

2006 Year in Review

There is an old proverb that says, "One must wait until evening to see how splendid the day has been"

I think it is common for the majority of us spend valuable time at the end of each year assessing accomplishments, reviewing challenges, counting blessings and measuring progress toward goals. That may come as a result of submitting required annual reports to our respective employers, or perhaps it comes as a natural outgrowth of voluntary activities such as writing the annual family Christmas letter. Regardless of the motivation, a year end review is a worthwhile activity.

I was interested in reading the ten "Top Stories of the Year" in a recent edition of the Herald Journal. The entire Herald Journal staff discussed several potential leading stories before settling on the top ten. Editors pointed out the fact that our beautiful valley has experienced everything from tragedy to triumph. We have had difficulties and burdens and we have had much of happiness and success. For my final column of the year I comment on two of the "Top Stories" that have impacted Cache Valley agriculture in 2005.

At this time one year ago, we were all concerned about the extended drought and anxious for an abundance of snow. During the early weeks of January the storms began and moisture continued to come until late in May. Roofs caved in from heavy snow loads, basements were flooded with persistent spring rains and the planting of crops was delayed because of our inability to get into the fields. Many farmers who had worried about drought damage to their crops were instead troubled with an excess of moisture. Many acres in the valley were not planted this year because of the delayed planting season and many acres had to be replanted because of excess standing water. Where we were able to plant spring grains the yields were usually good. Most farmers planted short season corn varieties to obtain satisfactory maturity before our normal seasonal frost in September. With an abundance of irrigation water and an unusually late fall harvest season most of our crops yielded quite well with good quality. There was certainly a combination of tragedy and triumph with regards to moisture during 2005.

The tragic September 26 traffic accident has had a profound impact on many families in our State and County, but especially to the agricultural community. Agricultural Technology students were returning from a fieldtrip in a University van when a tire blew, the van rolled, and eight students and their instructor lost their lives. Two additional students survived the accident with serious injuries. The tragedy of this event is obvious as we have observed the sorrow and loneliness experienced by family and friends of the victims. The agony of broken hearts and shattered dreams almost created feelings of total despair for grieving parents, saddened siblings and lonely widows.

The triumph has come from the tremendous outpouring of support and love from a multitude of sources. Generous and kind friends, awesome neighbors, supportive and caring family members, wonderful and sympathetic University students, faculty and administrators, and wise, sensitive religious leaders have done much to soften the blow. Many personal visits, much genuine kindness, unselfish financial contributions, a consoling candle light vigil, posters signed by

University students, graduation diplomas provided by University administrators, many beautiful flowers, timely cards of sympathy, comforting funerals, a tender Memorial Service with gentle speakers, beautiful music and a plethora of additional kindnesses have helped to heal heartaches.

As Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ during this Christmas season, it is appropriate to remember his message of comfort and peace. The Bible records his birth in a stable, being wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, because there was no room for him in the inn. The heavenly angles sang of “peace on earth, good will toward men”. As He walked among men he comforted the weary, healed the sick and even raised the dead. He went about doing good and invited his followers to do the same.

A foundation belief of all Christians is the reality of Christ’s resurrection three days after Roman soldiers hung him on a cross. The promise of a universal resurrection for all mankind “to our perfect and proper frame” generates hope and optimism for all who believe the scriptural accounts.

It seems we all have our turns with tragedy and we all have moments of triumph. Our own personal difficulties make us more mindful of the sorrows and difficulties of others. Since we are all connected, we need to do all we can to make the journey easier for others. My good friend, Ed Jenson has often said; “When you are up, reach down and when you are down, reach up”. We all need each other in times of triumph and also in times of tragedy.

I personally appreciate the visits, cards and phone calls that have come to our home and to the office in recent months. In addition to a great family, I value kind friends that have been developed in various circles over the years. Though we don’t see each other daily, there is a common thread of concern and brotherhood, regardless of our immediate circumstances.

A review of the past year shows that indeed, it has been splendid, even with the tragedy that has been a part of it. I express sincere thanks to each of you for making Cache Valley a wonderful place to live. Let’s all look around, enjoy the season and move forward with gratitude, hope and optimism.