

## **And That's A Wrap!**

### AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

According to my far too extensive records that I keep, this is the 2,081<sup>st</sup> weekly newspaper column that I have written. (Yes, I do have copies of all of those columns, neatly digitized, cataloged, and archived.) The first column was in the March 10, 1982 edition of the then Junction City Daily Union. This column will be my last as I am retiring.

First of all a big thank you to the various owners of the newspaper for continuing to give me the column inches of space every week. The opportunity that this column gave to me was truly priceless. I've covered a lot of topics from agriculture to lawn and gardens to community development and occasional ramblings on life in general. I was never told what I could or couldn't write about. That clean slate faced me every week causing me to ponder what am I going to discuss this week. While it did occasionally feel like a chore, I recognize now what a wonderful opportunity it was!

It was never my intent to spend 40 years, my entire professional career, here. This was just a break from graduate school and after 4 or 5 years I was headed back to get my Ph.D. and spend the rest of my life as a plant breeder. But a funny thing happened along the way. I realized how much I truly loved what I was doing. What's better than to spend every day going to a job that you love, and then getting to do it for over 40 years.

We've been through a lot together. A couple of farm crises, floods, droughts, snowstorms and even a couple of ice storms. Then there are insects: new insects, old insects, some insects that were novelties and some that were threats to our health. I grew up with a love of the natural world and tried to share that with all of my readers to help them better understand what was happening around them, and why. We watched the personal computers slowly invade our offices and homes as well as the internet and cell phones. While the questions may have not changed very much over 40 years, the way those questions arrived to me certainly did!

I had the amazing good fortune to have been only the third Geary County Agriculture Agent since the first full time agent, Paul Gwin, arrived on October 1, 1925. Between Mr. Gwin, Mike Stroud, and myself, we will have served for just a month shy of 97 years, 35,400 days to be exact. Pierce County, Wisconsin, came close (actually led for a while) with three agents from August 1, 1920 through February 1, 2016, 34,882 days. For two counties to have had that kind of longevity is nothing short of amazing.

It doesn't happen by accident though. It happens because of the people in the community and how accepting they are, it comes from a good team in the county Extension Office and due to outstanding ongoing support from the Geary County Commissioners! So a thank you to all of you, all of my Extension Office coworkers over the years and to those County Commissioners.

And now a request of all of you. The recruitment and eventual hiring of a new county extension agent is underway. That person will hopefully be here by the fall. Keep in mind that they aren't me. The Chuck you see today was not the Chuck of 1982. I learned a lot along the way. The new agent will have different interests, different skills and will be a better agent than me in many ways. Give them the room, the time, and the support to develop into the best agent that they can be! But don't expect them to be here for 40 years. Those days are likely long gone!

In closing, thank you! Thank you for making me keep learning because of your questions. Thank you for your support and thank you for your friendship. I couldn't have asked for a better career and if I had it to do all over again, I doubt that I'd change a thing. So as they say in the broadcast business, "That's a wrap, folks!"