



Volume 6, Number 12, December 4, 2018

by Larry A. Quinn



COLLEEN CALLAHAN NAMED CO-CHAIR OF ILLINOIS AG COMMITTEE – Illinois Governor-Elect **J.B. Pritzker** and Lieutenant Governor-Elect **Juliana Stratton** announced the formation and members of the transition’s *Growing Our Agricultural Economy Committee*. The committee is the fifth of several working groups of the Illinois transition made up of subject-matter experts who will advise and guide the incoming Pritzker-Stratton administration. The *Growing Our Agricultural Economy Committee* will be chaired by former USDA Rural Development State Director **Colleen Callahan** and Former State Senator **John Sullivan**, and consist of 22 members. “Agriculture accounts for one in 17 jobs in Illinois, and J.B. and I are committed to supporting farmers across our state,” said Lieutenant Governor-Elect Stratton. “This committee will focus on policies that help our agriculture and rural communities thrive — from investing in farm to market infrastructure and expanding access to capital for family farmers to defending agricultural education and growing rural areas in downstate Illinois.” While Callahan served

as the former state director for USDA Rural Development in Illinois, she oversaw a 20 percent reduction in staffing while still being able to generate a \$1 billion increase in the Illinois loan portfolio. As a broadcaster, Callahan served as the agribusiness director for WMBD (Peoria, IL), a position she held for 30 years. In 2002, she was elected the first female president of the National Association of Farm Broadcasting (NAFB). NAFB named her *Farm Broadcaster of the Year* in 1999 and inducted her into NAFB’s Hall of Fame in 2011. About her nomination, Callahan said, “I’m honored to be asked to serve as co-chair of Governor-Elect J.B. Pritzker’s transition committee on *Growing Our Agricultural Economy*. As a new administration begins, I’m proud that J.B. and Lieutenant Governor-Elect Juliana Stratton have reached out in a bipartisan manner to subject-matter experts who will advise and guide on policy, innovation, education and the rural economy.”

HALL OF FAMER DON WICK WINS MINNESOTA AG COMMUNICATOR AWARD – Besides his recent induction into the 2018 NAFB Hall of Fame, **Don Wick** (Red River Farm Network, Grand Forks, ND) also received the *Minnesota Farmers Union Ag Communicator of the Year Award*. Both awards were presented at the NAFB 2018 Convention. About his Hall of Fame induction, he said, “It’s very humbling to stand in front our membership and be inducted into the NAFB Hall of Fame. The honor was made even more special by sharing the honor with my good friend **Mike Adams**. I received so many calls, cards, and letters, which has been great. Also, **Kolleen** and I were so happy to have our friends and family at the Night of Honors. I’ll never forget having the grandkids rush the stage that night.”



Don and Kolleen Wick are joined by sons, **Tony and Sam**; daughters-in-law: **Monica and Felicia**; and grandchildren: **Piper, Adrienne, Sterling, and Aurora** in celebrating Don’s induction into the 2018 NAFB Hall of Fame.

HALL OF FAMER MIKE ADAMS REFLECTS ON HIS CAREER – “In December of 2017 after 43 years of being on the radio, I suddenly found myself wondering whether my broadcast career was over,” said **Mike Adams** (Adams on Agriculture, Jacksonville, IL). Among the many emails and phone calls Mike received, there was one in particular that caught him by surprise. “**Lance Knudson** with the *American Ag Network* called to see what my plans were for the future. I told him I really wasn't sure, and we agreed to talk again after the holidays. Little did I know that phone call was the door opening to the next stage of my career. When we talked again in January, Lance explained he wanted to start a syndicated radio show based on news content and using the contacts and experiences I had gained over the years. It seemed too good to be true. A few days later I talked again with Lance and **Mark Swendsen** about different ideas and possibilities. The more we talked the more interested I became, and we soon reached an agreement.”



Mike Adams interviews Gregg Doud, U.S. Chief Agricultural Negotiator

Mike continued, “I started with them on February 1 with a plan of going on the air March 5. There was a lot to do in a short period of time; and looking back, I'm still not sure how we did it. Equipment had to be ordered, satellite service worked out, and we had to find stations to carry the show.” The American Ag Network team took care of the technical side, and Mike started calling radio station owners and managers he knew. “I'll be forever grateful to the several stations that trusted me and said they would carry a show that at that point was just a concept. Every day brought new challenges to be resolved as we prepared to meet the launch date of *Adams on Agriculture*. It had been almost three months since I was last on the air, by far the longest stretch I had ever gone in more than 40 years. I had kept up on the news and issues as best I could and

