

by Julie Mais
Editor



And on the eighth day...

Life as a farm kid seemed to revolve around the radio in my dad's 1978 brown Chevy pickup. Chatting with my siblings packed in that single-cab truck was brought to a quick halt by a stern "shhh!" when the weather came on, and a "quiet down!" when the market reports rang across the air waves.

We spent a good amount of time sitting in that truck parked in the driveway waiting for Paul Harvey to finish "the rest of the story" so we could go on inside the house.

So, in early February 2013 when I heard that familiar voice during the Super Bowl XLVII commercial break I was keen on listening to the story Mr. Harvey had to tell.

In a Ram Trucks ad, Harvey, with his iconic pauses and quick delivery, voiced over images of rural America, of leathery skin from days working in the sun and fresh faces of the next generation, and of men and women caring for land and livestock.

"And on the eighth day, God looked down on his planned paradise and said, 'I need a caretaker.' So God made a farmer," Harvey described.

"I need somebody with arms strong enough to rustle a calf and yet gentle enough to deliver his own grandchild..."

"God said, 'I need somebody willing to sit up all night with a newborn colt. And watch it die. Then dry his eyes and say, 'Maybe next year.'"

"...And who, planting time and harvest season, will finish his 40-hour week by Tuesday noon, then, pain'n from 'tractor back,' put in another 72 hours. So God made a farmer.

"God had to have somebody willing to ride the ruts at double speed to get the

hay in ahead of the rain clouds and yet stop in mid-field and race to help when he sees the first smoke from a neighbor's place. So God made a farmer.

"...Somebody who'd bale a family together with the soft strong bonds of sharing, who would laugh and then sigh, and then reply, with smiling eyes, when his son says he wants to spend his life 'doing what dad does.' So God made a farmer."

Balancing it all

Today's farm and ranch families have kept these values, but we recognize that days may look different balancing farm life and off-farm work.

In 2017, 98% of U.S. farms were family farms, and they accounted for 87% of farm production.


According to the USDA Economic Research Service, beef cattle producers work less than 30 hours per week on farm, and they spend an average of 20 hours per week in off-farm employment.

Self-employment or wage/salary jobs are the main source of off-farm income for farm households, and farm households often use off-farm income to fund their farm operations.

In 2017, the American Angus Association reported nearly 13,000 members have a herd size of 50 head or less.

As a daughter of a carpenter father and a mother who worked outside the home who also ran about 50 head of cattle and a few hundred acres of row crops, our family fell into those aforementioned categories. I remember watching my parents come home from a hard-day's work and then essentially take on another full-time job working cattle and planting crops — us kids got to help out too.

In this issue we recognize the successes and struggles of our members who balance it all. This issue also addresses the lack of high-speed internet access in rural areas and how it may negatively affect education and business opportunities of rural users who are forced to rely on slower, spotty connections.

Angus breeders with herds and operations of all scales and sizes make the Association what it is today, and each seem to be able to find that extra day of work to care for their herds and their families. 



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Editor's note: Paul Harvey's speech, "God Made a Farmer," was given at the 1978 National FFA Convention.