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by Larry A. Quinn



FIRSTHAND LOUISIANA FLOOD REPORT – For **Don Molino** (Louisiana Farm Bureau Agri-News Radio Network, Baton Rouge, LA) and his wife, **Laura**, the "Great Flood of 2016" started at 6:00 a.m. August 14 with a neighbor banging on the front door "telling us if we wanted to get a car out we'd better do it now!" Don explained, "When we went to bed the night before things were calm and dry for the most part. It had started raining very hard the previous Thursday and didn't stop until sometime Saturday evening. We thought everything was just like storms in the past with heavy rains, some minor street flooding and that's all. Wrong!" He continues, "By 7:30 a.m., I realized I needed to move my old Jeep, just in case. By 9:30 a.m., we had to wade





out in knee-deep water for three blocks with our two dogs and whatever we could carry, which wasn't much." Don said, "I never thought the water would get deep enough to hurt Laura's new car. Wrong again. It was totaled along with just about everything inside our house." Don said, "We were able to save some clothes, one radio, and one TV set. Anything that was on the floor or

below 24 inches floated away. The water stayed in and around our house from Sunday morning until Tuesday morning. I waded back those three blocks Sunday afternoon to check on the house. The flood water was about ankle deep inside the house at that point. Surely it wouldn't get any higher. Wrong yet again. When I waded back Monday morning it was knee-deep." Don observed, "This couldn't possibly be happening to us. But we never woke up from the nightmare. With the help of a lot of very wonderful friends and people that we didn't even know, we started ripping up carpet, tearing out sheet rock and moving destroyed furniture out of the house and made huge mounds of trash in the front yard, as did all our neighbors." Don updates the situation saying, "Two weeks later, the house is almost dry inside, FEMA has inspected and come through with some living expenses, flood insurance inspectors have come and gone and promised us a down payment on our policy, and we've applied for any and all help we can get." He adds, "Estimates are that some 50,000 homes were destroyed by the flooding in the Baton Rouge area so we're not alone unfortunately. At least we have a place to stay unlike a lot of people who are still in shelters or living in motel rooms." The most interesting



group of volunteers, which Don describes as “The so-called ‘Cajun Navy,’ were “just a bunch of guys with fishing boats who saved probably thousands of people stranded by the flood. They didn’t wait for orders from the state, they just loaded up and headed for the flood.”



Agriculture in south Louisiana has been slammed hard yet again, Don said, “Preliminary estimates are at least \$110 million in damages, perhaps as much as \$200 million. Louisiana will lose 420,000 acres of soybeans, almost half this year’s planted acreage. Per acre cotton average yields have been slashed

from 1,100 pounds to 300 pounds of lint per acre. Rice producers were just about finished with harvesting but will still suffer losses in the tens of millions of dollars. Several hundred head of livestock were lost in the flooding.” Don predicts, “It’s going to be months before all the losses are totaled up, and it ain’t gonna be pretty. Help has been coming in from everywhere it seems. The Salvation Army has done a great job, and if anyone wants to make donations I’d suggest that avenue. Prayers also work wonders.” He described the situation as ‘The New Normal.’ “No one likes it, but we have to deal with it. And what we’re going through doesn’t begin to come close to a soybean farmer in Acadia Parish with nothing but muddy fields where his crop had been. That’s a whole different kind of disaster,” Don concludes.

USING FACEBOOK AS A FARM BROADCASTING TOOL – Von Ketelsen (KCIM-KKRL-KIKD Radio, Carroll, IA) has spent his career in farm broadcasting and has seen many changes in agriculture and ways to better communicate its story. Von has several *Facebook* pages, which he constantly updates with farm information, as well as photos from events he covers. “When I started in farm broadcasting, there were computers, but they were large desktop machines, strictly for word processing. Of course when the Internet came along that revolutionized things,” he said. Even with tools like *Facebook*, Von emphasizes that some things haven’t changed in farm broadcasting. “One of the first things I learned when I entered broadcasting is the saying, ‘*If you talk about them, they’ll talk about you*’. Meaning, if you involve people in your broadcasts, through covering events, and mentioning names of local people on radio – they’ll tell their friends about you.” Ketelsen keeps a busy schedule both on the air and in the communities he serves. In addition to covering state and local events, he produces unique promotions he’s branded as his own.