started to put together a guest list for the new show.” Mike said they were still testing equipment the day before they went on the air, and they all breathed a sigh of relief when that first show was finished. “There were plenty of rough spots those first few weeks, but we were able to quickly work through them. The show focuses on issues important to farmers and rural America, and there has been no shortage of topics to talk about thanks in large part to **President Trump** who seems to supply topics of discussion every day. As both host and producer of the show, I try to have guests that provide good perspectives and analysis of issues such as the farm bill, trade, renewable fuels, immigration, markets and health care. I have four guests each day and work closely with ag groups, members of Congress, and the USDA. I also enjoy talking with other journalists, both print and broadcast, to find out what they are hearing and reporting on. Basically, I get to moderate a panel discussion on the hot topics of the day.” Mike concludes, “We’ve come a long way in less than a year and have had good response from listeners and our affiliate stations, with several more planning on joining us after the first of the year. My thanks to all who have helped make 2018 a year I will never forget.”

COLLEGE RADIO JOB LED TO LARSON’S CAREER –

Bob Larson (Ag Information Network of the West, Walla Walla, WA) found his niche working for the student-run college radio station, KBVR 88.7 FM, as a news reporter and eventually news director. Back in the ‘80s, he graduated from Oregon State University (OSU) with a degree in technical journalism. During his time at OSU, he also wrote for the school paper, *The Daily Barometer*. “After graduation, I moved to Seattle looking for a career in media or public relations, working for a few different organizations, but I eventually found my way back to radio with a job at KOMO in 1995. I started as a talk show board-op and producer, but I found myself back on the news side when the station went from a talk format to a 24-7 news source a couple of years later. In 2006, as things seemed to happen in radio, there was some reorganization at KOMO, and I found myself lured to News-Talk 710 KIRO. About a year later, the iconic KIRO AM station moved to the FM side at 97.3. Over the years in radio news, I’ve enjoyed assignments as a general news reporter, anchor, and editor.” Bob came to the agriculture side of broadcasting in September 2016 after 20 years in Seattle radio, 11 years with KOMO 1000 News, and nine years at KIRO News Radio 97.3 FM. “It wasn’t until early 2016 when I reconnected with an old high school/college buddy, Ag Information Network owner **Kelly Allen**, that I found myself reporting on topics that suddenly felt kind of ‘natural.’ Like they say, ‘what goes around, comes around.’” Growing up in Walla Walla,



a town of about 30,000 people in the southeast corner of Washington state, Bob spent much of his summertime working for farmers to earn money. From picking strawberries and squash to topping Walla Walla Sweet Onions, or driving a truck or combine in wheat or pea harvest, working in agriculture was a pretty normal summer job for many kids in the Walla Walla Valley. “Working in ag broadcasting for the past two-plus years has been a blast from my past and a fantastic learning experience. The world of agriculture has changed so much since my early involvement, but getting back and talking with the farmers in our state has been like stepping back in time to the days of my youth when so many of the people we knew were either farmers or involved in farming. Reporting for the Ag



Information Network has re-energized my passion for news and given me a new direction.” Even though he has lived in the mostly urban/suburban sprawl around Seattle for more than 30 years, he feels like his background is well-suited for ag reporting. “The biggest thing I’ve noticed since moving to the ag beat is how lacking urban news sources are of stories about what’s important in agriculture. The farmers and ranchers certainly know what’s going on; but the general public, especially those not involved in agriculture, really have no idea of the challenges facing the ag sector.” He added, “Whether it’s regulations, the labor shortage, trade, food safety, or any number of important issues, the ag news reported by the mainstream media seems written to fit someone’s talking points and rarely paints the true or entire picture of what is actually going on.” He concludes, “It’s become apparent to me that telling the stories of our producers is more important today than ever. I hope, in some small way, I can help get those messages out there and impress upon our colleagues in the mainstream that getting their information from the people who do the work is better than from what they’ll hear from any advocacy group or politician who may have never even set foot on a farm. So, moving forward, my goal will be to share the stories of the people who make agriculture great with the hope those messages will open the eyes of those who’ve been misled for too long. Being a part of NAFB has been a huge part of my learning process to this point, and I expect it will continue to be an invaluable resource moving forward.”



