, I

accepted a job as an anchor at WOC (Davenport, IA), where flooding was a major concern along the Mississippi, Rock, and Wapsi Rivers. I covered damage to crops and other downfalls that

Mother Nature brought to the farming community.” In 2007, Terry became News Director for the Nebraska Radio Network and covered the legislature. He spent extensive time on the water fight between Kansas and Nebraska. Also, he followed legislative hearings in Nebraska regarding efforts to preserve the family farm which many felt was in jeopardy. Many of the bills that came through the legislature were agricultural in nature. He was invited back to the Mercer County Fair on several occasions to speak with the people he had grown up interviewing and emceeing their annual 4-H Auctions. Also, Terry was invited in 2011 to emcee at the Rock Island County Fair. Regarding his background before becoming a farm broadcaster, Terry said, “I grew up on a small farm in Sherrard, IL, and I frequently helped my father, who worked part time at the neighboring Calderone Farms operation.”

KRVN CELEBRATES 65TH YEAR – On February 1, KRVN Radio in Lexington, NE, celebrated its 65th year on-the-air. **Joe Gangwish** said, “This year's anniversary fell just ahead of a blizzard on the plains where 18 inches of snow fell with 40 to 50 mph winds. This was quite appropriate since two of the driving forces behind creating the station were the blizzards of late 1948 and early 1949. Several lives were lost along with many head of livestock thanks to those storms, simply because rural Nebraska did not have a radio station to bring up-to-date weather information. The coverage just wasn't there.” Ag producers wanted the latest market information and news. So, the Nebraska Coop Council went to work, forming a partnership with the Nebraska Farm Bureau, Nebraska State Grange and the Nebraska Farmers Union to create a station to serve agriculture. It was "1010 for KRVN" when we went on the air that cold morning in 1951. KRVN, and its affiliates are the only farmer and rancher-owned stations in the country. They have a board of directors and offer memberships to those actively involved in agriculture. The Nebraska Rural Radio Association also owns KNEB AM/FM (Scottsbluff, NE), KTIC AM/FM (West Point, NE), and KAWL-AM and KTMX-FM (York, NE).



KRVN Farm Broadcasters: (L-R) Jesse Harding, Dewey Nelson, Dave Thorell and Joe Gangwish. Not shown is Shalee Peters.

50 YEARS ON-AIR – Curt Lancaster (Texas Farm Bureau Radio Network, Waco, TX) began his broadcasting career at age 15 at KPOS-AM, Post, TX). He’s worked at seven radio stations and three radio networks (two of which he launched). Also, he worked at three television stations for voice work and writing and directing their talk shows and newscasts. Curt said, “There is nothing in the broadcasting business I haven’t done. I have been a General Manager, a disc jockey, newsman, writer and producer of radio and TV commercials, video camera operator, TV director, radio consultant, program director, and, yes, janitor.” About his early years, Curt said,



“When I was kid on the farm, the radio was my constant companion along with my German Shepard. No matter what job I was doing there was a radio attached. Radio was different in the mid to late ‘50s into early to mid-‘60s. Top 40 radio was really getting cranked up, and I wanted to be a part of it. The people on the air then painted pictures for you. They were creative. When you were behind a hoe-handle and walking across a cotton field in triple-digit west Texas heat looking for weeds, the radio studio sure sounded better.” When Curt was aged 8 or 9 his mom would take

him to town on Friday afternoons in the summer so he could go swimming. But, first, she would let him off at the radio station so he could watch the disc jockey on the air. “They were nice to me, and I became their ‘gofer’. They also saved a huge roll of AP wire copy for me every week, and I would read that out loud in the barn.” Curt explained, “Why the barn? I didn’t drive anyone nuts in the house, and the barn had its own reverb system like stations used in those days. The turn in Curt’s career was when **Roddy Peebles** hired him in 1981 to join the Voice of Southwest Agriculture (VSA) Network. “Roddy was not only a great ag-radio teacher, he was a good teacher on life. I lost my dad as a result of a farming accident in 1991. I always said that Roddy was like a second dad to me, and I have never forgotten that. Roddy and I were a great match, both farm kids who loved radio, photography and were both pilots. About the only thing we didn’t agree on was music.” Curt concluded, “I am very fortunate, and I was very determined to make broadcasting my career. There were times in the early days I wondered why I got into the business. These days I work for great people at Texas Farm Bureau. They provided the tools and I had the expertise to build the TFB Network. There’s nothing like being on the top of the game.”



