

VITA (2014)

John (Jake) Ferris

Professor Emeritus

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In keeping with the true Land Grant tradition, Dr. Ferris's career has blended extension, on-campus teaching and research with emphasis on agricultural price analysis, outlook and marketing strategies. For many years, he headed the outlook and marketing education programs in Michigan, leading numerous marketing workshops for farmers and making extensive use of the mass media. He provided leadership for four college-wide projects on the long range prospects for rural Michigan. Ferris developed undergraduate and graduate courses on commodity market analysis, the latter leading to the publication of a text book. His research centered on applied econometrics and the formulation of forecasting models.

Background Sketch

Formative years on an Indiana hog-corn farm, 1929 - 1951

B.S. in Agriculture, Purdue University, 1951

M.S. in Agricultural Economics, Cornell University, 1952

U.S. Army, 1953-55

Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University, 1960

Faculty in Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University, 1957-1997

Extension/Outreach

Ferris considered the joint appointment in extension, teaching and research an advantage because of the complementarities among the three areas, each contributing to the other two sectors. For example, the feedback from his stakeholders of farmers, agribusinesses, extension agents, farm organizations, legislators, etc. provided guidance for Ferris's research activity and also furnished ideas for the classroom. In producing over 1000 outlook articles, he wrote a monthly market page for a national livestock magazine for 10 years as well as a state-wide farm publication. While the forecast period was mostly for the next year ahead, his interest in the longer run outlook was enhanced in the early 1960s when asked to provide leadership for a 10 year look ahead for Michigan agriculture and natural resources. This project, which brought together college faculty with rural leaders for a mutually beneficial exchange, was repeated three times in slightly different forms in the ensuing 30 years. His marketing education program featured three day workshops in which more than 8,000 farmers participated over the years.

Teaching

Ferris developed an undergraduate course entitled "Commodity and Futures Marketing." His graduate course, "Commodity Market Analysis," was designed to help students develop analytical skills in applied econometrics. A majority of the students were either foreign or were interested in international development and were encouraged to select a commodity in their country to analyze. Class notes led to a textbook, *Agricultural Prices and Commodity Market*

Analysis, first published by WCB/McGraw-Hill in 1997. The book is in the second printing of the second edition and has received a very favorable review in the *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*.

Research

Supporting his extension activities in short run forecasting of agricultural prices and generating long term projections has been his research in developing and improving econometric/simulation models. Among his contributions to this area of economic analysis has been the rationale for agricultural enterprise gross margins in supply analysis and stochastic forecasting, particularly for crop yields. After several years working with colleagues in the department on developing and marketing an econometric model of U.S. agriculture on a large computer mainframe, he generated a desktop model called AGMOD which he has continued to maintain as a research tool. Since 2005, the model has been the base for three refereed papers on the impact of the expansion in biofuels over a 10 year forecast period. Two of the papers were chapters in books and the other was published in the proceedings of a conference.

International

International experience involved overseas leadership conducting a USDA/MSU project in the U.K. at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne on the impact of enlarging the European Economic Community in 1969-70. Also, Ferris was an active participant in a USAID/MSU project on agricultural development in South Korea in 1971-72.

Consulting

While on the faculty, Ferris consulted with a number of firms and organizations including the Tractor Division of Ford Motor Co., Dominos, and the Michigan sugarbeet and soybean industries. He spent four months in 1973 in Washington D.C. on leave from MSU with President Nixon's "Cost of Living Council." In 1989-1990, he was on sabbatical leave with the Economic Research Service of the USDA, also in D.C. Since retiring from MSU in 1997, he has undertaken projects dealing with the economic impact of TB in the Michigan deer herd and projections of land use by agriculture in the state. From 2005 to 2014, he wrote monthly articles on biodiesel for the web distribution system of Jacobsen Publishing, a private market news firm specializing in prices of by-products of agribusiness.

Publications in 2005 to 2014

"An Econometric Analysis of the Impact of the Expansion in the U.S. Production of Ethanol from Maize and Biodiesel from Soybeans on Major Agricultural Variables, 2005-2015," a chapter in *Agriculture as a Producer and Consumer of Energy* (2005) with Satish Joshi, edited by Joe Outlaw, Keith Collins and James Duffield, CABI Publishing.

"Forecasting World Crop Yields as Probability Distributions" (2006), a contributed paper prepared for presentation at the International Association of Agricultural Economics Conference, Gold Coast, Australia, August 12-18, 2006, AgEconSearch: <http://purl.umn.edu/25649>.

“An Evaluation of the Economic Outlook for Switchgrass as a Feedstock for the Production of Ethanol” (2006), a study funded by General Motors.

“Modeling the U.S. Domestic Livestock Sector in a Period of Rapidly Expanding By-Product Feed Supplies from Ethanol Production” (2006), Staff Paper 2006-34, Department of Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University, AgEconSearch: <http://purl.umn.edu/11628>.

“Agriculture as a Source of Fuel, Prospects and Impacts, 2007 to 2017” (2008) with Satish Joshi in *Biofuels, Food & Feed Tradeoffs*, proceedings of a conference edited by Joe Outlaw, James Duffield and David Ernstes, Oak Brook, IL: Farm Foundation, pp. 112-119.

