

ABE@Illinois

Agricultural and Biological Engineering Alumni Newsletter. Spring 2009

SPRING 2009

Rausch Travels to Brazil with ACES Academy for Global Engagement

Kent Rausch, Ph.D. '93 AgE, an associate professor in the Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, was a member of the 2008 class in the ACES Academy for Global Engagement.

"The premise of the Academy is to help new to mid-career faculty prepare for life-long engagement in the global arena," said Rausch. The Academy provides new opportunities for faculty to become involved in international activities with the hope of increasing the number of faculty who participate in those activities.

One faculty member from each department in the College of ACES, as well as a representative from University of Illinois Extension, is nominated by their department head and chosen to participate in the year-long program. Rausch's class included Nicki Engeseth, Food Science and Human Nutrition; Miguel Gómez, Agricultural and Consumer Economics; Angela Kent, Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences; Kris Lambert, Crop Sciences; David Miller, Animal Sciences; and Michelle Norris, U of I Extension.

Throughout the year, the members learned about international resources available on campus, and traveled to Chicago to visit various international businesses as well as the Chicago Board of Trade. The purpose of these visits, was to learn about the international resources available, not just on campus, but in the state and the nation, that will enhance their teaching, research and extension missions.

"We were also able to visit several agencies in Washington, DC," said Rausch, "such as the United States Agency for International

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Mato Grosso. “Mato Grosso could be called the ‘Illinois’ of Brazil,” said Rausch. “It’s in the center of South America, and it’s the largest flatland in the world. Mato Grosso is the top Brazilian producer in soy, cotton, sunflower, and cattle and it’s also a major producer of corn, pork, poultry, and wood.” Since 1980, Mato Grosso has gone from producing zero to 30 percent of the country’s soy, so their time in the state included visits to the country’s major soy production and soy processing areas.

Another highlight of the trip was a visit to ESALQ, Escola Superior de Agricultura Luiz de Queiroz, located in São Paulo. “The U of I helped establish this school, under the direction of Eugene Davenport [Dean of the College of Agriculture in 1895] at the turn of the last century,” said Rausch. “Basically, it’s the College of ACES in a Brazilian format. They had an ag engineering department, a food science department, a natural resources department — there was a pretty direct one-to-one

Rausch Travels to Brazil*...Continued*

Development, the National Science Foundation, and we made several stops at the USDA, including the Foreign Agricultural Service office.”

The class met about once a month to hear a variety of speakers and to plan their capstone “immersion experience.” The capstone portion of the Academy program was patterned on student-oriented global immersion programs that have been successful in the College of ACES. Ideally, said Rausch, the capstone experience embraces both an integrated theme and takes advantage of a network of connections already established in a designated geographic site.

“In the last few years, an overarching theme in the College has been biofuels,” said Rausch. “So our class chose to go to Brazil, since ACES has extensive ongoing dialogue with that country on bioenergy.” Rausch said the trip was an opportunity to study the broader impacts of bioenergy on the agricultural practices, the environment and the economy of the country, as well as on social conditions. The group spent considerable time in the state of



Prof. Rausch (left) visits with a colleague at dinner in Cuiaba, Brazil.

correlation for all the faculty that were visiting. It became very apparent that there were connections that could be made for future collaboration.”

One of the final activities for the group was an economic conference, co-sponsored by the U of I, that compared and contrasted United States and Brazilian biofuel policy and production, said Rausch.

Overall, Rausch said his year with the Academy was a “very positive experience.” Although current funding opportunities for international collaboration are somewhat limited, he said “The connections we made during our time in Brazil will be very easy to pick up in the future. In the meantime, the opportunities for international collaboration here on campus are pretty good — and they’re right outside our front door.”

Jim Steck Commander-In-Chief at Sloan Implement

Jim Steck, '90 AgM, is the president of Sloan Implement, one of the largest privately-owned John Deere dealerships in the world. Established in 1931, Sloan Implement has its headquarters in Assumption, Illinois. Steck has been associated with John Deere in one way or another since graduation.

"I went to work right out of college for the John Deere Industrial Equipment Company, on the corporate side of Deere," said Steck. "My last position there was as a field representative in Oklahoma. We lived in Edmund, and my job was to call on industrial dealers around the state, to represent John Deere."

