

## BARBARA STILL REMEMBERS THE FARM

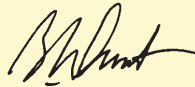
**A** chronic frustration during my 36+ years as a working agronomist has been the lack of understanding of farming among city folks. The selections of healthy, tasty, and economical foods at supermarkets are almost infinite. Yet, how many people associate them with what goes on at the farm? Some are more likely to be critical of farmers – because they are ‘paid not to grow crops’ or are ‘polluting the environment’. A few choose to pay a premium for organically grown foods, thinking they are more nutritious or better for the environment. Misunderstanding and uncertainty about agricultural production are common.

Barbara is different, though. She knows about farming and, as I discovered, is more than proud of her Minnesota farm heritage. We met a few weeks ago when Pat and I were looking for a piece of furniture. Barbara sold us a table and, while writing up the ticket, asked me where I worked. I told her a little about the Institute and then suggested that she probably wouldn’t be interested in hearing about agriculture. Whoa! She went into a 10-minute sermon about why she is interested and showed me that she knows a lot about farming, especially corn and soybean production.

As it turns out, Barbara’s dad was a grain farmer who won a national corn yield contest back in the late 1950s. She proceeded to describe how he was able to grow such marvelous corn and even estimated by her hand spread how long the ears of corn were. (I suspect Barbara was also a good fisherman at one time because she stretched those corn ears out pretty good.)

Then Barbara grew pensive, as the conversation brought back fond memories of her father. But she brightened when she told us about a picture of her dad and his corn that is now hanging in her kitchen. Unlike many today in professions not directly related to farming, she continues to maintain a strong, positive appreciation of the importance of food and fiber production. She remembers.

Without realizing it, Barbara made my day – my week. As I left the store, it occurred to me that all of us should be a little more like her...proud of our heritage. Maybe then we would be more inclined to remind our city cousins about the essential role of modern agriculture.



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