

Busey's Steve Myers is Named 2008 Farm Manager of the year

Steve S. Myers, an 18-year veteran at Busey Ag Services, LeRoy, Il, has been named Farm Manager of the Year by the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers. The presentation was made during the ASFMRA Annual Meeting held in November in San Antonio.

“This is quite an honor,” Myers said. “It’s very humbling because there are so many great farm managers out there.”

Myers credits his farm background and currently owning farmland himself with helping him learn how to relate to landowners and farm operators.



Myers is Farm Manager of the Year

Steve Myers (with plaque) was named the 2008 ASFMRA Farm Manager of the Year during the organizations’ annual meeting in San Antonio in November. He was presented with the plaque by Rick Patton, left, publisher of AgProfessional magazine, Rick Rockers, (center) marketing manager for Syngena, and Jerry Warner, AFM, ASFMRA President.

“I pay the bills on my own farm,” he said. “I treat my owners’ farms just like I treat my farm. Whether it’s farmland value going up or down or corn prices going up or down, I think it’s great for those owners to know it affects me directly.”

Steve was raised on a grain and livestock farm in Western Illinois. His passion for agriculture led him to Illinois State University where he graduated with a degree in Agriculture Education. Upon his graduation in 1986, Steve began his career as a vocational education instructor at Blue Ridge High School in Farmer City, Ill. After a couple of years in education, Steve joined the ag retail industry when he became a Crops Specialist and Plant Manager for McLean County Service Company in Bellflower, Ill. In 1990, Steve joined what was then Busey Bank as a professional farm manager. He currently manages more than 15,000 acres for 66 clients. He received his AFM designation in 1996. In addition to professional farm management, Myers is a licensed real estate broker and certified crop advisor.

These experiences have helped Steve serve his client

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mboyd@farmersnational.com

Illinois Chapter Office
Carroll E. Merry
Executive Director

N78 W14573 Appleton Ave.
#287
Menomonee Falls, WI 53051
Phone: 262-253-6902
Fax: 262-253-6903
ISPFMRA@countryside-marketing.com

www.ISPFMRA.org

If you are interested in participating on the Board of Directors or an ISPFMRA Committee, please contact Fred Hepler at winealmds@SBCGlobal.net

Fred Says

by Fred Hepler, AFM, AAC
President
Illinois Society of Professional
Farm Managers and Rural
Appraisers



The year 2008 was a difficult year for American businesses but a great year for agriculture. With unprecedented economic collapses, the freezing/collapsing of the credit market, major swings in commodity markets and a great deal of emphasis over the food-versus-fuel debate, all of which created challenging conditions for world and especially America's farmers.

Add to that the unsettled feelings among most people as to the effect of a new Administration. Plus, as Illinois residents we even have an additional challenge with our own state's administration and leadership. The following headlines were in a recent *Wall Street Journal*:

- Bank of America to get Billions in U.S. Aid
- The Stimulus plan's price tagged near \$850 billion
- Microsoft is Exploring Job Cuts
- Nortel Networks File for Chapter 11
- Smurfit says Bankruptcy is possible
- Motorola to Cut 4,000 More Jobs.....
- Nissan Extends Output Cuts
- Gottschalks is Latest of Retail Casualties (Bankruptcy)
- Growth in World-Wide PC shipments Levels off
- Tiffany's Profit Outlook Weakens
- Barnes & Noble Eliminates 100 Jobs
- Gannett Workers Ordered to Take Week of Unpaid Leave
- Barclays Plans Retail Job Cuts
- Financials Citi, BofA and MetLife Drop

My point in showing this list is to note that not one of the companies mentioned above are a part of the agricultural industry. This is very consistent message if you watch all the business publications. However, if you evaluate agriculture you will find it to be one the most financial stable industries in the world today. It's a great industry to be a part of in today's world and has one of the brightest lights for the future.

As an example to solidify the stability of our industry, you should try to hire a person with solid agricultural management, appraisal, and financial skills. You will find that we have no one looking for jobs in our businesses. Can you recall seeing a news ad concerning an agricultural company cutting back or laying off employees?

