

All I Want For Christmas...

AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

Each year is going by fantastically quicker than the previous one, or so it seems. As a kid, if I hadn't broken at least one toy by New Year's Day, I wasn't trying very hard. Now it seems that I've just barely had the opportunity to make use of one Christmas present and another Christmas is barreling down upon me! I talk with great nieces and nephews and they can't believe that I don't have a wish list three pages long. I tell them that I could make a list of Christmas wishes, but they may not understand it.

I wish that time would slow down. About the time that one figures out how to appreciate life and the world around us, is about the time that the days are going by like the blink of an eye. I want sunsets to last longer so I can enjoy them longer. I want weekends to last longer so I can sneak in a little more birdwatching and I want vacations to last longer so I can enjoy the friends and family that I get to visit.

I wish that people could stop getting sick. The number of friends that I lose each year just keeps increasing. Sometimes it's from disease and sickness, sometimes it's because of unfortunate accidents and sometimes it's just because people get old and die. I remember a song from the late 1960's that has the line in it, "I couldn't get any younger, I have to be an old man." That line means a lot more to me now than it did nearly 50 years ago!

I wish that people would put down their "screens" and spend less time looking at virtual reality and more time looking at natural reality. As a society we isolate ourselves, or try to, from the natural world around us. We'll look at photos and videos of wildflowers, wildlife and birds, but won't step outside and take a walk in it and see it for real. If you take a few hours to put the screen down and walk in the woods or in a prairie you'll find stress and cares quickly leaving you. The added benefit is that once you start to reconnect with the natural world around you, you start caring about it more and have a stronger desire to take care of it and see more of it. But if you start to take a walk and after ten minutes you are getting fidgety and panic stricken because you don't feel "connected" then it's a sure sign that you need to be separated from your phone more frequently!

I wish that people could become more patient and tolerant with that which is different than themselves. We see so much hate and anger and much of it simply comes from lack of understanding. We have people on TV, on the radio, in print, and on social media telling us who to blame and who to hate. It is far too easy to hate. It is far too easy to distrust that which we do not know. But as a society, be it a local community or a global community, we all need each other. Ignorance leads to hate, hate leads to destruction and doom. We need to learn more about those who are different from us, because I think you'll find that we have more in common than we do different.

But mostly what I wish for is safety and peace to all my friends and neighbors and residents of our region. Safety and peace is the uniform desire of people that I have met in the parts of this country and globe that I have had the privilege to visit. We may live differently, we may have different religions, but everyone wants peace and safety and a chance for their children to be safe and successful. We can't change the world, but we can change ourselves. Here's wishing each and every one of you a peaceful and safe season in the days ahead.