



AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

May 2004

Vol. 6, No. 5

SUN SAFETY!

CONTENTS:

- SKIN CANCER: It won't happen to me!
- SHADY DAYS
- PROTECT YOURSELF
- RESOURCES
- UPCOMING EVENTS
- NEWSLETTER THOUGHTS

SKIN CANCER: It won't happen to me!

During years and years of farming in northwestern Iowa, my grandpa spent his days in the barnyard and in the fields. He wore a baseball cap to keep the sun out of his eyes and worried more about tractor accidents and poor yields than about skin cancer. In the fall of 2000, he found out that he had skin cancer on the backs of his ears and doctors removed it by "carving" the cancer cells off of his ears. But, only a year later the cancer was back. In January, 2002, he wrote a series of letters to us (his family) to tell us of his experiences with the skin cancer and the process they used to remove it once again. My grandparents, Bob and Eileen Martin, were living in southern Texas during these visits. The following excerpts from my grandpa's letters give a very real description of what it's like to have skin cancer and a rather humorous description of what visits to doctor's offices are like to many of us. (EH)

January 3, 2002

Dear Family,

Eileen and I are going to San Antonio tomorrow to have a dermatologist look at my ear and hopefully carve on it on Saturday morning. There is no sense of urgency but everybody would just like to get it over with. The local plastic surgeon said he would recommend this action. The guy in San Antonio will take off little sections and have them examined for cancer and if there is any, he will take off a little more, and so on until he is certain all is excised. I'm going to make him guarantee that he will leave enough to hang my glasses on.

Bob

January 5, 2002

Dear Family,

Just got home from San Antonio. Still have my ear but it seemed as if the Doctor wanted a lot of it. This was the MOHs procedure where he carves for a while and checks to see if he has cancer in the sample he took. If there is cancer he goes back and does it again until he gets a cancer free sample. For me, he took four samples and it takes two hours between servings (lab checks) so it took a while. Then he cut some skin off my shoulder and grafted it on (this was the

AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

simplest part). He had four people that he worked on today besides several people that had other appointments. I saw a picture of the ear after the doc had worked on it (before the skin grafting) and it was not a pretty picture. They (doctor and nurses) claimed I would be proud of it after it heals. Time will tell.

Today's experience made a convert out of me. No more tans--no more baseball hats. The rather innocuous treatments that involved freezing the skin cancer are one thing and the process I went through today is another. Also, the pictures I saw of other skin cancers are very impressive. And this cancer was the most benign of the three skin cancers. This was basal cell cancer; squamous is worst, and we won't even talk about melanoma. All are treatable if you catch them early but you need to really watch for them.

I feel great and the ear doesn't hurt much. I have to go back on Friday to the doctor to get the staples out and an examination. Eileen was superb. Sitting around for a whole day in the office and then driving most of the way home wasn't a lot of fun, particularly with a nervous passenger that kept trying to tell you how to drive.

Bob

January 12, 2002

Dear Family,

Another chapter in the ongoing saga of Bob Martin's ear.

Eileen and I went to San Antonio on Friday. We thought there was a good possibility of the staples coming out and then, no more trips. How naive we were! After waiting the obligatory hour or so, we found that our trip was only to have the wound redressed. Also, the good doctor informed us that there

was just a smidgen of cancer left that needed to be removed. The bad news was that he wouldn't do the removal until the ear had healed more. The good news was that he could do it when we came back in two weeks and, of course, that would require an additional trip (or two) after that. So, in two weeks, we are off again to the big city.

I rather enjoyed the enforced idleness at first as Eileen thinks I should do no chores around here. I didn't want to disabuse her of this misconception at first but now boredom has begun to set in. No golf in this country means that the days get rather long in the midst of winter. Thank God for the library and for the game of bridge.

Bob

January 24, 2002

Dear Family,

We arrived home from San Antonio at about five this afternoon. Doc took a couple more carvings off and pronounced the procedure done. No skin grafts were necessary. He said to come back in a month for a checkup. I'll be back when pigs learn to fly. The ear hurts a little bit but the Tylenol is helpful. Some bleeding but I've got a good reservoir.

We got home OK and we are really getting good about finding our way in the big cities. Eileen tells me where to go and I steer. There are deep indentations on the steering wheel where I grasp it but traffic doesn't bother me anymore, anymore, anymore, anymore. Eileen is concerned that I don't remember what streets we have been on or which direction we were going but I figure just keeping the car out of trouble is accomplishment enough for me.

Bob

AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

SHADY DAYS

Do you know how to protect yourself from the sun? Steven Smith does, and he puts this knowledge to use everyday on his small farm near Marshalltown. Steve knows that skin cancer is a risk associated with being out in the sun day after day, so he is trying to make up for lost time in earlier years when he wasn't as safety conscious. In those days, Steve would get burned often and remembers always being red from working outside.

These days Steve wears long sleeve shirts, long pants, hats with brims, and even gloves whenever he's outside. He's found that special SPF clothing provides extra protection from the sun and keeps him cool in the hot summer months. He has several hats that have three-inch brims on them and decides each morning which hat to wear depending on the wind, the rain, his mood, or, of course, his outfit! Since his tractor doesn't have a cab on it, Steve added a canopy for increased protection from the sun.