Notwithstanding that our nation faces serious challenges and our leaders must deal with those. Our new Congress and the Obama Administration will need to draft proposals that will address the current economic recession and financial climate changes. They also must enact policies on taxes and the environment that will promote economic growth.

Steve Myers is ASFMRA Farm Manager of the Year

(Continued from Page 1.)

base and those within his circle of influence effectively for more than 20 years. His progression from educator to agronomist to farm manager/real estate agent has developed him into one of the most trusted regional experts by colleagues in the industry.

The award is sponsored by ASFMRA, Syngenta, and AgProfessional magazine.

Each year, a panel of judges rate award nominees on client retention, innovative crop production practices, average crop yields and marketing success, involvement in agriculture and non-agriculture service organizations and ability to adapt to changing economic and environmental conditions. Myers award entry rose to the top based on his achievements in each of these categories.

David Klein, a fellow Illinois Chapter member and professional farm manager with Soy Capital Ag Services in Bloomington, Ill., nominated Myers for the award based on a healthy respect for Myers, even though the two are friendly competitors.

“Anyone can go out and write a lease, but few people can positively impact agriculture in the manner in which Steve does,” Klein said.

Other Chapter Members Honored See Page 9

Brent Rockers, marketing manager for Syngenta, said Myers has developed a reputation for hard work, success and innovation, which has led to a deep respect from colleagues, co-workers, clients and the community. This respect makes Myers a “true leader” in the farm management industry.

“Steve Myers is not only an exceptional farm manager, but he’s also a great ambassador for agriculture,” Rockers said. “This industry needs people like Steve who are committed to keeping the passion for agriculture alive for future generations. We are proud to honor him and his accomplishments.”

Myers, a self-described “cows, sows and plows type of guy,” said there’s no other career he’d rather have.

“Agriculture for farmers and farm managers is one of those few jobs where when you look at an entire crop, spring to fall, if I have a career 40 years, I get 40 chances,” he said. “This is something I only get to try about 40 times, and you want to get it right. It’s easy to get amped up because this is something that’s not going to be repeated again.”



Sharing the Honor

With Farm Manager of the Year recipient Steve Myers (second from right) at the ASFMRA meeting in San Antonio are, from left: his parents, Barb and Bob Myers; sons Thomas and Eric; and Kim, his wife.

Steve oversees Busey’s on-farm research program in addition to his farm management and real estate duties. He currently manages approximately 15,000 acres of row crop farmland along with appraising, selling and buying farmland. Steve is fully involved in the crop inspection process throughout the growing season, and he implements economically-proven crop management practices with integrated pest management techniques, including timely fungicide and insecticide applications to enhance returns.

Steve is on several Illinois chapter committees and he was the chairman of the annual meeting in 2007. He also serves on numerous boards and associations. He is on the Illinois State University Ag Alumni board, Illinois Certified Crop Advisor Board and he annually participates in judging FFA and college-level projects. Steve is also a monthly columnist for *Prairie Farmer* magazine in the profit planning section. He has been active in the LeRoy Presbyterian Church, LeRoy youth programs and many other community activities. Steve has also served on the State of Illinois Council for Food and Agriculture Research (C-FAR) Committee.

Steve is the proud husband of Kim Myers, a third grade teacher at LeRoy Elementary School in LeRoy, and the proud father of Eric Myers, 15, and Thomas Myers, 11.

As part of the award, Syngenta donates \$1,000 on behalf of the honoree to an agriculture organization of his choice. Myers’ donation will help fund the building of a greenhouse at LeRoy High School.

2009 Appraisal Education Schedule

APPRREV — Appraisals Through the Eyes of the Reviewer

Description: In order for an appraiser to see the appraisals through the eyes of a reviewer they first need to know what a reviewer's role and responsibilities are. The course will explain who appraisal reviewers are and what appraisal reviewers do. It will also explain why appraisal reviews are completed and what appraisal reviewers can and can't do. It will explain an appraisal reviewer's qualifications, the different types of appraisal reviews, discuss the common appraisal errors, and what appraisers can do to avoid issues on appraisal reviews.