“The Economics of Converting Switchgrass and Corn Stover to Ethanol” (2009), Power-Point presentation, BBIInternational’s International Biomass Conference and Expo, Portland, OR, April 28-30, 2009.

“Prospects for Ethanol and Biodiesel, 2008 to 2017 and Impacts on Agriculture and Food” (2010) with Satish Joshi in *Handbook of Bioenergy Economics and Policy*, edited by Madhu Khanna, Jurgen Scheffran and David Zilberman, Springer Science+Business Media, LLC.

“The USDA/Land Grant Extension Outlook Program – A History and Assessment” (2010), base document for a Power-Point presentation for the Extension and Senior Section Track Session on the centennial theme of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association at the 2010 annual meeting in Denver, CO on July 25-27, 2010, AgEconSearch: <http://purl.umn.edu/101723>.

“Potential for Corn Oil from Distillers’ Dried Grain and Solubles as a Feedstock for Biodiesel” (2011), Staff Paper 2011-07, Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics, Michigan State University, AgEconSearch: <http://purl.umn.edu/115632>.

“Impacts of the Federal Energy Acts and other Influences on Prices of Agricultural Commodities and Food” (2013), Staff paper 2013-02, Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics, Michigan State University, AgEconSearch: <http://purl.umn.edu/150245>.

“Solving the Ethanol Blend Wall Problem with Biodiesel – A Scenario” (2014), Power-Point Presentation, BBIInternational’s Fuel Ethanol Workshop and Expo, Indianapolis, IN, June 9-12, 2014.

Personal

(To be less formal, Dr. Ferris will become Jake, his long-term nickname.) Jake and his wife, Maxine, met on the campus of Michigan State University after he had joined the faculty and she was finishing her PhD in Communications in 1962. Married in 1964, they made it to their 50th in 2014. Maxine’s career was also in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources where she was a professor and Director of Outreach Communications. They have two sons, Bill born in 1965 and John in 1967. Bill, with an MBA from Duke, has a website marketing program for upscale furniture and is professionally pursuing an acting career living in North Hollywood, CA.

(Bill was with Jacobsen Publishing in 2005 when he asked Jake to write the articles on biodiesel.) John, also with an MBA from the University of Chicago, has been with GM Headquarters and on the team which launched the Chevy Volt. He is married with two children.

Jake's avocation includes travel, genealogy and Michigan State University basketball and football. In the mid 1980s, Jake and Maxine bought their first time-share in Chelsea, a suburb of greater London, England, prompted by their year in the U.K. in 1969-70. Since then, they have added five more, mostly with Marriott, and have traded into 80 different locations in 19 different countries. Jake completed a genealogy of the Ferris line going back 10 generations to a Samuel, a vicar in England living from 1615-1679. His big find was the parents of Samuel who lived in London, and, having a time-share there, he had the opportunity to view their locations.

Following the Spartan basketball and football teams deserves a separate paragraph. Jake being an avid Hoosier basketball fan, especially appreciated the success of this program. Of the seven Final Fours (MSU won two), he and his wife have attended six. On football, Jake and Maxine have been to three Rose Bowls, won two and lost one.

Jake retains strong ties to his Indiana formative years on the family farm and Purdue. Owning a third of the family farm when his mother passed away, he bought the other two-thirds from relatives in 1999. Of course, he is renting it and employs a farm management firm to handle the day to day operation. In any case, this keeps him close to the realities of farm operations.

Community Activities

In 1968, Jake and Maxine, along with six other couples, founded *Michigan Montessori Internationale, Inc*, the first Montessori school in the mid Michigan area and second in the state. Their two sons were in the first and third classes. It has spawned other such programs locally including the public system. Jake has remained on the board of directors since then in spite of repeated efforts on his part to resign – probably over-ridden because of his institutional memory. The school's proudest product is Larry Page, co-founder of Google. His father, Carl, served on the board of directors with Jake.

Jake, a birthright Quaker, grew up in a denomination called the "Christian Church" but did not feel a strong attachment to any one faith. His love of music directed him to the best choir in the Lansing, MI area which was the interdenominational Peoples Church in East Lansing. Maxine and Jake joined the church shortly after they were married and both have served on numerous roles including the Council of Elders. Jake has continued as a member of the choir.

Jake and Maxine are privileged to be able to fund five endowments at Michigan State University. Two support agribusiness activities and study abroad for undergraduates. One is for application of telecommunication technology in developing nations. Another is for undergraduate scholarships with preferences for those enrolling in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources who are also enrolled in the Honors College. The other endowment supports the inter-collegiate Debate Team, which has received high national honors. Both Jake and Maxine were debaters as undergraduates, Jake at Purdue and Maxine at the College of Wooster in Ohio.

Awards

“Distinguished Extension Program Award” presented by the American Agricultural Economics Association, 1975.

“Outstanding Extension Specialist Awards” presented by the Michigan Extension Specialists’ Association (1980) and the Michigan Association of Extension Agents (1991).

“Premiere Forecaster Awards,” nine, presented by the Extension Outlook Committee of the American Agricultural Economics Association, 1989 to 2014.

“Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award” presented by the Michigan Farm Bureau, 1996.

“Certificate of Distinction for Outstanding Service to Agriculture” presented by the Purdue Agricultural Alumni Association, 2007.

“Outstanding Contribution by an Individual” presented by the MSU Faculty Emeriti Association (2008-2009).