

JACK WELP

Agribusinessman or Horticulturalist: The Different Faces of a Hard Worker

Graduate: Class of 1977

Occupation: Agribusiness, Horticulturalist, and School Transportation
By Andy Helming, Spring 2010

His grandfather probably never would have thought that he would have had the biggest effect on his grandson when he asked him if he wanted to take a ride on the tractor with him. From the moment Jack Welp's grandfather asked Jack to ride on the tractor with him, Jack knew he wanted to follow in his footsteps and become a farmer. Growing up in Schnellville, where he worked and lived on the family farm, Jack learned hard work and family values. Jack still resides in Schnellville and farms the same farm that his family has owned for around 90 years.

While in high school, Jack used the resources that the school offered to broaden his knowledge for what he would need later in life. Jack had many different influential teachers throughout high school: Larry Tenbarge, Steve Stoffel, Jim Johanaman, and Marion Jochem just to name a few. "Try to learn as many different things as you can, you will need it," are some influential words he has for high school students. When asked what he thought about college he stated, "If you have the opportunity, don't miss out!"

Jack's family - one of the most rewarding parts of his life - began on July 7, 1979, when he married Joyce Giesler. Over the years, their five children have given him satisfaction and much laughter to keep him in good spirits. Now having three grandsons of his own, he has the same feelings watching them explore the animals and equipment on the farm.

At ten years of age, Jack started working on the family farm; working long hours did not have a significant impact on him. After high school, Jack went to work full time on the family farm. A shock came to him in 1981 when Southeast Dubois County School Corporation asked him to drive a school bus. Jack accepted and has now driven a school bus for 29 years. In 1993 Jack and Joyce started Welp's Greenhouse, adding horticulturalist to his list of job titles.

Keeping him hopping around, Jack's job requires him to do different jobs from day to day on the farm. On most days, Jack starts at 6:30 a.m. by making sure that both his and Joyce's busses are ready for their routes. After checking the greenhouse heaters, if in season, Jack drives his bus to the other farm where he feeds the feed lot cattle before starting his route. Once Jack finishes with his bus route around 8:15 a.m., he feeds the rest of his cattle before starting the rest of his farm responsibilities. Jack works all day until he leaves for his afternoon bus route at 2:30 p.m. which last until 4:00 p.m. Working until dark after his bus route, Jack still has to attend meetings or training sessions once or twice a week.

Once an avid 4-H member himself, Jack has worked with the youth in 4-H for over twenty years as a club leader. Joining the Schnellville Volunteer Fire Department at the age of twenty-three, Jack has now served as a member for twenty-seven years. Serving as either a supervisor or a board member for the Dubois Country Soil and Water Conservation District for the past fifteen years shows that Jack cares about the land as a farmer.

Jack does many different jobs on the farm and at the greenhouse; one day Jack was driving down the road on a tractor at full speed when the steering went out. The steering going out caused the tractor to go off the side of the road and up a steep bank which caused the tractor to roll over on top of Jack crushing his legs. After he woke up at the hospital, Jack did not want to believe it when the doctors told him that he would probably never walk again. Through perseverance and dedication, Jack can now walk again. Jack once told me, "No matter what life throws at you, you need to get back on your feet and keep going."