

OPEN LETTER TO FRANK PATTON

In all of your interviews, it seems you want to pass yourself off as "one of us." Let's see how much you are like one of us.

You and your buddies meet at the country club or some board room. We meet, if we have time, at the local coffee shop. During planting or harvest time, these meetings might be few or not at all.

Have you sat on the tailgate of a pickup truck and had your lunch either brought out by your wife or from the nearest fast food place?

Have you ever been part of an eight or ten convoy of combines going to harvest another farmer's crops because he got sick or had an accident? He might just be a guy you have waved at while driving by, but he is a fellow farmer.

Have you ever sat in a stall half the night with your son or daughter whose 4-H pig or goat or sheep or horse is going to give birth?

Have you gotten up every single morning to go milk your cows and during the winter had to throw out all the milk because the trucks can't get to you because the roads are blocked with snow?

Have you and your family raised an animal that you have all come to love, only to watch your son or daughter hand over the lead rope to a stranger knowing it will be slaughtered? Then during riding home no one can talk because your emotions are at the breaking point.

Have you ever watched out the kitchen window as the rain floods ten or twenty acres of your newly planted field?

Have you walked out in your field and dug around to find a seed that has just started to sprout and is sending its roots down in to the earth and you figure this will be a good year?

Have you ever looked out your window or sat on your porch and thought about how your great grandfather and your great grandfather's family cleared this land of trees and rocks, not with machines, but with horses and by hand?

There are hundreds of other things and if you haven't done these, you are not one of us.

I applaud what you have done in your lifetime, but I would have more respect for you as a person if you would not look at the rest of us as "poorly educated country folks."