

first gear

>> “I thought that was the end of it,” Connors recalls. The story, however, took on a life of its own, as the 5th-generation farmer began fielding calls from media outlets, including numerous radio and TV stations, “Good Morning America” and the Associated Press. Reportedly, the story even scored time on David Letterman’s “Late Show” and the Weekend Update on “Saturday Night Live.”

“The whole story went viral because of this 911 call,” Connors says with some trepidation in his voice. “I mean, I hate to take a hardship like that and say it was a good thing, but it was a positive thing for every maze across the country. We and just about every other maze were very busy from that moment, right through to closing on Halloween.”



Such a media bonanza wasn’t Connors’ only brush with fame. In 2009, his maze was based on “Family Guy” animated TV characters Brian and diabolical baby Stewie. “We got a surprise visit from Seth MacFarlane,” Connors says of the show’s creator. “He was actually in New York, and he made a special trip out here on his birthday, and did the maze and a photo shoot with us. He’s just a down-to-earth guy, and it was a cool experience.”

At this writing, Connors is considering another Salem-themed maze for fall 2012. He’s also hoping Clint Eastwood will see this story, since the photo of the maze he inspired is running with it.

“Clint Eastwood’s my favorite actor,” says Connors. “Maybe it’s just a selfish thing on my part after the whole Seth MacFarlane thing, but I’m really hoping that Mr. Eastwood would come out for a visit.”



Rodney at the Rodeo

HESSTON BY MASSEY FERGUSON® and the PRCA Wrangler National Finals Rodeo (NFR) are once again teaming up to bring together the best of the best to compete in the super bowl of rodeos. Held in Las Vegas, December 6–15, 2012, the NFR will feature head-to-head competition between the year’s top-ranked cowboys and cowgirls in 7 events.

This year, however, Massey Ferguson offers NFR attendees an additional blockbuster event: a concert from country music star Rodney Atkins. The show—sponsored by Massey Ferguson, the official tractor of Rodney Atkins—is scheduled for December 8 at the House of

Blues in the Mandalay Bay Hotel. Atkins, who scored several number one country singles such as “These Are My People” and “Take the Back Road,” has been a favorite of many fans in the agriculture community with songs like “Farmer’s Daughter” and “Friends with Tractors.”

We’ll be posting details at these sites:

■ For the Rodney Atkins concert, see

HouseofBlues.com.

■ For the PRCA National Finals Rodeo, go to **prorodeo.com.**

■ For special rates offered at the Mandalay Bay Hotel to Hesston by Massey Ferguson customers, see

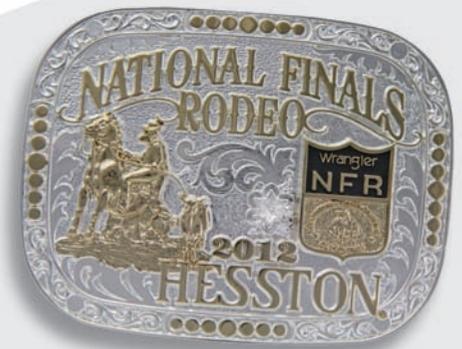
Mandalaybay.com/Hesston.

Jewel Of All Belt Buckles

BACK WHEN they were first made, odds are no one knew the 1974 Hesston belt buckles would one day sell for as much as \$1,000 apiece. Then again, it’s unlikely anyone thought the simple buckle with an understated design would be the beginning of a series that would last nearly 40 years, with no end in sight. Yet here we are in 2012,

and the buckle, which has been co-branded with the National Finals Rodeo since 1975, is still a sought-after collector’s item. For more information on the 2012 commemorative Hesston buckles, which range in price from \$16 to \$90, visit **ShopMassey.com.**

■ See a gallery of every buckle since 1974 at **go.myfarmlife.com/buckles.**



PHOTOS: CORN MAZE, COURTESY OF CONNORS FARM; RODNEY ATKINS, AP/WORLDWIDE