

Lawrence E. Kunkle, 1909–1990: A Brief Biography

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A Beginning

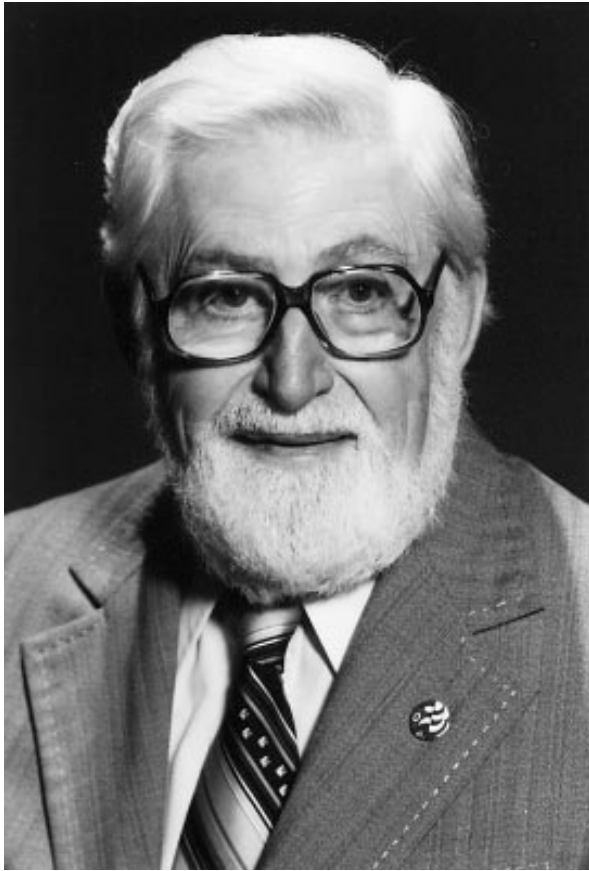
Larry Kunkle, of solid farm family origin in central Ohio, was born November 6, 1909, near Springfield, Ohio. His parents were Edward and Lizzie Neff Kunkle. He and a brother, Howard, were ambitious farm helpers, active in 4-H, and entrepreneurs with Grandad Ward in small fruit and vegetable production to accumulate college funds.

Larry received his B. S. degree in the Department of Animal Husbandry from The Ohio State University in 1932 after only 11 quarters of study. His academic performance, personality, and ambitious attitude drew the attention of Dr. Carl W. Gay, Chairman of the Department, and he was employed as an Assistant in the Meat Laboratory while he earned the M. S. Degree and taught the laboratory sections of meat courses. This led to an appointment as Instructor, followed by promotions to Professor and a 40-year career on the faculty of the Animal Husbandry Department of The Ohio State University.

A Fruitful Career

The meat teaching position included the management of meat procurement and processing not only for classes but for all campus dining halls. Such an arrangement contributed a practical environment to the academic program, supported meat research, and provided "in-house internships" for up to 50 student employees simultaneously. Professor Kunkle absorbed the criticism by colleagues at other land grant colleges for sustaining this somewhat commercial activity and for arranging other student internships in industry during the "scientific 50s," only to observe 25 years later renewed enthusiasm across the country for internships and practical experience.

Larry was recognized as a master teacher in a wide range of situations. During his professional career he was instrumental in developing seven courses in this growing discipline of Meat Science and he taught beginning courses on slaughter and processing, graduate courses, seminars, adult courses, and short courses for livestock and trade organizations. Prominent graduates are the hallmark of an effective teacher and advisor. Larry expected no greater reward. His former students have distinguished themselves in academia, where many have been in charge of university meat programs, several served as department chairmen, while others filled responsible positions in USDA meat



"I never dreamed I was important to anyone," stated Professor L. E. "Larry" Kunkle surrounded by a multitude of friends at his retirement banquet in 1972. This pretty much describes the quiet, generous, gregarious demeanor of the man to be presented in this biography.

Lawrence E. Kunkle was right for his time, as evidenced by his contribution to the field of meat during the period in history when it emerged as a science and by the national and international reputation he developed in the field. He was a common man who generated uncommon accomplishments through positive thinking and action. Larry established an unquestionable reputation as a teacher and as a person who used the practical approach for developing concepts and solving problems. His brand of generous cooperation was a hallmark.