Date/Time: **May 5**, 8 am-5 pm

Location: 1st Farm Credit Building 2200 Jacobssen Dr., Normal, IL

Instructor: Jim Cannon, ARA

Fee: \$215 member / \$295 non-members

Approved for 7 hours CE

7-Hour National USPAP Update Course (A-114)

Description: This constantly evolving seminar keeps appraisers up-to-date with the latest revisions and changes to the Uniformed Standard of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP) as adopted by the Appraisal Standards Board (ASB).

Topics: In the morning session, USPAP changes recently adopted by the ASB will be discussed. In the afternoon session you will be afforded the opportunity to apply this information by case study, critique, and discussion of an agricultural appraisal report.

Note: Attendees do receive a copy of USPAP.

Date/Time: **May 6**, 8 am-5 pm

Location: 1st Farm Credit Building 2200 Jacobssen Dr., Normal, IL

Instructor: Jim Cannon, ARA

Fee: \$150 member / \$175 non-members

Approved for 7 hours CE

Date/Time: **June 2**, 8 am-5 pm

Location: Parkland College, Nolen Ag. Building, Champaign, IL

Instructor: Andy Brorsen, ARA

Fee: \$150 member / \$175 non-members

Approved for 7 hours CE

Register today!

Member Non-Member

APPRREV -- Appraisals Through the Eyes of the Reviewer

May 5, Normal – Member \$215/Non-member \$295 _____

7-Hour National USPAP Update Course (A-114)

May 6, Normal – Member \$150/Non-member \$175 _____

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“Volunteers” Needed for Congress Roles

While the number of members who have stepped forward to participate in the IFMA17 Congress is good, there are still a handful of spots that are open and need to be filled.

“We got very good turnout at our meeting after the Annual Meeting in Decatur, but we still need more help,” says Bob Swires, ISPFMRA Director of IFMA17. “We need at least one Chapter member on each of the tour buses to act as a guide and to answer questions that come up as the buses roll. It would be very helpful if these individuals would be familiar with the area through which the coaches will drive. You just know there are going to be questions about the terrain, land values, types of farming, costs of inputs, yields, and so on. There will be some areas where our guests will be surprised to see oil pumps working in the fields. Those will surely draw questions.”

“Based on my experience at the Congress in Ireland, this can be one of the most fun jobs of the entire Congress,”

says Ray Brownfield, ASFMRA Director of IFMA. “This is where you get the real chance to get to know these people who have come, literally, from around the world to find out about agriculture in the United States. And they will ask questions because they are here to learn and want to take home with them as much as they can.”

“The job of the Hotel Hosts are to be at the respective properties and to direct our guests on how to get on the shuttles to get to and from the ISU campus as well as the other activities. These people will need to help make sure that people get to ISU on time, particularly on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, for the tours. The tours won’t all leave at the same time, which means the guests will need to know when to leave the hotels to get to the departure point at the campus,” he says. Hotel Hosts do not have to stay at the hotels, but they will be required to be there early every morning. “This is a great job for some of our Bloomington/Normal-area locals who don’t mind getting up early on those mornings and going to the respec-

Help Wanted

Bus Hosts/Guides

Responsible for being host on a Day Tour motor coach on Tuesday and Thursday of the Congress. Needs to be familiar with the area the bus will travel through and is in charge of head counts each time the bus loads and unloads. Will be asked to help distribute information to passengers, provide narrative about what passengers are seeing as they travel, and answer general questions that may come up. Not necessary to handle any money.

Needed for:

Tours 1/9 -- 2 needed -- Stops at Twin Groves Wind Farm east of Bloomington, Pioneer Hi-Bred facilities in Princeton, Knobloch Farms (near Bradford).

Tours 2/10 -- 1 needed -- Stops at Arlen & Greg Ruestman Farm (on Hwy. 17 east of Varna), Pioneer Hi-Bred facilities in Princeton, Reeves Farms (near I-55 at Towanda).

Tours 3, 11 -- 2 needed -- Stops at Bittner Farms (east of CIRA Airport), Monsanto Learning Center at Monmouth, and Ropp Jersey Cheese, NW of Normal on Ropp Road.

