

Farming insight, from the back 40

By Paul Cowley – Red Deer life

In Steve Stubblejumpski's world GPS stands for Get Plowing Steve.

Get it?

That joke might be lost on those who don't know a tractor from a toaster, but it slays at agricultural shows.

As rural as cow pies and gum-boots, Stubblejumpski is the comic alter-ego of Rob Saik, a certified agricultural consultant and President of Agri-Trend Agrology Ltd.

"Steve is a guy from the '50s, trapped in the '90s, and he just wants to go home." Says Saik.

I talk about the information highway, and all Steve wants is a paved road to his home."

Saik dreamed up the character in 1986 when he was looking to plant a few laughs into the Grand opening of a fertilizer retail store in Two Hills.

When the gum-booted, coverall and fur hat wearing farmer who runs a "mixed up farm" near Double Bumps generated more smiles than a bumper crop, he knew he was onto something.

His first gig following the opening was at the Western Fertilizer and Chemical Dealers Association convention in Winnipeg.

"I can tell you that the night before the convention that I didn't sleep. I was still writing it the night before," he says.

Saik's – and Stubblejumpski's – expertise in fertilizer and comic timing was a big hit, and he has never looked back.

Saik figures Stubblejumpski has seeded crowds with his homespun wisdom at upwards of 400 conventions, Christian retreats, banquets, conferences, annual general meetings and other company get-togethers.

Despite his country bumpkin like appearance, audiences quickly learn that while Stubblejumpski may not be high on book learnin' he knows a heck or a lot about farming.

That's the key to the whole character claims Saik, who believes farmers sometimes get a bad rap.

"In a lot of cases, farmers are Stereotyped as being Hayseeds" he says.

"That's kind of the way Steve looks"

But by the time the routine is done, audiences have clued in that Stubblejumpski not only knows all about GPS (Global positioning System), but he is up to speed on pretty much every aspect of farming.

"The audience is just blown away. (They ask) how does this guy know so much about global positioning systems?"

While Saik's expertise lies in fertilizers and farming, Stubblejumpski has also performed his unique routine for dozens of other companies and organizations, including Manitoba Hydro, Amoco, the Swift Current Chamber of Commerce, and the Manitoba Union of Urban Municipalities.

He's even taken his routine into the United States, and warms up the

crowd by having Stubblejumpski tickle a sore spot on his American audiences by declaring his intention to sell his grain in the U.S.

"That breaks down the barrier real fast" he says with a mischievous smile.

Saik has made an art of being prepared. He never goes into a show without knowing the lay of the land, thanks to a little pre performance homework by his executive assistant.

"We try to keep current with shifts in Agriculture going on in the world," he says.

With technology giving the world Windows, and the Y2K bug, Stubblejumpski retaliates by pitching his "Doors 2000", which "shuts everybody down" and solves the problem.

Over the years he's built up an arsenal of can't miss jokes and impressions. While his imitations of (former) Reform party of Canada Leader, Preston Manning and Prime Minister Jean Chretien are crowd pleasers, "my best impressions are cows, chickens and sheep," he says, letting out an impressively accurate "moo."

He even gets away with a few Ukrainian Jokes. As a Ukrainian himself, he has the right to poke a little fun, he says.

"I think to be a farmer, you have to have a real good sense of humour," he says, summing up the success of his act. "There's not many people who can joke about a hailstorm but a farmer has adapted himself to do that."