

Columns

A brief history of Memorial Day

Here in the river city, Memorial Day weekend has always been associated with Alumni weekend, when classes get together every five years to celebrate their shared experiences. Of course, for the younger folks, the desire to get together has been mitigated by new technologies that allow them to stay in touch much easier than in the old days. One fairly recent VG graduate confided in me that they are already in touch with the friends from high school that they wish to talk to, and they don't feel a strong compulsion to regain contact with the other members of their class. Must be a generational thing, because for those around my age, it's always a good thing to get together and reminisce about the good old days.

Hook, Line and Sinker

By Tony Hooker



Alumni banquets and reunions are great, but the real reason we celebrate Memorial Day runs much deeper. Memorial Day is the day that we give thanks to those who gave their lives in service to our country. By making the ultimate sacrifice, these heroes paved the way for us to enjoy our barbecues, and cornhole tosses and picnics and our reunions, banquets and golf outings.

According to history.com, gatherings and festivals to honor fallen warriors can be traced back as far as 431 BC, when the Greek statesman Pericles gave a speech at a public funeral honoring fallen Greek soldiers from the Peloponnesian War. The Greeks and Romans continued to hold these ceremonies, year after year.

In the U.S., ceremonies to

honor the fallen can trace their roots to the Civil War, when newly freed slaves, along with U.S. colored troops and other locals in South Carolina, organized a burial of union soldiers who had died while being held as POW's at the Florence Stockade. They honored them by singing hymns and placing flowers on their grave.

It was union General John A Logan who chose May 30, 1868 as a day to honor the fallen soldiers of the Civil War. His efforts later expanded into what was known as Decoration Day and included those who lost their lives during World War I. Interestingly, Logan selected May 30 specifically because there had been no major Civil War Battles fought on that day. Originally, the southern states

had selected different days to honor fallen Confederate soldiers, and in fact, 9 states still have different days honoring their fallen in addition to Memorial Day.

Oddly enough, it would be more than 100 years before Memorial Day became an official holiday in 1971, though observances were held annually throughout the US. There has been much disagreement over where the first official observance was held, but in 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson made a formal decree that Waterloo, NY be recognized as "the birthplace" of Memorial Day. One hundred years earlier, the town had held a ceremony to honor their civil war veterans and continues to do so every year on May 30.

In 2000, President Bill Clinton signed into law the w "The National Moment of Remembrance Act," P.L. 106-579, which encourages all Americans to pause at 3 PM local time for a minute of silent reflection to remember and honor those who have died in service to our country.

I hope that everyone had a safe, enjoyable Memorial Day, but I also fervently hope that you took a moment to recognize those who gave all to ensure that you were able to do so. As Pericles said some 2400 years ago, "Not only are they commemorated by columns and inscriptions, but there dwells also an unwritten memorial of them, graven not on stone, but in the hearts of men."

Rain interrupted planting in county

Planting continues in Douglas County. Some is being done for the first time and there is more than a little replant as well. The rain over the first weekend of the month filled the ponds in the fields and stopped progress for several days. Seedling corn and soybeans can stand some water, but days of saturation usually mean a trip back into the field to fill in the blank places. We got started on replanting the third week of May.

After warmth at the beginning of April, we settled into a below-normal temperature regime that lasted until the middle of May. Some of our early planted soybeans were still coming up a month after planting. Our corn came up more evenly than our beans. I heard others say the exact opposite. After the heavy rain, many fields needed another shower to help the sprouting seed come on through the crust that developed.

I recently read a book about central Illinois, roughly the area between Peoria on the north and Interstate 70 on the south. East Central Illinois was the last area of the state to be settled because it was mostly just swamp. Only after digging surface ditches and putting in drainage tile mains could this

land be farmed. After heavy rain, you can begin to see what our ancestors saw 175 years ago. We continue what they started back then in making drainage improvements hoping for better productivity.

The initial U.S. Department of Agriculture crop estimate for 2023 is for a record corn crop with both more acres and a higher yield. They project more soybeans than last year as well by expecting a higher yield. I probably say the same thing each spring, but it seems like a stretch to predict record crops when the crops are just going into the ground. They need to start somewhere, I guess. Some of the marketing advice people share my skepticism of the rosy forecast this early.

