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by Larry A. Quinn



**JAHNKE REPORTS ON WISCONSIN DAIRY ISSUE** – “Connecting with our agriculture audience is critical to being a successful farm broadcaster, but it can also have its pitfalls,” said **Pam Jahnke** (WI Farm Report Radio Network, Madison, WI). She reports that in April, 58 Wisconsin dairy farms of all sizes, got an unsigned, impersonal letter from their dairy processor announcing that as of May 1, they’d no longer have a home for their milk. Canada had revised their milk pricing formula and closed one artery that was vital for that plant. “As a dairy kid myself, I knew the fear that suddenly struck hearts and minds in those families. So, my job as a journalist kicked in naturally. Call the processor and get their story, call the state and find out what they’re doing, and finally, call those families and find out how they’re handling it.” She added, “What started as a supply glitch turned into a national issue when **President Donald Trump** said he would ‘defend Wisconsin dairy farmers’ during an appearance in Kenosha, WI. What had been ‘my’ story – turned into everybody’s story. A group of Canadian TV reporters came to Wisconsin to find out why they were getting all the blame – and asked for my help telling the story.” Pam is shown with **Paul Hunter**, a reporter with Canada’s *The National Show*.



Wisconsin Ag Secretary, **Ben Brancel**, (shown being interviewed by Pam) got in the habit of calling her on his way to the office each day. “Seemed like just talking helped ease some of the pressure. I don’t know about other farm broadcasters, but in situations like this, I give people my personal cell phone number with a request to ‘call anytime – day or night – good news or not,’ and they

have.” She continues, “And then there’s the families. As I write this, 10 have found a new home for their milk. I’ve gotten emotional calls from them announcing the good news – and thanking me for the help. Really? What did I do but listen. Unfortunately, there’s still 48 multi-generation families that are on a bubble waiting. And that’s a story I’ll ultimately have to tell too, no matter what transpires.” Pam adds, “I believe farm broadcasters sometimes forget how close we are to our audience. We’re at their meetings, their events, their communities, we’re in their lives! We announce the thrilling wins – the new office – the new barn – all the things we love about our rural lives. But then there are times like this when they’re in a battle, and like it or not, it’s your battle too.” Pam was chosen as NAFB’s Farm Broadcaster of the Year in 2013 and served as NAFB President in 2009.

**A NEW VOICE COVERING WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE** – For the past 10 months there has been a new, second voice sharing agricultural markets and news with farmers in Wisconsin. **Kristin Smith** joined WAXX 104.5 FM/WAYY 105.1 FM, Midwest Family Broadcasting’s Eau Claire farm department as the assistant farm director helping NAFB Hall of Fame Broadcaster **Bob Bosold** with the daily and weekly chores. “Kristin decided to get into broadcasting as she has a passion for agriculture and understands what the farmers want. She read the ad and thought ‘that’s perfect for me.’” Kristin is no stranger to agriculture as she was born and raised on her family’s dairy farm in Loyal, WI. From the time she was two weeks old to her graduation from technical college, Kristin was out in the barn or in the fields. Kristin was busy on the farm as she went from feeding the calves to feeding and milking the cows to working with her family in the fields in the summer. As a member of her 4-H Club in Clark County, the summers were busy as she showed her family’s registered Holstein dairy cattle at the county, district and state fairs in Wisconsin. After graduating from technical college, Kristin stayed with her family roots and knowledge of



dairy and worked at a veterinary office assisting veterinarians and clients in large animal health and in small animal procedures. In 2006, Kristin became the office manager at her family's Golden Grain Storage facility in Loyal where she worked with area farmers and grain businesses in marketing and storing their corn, soybeans, and wheat. She managed the books for the business and worked with the Wisconsin Department of Ag, Trade and Consumer Protection in licensing and was responsible for marketing grains for the business as well as buying and selling grains.

