



Hall of Fame

Class VII





NATIONAL
Watermelon
ASSOCIATION



Honoring

Furman Hamilton Dicks, III

Barnwell, South Carolina
and
Tom Vincent

Laurel, Delaware

Mr. Furman Hamilton Dicks III



Hamilton Dicks III was born September 2nd, 1936 and raised in Dunbarton, SC which is now the home of the U. S. Department of Energy's Nuclear Facility. His family relocated to Barnwell, SC in the 1950's. Hamilton grew up working in agriculture with his father and watermelons became a center point for F. H. Dicks Company in 1935. Hamilton began attending the NWA convention at a very young age. Hamilton's father, F.H. Dicks Jr., served as President of the National Watermelon Association in 1962 and 1963.

Hamilton graduated from the University of South Carolina in the very 1st Class of Banking and Finance in 1958. While attending college, he served in the ROTC followed by two years active duty as a Naval Officer based in Norfolk, VA. He returned to South Carolina to work for the South Carolina National Bank in the Trust department. He later went on to become a General Contractor for more than 25 years completing commercial and residential properties. He remained close to agriculture throughout those years, always pausing to help his family during watermelon season.

After retiring from construction, his sole focus became agriculture. Hamilton and Hammy began a greenhouse operation, bee keeping, and Hamilton joined Hammy on the road following the watermelon crop. F.H. Dicks Company later partnered with Lawrence J Lapide Inc. and Richard Chastain Watermelon Sales to form Melon 1. Hamilton served as the President of the South Carolina Watermelon Association in 1991 and 1992. He currently serves as Treasurer of the South Carolina Watermelon Association and has for the last 30 years, since 1993. He has served as an Elder for the Barnwell Presbyterian Church, served on the Barnwell County Council, and served as Chairman of the Barnwell County Nursing Home Board. He was instrumental in getting a new nursing home built in Barnwell County. He served 40 years as Trustee for the Ellenton Ag Club and is still a faithful member.

Hamilton has two children, Hamilton Dicks IV, and Allison D. Forehand. He has three wonderful granddaughters, Caity, Emily, and Anna. He and his wife Linda Birt Dicks have been married for 42 years. In January of 2020, Hamilton and Linda lost their beloved dog, "Melon," who is still greatly missed. Hamilton and his new dog "Beau" still go to the office every day. He keeps a watchful eye on the stock market while overseeing their South Carolina farm operations. Hamilton also enjoys cheering on his beloved South Carolina Gamecocks. He loves spending time with friends and family around a great meal, an occasional glass of "Old Forester" or maybe a big bowl of ice cream!

Mr. Tom Vincent



Tom Vincent was born in Laurel, Delaware on May 9, 1934. Although he grew up farming alongside his father and grandfather, he was known for saying, "I'm not gonna spend my life staring at the back end of a mule." His true passion was woodworking. He became a cabinet maker by trade in the mid 1950's, and a true craftsman in the 60's. He was a perfectionist. Every miter had to be square and every door had to be true. He enjoyed the work but respiratory issues caused by workshop air, thick with saw dust, prompted him that a career-change would eventually be needed. Thus began his road back to agriculture.

Tom and his wife, Carole, bought a 40 acre farm and started the family in the watermelon business in 1978. From that humble beginning, and with the help of his two sons, Clay and Ray, Vincent Farms grew substantially over the years. He joined his sons on the farm full time in 1994. Tom could always be found in the watermelon fields, checking on the crops and the harvesters. Despite retiring from carpentry, he returned from time to time over the years to build packing sheds for the Southern Delaware Truck Growers Association, otherwise known as the Laurel Auction Block.

He was an active member of both the Mar-Del Watermelon Association and the National Watermelon Association and served on the boards of both organizations. Tom and Carole started attending NWA conventions in the early 1990's. He was elected to the executive committee for the NWA before moving to the executive council for a combined 28 years of service. While Tom enjoyed his time at the executive committee meetings, his favorite part of the convention was the annual auction. He would write down the bid price of EVERY item so that he could total the proceeds himself and not have to wait for the closing banquet for the final tally. Tom truly loved the NWA. He attended many of the fall meetings and every national convention while he served on the board. He looked forward to the watermelon family reunion each year and often invited family members and friends to accompany him.

