

# God is making fewer farmers

For a second, it was as if home had suddenly popped up, bigger than life, on our television screens.

The Super Bowl was all over except for the confetti and the celebrating on the gridiron, when, instead of a silly Dorito commercial, we were treated to some beautiful words spoken by a voice that has been silent for years.

Dodge's "God Made a Farmer" Super Bowl commercial, running two minutes long and narrated by the late radio commentator Paul Harvey, struck a chord with much of the nation, especially those of us who live here in the heartland.

The piece consists of still photos of farm scenes – farmhouses and barns, dirt-crust farmers with beat-up hands and weathered faces, tractors at work in fields. One reason the ad hit home is nearly every image could have been shot here in South Dakota.

The ad is uplifting and a bit discomfoting, all at the same time.

The beauty lies in the celebration of a way of life that I and hundreds of thousands of people my age remember. We grew up on family farms, and the emphasis must be placed on the word "family" to truly describe that lifestyle.

Farms at that time really couldn't exist without families that owned them and cared, diligently, about every minute detail needed to make sure the operation was a success.

The farms were smaller, meaning there were more farmers. And more farm families, meant my hometown, despite being only 20 miles from Sioux Falls, was, again, during my childhood, much more vibrant and self-sufficient than today.

The discomfort from the Dodge ad comes when, after experiencing a flood of nostalgia from the barrage of familiar images, all described so accurately by a man with a trusting, familiar voice, you're easily left with a feeling of longing rather than satisfaction.

I know farming has changed a lot since I was a kid. Not all of the changes have been positive ones. Farm operations, like every other business in this country, have had to adapt or die. Today's farms are much larger and much more mechanized.

According to the 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture (the last census was conducted in 2012 and the data isn't readily available yet) seven South Dakota counties experienced at least a 10 percent loss in farm numbers, and Clay County just barely escaped being part of that group.

Davison, Bon Homme, and Sully counties encountered the

greatest percentage loss. Geographically, the James River portion of South Dakota lost the most farms. Of the counties the James River runs through (Brown, Beadle, Davison, Hanson, Hutchinson, Sanborn, Spink, and Yankton), only Beadle County gained farms.

According to the census, there were 484 farms in Clay County in 2007. In 2002, the county had 536 farms. That's a decrease of 9.7 percent during that five-year period.

The census deals mainly with numbers and raw data. It doesn't speculate as to why, in the last

decade, God has seen fit to not create as many farmers in Clay County. It's a trend I fear the latest census will only confirm to be continuing once all the numbers

from 2012 have been crunched.

Perhaps Paul Harvey saw this coming. At the time that he made the speech used in the Super Bowl ad, he also was busy extolling the virtues of America's technological progress in farming – from the increased use of pesticides to the spread of more modern farming equipment.

Harvey wasn't the least bit skeptical of "agribusiness" – which was and often still is seen as the antithesis of the family farm. In fact, Harvey might be one of large-scale farming's more vocal defenders.

What's revealing – and a bit sad – about the Super Bowl ad is that in memorializing and purporting to celebrate farm families and their way of life, the television spot highlights the fact that they're disappearing.

The way of life I'm currently pining for wasn't perfect, and I don't mean to idealize it. What I remember most about our farm, though, was the unique human interactions it allowed my family to experience with so many other people.

God made farmers, in part, because we need that human connection that came from doing physical work side by side, and then sitting down together outdoors in the shade in sweaty fellowship, to eat sandwiches and freshly baked cake, feeling exhausted and productive.

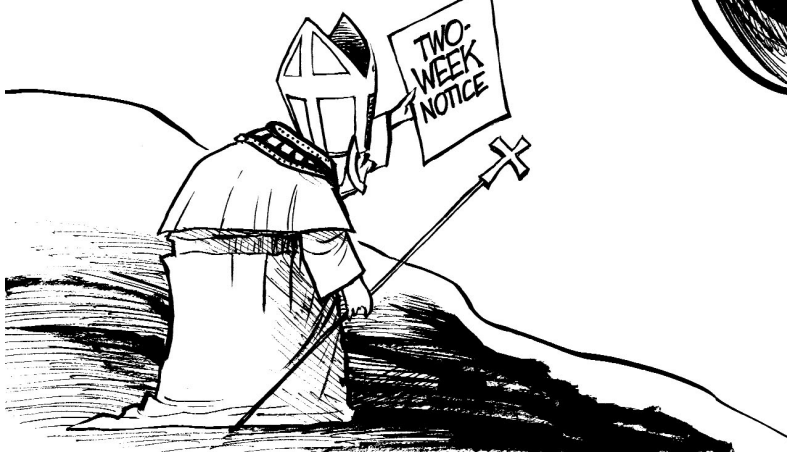
To me, the Super Bowl commercial wasn't about trucks. It was about us and what we miss about being connected to each other.

