

As many of you know, I've been involved in agriculture my entire life. My parents moved to our farm just north of West Concord two months before I was born. After leaving the farm for some college and a year of working in radio in Waseca, I came back to farm with my parents, eventually taking over the farm. In 1987, I started my career as a farm broadcaster at KDHL.



Hall of Fame broadcaster Orion Samuelson, a man I've gotten to know over the years, always told the story of his dad visiting him at work at WGN in Chicago early in his career. Orion grew up on a dairy farm in Wisconsin. His dad, a long time dairy farmer, was not all that impressed with Orion's new line of work. Orion was the farm director for the 50,000 watt clear channel station in the windy city where he would cover everything agriculture. After the visit, Orion's dad said to him, "It must be nice to just look at all of that work and talk about it. That's how I felt over the years when I would report ag news or markets. It is nice to just look at all that work and talk about it. I remember all too well fixing fence when it was 95° and humidity was 95% and I'm fighting off horseflies, which I couldn't see because of all the sweat rolling off my forehead.

The other extreme was keeping a water fountain near the barn from freezing when the temperature was 5 below and the wind was blowing and I had to work without gloves to get the bolts off the water fountain. And I didn't mention that water had poured inside my boots. I distinctly remember baling hay, loading the wagon behind the baler in 104° weather. Again it was hard to see from the sweat and the chaff blowing back into my face. So having been there and done that, I appreciate all that the farmers do. Sure they might have bigger, better machinery today with air conditioners and heaters and everything you used to find only in a Cadillac, but farmers still work very hard.

I came across a script of a commentary program I did on the Minnesota Farm Network. In it, I talked about a framed print I saw at a silent auction at the state cattlemen's convention one year. It was entitled 'You know you're a Farmer.'

- You know you're a farmer if your dog rides in your truck more than your wife.
- You convince your wife that an overnight, out of state trip for parts for a piece of equipment is considered a vacation.
- You know you're a farmer if you wear specific hats to farm sales, livestock auctions, customer appreciation dinners and vacations.
- You remember vacations...that out of state trip for parts!
- You know you're a farmer if you ever had to wash off with a garden hose before you were even allowed into the mud room.
- You've never thrown away a five gallon pail or a five quart ice cream pail because you just never know when you'll need another one.

That last one is a habit that's hard to break. Heck, I'll stop along the highway to pick up a 5 gallon pail that has blown out of somebody's pickup.

- You know you're a farmer if you can remember the fertilizer rate, seed population, herbicide rate and yields on a farm you rented 10 years ago but yet your wife's birthday....you think it's sometime in the summer.
- You know you're a farmer if you've been out road farming and driven off the road while checking out the neighbors fields.
- You know you're a farmer if you ever "borrowed" some gravel from a county or township road to fix a pothole in your driveway.
- You're a farmer if you've used the front end manure loader as scaffolding to fix the roof or to paint.
- You've fibbed to the mechanic about how often you grease the bearings on a piece of equipment.
- You know you're a farmer if you've cried like a baby when you buried the family dog.

I have an added note here that you don't have to be a farmer to cry when you bury the dog.

- You know you're a farmer if you've said over and over that if you didn't have a pair of pliers, a jackknife and WD40, it'd be almost impossible to get things done on the farm during a day.

There was an article on a website called Buzzfeed.com that had a list of 26 ways you know you grew up on a farm. But as I looked at the list, I thought some of them were written by a city kid. For instance, sign number one that you grew up on a farm is that you learned to drive by the age of 13. Well I had 6 years of driving experience by the time I was 13. Heck I went into my first ditch at 8 and ripped out my first woven wire fence at 9. There was another sign on the list; you don't know what it's like to sleep in on the weekend. That one is 100% accurate. Another sign you grew up on a farm is that no gym will give you the same workout as baling hay all summer will. I know Coach Gunhus would stop at the farm just to make sure we were getting all the hay baled and that it was hot enough weather to do it in.

If you grew up on a farm, and I know many of you did, you learn to love a rainy day, you learn to not get too attached to livestock, you have a strong affiliation to the color of your tractor, you learn that work comes before play and before school and sleep. There were and are always chores to do. But in the end, you wouldn't trade it for anything because you learn the value of work and the value of life itself. I'm pretty sure I don't want to go back to handling small square hay bales in 104° weather or fixing fence when it's 'only' 95°, but I sure do miss those days.