



Dr. Paul N. Ellinger  
Head of Department

## Department of Agricultural *and* Consumer Economics

### July 2010

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#### A Message from the Department Head

All the signs of summer in Illinois are upon us – fewer students on campus, 7- foot corn, and fireworks. ACE faculty are working vigorously on research projects and grant proposals, in addition to preparing for the next cohort of ACE students coming this fall. We have 141 new undergraduate students and 18 graduate students joining the ACE family in August.

In this issue, we acknowledge the retirement of a distinguished colleague, highlight a successful Extension program, and reflect on the path-breaking career of a former professor. We also initiate a new section in our newsletter titled "Where are they now?". Included in this section, we have a conversation with a retired faculty member to bring us up-to-date on his current activities and reflect on his time in the Department.

Paul

#### Thompson Enters New Phase in Distinguished Career



Dr. Robert Thompson

Professor Robert L. Thompson announced his retirement from the Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics in May of this year. Thompson was the first recipient of the Gardner Endowed Chair in Agricultural Policy at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. He accepted the position and joined the ACE faculty in September of 2004, bringing with him an international expertise on agricultural economic policy that is unmatched in his field.

Thompson is a Bachelor of Science graduate of Cornell University and earned both his Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy degrees from Purdue University. He accepted a position as professor of agricultural economics at Purdue in 1974, focusing on agricultural trade policy, U.S. agricultural policy, and world agricultural development.

Thompson took a leave of absence in 1983 and spent the next four years in Washington, D.C., where he served at the White House under President Ronald Reagan as the Senior Staff Economist for Food and Agriculture on the President's Council of Economic Advisers from 1983 to 1985. He then spent two years as Assistant Secretary for Economics at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Upon his return to Purdue in 1987, Thompson served as Dean of Agriculture until 1993, where he oversaw agricultural instruction, Extension, research, international programs, and regulatory affairs for the State of Indiana.

After his 19-year tenure at Purdue, Thompson took a position as President and CEO of Winrock International Institute for Agricultural Development, a not-for-profit institution. Winrock carries on projects in 40 low-income countries worldwide to reduce poverty and hunger by increasing agricultural productivity and rural

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employment while protecting the quality of the environment.

In 1998, Thompson moved on to the World Bank, where he served as its Director of Rural Development, with administrative responsibility for the Bank's worldwide agriculture, forestry and rural development programs. He also served as the Bank's Senior Advisor for Agricultural Trade Policy.

Thompson's extensive international experience includes long-term assignments in Denmark, Laos, and Brazil. He has lectured, consulted, or conducted research in more than 90 countries worldwide.

Thompson recently reflected on some of the highlights of a career that has spanned more than 36 years.

*As Dean of Agriculture at Purdue:* "My tenure as Dean at Purdue was a period of very tight budgets," he said. "Purdue hit the wall financially before many other universities. My predecessor set the downsizing process in motion, but I had to finish it. We downsized the faculty 20 percent and the Extension field staff 25 percent in five years. By tightening the belt and right-sizing, we were able to project out in the state that we had done our part. The last year I was Dean, we were back in the rehiring mode, and we did some phenomenal hiring of extremely bright and talented faculty members.

"We also rebuilt student numbers, which had declined significantly in agriculture, and brought them back up to where they were before. We were also able to get a greater commitment from students to study abroad. When I left, 5 percent of graduating seniors had had an international experience, and that went up to 10 percent shortly after I left the Dean's job. That's a legacy I feel very good about, because with the global nature of the food and agriculture business today, to be competitive in the world of work, one needs to have a much broader international perspective than we get just growing up in the United States."

*As Senior Staff Economist for Food and Agriculture on the President's Council of Economic Advisors:* "I feel the contributions I was able to make to the public policies of this country as a member of the Council of Economic Advisors were probably the peak of my career," Thompson noted. "And serving in government at a responsible level in public policy made me a more effective Dean when I returned to Purdue. I had not only the technical analytical background from academia and academic research and teaching, I also had that real-world experience."