### **Kristin Smith and Bob Bosold**

Kristin assisted more than 200 customers in storing, contracting, drying and trucking their grains to and from different locations throughout the state and beyond. She lives in Neillsville, WI, with her husband **Luke** who's in the construction business. Also, he sells Dairyland seed to farmers. They have two children, a daughter, age 4, and a son, age 2. Kristin's daughter will be following in her mother's footsteps as she will be making her cattle showing debut later this year in the Little Britches Contest at the Clark County Fair. According to Bosold, Kristin has been a tremendous addition to the farm effort at the stations as "she came ready to learn broadcasting and do whatever was needed to get the message out to farmers." Bob added, "Kristin has a great personality for this business and is learning fast and is a big help with the new technology that changes seemingly on a daily basis." He continued, "Another big plus is that she knows what she's talking about and the farmers like her. It's been a remarkably quick transition for her to go from production agriculture and living the life to now talking about the life and seeing how important getting the message to farmers on a daily basis really is." Bosold concluded, "She's the real deal and a keeper."



**SHAWNA OLSON ANCHORS AGWEEK TV** – Shawna Olson has been in the television industry since 1999. “I started out as a general assignment reporter, anchor and eventually became a meteorologist for the NBC and CBS affiliates in Fargo, ND,” she said. “I left the television industry to pursue a career in agriculture about seven years ago. That’s when I became the ag director for KFGO (Fargo, ND). Then the offer came to start up a new television program called *Agweek TV*. *Agweek*, the magazine, has been around for more than 30 years and the Forum Communication Company decided to expand the magazine into a television program.” *Agweek TV* has been on the air for 2 ½ years. It’s a locally produced program, based on local farmers and ranchers. “We focus on news and amazing feature stories that tell the true story about agriculture and life on the farm. We offer a lot of unique ag news along with some entertaining stories.” Shawna grew up on a farm near the Canadian Border in North Dakota. “We raised Simmental Cattle along with small grains. I spent a lot of my time on the farm riding in the combine with my dad or helping my mom bring meals to the field. I also spent much of the time having fun with my horses,” she said. Shawna is married and has two young children, a son, who is 3, and a daughter, who is almost 2. “I currently live on a hobby farm with my family and three horses. I never anticipated a career in ag. It fell into my lap when I was offered the position at KFGO to replace a legendary farm broadcaster, **Larry Ristvedt**. She concluded, “I had big shoes to fill, and hadn’t been around ag for several years, so it was a leap of faith on my part when I took the job. I’m so glad I did, because I’ve met some of the most amazing people in ag and continue to do so. It’s a career I hope to have for a long time.”



**Shawna Olson** goes on location for an *Agweek* TV story in Hillsboro, ND, with **Ben Miller**, left, and **Tim Kozojed** of Bloomfield Enterprises.



**NAFB members at work** during this year's National Farmers Union Convention in San Diego, CA, interviewing **Chuck Conner**, President, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives. Shown from left are **Brian Winnekins** (WRDN, Durand, WI), **Chuck Conner**, **Mike Hergert** (Red River Farm Network, Grand Forks, ND) and **Sara Wyant** (Agri-Pulse Communications, Inc., Camdenton, MO).

**SHIELDS REFLECTS ON HIS YEARS IN BROADCASTING** – Rick Shields (WKZO, Kalamazoo, MI) said, “I've spent all of my adult life talking -- on the air and in the classroom for several years. A couple of years back I decided it was time to spend more time listening. I got hooked on travel early in life and had visited all the lower 48 states by the time I had finished high school. Then, in an ‘ah-ha’ moment I decided to combine the two and have since spent as much time as possible traveling and listening to people off-shore who in most cases aren't experiencing any urban-rural disconnect. No doubt about it. Travel to a new culture is the best education you can get as long as you really listen upon arrival. And, certainly you bring back what's been at least partially absorbed.”



In the photo above, **Rick Shields** is shown during a 2015 stay with a family in Cambodia. About this visit he said, “No town-country disconnect here. Anytime I think I'm having a bad day, I consider their recollections about family members who managed to survive the Khmer Rouge regime as well as those who didn't while having more ordinance dropped on their nation (which is the size of Maryland) than was used to strike Nazi Germany in WWII. The world goes on.” About his travels, he explains, “It's difficult to say how much of the new-you goes into news stories, interviews or on-air banter. Some of it does. I'm Midwest Communication's Farm Service Director for five stations in Southwest Michigan. I've lived in Kalamazoo for more than 16 years and work out of WKZO AM/FM. This is a prime location to watch town and country interaction. It

