



Hall of Fame

Class VI





NATIONAL
Watermelon
ASSOCIATION



Honoring

Dean Liere

Woodland, California



Dean Liere

Variety selection is one of the most important factors to a grower's success, and who has found more successful varieties than Dean? His unique ability to understand the watermelon industry's needs as well as the breeding process has enabled him to bring new hybrids to the market that manage the current and future challenges of growers and distributors. In addition to contributing to Syngenta's Research & Development Team, Dean has been a longtime champion of public watermelon research efforts and has

advocated for numerous variety trials, plant physiology studies, and consumer market research with numerous universities and state associations.

He has been committed to educating a new generation of professionals in the industry by serving as a guest lecturer in university courses and as a mentor to many. Dean had a willingness to engage in open conversations with growers about the seed production process, variety selection, and production practices. He further supported growers through the development of the Full Count Plant Program, which revolutionized watermelon production by providing reliable transplants to the growers and taking the guesswork out of planting.

In his 25 years with Syngenta, Dean's passion for the watermelon industry transcended his role as a Watermelon Portfolio Manager. He deeply understands the necessity of partnerships between the seed producers and the National Watermelon Association and has been a strong supporter of the program. His dedication to the watermelon industry was documented by his commitment to support public outreach with a donation to the Watermelon Queen Program through the Full Count program. He has also been instrumental in educating the Watermelon Queens on the breeding process and watermelon variety performance. Additionally, Dean has been key in backing Syngenta's latest partnership with the NWA to support veteran's associations as a part of the new Valor program and partnership.

Dean has been a huge supporter and partner with the National Watermelon Association, and we are forever grateful for his involvement, support commitment and friendship. It will go without saying that he will be missed as he moves forward into retirement. Job Well Done, our Friend – Colleague – Mentor – and Brother. You are a shining example to those that will come behind you. Thank you for all that you have done for the industry, the queens, our members and the National Watermelon Association. Well Done!

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. Gullledge · 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



NATIONAL
Watermelon
ASSOCIATION



NATIONAL
Watermelon
ASSOCIATION

The National Watermelon Association has stood the test of time for 104 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 one individual who has led, supported and taken great care of the Association across many years of service.

We all stand at the convention to congratulate this inductee. He has played a huge roll in the success of the Association, and for that commitment we place his name into the highest honor that we can bestow. The honoree will forever be known as a member in the National Watermelon Association Hall of Fame.