

## Can the weather get any worse

### Insight

John Schlageck



Hundred degree days coupled with 30-40 mile-per-hour winds and little moisture spells crop and pastureland failure for western Kansas. It's like putting the corn and grass in a giant outdoor oven and turning a fan on.

Forty-year-old Ben McClure, Stevens County, says the extended drought that began during the summer of 2010 may be the worst drought ever in southwestern Kansas – and that includes the infamous droughts of the Dirty '30s and '50s.

Although McClure didn't experience those two droughts, some veteran farmers and stockmen did. They've told him this drought may be the worst ever. He's looking at three consecutive years of failed dry-land crops.

His irrigation crop yields fell by as much as 30 percent in 2011. While the Stevens County farmer believes he's fortunate to have the availability of flex accounts, he's worried about using up his pumping allotment in two or three years and no more water to irrigate with if the drought continues.

"It's bad," McClure says. "Since the drought started during the summer of 2010, we've received less than 17 inches of rain and no measurable snow."

Average rainfall for Stevens County is 17 inches annually. McClure's land received no precipitation of any kind during a recent 13-month period.

The hardest part of such a drought, McClure says, is putting effort into growing a crop and watching it die. His family has farmed the Kansas soil for five generations.

"I believe you don't farm as a chosen career," he says. "It's a career that chooses you."

Watching the precious top soil blow during this three year drought is especially painful. At this point there's little a farmer can do to stop erosion.

"You can pull a shovel or a blade through the soil that's bone dry a foot deep; all you'll be doing is turning over dry dirt," McClure says. "Because we haven't really grown any crops for three years now, there's little residue left to hold the soil in place either."

Last winter the Stevens County farmer watched the soil blow down to the hardpan (a layer of soil so compacted that neither plant roots nor water can penetrate). That's gut-wrenching. It leaves a scar on a farmer and the land.

McClure says the wind has blown crop residue drifts four and five feet deep on his family's driveway. Last winter, corn stalks blew into his yard, drifting around his farm equipment like snow.

Strong southerly winds have also uncovered fence rows he's never seen before – probably relics from the '50s or even the '30s Dust Bowl days.

The livestock situation is dire in Stevens County as well. McClure pulled his cow herd off pastures early in 2011 and placed them in a dry lot in 2012. He's reduced his cow herd by one-third.

Many of his neighbors have sold their entire herds.

"Some neighbors tell me they'll buy cows again, but I wonder if they'll be able to because they don't want to go through another heartache of losing something they spent a lifetime building," he says.

McClure is trying everything he can to keep his cow herd. He's grazing irrigation corners and grass he labels "wasted" just to put roughage in his cattle.