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grading, marketing and meat inspection, and still many more benefitting from the Kunkle practicality have emerged in technical and administrative positions in industry. For 18 years, he coached the Intercollegiate Meat Judging Team and experienced the satisfaction of seeing his students garner the supreme laurels in contests. He seemed always alert to current needs. A few examples follow. In 1935, he authored a bulletin detailing farm hog slaughter and processing. He teamed with Dr. Earle Klosterman (1959) in writing a bulletin elucidating the merits of dairy beef production. During World War II he stretched his energy and time to teach a meat science course for veterinary students destined for military service, of whom many would become food inspectors. His Frozen Food Locker Operators short course for returning WWII veterans helped prepare hundreds of young men for business opportunities. To enhance this presentation and to serve as a reference for owners and managers of those significant food facilities he co-authored a book, *Frozen Food Processing and Handling*, in 1946. Beginning in 1968, he and his colleagues conducted a training program for USDA meat inspectors that emphasized the science needed for an effective inspection program and truly was a forerunner of the scientific approach being touted by USDA in 1995.

A strong attribute of this individual was the masterful use of the knife to reveal carcass characteristics and value and especially to stimulate attentiveness of the audience. His free flowing verbal accompaniment emphasized pertinent concepts to his audiences of producers, meat packers, retailers, restaurateurs, or consumers. Frequently he was called on to serve as an extension of the Meat Merchandising Department arm of the National Live Stock and Meat Board, to conduct meat cutting lecture-demonstrations at merchandising and cooking schools, and to provide elaborate fresh meat exhibits at fairs and conferences.

Professor R. J. Deans of Michigan State University and a former student of Prof's writing a dozen years prior to Larry's retirement stated the following, "I can state with conviction that the education of people or, stated another way, the ability to stimulate minds into hitherto untried activities in his natural talent. In teaching, he was acutely aware that he would not get far with us as students unless he connected the subject matter area with our past experiences and then guided us into channels where our curiosity activated further mental activity. These reactions he fostered by praise, thus exposing us as students to that very wonderful pride of accomplishment." A legion of leaders in academia and industry carry the trademark of a college teacher, advisor, and father figure in the person of Larry Kunkle. One might say that Larry Kunkle's career spanned an era when carcass evaluation and, indeed, meat animal evolution were rising to prominence. Through the efforts of

Larry and his peers, carcass evaluation became the focal point of the livestock industry during his day. As early as 1940, he and one of his graduate students were pioneering pork carcass grading as related to cut-out value in a packing plant in Columbus, Ohio. The following story illustrates the need for his kind of leadership in the 1950 period. Larry was a partner in a very impressive live hog/carcass evaluation program presented to a national audience. Differences in value of animals varying in type had been clearly defined and shown on Larry's cutting table and scales. At that point, the head hog buyer of one of the "Big Three" packers made the point that in their company they were prepared to process hogs into many products and stood ready to buy and utilize any type hog that came to market. Prof always remembered that sabotage of his ideas but felt exonerated just a few years later when the same company boldly pronounced the development of a carcass merit system of hog procurement. Once again, Larry Kunkle's forward thinking became a proven concept and 40 years later was the cornerstone of hog marketing.

His advice and cooperation with Professor Wilbur Bruner and other leaders was instrumental in the initiation and development of the Ohio Swine Evaluation Program. This program was anchored by a swine evaluation station, the first of its kind in the United States, and the carcass data generated in Larry's laboratory. The validity of Larry's concept of carcass evaluation along with the experience and data he had accumulated were recognized beyond his normal sphere of activity. He rendered service for USDA on their Regional Swine Research Project. His concepts were sought and utilized by Selection, Inc. and other companies whose goals were to more effectively merchandise meat-type pork. Likewise, the dressed hog cutting industry of New York City called on him to explain and demonstrate pork grades, carcass values and merchandising concepts to advance this significant marketing program. In 1954, he helped draft the first all-breed pork carcass certification standards. The development of an "evaluation language" is credited with bringing swine evaluation of age and signalling significant cooperation between producers and packers in the interest of pork improvement. The ensuing interchange of information stimulated improvement in carcass composition and much-needed economies in the swine industry. It was at this time that Larry suggested cutting the longissimus dorsi muscle in cross section at the tenth intercostal space for measuring the loin eye area as the objective indicator of carcass muscling. Because of the scientific accuracy of this prediction and practicality of obtaining the measurement in commercial plants and university meat laboratories, this procedure has remained a major tool in the arsenal of carcass evaluation. He shared the message of meat-type carcasses by word and demonstration at numerous

national type conferences scheduled by the various breed organizations. Larry's dedicated service to the swine industry was recognized when he was presented the National Hog Farmer's Award for Outstanding Service at the American Pork Congress in 1974.

Closely following on the heels of pork carcass improvement, attention was given to differences in beef animals and their carcasses. Again, Larry was a leader as he worked diligently with Paul Gerlaugh and Earle Klosterman on Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station beef genetic and nutrition projects to evaluate carcass composition. Larry also was on the research team that examined the feasibility of dairy beef, a concept that has been broadly accepted. They also generated data supporting the action of hormones, whether inherent in the bull or an added synthetic, in muscle development. Publication of those results led to requests from industry for similar information pertaining to cattle featured in field days and type conferences. The reputation generated as a result of these activities culminated in an invitation by the International Livestock Exposition Board to participate in the Beef Carcass Contest conducted in connection with the annual International Livestock Show in Chicago. For 13 years, he assisted the Board, represented by Dr. Robert Bray, as a judge of the live show and the carcass contest, during which time the criteria of modern beef standards were continually emphasized, examined, and improved upon.