Steve hasn't been out in the sun (or shall we say shade) as much as he would like since he injured his back in December, 2001. The ruptured disk and degenerative disease cause chronic pain which slows him. In fact, he remarked, "The hardest part [in dealing with the injury and pain] is the spiritual challenge; the required inactivity."

But, with the inactivity outdoors, Steve has been busy learning how to make his dreams of managing and operating a small farm a reality. In fact, this past Spring, Steve participated in a course titled "Growing your Small Market Farm" offered through Drake University in Des Moines. Although one of the main goals of the course was to help participants develop a business plan, Steve thinks the most valuable part of the class has been the ability to network with other

participants. His class will reconvene again this fall and he is already looking forward to seeing his classmates.

Another opportunity Steve has taken advantage of recently was a one-day workshop for entrepreneurs with disabilities. Business planning was also the main topic at this workshop, but once again, Steve found more benefits. He learned about grants and secured loans to help with start up costs for his business and met even more people interested in starting small businesses.

Currently, Steve has plans to begin a rotational grazing program, raising meat goats and small fruits such as berries. He is putting the finishing touches on his business plan and applying for grants and loans. Steve looks forward to a future of possibilities and admits, "My injury has been a blessing, other than the chronic pain. It has forced my wife and I to make decisions that we may not otherwise have had the courage to make."

If you would like to contact Steve, you can call him at 641-754-6898 or email him at twofriendsfarm@yahoo.com. (EH)

PROTECT YOURSELF

Anytime you're going outside, remember to save your skin from the harmful effects of the sun. Follow Steve's example: wear a hat with a brim, choose long sleeve shirts and long pants, and stay in the shade as much as possible. Wear sunscreen and sunglasses for added protection of your skin and eyes. Additionally, washing your clothing in detergents that contain whitening or brightening agents will improve the UV protection of your clothing. For more information on these ideas, consult the resources below! (EH)

AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

RESOURCES

The resources below are Extension publications, with the exception of the American Cancer Society. If you do not have access to the internet you can ask for a copy of the publication at your local extension office by using the letter/number combination listed above. (EH)

Is it time to change your hat? (PM 1683)
www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1683.pdf

How shady is your t-shirt? (PM 1916)
www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1916.pdf

Consumer Choices: Shirts and Stuff for Sun Safety (PM 1862)
www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1862.pdf

American Cancer Society, Inc
www.cancer.org
1-800-ACS-2345

UPCOMING EVENTS

Freewheeler's Friends and Family
Saturday, June 5th 1:00 pm
Pizza Ranch, Conrad, IA (CS)

June Pasture Walk Features Rotational Grazing

BAXTER, Iowa -- The Iowa Beef Center kicks off the 2004 series of Pasture Walks on June 23 at the Jon Northrup farm near Baxter, Iowa.

"Our pasture walks have been popular in the past for their relevance and convenience, and this event will be no different," says Carl Neifert, Iowa State University (ISU) Extension field specialist. "Rotational grazing is raising a lot of eyebrows, and producers can see such a program in action at this event," he adds.

Pasture walks are a unique learning experience where the pasture itself is the classroom. Producers can see first-hand new management techniques, examine forage issues and see the effects on the beef herd.

Dan Morriscal, ISU Extension sheep specialist, will discuss the keys to success for rotational grazing, and will be joined by Stephen Barnhart, ISU Extension forage specialist, who will teach producers how to identify and manage grass and legume species. Jon Northrup, host of the pasture walk, will talk about the challenges and rewards of grazing 20 cow-calf pairs on 20 acres.

Northrup's farm is located at 7452 N 95th Ave W, or about one mile west of the Baxter athletic complex. The walk begins at 6:30 p.m. There is no registration fee, but farmers are asked to RSVP by contacting Jasper County ISU Extension office at (641) 792-6433 or (800) 811-7081.

AgrAbility Family Fun Fest

Saturday, June 26, 2004
9:30 am - 3:00 pm
Lon & Sandy Strum's Farm
Rural Roland, Iowa

Invitations were mailed in May. If you didn't receive yours, please contact Erin Haafke for details at 515-294-8522! (EH)

NEWSLETTER THOUGHTS

Please call or e-mail me with your ideas for future newsletters. I would be happy to write your remarks, suggestions, and experiences for others to learn from or be encouraged by in the upcoming Chit Chat Newsletter! My phone number is 515-294-8522 or send me an e-mail at chaafke@iastate.edu. (EH)

AGRABILITY CHIT CHAT

IOWA AGRABILITY - A joint effort of ISU Extension and the Rural Solutions Program of Easter Seals Iowa. The program can help farm family members with a disability stay in farming.

This newsletter from the Iowa AgrAbility Project will be sent monthly to AgrAbility families and other interested individuals. Please send comments and suggestions to:

Erin Haafke, AgrAbility Program Specialist

96 LeBaron Hall, Ames, IA 50011

E-mail: ehaafke@iastate.edu

Phone: ISU Answerline at 1-800-262-3804

TDD: 1-800-854-1658.

Web site: www.extension.iastate.edu/agrability/

... and justice for all. The Iowa Cooperative Extension Service's programs and policies are consistent with pertinent federal and state laws and regulations on nondiscrimination regarding race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, and disability.

Iowa AgrAbility Project

Iowa State University
96 LeBaron Hall
Ames, IA 50011