

Rural roots run deep

by U.S. Rep. Vicky Hartzler

There's nothing like life in the country. Fresh air, watching baby calves scamp in the pasture, seeing wheat fields turn from dirt black to spring green to harvest gold, and the opportunity to see God's hand at work every day.

That's the life I've been blessed with growing up on a farm in southern Cass County and continues today on the farm my husband and I own. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

Farming goes back generations in my family. My grandparents on my father's side, Hank and Izola Zellmer, were from Bates County but moved to Cass County as newlyweds and farmed their entire lives starting out with threshing crews and working up to modern equipment. Their enduring qualities: embracing hard work, faith and being neighborly.

My grandparents on my mother's side, Joe and Olive Purdy, were from Bates County, also, and were cattlemen. Grandad was a real cowboy running large Hereford cattle ranches all over the Midwest in my mother's

early years and judging the American Royal in his later years. They always had a milk cow which made for great homemade ice cream for the family when we came to visit. I enjoyed riding horses with Grandad whenever I could.

My parents, Ted and Ginny Zellmer, started out small with rented acreage, a few hogs, cows and a dream. What we did, we did as a family, through hard work and perseverance. My sister, Peggy Zellmer Heid, and I grew up helping clean the hog barns (such

fun!), learning how to drive a Farmall tractor pulling the hay wagon for my father, bottle feeding calves and learning leadership through 4-H.

We sweated moving irrigation pipe to different sections of the corn field when we got a traveling gun irrigator, ate our supper on the pickup tailgate in the field during planting season and waited in line for hours to unload our grain at the Archie Elevator during harvest.

The highlight of those hot, dusty waits was a bottle of Vess soda from the elevator



"I believe that by working together, we can keep rural America strong for future generations so they, too, can enjoy the blessings of living in the country."

Rep. Vicky Hartzler

headquarters pop machine if my sister and I didn't complain too much.

As a family we, too, shared in the challenges of rural life: droughts, floods, dusty roads, muddy roads, potholed roads, losing livestock, down markets and crop failures. All of those challenges brought us closer together as a family and to the One who controls the weather and has His caring eye on us.

I'm grateful to now have the opportunity to stand strong for rural America by representing Missouri's 4th District in Congress. At a time when fewer people in Washington have a firsthand knowledge of rural America, it is a privilege to share with them the value of our way of life and how Washington policies impact our state. I believe that by working together, we can keep rural America strong for future generations so they, too, can enjoy the blessings of living in the country.

Hartzler represents Missouri's 4th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives. She is also a member of Osage Valley Electric Co-op.