The Richard H. Gumz Agricultural Scholarship

For virtually all of the 20th century, Richard Gumz was a farmer. He started out on a small farm of 40 acres and became one of the most successful farmers in the Midwest, an agricultural pioneer who farmed several thousand acres in Indiana and Wisconsin. He was man who loved the land, was passionate about farming, and never retired.

Richard was born on a small farm in Denham, Indiana, on February 8, 1903. Born to German parents, Richard only spoke German until he started school, where he quickly learned English. Richard quit school after the 8th grade, however, when he began working full-time on his father's farm. In the 1920s, he purchased 40 acres of his own and began to build his own farming operation.

Thanks to early success, Richard expanded his farming operation between the 1930s and 1950s, buying the Burbank Farm south of North Judson, Indiana, and expanding into Wisconsin, where he discovered and purchased several acres of good farmland. His farm produced potatoes, corn, onions, other vegetables, and mint; he became the largest producer of mint oil in the Midwest.

When Richard started, farming was still done with horses. Throughout the years, however, he always led the effort to implement modern advances in agriculture. He innovated to make the fertile swampland of Starke and Pulaski Counties productive, clearing trees, digging ditches, and laying clay tiles one by one. As he reclaimed the farmland, he left growth along the edges of his fields to accommodate wildlife. He was also one of the first truck farmers in the area. In all he did, he sought to improve the soil, and he is remembered as a pioneer of advanced farming techniques.

Farming was always Richard's life. His family recalls that he would often drive around his farm, checking on the crops and the land, even in the winter. Over his lifetime and because of countless hours of hard work, a small farming operation that began with 40 acres had grown to one of the largest farms in the Midwest.

Richard passed away in March of 2001, but his legacy is still alive and well. Today, his children and grandchildren still farm the land. Jerome and Cherry Gumz, Richard's son and daughter-in-law, sought to honor Richard through a scholarship which would benefit students looking to follow a similar career path. Cherry was one of the founding members of the Community Foundation and was the board president for ten years, so it was clear to her that the best way to do so was to create a scholarship through the Community Foundation.

Jerome and Cherry established the endowed Richard H. Gumz Agricultural Scholarship in 2001. The scholarship exists to honor Richard's legacy and his never-ending quest for advanced farming techniques. The scholarship assists high school graduates of Starke County who are enrolled at Purdue University, pursuing a career in agriculture. Involvement in school, work, and the community is also essential.

Jerome and Cherry Gumz still live in North Judson. They have five children; Roberta Mocogni, Richard, Kevin, Roderick, and Daniel. Through Roberta they have three grand-children; Sara, Megan, and Monica. By Richard they have on grad-child, Jacalynn. By Kevin they have two grand-sons, Taylor and Matthew, and by Roderick they have three; Brandon, Jason, Alexandra.

In addition to farming, Jerry enjoys hunting and fishing. Cherry loves planning family events and holidays, scrapbooking, and gardening. Cherry was also a founding member of the Community Foundation and the board president for 10 years.

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