

The Prairie Voice

Spring 2005

From the President Cherilyn Jolly-Nagel, President

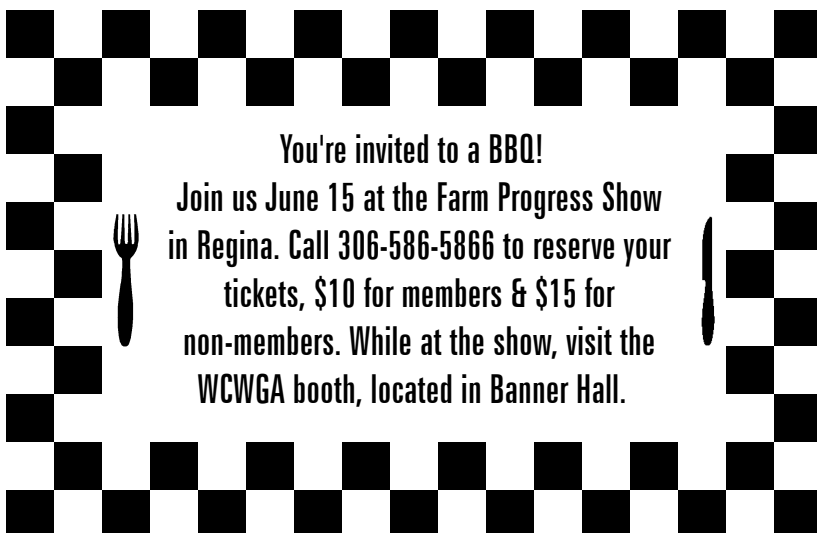
My husband, David, and I went on our honeymoon in Germany this past March. Among the usual tourist attractions, we took in a visit with a local farmer, 25-year-old Bernd Guenter, who agreed to be our agricultural tour guide. Farming 350 acres, Bernd is considered a large farmer.

Bernd is probably not your typical European farmer. For one thing, he is fundamentally opposed to government subsidies – a view that does not make him popular among many of his farming neighbors. The problem with the subsidies, he says, is they come at a very high price. If you do not comply with excessive government regulation, then the government cuts back your subsidy.

For example, every few months a government official visits his farm and questions him on his farming practices. Take spraying for instance. If the government decides he sprayed his fields on a day when weather records indicate it was too windy, he'll get his subsidy cut back. Also, because of the rules of the subsidy program, Bernd is unable to expand his operation – a right I've always taken for granted.

Here on the prairies we often complain about the amount of government regulation and attempt to ensure regulation doesn't interfere with our management decisions, but visiting Germany made me realize how bad things can become if we let down our guard. A case in point is the recent announcement by the CGC to have mandatory licensing and bonding for all grain companies dealing or handling grain. The rationale given by the Commission is the new regulation will protect farmers and ensure quality. I'm not convinced. Before the CGC imposes more regulation, our industry needs to explore other options. I think we have to ask ourselves, at what point do we as farmers accept responsibility for our own business decisions? Or more to the point, where does the farmer's responsibility stop and government intervention begin? I've got caught a glimpse of the path taken in Europe and believe me, that's not the regulatory road I want to travel.

I've enjoyed all the phone calls and emails from members sharing their concerns, suggestions, opinions and even seeding updates. There's no better way to let your Board of Directors know how to best represent you than to give any of us a call. Hope to see many of you at Farm Progress Show in mid-June. □



You're invited to a BBQ!
Join us June 15 at the Farm Progress Show
in Regina. Call 306-586-5866 to reserve your
tickets, \$10 for members & \$15 for
non-members. While at the show, visit the
WCWGA booth, located in Banner Hall.

A View from the Chair

Randy Hoback, Chair

Canadian farmers have thousands of dollars to gain from the elimination of trade barriers and trade-distorting subsidies. For that reason, Wheat Grower Vice-President Doug Campbell and I went to Geneva in April to take part in the latest WTO trade talks.

It was quite an eye-opener. We found Canada is widely viewed by the international community as a protectionist nation, even though we're third in agricultural exports and fifth in agricultural imports.

We met with trade representatives from Australia, Brazil, China, India, New Zealand, South Africa and the United States, urging these officials to keep up the fight for an ambitious outcome. This was not a message they were used to hearing from Canadian farm groups and they told us our views were a "refreshing change."