Steck moved to Sloan Implement in 1994. "I started out in sales, but I was hired with the

Steck is married and his wife Amy is a graduate of the University of Southern California. Steck said that made the 2008 Rose Bowl "...very interesting. We actually attended the game, which of course ended up being pretty much a beating for me." Amy owns her own business, Kids-N- Fitness, which provides a variety of activities (such as tennis, swimming and basketball lessons) for approximately 350 children. The Stecks have three children: a daughter, Mackenzie, and two sons, Harrison and Corbin.

Steck said his involvement in the business and commitments to his family mean his outside interests are limited, but he loves sports and he enjoys running. He is planning to compete in Christie Clinic's Illinois Marathon in Champaign-Urbana on April 11.

"I'm an early morning guy, so I usually run around 4:30. I don't know if that means I'm committed or I'm crazy," he said, "but my nights are pretty hectic. I want to devote that time to my kids, so it has to be early morning."

When asked about his time at U of I, Steck was quick to praise a former professor, and now a good friend and mentor, Phil Buriak. "Phil's a great guy," Steck said. "In fact, he's the reason I'm at Sloan's today. He knew Tom Sloan, and Tom called him to ask if there was anyone he could recommend who might actually help run the business one day. Phil recommended me, Tom called, and the rest is history. "So Phil's the reason I have this job," he concluded, "and I'm very glad I'm here."

anticipation of being mentored by Tom Sloan, the owner."

In 1995, Steck decided to pursue an advanced degree, and in 1997 he received the Executive MBA from the College of Business at the University of Illinois. In 2006, Steck became president of Sloan Implement, and today he oversees almost 300 employees in 15 different locations.

"My routine is different every day," said Steck, "but it's very hands-on. I do a little bit of everything. I'm involved in sales, as well as the overall management of the business. We have ten locations in Illinois and five in Wisconsin," he noted. "We are very fortunate to have outstanding employees in all fifteen stores. They certainly make my job easy."

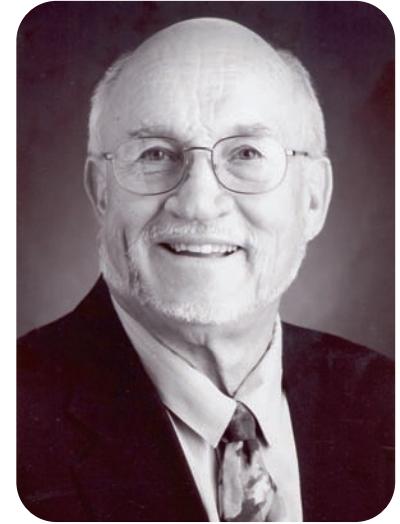
**The ABE@Illinois
reception at the ASABE
Annual International
Meeting will be held on
Sunday, June 21, 2009
in Reno, NV.**

“Retirement” Changes Little for Dr. Mike Tumbleson

Dr. M.E. “Mike” Tumbleson, Professor Emeritus of ABE, came to the University of Illinois in 1986. Tumbleson held a joint appointment in veterinary biosciences and agricultural engineering until his official retirement in May 2006.

“But my job hasn’t changed,” Tumbleson said from his office in the Agricultural Engineering Sciences Building. “I feel very fortunate that I can continue this work, because there are a lot of graduate students I work with whose research is a result of many years of our work.”

In his time at U of I, Tumbleson was involved with a variety of areas, ranging from using swine as animal models to evaluate the effects of alcoholism, to optimizing ethanol production and corn utilization. In 1985, Tumbleson organized and chaired the international conference, “Swine in Biomedical Research”, after which he compiled and edited a three-volume treatise of the same name.



Emeriti Coffee

Are you going to be in Champaign-Urbana on a Tuesday? Stop by the weekly ABE Emeriti Coffee at the Perkins Restaurant on University Avenue in Urbana. It starts at 9 AM, but show up at 8:50 if you want a seat.

Tumbleson has chaired or co-chaired numerous other professional conferences and conference sessions and was often the editor or co-editor of the proceedings from those conferences.

Tumbleson has co-authored more than 200 refereed journal papers and 500 scientific abstracts and presentations, often with colleagues from the department, including Drs. Phil Buriak, Leslie Christianson, Steven Eckhoff, Kent Rausch, and Vijay Singh. Tumbleson co-authored publications with more than 100 other distinguished colleagues, including Robert Eppley (FDA, Washington, DC), D.K. Gupta (G.B. Pant University, Pantnagar, India), and Ron Gerards and Luk Vriens (Seghers, Wespelaar, Belgium).

