

The New Millennium... and remembering the good old days



Last year about this time, I made reference to the fact that three or four colleagues and I believed there had been a 365-day rush on the beginning of the Third Millennium. Well, we've been joined by a few others who think that, effective January 1 of 2001, we are actually there. In fact, there have been references to the *scientific* new millennium now upon us. You could say I've made this too much of an issue, but a new 1,000 year-period doesn't come along that often...and that puts the issue of remembering the good old days in a whole new light.

Recent winter ice and snow storms across much of the U.S. were devastating. People went without power and heat for as long as two weeks. For many, drinking water supplies were also disrupted. Storms caused several deaths, states of emergency were declared, and hundreds of thousands were forced to survive without modern conveniences.

The storms and reports I watched on TV and read in the news took me back to the middle of the last century and southeastern Oklahoma. We had severe ice a couple of winters in a row. I can remember how serious it was because KSEO 750 in Durant was off the air for a while. The storm didn't affect our battery operated radio, but it put the station, dependent on electricity, out of commission. Schools were also closed...good news!

Things didn't change much at our house though, except that it was tough beating the ice off the woodpile to get fuel for our cook stove and 'heater.' There was always a good supply of kerosene ('coal oil' as we called it) to light the lamps and start the fires, and our water came from a well.

There is no way I want to go back to 'the good old days.' I like running water, electricity, air conditioning, and cable TV, even if they are occasionally disrupted. While progress has brought some problems, it has changed all our lives in ways much more positive than negative. That includes modern production agriculture. When one looks at food production today and compares it to that of a half century ago, he or she could hardly be objective in suggesting that we aren't much better off now. Yet, there are those detractors who continue to criticize and encourage a throwback to an agriculture of 50 or more years ago. They don't have scientific evidence to support their rhetoric, but that hasn't stopped them yet.

Now that the new millennium is undeniably here, perhaps the detractors of modern agriculture can find a new agenda. I wouldn't bet on it, because there are still folks who refuse to give up on the good old days.

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