*As President and CEO of Winrock, International, and Director of Rural Development with World Bank:* "Those jobs blessed me with the opportunity to get a breadth of experience, but both jobs also involved downsizing," he said. "Winrock needed to have the staff brought in line with its resources and the World Bank was also in a downsizing mode with internal staff. Downsizing gets very old," he noted. "It's hard on one's constitution. So I had no further aspirations of administrative positions after leading three downsizing processes."

*As the Gardner Chair at the University of Illinois:* "The endowed chair has been a very nice capstone on my career," Thompson said. "One of the best things about this job was that 40 percent of my time was budgeted for Extension public policy education. So I had the opportunity to draw on everything in my career and work with farm organizations and government in the broader public educational forum.

"This is an excellent department with good colleagues," he continued, "and a good quality junior faculty, which is the future of any department. The quality of the Department has proven to be as I expected, and it's been a very good place to be."

Thompson and his wife Karen will be leaving the Midwest and splitting their time between Bethany Beach, Delaware and Washington, D.C. Although Thompson said he will *not* miss changing planes at O'Hare multiple times per month, he and his wife will "really miss Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. The program that Mike Ross [Director of the Center] puts together each year is phenomenal. Washington, D.C. has a rich cultural life, but the short commute, the low cost and the ease of parking – that's going to change."

While in D.C., Thompson hopes to join one of the "excellent think tanks interested in global agricultural issues," he said. "I hope to have a place to hang my hat occasionally and interact with a group of professional colleagues. I expect to become engaged in the next Farm Bill debate, and stay engaged in the WTO trade

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negotiation debate, as well as the direction of future foreign aid programs of the United States."

When asked what advice he had for students and young professionals interested in a career in agricultural economics, Thompson pointed first to his family.

"A career like mine would not have been possible without the support of my wife and children," he said. "They were willing to pick up and move whenever I asked them. I know that's more difficult for today's couples with two careers. But if you have that support," he concluded, "be willing to say yes when opportunity knocks. Get a variety of experiences. Be flexible and dive into something new when it presents itself. And, of course, there's no substitution for being willing to work hard."

### **MarketMaker Website Makes Multi-State Connections in the Food Supply Chain**

If you're a link in the food industry supply chain in Illinois – whether producer, buyer, seller or distributor – you've probably heard of *MarketMaker*. *MarketMaker* is an interactive website developed by University of Illinois Extension researchers. It was originally designed to connect Illinois farmers and producers to regional markets.

"But the program has grown exponentially in the last few years," said Darlene Knipe, marketing specialist for University of Illinois Extension. Knipe and her husband Rich, also a specialist with Extension, are principal investigators for the project. "It began as a database of Illinois businesses, but it was so successful that other states have joined the effort, making it a national network of interconnected sites. Currently, it's one of the most extensive collections of searchable food industry-related data in the country."

The program had modest beginnings in the late 1990s, when the Knipes began working with Peter Goldsmith, a professor in ACE, on developing software that would use GIS (geographic information system) data to help farmers market their products in Chicago.

"I worked with an ACE graduate student and an ITCS programmer to develop the crude software," said Goldsmith. "We named it MarketMaker, and Dar liked the name, so it stuck. It was really just a proof of concept. Dar found a company who built the version you see today. We contacted Clark Roberts [in the ACE computing group] about hosting the site and they are still hosting it today. It's a great website and Dar has done a wonderful job growing it."

Goldsmith stepped down from the project in 2005 to assume new duties running the National Soybean Research Laboratory, but he uses the website in ACE 430, a food marketing course.

The Illinois Council on Food and Agricultural Research (C-FAR) provided funding for the original project, which worked specifically to improve access to markets for livestock producers.

"Rich has been connected to the livestock industry all his life, and he always had an interest in helping livestock producers improve on the business side of things," said Darlene. "He felt there was an unmet need among producers to market their product more efficiently, so that was an effort to fill that gap."

**MARKETMAKER™**  
Linking Agricultural Markets



Knipe said the project's engagement with industry reinforced the need to build a system that would capture the benefits of technology and the Internet to provide more efficient

and easier access to marketing information for farmers. The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) agreed, and in 2002, they provided seed money to expand the program to all food-related projects.

