

A Very Merry Christmas to One and All!

AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

There seems to be a fair amount of discussion, and sometimes intense discussion, about whether you say Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, or whatever. I'll be honest with you. My reaction to all of that is "don't get your tinsel in a tangle." There are many different holidays that occur from Thanksgiving on through the New Year. We aren't all going to observe the same holidays and many of us won't even observe the same holidays in the same ways.

I am likely to greet you at this time of year with a "Merry Christmas" because that's my world. I grew up celebrating Christmas. But I also have friends and family members that celebrate Hanukkah and if I see them I will likely greet them appropriately. If someone chooses to wish me a Happy Holiday I may respond likewise as I will if someone wishes me a Merry Yule or Joyous Solstice. We all have different lives and life's too short to worry about that.

Regardless of what holiday, if any, you celebrate at this time of year, I choose to head into this season with a sense of joy and try to find a little inner peace. It's how I simply approach the season. I make no bones about it, I do love Christmas music. I start listening to it in October most years, to the dismay of many people. A few folks occasionally express their disgust with this and I simply respond with a question. "What's wrong with listening to music that promotes love, peace and joy?" I think we could use a little more of that.

I long ago quit making Christmas wish lists. Many of the things that I want have little to do with material possessions and more to do with the intangible human nature. The classic things like peace on earth, goodwill towards mankind. I try to exemplify my attitude with action this time of year. I had to go to the post office this week (NOT to mail a Christmas present) and I knew it would be busy. I knew that if I was out of there in under a half hour it would be a victory! I also knew that there would be people in line far less jovial than I. I struck up conversations with other people in line and make things a little bit lighter. If I could sing, I would have sung Christmas songs to pass the time. But given how I sing, I figured that might make things worse! As I suspected it took about a half hour and I came out in a good mood and happy spirit.

In the coming weeks we'll spend a little bit of time on the road. I hope you don't get behind me and you're in a hurry, because I'll be going no faster than the speed limit. If we run into traffic congestion, we'll just take our time and arrive safely wherever we are headed. We'll pack more clothes than we need just in case an unexpected storm comes along and makes travel a challenge. We'll spend time with family and friends in the coming weeks and we won't let things bother us, because before long we'll be into the new year and all the busy times that it will bring.

One of the things that I've noticed is that the stress that the holidays bring on us is usually self induced. The best way to reduce stress is to reduce our expectations. Head into the holidays with a mindset that the best present you can receive is to spend relaxing time with family and friends. Also know that 20 or 30 years from now people won't remember the gift that you may have given them, but they'll remember the time that you spent with them...stuck on the farm... in a blizzard. And that is what will bring a smile to your face, and their's!

To bring these holiday ruminations to a close here is one of the things on my imaginary wish list. I wish for you all to have a safe and happy Christmas or whatever holiday that you celebrate. I wish for you to celebrate it with those that you love and that you spend it making memories that will bring a smile to your face for years to come. Merry Christmas everyone!