WISCONSIN MEAT INDUSTRY HALL OF FAME
1995

Clarence J. Becker
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Clarence Becker is "Mr. Purveyor" of the meat industry of Wisconsin. He joins the Wisconsin Meat Industry Hall of Fame because of his dynamic, untiring and far-sighted leadership to the purveying industry of the U.S.A. He was born March 30, 1917 in Sioux City, Iowa, received his B.A. degree in Economics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1938, and joined the family wholesale meat company in Milwaukee in 1939. He married Pearl Robbin in 1941 and they have a son Steve and a daughter Mrs. Bonnie Gould. Clarence became President of the company in 1944, and today, his son holds that title.

David P. Becker, the father of Clarence, came to the U.S.A. from Russia as a young boy in 1905. He found jobs, within the meat industry, in New York City, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Sioux City, Iowa, and finally settled in Milwaukee in 1923. He worked in retail stores, and by the late 1920's established the Wisconsin Wholesale Market. His vision was to supply the market "where meals were served away from home" -- what we now call the Food Service Industry. Under the leadership of Clarence, the business underwent significant expansion and improvement. World War II was a difficult time for the company, not only because of the constraints of government price controls, but also due to the day-to-day problems of obtaining meat due to war time shortages. The name was changed to Becker Meat and Provision in 1944, and to Becker Food Company, Inc. in 1975, to reflect the expanding product line.

Clarence brought success to the company because of innovations he instituted. He insisted on a quality image, and sold U.S. Choice or higher grade beef when he could have dealt with lower quality meat. He continuously updated his facilities and equipment. He was a pioneer in the portion control concept, and he obtained registered trademarks of "portion cut" and "portion carve" which were used widely in merchandising efforts. He worked tirelessly with the restaurant industry promoting the concept of portion control meat cuts which are visually uniform and prepared by professional meat cutters to specified weights or thicknesses. This innovative concept would permit foodservice professionals to identify their exact meat portion costs, and consequently be more effective in pricing menus and satisfying patrons with uniform portions.

Clarence has undoubtedly done more to advance the purpose of the National Association of Meat Purveyors (NAMP) than any other single individual. He has become famous among meat purveyors for his creation of the NAMP "Bull Session", an activity he has personally conducted 77 times over a period of 42 years. He was President of NAMP in 1957 and has earned every major award of the association.

In 1960-1961, he was part of the original NAMP Standards Committee which developed the Meat Buyer's Guide -- now translated into six languages for international use. Since its inception in 1961, the Meat Buyer's Guide -- which defines specifications, has been an invaluable resource for foodservice meat buyers, educators and students. Now, the entire meat industry throughout the world uses the NAMP Meat Buyer's Guide as the authoritative text.

He has been a long-term and dynamic member of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association and the Wisconsin Livestock and Meat Council, as well as being active in his home community in civic and philanthropic affairs.
Clarence Becker is a leader, an innovator and a positive promoter of the meat industry. Even though home base is Wisconsin, his impact has been clearly felt across the nation.