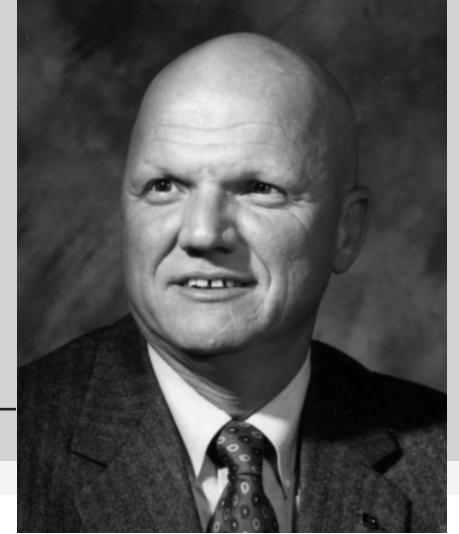




## DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARDS

Earl K. Harbaugh '61 Agr



### To Earl K. Harbaugh for his commitment to undergraduate education in the fields of entrepreneurship and agriculture.

Earl Harbaugh paid for his first year at Penn State with scholarships and the earnings from his first entrepreneurial venture, selling broiler chickens he had raised for his high school's vocational agriculture program and Future Farmers of America. Today, after a lifetime of business success, Harbaugh is a strong supporter of both entrepreneurship education and scholarships.

"Farming is the purest form of entrepreneurship," says Harbaugh, who comes from a dairy farming family in Franklin County, Pa. "When people ask me why they should donate to agricultural science research and education, I say, 'Do you eat?' Even when food comes in a microwavable container, it's still a product of agriculture."

The first in his family to go to college, Harbaugh had never seen the Penn State campus when his parents dropped him off in 1957 at the old Nittany Dorms. While his family helped him financially when they could, money was tight, and a succession of summer jobs helped him pay his tuition.

At various times, Harbaugh could be found chauffeuring visiting dignitaries to the train station or airport, patrolling with the campus police, or interning with Penn State Cooperative Extension. Through it all, college was a transformative experience that exposed Harbaugh to diverse people and ideas. And being part of a fraternity gave him teamwork and leadership skills that he would later use as a business owner.

After graduating with a degree in general agriculture in 1961, Harbaugh worked with the Penn State Cooperative Extension in Erie and in agricultural chemical sales before being recruited by the farmer-owners of a struggling John Deere dealership to revive its fortunes. Eventually, Harbaugh's business acumen brought him to the attention of Edwin Malzahn, founder of the Charles Machine Works, manufacturer of Ditch Witch underground construction equipment. In 1970, Malzahn asked Harbaugh to inaugurate the company's first specialized dealership in Northern Illinois.

"And that's how I started my business," recalls Harbaugh. "It meant moving my young family from western Pennsylvania to a Chicago suburb, Carol Stream. But by that point, I was no longer afraid of risk. I saw an opportunity, and I decided to take it."

Under Harbaugh's leadership, Ditch Witch Midwest grew from two to 60 employees and opened locations in Indiana and Wisconsin. In addition, Harbaugh started four more businesses in Carol Stream, all of them still family-owned and operated: Illini Power Products, Gen Power, Rentals Plus, and First Choice Equipment. Besides expanding his business interests, Harbaugh worked with his family to support community organizations including Delnor Hospital, Fox Valley Christian Action, Tri-City Health Partnership, Lazarus House, the Northern Illinois Food Bank, and the Salvation Army.

In recognition of his service, the city of Carol Stream, Ill., gave Harbaugh its first "Businessman of the Year" award in 1992. Harbaugh's commitment to education shows in his service as a trustee of Bradley University in Peoria, Ill., from 1985-1993. Professionally, he served as president of the Associated Equipment Dealers (AED), founded the AED Foundation, and received AED's Founder's Award. In 2008, his college fraternity, Delta Theta Sigma, gave him its distinguished alumnus award.

A lot has changed since Harbaugh was an undergraduate, but he always feels comfortable on campus. "It's like putting on a

shoe that fits. It's my beginning," he says. "Yes, the university has changed but so has everything else. The journey of life is about change."

Among Harbaugh's many contributions to Penn State are the Harbaugh Entrepreneurship Forum, which brings successful entrepreneurs to campus to speak about opportunities in agriculture, and the Earl and Kay Harbaugh Entrepreneurship Competition, which encourages students to develop their business ideas.

Harbaugh and his wife, Kay, are life members of the Penn State Alumni Association and have three children, Leanne, Scott, and Mark. While Earl Harbaugh remains chairman and CEO of Ditch Witch Midwest, his son Mark now serves as president.