*MarketMaker* began as a collaboration between the University of Illinois Initiative for

the Development of Entrepreneurship in Agriculture (IDEA), U of I Extension, the Illinois DOA and C-FAR. By 2005, *MarketMaker* had expanded to a national platform, and today *MarketMaker* sites have been established in Iowa, Georgia, Mississippi, Nebraska, Kentucky, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, New York, South Carolina, Colorado, Arkansas and Washington, D.C. Sites are currently being developed in Pennsylvania, Louisiana, and Florida.

"Each state has its own portal," said Knipe, "and we offer them some options to populate it with information that's useful to their particular state. But the database is the same across all states, so when you search in Illinois, you have the option of searching across all states."

*MarketMaker* operates on a very simple concept – producers need to find markets where they can sell their particular product, and markets need to find producers who will provide what they need. There is no charge to list a business, or to search the site for information. The result is an incredible database of information that can be used by anyone who buys or sells food.

"Walmart has used the site to secure locally grown fruits and vegetables, which keeps costs down and provides their customers with fresher produce," said Knipe. "But an individual can use the site just as easily to find farm-fresh eggs. Our goal was to create a site that served all the different players of the food supply chain, because we want everyone to contribute and participate."

Knipe provides other examples of the site's versatility, from the farmer who wants to sell his cilantro to Hispanic restaurants in Chicago, to a farmer's market looking for producers who can provide certified organic cauliflower to a specific area on a certain date.

"The search capabilities in the program allow you to drill down to be as specific as possible," said Knipe. "We also have a "Buy & Sell" forum. If you don't want to do a search, but you have something to buy or sell, you can list it on the forum. It's just another way to get the information out there and it gets a significant number of views."

Knipe said their connection to Extension from the very beginning has played a large part in the success of *MarketMaker*. "There's a real issue of trust involved when people are sharing this kind of information," she noted. "Because of our partnership with Extension, we're perceived as a neutral broker of information. All the land-grant institutions enjoy that niche."

"We also have a presence out in the field," she continued. "Individuals in Extension have relationships with farmers that have helped us build this network and bring information into the system. All of that has played a huge part in the success of the program."

The Knipes are based in the Quad Cities area, but spend a significant amount of time on the road these days. Together they have a collection of degrees from The Ohio State University and the University of Connecticut. They have three children and four grandchildren in the Quad Cities area and are building a new home. Knipe said she loves college football, and hopes to pursue an interest in art someday. But retirement is not in their immediate future.

"*MarketMaker* is reaching milestones that really almost shock me," she said. "And yet, I aspire for this to move into all the states. We'd also like to serve the global marketplace. I think there are developing countries where the technology is farther along than we think, and this program could help farmers gain access to emerging markets."

"The goal for any program is to build it to the point where it can continue without you," Knipe concluded. "That's got to be the end goal, but I'm not quite sure we're there yet."

[Editor's comment: The press release *Louisiana Gulf Coast fishermen grab life ring through MarketMaker* illustrates utilization with Louisiana Gulf Coast fishermen]

## The Doving Saga

The life and times of a former professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics



Dr. Janken Myrdal

at the University of Illinois is the subject of a new book by Janken Myrdal. *The Dovring Saga: A Story of Academic Immigration* is the story of Folke Dovring, a Swedish agrarian historian rejected by the Swedish academic community in the mid-1950s.

"I had two questions when I began this book," said Myrdal, a professor of agrarian history at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences in Uppsala, Sweden. "First of all, why did Dovring leave Sweden, and second, why did he come to America?"

"The answer to the first question involves European conservatism in the academic world at that time," said Myrdal. "Dovring was interested in the history of the farmers, but the Swedish historians were more interested in kings and wars."

So the doors of academia "were closed to him" around 1950, said Myrdal, but Dovring was not to be deterred. "He wanted to work on the history of farming, so he began a project on the history of European farming from the mid-19th century onwards."

In 1956, Dovring's work was published in a book entitled *Land and Labor in Europe 1900 - 1950*. The book is considered a minor classic and is still quoted as one of the most important contributions in its field.

"So it was awkward," said Myrdal, "because he was very successful. He actually published two books, several articles, and even wrote in some famous international journals. He was actually at the cutting-edge of history at that time, because interest in agrarian history was increasing."

"But his work was not suited to the old, conservative professors in Sweden, so they declared him incompetent in history. It was not because he was doing bad research," Myrdal noted. "His research was quite well-done and published widely. But they thought he was not doing "real" history, which was history of the state, so they rejected him. It was politics."