The Larry Kunkle/Fred Deatherage/Harry Weiser research team infused live animals and whole carcasses with substances such as antibiotics and cation-containing salts. These experiments vividly demonstrated the antemortem condition and postmortem changes of muscle as they affect meat quality. Kunkle's co-authored publications in the *Journal of Food Technology* in 1956-57 pointing to the tenderizing effects of the chlorides of sodium, magnesium, and calcium are especially noteworthy in light of current research on the same subject.

Larry's ability to focus on the important and useful things of a livestock industry that found itself in a somewhat chaotic transition was recognized and utilized in pre-Castro Cuba. The Cuban Ministry of Agriculture in 1954 requested his assistance in helping them to understand meat grading and quality meat production and utilization.

Likewise, the ovine species came under his scrutiny. He and Professor Don Bell early recognized the significance of a declining wool market and the need to produce a lamb meat product more in line with consumer desires and to provide an additional source of income for sheep producers. They provided data to guide the development of increased edible portion and more flavorful and tender lamb meat.

Personal Profile

Coupled with a prestigious professional career was a personal life of renown. It was special because it was

forever centered on "being of service." This can be illustrated by one simple example. Through the courtesy of L. P. McCann of the American Hereford Association, Kunkle learned the art of pit barbecuing. He subsequently provided this service to livestock groups, civic and trade associations, national scientific organizations, and others. Prof justified his participation as a way to help people enjoy themselves eating flavorful and tender meat, a means of enticing them to be regular meat consumers, and as an excellent public relations tool. His largest undertaking was to prepare in excess of 10,000 lbs. of boneless beef carved and served hot in 42,000 buns to 21,000 persons for lunch. A truly useful and significant hobby existed in his life.

Larry's zest for people and geography induced him and his wife to travel extensively worldwide and to each year explore an area of the United States. Larry and Louise were rightfully proud of their two sons, Lawrence (Larry) Jr. and Lynn, who provided three grandchildren. As additional evidence of practicality and the desire to keep in tune with agriculture production, Larry owned and managed a farm on which he maintained a herd of Angus cattle.

His enthusiasm for people was mirrored not only in the diversity of his activities but also in his university service. In his department he was charged with overseeing the construction of a new multimillion-dollar classroom/office building including nutrition and meat laboratories that was the flagship of such facilities in its day. His leadership and judgment were recognized when his peers elected him to Faculty Council, Graduate Council, and the prestigious position of President of the Faculty Club consisting of campuswide membership. University administration called upon him to serve on the Commencement Committee and chair the Honorary Degree Committee. The ultimate Ohio State University recognition came at the 1980 Summer Commencement in the form of the Distinguished Service Award. Previously he had received the Distinguished Alumni Award of the College of Agriculture and was named a Fellow of the American Society of Animal Science, and his portrait hangs in the Ohio Agricultural Hall of Fame. Also beyond the campus he helped plan and was a charter member of the Reciprocal Meat Conference, which he faithfully served for 46 years, and he was instrumental in organizing the American Meat Science Association (AMSA). His productive service led to his election to the highest position of responsibility of each group. Other honors bestowed on him by the American Meat Science Association were the Meritorious Service Award, Distinguished Teacher Award, and the R. C. Pollock Award, which is the most prestigious recognition given by the AMSA.

Additional service on a national basis was provided to Gamma Sigma Delta, the Honor Society of Agriculture. Larry served as Historian, President-Elect, and President of the International Society during the period from 1958 to 1972. In 1962, the Japanese meat

industry and the U. S. Agency for International Development requested his services for 40 days to lead a group of Japanese scientists and meat industry executives in a study of meat processing and merchandising in the United States.

To record what this individual accomplished without an attempt to record his identity indeed would be an inadequate biography. He was always so busy thinking and working positively he didn't have time to express anger; his willingness to help others and be of service displaced selfishness; his high moral standards and positive attitude quietly and forcefully influenced

students and colleagues; his work ethic challenged the most energetic individuals; his subtle humor added zest to life and his mild, unassuming, magnetic demeanor drew him into the company of and placed him at ease with individuals of any station in society. These exemplary qualities were reflected in friends who eagerly established a student endowment in his honor and the multitude who, upon his retirement, celebrated with him his professional career. They expressed their gratitude via an L. E. Kunkle Day Seminar embellished by his trademark—uplifted friendships.