



DEKALB ALUMNI NEWS

NOVEMBER 2009

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Planning for the 2010 DEKALB Alumni Meeting is underway. More details at a later date.

THE DATE – The 2009 annual meeting will be held on Tuesday and Wednesday, September 14th and 15th.

THE PLACE – The place remains the same at the DeKalb County Farm Bureau building on the corner of Peace and Bethany Roads. This is just east of the NIU complex, formerly the DEKALB headquarters.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Fellow DEKALB Alums-----

Your DEKALB Alumni Board met shortly after our annual meeting and elected officers for the coming year. Dan Rozzen did a great job leading our group for the last two years but the by-laws state that the President can not serve more than two consecutive years. Since I was not at the meeting to refuse, I was selected to serve a second tour of duty as President.

There are no term restrictions on other officers and they all agreed to serve again. Dan and his team deserve our thanks for the excellent job they did the last two years. You can see the officers and board members elsewhere in this Newsletter.

The web page is up and running. Take a look at ----dekalbalumni.org. We owe Monsanto a big thanks for its generous support that covered the cost of development and some ongoing maintenance. We will not have a way to alert you of changes and additions, so please check it every couple of weeks.

The Spring Luncheon is tentatively planned for April 7 for those in the DeKalb area or others that would want to drive in. It will involve something special this year. A lot more info will follow but we will have an opportunity to view an exhibit being developed by your board. The DeKalb Park District received a historic bank building in downtown as a gift and they use the upstairs 5 rooms for various exhibits. We have been asked to furnish an exhibit from Feb. 1 thru April 21 featuring the history of DEKALB Ag. So our Spring Luncheon will either be held at the Nehring Center or at a restaurant nearby so you can visit the exhibit. We will have all 5 rooms so there will be lots to see.

We continue looking for ways to make a permanent exhibit of this material. We appreciate those who have donated materials that are no longer of use to them or their family. Contact me if you have material. Your annual dues also help cover costs.

Thanks to the Northern Illinois Regional History Center Staff, several Alums were interviewed for our oral history collection during their visit for the annual meeting. We tried to concentrate on people from out of town. A schedule will be developed to interview local people this winter.

If you have a question on whether you are a paid up member, contact Doris Riippi (driippi110@tbcnet.com) . It is possible you receive this newsletter and are not paid up. We are purposely slow in removing names from the mailing list.

Thanks for your continued support of the DEKALB Alumni Association. Stay in touch.

Em

2009 – 2010 DEKALB Alumni Board Members

Emerson Wells	President	815-756-5959
Al Ratfield	Vice President	815-758-3635
Mari Duchaj	Secretary	847-638-0062
Doris Riippi	Treasurer	815-756-5247
Warren Holdridge	Membership	815-756-7567
Sue Breese	Director	815-756-4533
Bob Donaldson	Director	815-758-0918
Larry Mix	Director	815-899-2800
Daryl Rolland	Director	815-758-8223
Dan Rozzen	Director	815-756-6502
Marcia Thompson	Director	815-756-7599

SILENT AUCTION SUCCESSFUL

Silent Auction Successful

Thanks to the generosity of our members, we had another successful auction. You bid a total of \$486 on the many items donated by members. Funds raised at the auction will help your board keep the cost down when planning future alumni outings.

There was a lot of interest in the two collector's plates donated by Chuck Lindhart. The "Old Man With Corn" brought \$65, and the "Boy With Dog" brought \$45. Most of us had never seen the DEKALB outdoor thermometer that Monsanto made available last year. It brought \$21. Bidding also ended at \$21 on a DEKALB watch. Two belt buckles brought \$17. Two groupings that included DEKALB mugs each brought \$15. Bids on the other forty two groupings ranged from \$2 to \$13.

Again, thank you for donating DEKALB items, thank you for bidding, and congratulations to all successful bidders.

During the upcoming year as you go through drawers and cupboards and find those "old DEKALB items," and your kids don't want them, please remember your DEKALB Alumni Association. We

would love to make them available at the 2010 silent auction.

Remember, if it's got a DEKALB Winged Ear or a DEKALB Chix or a DEKALB Pig on it, WE WANT IT!

Your auction committee,
Al Ratfield, Alice Ratfield and Doris Riippi

APRIL 7, 2010 SPRING BUFFET

This will be the fifth annual mid-year luncheon. The details have yet to be worked out, but be sure to save the date. More information will be available in the next newsletter.

ERA ENDS FOR DEKALB AG'S ROBERTS FAMILY

By BARRY SCHRADER

If you were to pick the three most influential men in DeKalb County in the 19th Century they would undoubtedly be Glidden, Ellwood and Haish. Then in the 20th Century the three names that come to mind would probably be Tom Roberts Sr., Tom Jr. and Charlie Roberts.

That family founded the DeKalb Ag and continued to be a major influence in the county's fortunes even after "The Ag" was sold to Monsanto. The last of the three men, Tom Roberts, Jr., died in September and memorial services were held for him Saturday.

They have variously been called visionary, inventive, philanthropic and unpretentious.

E.E. "Al" Golden who knew them all well offered this: "DeKalb County with the spirit of creative leaders produced the Marsh Harvester, barbed wire, pure milk, the first Farm Bureau and hybridization of seed corn. ... The greatest agricultural achievement of the first half of the 20th Century was the development of hybrid corn."

He added, "It was through the genius of Tom Roberts, Sr. and later his son Tom Jr. and a son-in-law Charlie Roberts (who happened to have the same

last name) that the family became visionaries – for they had the idea of expanding into genetic improvement of crops, poultry and swine. Technically their goals were broad for they worked toward the ideals of an improved life for farmers and made farming a respected profession.”