The second part of the story - why Dovring came to America - starts with a very interesting fact, said Myrdal. "Even at that time, America had established a position of dominance for an academic life," he said. "When you look at higher education in America, you can point to the esteem of higher education among the public, beginning in the early 20th century."

However, Myrdal maintains that the most significant changes in higher education in America took place in the years between 1945 and 1975.

"First of all, if you look at a graph of the production of Ph.D.s in the United States, the number rises from around 7,000 in 1950, to over 34,000 in 1975," he said. "And the number of students climbs from around 2.5 million in 1950, to 11.2 million in 1975. So there really was an incredible increase in higher education during those two or three decades."

A second change came around 1960, said Myrdal, when "inbreeding" stopped. "Before 1950, departments (especially at the top universities) tried to keep their students. About 1960, this changed. And Harold Halcrow (former Department Head of Agricultural Economics at the University of Illinois) played a big part in this change."

"Competition was great among the different universities, and Halcrow quite aggressively tried to get the best faculty from other universities in the Midwest," said Myrdal. "But they tried to get his faculty as well. So Halcrow made an agreement with the other department heads. If they did not try to steal his faculty, he would tip them to his best Ph.D. students. He in turn would not steal their faculty if they tipped him to their best Ph.D. students. And that began a flow of students around the country."

Myrdal said that at the same time, Halcrow raised the salaries of some of his best faculty, with the reasoning that if you paid top wages, you would attract the best candidates from around the country.

"So with all these factors in place, Halcrow recruited Dovring," he said. "Dovring was recommended as the best in his field, and when Halcrow offered him a full professorship, the offer proved "so tempting" he could not resist.



Mrs. Dovring, Dr. Myrdal

"So that is the story of this book," said Myrdal. "It is not only the story of Folke Dovring; it is also a kind of success story for American universities during this period. When you have a very competitive system, it works somewhat like a top league in sports," he noted. "The top will stay at the top, sometimes for a very long time, and there is a reason for that.

"Someone who is performing among the best in the world wants to be with others who are among the best. You want to develop yourself; you want to be better. This is how you develop a top university, and today many of these universities are in the United States."

"I do not want to interfere in American politics," Myrdal concluded, "but if my argument is correct, the point can be made that if you want to cut down on something, perhaps it is a bad idea to cut down on higher education. That is something that sustains America's position in the world."

*The Dovring Saga: A Story of Academic Immigration* was published in 2010 by The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities.

### "Where are they now?" -- Robert G. F. Spitze



Dr. Robert G. F. Spitze

When asked what his greatest accomplishment was during his 33-year tenure at the University of Illinois, Bob Spitze says that it was working alongside his wife. Spitze and his family came to the University in 1961 so that he could pursue a challenging and broad intellectual environment. He came from the University of Tennessee, where he worked for nine years after earning his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin.

While at the University, Spitze's area of interest was Public Agricultural and Food Policy. Spitze taught governmental policy for 30 years, focusing on content and the political process. Spitze explains, "I worked in graduate, undergraduate teaching and counseling and I enjoyed it thoroughly. I used the Socratic method of teaching and I still get positive feedback from students about the interaction that we had."

In research, Spitze worked closely with Harold Guither, a leader in Extension, and others to prepare educational materials for the periodic process of developing new national agricultural and food policy (the farm bill.) The team distributed materials around the country to educate stakeholders in the farm and food sector about the current agricultural situation and potential alternatives. About this work, Spitze says, "I'm proud of it and I enjoyed it and I think I helped develop better policy."

Spitze was married to his wife, Hazel Taylor Spitze, for 65 years before she passed away in Aug 2009. Hazel was a successful Professor in the College of Education for 25 years before her retirement in 1987. "She was a wonderful companion, mother, and educational leader," Spitze says. "Working together has been one of the greatest professional joys of my life. She was a strong believer in women's rights and helped enumerable young women become prepared and motivated to become great leaders, as she was."

