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by Larry A. Quinn



GRANDDADDY OF SOUTHEAST AGNET

RETIRES – Everett Griner, left, at 92 years young, is turning off his *Southeast AgNet* microphone to officially retire, reports **Gary Cooper**, right, (founder and president of AgNet Media, Inc., Gainesville, FL). Everett plans to spend more time with his wife at their farm home in Moultrie, GA. “There are so many things about Everett that I learned to appreciate and respect since he joined the *Southeast AgNet* farm broadcast team in the late 1980s. He was already an accomplished and well-known farm broadcaster throughout Georgia at the time. His commentary skills were honed through a lifetime of unique experiences and world travels,” Cooper said. Griner served in all four branches of the U.S. armed forces. He entered the Navy during World War II

and was transferred into a Marine security unit immediately after boot camp. World War II ended the day his unit crossed the international dateline on the way to the war, so his months in the Pacific were spent traveling the region on various missions during the rebuilding months in the war’s aftermath. Enlisting again during the Korean conflict, this time into the Air Force, Griner was immediately assigned to an Army base due to limited facilities in the Air Force at that time. He saw places like Libya and Tripoli, and even spent time as a military police officer. Griner’s combined years in the service included assignments on four different continents. In between his two stints in the armed forces, he began his radio broadcasting career in 1948. “We did very little taping,” he said. “Everything we did was live.” In those days, regular newscasts in Georgia included a lot of farm news. Griner tells stories of playing the guitar during live music segments.

When the band took a break, he would read the local news, farm news, and high school sports headlines. The station had a daily farm news hour, which he eventually hosted and anchored. Griner has made farm broadcasting his full-time career for the past 38 years. Nearly 30 of those years have been spent on the *Southeast AgNet Radio Network* team. In 1980, he left the job he had for 26 years in local radio broadcasting and became the full-time farm reporter for the Georgia Network. "By 1982, we had 100 station affiliates, just in Georgia," Griner recalled. For a number of years, Griner was an active NAFB member. He served on the NAFB board as a southeast regional vice president, hosted a national summer meeting for regional NAFB members, and remained a member for a few years after joining the AgNet family in the late 1980s. Cooper met Griner for the first time when he was working in communications at Florida Farm Bureau in the early 1980s. "I heard about this guy in Georgia who was broadcasting farm news statewide from a studio in a barn in Moultrie. I fondly refer to Griner as the granddaddy of Southeast AgNet. He had the vision, roots, historical background and grassroots knowledge of radio and farming that in later years helped introduce the *Southeast AgNet Radio Network* into Georgia," Cooper said. "The forerunner of Southeast AgNet first expanded out of Florida into a three-state network in 1989. Griner anchored AgNet's regional broadcasts for many years." Later on, reducing his workload, Griner focused his energies on network commentaries called *Agri View*. More than 2,400 of his commentaries have developed a loyal following online at <http://southeastagnet.com/?s=agri+view>. A favorite of Gary Cooper's is "The Farm Dog," online at <http://southeastagnet.com/2007/09/22/the-farm-dog>. "Griner has been called 'the Paul Harvey of farm radio' due to his effective use of pauses in delivering his messages with his unique southern drawl," Gary said. A master woodworker and hobby carpenter, Griner built his barn himself decades ago, complete with an upstairs broadcast studio that allows him to watch his cotton and peanut operations from the window. For many years, travelers passing his home on Highway 319 could buy one of his custom-made birdhouses on display daily at roadside. It's another endeavor for which he developed a regional following. Recently, Griner and his wife watched live TV coverage as Hurricane Michael made its devastating pass through the Southeast, destroying crops and property on some of the richest farming acres in Georgia. While most others in their immediate area lost power, the Griners were fortunate. Everett Griner offers this advice for young people coming into the industry: "Just enjoy what you do, and do what you enjoy, but do it well. If I were a young man looking for a career today, I would choose the same thing I've chosen. I would do it again!"



