

Farming: A Way of Life

Area farmer retiring after 40+ years

By Andres Rivas

“[What I love most about farming is] just the beauty of it all, seeing that first crop come up and watching it in the spring as it progresses,” were the words uttered by local farmer, Richard Braun, on a sweltering harvest day.

For Braun, this would be his last harvest as he aims to retire after the wheat harvest

Braun was born and raised in Holcomb, Kansas, and has been farming for over 40 years. For him farming was always his place, even though his early endeavors did not reflect that.

“I went to Holcomb high school and after graduation I enlisted in the Air Force, spent three years in the Air Force,” Braun said when reminiscing on how he got his start. “I farmed with my dad and brother for two, three years, and that’s when I got this farm up here myself and started in my own than, in ’75.”

Braun began slowly, tending to less than acre when he first started to now farming nearly a thousand acres. As long as he has been farming in the northwestern area of Holcomb, Braun, has been doing business with the Garden City Co-op. For him, the Co-op was always about fairness and equality.

“Garden City Co-op has been with me and treated me as well as the big farmer,” Braun said. “I farm about a thousand acres now — I started out with three quarters [of an acre] — and they treated me as well as being a small individual farmer.”

Not only was the Co-op fair in how they treated Braun whether he was a big farmer with a lot of acreage or a small farmer, they also were dependable.

“They always were there when I needed something,” Braun said.



The wide open spaces that farming has in Southwest Kansas is what brought Braun back to the plains after his stint in the air force. Without it, Braun doubts that he would've come back to Kansas.

"I probably would not have been in Southwest Kansas," Braun says. "My wife gives me a hard time once in awhile about why i didn't make a career out of the military but my heart was at home with the farm, the wide open spaces."

These open spaces in the plains of Southwest Kansas mean more to Braun than simply a nice view or a means of earning income. It's a place where a family can grow and an individual can belong to a community, and the community belong to them.

"It's a way of life and it's a great place to raise a family. I have four children, we had two air force babies so to speak, and two after we started farming," Braun said. "It's just a great place you can be with family just about twenty-four seven."

After he retires Braun said that he will miss the camaraderie between farmers the most, but there are certain things he won't miss at all when it comes to farming.



"The hard work, changing sprinkler tires when it's a 110 degrees out, I wont miss that at all," Braun said with a laugh. "What I'll miss the most is the camaraderie ship with the neighbors and what have you during harvest time."

Family has been a common thread for Braun throughout his life. From his helping his father and brother farm early on in life to taking on farming himself for over 40 years. Family will also take the forefront of his retirement as he plans to restore his father's tractor.

"Its my dads [tractor], it's a mid 60's 806 international harvester," Braun said. "He bought it brand new back then and I bought it from him when he retired and [I'm] gonna get it back bright and shiny like when it was new."

Farming was — and seemingly always will — be a part of Richard Braun's life. For him, farming was more than just a means to to an end — it was a way of life.

"It's a way of life, it's just what I grew up [doing] and what I love," Braun said.