Today Tumbleson continues to work with ABE colleagues in food and bioprocess engineering. “Whenever you process foodstuffs, whatever is left over, they get in veterinary medicine,” he noted. “So I work with the people who process food to see if we can change the process a little bit so the co-products are more functional.”

Tumbleson grew up in the small town of Trimont, Minnesota and hitchhiked to the University of

Minnesota at the age of 17. He got his first job working in the university greenhouse for a professor who was on sabbatical at the time. That professor later facilitated a job for Tumbleson with another scientist noted for his work on cholesterol and heart disease. The value of these connections was not lost on Tumbleson, and possibly influenced his career-long habit of keeping detailed logs of his daily activities and the people he meets. Since coming to Illinois, he’s on log book #140.

Tumbleson has been a pilot his entire adult life, working as both an instructor and an examiner. He often combines work and pleasure, taking farmers up in the air to evaluate crop conditions. After a recent flight, he contacted a friend to let him know he had a serious problem with root rot in one of his fields.

“I told him if it was my field, that’s the first one I’d be in,” Tumbleson said. “The day he finished beans, he was able to get in there before the rain hit.”

Tumbleson is passionate about communicating and connecting with people. In his years organizing or attending professional conferences, he learned that much of the “real work” got done outside of structured meetings or rigid schedules.

"Whenever I organized a conference, I always made sure to schedule lots of time between the sessions," he said. "That's the time to talk. That's where all the work gets done."

To say that Tumbleson enjoys his work and his life is understating the reality. He jokes and laughs

through a conversation, making wry observations about whatever topic he takes on.

"Hey," he says with a wide grin, "if we can't joke about what we're doing, we probably shouldn't be here, should we?"

Illini Pullers Have High Hopes for "The Chief's Vendetta"

Members of the Illini Pullers are deep in the design and manufacturing of this year's entry for the 1/4 Scale Tractor Student Design Competition. The competition will be held May 28 through May 31 at the Expo Gardens in Peoria, Illinois.

Work on "The Chief's Vendetta" is "coming along well," said Stephen Corban, president of the Illini Pullers and a junior in agricultural engineering. "The tractor is fully designed now, and we've got a lot of parts coming into the shop. In the past week, we've started assembling our chassis. I wouldn't call it a rolling chassis yet, but it's close."

Designing and building the tractor is only one part of the competition, sponsored by the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers. Written reports, which detail the design and manufacturing process, and an oral presentation, which highlights the tractor design, are also major components of the competition. Entries are judged in on several categories, including tractor safety, appearance, maneuverability, and pulling ability.

The Illini Pullers have participated in the competition since 2001. There are anywhere from 25 to 30 schools represented each year. Last year, "Spirit of the Chief" placed 2nd in the team presentation, 3rd in the written design, and 11th overall.

Keith Webster, a senior in technical systems management, and a four-time participant in the competition, said, "Work on the tractor is way ahead of where we've been in the past. It's allowed us to start reports earlier and get parts earlier. We should have a pretty nice-looking, functional tractor by the middle of April. In past years, we didn't have a functional tractor until the middle of May."

Corban said that extra month will be key for manufacturing and testing the tractor, and gives them "the potential to do very well this year."

"We have approximately 30 members," said Corban, "and anywhere from 12 to 15 of those members will travel to Peoria to participate in the competition. There are also seven freshmen who will be competing in the X-Team Competition this year," said Webster. The X-Team Competition is an



The ASABE Quarter Scale Tractor Student Design Competition will be held on May 28-31, 2009 at the Expo Gardens in Peoria, IL.

Continued on pg 8...

Larry and Lola Huggins Boating “America’s Great Loop”

Larry Huggins, M.S.’62 AgE, is enjoying life from a different perspective these days. Huggins, a professor emeritus at Purdue University and his wife Lola are living aboard their boat, the Lola Marie, and boating “America’s Great Loop.”

“We’re going around the eastern half of the United States, up the Hudson River into the Canadian waters and back down into Lake Michigan,” said Huggins. “You get a different perspective on things from the waterways than you do from the highways. You meet different people, and many of the cities you go through on the rivers have interesting histories.”

The Lola Marie is a 48-foot twin-screw, diesel-powered Bayliner the Huggins bought in 2003. They have already traveled the “loop” once, taking 28 months to complete 9,700 miles. The couple began their second loop tour in August of 2008, and Huggins anticipates this time around they will take about 24 months.