YOUNG-PUYEAR ATTENDS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE – Cyndi Young-Puyear (Brownfield Ag News, Jefferson City, MO) was among a group of seven U.S. journalists who made the trip to Monheim, Germany, for the *Future of Farming Dialogue 2018* event with Bayer Crop Science.



Ag journalists from the United States met with Bayer Crop Science President Liam Condon.

Farmers, influencers, and journalists from more than 35 countries met in September 2018 for Bayer's farming dialogue. "The much-anticipated merger of Monsanto into Bayer Crop Science began four weeks prior to this global thought leadership event, so there were many questions



about the direction of the new company. During the opening session, Bayer leaders outlined the vision for the future and reaffirmed a commitment to innovation, sustainability and digital transformation," Young-Puyear said. During an interview later in the day, she asked Bayer Crop Science President **Liam Condon** what has him "buzzed up." "What I'm most excited about is simply the potential of this company," he replied. Condon also noted they've talked about it in an abstract sense as two companies for the

past two years; and now that they are together, it's a little like Christmas when you get to open all the toys and see how wonderful they are: "And now we are unpacking the toys, and there is a tremendous amount of excitement in the organization about what we can accomplish and how we can help our growers." Condon added that glyphosate litigation in California that came the week prior to the closing was like the ugly sweater under the tree that no one really wants, but that they will deal with it. When asked about what he is "buzzed up," **Bob Reiter**, Global Head of Research & Development, said he's very excited about putting together scientists from different disciplines that have never really talked. "Our scientists are so eager and anxious to collaborate, and when you let scientists work together, that's when the excitement really can take place."

Beth Roden, head of Global Communications for Bayer Crop Science, told Cyndi this event is about more than getting Bayer executives in front of attendees. "We really want to have an opportunity to engage in dialogue, to really talk about the challenges and the opportunities that are facing our industry, and that's why we call it Future Farming. So, the more we can lean in to what's coming down the road and to start to create



those conversations is really the purpose behind this event." Attendees heard from a variety of presenters, including experts in disruptive technologies such as Blockchain, Microbiome, gene editing, and drones.



On a personal note, Cyndi enjoyed seeing former Brownfield intern **Beverly (Kreul) Flatt** excel in her role on the Bayer communications team based in Monheim.

HER DOGS ARE MORE THAN HER BEST FRIENDS – Many people consider their dogs as their best friends. But for some people like **Lisa Adams**, dogs are an athletic teammate, as well. Adams, who is an NAFB Allied Industry Member (Kansas City, MO), shows herding dogs on the



competitive agility show circuit. Competitive canine agility is something Adams stumbled across five years ago when trying to find an exercise outlet for her white Australian cattle dog, **Tess**.

Lisa Adams is shown with her ribbon-winning dog, **Jaxon**, and friend **David Mehlhaff**, former NAFB member now with the Kansas City Board of Utilities; **Tess** is Adams' other award-winning dog (below).



“Competitive agility is one of the fastest growing dog sports in the U.S. The sport involves complex obstacle courses that test dog

and handler's athleticism and accuracy by racing against the clock. Consequently, the handler's controls are limited to voice and hand signals which requires extensive team coordination,” Adams said. She has been around dogs much of her life, growing up on a livestock farm where herding dogs were used routinely to work cattle. “Transitioning from working dog principles to competitive show ring principles has been a new and welcomed challenge,” she added. According to Adams, the sport of agility is constantly evolving, with owner and dog teams having to train continuously to advance from beginner to

