

TRAILHEAD

"BRINGING INNOVATION AND SUCCESS TO THE SANDHILLS"

September 2009 • PUBLISHED BY FARMERS RANCHERS COOPERATIVE, AINSWORTH, NEBRASKA 69210



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PARTNERSHIPS THAT LAST

When I first came to Farmers Ranchers Cooperative back in 1991 from Dodgeville, WI, I remember questioning the money spent advertising and sponsoring programs on the local radio station. Back in Dodgeville, trying to get the cooperative's message across on the airwaves would not have been an effective use of our dollars. I soon found out that wasn't the case in Ainsworth. Everybody listened to KBRB.

No wonder we've retained the partnership over all these years—one of the many we build with local vendors and businesses. And while we'll continue that strong relationship, we were sad to see our friend Larry Rice retire this summer from the station he founded back in 1968.

I sat down with him recently to talk about how he got into the business, ended up in Ainsworth, and his philosophy about local radio. It's an interesting story, and as many of you know, Larry is an interesting guy, with a great sense of humor.

His path to Ainsworth began as a farm kid growing up in northwest Missouri. "Radio was important to our family," says Larry. "I just liked it and gravitated to it."

In 1956 he began working part-time at KNIM radio in Maryville, MO, while attending college. That's where he found his radio voice, and radio name. "My real name is Lorris, but the manager of the station said, 'Lorris? We can't say that.' And so he changed it to Larry."

He worked at a radio/tv station in St. Joseph before moving on to Kansas City, where he and his wife, Linda, began raising their family. When fellow Missourian Gil

MANAGER'S MOMENT

by Keith Erickson
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Poese called and asked if he was interested in purchasing a radio station with him in the smaller and more rural O'Neill, NE, he jumped at the chance. A few years later the mayor of Ainsworth approached them about starting a station in Ainsworth.

In 1968, KBRB was formed, and the FCC approved the full-time AM radio station at 1400 on the dial. The tower and transmitter were constructed about a mile east of Ainsworth. A building downtown that had housed a plumbing business was remodeled for the studio and offices. And that's where you'll still find this Ainsworth landmark business.

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Farmers Ranchers President and CEO Keith Erickson and retired general manager of KBRB Radio Larry Rice believe in local business partnerships.

INTRODUCING HURLEY & ASSOCIATES

At Farmers Ranchers, we try to be responsive to the needs of our members. That's why, after hearing from our producer members that they would like help in navigating the complex world of marketing, we've found a reputable agri-marketing firm that can provide the services you're looking for.

We'd like to introduce you to Hurley & Associates. "Hurley & Associates is a family-owned corporation established in 1975 in Charleston, MO," says Barry Whitehill, the company's Farm Marketing Consultant for the Nebraska area. "Its sole business is working with individual producers to market crops and livestock. Our primary goal is to improve each client's long-term profitability."

The company has offices across the country, working through consultants like Barry to serve individual producers. Currently, the company assists farmers/ranchers in marketing crops from a total of more than one million acres. Services include crop marketing/risk management, risk assessment, and financial planning.

In partnership with Farmers Ranchers, Barry came earlier this year to conduct an informational meeting to explain the company's services. "We had quite a few producers attend that meeting and indicate an interest in follow-up workshops," says Farmers



Meet Barry Whitehill with
Hurley & Associates.

Ranchers President and CEO Keith Erickson. Since then, Barry has held marketing workshops in the Farmers Ranchers area for both grains and livestock.

Barry, who grew up on a southwest Iowa farm, has more than 30 years' experience in ag-business. He has been a Hurley & Associates consultant for 9 years. "My personal philosophy in working with producers is the same as our company's," says Barry. "We work for our customers, and we believe in building a close relationship with them. We also take a lot of pride in a 95%-plus retention rate of clients. That means we have a lot of long-term clients."

Keith says Farmers Ranchers is pleased to have Hurley & Associates providing a service that members have requested. "Our mission is simply to introduce Hurley & Associates to our members," says Keith. "Individuals who want to pursue a relationship with the company can contact Barry on their own and set up a personal appointment."

If you would like more information about Hurley & Associates, members can go to the company's web site at www.hurleyandassociates.com. We will also have a link on the Farmers Ranchers Web site. Barry also invites anyone with questions or interest to contact him directly toll-free at 866-646-7472, or bwhitehill@hurleyandassociates.com. ■

IT'S ON THE WEB—www.frcoop.com

Looking for Internet on the go or smart phones? You'll find them now at the Farmers Ranchers Appliance Store in Ainsworth.

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There have been changes over the years, including the addition of an FM station in 1983, expansion to 24-hour broadcasting in 2000, and some new faces, but the importance of local news remains intact.

"Our basic idea was to do anything we could do local," says Larry. "Local news was going to be important. Helping someone find a lost dog was important. And in those days, we could give hospital reports. Local was—and still is—the only way we can operate. Listeners can find the music they want on satellite radio, or stations out of Omaha or Denver. But they can't find out where the fire is, or who died in the community. We can still do that."

If local news has been the mainstay of KBRB, local business support has been essential. "The only way we could survive was to have the partnership of local businesses like Farmers Ranchers," says Larry. "Farmers Ranchers has probably been on the air

with us since day one. I can never remember a time they weren't involved."

That support continues with KBRB under its new operator/owner, Graig Kinzie, with sponsorship of daily local programs and opportunities to communicate effectively with our members and customers. It's a perfect example of how we continue to support local businesses and they support us.

