

# OPINIONS & EDITORIALS

## Things That Make You Go Hmmmm?

Opinions & Issues by Steve Ash

I said that I had an article about a man who discovered his favorite teacher in high school had just died. I said if there is an interest. I would like to publish that article in one of my future articles. Well, here it is.

The phone rang. It was a call from his mother. He answered it and his mother told him, “Mr. Belser died last night. The funeral is Wednesday.” Memories flashed through his mind like an old newsreel as he sat quietly remembering his childhood days.

“Jack, did you hear me?”  
“Oh, sorry Mom. Yes, I heard you. It’s been so long since I thought of him. I’m sorry but I honestly thought

he died years ago,” Jack said. His Mom replied, “Well, he didn’t forget you. Every time I saw him, he’d ask how you were doing. He’d reminisce about the many days you spent over ‘his side of the fence’ as he put it. Jack replied, “I loved that old house he lived in.”

“You know, Jack, after your father died, Mr. Belser stepped in to make sure you had a man’s influence in your life,” she said.

Jack replied, “He’s the one who taught me carpentry. I wouldn’t be in this business if it weren’t for him. He spent a lot of time teaching me things he thought were important. Mom, I’ll be there for the funeral”

As busy as he was, he kept his word. Jack caught the next flight to his hometown. Mr. Belser’s funeral was small and uneventful. He had no children of his own, and most of his relatives had passed away.

The night before he had to return home, Jack and his Mom stopped by to see the old house next door one more time. Standing in the doorway, Jack paused for a moment. It was like crossing over into another dimension, a leap through space and time. The house was exactly as he remembered. Every step held memories. Every picture, every piece of furniture ....Jack stopped suddenly... “What’s wrong, Jack?” his Mom asked. “The box is gone” he said. “What box?” Mom asked. Jack replied, “There was a small gold box that he kept locked on top of his desk. I must have asked him a thousand times what was inside. All he’d ever tell me was ‘the thing I value most.” Jack said. It was gone. Everything about the hose was exactly how Jack remembered it, except for the box. Jack figured someone from the Belser family had taken it.

“Now I’ll never know what was so valuable to him,” Jack said. “I better get some sleep. I have an early flight home, Mom.”

It had been about two weeks since Mr. Belser died. Returning home from work one day, Jack discovered a note in his mailbox. “Signature required on a package. No one is at home. Please stop by the main post office within the next three days,” the note read.

Early the next day, Jack went to the post office and retrieved the package. The small box was old and it looked like it had been mailed a hundred years ago. The handwriting was difficult to read, but the return address caught his attention. “Mr. Harold Belser” it read. Jack took the box out to his car and ripped open the package. There inside was the gold box and an envelope. Jack’s hands shook as he read the note inside.

“Upon my death, please forward this box and its contents to Jack Bennett. It’s the thing I valued most in my life.“ A small key was taped to the letter. His heart racing, as tears filled his eyes, Jack carefully unlocked the box. There inside he found a beautiful gold pocked watch. Running his fingers slowly over the finely etched casing, he unlatched the cover. Inside he found theses words engraved: “Jack, Thanks for your time !!!...Harold Belser.”

Jack thought, “the thing he valued most was my time!”

Jack held the watch for a few minutes, then called his office and cleared his appointments for the next two days. “Why?” Jamet, his assistant asked. Jack replied, “I need some time to spend with the people I love and care for, and oh by the way, Janet, thanks for your time.”

“Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take but by the moments that our breath is taken away.

(There will be a sequel to this in my next article. It will be simply the things you might want to take from this story.) **Steve**

If you have an issue that bugs you or have something you would like me to write about, let me know and I just might write an article about it. Email your idea to [spash@tctelco.net](mailto:spash@tctelco.net) Or, you could PM me on FB. Or even call me (I am in the phone book as Steve Ash) or tell me in person.



### Better Times Ahead Greg Doering, Kansas Farm Bureau

It’s hard to imagine waking up and going to work on payday only to find you have less money than you started with at the beginning of the pay period. That’s the reality many farmers are facing as fall harvest enters full swing in Kansas. Almost every acre of corn and soybeans across the state is expected to cost more to plant, grow and harvest than farmers will receive when they sell their crops.

