



World Ag Expo; My Experience February 18, 2020

By Don A. Wright

The 2020 World Ag Expo just wrapped up last week. It was by all measures a success. More than 1,500 exhibitors displayed their wares before more than 100,000 attendees who all got in front of me in the line for steak sandwiches. Hemp was big this year; an entire pavilion with the faint aroma of skunk was devoted to the crop. And I mean a faint aroma. The buzz wasn't about getting a buzz, it was about the unique opportunities surrounding this crop. Yes, the emerging hemp industry did start on a bump due to massive over planting and under-developed processing but I can tell you from personal experience; someone I know and love no longer takes some pretty harsh anti-seizure medications due to the curative properties of CBD.

It was a pleasure to visit many of WaterWrights' clients at the various booths. Gar Bennett, Water Assurance Partners, Technoflo, Pumpsight, Willitts Pumps were all folks I got to visit with for a bit. I missed Western Power's booth and probably a few more. It's just big. I looked on the WAE FAQ and couldn't find out how many acres big the place is.

Ouch

I've been there before so this year I wore tennis shoes the first day. I got some of those foam cushion arch support insoles and waded on in. I had a goal to visit every booth and exhibit. I'm not sure you could reach every booth even on horseback but a goal is a goal and I need the exercise. As the day wore on those inserts slowly migrated towards the toes and threw off my stride. By that night I was tender footed. The second day I wore Wellingtons, you know roper boots, and the inserts stayed in place just fine; but about noon my left knee started hurting. I've never had problems with my left knee before. Once again I could barely make it back to my car in media parking that evening.

Woke up Thursday feeling great. But just to be careful I brought a decorative, gentleman's walking-stick my wife had acquired in Louisiana. It has a brass alligator for a handle. I felt both spiffy and prepared for any ambulatory needs that might arise. And the need arose. By noon my left knee felt like it was attacked by a ball peen hammer. Also, my ears have been stopped up by a head cold from last month and I was having a hard time hearing people talk. So, for the last half of the last day I hobbled from booth to booth with my cane and a hand cupped behind my ear yelling, "Huh? I can't hear you." For those of you whom I met for the first time; I'm not really a crazy old man escaped from the Shady Acres Rest Home. It was a role thrust upon me by circumstance, not a permanent condition.



Faith and Farming

One of the best parts of the World Ag Expo is meeting new people. And one of the best places to do this is the annual Prayer Breakfast. The food's good. You can attend it as a stand-alone event without having to enter the show grounds if your day is busy and it is always inspiring. There were hundreds of folks from the ag industry joined together to express their faith. In my opinion, and I'm confident I share this with many, to farm without faith is a recipe for disaster. You might think man's actions somehow controls the negative parts of the climate but be still and know God brings the rain and God withholds the rain. Each year a local farmer is honored for being someone who has had faith and shared Christ with his friends and neighbors. This year it was **Dave Jackson** of Kingsburg and Family Farms. I remember him running for – I believe state assembly – a few years back but didn't know his story. Jackson had more than a 1,000 acres in production and lost it all in the 1980s. Jackson put his faith in the Lord and now his business is bigger, thriving and more secure than ever. Good for him.

New Readers

The WAE is a great place to gather business cards and give away free subscriptions. That's what I spent most of my time doing. Getting to meet new people and introduce myself and WaterWrights.net is a lot easier when they are all in one place.

There are a couple of hundred new readers and I welcome you. I want to point out a few things in this report. This report isn't typical. Most of the reports you will receive will be about irrigation water; the laws and regulations and how districts adapt and growers react. But really what we're writing about is ultimately people. How do you keep farming with water being a moving target?

For some time WaterWrights has wanted to expand coverage to the Sacramento Valley. I think we are very close to launching what I hope will be a game changer. After speaking with dozens of exhibitors from the Sacramento Valley I feel the time has come for all growers in the Central Valley to find common ground on water.

For the most part the folks in the north don't know what is happening in the south and the folks in the south don't know what is happening in the north. We occasionally lob mortars at each other over things (usually something to do with the Delta and water exports). The problem is we shoot too far. If we both increase the angle of the trajectory it will prevent us from overshooting the target and hitting each other and land on the real problem – Sacramento.

Water Reports

WaterWrights.net doesn't provide the usual report. We abide by the Associated Press Style Manual for as long as it serves our purpose. The purpose of continuity in style we are all used to. But these aren't mainstream media reports. I certainly feel free to switch from the third person to the first person to the editorial "we" at will. I don't quote very often and do paraphrase. So, please keep in mind a quote is only a quote if it is in quotation marks and attributed.

Obviously having 20 plus years of reporting on the San Joaquin Valley water situation and almost no reporting on the Sacramento Valley water situation leaves me a bit lopsided. I welcome all readers but especially those with knowledge of the Sacramento Valley to comment, question and offer corrections. I sit in board meetings and type in real time, usually a paragraph behind what is being said. Things sometimes get a bit addled – cubic feet per second and acre feet may become reversed in the report from what was said. Kind of like **George Carlin's**, "Hand me that piano," or "Throw me a cup of coffee." I usually know what I meant to convey – don't always do so.

Math

I use journalist math. My younger brother **David** is partners in an engineering firm and seems to have received the loin's share, I mean the lion's share of math skills. But that isn't why you'll find

very little reporting about financial matters. Each district has to report its financial state and does so. Because under California law these districts are subdivisions of the government – special districts. They have unique accounting obligations and transparency is one of them. Most sitting board directors are farmers and they watch the purse pretty close; out of habit I guess. In my more than 30-years of reporting I've only encountered one case of financial malfeasance and it was dealt with swiftly. Also, it's mostly boring. Director Bob will inform staff those bearings could have been purchased \$.37 cheaper at Al's Parts. Director Tom will counter that it may be true Al has less expensive bearings he prefers Tom's Parts because the free delivery would have saved more than the \$.37 cent cost difference. And on and on. Also, there are minutes available to the public for more in depth financial information.

We welcome editorials from readers and receive some from time to time. We do reserve the right to edit them for content. I know what you're thinking; this guy can't edit himself, why would I let him edit me? Easy answer, it's easier to edit others. Most of the time it's typos anyway. No one has ever submitted something so inappropriate it was rejected. But please keep in mind we have family friendly standards and as much as we want comments (also easy, comment section at the end of each report) we won't be printing vulgarities in language or message. It's never happened and I don't expect it to.

Thanks

Thank you to all our readers and clients and welcome to our new readers. Thank you also to the World Ag Expo for another great show. The WAP is a community effort and the thousands and thousands of man hours delivered by volunteers is what makes it work. Also thanks to Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District Director **Brian Wattle** for giving me a ride in his golf cart clear over to the seminar trailers in the back corner. I wish the Expo management would move them closer to the front. The lectures available to the attendees and fellow exhibitors are excellent. Fresno State University really knocked it out of the park this year. And that was that.

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