James Peterson was born in 1945 in Crawford County, Wisconsin. He attended a rural primary school and spent his early years in the Fairview Cheese Factory owned and operated by his parents, Lawrence and Eunice Peterson. When his parents sold the cheese factory and his father started an insurance agency, the family moved to Richland Center, where Jim graduated from high school. His first exposure to the meat industry was as an employee at the Richmond Center Locker owned and operated by his uncle, Herman Chellevold. That experience kindled a deep interest in the meat industry and launched a career of successful business development and outstanding leadership, service and educational assistance to the Wisconsin and US meat industry.

In 1964 with financial assistance from his father, Jim purchased the Lodi Locker. During the next 25 years, he expanded the business, modernized facilities and equipment, developed new products, adopted new technologies, won numerous state and national awards for his outstanding and innovative meat products, and became a highly respected and effective industry leader and advocate. Immediately after acquiring Lodi Locker, he installed refrigeration in the slaughter facility, purchased a water stuffer and started a sausage manufacturing operation. In 1968, he replaced the gravity smokehouse with an ALKAR smokehouse and the sausage business expanded rapidly thereafter.

Jim Peterson developed a reputation as an outstanding sausage maker and product innovator. He transitioned Lodi Locker from its focus on custom meat processing to a company that manufactured and merchandized more than 96 value added meat and cheese products. Jim cites with special pride his turkey bacon, ground and formed jerky, sectioned and formed hams, sectioned and formed smoked beef, and particularly, his summer sausage. Lodi Locker’s meat products won more than 140 awards in state and national competitions, including the Governor’s Cup in 1977. In addition to expanding its custom meat processing, sausage and retail meat business, Jim started Lodi Locker’s catering business. He always was an innovator, as exemplified by his work with a local livestock producer to develop a line of natural beef products sold in Madison markets. This venture, begun in the 1970s, was not successful at that time because consumers would not pay a premium for natural beef. But today, natural and organic foods are the fastest growing part of the food industry.

Beyond his success as a meat processor and business owner, Jim Peterson is recognized even more for sharing his successes and abilities with others. As he developed and manufactured award-winning products, he also shared the knowledge of their preparation with other small processors so that today most plants are making these products. He became a committed member of the Wisconsin Association of Meat Processors, served four terms as WAMP President, and continues to serve as Government Liaison for the Association. He was instrumental in developing the ham, bacon and processed meats contest and auction at the Wisconsin State Fair with the proceeds going to the Wisconsin 4H Foundation.

Jim sold Lodi Locker in 1989 and accepted a position in marketing and technical service with ALKAR-RapidPak, Inc. In that capacity, he has marketed cooking, chilling, drying and packaging equipment for meat and cheese products to companies throughout the United States and internationally. But, his leadership and service to the meat industry in Wisconsin and beyond did not diminish with his career change. His position has allowed him to share widely...
his knowledge of meat processing and sausage manufacture. Small meat processors throughout Wisconsin have benefited firsthand from this traveling teacher’s experience and knowledge, as have other state and national trade groups. He has had the opportunity to instruct about meat cooking and smoking at university- and industry-sponsored workshops throughout the United States and Canada.

He is active in the American Association of Meat Processors, serving multiple terms as a director and on several committees. AAMP honored Jim as its 4th inductee into the association’s Cured Meats Hall of Fame in 1997 and with its highest honor, the Outstanding Service Award, in 2006.

Jim and his wife Mary, a retired teacher, have one daughter, Meagan. They are very active in the First Lutheran Church of Lodi. Jim’s hobbies are Badger basketball, hunting, fishing, and antique fishing tackle. In the Lodi area, he is known as “Saus King”.