

Priggel

Scott County's presiding commissioner is stepping down.

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county government but about the man who had run that ship for eight years. Thursday was Priggel's last day as presiding commissioner, and dozens of friends, family and current and former colleagues attended a reception in his honor in the commission chambers.

The reception was no surprise to Priggel but emotional all the same. "I'm kind of overwhelmed," he said, admittedly near the point of choking up.

Priggel has made many friends as presiding commissioner and probably a few enemies as well. Colleagues say he was known for his diplomacy and professionalism. To the two commissioners he most recently served with — Dennis Ziegenhorn and Jamie Burger — he served as an example of what a presiding commissioner should be — thoughtful, open to suggestion and always ready to listen to constituents.

"I just think the way people perceive the Scott County gov-



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Martin Priggel signed papers for the last time as Scott County's presiding commissioner Thursday.

ernment has changed since he's been in office," said Burger, who will be sworn in as Priggel's replacement today after winning an uncontested primary for the seat in August. "He brought a degree of professionalism here, and when people do business with the Scott County government, they respect him."

But Priggel almost didn't make the jump into county government, said daughter Jenny Shively.

"We were a little surprised at first," she said of her father's decision to run in 1998.

Priggel had already served several years on the board of Oran's public schools and the town's private Guardian Angel

Catholic school. He had farmed for decades just outside of Oran. When his sons were old enough to start taking over farm operations, he decided to try his hand at county politics.

"Scott County and the people of Scott County had been good to me, and I wanted to give something back," Priggel said.

He immediately went for the top, entering a race against three candidates, including Ziegenhorn, a former state representative. Priggel won by almost 700 votes.

Ziegenhorn and Priggel both characterized that campaign as good-natured, even fun. "He was a real gentleman," Ziegenhorn said. "The best man won."

The next eight years weren't always a smooth ride for the newcomer to county politics. One notable rough patch was a series of public battles between the commission and former sheriff Bill Ferrell over a number of issues. Priggel also said he failed to accomplish one of his goals — expansion of the Missouri Department of Conservation's General Watkins Conservation Area between Benton and Oran.

But there were many positives. Under Priggel, the county destroyed 500,000 tires that had been stockpiled for six years in a lot east of Benton. A sales tax was passed in 2000 that paid for