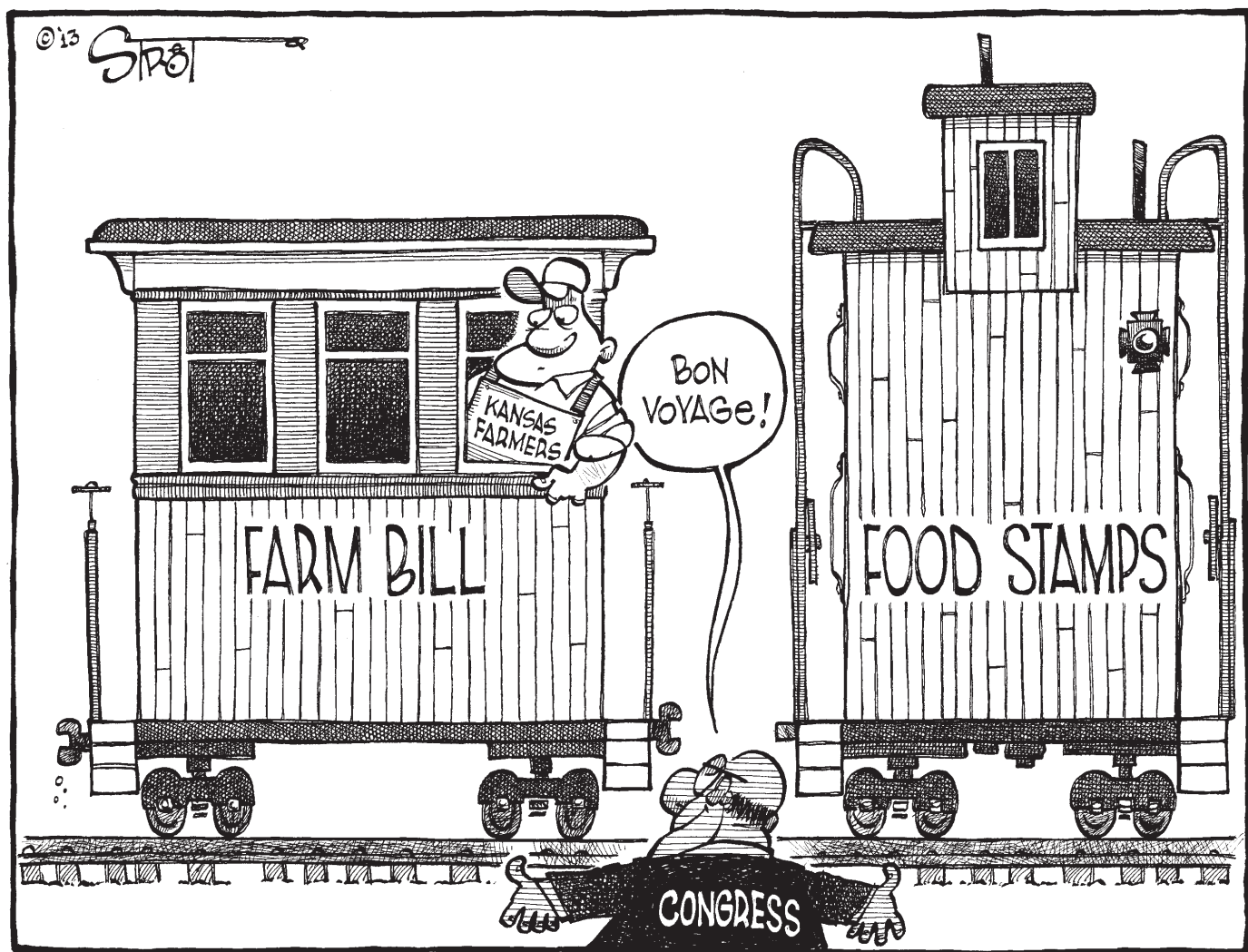
"We flashed across the pastures for a week when a little shower moved through earlier this summer," he says. "The pigweeds, kochia and thistles all came up but now we're back to feeding hay."

To cope with the three-year drought, McClure has changed his cropping practices. He's reduced corn acres and replaced some with wheat. He's also shifted to 500 acres of cotton.

Like other producers in the region, he's looking to grow more drought and heat tolerant crops. He'll plant mostly milo on his irrigated land next year instead of corn.

"It's been a tough few years," McClure says. "I hope I can persevere and my kids can see me be successful."

"At times I've been paid well for what I do," the Stevens County farmer/stockman reflects. "Other times I've done it for free and at times I've paid dearly. But I love farming and I wouldn't change it."



## Do something you love and it won't be work

When our children were growing up, we always told them, "Find something you love to do, and you will never have to go to work again."

It is advice that has served them well. The key, I have realized, is in their ability to make whatever the job into a career. Their jobs have ranged from pet store clerk to lifeguard from free lance copywriter to counselor, from college professor's aide to computer engineer, and they have found something gratifying in each one.

People tend to complain about their work, second only to weather. In 2010 in the U.S., only forty-five percent of Americans were satisfied with their jobs. Sometimes I think the joy rests in complaining, more than actual upset about their position. Either way, it tends to bring down the person and most definitely their quality of work.

As the poster says, "Attitude is the paintbrush of the mind; it colors everything we do." One thing is clear to me, the key is not the job, the pay, or the benefits, but in our own joy

### Phase II Mary Kay Woodyard



scale. I was fortunate, my parents both had careers, jobs they loved. My dad farmed, my mother was a teacher and they loved what they did.