## BETWEEN THE LINES



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THE COLUMBIAN DISPATCH  
CAGLE/CARTOONS.COM



## Indulgence on a friend's passing

Two words: Philadelphia Indulgence. Two more words: dark chocolate. Whoever came up with the recipe for dark chocolate cream cheese at Kraft Foods should be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for calming my morning sweet tooth.

Add to their mantle the Academy Award for best drama, since the creative director of this new delectably delicious spread infused lots of drama into a mundanely plain breakfast bagel.

Needless to say, when I first sank my teeth into it, I thought I'd died and gone directly to dark chocolate heaven. The flavor? Divine. The texture? Angelic.

I rarely stray from my regimen of oats, veggies, fruit, soy milk, little to no flour or sugar products, light, very light on cheese. Rarely, if ever, do I splurge on bagels and cream cheese.

But today was different. When I opened the fridge this morning, the banana bread a friend baked was sitting right next to Chocolate Philadelphia Indulgence. With fresh banana on the counter, I couldn't resist putting them all together in a chocolate sundae banana bread breakfast.

I can't begin to tell you how uncharacteristic this was for me. Very unusual. My only excuse is that it has not been a normal week. My brother-in-law, Tony, 65, died from complications of pneumonia in Vancouver, Wash. Tony and I had a lot in common: both of us writers and former English teachers, we shared a similar view of our canine pets as fur children, our love for chocolate and our passion for the written word.

No matter how long it had been since we last spoke on the phone or saw each other in person, we always were on the same page. Kindred spirits, as my sister puts it.

There was no funeral or visitation. Tony was cremated. A celebration of life is being

### MY STORY YOUR STORY



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planned for a later date. My sister Anita, Tony's wife, asked me to wait to visit her until after the birth of our fourth grandchild, due any day now. She also requested that I draft Tony's obituary.

Even though I've been writing articles for newspapers since 1982, I've never composed an obituary. Honored to be asked, I spent the following days pulling together Tony's life, all of which would be laid out for viewing in his hometown paper, Asbury Park, NJ, Press, and the Vancouver Chronicle, like this...

Author and educator Antony "Tony" C. Anjoubault, 65, formerly of Asbury Park, NJ, died peacefully due to complications of pneumonia on Jan. 29, 2013.

Born in Trenton, N.J., on Sept. 2, 1947, Tony graduated from Asbury Park High School. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in education from C.W. Post College, Brookville, L.I., N.Y., and graduated Summa Cum Laude from Monmouth University, West Long Branch, N.J.

During and since his many years of teaching English at Tinton Falls, N.J., School, he was a deeply perceptive mentor, whose sensitive spirit never ceased to enlighten and transform the lives of his students, friends and family.

After retiring from education, Tony pursued a second master's degree in psychology from California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks. As a liver transplant survivor of 22 years, Tony authored "Racing Against Time - Surviving an Organ Transplant and Living a Healthy Life," which is available at

www.tonysracingagainsttime.com. His book is a true account of Tony's battle to survive with progressive liver disease despite ever mounting obstacles. After receiving the gift of life, he was considered among the longest living liver transplant recipient. The book includes a foreword by actor Jim Nabors and personal note by famed tennis champion Chris Evert.

While Tony's first love was teaching, his volunteer work to offer help and healing at PeaceHealth Southwest Medical Center, in Vancouver, WA, was a close second.

Tony is survived by his wife of 32 years, Anita Bosco Anjoubault, his English Springer Spaniel, Hershey, both of Camas; his brother and sister-in-law René and Theresa Anjoubault, nieces Kacie Anjoubault and Rebecca Anjoubault, all of Oakhurst, NJ. Tony also left behind many loving family members and friends.

He was preceded in death by his mother, Maria R. Anjoubault, his adoptive father, Gabriel E. Anjoubault, his grandmother, Magda Stefanovic, and his beloved English Setter, Ruskin, and English Springer Spaniel, Danner.

A narrative compass for all who had the good fortune of knowing him, Tony's quick wit and sense of humor always managed to capture the irony and poetry in life. He will be deeply missed.

After finalizing the obituary proofs and completing the payments I was overcome with grief. Thanking the obituary coordinators at both papers, and then saying goodbye carried a mournful finality for which I was not prepared.

So here I sit with my fur children in my lap, writing this column, while enjoying the last bite of my Chocolate Philadelphia Indulgence banana bread sundae. All I can say is Tony would be proud.

