

LAW OF THE HARVEST

Ancient Greek playwright, Sophocles, is credited as saying; “We must wait till evening to know how pleasant the day has been.” Already we are in the “evening” of the growing season for Cache County crops. Though most growers have been abundantly busy during the months of crop growth, we now look back and gratefully acknowledge that the day has been pleasant. As stewards of the land, we are grateful to live in this land of opportunity and to enjoy the abundance of this peaceful valley.

Jon White, Chairman of the Blacksmith Fork Soil Conservation District and member of the County Council, recently wrote an article of gratitude for Cache Conservation News. Chairman White referred to the fact that our grain bins are full, hay is baled and in the barn, and corn silage and safflower crops are some of the best we have ever raised in this valley. Gardens and orchards have also produced plentifully and most of us will be well fed for the next year because of the abundance that has come forth.

Cache Valley ranchers weaned a healthy crop of calves this year that are heavier than normal. The early spring rains that lasted until mid June, really helped rangelands and pastures to be productive. The abundance of forage on those grazing lands provided ample feed for mother cows that milked well, raising larger calves. Sheep herds enjoyed similar benefits. Dairy farmers have not fared quite so well.

Not every day has been promising, however. It seems there is always more work than there is time to do it. Equipment breaks down, irrigation water always needs to be changed, cattle need to be fed, and bills need to be paid. On some days, the long hours, the heat of the sun, the disappointment of an untimely rain, or the economic challenges of operating costs make farmers wonder if the days really are pleasant.

The canal break on the Logan Northern has been challenging to many local residents in recent months. Loss of life, loss of property, loss of precious irrigation water, modified delivery systems and uncertainty of the future have all caused us to wonder how pleasant the day has been. The cooperation of municipalities, irrigation companies, property owners, and multiple agencies has been impressive, however. The frantic effort of countless individuals has resulted in minimal losses, with the promise of a brighter future with additional leadership, expense, and effort.

The rotation of the seasons happen quickly, with each phase bringing unique challenges and abundant blessings. As I grow older, I am noting that the seasons of life also move quickly. In my younger years a wise friend told me that the days may often seem long, but the years would be very short. I have been pondering that statement again this week after having attended the funeral of Ray Burtenshaw, one of my predecessors who spent a lifetime working as a County Agricultural Extension Agent and 4-H leader.

Ray was one of the local County Extension Agents during all of my years as a 4-H member. He worked tirelessly in giving encouragement and instruction to youth and adults alike. He was a quiet man who was always very professional and devoted in his service to others. Cache County farms became more productive and Cache County youth became more confident and capable because of the example and leadership of Ray Burtenshaw. For many of us, the first trip we ever took from one end of the state to the other, or out-of-state, came with the companionship of Ray on various 4-H activities. Ray Burtenshaw was a great leader and teacher and friend. I have always been impressed with the

effectiveness of Ray's daily labors. I fear my own efforts in this Extension chair may not be nearly as acceptable as his.

The growing season in Cache Valley lasts only a few months. The season of Ray's mortal life lasted 94 years. Many of those days have undoubtedly been long, but in looking back the years have been short. Sophocles was partially correct in saying; "We must wait till evening to know how pleasant the day has been." Wise travelers note pleasant hours often. Honest travelers, especially in this beautiful valley, acknowledge each evening that the day has indeed been pleasant.