

News Column

by Greg McClure, KSU-Riley County Extension Agriculture Agent
110 Courthouse Plaza
Manhattan, KS 66502

For Release 01/30/23
Phone: 785/537-6350
Fax: 785/537-6353

OPIE TAYLOR DAYS

I'm not sure what I did with all my time when I was a child growing up on a farm. I remember stacking small square bales in a hot hay field on a miserable August day when I was five. And I remember long – sunup to sundown – days shearing sheep in the spring with my dad. In both cases I mostly watched,....but I was there.

I also remember playing in the dirt at the end of the field while Dad was drilling wheat in the field across the creek and up the hill from the old barn. Every couple of hours Dad would stop for more seed and I would grease the drill discs while he scooped seed wheat into the drill. I'm sure I was a dirty mess, but I don't remember Mom ever complaining.

Now, as I look back on those days, I wonder what I did with the rest of my time.

What I'm sure I don't remember from my childhood are any Opie Taylor days. I never headed out on foot, all by myself and with a fishing pole over my shoulder, to go fishing down by the pond, whistling as I walked.

I guess I wasn't as adventuresome as Opie. It just didn't happen.

The only pond we owned was 10 miles from home in what we called the South Pasture. I don't recall there ever being fish in that pond. Was that because Dad didn't have time to fish, or was it because the pond went dry one year and killed all the fish? I don't know.

Today, if I had a pond anywhere near where I live I would want it to be a good pond for both Opie, and the cows. Why not? A good pond should be able to serve both purposes –

fishing and livestock water.

When K-State Extension hired a “pond guy” about a year ago and, I decided to ask him to speak at one of our coffee shop meetings. Since pond questions flow through my office fairly regularly, and because I’m terrible at answering those questions, it seemed like a good idea to bring in an expert. That’s how Joe Gerken got on the schedule to be the featured speaker at our February 9 coffee shop meeting.

Once I had Joe booked, the next task was to narrow down the topic. I obviously knew we would talk about ponds, but that’s as far as I had thought this through before I asked him to speak. So,... I asked Joe how I should title his presentation, and he immediately said, “Big Fish. That’s what will draw a crowd.”

Since I’m more of a cow guy than a fisherman, I settled on Big Fish and Good Livestock Water as the program I would promote. Honestly though, it’s all promotion — I don’t really know what we’ll talk about that day. The topic is ponds, but the rest will depend upon the questions we get from the audience.

If you are interested in either big fish or good livestock water, come join us at 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, February 9 at the FarmHouse in Riley. Sponsors will provide refreshments to you free of charge and we will enjoy a good discussion with “the pond guy”, Joe Gerken.

I can almost guarantee it won’t be as much fun as sitting on the bank of a pond watching a bobber bounce up and down, and it won’t be as relaxing as sitting in your pickup truck counting cows, but it will be a good day nonetheless.

If you plan to attend, you can register online at www.riley.ksu.edu. I won’t kick you out if you just show up without registering, but I’ll like you better if you tell me ahead of time that you are coming.

If you have questions, or if you just don't like online registration, you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-6350. Or, you can send e-mail to gmcclore@ksu.edu.

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.