



Hall of Fame

Class V





NATIONAL
Watermelon
ASSOCIATION



Honoring

Anita Field

Indianapolis, Indiana

Ross Deal

Northwest Florida



Anita Field

Ms. Anita Field of Indianapolis, Indiana retired from the watermelon business as the General Manager and Owner of Wabash Valley Growers in Vincennes. During her stellar career she held memberships and positions with numerous groups including the Future Business Leaders of America, American Business Women's Association, President of Women in Community & Junior Colleges, Advisory Committee of the Agribusiness Program @ Vincennes University, Vincennes Alcohol Board, Vincennes Chamber of Commerce, and the Advisory Board of the Indiana Department of Agriculture. In a prior career Anita was the Assistant to the Dean of Occupational Education at Vincennes University, and she taught writing at Indiana State University.

There are numerous highlights throughout Ms. Field's career, including organizing the Illiana Watermelon Chapter (IWA) of the National Watermelon Association (NWA), and serving as its Charter President. She remains active with the IWA Watermelon Chapter and participates on their Board of Directors today. She also served as an officer of the NWA and has loyally served on the association's leadership group for over 30 years, currently as a member of the Lifetime Council today. Anita was one of two female Presidents of the NWA, and served for many years as the Co-Chairperson of the NWA Queen (Promotions) Committee. Ms. Field was appointed to the National Watermelon Promotion Board for eleven years. She is the recipient of numerous awards and honors including the prestigious Outstanding Service Award.

Following the sale of her company, Anita remained in place as the General Manager of Wabash Valley Growers until her retirement, upon which she relocated to Indianapolis to be closer to her loving family. Anita has 2 daughters, 2 sons, 12 grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren. On behalf of the National Watermelon Association - its officers, leadership, members and staff—we congratulate Anita on this great achievement and thank her for all of her support, dedication, commitment and efforts throughout her distinguished career.



Ross Deal

Mr. Ross Deal, deceased (1992), was known in his day as 'Mr. Watermelon' in the Panhandle area of Florida. Ross was an active member of the National Watermelon Growers & Distributors Association (the original name of the National Watermelon Association) and numerous other industry, civic and church groups, including the Kiwanis Club, Fire Ant Control Committee, Washington County Historical Society, the Sportsmen Club, and Washington County School Board. Additionally, Mr. Deal held positions as a Trustee with Moss Hill United Methodist Church, Washington County Vo-Tech, and Washington County Hospital, and he was the Founder of the Georgia McGraw Day Scholarship Fund and the Panhandle Watermelon Festival, which began in 1956 as a free weekend of events surrounding watermelon (and still attracts over 10,000 annually today).

Mr. Deal's life surrounded the growing and shipping of watermelons. During his time in the industry he developed innovations in watering (irrigation) and conveyer belt systems to unload trucks that were huge advancements for the industry. He was instrumental in encouraging other farmers to plant watermelons as a cash crop, and having the panhandle of Florida recognized as a watermelon producing region. He loved to give speeches and talk about what he loved (after his first love - his wife, Agnes) - - he loved to talk about watermelon!

Ross Deal was recognized by then Florida Governor Burns (1965) with the Distinguished Citizens Award, one of the many honors that he received during a storied career. He is considered by many to be (not only the patriarch of his loving family) but also of the watermelon industry in Northwest Florida. Please join us in congratulating the entire Deal Family for this posthumous honor of their beloved Ross (Deal), as he takes his rightful position in our most honored roll as a National Watermelon Association Hall of Famer.

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



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A S S O C I A T I O N

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 two (2) individuals who have led, supported and taken great care of the Association across its first century of service.

We all stand at the convention to congratulate the fourth class of inductees. They have both played a huge roll in the success of the Association, and for that commitment we place their names into the highest honor that we can bestow. The honorees will forever be honored and earned members in the National Watermelon Association Hall of Fame.