



The Mid-Columbia Agriculture Hall of Fame was formed in Year 2000 to recognize and honor distinguished individuals that have made significant contributions to the agricultural community in the Greater Franklin County region and its immediate surrounding areas; although nominees from neighboring counties of Franklin County within a 150-mile radius are often also considered for this prestigious award.

The Pasco Chamber Board has proudly created a Selection Committee comprised of quality individuals representative of our agriculture industry and has chartered them with the honorable task of reviewing all nomination submittals. Induction candidates are selected based on their outstanding performance in the agriculture industry and their bountiful support of the local and rural communities. Candidates are recognized by their peers for not only their dedication, generosity, and selflessness, but also their demonstrated achievements, noteworthy expertise, and creative innovations that often provide a legacy of impactful results and lasting benefit to the overall enhancement of the local agricultural industry and community at large. Farmers, growers, ranchers, and owners/employees of agribusiness firms are all eligible for nomination as either individuals and/or families.

The Ag Hall of Fame inductions will be presented at a special gala January 22, 2015 at the Pasco Red Lion. **Deadline for Application is November 26, 2014.**

Mid-Columbia Agriculture Hall of Fame Intent to Nominate

Nominee's Name: Richard O. Rehfeld (aka, Dick)

Mailing Address: 524 N. Ely, Apt. I-9, Kennewick, WA 99336

Nominee's Phone: 541-217-0754 Fax: N/A E-Mail: N/A

Date of Birth: October 26, 1922 Birthplace: Coos Bay (Marshfield), OR

Date of Death (if deceased) N/A

Nominator's Name: Joel Rehfeld

Phone: 509-378-0894 Fax: N/A E-Mail: joelrehfeld@hotmail.com

Family Contact: Joel Rehfeld

Phone _____ Fax _____ E-Mail _____

Bio for Richard & Marjorie Rehfeld

Organizations & Services

- Franklin County Cattlemen Association
- Charter Member, Basin City Volunteer Fire Dept.
- Secretary, Basin City Development Corp.
- Marjorie; Charter Member Block 19 Home Makers
- Marjorie; 4-H leader

Richard spent his early years in Coos Bay and Lakeview, Oregon, eventually moving to Santa Rosa, California in his teens. It was in Santa Rosa he met his future wife and helpmate, Marjorie (Marge) Elton. Summers at his aunt and uncles' ranch on the Klamath River near the California/Oregon border provided adventure, and his exposure to agriculture. Because his Aunt Alice was the unofficial historian of Klamath County, Richard developed a lifelong interest in the history of Oregon and the role his ancestors played in the settlement of the state. Those ancestors were a hardy group of men and women who traveled into the barren lands of southeast Idaho and Nevada, and the wet southern Oregon coast eking out livings on farms and ranches. It is no wonder that Richard would heed the call to be a modern day settler and successful farmer.

Following his service in the Coast Guard during WWII, Richard returned to Santa Rosa to marry Marjorie and raise a family which eventually included three sons; Zane Barry, Rodney, and Joel. Working as a journeyman electrician provided a good income but not quite enough for the extras. Marge and the boys picked fruit to earn money for school clothes. Weekend trips to Bodega Bay were supported by collecting beverage bottles for return. Richard was involved in local electrical union activities and helped out neighbors and relatives with his willing hands and skills. Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons found the family at Marjorie's aunt and uncles' turkey ranch at Sebastopol, California processing fresh turkeys for the holidays. The time spent provided turkeys for the Rehfeld table and good times with the extended family.

Independence Day, 1955 brought changes to the lives of the Rehfelds. While on a family vacation to visit his mother, aunt and uncle, and cousins in Seattle the extended family camped at Deception Pass National Park north of Seattle to fish and harvest crabs. The park information board held application forms for an opportunity to be selected to obtain land in the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project north of Pasco, Washington. Richard's mother insisted he fill it out and mail it in (mothers know best).

Decision time came upon Richard and Marjorie quickly that fall when they were asked to travel to eastern Washington for an interview and farm selection. It was a tough decision. Moving would entail traveling hundreds of miles away from Marjorie's mother and extended family and as well as Richard's Dad; moving the boys to new schools, and entering into a new occupation in an unfamiliar setting. As a team they said, "Yes".

