The Grady County agri-
culture community honored retiring Extension Service agent Don Clark Thursday at a banquet at the Grady County Ag Center.

The 30-year veteran of the University of Georgia Extension Service was the guest of honor and was presented with a new fishing rod as well as a monetary gift for leaving the next day for a trip to Key West.

"Thank you for allowing me to work with you," Clark told local farmers, community leaders and co-workers last week.

Clark was hired to work in Grady County in 1984, how-

ever, for some time the Extension Service was not used until October of that year and he originally thought he would begin work in May.

"I had to find something to do and luckily the late M.T. Shiver, who was the general manager of the Grady EMC at the time, hired me and told me to report to work the next day. I worked with Wayne Windham and others to construct the Open Pond substation. That was my introduction to Grady County," Clark said.

The veteran ag agent said many changes had occurred in the Extension Service and in Grady County agriculture over the last 30 years.

"When I came to work here we only had one com-

puter in the office and we only used it to manage our mailing list. Now I don’t know how we operated without

the computer and cell phones," Clark said.

He also pointed out when he began work here there were about 40 acres of cotton being planted in Grady County and this year over 40,000 acres of cotton were planted.

"When I came to work here none of the roads were named and depending on who you asked determined what the roads were called," Clark said.

He credited the leader-

ship of former Extension Service Director Perry Pape for his guidance and friendship in those early years.

Clark worked here for the bulk of his career, for several years in an office in Thomas County, before re-

turning to Grady County to close out his tenure with the Extension Service.

He thanked many of the farmers and others present for their impact on his life and their friendship.

Several of those in attend-

ance offered humorous anecdotes, both sweet and humorous in nature.

Phyllis Jones shared a tale from the days when Clark would ask her and her hus-

band Grady County farmer Dan Jones to entertain inter-
national farmers and agriculturalists coming to Grady County.

She said he had a group from Egypt and one of the men said he wanted to go to John’s River, but not Dan. It wasn’t too long after that I told Don Dan he would have to find someone else to help him entertain," Mrs. Jones joked.

Current and former co-

workers also paid tribute to Clark during the banquet last Thursday evening.

Extension Service agent Derek Belford thanked Clark for bringing together the University of Georgia and said he was always a team player.

Former Grady County Ex-

tenion Agent Jimmy Lee, who now farms his family’s farm in Mitchell County, also

thanked Clark for giving him his first job out of college.

Retired State Representative and local Dr. Eugene Maddox described Clark as a "great extension agent" and "not a pretty good vet assistant too."

Clark said.

Although Clark is retiring he has agreed to assist his re-

placement with the transi-

tion and to introduce the new ag agent to local farm-

ers.

"I’m staying from this

front, but I am looking for some con-

tribution that I can con-

tribute to this community and to support Grady County agriculture," Clark said.

He added, "Grady County is home to the best farmers in the country and the finest people anyplace. I’m really glad to call Grady County home."

The holidays are just around the corner... Are you ready?

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