

The Jerry Scherf Scholarship Fund

Jerry Scherf, an eager business-man, and long-time resident of Starke County, can often be found at local restaurants catching the latest news over breakfast and a steamy cup of coffee.

Jerry has been a resident, farmer, and salesman in Starke County for 67 years. He was born in Waconda, Illinois to Herman and Martha (Volling Scherf) on August 8, 1932.

Jerry recalls moving to Starke County in 1938 when his father pursued his dream of owning his own farm. Herman, Jerry's father was working as the manager of a malt plant in Illinois when he stumbled across a paper stating that Starke County had land for sale. Jerry, who still lives on part of the farm where he was raised, recalls his father's excitement when he found out about the perfect 80 acre farm available for his family. "Back then, people were just starting to establish homes here, land was \$50 an acre," Jerry said. He spoke about his father's dedication and commitment to raising the money he needed to pay off his farm by working hard in the steel mill and saving every penny that he could.

Jerry has two brothers named Maurice and Milton, who also still live within the community. Jerry recalls his first job, along-side his brothers, "My dad paid each of us 25 cents a week to work on the family farm." When Jerry wasn't in school, he could be found working in the fields along-side his father and brothers. In 1968, after Jerry had graduated from Knox High School, he bought the family farm from his father. Although Jerry didn't mind farming, it didn't take him long to discover his true passion.



Jerry's knack for business came about coincidentally when a man at Berdine Chevy and Pontiac asked him if he thought it could sell a car. Jerry took on this challenge and sold the car in the same day. The dealer then gave Jerry \$50 commission and a job. He laughed as he recalled that it wasn't a hard decision to make when he compared the \$150 a year he made in farming along-side the \$50 he had made in one day selling cars.

As time passed, Jerry continued to sell cars but left Berdine Chevy and went to work for their rival company, Ford, in Chicago Heights. In his free time, Jerry became very fond of the Dyer Auto Auction and often found that he could buy and resell several different cars from it while making a profit. "I kept calling in sick to work because I wanted to go to the auction. Finally, they said if I took off again I was going to be fired," Jerry recalled. "So I quit."



After a few years of buying and selling several vehicles, Jerry had built up his business. He then met a man that would nudge his inner businessman yet again. As a local resident became more and more interested in a Cadillac Jerry was selling, he couldn't resist himself. Jerry offered to trade the man his house and \$700 for the car and the man readily agreed. It was in this moment that Jerry transitioned from selling cars to renting and selling houses. Jerry later sold the man's house and made a large profit. "To be successful you have to start with a foundation, you have to play the game fair, you have to do the best you can with what ya got and go from there," Jerry states.

To this day, Jerry has rented and sold over a dozen houses and still owns two houses that he rents out in Starke County. He also has two children, DeWayne and Kathy, who both still live in Indiana.

In 1982, Jerry made a trip to Clearwater Beach, Florida with his dad. "I was surprised," he said, "I really liked it down there so I bought a little mobile home in Key Largo." It was here that he met Donna Berg at a singles night in Clearwater. It didn't take Jerry long to fall in love with Donna and they have now been together for 33 years.

Jerry was raised in Starke County and wants to reserve his money so that he can do well unto those who live here for generations to come. "There are all kinds of opportunities in Starke County if you want them," Jerry states.