Enjoying The Change of Seasons

Melea Reicks Licht
Bill LaGrange always considered that his work as an Extension food scientist was, at its core, about helping people do their jobs to their utmost ability.

“I loved working with people in processing plants, regulatory agencies and scientific organizations related to the food industry. Plus, those flavor evaluations at 10 a.m. at Sara Lee’s plant in New Hampton was icing on the cake,” he says with a smile.

For four decades LaGrange offered extension programs to help with food safety, regulatory requirements, quality testing methods, product packaging and facility management.

“I worked with everyone from the food plant executives to the folks cleaning the floors,” he says.

LaGrange (’53 dairy industry, PhD ’59 food microbiology) helped the Iowa food processing industry change, as consolidation became the norm and the number of facilities in Iowa decreased. The remaining plants increased in processing capacity and product volume.

As the industry changed, so did his department. The Department of Dairy Industry became the Department of Dairy and Food Industry, then Food Technology, and finally the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition, which it remains today.

“In addition to dairy facilities my clientele included large plants manufacturing foods like BBQ sauce, cookies and potato chips,” he says.

LaGrange was involved with the Institute of Food Technologists, of which he was named fellow; the Iowa State Dairy Association; The International Association for Food Protection; and the FFA. He also worked as a consultant in Brazil, Ireland and Australia.

Iowa State campus had always been familiar to LaGrange. He grew up accompanying his father and namesake to the Iowa State livestock farms. The eldest

LaGrange was a professor of animal husbandry at Iowa State College.

LaGrange says he considered following in his father’s footsteps but thought majoring in dairy industry was a better fit since he had “no real farm experience other than hoeing and detassling corn.”

Today at 80, he runs four miles three times a week and plays tennis as often. He is an accomplished stained glass artist. LaGrange also is an active member of several Ames community organizations including Rotary, Ames Historical Society, Ames Trees Forever, the Ames Foundation and the Ames Public Arts Commission.

LaGrange shared his Iowa State experiences as part of the college’s 150th anniversary and his experiences at working at Moore’s Dairy in Ames in 1950. Read his essays online.

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Variations on Orange Sherbet
From the kitchen of: Bill LaGrange

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