"Vittles with Von is where I take lunch to a different farm family each week during spring field work and during fall harvest. Area caterers prepare the lunches which I bring to each of the families. I interview members of the family on the radio about their lives. It's amazing how many people who aren't in farming follow *Vittles with Von* and listen to my interviews with the farm families. It's a great way to thank farmers and have them tell the story of agriculture to non-farm listeners," he said. *Farmer Comments* is another unique program Von produces. Every spring and fall, he drives the country roads searching for farmers. When he sees one, he gives them a snack



and bottle of water. "*Farmer Comments* is listened to by farmers, because they like to hear themselves and people they know on radio. They like hearing how their neighbor's fieldwork is coming along, if there are problems in the field, and what

harvest yields are. Non-farm listeners like it, because they usually hear local farmers they personally know.” Von is very involved with FFA chapters in his listening area. “I produce a weekly



program called *FFA Today*, where I interview members about their FFA experiences. It’s a well-received program, and it’s rewarding for me to make friends with these FFA students and watch them grow,” Ketelsen added. *Your Old Tractor* is another weekly program Ketelsen produces. Every Saturday morning, he visits with tractor collectors about – you guessed it – their

old tractors. “I ask them to tell me the stories behind their vintage iron, what’s unique about it. The highlight is at the end of the program when they get up on their tractor, start it, and rev it up!” With so many tractor rides going on during the summer, Ketelsen has taken the program on the road. “I have broadcasted *Your Old Tractor* live from tractor rides every week during the past couple of summers, from June through the end of August. People enjoy having their local tractor rides publicized that way,” Ketelsen said. When he isn’t on the air, covering a farm event,



or taking part in a radio station promotion, Ketelsen can be found singing and playing his guitar at a number of events. “I perform at county farm organization meetings, community events, and festivals. I’ll be performing at several county Farm Bureau meetings this month. I do songs people know and tell the stories behind the songs and the artists who originally recorded them. A lot of them have a positive message,” Ketelsen said. Despite new technologies like *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *Instagram*, Ketelsen says the personal nature of farm broadcasters connecting with listeners hasn’t changed. “Farm

broadcasters provide a vital emotional link between radio stations and listeners. And being an NAFB member adds credibility to the farm broadcaster and the stations they serve,” he concluded. Von joined NAFB in 1984, while he was a student at Iowa State University. During that time, he served a stint in the WOI Radio farm department.

CHAMPION HOG GENERATES THOUSANDS FOR CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL OF WISCONSIN – Mike

Austin (WTAQ-AM/FM and WDEZ, Green Bay, WI) shared this story about how agriculture and a thankful boy generated help for sick children. Mike begins, "At this year's Kewaunee County Fair sale, the buyers were very generous in opening up their wallets with prices sometimes reserved only for state fair bidding, as one youth received over \$9 a pound for her steer, another boy received more than \$17 a pound for his hog, and one lamb brought \$30 a pound." Mike added, "The junior livestock auction at the county fair is always a special event as area agribusinesses and associations pay well above market value to help support and reward youth for their quality livestock project animals. Youth then take those dollars and either reinvest them into next year's project animal or put that money away for future educational needs, or both." But, something unique

happened at this year's auction. "When 10-year-old **Blake Krull** entered the ring with his award-winning hog, he announced that he was donating \$500 dollars of his winning bid to Children's Hospital of Wisconsin as a thank you for the care he has been receiving there over the first 10 years of his life."



Mike described that the bidding was going rather briskly when the Algoma FFA Alumni announced that they would cover that \$500 donation, which was greeted with a generous round of applause from the nearly packed auction tent. Then, as the bidding continued, two more bidders said they, too, would donate \$500 dollars. "What happened next was very special as a wave of bidder cards went up into the air and when all was said and done more than 30 businesses agreed to donate an additional \$500 dollars a-piece. So in a matter of less than seven minutes, \$15,500 was raised for Children's Hospital of Wisconsin." Blake's mom, **Kim**, said the idea to donate the money came from Blake, and she was extremely proud of him and was amazed at the outpouring of support and generosity of the rural community of Kewaunee County. She added that once the news of the auction hit the fairgrounds more donors came forward and the final contribution was closer to \$22,000." Mike concludes, "Oh, and for his efforts, Blake did okay as well, receiving \$17.75 a pound for his 220-pound hog. A truly memorable moment that teaches us many things including the value in the power of one!"

IOWA STATION CELEBRATES 50 YEARS – KICD Radio (Spencer, IA) is celebrating 50 years of service and entertainment this year. The station was one of the first AM signals in northwest Iowa in 1942 and KICD-FM was one of the first FM signals in 1966. Because of that heritage, both stations have a strong regional listenership in nine northwest Iowa counties and three in southwest Minnesota. KICD just wrapped up coverage of 11 area county fairs and the Iowa State Fair with the big hometown county fair to go, the Clay County Fair, which attracts more than 325,000 people each year during a nine-day run. This year's dates are September 10-18. KICD and KICD-FM broadcast live from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. each day from The Depot building on the fairgrounds. Tens of thousands file through The Depot building to see the announcers and one of the largest HO scale train displays west of the Mississippi (see photo at right). The trains celebrate 70 years at the fair this year. The foreground is a recreation of the Clay County Fairgrounds with the Grandstand/Racetrack, rides and some buildings.