Tours 4, 12 -- 2 needed -- Stops at Rother Farm (near Tremont), Monsanto Learning Center at Monmouth, and National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research in downtown Peoria.

Iceman

1 needed. Work with partner early on mornings of July 21 and 23 to pick up ice from local supplier, bottled water from Chateau, and stock coolers on buses. Will likely want to have a pickup truck between the two. Need to be available to empty and gather coolers when buses return both evenings. Can certainly take part in day tours once work is done in the mornings.

Hotel Hosts

4 needed, one each at Holiday Inn Express Inn and Suites (across from CIRA airport), Crowne Plaza (old Holiday Inn on North Business 51), DoubleTree, and ISU Residents Halls. Act as general information guides at hotels to direct people on shuttle schedules to get to and from ISU for registration on Sunday and Monday, to and from Miller Park on Sunday night, to ISU on Monday morning, and to proper buses for tours on Tuesday and Thursday. Not necessary to handle any money.

Spouse Tour Hostesses

2 needed. Will act as hostesses for spouses taking local tours on Monday and Wednesday. Should know local area and be able to provide local ‘color’ if possible. Will be responsible for head counts on buses at all stops and to assist where needed with answering any questions. Not necessary to handle any money.

tive properties. Arrangements have been made with the hotels to have information desks set up in their lobbies for IFMA17 staff. Bus shuttle schedules will also be at the hotels, so people can get an idea of what time they need to get on the buses to get to the ISU campus.”

Spouse Tour Hostesses

“The hostesses for the spouse’s tours should also have a great experience,” Swires continues. “Not only will they have a chance to show off their communities, but likely will make some great, life-long, international friendships. These tours are on Monday and Wednesday while the regular Congress sessions are underway.”

“We know it’s difficult for people to give up this kind of time in the middle of summer,” Brownfield continues. “But this really is an opportunity of a lifetime to meet these foreign and domestic guests and to show off to them our communities and agriculture. To spread the pride.”

Sorry, It’s Not Free...

“We would love to be able to offer free passes to all our volunteers, but we have to cover our costs for the Congress, so there is a very much-reduced registration fee for our volunteer members, and some perks on the side. The registration fee will be \$280 and will be handled separately from the regular registration of the Congress. You’ll get special forms and everything,” Swires says.

“As in the case of the two Ice Men and the Hotel Hosts, once their work is done early in the morning, they are encouraged to hop on a motor coach and take the tours along with everyone else. And, of course, all the regular Congress meals are covered. We are also inviting them to bring their spouse, or significant other, to the Thursday evening banquet as special guests of the Congress. And that is shaping up to be a really fun event. The only thing I can tell you about it is bring your dancing shoes!!” Brownfield adds.

And, of course, all volunteers are encouraged to attend all the presentations on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at the ISU campus.

He went on to explain that volunteers will be provided with an IFMA17 summerweight vest to wear when they are “on duty”. “That way our guests will always be able to identify an IFMA17 host. Extra vests will be available at cost to anyone who wants more than one.

Most volunteer time will not last through the duration of the Congress. “Once we get past the shuttle bus routines, getting around the meetings rooms at ISU, and the first day of tours, we would hope that most people would understand the routines and be able to manage on their own,” Swires noted. “We will likely have little need for

volunteers past Wednesday at the campus. The exception to that will be the Day Trip coaches on Thursday. Again, since the buses are not all leaving at the same time, we will want our Hotel Hosts in place to expedite people getting onto the shuttles to the Campus on time.

Visit the Web Site

“As much as we can talk about the Congress and all the activities involved, there is so much more available on the web site. There are pages and pages of information about the Congress. I encourage all our members to visit the site and become familiar with what the Congress is all about,” Brownfield stresses. Visit www.ifma17.org

“This truly is a once-in-a-career opportunity for us to show off to the world. The only other time a Congress was held in the United States was in 1986. The Congresses are held every other year and the next one will be in New Zealand in 2011. The 2013 Congress will be in Poland. It truly is an international event.

