

PolicyPennings by Daryll E. Ray & Harwood D. Schaffer

Daryll is retiring from The University of Tennessee but remains a column author

By the time you read this column, Daryll will have made a significant transition in his life. As of May 1, 2015 he retired from the University of Tennessee after 43 years of work as an agricultural economist and agricultural policy analyst. After receiving his PhD from Iowa State University he became a member of the faculty at Oklahoma State University where he worked for 20 years before accepting the Blasingame Chair of Excellence in Agricultural Policy at the University of Tennessee where he has been for the last 23 years.

Before you panic, I want to reassure you that Daryll will continue co-authoring the column in retirement. The working relationship between the two of us will continue as before and he will be as fully involved in the writing of the column as ever.

Daryll and I have discussed the life of the column many times over the years and the first thing we concluded is that neither one of us could write the column alone. Each of us brings unique talents and perspectives to the column and without the balance of the other, the column would not be the same. We are similar enough in our perspectives that we do not spend our time fighting and we are different enough that we challenge each other. The result is that we work as a team.

We enjoy working together and have agreed that we will continue to write the column as long as both of us are physically, mentally, and emotionally able to do the work. When the time comes that one or the other of us can no longer fully participate in the writing of the column, the column will cease. Until then the two of us are going to continue to have fun and share our analysis of agricultural policy issues with you, our readers. Without you there would be no reason to write.

We have developed a rhythm over the years and Daryll's retirement will change that in some ways. We will no longer sit down in the office with our feet propped up on chairs as we engage in a stream of consciousness discussion as we move seamlessly from one topic to another in no particular order. Some of our best columns came from these discussions. There were also some ideas that never made it into these columns and for that you, the reader, can be thankful.

Even though our offices were near each other, much of our communication was done using email—the link to an article here and a cryptic comment there. Much of our communication, especially information from data analysis and research, has been contained in an unending flurry of emails and that will not change with retirement. The emails came and went at all hours of the day and night seven days a week. We even talk

to each other via skype even though we live less than 10 miles apart.

With his retirement, we will have to more formally schedule our face-to-face discussions, but because we share the hobby of woodworking, I get the feeling that I will be spending more time in his “new office.”

The analysis of data and use of policy models have always been at the heart of Daryll's analytical work. During his career, he developed three agricultural commodity-based policy simulation models, each of which broke new ground in terms of availability and use of computer simulation to analyze alternative federal agricultural policies and economic conditions on production agriculture.

Daryll's modeling remains at the foundation of the empirical studies at the University of Tennessee that estimate agricultural impacts of alternative bioenergy and other policy scenarios on the economics of major agricultural commodities.

He will continue to pursue that data-based analytical interest even in retirement as he is learning the programming language C# so he can help maintain and make additions to our data extraction and graphing tool, DataManager, which allows easily access to the time-series data that are the bread and butter of our columns.

Retirement will allow Daryll to gain more control over his calendar, though he will certainly be as busy as ever, though I would expect that he will take more trips for pleasure and visiting with family than he could when he was working full time. He will also be able to spend more time with his wife, Melissa.

Daryll takes economic principles seriously—even influencing his management practices in the office, but not in the way you might expect. Readers know that Daryll takes the concept of “consumer sovereignty” seriously—the customer is in charge and farmers need to be attentive to what the customer wants whether it is humanely raised meat or organic grains.

In staffing our office, Daryll is a great believer in the concept of “comparative advantage.” He believes in hiring the best people and helping them develop their unique talents so each can make maximum contribution to the mission of the center. He guards against hiring clones of himself or others already part of the center. For example, the staff of the Agricultural Policy Analysis Center has earned two Masters Degrees and two PhDs—in the fields of agricultural economics, geography, and sociology—with Daryll's support and encouragement. The result is that we have been able

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to use our skills to increase the scope and quality of our work.

Readers will notice one minor change. The order of the names of the authors will change with Harwood's name being first from now on. Readers who call the office wanting to talk to one of us will end up with me instead of Daryll. Also, Daryll will be taking fewer speaking engagements, but will still take an occasional invitation.

This column is just the first installment of the next

769 columns Daryll and I will be writing to help you, the reader, better understand the critical agricultural policy issues you face.

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