



For Granted

► by **Eric Grant**, freelance writer

Majestic simplicity

Perhaps the greatest cathedral in all of Europe is the one that rises up in the center of the city of Chartres. Construction on it began in the year 1045 and was completed 150 years later. From a distance, the building appears to hover in mid-air above the wheatfields. Its two spires — both soaring to over 300 feet — push upwards over the pale green roof and into the sky.

Know it when you see it

What makes the cathedral unique is not only its size — it is one of the continent's largest — but its combination of size with relatively inornate design.

My college professor, who spent many years in France, frequently commented on the building's "majestic simplicity." As an English professor, he often told his students they should seek "simplicity" in their life's pursuits; that a sentence crafted simply often conveys more power than a sentence written for complexity.

I often wonder how much happiness

and professional contentment we miss because we clutter our days with unnecessary, complicated things. We're always reaching for the newest gadget, chasing the latest gizmo and buying the latest technology to allow us to do the latest thing.

U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart was once asked how he would define hardcore pornography. He responded, "I shall not today attempt further to define [it] ...; but, I know it when I see it."

Knowing it when you see it applies to the bull business as well. The recognition that

breeding cattle for a living is half science and half artistic pursuit is a first step toward embracing the simplicity of life we all desire.

Throughout history, the great animal breeders have possessed a special knack at balancing the two. They have a keen ability to see beyond the numbers, to pick out good ones at a glance, and to change their cow herds for the better in just a few short years. Indeed, they approach cattle with simple objectives in mind, and they achieve greatness by embracing simplicity of thought and principle.

Time to think

My grandpa used to eat a big breakfast every morning. He would plow through two eggs, sausage, bacon, a bowl of Cream of Wheat and a grapefruit before he would sit silently at the end of the table, contemplating the tasks for the day ahead.

Now that I am an adult and in business for myself, I have gained an acute appreciation for his time of meditation. I don't know how many problems he headed off by thinking things through before they happened. Everything always seemed under control, and he always had his ducks in a row, no matter what task we undertook.

"The key to success," he told his grandchildren many times, "is knowing what to do next."

His advice, like that cathedral, possessed its own majestic simplicity that still possesses a powerful relevance among the people who knew him.

And sometimes, when the pressure's at its peak, carving out a moment for yourself to contemplate what lies ahead is the most valuable thing you can do.

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Editor's Note: "For Granted" is a monthly column written for the Angus Journal by Colorado-based freelance writer Eric Grant. The column focuses on marketing beef, the beef industry and seedstock in particular — aspects of the business that are often taken for granted as day-to-day tasks take center stage.

