

Senior Tribute – Bill Yamazaki April 3, 2006

Presented by Frank Hall

I am delighted to be able to present this senior tribute for a friend and colleague today.

Bill was born and raised in California –May 10, 1917 in San Francisco, Cal.

His schoolteacher parents came to the US in 1915. He had 2 brothers and 1 sister

Bill was active as child in Boy Scouts and attained the rank of Eagle Scout in

California. He attended the University of Cal at Berkley, with a BS in Chemistry in

1939, and followed that with a MS in Agricultural Technology in 1941 – also at Berkley.

His advisor told him that jobs in chemistry would be scarce and so he went for a

specialty in plant chemistry and where he learned to make sauerkraut out of lettuce???

Going to Berkley was an adventure but he took the streetcar and then the ferry over to

Oakland and in the process saw the building of the Golden Gate and Oakland bridges.

The war arrived and with it came internment- indeed an unsettling period of time but he

learned how to drive while in the camps. Bill met Sue while in college and got married

in 1942 while still in internment camp. Sue says he still can't recall when/how he met

Sue in college but he can recall a particularly good poker hand back in those days!!!

However, they survived and produced 3 children over the next few years.

Russell, teaches Pharmacology at Wayne State in Detroit. June is retired

from a job in computers and lives in Lodi, OH, and Nancy is Director of Data Processing

for 2 major hospitals in Bolder Col. and has their only grandchild – Holly age 17.

Following internment, Bill began his career working for a private wine consultant where they aided small grape growers in the production of wines and where Bill frequently returned home with purple lips!!!

More job interviews followed and with it a chance to work for the government began with a starting technical position in USDA which led to his appointment here in 1944 with the USDA Agricultural Research Service in the beginnings of the Soft Wheat Quality Laboratory. I found this most interesting in that first they were quartered in the camps by order of the government and then Bill got a job with that same government – How ironic!!!!

For those of you who are not familiar with this group, this lab is responsible for investigating the properties of soft wheat contributing to the milling and baking qualities. FYI – hard red wheat is grown in the central US – from OK to Ks to Nebraskan and is used for breads and pasta. On the other hand, soft wheat is grown principally east of the MS river and is use in pastries. So they indeed used to bake cookies here – some were very good – personal experience!!!!

Rising from a technician status upon his arrival, Bill also had an opportunity to complete his PH-D at Ohio State. Bill was appointed to Director of the lab in 1963 and held this position until his retirement in 1981. With a career in the USDA encompassing 39 years, Bill published more than 75 technical articles involving the chemistry and physics involved in the baking process. He also helped to develop the long standing Industry Research Review Conference, some 50 + years old now, which serves the agricultural community and which are scheduled to be held here in Wooster this year.

I'm sure Bill will be attendance – hard to keep a good man down.

While he spent most of his career here at Wooster, after retirement in 1981, Bill was asked by USDA to go to Kansas to head the Grain Marketing Lab and Grain Center out in Manhattan Ks for 2 years. Then he said, “enough is enough”, and he came back to Wooster, to finally complete the retirement process.

But then he couldn't resist another opportunity, and went off to Europe as a member of the US Wheat Associates team, describing US wheat characteristics to host nations. During that time he spent a month in Egypt as a member of the technical aid program and 6 weeks in Pakistan on a similar program.

As his peers have stated, when Bill talks, people sit up and listen – a straight talker and one who tells it like it is. No ego here, a super person to work with – the epitome of a very quiet man, unassuming but one who had much influence in the wheat processing arena. During his career here, Bill was recognized many times by his peers for his Research expertise in agriculture – involvement in Phi Sigma – Phi Lambda Epsilon – chemistry, and for his excellence in research – Sigma Xi – all familiar societal organizations to those of us in research circles. And of course he was a long standing member of American Chemical society – now emeritus member.

Bill was also recognized by the American Association of Advancement of Science, as well as the American Society of Cereal Chemists in 1986, as a **Fellow** of those respective organizations. Both well deserved and prestigious awards indeed. For those of us in Science, the highlights of our research efforts in our careers.

Bill joined Wooster Rotary in 1966 and has long been recognized as a team player,

ready and willing to aid the cause and you can see him every year at the Wooster Rotary Auction. But then he has other efforts long recognized in the community, as you will see his name on the Contract Bridge winner lists on a regular basis. Starting at the age of 17 with his brother – playing for money – he quickly learned the nuances, strategies and tactics of brainpower with partners to gain the advantage in various card games. He has partnered with many folks over the years even with former leaders of the City – Former Mayor, Margaret Demorest after her retirement. He developed this by playing cards at an early age and even frequently played all nite at college but then fell asleep at the football game the next day. But I wouldn't play poker with him on any day!!! He knows where all the cards are!!! It is clear that Bill likes to tweak his brain by playing bridge on a regular basis but he also does cross word puzzles, and reads the financial pages. He reminisces, that these activities are indeed an excellent way to keep the mental acuity at the Max.!!

And there you have the whole story of a quiet, unassuming but influential man in his field–

Ladies and Gentlemen ---I give you Dr. Bill Yamazaki.