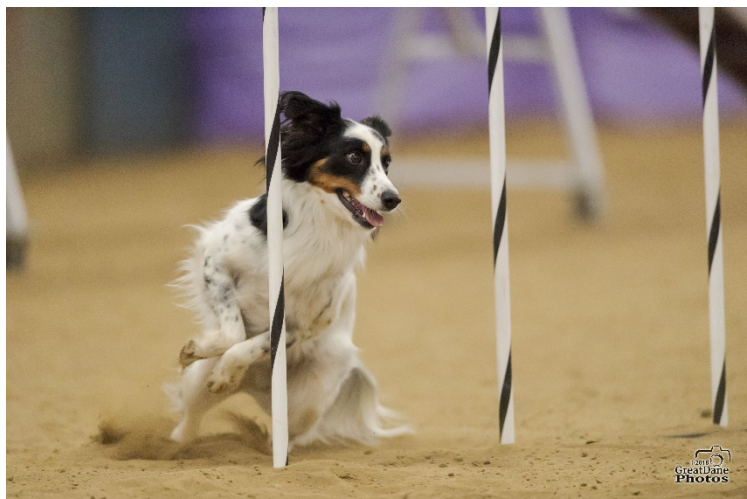
elite levels for national point accumulation. “I love the sport,” smiled Adams. “It’s a game of strategy where the handler has to initiate precision-based commands to maneuver a dog traveling at lightning fast speeds while compensating for instinctive strengths and weaknesses.” Dogs jump bars, sprint through tunnels, weave through a series of poles, and climb different combinations of tower structures. While speed is important, Adams said the fastest dogs don’t necessarily win if they get lost on the course or botch an obstacle and get hit with a time penalty. “I’m still really new to the sport,” said Adams, who qualified with her newest running partner, **Jaxon**, a Border Collie/Australian shepherd mix, for the 2018 North American Dog Agility Council (NADAC) National

Championship Show in Gillette, WY. A first-time national event contender, Adams and Jaxon competed with 336 dogs for the chance of winning top honors in their sport in September. Adams says she was more than thrilled with her dog's first-time performance at this year's championship, placing 21st out of 65 dogs in their designated class category. "We worked hard to qualify, and I'm



happy Jaxon finished right up there with the best," she said. According to Adams, the NADAC Championship Show is one of the most prestigious in North America. "Jaxon's ability to qualify with only 18 months of training was pretty amazing. This dog has speed, jumping ability, and intelligence on his side, plus an instinctive ability to elevate his game every time he enters the ring," Adams noted. "I've been fortunate to have two dogs that embrace the sport, along with coaching from experienced trainers and clinicians."

Both of Adams' dogs (**Tess** and **Jaxon**) are heart-wrenching, classic stories of rags to riches. "Our journey to the show pen has had its fair share of challenges," she said, "especially when it comes to maintaining both dogs' physical and emotional well-beings." Unlike many of her competitors who show animals bred for canine sports, Adams' dogs come from adoption cases out of Kansas and Oklahoma rescue programs. "While there's lots of love and happiness to be gained by [rescuing and fostering animals](#), it comes with some heartbreak as well," she said. "Healing and happiness are the primary objectives for why I choose to adopt over buying purebred sporting dogs. It's an entirely different mindset, but my dogs are an inspiration for 'what's possible' when adopting animals that come from abusive backgrounds." Adams also credits her dogs' accomplishments to a long list of veterinarians and animal wellness experts. "Jaxon came to us with a lot of physical ailments which required surgeries and therapy to help him re-learn the art of running," she said. "We never intended to transition Jaxon to the show pen, but to use agility



as a part of his physical therapy." Surprisingly, Jaxon's long road through recovery paid off with his veterinarian team giving their stamp of approval for him to try competitive dog sports once fully recovered. "Today, Jaxon maintains a stringent diet and exercise routine with constant vet checks and chiropractic treatments to keep him happy and healthy," she adds. Adams travels to about 20 NADAC qualifying shows a year across the

Midwest. "My dogs don't view this as work, they view it as play," she said. "But, just like any sport, there's a lot of commitment and training that goes into it." The best part of it, she said, has nothing to do with the trophies and accolades. Showing competitive agility has brought her closer to her dogs and introduced her to many new friends in the sport. "We're having a great time," said Adams, "and we plan to keep playing the game to see where this amazing journey takes us."