After retiring, the Spitzes spent much time on volunteer work and traveling. They were involved in organizations such as the University YMCA, the United Way, the Center for Women in Transition, and Planned Parenthood. They also continued to be involved in the political process, both in their own political parties and on campus. "We are very political, participatory animals," Spitze says, "and we believe that education has to serve the purposes of democracy and the only ways you can have

an effective democracy is to have an effective citizenry."

Now, Spitze focuses on maintaining his health, including walking every day, watching his nutrition, and getting enough sleep. He continues to be active on campus. In addition to maintaining relationships with other retirees, Spitze reaches out to new faculty when they arrive. He is active in the local chapter of the American Association of University Professors and keeps in touch with administrators and issues recommendations.

Spitze also participates in interviewing for the Jonathan Baldwin Turner Scholarship, which is based on merit and allows the University to attract 50 promising students a year. In addition, Spitze continues supporting educational programs he and Hazel started at four Land Grant institutions that have affected their lives: the University of Arkansas, the University of Wisconsin, the University of Tennessee, and the University of Illinois. Although these activities are time-consuming, Spitze is energized about being involved and finds it inspiring. "It keeps me busy, excited, and optimistic!" he claims.

Spitze believes that his life with Hazel at the University and helping two children develop in this community was "the most enjoyable and exciting life I can imagine." He fit in well at the University and enjoyed his ability to interact with people in all disciplines. Spitze says, "I worked with many different fields, from respected lawyers, engineers, social workers, and humanists, and it was the kind of intellectual environment that I really thrived on."

After all of these accomplishments, Spitze remains the most grateful that "Hazel and I were able to develop ourselves very much together. We traveled and learned about the world that we had never known about before. As is often in our profession, we became leaders internationally. I appreciated being recognized locally as a Funk and Campus Teaching awardee, and by the American Agricultural Economics Association with the Teaching and the Distinguished Policy Contribution awards.

"Being able to travel to many countries of the world and making associations brought about a richness to me and her and to our family. And I am eternally thankful that I was at a university that encouraged that and helped develop those curiosities in me. I am grateful for the opportunities I had here and that I experienced them with my wife."

### Awards and Recognitions

- **Eric Micheels**, Outstanding Paper Award, IAMA meetings
- **Nicholas Brozovic**, Teacher Fellow Award, North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA)
- **Bryan Endres**, promoted to Associate Professor and new Director of the European Union Center

### In The News

- **Craig Gundersen**, Food insecurity increases risk of weight gain and complications during pregnancy
- **Scott Irwin**, Commodities bubble not driven by speculation, OECD says
- **Angela Lyons**, Global initiative launched to empower children financially

### Upcoming Workshops

The Office for Futures and Options will host several two-day Ag markets workshops during 2010:

- **World Agricultural Marketplace and Risk Management Workshop:** November 15-16, 2010. Topics covered include the world Ag marketplace, grain flow, transportation, regulation, hedging, basis trading, spreads, market reports, and options.
- **Intermediate to Advanced Agricultural Hedging Workshop:** December 13-14, 2010. Topics covered include hedge scenarios, the practice and benefits of rolling hedges, calculating the cost of carry and covering carry charges in futures.

The University of Illinois Tax School has announced their 2010 seminar schedule. All seminars offer CPE; Illinois MCLE,

Illinois Insurance, and CFP credits are also available. Click on the links for more information.

- **Social Security Planning: Preparing for the Silver Tsunami:** September 13: Collinsville; September 14: East Peoria; September 15: Tinley Park. This one-day seminar will give you the tools to best advise clients on developing and implementing a comprehensive plan for drawing social security benefits.
- **Beyond Form 1120: The Lifecycle of a C Corporation:** September 20: Oakbrook Terrace; September 23: Collinsville; September 24: Springfield. This one-day seminar goes beyond completing Form 1120 and examines special problems that arise during the life of a C corporation.
- **Key Farm Tax Issues for Practitioners and Their Clients:** October 4: Champaign  
Roger McEwen, the foremost expert on agricultural taxation, focuses on key issues in farm taxation in this one-day seminar.
- **2010 Fall Tax School:** The Fall Tax School, an annual two-day seminar covering an extensive range of tax topics, is held in 32 locations throughout Illinois; the first Fall Tax School begins October 25. Topics include Ethics, S Corporations, Estate & Trust Taxation, and more.

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