



A Man of Many Hats

His job title is full-time farmer, but for Dale Swinburn, the description includes much more than tending to his farm in Tulia, Texas. When Swinburn is not on a tractor, he is on the Texas Tech University sidelines cheering on his Red Raiders. He seems to be the jack-of-all-trades. From being recognized by the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) department at Texas Tech University, to playing a major role in his community, and being the best grandfather he can be, he seems to be living proof that it is possible to be able to do it all.

Since Swinburn grew up in Tulia and being so close to Lubbock, he has always been an avid Tech fan. Swinburn graduated from Texas Tech with a Bachelor's of Science in Agronomy. Since graduating and building his success, he has been very much involved with CASNR, earning awards and recognition. He has been recognized with the Texas Tech University Distinguished Alumni Award as well as several other awards in the college including the Gerald W. Thomas Award for Outstanding Agriculturalist.

When asking Swinburn about his recognitions, he simply smiled. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said with a chuckle. "They must have really scraped the bottom of the barrel with that one." His response made a big impact. Rand Merchant, a Ph.D. student in Plant and Soil Science said he knows Swinburn and has visited his farm before.

"He truly does not take any credit," Merchant said. "Mr. Swinburn has been a very successful farmer throughout the years and does not expect any praise for it. He is inspiring to be around and a very wise man."

Like others, after graduation, Swinburn said he knew he wanted to go back to Tulia and farm.

"My parents were both school teachers, but they bought a little farm land, so I had the opportunity to mess around on the farm," he said.

"So once I graduated from Tech, I was able to go home and rent a little land from my parents."

Swinburn has a wife, Cheryl, and three sons as well as grandchildren. Cheryl grew up around Tulia as well. Her father was a dry land farmer in the area so she has always been surrounded by, and had an appreciation for agriculture. While none of their sons returned home to farm with their father, they have all carried the legacy of being Red Raiders and graduating from CASNR. Swinburn said his sons were a great help around the farm.

"They didn't have a choice but to help out," he said. "It was mandatory."


His favorite part about farming cotton is seeing his hard work pay off.

Swinburn said while cotton does not require as much water as some other crops, water is still a concern in West Texas.

"On the positive side, there are new genetics coming where we're starting to create plants now that are much more water conservative," Swinburn said. "The plant won't waste as much water. It's the genomic revolution."

He said there has been a new issue come up in cotton farming recently, and that is the arrival of the resistant Pigweed. He said the weed can be dealt with but it is going to take some innovation. "Farmers are pretty innovative and pretty resilient so we will be okay," he said. "We just have to address that new issue."

As far as the future of cotton farming goes, Swinburn believes that the High Plains region is going to be just fine.

"In the High Plains and around Lubbock, we're kind of a sweet spot on the planet as far as cotton production goes," he said. "Cotton does very well here. It's been a good cash crop for a lot of people over the years and I don't see that going away." 

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