

Friday, December 4, 2009

DFA family loses its friend and leader: Word received today of Chairman Tom Camerlo's passing

We are deeply saddened to announce the passing of our friend and Chairman of the Board Tom Camerlo.

Tom, who committed a lifetime of service to the global dairy industry and served as DFA's chairman since 2003, passed away December 3, 2009, after a courageous battle with cancer.

"Tom's commitment to the dairy industry ran deep, and was second only to his devotion to his family," said Rick Smith, DFA president and CEO. "The entire DFA family extends our heartfelt sympathy to the Camerlo family. We share in grieving the passing of our colleague, a dear friend, and a man whose lifetime commitment and leadership made an everlasting difference in the dairy industry."

Tom, a dairy producer from Florence, Colo., served as DFA's chairman since 2003. As the former board chairman for one of DFA's predecessor cooperatives – Western Dairymen's Cooperative, Inc. – his leadership and strong cooperative convictions were instrumental in the formation of DFA.

Tom provided years of expertise and leadership to the dairy industry in the broader arenas of dairy trade, farm policy, cooperative marketing and dairy product promotion. For two decades, he served as chairman of the board for the National Milk Producers Federation in Washington, D.C. After leaving that position in 2003, he was elected chairman of the board for the U.S. Dairy Export Council (USDEC).

Tom also served on the board of Dairy Management Inc. (DMI), the board of Western Dairy Association, a local affiliate of DMI; the Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee and the board council for Nationwide Insurance.

In addition to his service to the dairy industry, he was a local community leader, playing active roles in the Florence Elks, Lions Club, Chamber of Commerce and St. Benedict's Catholic Church. He also served on the board of the K-12 Foundation for Education and Destination ImagiNation, a creative problem-solving education program for students ages 5-18. In 2009, Tom was honored with the inaugural Camerlo Award, which recognizes individuals who have committed countless hours and donated extraordinary resources to Destination ImagiNation.

Tom graduated from Colorado State University (CSU) in Fort Collins, Colo., with a bachelor's degree in general agriculture. He served on the CSU Provost Advisory Committee. He was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army with the rank of Captain of the 101st Airborne and received the Army's Commendation Medal for Meritorious Service.

Tom earned numerous awards during his career and received international recognition. He was named World Dairy Expo's Dairyman of the Year in 2003; received the National Council of Farmer Cooperative's National Cooperative Statesman Award in 1999; and the Soil Conservation Service presented him the Conservationist of the Year Award in 1996. In 2002, the Colorado Livestock Association presented him the "Best Hand" Award and in 2001, he was inducted into the Colorado Agriculture Hall of Fame.



James P. "Tom" Camerlo

He is survived by his wife Barbara and four children, Tommy, Jimmy, Patty and Brooke.

Service arrangements have not been finalized. DFA, in consultation with Tom's family, will be celebrating Tom's career and contributions to dairy industry in the first quarter of 2010.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests contributions in Tom's memory be sent to the James P. "Tom" Camerlo, Jr. Memorial Scholarship at the Colorado State University Foundation, P.O. Box 1870, Fort Collins, CO 80523-1870. Memorial contributions will establish a scholarship to support students with a background or career interests in the dairy industry. Checks should mention the James P. "Tom" Camerlo, Jr. Memorial Scholarship in the memo line.

"Truly, this is a sad day for dairy," said Smith. "For nearly 40 years, Tom has served as a champion for dairy farmers and positive influence in this industry. There are not words to describe what Tom meant to all of us."