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by Larry A. Quinn



CALIFORNIA WINERIES HAVE A LONG ROAD AHEAD – A series of 16 wildfires that initially began October 8, have consumed large areas of California’s wine growing regions in Yuba, Sonoma, Napa, Mendocino, Butte and Lake counties, reports **Brian German** (Multi-Media Journalist, AgNet Media, Inc., Fresno, CA). More than 210,000 acres have burned in total, destroying approximately 8,400 structures as of October 25, Brian said. As the fires are now at least 90 percent contained, many of the area’s winemakers are faced with a variety of challenges. Reports are still coming in from wineries, making it difficult to get a clear picture of what kind of damage was caused by the fires. A statement from the president of the Fountaingrove District Winegrowers Association

indicated at least eight vineyards totaling 90 acres of vines have been lost, with others in the area still unable to report. Brian continued, “More than 24 wineries in Sonoma, Napa and Mendocino counties have been affected with damage ranging from partial singeing in vineyards to complete losses of structures and vines. Backbone Vineyard in Napa lost not only their vineyard, but also the last 5 years of vintages.” A lot of the destruction in the region was seen in the loss of buildings including the homes of the owners. “Vineyards fared better than structures as the vines served as a kind of firebreak due to the amount of moisture in the plants.” In Napa Valley, White Rock Vineyards and Signorello Estate saw significant levels of damage to their operations. Other wineries reporting varying levels of wreckage include Frey Vineyards, Michael Mondavi Family Estate, Roy Estate, Paradise Ridge, and several others. “When the fires began, roughly three-quarters of the wine grapes had already been picked, but much of the merlot and cabernet sauvignon crops remained on the vine. For vineyards that were not directly damaged by the flames, the fires still caused adverse effects.” Brian added, “The significant amount of smoke and ash in the air can make its way into wine grapes, having a direct impact on taste and quality.

Depending on where grapes are in the ripening cycle, exposure to heavy smoke can pollute the taste in only 30 minutes. The taint from smoke has been described as having an ashtray, or campfire type of taste and aroma.” For winemakers who are finishing up harvest, they will be testing for any hints of smoke damage and discarding whatever has been tainted. “For the operations least affected by the fires, they are still suffering under a significant drop in tourism. Tasting rooms that would typically be filled with guests during the mild fall weather are empty or seeing far less traffic than a normal season. Wine tourism is one the major drivers of the local economy, which is why many industry organizations are urging visitors to keep their current reservations,” Brian explained. **WINE TASTING ROOMS REOPENING** – Tasting rooms near the wildfires that have been able to reopen are seeing less than half their normal rate of visitors. The Wine Institute issued a statement encouraging people to not let the fires deter their plans to visit the North Coast wine region. “Most winery tasting rooms have reopened for business. People planning to visit should not cancel their trips. Now is the time to visit and support wine country,” the statement read. Many winemakers, growers and winery owners are contemplating what to do moving forward. Operations that suffered the most amount of vineyard damage may take five years for their vines to grow back. Vines that were only lightly burned or suffered heat-related damage could potentially rebound in the spring, but may be significantly weaker and eventually need to be replaced. “Recouping losses after replanting a vineyard can be a costly and time-consuming process. Each acre can cost between \$25,000 and \$75,000 to plant. It would require at least five years of growth before cabernet grapes will produce the quality that growers require and another two years before the wine produced can be sold. It would take approximately seven years before replanted acreage would start generating money. Estimates of the total damage caused by the wildfires range from \$4 billion to \$6 billion,” Brian said. “It will take several months before an official assessment can be made and it could potentially take years before the final numbers are tallied.” Multiple wine groups in the area, along with several other businesses have pledged donations to aid in recovery. E. & J. Gallo donated \$1 million to wildfire relief. The Paso Robles Wine Country Alliance announced that they will be contributing \$1 for every bottle of wine that is sold from 50 wineries during the month of October. The Oakland Raiders also have contributed \$1 million to the relief efforts. A group of winemakers and sommeliers are also holding fundraising events in New York and San Francisco. California has the highest number of wineries in the United States, followed by Oregon and Washington. According to groups representing winemakers, the most recent reports indicate the wine industry generates about \$26 billion annually for Napa and Sonoma counties. Statewide, the industry contributed nearly \$58 billion to the economy last year. Conditions in the area became so dire that **California Governor Jerry Brown** declared Yuba, Sonoma, and Napa counties disaster areas. “This is truly one of the greatest if not the greatest tragedy that California has ever faced,” said Governor Brown of the wildfires. “The devastation is just unbelievable, it’s a horror that no one could have imagined.” The fires spread at a rapid pace, aided by windy conditions with gusts of up to 51 mph. Approximately 100,000 people have been displaced by the fires. The fires also claimed the lives of 42 people, making it the most lethal fire event in California history. Officials have reported that firefighting crews will remain on the scene continuing to suppress what is still burning and ensure the area is safe for residents to return.

