

Remembering David C. Morris: A giant of Michigan agriculture

BY RUTH HOHL BORGER

The Michigan agriculture community lost a giant with the passing of David C. Morris of Eagle this spring.

Morris was truly a son of Michigan State University. As a young man, he came to Michigan State College in 1945 to study Agricultural Technology. He left the classroom with more than the knowledge

shared by his professors. He left with an appreciation and value for applied learning, a commitment to community service, a love for Michigan State University and a passionate understanding of the land-grant university mission that is manifested in his life work.

Dave Morris made contributions to agriculture and communities in Michigan



David Morris was a faithful Ag Expo attendee, and bought the last FFA toy tractor at the 2008 ag breakfast.

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as a farmer, a public servant and a philanthropist. Over his 60-plus-year professional career, Morris applied what he learned in MSU's classrooms to build a model agricultural enterprise that was a virtual laboratory for thousands of MSU students, provided pragmatic leadership to national efforts advocating for modern agricultural practices and policy, and wisely stewarded his community as it navigated the delicate balance between rural traditions and urban development.

He and his late wife and business partner, Betty, grew their farm and property from a 245-acre family farm into a thriving enterprise of more than 1,600 acres. Careful stewardship of their land and good business decisions led to their success in their cattle and other livestock operations.

In addition to his own substantial success, Morris worked diligently to ensure the success of his community and Michigan's agriculture industry. He had been a member of the Michigan Farm Bureau since 1950 and served in leadership roles with the organization. He served as an Eagle Township supervisor for 23 years and was an active commissioner for

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Morris

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Clinton County. As a township executive, Mr. Morris demonstrated his dedication to serve the needs of individuals and not the whims of special interests. He consistently was able to take care of the needs of each person by taking a personal interest in trying to help others. In that vein, he established a reputation as a man who made things happen, including the creation of the Looking Glass Regional Fire Authority, a joint fire and emergency medical service long before talk of consolidated services was en vogue.

The capstone to his distinguished career of economic, civic and educational leadership was his generous endowment of faculty chairs and programs in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. His foresight to endow these programs was a fitting act of a man who believed in the promise and potential of future agricultural students and Michigan State University, a man who gave all of us an example of quiet and unconditional leadership and service.

Dave Morris' legacy includes four important program endowments to Michigan State University that will have a tremendous impact on the future of Michigan livestock research, local government policy and agriculture.

- The Betty and David Morris Chair in State and Local Government Finance and Policy is a faculty position funded through both current support and a future endowment that enhances our ability to help state and local governments adapt to change and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government services.
- A livestock research endowment will bring talented graduate students to MSU animal science programs and fund research that will lead to improved livestock and animal health.
- Two other endowments – the Betty and David Morris Endowment for Support of Programs in Communities, Agriculture and Natural Resources and the Betty and David Morris Discretionary Fund in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources – will provide the college, Extension and the Experiment Station the financial flexibility to address critical issues and seize opportunities to create significant impact in commu-

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