In reading the book “The Story of the DeKalb Ag” by Tom Jr., one realizes the impact that family and their closest associates over the years had worldwide and brought untold millions the benefits of hybridization. When writing this I cannot overlook the major contributions of the late Charlie Gunn who was the man who made DeKalb hybrid seed-corn the most successful for its time.

Tom Roberts Sr. got his start in life on a Waterman farm owned by his father, Humphrey Roberts, whose land is where the Waterman depot and Waterman State Bank stand today. The father founded the bank in 1891. The founders of Waterman, named after a railroad magnate Daniel B. Waterman, might better have chosen the name Roberts for their village, but that is all past history now. Tom became the DeKalb County farm adviser for 10 years until he fathered the DeKalb County Agricultural Association – “The Ag” to its employees and most of the rest of the county’s population.

One cannot extol the virtues of the Roberts family without mentioning the creation of the DeKalb County Community Foundation. It was Charlie Roberts and his wife Mary (sister to Tom Jr.) who gave \$3 million to start the foundation but made sure it was named “DeKalb County” not the Roberts Foundation. Jerry Smith, the recently-retired executive director of the Foundation said: “There is no greater testament to Charlie and Mary than their desire to see their philanthropy grow with the inception of the DeKalb County Community Foundation. It has truly allowed folks throughout the county to give back to the communities where they have lived, worked and raised their families. The foundation will be a lasting legacy of the Roberts family, for sure.”

I could go on detailing many more gifts of land and money, but maybe you should just read the DeKalb Ag book and get a better feel for the magnitude of their accomplishments. It will make you think of them every time you see that famous winged ear of corn on fence lines, caps, T-shirts and memorabilia in so many places around the country.

By the way, there will be an exhibit of DeKalb Ag history at the Nehring Gallery in downtown DeKalb starting in February. I am wondering when there will be a museum built to showcase the history of the Ag like there are for the barbed wire barons.

• *Barry Schrader was editor of the Daily Chronicle from 1969-1972 and later worked at newspapers in San Francisco’s East Bay. He and his wife are retired and live in DeKalb.*

If anyone has any information that they would like to pass along to fellow Alumni, send it to:

Warren Holdridge
519 Best Ave.
De Kalb, IL 60115 or
e-mail to: warrenh171@aol.com

Newsletter by Warren Holdridge

ALUMNI NEWS

Opal Wilson – passed away on Nov. 1, 2009 in DeKalb. She was a long time employee of the DeKalb office.

Steve Christensen, -- Patty and boys moved to Hawaii over a year ago with Monsanto. He says, “Keep the snow. We are doing fine. It’s quite a different working environment in Hawaii. I have planted, detasseled, harvested, shelled and conditioned all in the same day. There is no let up in experiments to do and seed is available all the time - no winter breaks. Patty is working at Home Depot and is doing well. Lars is going to school and still working at the Kapolei golf course. He has a steady girlfriend who goes to UH. Jake does landscaping and hits the beach to surf after work every day and on weekends. The surf is beginning to build on the North Shore to 10 to 15 feet. Loud and scary when you watch the surfers there.

Jim Terry -- is facing a second battle with cancer. This time it involves his liver. Jim and Nina will be going to see some specialist this coming week to see what the best options are. Hope you will keep them in your thoughts and prayers.

John Pitts – is getting along pretty well. He was fussing about losing money on his condo rent down at the beach, but don't think we'll need to be taking up a collection for him any time soon. (from Cliff Hardison)

Bill Cox -- Monsanto turned him out to pasture with their last "re-structure", so he has new email.

Dennis Schlott -- is back under the Monsanto umbrella, managing three of their "farmer dealer brands" in the Indiana area.

Dave Haines -- also was "re-structured", not sure what he's doing Betty McKown, she was doing well, still living by herself. I can assure you she would love to hear from you, so pick up the phone and give her a holler.

Cliff Hardison -- For the Hardison's it has been a pretty good year. My business had a good year and our performance has really been competitive this fall. I also harvested a new son-in-law back at Easter. Misti had the nerve to bring a North Carolina fan into the family. Shearl is staying busy with Weight Watchers and the beauty shop. I'm trying to talk her into retiring and being my secretary (make that administrative assistance, I'm hoping the bigger the title, the smaller the salary!) Figure that might give me a chance to boss her around, never have been able to up to now.

KERNELS OF WISDOM

BY SUE BREESE – VOL. 7

Sixty years ago DeKalb Agriculture Association was investing in a state of the art accounting system. International Business Machines were added

to improve "tabulating" reports and inventory. At that time the company struggled to keep up with the 60 different varieties, 1200 dealers and 22 districts. Four types of machines were used: the card punch, the sorter, the tabulator and the gang punch. The card punch punched information onto the card, the sorter sorted the information (24,000 cards per hour), the tabulator was used to produce reports and the gang punch recorded duplicate information into each card like the date and warehouse number. I remember the board used to program the gang punch machine. It resembled an early telephone switchboard where the cables were manually plugged into the board. The gang punch cables were plugged into the board at specific locations or "ports" to produce the desired results. Alvin Bohlander was in charge of the machines and attended special training in Endicott, New York. This "modern" technology improved the order process tremendously.

And the rest is history.....

FINAL NOTE

If you have not sent in your dues for 2009, please send it to Doris Riippi. If you know other ALUMS that are not members, feel free to send them a copy of the newsletter and encourage them to join.

PLEASE don't forget to send your change of address to Warren Holdridge as you move from the old homestead to new retirement quarters. We have lost contact with several people this way. Everyone is important to us.

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