

Ag Column
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Reflections on Change

With a brand new year, many thoughts of challenge and anticipation come to mind. Over twenty-two years with UT Extension, I have enjoyed and endured many changes, both personally and professionally. While I am not a millennial, I realize I am still quite young at 49 years old, as my good friend in his late seventies reminds me on the telephone when he greets me with, "Hey there youngin". While I am somewhere between youth and wisdom, many memories and thoughts came to me over the past year. It's amazing how fast time flies when you're having fun.

Many of these memories and thoughts have circled around working as a "change agent" with the University of Tennessee Extension, as I have continually dealt with change in peoples' lives. Gardening interests in our area once were dominated by ornamental selections, landscaping, and similar interests. Today, I receive far more questions on vegetable gardening as those in their twenties and thirties are finding a new interest in growing their own food. Much of this surge in local food seems to have originated around the time of the bombing of the world trade center. Beef cattle marketing options once were limited to a trip to the weekly market. Today, producers have many specialized sales, video sales, tele-auctions, and internet marketing.

I remember when the internet and cell phones were a "new toy". Today, our world revolves around the use of the computer and the cell phone. It has become very difficult to "disconnect" from the working world. Right at your fingertips, you can email, text, instant message, snap chat, Instagram, tweet, post, check your bank account, news, stocks, weather, and even make a phone call. Remember the term, Y2K, when we thought the world and its many systems that support our everyday life was coming to an end. Nothing more than a memory.

2017 will be a milestone year for my family and me for sure. My wife, Melissa, and I will be married 25 years. Our two children, Amber and Austin, will graduate, one from ETSU and the other from Sullivan Central High School. They will reach their 18th and 21st birthdays, while I will turn 50. This is likely to be a year to remember.

A big change and awesome opportunity for agriculture in Northeast Tennessee will come with the Ron Ramsey Regional Agricultural Center. This will be a big change and opportunity for the UT-TSU Extension Sullivan County Office, as this Ag Center will be the new location for our office beginning sometime in the spring of 2017.

Realizing this article didn't discuss tomato diseases or the latest in beef cattle trends, I hope you enjoyed and shared in my reflection on the past 20 to 30 years of change.