We'll miss Larry at the helm of the station, but he's not going away. In fact, when we met to reminisce, it was still in his old radio office, surrounded with his antique radios and memorabilia. "I've got to try to clean out this office," he said laughing. "This is 41 years of junk that I'm trying to relocate." That's not 41 years of junk, Larry, but 41 years of great support and service to our community. Happy retirement! ■

by Rocky Sheehan
 Feed Division Manager
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MILL WELCOMES AUTOMATIC BAGGER

Farmers Ranchers' automated bagging system is now operational, with the robotic palletizing system scheduled to be stacking feed bags in early September. Not only is the new system reducing dust in the feed mill and producing more professional-looking and more tightly sealed bags, but it's increasing our efficiency. That enables Farmers Ranchers to continue offering competitive feed products.

We're getting used to the new system which was installed in August, but we've already seen an increase in the number of bags we can fill with feed or mineral. Compared to our old manual system, where we could bag and stack up to 8 to 10 tons per hour, using just the automated portion of the system, we've been filling and stacking 12 tons per hour. Once the robot palletizer becomes fully operational, we expect that number to be 15 tons an hour. At optimal conditions it could top out at 22 tons per hour.

Open House October 2

We'd like to thank Bill Worden and his crew for their long hours tearing out the old equipment and installing the new. And,

we invite you to see the equipment in action during an open house at the Feed Mill on Friday, October 2. We'll provide tours between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., with lunch served from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. During the open house we'll also be offering buying opportunities for animal health products, vaccines, and starter feeds, along with booking cake. And we're still inviting customers to help name the new robot. Call me ahead with your creative ideas!

Cake contracts available

Cake price contracts are now available. To discuss your cake needs and pricing opportunities, contact your Farmers Ranchers feed salesperson or the Ainsworth, Valentine, or Springview locations. Feed costs appear to have come down a little, but we do not expect to see a drastic reduction until harvest gets closer.

Give us a call to talk over any of your feed needs, or to give us your robot name ideas! ■



The new automatic bagger is increasing efficiency at the Ainsworth Feed Mill.

AGRONOMY ADVICE

by Katie Moravec
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WINTERIZE YOUR FIELDS

Without proper preparation for winter, your diesel engines would freeze, crack, and be a costly reminder of what you should have done before cold temperatures set in. The same is true when it comes to land preparation. If you don't winterize your fields and pastures, plants like alfalfa can freeze and winterkill, and weeds can take over in the spring.

We recommend soil samples be taken every five years. These tests will give us a good reading of what

nutrients are available and in what quantities so we can come up with a customized fertilizer blend.

We can also help you evaluate this year's crops—looking at what worked well and what fell short. We can reserve hybrids and varieties for next year, finding the genetics that are best for your soils and conditions, and offering up to a 10% cash discount and up to 14% volume discount on row crop seed. To find out more, call me at 402-387-2323. ■

INSIDE

NAVIGATING THE WORLD OF MARKETING



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LOCATION PROFILE: AINSWORTH MR. TIRE

TIRES AND SO MUCH MORE

Walk into the Ainsworth Mr. Tire, and Manager Dennis McBride might be talking to a customer about a tire order or scheduling a service job. David Kackmeister is handling an alignment or exhaust job. Chuck Irwin is changing oil or filters. Richard Masters is repairing or installing tires. Tom Handsacker might be helping Chuck or Richard, or running the second farm tire truck. And Dale Mapes is definitely out in the tire truck, heading to a customer's farm.

No wonder this Mr. Tire shop is so successful. "When I first got here eight years ago, we were at about \$750,000 in sales annually," recalls Dennis, "and we thought, 'Wouldn't it be great if we could reach the million-dollar-mark some day?' Well, we've topped \$1 million in sales for the last three years." In fact, combine all three of the cooperative's Mr. Tire locations (Ainsworth, Valentine, and Mullen), and Farmers Ranchers' Mr. Tire ranks third in sales among all of the Mr. Tires in Nebraska.

One reason the Ainsworth Mr. Tire staff stays busy is their depth of experience. Chuck Irwin is just one example. He was co-owner of the Irwin Oil and Tire business in Ainsworth when Farmers Ranchers

purchased the business in 1995. "Chuck changed the oil in my car when I was in high school," says Dennis.

In 2003, the cooperative chose to become part of the Mr. Tire network. With that association, the business has access to quality tires like Hankook and Cooper—with their road hazard warranty. They can also outfit a customer with other brands, including Goodyear and Michelin.

While experience and product is important, Dennis says the single most important reason the Ainsworth Mr. Tire is successful is the focus on customer service. A perfect example is, he says, our relationship with other Mr. Tires around the Midwest. "We have several customers who purchase tires from us for their child's car when they head off to college. They know if something happens to those tires when they're away at school, we'll work with a Mr. Tire in the area to take care of the problem," says Dennis. "That's worth a lot."

They also try and fit the tires to a customer. "We try to give our customers what they need—selling them the tires that will work best for them and their type of driving." To do that, you have to know

your customers. And Ainsworth Mr. Tire is great at building customer relationships.

"We've known most of these customers their whole lives," says Dennis. "You see them on the street, or in church, or at school functions. If you don't treat them right, they'll either tell you or tell someone else. We just believe in treating them right." ■



Clockwise: Dennis McBride, Tom Handsacker, Richard Masters, Chuck Irwin, and David Kackmeister. Not pictured is Dale Mapes, who was on the job in the tire truck!