The May 15 U.S. Crop Progress report showed Illinois well ahead of its 5-year average in planting both corn and soybeans. Our neighboring states, Iowa and Indiana, are average to slightly above, so planting is proceeding in a timely manner. Early planting does not mean a bumper crop, but it is a good start.

The weekly crop progress reports are interesting to me. They follow the progress of the major crops from planting to harvest. Corn and soybeans

are tracked in 18 states where there is important production. Rice is followed only in six and cotton in fifteen for obvious reasons. Those are important crops, but neither are grown outside of the southern states.

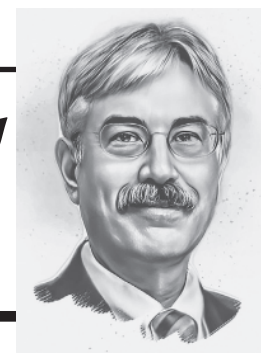
After planting, the reports begin to track crop emergence and crop condition after that. They are a way to look at the condition of corn in Iowa or soybeans in Alabama without traveling to that state. Everyone in the agriculture sector is trying to guess what the final production will be this fall. One score for an entire state can be a little bit of a stretch, as we see every year.

I have spoken before about the way the crops we plant came to us in their present forms. Hundreds and even thousands of years of selection of the wheat cultivar that gives the best quality grain resulted in the varieties we have today. Saving the best ears of corn at harvest to plant the following year, and then crossing those varieties for an even better plant and ear give us the chance to grow yields our grandfathers could only dream of.

Cover crops that grow on otherwise fallow land during our winters are a topic of research and discussion for

Douglas County Agriculture

By Larry Dallas



much of agriculture. These protect the soil, take up and sequester nutrients left from the preceding crop and hopefully contribute to soil health. These are planted in the fall and then terminated in the spring when the next cash crop is planted. Oats and rye are commonly used in this area, but a wide variety of plants are being tried. There is no grain harvested from a cover crop.

A group of companies and universities including Western and Illinois State are trying to take a common winter annual weed called pennycress and turn it into a cover crop that can be harvested in early spring as an oil seed. They have been working on this since 2013 and contracted a limited number of acres last fall. I do not know where the nearest field was, and I had not heard how this turned out.

The company website says they have used gene editing to improve crop quality, but a lot of this work has been done by making selections of existing lines they have found. This is not the manipulation of an existing crop into a better variety. This team is trying to telescope hundreds of years of development into perhaps a decade of breeding for a whole new type of oil seed crop. The website says they want to stress oil production for bio-fuel use and animal feed from the leftover meal.

In 2018 California voters passed Proposition 12 which said pork sold in that state had to be from females allowed at least 24 square feet of space on the farm. This was important since California consumes 13% of the pork eaten in this country but raises only 1%. 24 square feet is about a third more than current industry

practice. This immediately went to litigation. This past week the US Supreme Court ruled this was constitutional, although it looks to me, mostly, they ruled that the Constitution doesn't say anything about pork production.

The Constitution does talk about interstate commerce and this ruling has drastic ramifications in that arena. California is telling Illinois hog producers how to raise their animals. Can they next tell us how to raise corn or soybeans? I am sure some people would like to do that. There will be a lot more litigation before this is all settled. I will say that an Illinois farmer probably knows more about raising hogs than the average California voter.

A lot of what was written about this is that pork prices will increase as farmers can raise fewer animals in existing buildings. It is more likely that pork producers will face increased costs in the short run with no increase in pig prices for them. In the long term, faced with remodeling their facilities, farmers will just quit. That is when consumers will pay more.

Thank you for reading about Douglas County agriculture this month.

A musical trip down memory lane starting with Chicago

Be still my heart; the band "Chicago" is playing in Springfield at the Sangamon Auditorium on Saturday, June 17! Wow, just in time for Father's Day for those of you who have not yet purchased a gift for your "rocker" dad! The night before, June 16, they are in Evansville, Ind., and these two places are the closest to our area. As I am writing, there are still tickets available at both locations and from what I have heard from friends in Iowa a few tickets were available at the door when they attended on May 23.

"Chicago" has been my all time favorite band since its inception in 1967 when their name was "The Big Thing." They later changed the name to "Chicago Transit Authority" and in 1969 shortened the name to simply "Chicago." Oddly enough we were supposed to go to one of their band jobs in Chicago on our honeymoon May 28, 1967; hubby had a musician friend who lived in Chicago and knew some of the band members but when the day arrived, their job date had been changed so we did not get to hear them.