Canada's trade negotiators seem to be held in high regard by other trade negotiators, but are hand-cuffed by Canada's lack of commitment to an aggressive outcome. Canada says it wants the elimination of export subsidies and sharp reductions in trade-distorting domestic subsidies, but when it comes to making trade-offs, our negotiators are forced to adopt a protectionist stance. Because of this, Canada has been left out of the group of Five Interested Parties (US, EU, Brazil, India and Australia), the key negotiating block. Unless Canada adopts a more rational and consistent approach, we could be on the outside looking in.

While at these talks, we also met with representatives of the CWB. While the WCWGA took issue with the information the CWB was distributing in Geneva, we did agree to work with them to improve market access and to reduce trade distortions to benefit grains and oilseed producers under any type of marketing structure.

It was vital for us to be at these trade talks. Over 90% of Canadian farmers rely on trade, so it's important to get a WTO agreement that sharply reduces trade distortions. Studies have shown tariffs and foreign subsidies are costing Canadian farmers \$1.21 per bushel on wheat, \$0.78 per bushel on barley and \$2.64 per bushel on canola. That's why the Wheat Growers will continue to do everything we can to get rid of export subsidies, tariffs and other trade-distorting programs. □

Glen Campbell, 1916-2005

Wheat Growers were saddened to learn of the passing of Glen Miller Campbell on Feb. 1, 2005 in Regina. Glen was a founding director of the Palliser Wheat Growers Association and a long-time secretary-treasurer of the Association. Born on Sep. 23, 1916 in Avonlea, SK, he was a chartered accountant by trade. During WWII, Glen was an RCAF bomber navigator stationed in York, England and Aberdeen, Scotland. After the war he became a well-respected farmer and registered seed grower in the Avonlea and Pense district. Doug Campbell, Glen's son, is a current Wheat Grower director. We extend our condolences to the entire Campbell family. □

Convention 2005 . . .

Meeting the Challenges Head On, the first-ever joint conference of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association and the Western Barley Growers Association was held February 16-18, 2005 in Canmore, Alberta. Over 200 industry leaders and supporters were on hand to participate in the event. A broad range of experts filled the agenda, providing insight on many timely topics. Complete conference proceedings and resolutions are at: www.wheatgrowers.ca. Thanks to the many sponsors who made our event possible:

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Wheat Growers in Action

Activities of the Wheat Growers over the past two months have included:

- In March, Grant Dyck, Director, attended a Western Grain Research Foundation board meeting in Saskatoon. The WGRF is lobbying to increase the research check-off by \$0.10 per tonne on wheat and barley, bringing the check-off to \$0.50 on wheat and \$0.30 on barley.
- On March 15 in Winnipeg, Joe Janzen, Director, attended a Cereal Grains Value Chain Roundtable meeting where there was frank discussion on new uses of wheat, value-addition, identity preservation, research funding and the need to eliminate KVD.
- Dean Klippenstine, Saskatchewan VP, attended the National Safety Nets Advisory Committee meeting in Ottawa on April 13, where CAIS was discussed. Key issues are proper inventory valuation and the treatment of CWB payments.
- On April 14, Bill Rusk, Director, represented the Wheat Growers at the Canadian Grain Commission's Western Grain Standards Committee meeting where a number of grading issues were debated. Committee decided not to introduce HVK as a grading factor on hard spring white wheat and to retain sprouting tolerances on durum. Committee also decided to delay the introduction of falling number as a grading factor on wheat, due to concerns over consistent test results.
- From April 6-8, Cheryl Jolly-Nagel, President, Randy Hoback, Chair, and Doug Campbell, Alberta VP, were in Ottawa to lobby on several issues including trade, a review of the CWB, farm income, grain transportation, pesticide harmonization, and a review of the Canadian Grain Commission.
- On April 13, Cheryl Jolly-Nagel, President, Bill Rusk, Director, and Blair Rutter, Executive Director, met with top officials of the Canadian Grain Commission to discuss grain grading (falling number issues), KVD, licensing and bonding, and the need for an overall review of the Canada Grain Act.
- On April 15 Blair Rutter, Executive Director, participated in a farm income consultation meeting in Calgary, hosted by MP Wayne Easter, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Blair emphasized the need for government to cover the full cost of regulation deemed to be in the public interest and urged the Canadian government to pursue more bilateral trade deals.
- Geoff Hewson, Director, and Blair Rutter, Executive Director, met with Alberta MLAs and government officials at a reception hosted by CropLife Canada in partnership with the Wheat Growers, Barley Growers, CAAR, Wild Rose and the Alberta Canola Producers Commission.
- Randy Hoback, Chair, and Doug Campbell, Alberta VP, participated in world trade talks in Geneva from April 17 to 23. They also met senior executives of Bayer CropScience and John Deere at their offices and manufacturing plants in Germany. □

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