WISCONSIN MEAT INDUSTRY HALL OF FAME

1997

Milton Peck
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Milton Peck led the company he founded to national prominence. He rose from the ranks of butcher and boner to become manager, owner and a leader in his industry. Through Peck Packing Company, he was a consolidator and survivor of what once was a thriving nucleus of beef slaughterers located in the greater Milwaukee, Wisconsin area. Milton Peck was progressive and forward thinking, and was always at the forefront in technology and productivity. He lived to see the company he had built, along with his sons Bernie and Emmett, become a division of Sara Lee Meat Group in 1985.

Milton Peck was born July 4, 1904 in Milwaukee, the son and grandson of a meat industry family who had immigrated from Czechoslovakia in the 1800's. By the time he was ten years old he was leading cattle to the slaughter house. He left high school after two years to work full time with his father in the family slaughter house located at 14th and Meinecke streets in Milwaukee. He knew all phases of the industry, but specialized in buying cattle and would drive to Chicago at 4:00 am several days a week to buy top grade fed cattle at the stockyards.

He married Lillian Resnick in 1925. The Peck and Resnick families both operated packing plants, and eventually the Peck and Resnick businesses were merged to form Monarch Meat Packers Company. During World War II he leased his plant to the National Tea Company and worked for them as an employee.

In 1951 he purchased the Ideal Packing Company and became the first packer in the area specializing in slaughter and boning of cows and bulls. Automated kill lines and moving top boning tables were included in the operation as they became available to the industry. As the packing industry changed in Milwaukee, the Peck Company not only survived but grew from 180 employees to 800 employees and three additional plants. In 1985 Peck Packing Company became a division of the Sara Lee Meat Group and became known as Emmber Foods.

He was progressive and forward thinking and always at the forefront of technology. He was held in the highest regard and respected by his employees. His word was his bond.

Peck Packing Company pioneered the muscle boning and separation of cuts for specialized uses. Some examples would be early-on sale of round cuts to Patrick Cudahy for dried beef manufacture, segregation of rib rolls to fast food chains for beef sandwiches, and later the manufacture of restructured beef for thin slicing to national chains.

He was a philanthropist and established many foundations which remain active in supporting local and charitable causes. Major donations include the Peck Pavilion at the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts, the Peck Auditorium at the Jewish Old Home, The Peck Welcome Center at the Milwaukee County Zoological Gardens, and the Aquatic Center at the Jewish Community Center.

He was a pioneer and survivor who progressed steadily and continuously. He died April 14, 1988.