### Greetings from Pierre:

## HB1239 offers difficult decision

By Ray Ring  
District 17

We're now over halfway through the 2013 legislative session.

This week I faced a difficult decision with House Bill 1239. School districts can currently levy up to 30 cents per thousand dollars of taxable property value for the pension fund, which is dedicated to paying pensions or contributing to pension funds. HB 1239 would have raised the maximum levy to 40 cents per thousand dollars value and allowed districts to divert pension fund money to pay for health insurance.

In a similar change, a few years ago, the districts were allowed to use the Capital Outlay Fund for current expenses such as utili-ties

and transportation. Before that, capital outlay funds were limited to buying, improving, or remodeling "real property, plant, or equipment" (SDCL 13-16-6).

These short-term fixes have potentially serious long-term consequences. When the state provides too little money at the same time that it limits school districts' own revenues, the schools have little choice. They resort to short-term solutions like using the pension and capital outlay funds for purposes for which they were not intended. Delaying pension contributions or capital spending shifts more of the burden onto future taxpayers.

State government does not adequately support education. Adjusted for inflation, total state aid to local schools was lower in 2011-2012 than in 1999-2000.

During the same twelve years, inflation-adjusted property taxes rose by 17 percent. Insufficient state support forces local districts to use the only other source available to them.

Besides being short-sighted, these changes are unfair. Pension and capital outlay funds are not included in state equalization aid calculations, so property-rich districts (with higher assessed values per pupil) can raise more revenue with the same property tax rate than can property-poor districts. Opt-outs provide the same advantage to property-rich districts.

I opposed HB 1239 the first time we voted on it, because it is bad policy. It lost narrowly, but was brought back for reconsideration the next day, with the cap lowered back to 30 cents

per thousand. In the meantime, I heard from several constituents how desperately they need even the small amount of additional funds it would provide. I changed my vote, as did many other legislators, and the bill passed. I accepted a short-term, short-sighted answer to an intense need for funds.

It's time for state policy makers to acknowledge that state government needs more resources. Instead of raiding another cookie jar (or small restricted fund) while we wait for the goose that lays the golden egg (sorry about the mixed metaphor), we need to act to solve our long-term funding problems. The longer we wait, the more difficult they will be to resolve – and people suffer in the meantime.

### Legislative notes:

## Clay County farmer says SB 179 'not ag-friendly'

By Rep. Nancy Rasmussen  
District 17

I received many messages this past week concerning Senate Bill 179. SB 179 provides for uniform county drainage permit application forms and removes the maximum limit for drainage permit fees. Many District 17

farmers are not in favor of this bill.

One letter I received especially spoke to our farmer's concerns with this bill. I was given permission to share that message with you here.

"As a young farmer in Clay County I feel that our state needs to be agriculture friendly. Senate

Bill no. 179 is not agriculture friendly.

Agriculture is the engine that runs our state. The "red tape" that Senate Bill no. 179 will apply to our farmers is not necessary and will cause problems for farmers that want to improve their productivity. My brother and I have done tilling on our farm and

so far it has increased productivity which in turn increases our income. Water runs downhill. We don't need engineers to tell us that."

I thank the farmer from Clay County for allowing me to print his letter, and thank everyone else who reached out to me with their concerns.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### VPD promoting safe travel

The Vermillion Police Department has recently received a Highway Safety Grant from the South Dakota Department of Public Safety to assist with problem traffic areas within the city.

Part of this grant funding has been assigned to the purchase of traffic monitoring equipment to assist the police with identification of high traffic areas with increased speed violations.

Using this equipment, the Vermillion Police Department has already collected data in the area where South University Street intersects with Chestnut Street and Burbank Road. Data acquired through this phase has shown a need for increased police presence and speed enforcement in this area.

As a result, the VPD will begin increased patrol efforts at this location to encourage motorists to comply with the posted speed limits and thus reduce the risk of accidents and injury to both motorists and pedestrians.

The grant funding received also provides for saturation patrols during various holidays

and events throughout the year.

The Vermillion Police Department will use this funding to provide increased patrols focused on impaired driving enforcement and the use of safety equipment as highlighted by the annual Click It or Ticket seatbelt campaign. It is our hope that increasing the public's awareness of these violations will remind the community to operate their vehicles in a safe fashion with regard to speed, safety equipment, and alcohol consumption.

The Vermillion Police Department intends to utilize multiple media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter to promote and educate the public of our participation in the various campaigns throughout the year. Like us on Facebook and follow us @VermillionPD on Twitter for updates. Please feel free to find us online or as always, call if you have any questions or concerns.

Wishing everyone safe travels for 2013,

Sgt. Jacy Nelsen  
Vermillion Police Dept.

Vermillion

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