

## My Christmas Wish List

AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

As we approach the Christmas and New Year's, and many other, holidays, it always causes me to stop and ponder many things. There's the personal importance of Christmas and all the memories that are conjured up from past celebrations. Wonderful memories of Christmases as a child growing up on the farm. Memories of being snowed in and snowed out back at the farm when I was an adult. Memories of nieces and nephews and great nieces and great nephews and the wonderful excitement of Christmas that you could see in their eyes. Precious, wonderful memories.

I remember eating the Swedish, or at least Scandinavian dishes on Christmas Eve that my mother would prepare. While my father loved the pickled herring and lutefisk, I was probably well into my 20s before I could handle the lutefisk. I still make it occasionally, just to keep me connected to my past! The potato sausage (potatis skorv) was another story however. I could eat a pound of that all by myself. Thank goodness I can get an excellent potato sausage in Clay Center - because I go there to buy it every year!) Why is it that we so associate food with the holidays?

As the year draws to a close it brings me closer to the anniversary of when I started work. January 4, 1982 was my first official day as a county extension agent. I spent the holiday season just before then packing up and getting ready to leave Lincoln, Nebraska behind. I spent the month of January training in the Pottawatomie County Extension Office and then began at the Geary County Extension Office February 1, 1982. Little could I imagine that 38 years later I'd still be here doing the same thing. Oh, how I do my job has changed incredibly since then, but the job I do is still the same. I get to help people find solutions to their problems whether that is growing a lawn, a garden or a quarter section of wheat, corn or soybeans. People ask me why I've stayed here this long and the answer is simple - the people. The people I work with and the people I get to help.

It is altogether fitting that I close this column out with my annual Christmas wish list. Topping the list of things I want to get is another great year doing this wonderful job. I look forward to the coming year and programs I want to do and all the unknowns that make every day of this job different. Second on my list is tolerance but not just tolerance but an example of how to be a tolerant and accepting individual (I do reserve the right to exclude "bad" officiating of basketball and football from that list!) I fear that we are becoming a less tolerant society while at the same time we are becoming an ever increasingly diverse society. Tolerance and acceptance is essential to our continued survival as a country. I can't make anyone else be more tolerant and accepting, but I can try to be a good example of both.

I also wish for a less violent world. I have no idea how we have gotten to the point we have and it makes me sad. Now, perhaps more than ever, we truly do need peace on earth, good will towards all. I wish for aid and comfort to those who are hurting, to those who are hungry, to those around the world merely looking for a safe place to raise their families. As I've traveled I've found that people everywhere all want the same thing - a place for their family to grow up safely without fear and hunger. Sure, my wish list is pretty big and nothing you can buy in the store. But if we can accomplish just one or two items on this list, what a much better world it would be. Merry Christmas (or whatever holiday you choose to observe) everyone! May it be safe and happy!