“We’ve been working on this project for over five years, and the amount of planning and detail that has gone into is almost overwhelming,” Swires says. “I can’t begin to stress enough what a tremendous opportunity it is to be part of this event.

“To be with these international visitors is great enough. Add into that the program and the speakers who will be making presentations here, and the media coverage this event is going to bring to the Illinois Chapter.....it’s an opportunity that none of us should pass up.”

The Generals

Once the basic program for the Congress had been put into place, a virtual ‘chain of command’ was established for the actual running of the Congress and “Generals” were selected to run various elements of the program. Details and management of their particular assignments are being handed over to them and they, ultimately, will make the day-to-day decisions on how things will actually happen on the days of the Congress. All are either regular or Friends members of the Illinois Chapter.

Pre-Congress Tour -- Don and Doris Cochran

Volunteers -- Norbert Soltwedel

Transportation -- Roger Hayworth

Speaker Arrangements -- Kim Morton

Media Relations -- Colleen Callahan

Academic -- Harold Guither

Post-Congress Tour -- Phyllis Parks and Joe Daughhetee

“I don’t think I can stress enough what a tremendous experience this Congress will be, “ says Brownfield, who has attended three such events in the past. “If you don’t sign up as a volunteer, for goodness sake, register to attend as a regular delegate. You will never regret it. It is an opportunity of a lifetime.”



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We would like to acknowledge our commercial sponsors whose support has greatly enriched the programs of the Illinois Society of Professional Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers:

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Trisler Seed Farms

More Congratulations to Eberle, Hacker

Illinois Chapter Members Phil Eberle, Ph. D., and Jeff Hacker, ARA, received special recognition during the ASFMRA conference in San Antonio in November.

Eberle, and his co-author Russ Wallace, were recipients of the **2008 Golden Quill Award** for the outstanding article in the *Journal of the American Society of Farm Management and Rural Appraisal*.



Phil Eberle, Ph. D.

The article titled “Recreational Leases as Means to Increase Landowner Income” was a result of a survey of Illinois professional farm managers regarding recreational leases held by their clients. Information was collected on lease rates, recreational uses, wildlife types, land management practices, and

property characteristics. Results indicated that 38 percent of managers had recreational leases on about 6 percent of their managed properties. Lease rates ranged from \$1 to \$75 per acre. Adoption of land management practices and location within state were factors that positively affected lease rates.

In accepting the award Eberle expressed his appreciation for the cooperation and participation he received from members of the Illinois Chapter in conducting the study. The study was funded by the Illinois Council on Food and Agriculture Research (C-FAR).

Phillip Eberle was raised on a farm in eastern Washington and received a B.A. degree from Whitworth College in Spokane. He then served as an agricultural extension agent as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Afghanistan. After his volunteer service, he received an M.A. in Agriculture Economics from Washington State University then a doctorate in economics from Iowa State University. He has since been on the faculty of Agribusiness Economics at Southern Illinois University Carbondale where his research and teaching interests are related to farm management and real estate valuation.

Since 2005, Phil has been involved in three agricultural development projects in Afghanistan. He also serves as President of L&A Farms, a family farm corporation.

His co-author, Russ Wallace, is a long-time resident of southern Illinois. After four years of military service, Russ attended Southern Illinois University where he obtained a B.S. in Geography/Environmental Planning and an M.S. in Agribusiness Economics. Past employment includes positions as an environmental technician, Illinois certified residential real estate appraiser and a survey worker. Currently, Russ resides in Little Rock, Arkansas,

where he is employed as an economist with the Army Corps of Engineers Environmental and Planning Branch.

Hacker Receives ARA Designation

1st Farm Credit Services’ Jeff Hackers was among those receiving professional designations at the San Antonio meeting.

Hacker is senior appraiser with the company’s office in Bourbonnais. He joined the Illinois Chapter and ASFMRA in 2006 and has worked in the appraisal field for more than 22 years.

Hacker graduated from the University of Illinois with a degree in agricultural industries. He previously received a Senior Residential Appraiser designation from the Appraisal Institute.

Special congratulations to both of these Illinois Chapter members.