ARKANSAS FARM BROADCASTER STARTED IN MUSIC RADIO – Scott Woodson

(Farm Broadcaster, EAB Ag Network, Jonesboro, AR) said, “To be honest, I have a much more substantial history in music radio than I do in farm broadcasting.” He grew up in a farming community in north central Arkansas. His father was a construction worker, who retired in the tiny town of Newark, AR. “We had moved there to finish up construction of a coal burning power plant and loved the

area so much, my dad decided to retire early so I could go to high school in one place.” Scott explained, “We moved so many times in the early years of my life. For instance, I went to five different schools in the fifth grade alone.” Because of the coal burning plant in the county, Newark Schools received quite a bit of tax funding and started many new programs including a radio and television department. “My first year of high school, I developed asthma and had to quit participating in sports. I had to fill that hour of my day, so I decided to try out radio and television to see if I liked it. It was amazing! I won several state awards in radio during my high school years and decided to study radio programming at the University of Arkansas in 1987.” He worked his way through college at several radio stations playing all types of music, from easy listening to rock-and-roll oldies. In 1991, he got his first job in Country Music at KBEV (Springdale, AR). “I would stick with country music for many years, working in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Missouri, and most recently Kansas before moving back to Arkansas.” He said, “When the job opened up as Ag Director/Farm Broadcaster at East Arkansas Broadcasters and the EAB Ag Network, I jumped at the opportunity! I’ve always had a very healthy respect for the farmer and the ag industry as a whole.” He has been with EAB now for five years, and says he is still learning all there is to know about farm broadcasting. “I’m sure I’ll be learning for a long time to come. I’m just turning 50 and celebrated my 31st year in commercial radio this September. Even though I just got my AARP card in the mail, I don’t plan on retiring anytime soon. I’m having too much fun.” Scott says he is often asked, ‘What’s the best thing about working in radio broadcasting, and especially farm broadcasting?’ “I can honestly say it’s the people. There are no friendlier or more honest people in the country than American farmer, and I’m honored to be a small part of their every-day life. “



Scott Woodson interviews Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson at the Arkansas Rice Expo in Stuttgart last year.

JOHN HERATH'S CAREER BEGAN WITH RADIO STATION INTERNSHIP –

About his career, **John Herath** (*Farm Journal* News Director, South Bend, IN) said, “Nearly all of my career circles back to an unplanned internship at a local radio station. Since then, I’ve been fortunate to be surrounded by a lot of very smart people who have been gracious and patient enough to let me learn from them.” It was at that station, WLDS in Jacksonville, IL, where John first worked with **Mike Adams**, then the station’s farm director. John worked full-time in the station’s news department through his college years. **Mike Perrine** was the farm director at the cross-town rival. After graduation, John did a brief stint as news director at WIHN (Bloomington, IL) before moving to WFMB/WCVS (Springfield, IL) where he co-hosted a morning political talk show and served as backup to legendary farm broadcaster **Peggy Kaye**. “Peggy not



“Peggy not

only taught me how to read a markets screen, but she also shared her tenacious news sense and how to relate on a personal level to the radio audience. Those lessons continued with subsequent Farm Director **Hartzel Bruno**, one of the most big-hearted men I've ever known," he said. John's radio career took a break in 1997 as he moved to the Illinois Department of Agriculture to serve as public information officer for Ag Director **Becky Doyle** and press secretary for Director **Joe Hampton**. In the state position, John had the opportunity to work on a daily basis with a strong ag reporting corps in Illinois, which at the time included **Orion Samuelson, Max Armstrong, Charlyn Fargo, Colleen Callahan, Jim Fleming, Dave Schumacher, Mike Adams, and Mike Perrine**. As **Rod Blagojevich** became governor of Illinois in 2003, it was time to find a new opportunity and re-join farm radio. John joined Mike Adams at the *AgriTalk* network as the show moved to St. Louis, MO. Mike Perrine soon became part of the trio. "I've spent probably more hours and certainly more miles with Mike Adams than with anyone, including my family," Herath said. "From driving through blizzards in the Dakotas, to broadcasting from the show ring next to a bucking bull and traveling through the slums of Colombia, Mike and I have a million wonderful shared memories. I was so pleased to see his remarkable career recognized by the NAFB Hall of Fame." Since 2012, Herath has been with *Farm Journal*, serving first as executive producer of radio programming and now as the company's news director. He still manages the *AgriTalk* and *After the Bell* radio shows, the podcast network, and now also the news on the company's varied digital platforms. "I still find myself surrounded by incredibly smart people like **Chip Flory, Clinton Griffiths, Tyne Morgan, and Betsy Jibben**. He concludes, "Now I get to work with a big stable of similarly intelligent and creative reporters across the *Farm Journal* print, digital, and broadcast teams. And I keep learning from them every day."

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***.