Our youngest son, Michael, works at Main Street Grocery. Michael loves to work, whether it is for the store, God's Pantry or helping one of our neighbors with their dogs, he loves to help others. Most importantly he does it happily and willingly. When it is time for work, he doesn't have to plaster on a smile; he feels that way.

No job is 100 percent what we want it to be each day, but life in general isn't that way either. Life is much more enjoyable when we find something about it to bring us joy. To be sure,

there are times when we have to pretend it is good, and strangely enough, before long, we actually find something that is good about it.

I know I will hear from those who say, "You just don't know how bad my job is or how hard I work or how little recognition I receive." That is all well and good, but until you find a better job, doesn't it behoove you to try to feel good about what you are doing now?

It brings to mind the story of the three men working side by side.

When asked what they were doing, the first said, "I'm working construction." The second answered, "I'm laying bricks."

The third replied, "I'm building a cathedral."

Jack's dad used to say, "You can find something to love in any job." Jack believed that and our children, for the most part, have clung to that way of thinking as well. It isn't the job that brings joy, it is us who bring joy to the job. Mail to: mkwoodyard@ruraltel.net

## The true insanity of a wedding and what it entails

### This Too Shall Pass Nancy Hagman



rude behavior. Ah, well that's a topic for another day!

One woman complained her wife suffered from celiac disease; some of the food items had gluten. She told the gift giver she hoped they kept the sales receipt so they could return it.

The other partner then posted on social media that it was unbelievable that someone gave them a "gift" rather than money. It cost \$98 to entertain a guest at the wedding and they needed to recoup some of the cost. Plus many couples use their wedding cash to build for future financial success. No one else brought a "gift" to the wedding.

The wives did not realize the guest had connections to a reporter who was happy to write a story about the expectations that surround weddings these days. One of the women remained entrenched in her position. But after a few days of seeing very negative reaction to the events, the second was

This is not a new thought; awhile back I decided there only needs to be one (MOB) Mother of Bride dress. We could just pass it around.

So, of course, the idea is not without flaws: events on the same day, differences in taste, sizes, etc. but surely it could work somehow! No one is looking at the MOB's anyway!

As to the style of wedding, I'm all for on the beach. Then everyone could go barefoot.

When you look from the outside in, most weddings seem excessive. It's easy to judge.

Who are these people? Bachelorettes in Las Vegas? \$10,000 wedding dresses? And even though I said I like the idea of the beach----I think it takes quite a bit of nerve to ask your family and friends to shell out \$1000's for plane tickets and resort costs.

I read a story on line about a couple who criticized a wedding gift. It was a basket filled with trendy food items and beverages. And a box of Sour Patch Kids candy, because as the hand written note explained, there will be sour patches. Thoughtful, right?

The wedding involved a same sex couple. I'm accepting of their choice, even their right to be married but why did they take it one step further with

begging the story be taken down from the internet!

Beyond this anecdote, the article gave an interesting analysis of today's weddings. The story pointed out the wedding guest's average cost of attending is several hundred dollars. That includes transportation, lodging, gift, a sitter for young children, a special new item to wear, etc. If you are a member of the wedding party, it can easily run into the \$1000's. Hosting a shower, the bachelorette, clothing, etc!

The average direct cost of a wedding to a bride is \$23,000. I reiterate: it is easy to judge; it seems excessive! Who are these people? Aren't we in a recession?

But then you go to weddings, they are so beautiful and everyone is so happy (except the MOB, who wants to be barefoot because her feet hurt).

The ceremonies make you cry, the food fills your tummy and your heart is full of joy at the gathering of family and friends!

As Alan Jackson sings: "Too much of a good thing is a good thing!"

PS: Elizabeth became Mrs Brandon Maughan, Saturday, July 20 and my feet still hurt!

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Thumbs up to Doug Sebelius on his quote: "One more item raised (by the law) because it can be, is politics; this issue has degenerated to wartime posturing. It's us versus them. My rights and yours be damned", said Sebelius. I agree with that 100 percent The best two congressmen we ever had were Keith Sebelius and Bob Dole. Called 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.