

Farmwork December 2023

First off, an update from last month when I wrote about a state fishing record set in South Dakota. In late October, a North Dakota fisherman, Aaron Schuck, broke a 21 year old record for the largest walleye caught in South Dakota. In the 'hook and line' category, Schuck's walleye, caught in Lake Oahe, weighed 16 pounds and 8 ounces. Just after the November Messenger went to print, Schuck's 3 week old record was broken when Keith Pazour of Pierre, SD, caught an even bigger walleye on the same lake. Pazour's fish, verified by the SD Game, Fish and Parks department, weighed in at 17 pounds and 13 ounces and was 33 inches long. We'll see if one over 18 pounds will be caught in time for our January issue.

Now to what I really wanted to write about this month; I have written about and I tell people my background of growing up on the farm 2 miles north of West Concord and eventually taking over the farm from my parents before leaving for the world of farm broadcasting. I have over the years, gotten the question about if I miss the farm and do I miss any certain aspects. The short answer is yes...and no.

I do miss the rural life and small town living but I get back to visit enough to get over that. I do, in the fall, walk out in Keiven's field to see how the corn or beans look up close. The corn this year looked very good considering we had a dry year. I've not heard the official yield from this past growing season but I'm sure it's upwards of 200 bushels per acre.

I don't miss the long hours spent at planting season or harvest season. I certainly don't miss picking rock out of the fields. Nowadays they just replant the rocks by running a big roller over them. Where was this technology back in the day? I also don't miss walking the soybean fields to pick or cut weeds, in particular the buttonweeds, sunflowers, giant ragweed and the occasional volunteer corn. I had a broadcasting friend who used buttonweed as a front of the house decorative plant. He asked if I knew what this plant was. I said, 'yes, would you like me to yank it out for you?' 'No, I kind of like it', he said. I don't need to tell you he was a city kid having grown up in the Twin Cities.

I see sunflowers planted on purpose in gardens. And yes, I realize that the high plains states grow acres upon acres of it, but for me, it was a weed that did not belong in the soybean fields. Sunflowers aren't as bad as velvetleaf but for me, it stirs up those weed pulling days. I am surprised that some of these city folks don't use the giant ragweed for a hedge. Kingweed as I called it, grows fast and very tall. It's a hardy and sturdy plant too. In the fall, you can chop them down and burn them in the outdoor fire pit.

One thing I do miss, kind of, is the baling hay in the small square bales. They're actually rectangles but they ended up being called small squares. That's why geometry was hard for farm kids. I couldn't do it for a full afternoon anymore like I used to, but it was a good exercise program. I've written before how Coach Lorry Gunhus would make a visit to the farm during the summer to see if I was baling enough hay and if I'm sure I picked up every last rock in the bean fields. I assured him I was and I did.

More than the work of heaving bales of hay 5 high on the rack against the wind, where the chaff blows right back at you, I miss the smell of alfalfa drying in the sun. I will still occasionally pass a field with that very smell and I have to stop and reminisce about years gone by. Then I start to sweat in the heat and decide I don't miss all of the work associated with that great smell.

I often think of the line that it'd be nice to know you're in the good ole' days while you're actually in them. I think I've done that a lot but not as much as I probably should have.