ADKINS WEARS MANY HATS FOR KMA – "It's been an honor to work at KMA (Shenandoah, IA) all these years," said **Dean Adkins**. "It is still a family-owned radio station that's been going strong since 1925, serving southwest Iowa, southeast Nebraska, northwest Missouri, and northwest Kansas. I've had the opportunity to 'wear many hats' while working at KMA." These days, Dean hosts a morning talk show and a buy-sell-trade program while also serving as Ag Services Director. "I also enjoy helping out in the sports department with some wrestling and football reporting." As Ag Services Director, one of his main passions besides relaying basic market information and general ag news is to get out to the people in his listening area. "Over the years, I've had the privilege of interviewing hundreds of folks with ties to agriculture by going out to their farms, places of business, and schools. I do a monthly feature with area FFA and industrial tech students and place a

heavy emphasis on 4-H kids, as well. Page County and Clarinda, IA, is the birthplace of 4-H through the legendary Mother of 4-H, **Jessie Field Shambaugh**," Adkins said. "I've learned so much by getting out of the station and making my way to these wonderful people who are willing to share their stories with me. In these tumultuous times, it's such an honor to still find so many selfless, giving folks who still understand the value of being not only a good person but a good neighbor as well." Adkins grew up on a farm in Council Bluffs, IA, and is one of seven children born to the late **Robert** and **Betty Adkins**. His two oldest brothers still farm in Pottawattamie County. "My wife, **Kris**, and I reside in Shenandoah. We have three children: **Mikayla**, **Claire** and **Sophia**. We are active in our church and enjoy being involved in shows at our local community theater. I'm passionate about soil conservation and water quality, and I enjoy interviewing producers and landowners, along with Natural Resources Conservation Service and Iowa Department of Natural Resources professionals, who share my passion. A frequent theme of many of those recent radio visits has been the tremendous value of cover crops. Every day brings new opportunities and challenges, and I'm thankful for not only a supportive family but also a great staff with whom I work with here at KMA, including an owner who is second to none, **Ed May Jr.**"



BAKER CHOSE BROADCASTING AT AN EARLY AGE

– **Bill Baker** (American Cattle News/Dairy Radio Now, Bend, OR) knew he wanted to be a radio broadcaster early in life. When he was 10 years old, he built a make-shift radio station in his bedroom and broadcast to an audience of one, his dog **Moses**. Later in high school, he heard about a classmate working a weekend shift at a real radio station. He tagged along and spent time recording his voice in the production room and leaving it for the boss to listen. “The station manager told me I didn’t have much of a voice, but I could read. That was enough encouragement for me,” he recalled. “I filled out my FCC license and was hired as a part-time board operator.” His first day on the job was May 18, 1980 -- the day Mt. St. Helens blew. The first time “on the air,” his parents recorded him on a tape recorder, but they wouldn’t let him listen to it because they didn’t want to discourage him. “Maybe that was a good thing,” Baker added. “It took a while, but I started to get more comfortable after a few board shifts. I was blessed to have a

station manager who let me make rookie mistakes before I ventured off from my hometown.” Baker worked at several radio stations in the Pacific Northwest in the 1980s and 90s, mainly as the news and public affairs director. The Associated Press honored him with the *Best Scheduled Newscast* award twice, when working at KPUG-AM (Bellingham, WA) and KBNW-AM/FM in Bend, OR). He first became involved in farm broadcasting in 2000 when he worked for **Lee Mielke** of *DairyLine Radio*. That’s when the internet took things to the next level. “New technologies forced us to put the razor blade down when editing tapes and learn how to do it on the computer,” he said. “It took us an hour to upload a 5-megabyte audio file at first, but we got the hang of it.” Fast forward to 2018 where Baker just launched a five-minute radio segment called *Dairy Radio Now*, heard weekdays on a growing network of radio stations across the U.S. “Radio continues to be an ideal vehicle for relevant news relating to the dairy farmers’ bottom lines. *Dairy Radio Now*’s regular segments are devoted to professional development, market management, feed, genetics, animal welfare, policy, and promotion,” Baker emphasized. “Working in farm broadcasting the last 18 years has opened my eyes to the perseverance of American dairy farmers. I encourage everyone to raise a glass of milk in their honor!”



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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***.