Revenue from wheat, soybeans and corn is forecasted to decline by 12, nine and six percent, respectively, in 2025. It will be the third year in a row with declining receipts for those commodities while expenses have remained the same or risen.

Buying at retail, selling at wholesale and paying the freight both ways has always made farming a tough business, but this year is a good example of why farmers do what they do for reasons other than money. Good weather and good yields don’t make up for low prices, and most producers will end up selling their crops at a loss if conditions don’t change in a hurry.

Grain is a global commodity, and buyers have more options today than they did 10 or 20 years ago thanks to competition in South America. That’s made it far easier for China to use U.S. farmers as leverage in trade negotiations. China hasn’t purchased a single order of soybeans from the U.S. to date this year, despite representing more than half of U.S. soy exports in 2024.

Domestically, the picture isn’t much better. Livestock and grain markets rarely move in the same direction. High grain prices make each additional pound of beef more expensive in the feedlot, and the inverse is true. The drought-induced slimming of the cattle herd means there’s fewer mouths to feed, putting additional downward pressure on grain prices while beef is near record levels.

The slowdown in the crop economy will show up beyond the fields. There will be fewer cups of coffee at the local café. Fewer remodeling supplies sold at the hardware store. Fewer loan originations at the bank. Fewer pickups bought at the local dealership. School bond issues to invest in the next generation will face uphill battles at the ballot box this year in farm country.

This downturn is discouraging but not quite dire. Farmers will use a variety of tools to make it through. Grain will go into storage in hopes prices are better tomorrow. Balance sheets were healthy entering this current slump and land values are holding on, for now. That equity will be used to buy time.

Hopefully there’s good news on the trade front soon that will lift prices. It’s also likely the estimates of strong yields aren’t fully realized once harvest is further along, reducing the spread between an abundant supply and scarce demand.

There’s always hope the markets will turn before harvest ends. Or they’ll rally over the winter to more than cover the cost of storing grain. Or next year will be better. It’s an eternal mindset that gets tested over and over again.

Most have made it through rough spots like these before and come out strong because of it. Looking back, it won’t seem as bad as it feels right now. There’s no shame in admitting to being scared or stressed. And help is available if you’re struggling. Visit [www.kfb.org/ruralmatters](http://www.kfb.org/ruralmatters) for a list of resources or call 988 if you’re experiencing a crisis.

Believe better times are ahead. And above all, take care of yourself and those around you.

## Part 5 Ipana Toothpaste, the Ford Edsel, and Swanson TV Dinners

*Advertising in the Golden Age of Television... as I Remember It!*

Written by Doug Scott, White City High School Class of 1967

Celebrity endorsements in the 1950s ran the gamut and were an essential part of TV advertising, leveraging the familiarity of popular individuals to promote products to the public. Back then, with TV becoming a dominant national medium, celebrities from Hollywood, professional sports, and even politics were tapped to pitch everything from cigarettes to appliances. For example, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz pitched Philip Morris cigarettes. Their TV show, “I Love Lucy”, was the most popular show on the airwaves at the time, thus their endorsements felt like an extension of their beloved on-screen personas.

Ronald Reagan (later to become a two-term U.S. President, starting in 1980) presented General Electric (GE) products on TV when he was the host of “General Electric Theater” in the 1950s. In TV commercials, Reagan spoke very positively about GE appliances; he also pitched GE products via printed promotional materials, especially in national magazines. His authoritative and reassuring demeanor made him a relatable spokesperson for household products.

I remember the enormously admired radio and TV host, Arthur Godfrey, was the TV spokesperson for Lipton Tea in the ‘50s. Mega Hollywood movie star, John Wayne, endorsed Camel cigarettes, whereas the popular Groucho Marx employed his comedic style and humor to pitch DeSoto automobiles (which were discontinued in 1961).

The vocal troubadour Perry Como appeared on the TV screen pitching Chesterfield cigarettes, often singing the praises in his trademark soothing voice of the “rich tasting, smooth-smoking” Chesterfields. He had a significant association with Chesterfield cigarettes during his early television career in the 1950s. Como often appeared in commercials for the brand during his popular hour-long weekly TV program; and in doing so, reflected the norms of the era when tobacco advertising was prominent and linked with entertainment personalities. He would sing jingles for Chesterfield, blending his suave vocal style to underpin Chesterfield’s marketing message.

