

While I was out enjoying a round of golf in Bellevue, Nebraska recently with my two sons, I was reminded of work I used to do on the farm. The rough, as they call it in golf, is the extra-long grass and weeds that grow alongside the fairway. I do spend an extraordinary amount of time in the rough when I play golf. It may be because playing out of long grass and weeds conjures up memories of working on the farm. Or more likely it's because I'm not playing golf all that well. Either way, in the rough on hole #18, there was a patch of wild mustard. I was soon explaining to my boys about having to pick the wild mustard in our oats fields.



My dad for many years grew certified and registered seed oats and soybeans. We would get our registered or foundation seed through the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA). Dean Wright was very involved with this Association. Dean, on his farm which of course was located at Wright's corner, had the equipment to clean and bag oats and soybeans. Growing up, that was one of the first rights of spring, or should I say first 'Wrights' of spring. We had the oats stored and would load the wagon or the 5<sup>th</sup> wheel grain trailer and haul them to Dean's place. He would then run the seed through his screeners and then bag them. After a winter of not doing much heavy lifting on the farm, this would be my first weight lifting activity of the spring. 64 pound bags of oats, two bushels per bag, would need to be loaded onto the trailer. They would then be taken home and unloaded into our seed storage building. There we had to stack the bags as high as gravity would allow.

There would be two days of this activity and the second day the oat bags would not be stacked near as high as the whole body ached from the first day of this. This process would be repeated days later when Dean was set up to clean soybean seed instead of oats. My dad would say the soybean bags should be lighter as they're only one bushel bags. That was not encouraging as we know a bushel of soybeans is 28 pounds heavier than a bushel of oats. We would usually have about 2 to 3 times the number of soybean bags compared to oats. So a one bushel bag of soybean being 4 pounds lighter than a two bushel bag of oats did not make much difference when there were that many more bags to load and then unload and stack.

Going back to why the wild mustard plants reminded me of all this. The oat field that would become seed oats would need to be inspected by the MCIA. They would not pass inspection if there was wild mustard growing in the oat field. And having a bright yellow flower, they really stood out. It was my job to walk around the oat field and pull out every mustard plant. And while I was there if



there were other weeds, pull those out too. The oat fields were usually pretty clear of weeds as we underseeded alfalfa with the oats so weeds other than a few mustard plants would not survive. Some Canadian thistles or sowthistles would show up and we'd eliminate them. The golf course rough at hole #5 reminded me of why I didn't like Canadian thistle. I really should try to hit the ball straighter.



Soybean fields that were for certified seed the next year would have to be walked and weeds pulled. There were more weeds in the soybeans back in the day. Occasionally there was a mustard plant but usually it was velvet leaf along with sunflowers, ragweed, sowthistle and volunteer corn that would be the target plants to pull. Later in the season, the ones we missed would have to be cut down. A battery operated chainsaw would have been nice to have back then. All this work would take place in between baling hay and straw.

Now I know why Coach Lorry Gunhus would stop out at the farm each summer. He wanted to make sure I was walking all those fields and toting all those bales to get in shape for the next basketball season. He also wanted to make sure my mom had him on the list to get lefse come December. I think the next time I'm in the rough on the golf course; I may just pull a few of those mustard plants for old times' sake.