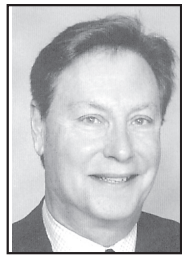


Speaking from the heart of the farmer

Life experiences teach plenty to those willing to learn. From the time I was a small boy, I remember my dad, uncles and grandfather talking and debating the issues of the day whenever we visited one another.

Insight
John Schlageck



As I grew older, I began to hear some of what they said. I began to understand what they were talking about. But it has taken me nearly 30 years to understand what my grandfather used to say about understanding issues.

About the time I was halfway through high school, something he said finally sunk in. Grandpa Bert always said when you know a little about an issue, it's easy to form an opinion. When you learn a little more, it becomes a little more difficult to make a decision. And when you learn even more about an issue, your decision becomes, "just plain hard."

Lately, I've been thinking a lot about the issue of farmers and ranchers who often toil long days away by themselves. Sometimes they feel isolated with their backs against the wall. More than one farmer has expressed a feeling of, "It's me against the world."

Never before in agriculture has it been more important for farmers to express their basic wants, hopes and needs. Things like protection of personal property, a sound education for their children and a responsible, nonintrusive federal government, to mention a few.

Never before has there been such an opportunity to express agriculture's needs. Today there are hundreds of satellites in orbit around our globe. Our cable system is loaded with hundreds of networks. The information highway continues to speed forward and we can communicate with people around the world instantly. Smart phones and social media keep us connected at every turn.

Today's technology allows individuals to access videos, music, news, weather, markets, and consumer information – literally anything happening in our world today.

It's been nearly three decades since newspapers entered the era of national and international publications. In this country, Christian Science Monitor and the Wall Street Journal pioneered the way. Magazines and newspapers from all over the world are on line today, available for anyone with the time and desire to read them.

With all of these different information avenues, it may be easy for some to tune out and turn off. Farmers, ranchers, businessmen, bankers and professionals cannot afford to do that. We must utilize these communication tools to tell our story.

One way to help do this is by becoming active in the farm organizations and commodity groups of your choice. They can provide the vehicle to help you tell agriculture's story while developing sound farming policy that must be communicated.

Agriculture finally arrived as a headliner during the farm crisis of the mid-'80s. Every day, newspapers, radios, televisions and computers are chock full of stories on agriculture. Subjects range from food additives in processing to agricultural chemicals. Stories include animal care, cholesterol in the diet, sugar-less foods, the farm bill and finding ways to increase agricultural trade.

Remember, farmers and ranchers must continue to voice their message in the public information arena. Agriculture must utilize this medium to promote and persuade others to bring about change – change that will benefit agriculture and a society that relies on U.S. farmers and ranchers for the safest and most abundant food source in the world.

A Kansas citizen said it best approximately 90 years ago, "This nation will survive, this state will prosper, the orderly business of life will go forward only if men can speak in whatever way given them to utter what their hearts hold – by voice, by postal card, by letter or by press."

William Allen White wrote this in his Emporia Gazette during the post-World War I recession in 1922. These words ring true today.



A helping hand from the Lord

Pinch me. If I feel it I must still be alive.

Because, seriously, I was afraid this last mission trip killed me. It may have something to do with the number of candles on my birthday cake, but this was, without a doubt, the hardest build I have ever done. And, the need for this house was the most desperate we've ever seen.

Jim and I have been going on these house building mission trips for years. We thought we had seen it all. In the past we had built for a family that lived in an old mini-van body; for a couple in a tar paper shack with a dirt floor; and for a man in a six-foot square hut. But we had never built for a family who, literally had no shelter.

Paula (pronounced Pow-la), two daughters and two grandchildren were all sleeping on a queen-sized mattress, on the bare ground. As best we could tell, their entire worldly possessions were stuffed into an old wardrobe. Her husband had left and she had injured herself while tearing down what little shelter they had about a week before our team was to arrive.