Comedian Bob Hope’s quick wit and charm made him a favorite spokesperson for Texaco gasoline. I well remember his Texaco commercials. His light-hearted persona was often featured in those TV ads and always reflected his comedic twist.

In no surprise, George Reeves, who played the vintage Clark Kent/Superman on TV in the 1950s, appeared in commercials aimed at us young kids, with him often filmed as his fictitious character, wearing his red and blue Superman suit. Young kids (including me) idolized Superman back then, making Reeve’s television ads highly effective for the cereal brands (especially Kellogg’s sugar-coated frosted flakes) he endorsed to America’s youth.

Jack Benny incorporated sales plugs for Jell-O and Lucky Strike cigarettes directly into his television routines. Likewise, the husband-and-wife team, George Burns and Gracie Allen, regularly included in their TV sequences messages for Carnation Milk.

If you’re my age, you might recall mega-star Betty Furness, often called the “First Lady of TV Commercials”, in the 1950s endorsed products like refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, detergents, and other housewares and products which wholesomely appealed to suburban moms (my mother included). Furness was a multifaceted figure in American culture, known for her work as an actress on television; she later emerged as a successful consumer advocate.

Furness became widely recognized in the ‘50s for her role as a spokesperson for Westinghouse Electric Corporation, where she promoted their household appliances in commercials on multiple television programs. Her most famous association with Westinghouse was her nationally well-known tagline, “You can be sure if it’s Westinghouse!”. I remember many of her TV commercials, as if they were beamed into my family’s living room only yesterday.

Eddie Fisher, Joan Crawford, and other movie stars of the ‘50s era appeared in Coca-Cola ads. Coke also sponsored television variety shows and used a unique “host endorsement” style, as I recall.

Polly Bergen, a versatile American actress, singer, television host, and businesswoman, sang the “Be Sociable, Have a Pepsi” jingle on TV. Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis often performed comic plugs on their TV show for Colgate tooth paste, espousing the famous slogan, “It cleans your breath while it cleans your teeth!”

And I must include “Madge the Manicurist”. Surely you Baby Boomers remember her! She debuted on TV in the late 1950s/early 1960s for Palmolive Dish Washing Liquid, with her VERY annoying (my opinion) proclamation of, “You’re soaking in it!” when her astonished manicure clients asked Madge for a liquid hand/skin-softening recommendation. Were you really serious, Madge? Surely not.

Gillette razors and Gillette Blue Blades were hocked on television by sportscasters like Don Dunphy who was the famous TV voice of professional boxing; and by Mel Allen, famed New York Yankee radio broadcaster in the ‘50s. Baseball Hall of Famers, Dizzy Dean and Pee Wee Reese, pushed Falstaff Beer (no longer sold) on their weekly Saturday afternoon black-and-white telecasts of Major League Baseball games (usually New York Yankee games).

And of course, I must include here those 1950s TV commercials advocating the virtues of the yellow-colored liquid, Vitalis Hair Tonic, which was endorsed by male celebrities as an alternative to “that greasy kid’s stuff.” I have a small bottle of Vitalis sitting on my wall units in my den. That memento, along with its colorful shelf carton, is a daily reminder to me of the 1950s when I was a sports-crazed youngster and Vitalis was commercialized by my sports heroes. I bought that small Vitalis bottle as a keepsake years ago on eBay.

TV commercials in the 1950s for many of us then-young Baby Boomers featured Howdy Doody and Buffalo Bob, among MANY other of our heroes whom we adored when we were youngsters. Those television commercials undoubtedly helped define the golden age of TV advertising in America.

For certain, TV commercials back in the 1950s unabashedly relied on jingles, relatable narratives, and aspirational imagery to make their products impressionable and unforgettable in the minds and psyche of the American public, all ages. Today, at my age of 76, I still remember in considerable detail most of those vintage 1950s TV commercials – even though they were aired some seven decades ago.

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