

Farmers must not allow fear to override their faith

MANY people quote Franklin D. Roosevelt's "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself," but too few people take the time — or devote the energy — to truly ponder the meaning.

Coaches use the quote to bolster their players just before a big game. Few of us, however, live by the mantra. And, unfortunately, our society these days seems to take action based on fear, and the politicians running this democratic joint respond to that fear. And that, my friends, is exactly the reaction Roosevelt was warning us to avoid.

When we operate from a position of fear, we make decisions that aren't morally right. We take away the freedoms upon which this country was founded.

Fear's Hall of Shame

For a time, people in this country feared that black people would rise up and take over. So we denied those with darker skin the freedom to vote.

For a time, people in this country feared that Japanese people who lived here were spies for the government that bombed Pearl Harbor. So we took away their possessions and their freedom, locking them in prison camps for the duration of World War II.

For a time, people in this country feared terrorism to the point that we allowed our government to tap telephones and torture those suspected of subversive activity.

And now people in this country are afraid their food isn't safe, and so they're poised to take away the freedom to operate family farms without government

On My Mind

micromanagement in the field.

Nobody in the farming community is opposed to government oversight; we fear Big Brother squashing our property rights and our opportunity to do business at a profit, however marginal that might be today.

People afraid of cancer are twisting the vise on the tobacco industry, and the effort is squeezing tobacco farmers right out of business. Tobacco growers have been fighting for their freedom to farm a legal crop for at least the past 15 years — and losing ground incrementally.

Fear doesn't justify taking away freedom — even when it's a freedom few choose to flex.

Fear stalls action

The flip side of operating from a position of fear is inaction. Farmers can't afford to simply ignore the forces of fear that would stomp our souls into the dirt we cherish.

Fortunately, we have grower organizations that keep up with the fight — which now is being waged on so many fronts, from animal rights activists to organic food fanatics. The rest of us simply must lend our voices every chance we get to be sure we are heard in the halls of our state legislatures and U.S. Congress. We also must let those grower groups know what impact such legislation has on the farm. No matter how strong an advocate somebody is, they don't have the knowl-

edge that comes from being on the farm day in and day out.

We must also be willing to put ourselves in front of the media. A quote that I use more frequently than Roosevelt's is not nearly as well-known, and in these days of distrust — a close relative of fear — we are choosing to lose a tool that is indispensable in a democracy: a free press.

Thomas Jefferson said: "The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."

Just as those who lead our ag industry associations and our elected political leaders need to be educated, so to do those who wield the power of the pen. Not all of them relish as I do the opportunity to spend days on-farm listening and learning. So we must also go to them, and teach those we can.

We must operate with faith. Faith in our fellow man. Faith in ourselves. Faith in our nation and our God.

The farming community doesn't operate on fear; we step out in faith.



PAM GOLDEN
editor
pgolden@
farmprogress.com

The town that time and taste forgot

WHILE in Marietta, Ga., recently I spent the night about 200 yards from a bar called Doc's. I had been working all day and it was 8:30 p.m. by the time I got a shower and was ready to eat. It was a rainy, stormy night so I didn't want to go far.

I had a bit of a hankering for some potato skins, and it hit me — the bar was really close, and bars usually have good potato skins. I set out on the journey to get some of those really good skins with green onions and bacon and Cheddar cheese and sour cream. Mmm, were they ever going to be tasty! I was drooling like one of Pavlov's dogs.

Déjà vu

As I entered the bar I knew something was different about this place. Marietta always struck me as a part of Atlanta that time had left behind, and I mean that as a compliment. If there is any such thing as déjà vu, I experienced it that night.

The smoke was so thick it burned my eyes until a guy loaned me his



Sippin' and Spinnin'

By C.D. PLAYER

knife to cut it. I made my way to the bar and found one empty chair. The man sitting to my left asked me if I had heard him sing "Oh, Danny Boy." I apologized for missing his performance. He began talking to me and talked nonstop. When I wasn't paying him enough attention, he stopped the girls going by and flirted with them. They all seemed to accept it in stride. He told me he was 75 years old. I guess girls consider us harmless at that age.

I ordered a glass of unsweet tea and potato skins and began talking to the guy on my right. He was 65 and said he was a regular along with my other newfound friend.

As I listened to the music, a nice mix of late '60s and '70s rock, I kind of

settled in and mellowed out a bit.

It was then that it hit me. For the first time in years, most of the people in a bar were older than me. It was as if 30 years ago these folks came in and never left. I'm not sure, but I suspect I landed in a Stephen King mystery. It was the bar time had passed by in a town time also had passed by. I should have been a bit apprehensive, but it was great. I felt young again.

About that time my potato skins arrived. They were the most interesting potato skins I have ever had. They were frozen and burnt all at the same time. They had only cheese and a little plastic cup of sour cream that was about the consistency of the butter Grandma used to make. No bacon. No green onions. They weren't at all good. What did I expect of 30-year-old leftovers?

That night I went to bed with nothing in my stomach or on my mind. Thanks, Doc.

Born in U.C.L.A. (the Upper Corner of Lower Alabama), Player now lives and loves in Tifton, Ga.

Give your corn the Syngenta advantage.

Help your corn reach its full potential with a portfolio of industry-leading traits and products that guard against insects, weeds and disease through every stage of the growing cycle.



©2009 Syngenta Crop Protection, Inc., P.O. Box 18300, Greensboro, NC 27419. Important: Always read and follow label instructions before buying or using these products. Bicep II Magnum, Lexar, Lumax and Karate with Zeon Technology are Restricted Use Pesticides. Cruiser Extreme® 250 is a seed company-applied promotional combination of four active ingredients that deliver 0.25 mg a.i./seed of Cruiser® (thiamethoxam) insecticide plus three fungicides: Apron XL, Maxim® XL and Dynasty. Trademarks and logos are trademarks of a Syngenta Group Company.
1SYN9009-V26-CRN-SFC 7/09