Farm selection included a tour of Block 19 on the one paved road, State Rout 11A (now Rd.170) and traveling across the wheat stubble with stops to check the soil at each farm unit. No canals or other roads were in existence. Resisting the impulse to choose the only unit with an old house and barn (across what would become Basin City), the Rehfeld's first choice was 70 acres of good bottom land along the paved road between what is now Russell and Klamath Roads. They met the criteria and were awarded the prime land they chose. Preparations to make the move began in early spring.

With assistance from Richard's boss/owner of the electrical shop where he worked, the move was made to Mesa, Washington in April, 1956. Temporary housing in Mesa still had silt marks half-way up the windows from the big flood in February. Coming from an area of profuse greenery, it was shock enough to drive Richard to find housing for the farm. He purchased a surplus Navy four-plex in Pasco, and then cut it in two by hand to

sell half to the house mover in order to cover moving expenses. Windows were broken, there was no running water or sewer but it was home on the farm. The lack of sewer was soon taken care of and eventually a cistern for water storage until a well could be drilled.

Richard went to work for two years as a journeyman electrician in Othello braving the daily drive over the un-improved trail between the Bailie ranch and Radar Hill. While he was working, the boys attended schools in Connell and chased water around the unimproved land. 1956 was a test year for the new irrigation canals so water was free and relatively clean, providing a place for swimming (bath time). Marge kept up on dust control in the house while doing laundry and developing low budget casseroles to feed the hungry family.

The Rehfeld home soon became the gathering place for coffee and Marge's fresh oatmeal raisin or chocolate chip cookies. She was the best of hostesses for roundtable discussions that included Erv Easterday, Ed Danz, Nils Allison, Jim Reynolds, Leroy Mills, Wayne Faris and every salesman who knew when it was coffee time at the Rehfelds. Marge was not only a consummate hostess but the best of homemakers and helpmate to Richard. Whether picking rocks out of newly developed fields, making trips to Pasco for parts and supplies, driving tractor, changing siphon tubes, hoeing weeds in the fields or planting herself in a farm ditch break while dirt was shoveled around her; she was always willing and cheerful. Richard and Marge were a team who developed a successful farm operation together.

The roundtable discussions not only honed Richard's growing knowledge of farm operations but were the catalyst for business and community development. Richard was the secretary for a corporation formed to develop commodity shipping facilities at Ringgold if the proposed Ben Franklin dam was built on the Columbia to enable navigable water. The dam was never built so the corporation disbanded. Richard was one of the individuals who grasped Loen Bailie's dream of a city in the sagebrush. He became secretary of the Basin City Development Corporation which installed the first water system, built a stockyard with a scale house for shipping livestock, and built the much needed farm labor housing on Fair Way Road. Richard was recognized by members of the Hispanic community for being fair in dealing with his farm labor and was invited to make presentations at meetings about the proposed housing. As secretary, Richard was responsible for the operation of the housing project which kept him very busy in addition to farming. Always ready to help neighbors with his electrical expertise, it was natural for Richard to obtain a temporary electrical contractors license to wire the Basin Fire Station when it was built.

Although Richard and Majorie were always willing to help neighbors and community, in their spare time they developed a successful diversified farm operation. In addition to following rotation protocols in raising alfalfa, oats, wheat, feed corn, sugar beets, sweet corn, and lima beans they initially raised hogs to feed on corn and sugar beets fields after harvest. That soon entailed too much winter work. Fattening cattle over the winter required a lot less labor with better return. Richard was recognized for his conservation practices by being named 1963 Franklin County Conservation Farmer of the Year. He also was recognized for record yields of fresh lima beans and named Sugar Beet King for high quality beets. One of the last of his generation, Richard was respected by his peers for his abilities and involvement in building a community.

In 1975, Richard and Marge decided to try retirement and leased the operation to Gale Tuttle who eventually purchased the farm which had grown over the years to approximately two-hundred sixty acres. The original house still stands along Road 170 as a testament to the modern pioneers. Richard and Marge spent time on the Washington coast before moving to the southern Oregon coast with winters spent in Arizona. Marge passed away in 1998 at the Pasco home of son Joel. Richard returned to Oregon but eventually moved to a retirement center in Kennewick where he now resides at age 92.