George Bower, Katie Johnson and Troy Leininger will produce a daily half-hour show on Clay County Fair happenings and personal interest stories. This allows them to eat whatever they want “on-a-stick,” as they will work off all the calories they consume running from event to event. **George Bower** grew up on the family farm near Osage, IA. He started his

broadcasting career as a weekend disk jockey in nearby Mason City, IA, when he was 16 and was hired by the station full-time after high school in 1985. George's radio career has included stints as News Director at KCOB (Newton, IA), Morning Man at KUOO (Spirit Lake, IA), and General Manager at KLSN (Jefferson, IA). He has worked at two of Iowa's legendary farm stations – KGLO

(Mason City, IA) from 1987-1990, and KICD for the past nine years. George has a Business Management degree from Buena Vista University and has taken Ag Finance classes from Northeast Iowa Community College in Calmar. He transferred as host of the KICD Morning Show to the Farm Department after long-time Farm Director **Dan Skelton** retired in March.



2015 NAFB internship grant recipient and now full-time employee **Katie Johnson** was raised in the KICD listening area on a farm near Everly, IA, that produced beef, corn and soybeans. She exhibited black angus cattle in 4-H and was active in the Okoboji FFA Chapter. She was a National Collegiate Ag Ambassador through the National FFA Association while at Iowa State University and is an advocate for agriculture.

Katie talks with exhibitors at Kossuth County Fair in Algona, IA



Troy Leininger was raised on a hog, cattle and sheep operation also in the KICD coverage area near Ruthven, IA. He was active in 4-H and graduated from Grand View College in Des Moines. He worked at WHO-Radio and KLYF-FM from 1991-1995 before coming to KICD. **Troy is changing careers after 21 years at KICD in the sales department and 15 years as an NAFB member and farm broadcaster.** He will serve six northwest Iowa counties as a regional manager for Iowa Farm Bureau starting September 26. **Troy talks with Iowan Stuart McCulloh at the American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting.**



29 YEARS AT KWBE RADIO – Dave Niedfeldt (KWBE-AM, Beatrice, NE) joined the staff in August 1987, and was named Farm Director in 1988, to cover agricultural news on the local, state and national level. A member of NAFB for 13 years, he has received numerous awards and honors from The Nebraska Associated Press Broadcasters, Great Plains Broadcast Association, the Nebraska Broadcasters Association, and the Nebraska Dairy Association. Dave was raised on a farm in southeast Nebraska. Corn, soybeans, wheat, cattle and hogs kept his family busy on the farm in Richardson County. Following high school graduation, Dave attended college at Northwest

Missouri State University in Maryville, MO. He graduated in 1983 and started working at KTNC (Falls City, NE). After four years with KTNC, he and wife, Nancy, moved to Beatrice, NE. Dave has always enjoyed telling the story of agriculture and meeting the people who make up what agriculture is today. “I enjoy visiting and interviewing extension educators, local farmers, state officials and agronomists and hearing their thoughts about the issues facing farmers today. Everyone has a story to tell and it’s our job as broadcasters to give those in agriculture an opportunity to tell their story,” he said. Last fall, KWBE was purchased by Flood Communications, Inc. of Norfolk, NE. As a result, Dave’s responsibilities of reporting the ag news expanded to providing farm reports to radio stations in Norfolk, NE, and Nebraska City, NE. In addition to his radio duties, Dave served 12 years on the Beatrice School Board, becoming President in his last year. He and wife, Nancy, have two children. Their son, Austin, just got married in early August and resides in Bellevue, NE. Their daughter, Emily, is attending Wayne State College in Wayne, NE.

SUSAN LITTLEFIELD JOINS KRVN RURAL RADIO NETWORK

– After serving 18 years with KZEN (Columbus, NE), Susan Littlefield joined KRVN Rural Radio Network in Nebraska on August 30, working through their York, NE, office and her home office. In this position, she will continue to serve many of her longtime listeners. An active NAFB member, Susan served as NAFB President in 2015 and continues to serve NAFB as a member of the NAFB Foundation Board of Directors. Susan said, “I’m looking forward to getting the chance to work with some of the best farm broadcasters in our organization. Each one of us brings a different perspective on agriculture to the airwaves.” Her first days were very busy. “I hit the ground running my first day there by helping to cover events at the Nebraska State Fair.” She observed, “It was bittersweet to leave KZEN after 18 years, but when this opportunity was put in front of me, I couldn’t pass it up – where I will have the ability to cover more of agriculture in the State of Nebraska and beyond.”



WE WANT YOUR NEWS – Send us your stories and photos for future newsletter issues. Contact me at 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. For an archive copy of any past issues, go to **Membership** and click on **Airing on the Side of Agriculture**.