WISCONSIN MEAT INDUSTRY HALL OF FAME

2005

James Kalscheur
Jim Kalscheur bought a small meat market in Madison, Wis., in 1958, renamed it UW Provision Company, Inc., and turned it into a multi-million dollar meat distributor and processor of fresh meats. In addition, Kalscheur is recognized for his generosity to community organizations and his support of the UW athletic departments.

Kalscheur was born in 1929 in Pine Bluff, a small community west of Madison. He grew up on a farm but moved with his family into town after he developed hay fever in the eighth grade. He began his career in the food industry by working at the Ortman grocery store in Pine Bluff in grade school and high school. After high school Jim worked for 10 years for Esser’s Wholesale Market in Madison. In 1958 he bought a small meat market which had six employees, known then as the UW Meat Market. It had that name because it was located on University Avenue in Madison, and was near the University. In 1962 Kalscheur renamed it the UW Provision Company. The operation later moved to Bell Street on Madison’s south side, and in 1972 it relocated to its current location in Middleton, Wisconsin, just west of Madison.

Today the company employees more than 100 people, occupies a plant that measures 100,000 square feet and has annual sales of more than $100,000,000. But despite its growth, UWP still serves small mom-and-pop stores, as well as supermarkets, meat processors and HRI (hotel, restaurant, institutional) operations. Kalscheur continues to oversee day-to-day operations.

Over the years UWP has been a leading innovator in the meat processing industry. They were one of the first to further fabricate “boxed beef,” which was becoming the primary way beef was sold in the 1970s. It would break down wholesale cuts into “sub-primal cuts” such as inside rounds, strip loins and ribeyes, and individual boneless steaks, and distribute these to their customers. This forced others in the industry to follow suit and also to imitate UWP’s success selling boneless cuts.

As a pioneer in the industry, UWP is recognized for the following path-breaking steps:
* Use of telemarketing techniques. UWP realized the importance of telephone sales calls to expand its customer contacts, instead of the then customary sales person going store-to-store. From UWP’s beginning, phone calls were responsible for 100% of its sales. The telephone made possible larger numbers of contacts, eventually replaced by computers, which have exponentially increased the number of contacts. *Vacuum-packaged steaks. UWP was one of the first to use this concept for selling meat to restaurants. *Blast freezers. In the 1970s, UWP installed state-of-the-art blast freezers, which were not commonly used at that time by distributors and steak cutters. The rapid freezing of the meat brought about by very low freezer temperatures and rapid air movement lock-in superior meat quality.

Kalscheur is also known as a generous civic backer. His generosity to Pine Bluff has resulted in the building a community park, playgrounds and athletic fields. He also built an addition onto the Pine Bluff church he attends. Each summer Jim hosts handicapped children at his farm for a fishing outing. Over a 20-year period, a steak fry outing Kalscheur and other members of his staff initiated has raised over $6 million for the UW Athletic Department. UWP bore all the expenses for the outings. The proceeds from the first steak fry were $20,000. The proceeds from the last one were well over $500,000.
Steve Badalich, retired vice president of UWP, said, “This major meat industry individual should be inducted into the Hall (of Fame). My advice would be run, don’t walk, to nominate this man. How do I know? I was a UWP VP and minority partner for 32 wonderful years until my retirement some 12 years ago.”

Because of Jim Kalscheur’s leadership in developing UW Provisions from a 6 person operation to a company with over $100 million in sales, and his dedication to its growth into one of Wisconsin’s leading processors and distributors of meat products, he is indeed highly worthy of induction into the Wisconsin Meat Industry Hall of Fame.

Kalscheur is married to Joyce. They have three children: Scott, Amy and Steve, who works for the company. Jim and Joyce have seven grandchildren, which are a great joy to their lives.