Tom always stressed the importance of maintaining their family and the farm. He, with his wife, also believed in being actively involved in their local and agricultural communities. Through participation in the Mar-Del Watermelon Association, the National Watermelon Association, Delaware 4-H, the Sussex County Farm Bureau, and the Delaware Vegetable Growers Association, they sought to instill these same values in their three children. Over the years, they were recognized for their contributions to these organizations. If you were lucky, you would catch the brief, small smile flashing across Tom's face showing his appreciation. Tom never sought the spotlight. He was quiet, deliberate; he went about his work knowing there was value in a job well done.

As the years passed, he was able to see his grandchildren begin to take on major responsibilities in the family operation. They helped him in the wood shop, rode with him through the watermelon fields, and gave him a good excuse to sneak into town for milkshakes. His grandchildren knew Grandad as a kind-hearted man with an unwavering dedication to his work. Tom saw his grandchildren working the same land as both of his grandfathers as a great blessing and evidence of God's grace on his life.

The Inaugural Class

B.G. Anderson · Eustis, Florida
Tom Ayooob · Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Bob Bloebaum · Clermont, Florida
Percy Bunch · Murfreesboro, North Carolina
John Campbell · Lakeland, Florida
Nancy Childers · Morven, Georgia
Oren Childers · Cordele, Georgia
John Cooper · Centre, Alabama
E.H. Dicks, Jr. · Barnwell, South Carolina
Bob Deitz · Chicago, Illinois
J.B. Easterlin · Montezuma, Georgia
Gordon Etheridge · Raleigh, North Carolina
Gerald Funderburk · Jefferson, South Carolina
W.W. "Coonbottom" Glenn · Marianna, Florida

Al Harrison · Nogales, Arizona
Vern Highley · Fresno, California
Josephine Hughes · Houston, Texas
Dallas Jones · Clermont, Florida
Bill Knowles · Leesburg, Florida
Harmon R. Lawson · Morven, Georgia
Buddy Leger · Cordele, Georgia
J.D. Lowe, Jr. · Henderson, Texas
Wallace Luffman · Salisbury, Maryland
Ralph Meitin · Zellwood, Florida
Howard Sorrells · Arcadia, Florida
Vincent 'Jim' Vitale · Detroit, Michigan
C.C. Winkler · Vincennes, Indiana
Ernie Zaferis · Los Angeles, California

Our Founding Fathers

Capt. E. Bell · Trenton, Florida
David Brown · Albany, Georgia
Mercer Brown · Albany, Georgia
B.J. Christman · Atlanta, Georgia
Ike Cohn · Chicago, Illinois
S.G. Gay · Trenton, Florida
Frank H. Johnson · Hilton, New York
E.H. Kalmon · Albany, Georgia
James Leonard · Cincinnati, Ohio

Henry Mabbett · Quitman, Georgia
J.A. Murrell · McIntosh, Florida
Robert H. Pennington · Evansville, Indiana
D.H. Gilbert · Monticello, Florida
Fuller Groover · Quitman, Georgia
W.A. Gulledege · Verbena, Alabama
V.L. Hansen · Chicago, Illinois
R.L. Higgs · Fitzgerald, Georgia
O.K. Jelks · Quitman, Georgia

Class III

Matt Dietz · Laredo , Texas
Arnold Mack · Lake Wales, Florida
Bruce Price · Hinton, Oklahoma

Class IV

Charlie Lankford · Knox City, Texas
Art Perry · Manteca, California

Class V

Anita Field · Indianapolis, Indiana
Ross Deal · Northwest Florida

Class VI

Dean Leire · Woodland, California



The National Watermelon Association has stood the test of time for 108 years. With its beginning in March of 1914, eighteen (18) people assembled in Atlanta, Georgia with an idea to come together to expand watermelon's horizons. Today we assemble to honor two individuals who have led, supported and taken great care of the Association across many years of service.

We all stand at the convention to congratulate these inductees. They have played a huge roll in the success of the Association, and for that commitment we place their names into the highest honor that we can bestow. The honorees will forever be known as members in the National Watermelon Association Hall of Fame.