

Lifelong Dickerson grain farmer chosen for Master Farmer Award

By Ike Wilson News-Post Staff | Posted: Thursday, March 20, 2014 2:00 am

DICKERSON — After a short stint in the Army, Charles “Jamie” Jamison began to farm in 1969 after returning from Vietnam. Today, the Dickerson grain farmer and three sons plant corn, soybeans and wheat on 5,000 acres in Frederick and Montgomery counties.

Jamison, a former board member of the National Corn Growers Association and former treasurer of the Maryland Grain Producers Association, was chosen recently for the Mid-Atlantic Master Farmer Award. He will be inducted into the 81st class of Master Farmers, a career achievement honor dating back to 1927, during an awards luncheon March 31 at the Sheraton Harrisburg/Hershey Hotel in Harrisburg, Pa.

Selection for the Mid-Atlantic Master Farmer program is based on nominations and completion of an application documenting the individual’s success in farming, resource stewardship and community leadership.

The program is co-sponsored by Cooperative Extension of Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and West Virginia, along with American Agriculturist magazine.

“It’s a prestigious honor,” Jamison said, “and to even be nominated, much less selected, I’m very fortunate to be able to be thrown in that company.

“When you look at the other award recipients’ accomplishments, it’s really quite an honor. I never thought I’d be nominated for anything like that. I just wanted to be successful.”

Jamison is one of three new additions to the 665 men and women who have received the Master Farmers award since 1927.

The award notwithstanding, the seasoned farmer is not about to rest on his laurels.

“You still got to keep learning and looking and moving,” Jamison said. “I plan on being here a good while.”

Jamison and sons Joseph, 36, Patrick, 34, and Michael, 33, as well as Kathy, his wife of 38 years, run the family enterprise.

“They’re motivated,” he said. “They want to push and do and move. They’re always looking and analyzing. One of them is installing a GPS on a tractor that’s so sophisticated, I don’t know even how to start the damn thing.

“I support technology on the farm, but I don’t understand it.”

But technology is the future of agriculture, Jamison said.

“That is the direction we have to go; it saves seeds, and the objective is to get more yield at less cost,” he said.

Jamison may not be as tech-savvy as his sons, said John Vogel, editor of American Agriculturalist magazine, co-sponsor of the award. “But he’s tough to separate from his iPhone and general management oversight of Charles T. Jamison and Sons. He and his wife, Kathy, shadow decisions made by their junior partners.”

Agriculture is full of twists and turns that require that you stay abreast of what’s happening in the industry, Jamison said, and that’s what keeps it fun.

A changing industry

When Jamison was growing up, this region was all dairy farms. Today, many farm operations are focused on growing crops, he said.

But Jamison wondered at what point is there a saturation of crop farming.

He has read that U.S. vegetable consumption exceeds the amount grown stateside, he said.

“I have no problems with Mexico growing our vegetables, but is there an opportunity for people to grow some here?”

Smithfield Foods, one of America’s largest food companies, now has Chinese owners, and the question becomes what lens are they viewing U.S. agriculture through, Jamison said.

“Whether we like it or not, this is a world economy,” he said. “And if food is coming into America from Brazil, will it be cheaper or more expensive?”

Jamison offers these words of caution to young people considering a career in agriculture: No matter the profession, you must work long and hard. Agriculture is not a 40-hour-week vocation, he said.

He would also share this quote from Dick Waybright with future farmers: “Change is inevitable. Success is optional.”

Jamison credits his wife for the farm’s success.

“I got a good one when I got this one,” he said of his wife. “We couldn’t have had the level of success from a business standpoint without her. It’s been a team effort. She did no field work, but, boy, she handled all the paperwork that comes with farming, and she’s been a great mother to our children.”

Over the years, he has been lucky to associate with great people with whom he could trade ideas, Jamison said.

“That was no planning on my part, it just worked out that way,” he said.

Follow Ike Wilson on Twitter: @ikewilson99.

Know of a person who would make a good Slice? If so, please send your suggestions to citydesk@newspost.com or call us at [301-662-1178](tel:301-662-1178) and ask for a city editor.