It would be a few years later when they played at EIU

Memories and Musings

By Cheri Sims



before we heard them live and I was hooked, of course I had been playing their records for a couple years. Then in 1971 They played at the Assembly Hall in Champaign and I wanted to go but hubby's band was booked at the "Chances R" just a few blocks away from the Assembly Hall so naturally he would not go to another band's show but, luckily for him, after "Chicago's" job was finished the band went to the "Chances R" and listened to hubby's band. I can clearly remember having been awakened at 3 a.m., when hubby arrived home from Champaign, and being told that "Chicago" had come to his job.

We heard "Chicago" live one more time in the 1980s but the ticket prices were finally out of our price range even though hubby paid \$50 per ticket at that time. The next opportuni-

ty came at the whopping price of \$100 a ticket and hubby finally said no to that ticket price. Hubby stayed fast to his concert ticket limit until I told him that Adam Lambert was going to sing with "Queen" when we were vacationing in Montreal, Canada, in 2014 and he upped the price so we could have orchestra seats. Anyone interested in seeing "Chicago" live in concert should visit their official web site "Chicago theband.com/" and follow the links to tour dates and ticket sales. Hubby and I learned a long time ago that it is best to start with the official band web site instead of 'pie in the sky' ticket sales sites.

I feel pretty lucky to have seen most of the bands and performers I really liked even though in the early days we might have had to save for a

year to be able to afford two tickets. Driving to Las Vegas and seeing Celine Dion in concert at Caesars Palace was probably our most adventurous trip two week trip only rivaled by the Montreal, Canada, and Queen with Adam Lambert concert. My only concert regrets was not getting the chance to see "Cher" and "Aerosmith." My son, however, did get to an "Aerosmith" concert and he confided that I would have been miserable at the concert venue for many reasons. That's OK though because both hubby and my son's bands covered many of the rock band's songs that I liked and it was just as much fun watching my guys.

I still have all the old rock albums and have updated my favorites with CDs and now I can listen to all my favorites on my cell phone and I have made good use of the cell phone by listening to all the good music when I do my daily exercise walking. I have to laugh because my girlfriends worry about me walking and listening to rock music via an ear phone. I guess they don't realize I can still hear cars, people and dogs even with a heavy beat in my head. I have tried

listening to talk shows and cooking shows but somehow I just don't get the exercise feeling listening to talk shows.

So what were you doing in 1967? I was working full time in Decatur, planning our wedding, going to hubby's band jobs all over Illinois while listening to Larry Lujack on the WLS Chicago radio station in my 1963 VW. One of the fun things we liked to listen to on our drives around Illinois was when the DJ, Wolfman Jack, who was based in California, would call Lujack on the phone and WLS would broadcast the telephone conversation. We were easily satisfied back then! I cooked my first meal at our first apartment (mom would not let me cook at home). I did my first load of laundry, hung it out to dry and it rained and that was the first and last time I hung laundry on a line! Baked my first pie, black raspberry, and I had to borrow mom's rolling pin to make the crust. Our apartment was just six blocks from my parent's house and mom met me half way with the rolling pin. Daddy bought me a rolling pin the next day.

1967 fun facts: "Cool hand Luke," "Bonnie and Clyde" and

"The Good, the Bad and the Ugly" were the top movies in 1967.

"All you Need is Love" by the "Beatles," "Happy Together, by the "Turtles" and "Respect" by Aretha Franklin" were the top songs of the year.

Miniskirts, bell bottom pants and go-go boots were all the fashion rage.

New products introduced in 1967 were: the "Big Mac," "Close-up" toothpaste, "Fab" laundry detergent, "Twix" and "Gatorade." (<https://en.wikipedia.org/>)

Families were eating "Lipton" onion soup dip, fondue and "Haribo" gold bears gummy candy was all the rage.

Ahhhhh the memories!

1967 Lipton onion soup dip

1 envelope Lipton Recipe Secrets Onion Soup mix

1 envelope Lipton Recipe Secrets Onion Soup mix

Chips or vegetables, for serving
In a bowl, stir together the soup mix and sour cream until evenly combined. Chill if desired.

Serve with your favorite chips or vegetables, preferably Kettle Salt and Pepper chips with ridges.

Adapted from the Lipton Recipe Secrets Onion Soup mix box.