Out Back Carolyn Plotts



The site where we were to build was not properly prepared. It looked doubtful that our team would be able to build there. When Paula learned we were discussing whether or not we could build her house, her eyes filled with tears. My Spanish is not good enough to understand all she said, but I know she was pleading with our team leader to not abandon her. To not make her and her family sleep out in the open. I heard desperation in her voice.

Our team leader, Scott, has been building houses in Mexico for more than 10 years. I think he probably has seen it all. Now, outwardly, he might appear to be a little "crusty," but as Paula begged him not to leave her with no shelter, even he teared up. We all had tears in our eyes, but we knew there

had to be a solution. And there was.

Someone suggested bringing in fill dirt to prepare the site. Solution found. A few phone calls later, a truckload of dirt, sand and gravel arrived. Now, our work began in earnest. Leveling the site, building a form, digging the footings, cutting lumber for walls and the roof, pouring the foundation. I wish a movie camera had captured the action because I know we looked like a little colony of ants. Each with an assigned task; each scurrying about the site.

We finished the house in our allotted time. To say we all worked hard would be the understatement of the year. But would we do it all over again? In a heartbeat! Because those tears of desperation in Paula's eyes just three days before were replaced by tears of joy and gratitude when we handed her the keys to her beautiful two-room home with the orange trim.

Our team's scripture verse for the week was Psalm 127:1, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it." I know the Lord had His hand in this, because we couldn't have built it without Him.

What color is your month this month

Have you ever considered certain colors for specific months? Probably many people would pick red and green for the month of December, as these are typical Christmas colors. Some folks might pick fall colors red, orange or gold for September. I have only one month to have an outstanding color, and that is October; its color is pink.

Pink is the color adopted by people who are involved in breast cancer awareness. During October, we see a plethora of pink ribbons on people's lapels, in the newspaper and on Facebook. I don't remember thinking much about pink and breast cancer before I was diagnosed with that disease, but it was easy for me to grab hold of the pink ribbon logo to help spread the word.

My sister-in-law tells me that whenever you have three of anything, you have a collection. Well, all the various types of pink ribbons I have certainly qualify me as having a huge collection! I have pins, earrings, tee shirts, book-marks, socks and even stickers. I used a pink cover on the scrapbook that contains the story of

Life is Good Rita Speer



my journey through cancer. It would be easy to see, if one looked around my personal space, that pink ribbons are important to me.

Obviously it goes beyond the color and the ribbons. I want people to be aware of this disease and their own risk for developing it. It's important for my friends to know that early detection increases the likelihood of remission. I have even officially become a "nag" to my daughters, sending them an e-mail this month asking/begging them to have a mammogram if they had not had one this year. Women in the general population have a 1 in 8 chance of developing breast cancer in their lifetimes; my daughters have a 1 in 4 chance because of my diagnosis.

I was advised to have the genetic testing done. I did that, it was negative,

so no one is suggesting radical surgery for either of my daughters. That of course doesn't mean they are "home free;" it means they must be extra-vigilant. I have three granddaughters, and one of my hopes is that by the time they need to be aware of their history we will either have a cure or a 100% successful plan of prevention.

I have talked with a number of women who are breast cancer survivors, and one of the things I have learned: the word cure is not in our vocabulary, because we never know when despite aggressive treatment we may be looking at a recurrence or spread of this disease.

I read a book, The Biography of Cancer, and learned how much researchers have discovered about breast cancer and its treatment. But we cannot rest until this disease no longer strikes terror in our hearts or takes the lives of our mothers, sisters, daughters and friends. I encourage you to be knowledgeable about breast cancer: read everything you can about risks and prevention. Let's work together to eradicate this disease!



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Thumbs up to the NCHS marching band at Friday's half time. Especially the tribute to the troops that serve our armed forces. The echo taps was very moving. Emailed in.

Remember there is no charge for rendering a Thumbs Up. Thumbs Up are meant to give recognition for a positive person or event in the community. Also remember all Letters to the Editor must be signed.

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