WISCONSIN MEAT INDUSTRY HALL OF FAME

2006

Carl Chellekold
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Carl Chellevold was a leading participant in the development of Richland Locker and its operation in Richland Center, Wis., and served for many years in a leadership role in the meat industry as a Director of the Wisconsin Association of Meat Processors. For these and other significant accomplishments and contributions, Carl is being inducted into the Wisconsin Meat Industry Hall of Fame.

Carl was born in 1915 in Ferryville, Wisconsin (Crawford County) to Ole and Dorthea Chellevold, who emigrated from Norway in the early 1900s. Their children included eight sons and three daughters. He graduated from Gays Mills High School, and during his high school years worked for a creamery in Gays Mills. Carl attended the Dairy-Processing School at the University of Wisconsin-Madison from 1936 to 1937, and then worked as a buttermaker for the Nielsen Creamery. In 1939 he married Doris Susee.

In 1942 Carl entered the meat processing business. Previously his brother, Herman Chellevold, and Herman’s brother-in-law Olaf Larson, had opened a meat processing business in downtown Richland Center, which they called Richland Locker. This business mostly cut-up carcasses brought in by farmers, and rented out freezer storage lockers. Carl joined this meat processing business in 1942, but World War II was going on, and in 1943 he was called to active duty in the military.

Carl served in the U.S. Calvary group of the U.S. Army as a cook. After completing basic training at Fort Riley, Kansas, he served in the South Pacific. His service included time in New Guinea, the Admiralty Islands, Leyte and Luzon. Carl was awarded the bronze star for “going above and beyond the call of duty to bring supplies to the front, and to bring back the wounded.” He also spent time in Japan after the signing of the peace treaty. During his military service he contracted malaria, which persisted with occasional flare-ups for many years.

In October 1945 Carl returned from military service and re-joined Richland Locker, subsequently buying into the business in 1952. In 1947 the plant had added an annex on the edge of Richland Center, increasing the capacity of the business. A slaughter floor was added to the annex in 1952, and a 1977 addition to the annex tripled its size. The 1977 addition to the annex brought about the closing of the downtown plant. In 1974 Carl and Doris bought out Herman’s share of the business, and also that year Carl’s son-in-law Carl Huth and daughter Susan became part owners of Richland Locker. Carl Huth and Susan remain the current owners and operators of the plant.

Carl was a very “action-oriented” person in many areas of his life. In the early 1950’s he and his plant joined the Wisconsin Association of Meat Processors (known then as the Wisconsin Frozen Food Locker Association). Carl soon became a director of the association, and remained in this leadership role for the next 30 years. Twice he served as president of the association, and was also chairman of their product show. It is believed that he never missed a board meeting during his 30 years of service on the board.

Carl’s ownership of Richland Locker and his service to the Board occurred at a very important time for Wisconsin’s smaller-scale meat industry. The 1966 Wholesome Meat Act passed by the U.S. Congress allowed states to establish state meat inspection programs that equal the federal
USDA program. This required Wisconsin to establish the program within the state Department of Agriculture, and to explain and get acceptance of the program by the many small processors in the state, some of which had never operated under an inspection program before. Carl served on various inspection-related committees and attended many meetings to aid the industry and state government in giving birth to this new program. Today Wisconsin’s state meat inspection program regulates approximately 300 commercial plants and about 50 custom-exempt plans, and is regarded as one of the best-run state programs in the country.

In those early days of meat processing plants in the state Carl was instrumental in getting renderers to service the small plants. He started a carcass show at Richland Locker for 4-H and FFA kids who raised meat animals for the Richland County Fair. Carl wanted those participants to see how the breeding, feeding and management of their project animals affected the final meat product. That annual carcass show continues on to this day.

Carl was a hard worker, and very knowledgeable about the meat business. He trained many employees in all aspects of meat processing. Several of his trained employees still work in the plant, and have been there for 20 to 30 years. He retired from the meat business when he was 76 years old, but still has the meat business in his blood, stopping by the plant just about every day.

Carl was extremely active in community organizations. He served 58 years in the local Lion’s Club, receiving the Melvin Jones Fellowship Award from the Lion’s Club International Foundation, for “dedicated humanitarian service.” Carl was a member of the Richland Center Veteran of Foreign Wars and American Legion for over 50 years, and served for 30 years on the Richland County Parks Commission. Likewise he served on the Church Council of St. John’s Lutheran Church for 20 years and the Richland Center City Council for 6 years. Carl was truly an active participant in local organizations and had an outstanding record of community service.

Carl and his wife Doris have now been married for 66 years. Their children include Susan (married to Carl Huth, with grandchildren Jeff, Jenifer and Craig), Sally (married to William Borden, with granddaughter Rebekah) and Steve (married to Nancy, with grandchildren Courtney and Jared). Steve died in 2005.

Carl Chelleveold led development of Richland Locker into one of Wisconsin’s finest smaller-scale meat processing business during the 66 years it has served customers in Richland County, was a very active leader in the Wisconsin Association of Meat Processors and was exemplary in his service to his country and to local organizations. For these very significant accomplishments Carl is indeed highly worthy of induction into the Wisconsin Meat Industry Hall of Fame.