

Two Points Define a Line: Grant Thomas' Philosophy in Teaching, Research, and Extension. (S02-hargrove101717-Oral)

Authors:

- W.L.Hargrove* - *Kansas State University*
- D.E.Kissel - *University of Georgia*

Abstract:

Grant W. Thomas had a gift for combining elegant simplicity with scientific rigor, exemplified in the title 'Two Points Define a Line'. The objective of this presentation is to review some of the principles that were evident in his approach to teaching, research, and extension. This is based on being trained by him ourselves, reading his work, and observing him over about 30 years. A short list of some of the characteristics and principles that he exhibited include: 1) a keen sense of historical perspective; 2) ability to apply and foster critical thinking; 3) an interesting and engaging teaching style; 4) the capacity to form a process-based mental model, to be tested by experimentation/observation; 5) the humility to admit error, but a determination to get it right; 6) an innate proficiency in simplifying complex ideas and in designing simple, yet rigorous experimental protocols; 7) a focus on solving practical problems; 8) good rapport with agricultural/rural people; and 9) a desire to laugh and have fun in all that he did. These characteristics/principles can serve as a useful model for others to emulate.

Corresponding Author Information:

Bill Hargrove
Kansas State University
44 Waters Hall
Manhattan, KS 66506

phone: 785 532 7419
fax: 785 532 6563
e-mail: bhargrov@oznet.ksu.edu

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