Jeff Hacker, ARA

New, Expanded Membership Directory Now Available

Expanded versions of the ISPFMRA Membership Directory will be mailed to members and others affiliated with the industry beginning February 20.

“We’ve taken the basic membership directory and expanded it to include the list of committee chairs for the year as well as a more detailed calendar of Chapter meetings as well as those of associated industries, such as the REALTORS® Land Institute,” explains Chapter President Fred Hepler. “Many of our members have cross-over relationships with groups such as RLI and we feel it is a service of the Chapter to provide the service.”

“We traditionally mail copies of the directory to a number of organizations around the state, and we are doing that again this year,” Hepler explains. “In addition, if any members wants copies for their own complimentary distribution, they can obtain them at no charge through the Chapter offices.”

Hepler went on to note that now that the directory information has been updated, every effort is being made to bring the Web site listings up-to-date as well. “It’s no small task making all the changes to telephone numbers and, specifically, e-mail addresses that get changed throughout the year. People always forget to tell us about e-mail address changes, and it is now the primary medium for communications for so many of us.”

Annual Meeting To Be at Peoria's Pere Marquette Hotel in September

September 24 and 25 have been selected as the 'tentative' dates for the Chapter's Annual Meeting according to meeting Chairperson Tim Harris, AFM, with Capital Agricultural Property Services, based in Princeton.

"We say 'tentative' because the planning committee will be meeting at the end of February to determine the content of the actual program. This will have been a very, very busy year for the Chapter and at this time we have not as yet decided if we are going to go with a single-day meeting, or keep the traditional day-and-a-half," he explains.



Tim Harris, AFM "We will announce our plans to the entire membership once we have met," he says. "For sure, though, we will be at the Pere Marquette, which is right downtown.

"It's a beautiful, old hotel and has all the features and amenities we need for our meetings. It also is offering very special rates for sleeping rooms for our members as well as for our meeting space and meal functions. And, there is free parking!

"All in all, it's a real win-win for our members. We will be making a broadcast announcement to all our members as soon as we have decided on program dates and content," Harris states.

Annual Land Values Program Set for March 18, 19 in Morris

Jennifer's Garden in Morris will again be the site for the annual Illinois Land Values Conference, which will be held March 18 and 19, says Winnie Stortzum, ARA, one of the two co-chairs planning the event.

This is the fourth year the Conference has been held at the Morris location. "It's a convenient location for many to get to," add Brian Duke, AFM, Stortzum's 'partner' in planning the event. "We've discovered in the past that we get good participation from Chicago and its surrounding counties, particularly when we offer a day of education for realtors."

Which is what the conference will feature this year. The first day is given over to two 3-hour elective courses for real estate licences sponsored by the Illinois Association of REALTORS®. The first program is "Using Technology to Better Serve Customers" and the second is "Consumer-Centric Real Estate Web Sites." Both are being taught by Bill Schiller, ABR, CRS, SRI, TECS, -PRO, GREEN. There will be exams following each presentation and a networking reception starting at 5:30 p.m.

Mark Your Calendars

March

- 18-19 Illinois Land Values Conference, Morris, IL
- 26-27 RLI National Land Conference, Nashville, TN

May

- 11-16 NAR Mid-Year Meeting, Washington, D.C.

June

- 15-19 ASFMRA Summer Education Week, Des Moines, IA

July

- 19-24 IFMA17, Bloomington/Normal

August

- 25-27 Farm Progress Show, Decatur

September

- 24-25 2009 Annual Meeting, Pere Marquette Hotel, Peoria (Dates tentative)

October

- 25-31 ASFMRA 2009 Annual Meeting, Denver, CO

November

- 11-16 RLI National Convention, San Diego

The second day of the Conference will feature three presentations. The first, "Farmland Values and Recent Economic Conditions," will be presented by David Oppedahl, business economist in the economic research department at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago.

That program will be followed by "2008 Farm Bill: What It Means to Illinois Farmers," presented by Doug Yoder, senior director of Marketing and Affiliate Management for the Illinois Farm Bureau.