KRVN/RURAL RADIO NETWORK TO CREATE NEBRASKA CAMPUS LOCATION – Nebraska radio station [KRVN 880](#) and the Rural Radio Network will add a news bureau and production studio at Nebraska Innovation Campus (NIC) this fall. NIC Executive Director **Dan Duncan** said, "KRVN's radio network across the state will enable NIC to connect to everyone in Nebraska and share our stories" KRVN is the 50,000-watt flagship of a nine-station network spanning Nebraska with coverage into Iowa, South Dakota, Kansas, Colorado and Wyoming. The network is owned and operated by the Nebraska Rural Radio Association, a cooperative of farmers and ranchers. KRVN will be a sponsor of The Club at NIC, a new networking, event and project space being created for entrepreneurs, faculty groups and Recognized Student Organizations. Locating a production studio at NIC will enable the station to cover stories connected to NIC partners, programs and events, as well as university-related and regional stories. The studio will also provide KRVN staff with a convenient location for university and regional leaders to record programming, participate in live interviews and create video content. "KRVN and the Nebraska Rural Radio Association have worked closely with the University of Nebraska for almost 70 years," said **Craig Larson**, the radio association's general manager. "Our mission is to serve agriculture and rural Nebraska. This venture is the next step as we help tell the story of agriculture in Nebraska." KRVN already works closely with the university's [Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources](#), hosting a weekly radio show with **Mike Boehm**, IANR's Harlan Vice Chancellor. NIC is a research campus designed to facilitate new and in-depth partnerships between the university and private-sector businesses. At full build-out, NIC will be a 2.2-million square-foot campus with uniquely designed buildings and amenities that inspire creative activity and engagement, transforming ideas into global innovation. For more information, [click here](#).



Farm broadcaster and video specialist **Bryce Doeschot** will be working with this new venture at the Nebraska Innovation Campus. "Although I always wanted to be in the agricultural communications industry, I never considered radio until visiting KRVN Radio for an interview while serving as a Nebraska FFA State Officer. **Mike Leporte**, then Farm Director, joked about me taking over his job. Two years later, I began an internship (thanks to NAFB for the internship grant!) with KRVN the same week that Mike retired." Bryce continued, "I enjoyed my time at KRVN, and they were willing to let me continue reporting while concluding my time at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln. I graduated from UNL with a degree in agricultural and environmental sciences communication and a minor in Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship in May 2017. Following graduation, KRVN/Rural

Radio Network mentioned that they were interested in me for this project in Lincoln, and I eagerly said yes."

Like many kids in rural Nebraska, Bryce grew up in a tractor cab listening to KRVN 880 and the Rural Radio Network. He remembers hearing ag market reports come over the KRVN airwaves, but he didn't know that one day he would be the one delivering those market reports. Bryce is on the air up to five times per day covering regional agriculture news, programs and events, as well as university-related stories. He also captures video for Rural Radio Network clients. Also, Bryce hosts the weekly segment with Mike Boehm. Bryce credits his time in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources with preparing him for this communications role.