In his early years, Curt Lancaster operates the radio control board in 1972, and does an interview in the mid-1980s for the Voice of Southwest Agriculture Network.



FARM BROADCASTERS SEND POSTCARDS FOR KINDERGARTEN 100TH DAY SCHOOL PROJECT – Pictured above are some of the post cards sent to help a kindergarten class in central Minnesota meet their 100th day goal.

Joe Gill (KASM, Albany, MN) said it all began with a comment from my 6-year-old son, Ben, after school one day. He said, "Dad, our class is collecting postcards from all 50 states!" His excitement resulted in a few inquiring questions on Joe's behalf. The first one was...why? He said this is how their class is going to celebrate 100 days of school. Getting 100 postcards in 100 days, while collecting cards from all 50 states. "What a neat idea, I thought!" According to his teacher, **Cris Draais**, this is the third year they've done the activity in preparation for the 100th day of school. A note went out to parents asking them to share with their family and friends all around the country. Ben said, "Hey Dad do you think we could get your 'farm-worker' friends to send some cards?" By 'farm-worker' friends, he meant other farm broadcasters. Joe took action. "I then proceeded to post a message on the NAFB West Region Facebook page and added a little twist. I asked other farm



broadcasters to send a postcard from their state while including a unique farm fact from their state, too." The response was immediate. "I thought this would be a neat way to share the message of agriculture to a generation of kids, many multi-generations removed from the farm, and to reach their goal of getting cards from all 50 states. The teacher says the kids have enjoyed the farm facts. They love facts about animals. If possible, they try to connect the fact to Minnesota, and the class will do a large farm unit in the Spring, so this year they'll refer back to the info shared with them from the cards from farm broadcasters. Also, she mentioned they talk about "making connections" between real life and what they read and learn about.

“Being an advocate for agriculture is a theme shared by many farm organizations and individuals today. Although in a very small scale, I feel this turned out to be a huge success in advocating for all in agriculture across all 50 states. And, this is another example of the great job and willingness of farm broadcasters to share the farming message as they do every day in their respective states.” Joe concludes, “Whether it’s a politician, a citrus grower, a dairy farmer, corn and soybean farmer, or a kindergarten class in central Minnesota, this special project showed how farm broadcasters are connecting, educating and informing consumers and those in agriculture every single day. Finally, thank you farm broadcasters. It’s a privilege to belong to such a dedicated group of outstanding agricultural communicators!” **Ben Gill shows his personally designed 100th Day T-shirt.**



IN HIS 20 YEARS OF FARM BROADCASTING—Dave Schumacher (KTRS, St. Louis, MO) says that “One of the more frequently asked questions I run into in my travels is: How did you become a farm broadcaster, and better yet how were you able to remain a farm broadcaster on a major metropolitan radio station for 20 years?” Twenty years ago this April 15, Dave had just left the National Stockyards, where he had been a livestock commission man and one of the cattle auctioneers for many years. “I found myself not out of work, but with one less job as I was still farming and auctioneering full-time. It was about this time I received a phone call from the station manager of a new power house radio station in the Belleville IL/St. Louis MO, area wanting me to be their ‘farmguy’. I did not return their call because I had never been in a radio station no less wanting to be their ‘farmguy’. As Dave recalls, “It was early March, and I was ‘working ground’ not far from the location of the

station when they called again. This time I answered and told them I would be right over.” Tractor and all, Dave drove right into the parking lot. “I introduced myself as their new ‘farmguy’.” A few days later, he went on-the-air on what was then WIBV, which eventually became 550 KTRS. “Little did I know 20 years later I would still be their ‘farmguy’. That brings us to today where I am still with the 550 KTRS family. I am the only remaining member of the original staff,” he said.

Dave adds, “I have had great support from the private ownership of the station for bringing the world of agriculture to the radio audience (1 hour a day, 6 days a week for 20 years).” Dave has

covered stories on the local, state, and national levels for agriculture, consumers, growers, and industry. “I have had the opportunity to meet great people in all walks of life through interviews, conferences and personal appearances.” Dave concludes, “I think farm broadcasting gives one the platform to bring the stories of rural America into the lives of those who have never had the experience of rural life. I would encourage the youth of today to consider a career in the field of agricultural reporting or some form of media.”

WE WANT YOUR NEWS...We'd like to receive your stories and photos for future newsletter issues. Contact me at larryaguinn@outlook.com 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*.