seems to be becoming a more positive one in recent years through programs in our schools like *Ag in the Classroom*, through efforts of organizations like Farm Bureau, and through the interest of everyday people with a growing curiosity about where their food comes from. I hope they keep listening and learning and traveling seeking some answers.” In addition to work in Michigan, Rick does a call-in several times a week to **Bill Zortman's** *It's Your Agri-Business* program on the company's station KELO (Sioux Falls, SD). Rick has been an NAFB member for 35 years. Prior to that, he did news and various on-air programming. He started doing farm radio when there was an opening at KFKA (Greeley, CO). From there, he worked at Great Falls, MT, and also in west Texas as a farm broadcaster. About his career in broadcasting, Rick said, “I love the job because it focuses on the people, the listeners, and what they need to know to have a better day.”



**DEAD AIR IS BETTER THAN DUMB AIR –**

That’s advice from early in her career that **CYNDI YOUNG-PUYEAR** (Brownfield Network, Jefferson City, MO) still reflects on today. “In my first job at a radio station, I answered the phone, wrote advertising copy, deejayed on weekends (with record albums) and performed numerous other tasks that needed to be done. A few months in, the assistant farm director left and **Mike Perrine** hired me to fill that role. When Mike left, I took over as Farm Director.” Cyndi added, “That was more than 30 years and a million memories ago. As an ag education major with an emphasis in animal science, I did not set out to be a farm broadcaster, but would do it all over again in a heartbeat.” She continued, “Much has changed since I attended my first NAFB Convention in 1987. There were

no digital recorders or smartphones in those days. We all used bulky cassette recorders to collect audio, pens and paper to write our notes, and land lines to call in our reports.” Cyndi was named NAFB’s Farm Broadcaster of the Year in 1997. She served on the NAFB Board of Directors for several years, planned and hosted two regional meetings, chaired Washington Watch and Trade Talk and was in her 11th year of farm broadcasting before she ever had a computer at her desk. “We’ve reported on the changing technologies and tools used on the farm and have experienced changes in technologies used to report on agriculture. I used to think there was nothing better than getting that ‘nugget’ of news or breaking the story our listeners needed to hear. But after managing a team of farm broadcasters for 16 years, there is nothing I love more than seeing them working together and being recognized for their hard work.”



**Cyndi Young-Puyear and the Brownfield team.** “My greatest successes or accomplishments lie with the farm broadcasters and interns who are or have been a part of the Brownfield team during my management tenure. In 1985, the news director for WJIL Radio offered me simple advice that is useful not only in my role at Brownfield, but in every aspect of my life: ‘Dead air is better than dumb air.’ I’ve learned many things over the past three decades in this business. I hope to be a lifelong learner because curiosity is what inspired me in my early days in farm broadcasting and still inspires me today.”



Cyndi concludes, “When I need a dose of humility and a reminder of why I do what I do, I go home, throw on jeans and boots and get to work on the farm.”



**MIKE DAIN WINS TWO AWARDS** – Mike Dain (First Oklahoma Ag, Yancey Ag Network, and Voice of Southwest Agriculture, Oklahoma City, OK) received the Milton D. Hakel Award for Excellence in Agricultural Communications from National Farmers Union President **Roger Johnson** at the NFU convention in San Diego, March 6. “Agricultural communicators are increasingly important to providing a link between urban and rural communities, as well as the agriculture industry and the public. Mike’s insight into the viewpoints of family farmers, ranchers and rural citizens is what makes him an excellent communicator for the agricultural community and deserving of this award,” Johnson

said. The Milton D. Hakel Award is presented to reporters or news outlets that demonstrate exceptional reporting of agricultural issues. The award was named in honor of Milton D. Hakel, a well-respected Farmers Union communicator. Mike was raised on a small farm near Newton, KS, and has been reporting on farm and rural issues for more than 35 years. His contributions to the industry have been recognized by the Oklahoma Farmers Union, American Farmers & Ranchers, Oklahoma Wheat Commission, Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts, Oklahoma Cattlewomen’s Association, and the Oklahoma Pork Council. “Mike is a journalist who understands agriculture and rural life. I appreciate his dedication to the industry, and I respect his fair and accurate reporting of issues important to farmers and ranchers,” Johnson concluded.

American Farmers and Ranchers President **Terry Detrick** presented **Mike Dain** with the AFR Ag Advocacy Award at the AFR convention in February in Norman, OK.



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