The last presentation will be on the 2008 Farmland Values and Lease Trends report which will be delivered by Bob Swires, AFM, and Gary Schnitkey, Ph. D. All attendees will be give a copy of the Report.

The day will conclude with a noon luncheon.

Individuals can register to attend either day, or both, depending on their interests. Registration deadline is March 10. Complete information is available on the Chapter Web site at www.ispfmra.org.

Fred Says

(Continued from Page 2)

In doing so, they also have opportunities to put policies in place on issues such as energy, immigration, taxes and infrastructure to make us a stronger nation in the long run.

2009 will clearly present more challenges to the American economy and to all industries including agriculture, but these challenges are not insurmountable. We have to be concerned about the future of the new Farm Bill. When we are looking at a possible one Trillion Dollar total expenditure for "Bailouts" before we stop handing out money, it is really concerning about how it will be repaid. Obviously, the administration in all of their wisdom will look to the "few" successful industries from which they can cut spending and re-allocate the funds to a more "needy" cause like the airlines, banks, and car companies. Do you suppose that we could receive a "Bailout" if we failed as an industry?

When Congress and the administration propose and enact new laws and regulations to deal with our nation's challenges we, as a professional society, must put forth a lot of effort to ensure those new measures do not threaten farmers' and ranchers' profitability. We need to be a leading force in our industry to capitalize on these opportunities to build a strong agricultural economy. Our Governmental Relations committee met at the roundtable session in Springfield this past month. We only had two members represent our association. I am at fault as well as all other members who didn't attend because I ended up with a travel conflict. My point is that we as members need to be active in our local areas as well as at the state level to do our part to support the future of our industry. 2009 will bring "change" as we all heard during the past months of campaigning. We should not place our heads in the sand and let life-changing events take place without at least an attempt to make certain the proposed policies and regulations of that change are in the best interest of agriculture.

Meanwhile, here at home...

...we all have reason to take particular pride in being part of the Illinois Chapter. As you've seen from our Cover Story, our own Steve Myers, from Busey Bank in LeRoy, was named ASFMRA Farm Manager of the Year at the organization's annual meeting in San Antonio in November. Congratulations, Steve. It was just a few months earlier that our own Rich Grever, with Hertz Farm Management in DeKalb, was named the 2007 recipient of this high honor. To have back-to-back recipients of this high award says a lot for the dynamics and professionalism of the membership of this Chapter.

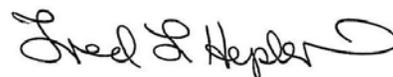
Special Congratulations as well to our own Phil Eberle and Jeff Hacker. The story of their achievement is part of this newsletter on page 9.

The first part of our Chapter's fiscal year is always somewhat of a "quiet" time except for those dedicated commit-

tee chairpersons who take charge and move forward. Bob Swires' team is working very diligently on the land values information. Winnie Stortzman and Brian Duke have a tremendous program in place for the Land Values Conference in Morris on March 18 and 19. They have educational offerings the day before that will most definitely be valuable to all members. I understand that Tom Wiggins and his crew are continuing their great success in acquiring sponsorship. Dave Ragan has several appraisal offerings in the works and I am hoping that Pat Harrington will have a Management Education offering as well. I am not intentionally overlooking all the other committee members and chairpersons who are working hard as well. These committees are the back bone and the "nuts and bolts" of your organization.

What a great time to be in agriculture. In 35 years as a professional in this industry, I have never experienced the volatility in commodities, land values, crop inputs, and the cost of money as we are experiencing today. But in a nutshell, one of the most meaningful attributes of this business is "NO two years are ever the same." Therefore, we should be as prepared as any professional of any other industry to turn these challenges in to opportunities. Let your society leadership team know how we can help you better prepare to meet those challenges.

Best Regards,



Fred L. Hepler
President

Welcome New Members

Collins, Jean
Friends
Liggett Heritage
25 Greenbrier Road
Westport, CT 06880
203-221-7692 - p
jecl2648@aol.com

Leupold, Wayne
Friends
4610 Norsaw Court
Greensboro, NC 27410
336-282-7450 - p
336-996-8445 - f