LEARNED FARM BROADCASTING FROM HIS DAD – Davis Michaelsen

(Farm Journal Broadcasting, Cedar Falls, IA) said, "I didn't go to journalism or broadcasting school, but from an early age, I learned from my dad, who was a seasoned writer and farm broadcaster." For example, "At dinner, he would work with my brothers and me on non-regional diction. It had to be, 'please pass the ve-ge-ta-bles,' or, 'may I please have some more wha-ter-melon' with that subtle 'D' or the 'L' in melon that broadcasters are so fond of." His dad was an NAFB member. "I remember joining him at the convention one year as a wide-eyed, 14-year-old farmboy in the big city." Flash forward to 2012, Davis said, "I had been out of work for a year after the small college where I worked enacted budget cuts. Before that I had worked as a full-time professional farrier (horseshoer) for 8 years until my shoulders, knees and back decided my talents were best utilized elsewhere." He continued, "I remember specifically praying to God that He would send me a job, 'just like my dad had.' It wasn't a few days later when I came across a job listing in my town that simply read, *Writer Wanted.*" The result was "I ended up at Pro Farmer in Cedar Falls, IA, where my dad had worked through the 1980s and into the mid-90s. I was hired to roll out a new fertilizer analysis website. But since I had no formal training in journalism, the condition from the start was that if my boss, **Chip Flory**, ever left a Kwik Star or Casey's job application on my desk, that I would accept my fate with grace, and move on with no hard feelings." Davis was a few years into building the *Inputs Monitor* when Chip asked him to join him in his office. "He handed me a sheet of copy and said, 'Here, read this.' I sat quietly scanning the page. 'No, out loud,' he said. From then on, in addition to his responsibilities as Editor of the *Inputs Monitor*, Chip and Davis have done *Market Rally* live each weekday from their Cedar Falls office. "In January, we will be 1,000 shows deep. I found a job just like my dad had as a writer, later adding farm broadcasting to my daily duties." He emphasized, "I have the luxury of working with Chip Flory, who is an encyclopedia of commodity market knowledge. That leaves me free to play the role of sidekick. With the farm economy as it is, I consider it my responsibility to our listeners to be a voice of encouragement and humor. One of the greatest challenges of the show comes in the last minute



of each broadcast – the tweet of the day. I grab three or four tweets from our listeners and write a unique intro line and then I perform the tweets.” If he were doing a tweet of the day on this post, it would be something like, *“Today’s tweets are brought to you by a wink and a smile... when you are blessed beyond what you deserve, but want to avoid sounding pretentious when writing the story, just give ‘em a wink and a smile... and now, today’s tweets.”* Davis concludes, “My goal as a rank amateur broadcaster is, first, to deliver the news clearly and within my time parameters. Beyond that, *Market Rally* listeners have come to expect the kind of jokes one might hear at the coffee shop sprinkled into conversations with analysts, traders and other farmers. Or, topical jabs at society, like in the tweet of the day, Mark Twain impersonations, or maybe an impromptu line sung in the old crooner style. Anything really to remind people that trouble rarely lasts long. To think of farmers grinning, looking down at their boots and shaking their heads, thinking to themselves, ‘Where does this guy come up with this stuff?’ is my daily bread and butter.” **Ken Root** (Iowa Agribusiness Radio Network, Dyersville, IA) once told Davis that he remembers his dad doing a funny bit for TV with a talking steer. “Ken, and others who know my dad, know where this guy comes up with this stuff. I am grateful to God for the opportunity, and to my dad for laying the groundwork in my mind to be able to deliver the news and the occasional chuckle to farmers, using, of course, the best non-regional diction I can muster.”



ACCOUNTING LED TO HER AG BROADCASTING

CAREER – Ag broadcaster **Phyllis Parks**, (WITY radio 980 AM and 99.5 FM in Danville, IL) is a Certified Public Accountant by profession, and she has a CPA firm, Daughhetee & Parks Management Consulting, PC, in Danville, IL. One of her clients is **David Brown**, owner of WITY radio. When a former ag broadcaster left, David approached Phyllis because he knew her history in agriculture. She was very interested because of her agriculture background. “My grandparents had a farm in Iroquois County, IL, and my family lived on a farm for a while. My husband and his father bought and sold cattle and hogs, and I kept the books for that activity.” She continued, “In the 1970s, we were partners in the Danville Livestock Sale Barn, and I worked in the office paying the sellers and collecting money from the buyers.” In 1976, her son graduated from high school and wanted to go into the hog business.

“We sold our share of the Sale Barn and helped him establish his hog business. Also, we lived on a grain farm so I was involved in that activity and did the bookwork there like many other farm wives do.” Her Ag background helped her tremendously in her position with WITY. “I am proud to be a part of the WITY Ag team that provides more than 2 ½ hours of Ag information each day and makes WITY the *Illiana's Farm Choice*.” She enjoys working with the WITY staff. “I learn so

much from the interviews I do and from the 4-H kids who are so neat to talk to. They always delight me in how much they know about their projects.” Summer farm shows and the fair circuit keep her busy, but she truly enjoys talking with exhibitors, farmers, parents and the kids at the various exhibits and livestock shows. “I enjoy the opportunity to travel, and when I do, I come back with interviews with people I met on my trips. In the past few years, I have been to Sheridan, WY, Syracuse, NY, and just recently Alaska. I have come home with interviews relating to agriculture in those areas.” She concluded, “Of course, there are the Farm Progress Shows, FFA conventions and Trade Talk at the NAFB convention. I always tell people that ag broadcasting is my fun job, and I hope to be able to continue this for several more years. It has been a great experience.”