Huggins is enjoying the fruits of his labor after a long and successful career at Purdue. Upon receiving his master’s in agricultural engineering from the U of I

in 1962, he joined the faculty of Purdue with a full-time appointment as an instructor in soil and water, drainage, surveying and water quality. While teaching, he earned his Ph.D. in ag engineering. In 1981, he was appointed Head of the Department of Agricultural Engineering (today Agricultural and Biological Engineering) where he served until 1994. He then took a position as Associate Dean of the College of Engineering. Huggins currently has a 10 percent appointment and will be fully retired on June 30 of this year.

“I’ve been able to combine my travels with some of the duties I have in alumni cultivation and development work,” said Huggins. “We meet and greet alumni in areas that aren’t usually served by alumni meetings. It’s been a unique and enjoyable way to combine my small appointment with travel that I really enjoy.”

Huggins has been a member of the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers (ASABE) for 51 years, where served two terms on the Board of Directors,

and was President from 1999-2000. In 2008, Huggins, an ASABE fellow, was the recipient of the 2008 Massey-Ferguson Educational Award, in recognition of his dedication and outstanding contributions to agricultural and biological engineering through teaching, mentoring, administration, extension, and research.

Huggins said past emeriti at the U of I played an important part in his career choice. “I worked in the lab with Dr. Ed Monke and [teaching assistant] Dick Black,” Huggins noted. “My interaction and work with them and my advisor, Dr. Ben Jones, greatly influenced my decision to stay in academia for a career.”

Huggins remembers his years at the U of I as a wonderful experience, but said time has changed some things. “There was a much higher percentage of married students than there is now,” said Huggins. “Dr. Frank Lanham was head of the Department at the time and his wife, Peggy, organized the student wives’ group. That group was instrumental in





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helping young wives get properly oriented and established. Almost all of them were working women because they were putting husbands through college, as was mine.

"We lived in a trailer, but it wasn't like the trailers they have today. This one was eight foot wide, 28 foot long," he said. "About the time we had our first child, that trailer got a tad-bit cramped. But it was a wonderful experience."

Today, the Huggins have three married children, four grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Their children and grandchildren sometimes join them in their travels. "We plan to cross Lake Okeechobee in mid-March," said Huggins, "and our daughter and son-in-law will join us. When they leave, our granddaughter will be with us for three or four days of her spring break, before going back to classes."

"It's not exactly a Lewis and Clark expedition," Huggins admitted with a laugh. "We're 'roughing it' pretty smoothly. It's a delightful lifestyle to enjoy."

**Save the date: Celebrate ABE@Illinois
on September 25-26, 2009. Go to our
website for more information.**



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Pullers have high hopes ...Continued

opportunity for younger members of the club to get involved. Schools are encouraged to rebuild the tractor they entered in the regular competition the previous year, fix any known problem areas and enter it in this separate event.

The operating budget for “The Chief’s Vendetta” is \$36,000, and Corban said, “We’re definitely looking for cash donations at this point. We have a lot of sponsors, including the Engineering Design Council and the ACES Student Council. We also have private businesses that we’ve worked with over the years that consistently make in-kind donations. But we need to make sure we have enough working capital to complete the tractor and cover any expenses we have at the competition.”

Dr. Alan Hansen, faculty advisor for the Pullers, believes the competition is highly beneficial for everyone involved. “It introduces team members to the new product design process, and it’s an experience that often translates into employment opportunities down the road. If I were an employer like John Deere, and I saw the $\frac{1}{4}$ scale competition on an applicant’s resume,” he said, “that would definitely take them up a notch in my estimation of their ability.”

Donations to the club may be made out to the “Illini Pullers” and mailed to the Dept. of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, 1304 W. Pennsylvania Ave., Room 338, Urbana, Illinois 61801, Attention: Illini Pullers.

Updates

Sachin Patrick Bhalerao is the newest “member” of the Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering. Sachin was born on May 11, 2008. His father, Kaustubh Bhalerao, is an assistant professor in the department. Sachin’s mother, Jessie, works for Waterborne Environmental, Inc.

Bhalerao, a native of India, said they are teaching their son both English and Marathi, Bhalerao’s native language. “It should make visiting my home a lot more enjoyable for him,” he said.

Mark William Harbourt was born to Susan and Chris Harbourt, Ph.D. ’98 AgE. Mark was born on Friday, April 24 and weighed 8 lbs 1oz at birth.

