

Farm Gate #177 side column: Tim Matchett

By Jeremy C. Nagel

Don't click on the photo because it's a great photo — it isn't. Click on it because it's **Tim Matchett**.

Specifically it's the late Tim Matchett, longtime president of the Charlevoix County Farm Bureau, taking active part in a breakout session at the 2023 Council of Presidents Conference. I was near the registration table when he walked in that day, several hours late following a cancer treatment in Grand Rapids. It broke my heart to see Tim as frail and weak as he was, but he pulled me aside and reassured me his treatments were progressing well and that he felt better than he looked.

Again, it's not a great photo, but I took it because I wasn't sure I'd see Tim make it to another Farm Bureau conference. None of us knew. The photo captures a more accurate depiction of what was happening to him deep inside: Cancer fighting Tim as hard as Tim was fighting cancer.



But time keeps passing anyway and this year brought a little *déjà vu*: Same conference, same venue, and I'm near registration when Tim walks in, on time and looking good — healthy, pink, gained back a few pounds.

And I was so relieved — we were all so relieved. He took me aside again and we chatted: All's well, he assured me... Feeling good...

Squint close and maybe you can make out that the exercise at hand was all about learning the various characteristics of today's generational spectrum, from "traditional" old-timers in the far left column, through the polarizing Baby Boomers (Tim's tribe), the indifferent Gen-Xers (yours truly), those darn Millennials and — heads up — Generation Z, also known as Zoomers because somebody had to rhyme something with Boomers.

Not a great photo, but what else does it capture?

I snapped it in partial disbelief he'd even shown up in the first place. Who does that? Who books it halfway across the state after a cancer treatment to attend a Farm Bureau conference?

Tim was Charlevoix's president for 30 years; there was nothing new for him to learn about the role. He had enough experience to teach anything on the agenda. Why was he even there? Nobody would've faulted him for skipping another Presidents' Conference.

I have my own thoughts about what it was about Tim — the man, the leader, his qualities — that compelled him to attend. They're not hard to figure out.

But I would suggest you consider what it is about *Farm Bureau* — Tim's organization, one of Tim's families — that offered the value that compelled him to attend. Why do you suppose he wanted to be there so badly?

There's a question more worthy of Tim Matchett the man, the leader, his qualities...