Phyllis Parks interviews **Nick Anderson** of the Illinois Livestock Development Association at an Open House of a hog feeding operation in Fithian, IL.



HIS RETURN TO FARM BROADCASTING – After more than a decade-long hiatus, **DeLoss Jahnke** returned to farm broadcasting in 2013 at WMBD-WIRL (Peoria, IL). “It was baptism by fire hosting long- and short-form programs, but it was wonderful to be back in the profession I’ve always enjoyed.” Then in 2015, DeLoss said, “I was fortunate to join **Rita Frazer** at Illinois Farm Bureau and the RFD Radio Network. Rita and I co-host *RFD Illinois*, heard on more than 70 stations, some



of which have carried the program for 50 years. DeLoss also hosts *RFD Today*, an issues-based hour-long program. “My favorite part of the job is getting out and meeting farmers and ag professionals all over the state and learning about the pride that comes from generations of work in rural Illinois. We have a strong heritage as well as a bright future. Our farmers are making environmental improvements without sacrificing

yields. Our livestock industry continues to grow and often provides diversification to bring new

family members to the farm.” DeLoss was a 1993 NAFB scholarship winner from Kansas State University. From 1994-96, he worked at WIBW/Kansas Ag Network in Topeka, KS, and from 1997-2002, he was a reporter at Brownfield. Network.



BORN INTO FARM BROADCASTING –

When asked how he ‘came to fame’ as a farm broadcaster, **Cody Martin** (Martin Ag Radio Network, Deer Trail, CO) said, “The answer is quite simple, I was born into it.” His parents, who both grew up on a farm, started into radio in the late ‘60s when 45 rpm records and reel-to-reel tape were state-of-the-art. About his parents, he said, “In 1980, they built a radio station in Deer Trail, CO, with a passion to report on agriculture and an appetite to serve an audience that feeds the world.” When Cody came along his parents had a combined 35 years’ experience in radio and a lifetime in agriculture. Cody learned from around age three the daily

workings of a farm-based radio station while he often sat on his mom or dad’s lap while they read the news on the air. Cody started putting his voice on the air at about the same time as the farm crisis of the ‘80s was in full swing. He still remembers cutting a promo with his cousins— “save the family farm for us little kids.” Cody said, “Radio broadcasting, farming and ranching have always been something I’ve been passionate about. It’s been a real privilege to report to the hard-working farmers and ranchers, husbands and wives and all that have a hand in making agriculture the most important industry in America. Bringing farmers daily news that helps their operation is something I don’t take lightly, and I feel blessed to have this opportunity.” When he wasn’t in the radio station with his parents, you could find him doing what he loved the most, riding on his grandpa’s lap on the tractor or combine. In 1990, The Martin Agri-Country Radio Network was founded by **Colleen Turecek-Martin**. “When Colleen built the radio network, she based her network on one theory -- provide farmers and ranchers with up-to-the-minute ag news and markets that would be critical to their operation. That kind of programming has served as a platform for the network for nearly 30 years and has attracted listeners to tune into the report on a day-to-day basis,” Cody said. “With nearly 30 years’ broadcasting experience, Colleen became a well-known name that the agriculture industry could trust.” Cody credits his mom for showing him the ropes in broadcasting and business ownership. Upon Cody’s mother’s passing in 2011, Cody took over the network as owner/broadcaster. He became a member of NAFB in 2013. He has modernized, standardized and expanded the network into the authoritative farm and ranch broadcast you hear on the air today. With a lifetime of agriculture and broadcast

experience, listeners have come to trust his broadcasts. Also, Cody has owned a successful construction company for the past 18 years specializing in all facets of construction. He said, "Being a full time single dad, farm broadcaster and general contractor is definitely something that is hard to juggle at times. It takes a lot of planning and learning that your arms really can stretch when getting pulled three different directions." In Cody's free time, he enjoys farming, hunting and raising his two boys, **Coehn** who is 8 and **Logan** who is 6 years old.



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**.