

# Chapter One

**1972-1982**

## **ILLINOIS CORN GROWERS ASSOCIATION**

Incorporated July 30, 1971

In preparing the history for the corn organizations, it became apparent that the one person who was really instrumental in getting the Illinois Corn Growers organization established was Rollie Main from Altona, IL. Rollie belonged to an investment club from Knox County who decided to go to Springfield and file for a charter for the organization. That way, they would have the name reserved to hold it without any political ramifications. Names of the original incorporators were:

John W. Curry, Victoria  
Housel Roberts, Altona  
Rolland Main, Altona  
John R. Block, Gilson  
Donald Love, Galva

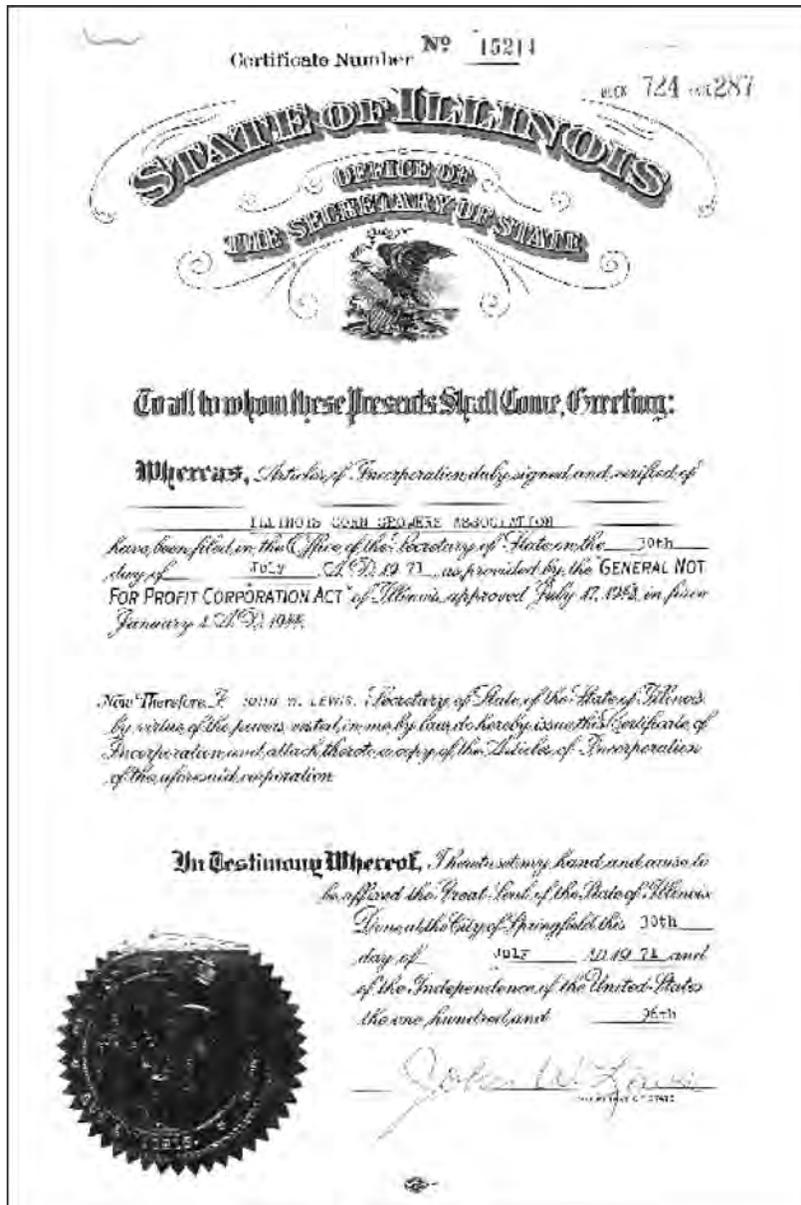
A copy of the incorporation papers can be found on the following two pages.

Previous to the filing of the charter, Rollie Main indicated that he was invited to a National Corn Growers board meeting in 1969 or 1970 where he was asked to serve as a director. At that time, he was serving as president of Knox County Farm Bureau, and he indicated that he did not want to take on any more responsibility until his tenure with Farm Bureau was over.

A second invitation to join National Corn came from Rollie's friend John "Bill" Curry, and he decided to get involved. First, here is some background on the National Corn Growers at this point in time, according to information from Rollie and confirmed by others interviewed. The founder and originator of the National Corn Growers Association and also the U.S. Feed Grains Council was Walter Goeppinger from Boone, IA. As Rollie stated, "Walter was a highly intelligent, influential and well-educated man whose family made a fortune from their carriage and buggy or wagon manufacturing business. Walter had a travel agency and advertised in *Prairie Farmer Magazine* and other national magazines for nice trips to different countries, which appealed to people who had the resources to travel in their maturing years. Through this business, Walter met a lot of interesting people from different states whom he invited to join his 'Corn Club'. Then

Walter began sponsoring a national corn grower contest where he identified some of the hands-on, good producers from various states. Walter was also a personal friend of Henry Wallace who was the Secretary of Agriculture back in the 40's under Franklin D. Roosevelt. He had a desire to perpetuate corn and was a great ambassador for corn.”

In the beginning, Walter’s “Corn Club” consisted mainly of producers from Iowa with seven or eight on their board. Rollie believed that the national organization had to change and become a federated organization, with state representation based on membership that elected their representatives. In 1971, Rollie agreed to accept a position on the national board. He noted, “Concurrently at the IFB annual meeting, a resolution was passed to have a corn growers organization.”



Fl. 25.00

FORM NP-29

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION  
UNDER THE  
GENERAL NOT FOR PROFIT CORPORATION ACT

BOOK 724 PAGE 288

(These Articles Must Be Filed in Duplicate)

(Do Not Write in This Space)  
Date Paid 7-30-71  
Filing Fee \$ 25.00  
Clerk

To JOHN W. LEWIS, Secretary of State, Springfield, Illinois.

We, the undersigned,

(Not less than three)

Name	Number	Street	Address City	State
JOHN W. CURRY	R. R. 1		Victoria,	Illinois
HOUSEL ROBERTS	R. R.		Altona,	Illinois
Rolland Main	R. R.		Altona,	Illinois
John R. BLOCK	R. R.		Gilson,	Illinois
DONALD LOVE	R. R.		Galva,	Illinois

being natural persons of the age of twenty-one years or more and citizens of the United States, for the purpose of forming a corporation under the "General Not For Profit Corporation Act" of the State of Illinois, do hereby adopt the following Articles of Incorporation:

- The name of the corporation is: ILLINOIS CORN GROWERS ASSOCIATION
- The period of duration of the corporation is: Perpetual  
(Please state "perpetual" or a definite number of years)
- The address of its initial Registered Office in the State of Illinois is: R. R. 1  
Victoria, Ill. (61485) County of Knox and  
(Zip Code)  
the name of its initial Registered Agent at said Address is: John W. Curry, R. R. 1, Victoria, Illinois 61485
- The first Board of Directors shall be 5 in number, their names and addresses being as follows:

Name	Number	Street	Address City	State
JOHN W. CURRY	R. R. 1		Victoria,	Illinois
HOUSEL ROBERTS	R. R.		Altona,	Illinois
ROLLAND MAIN	R. R.		Altona,	Illinois
JOHN R. BLOCK	R. R.		Gilson,	Illinois
DONALD LOVE	R. R.		Galva,	Illinois

5. The purpose or purposes for which the corporation is organized are: To further the use, market development, proper marketing, protection, legislative position, tariff consideration and efficient production of corn and furthermore, to do everything within the capabilities of the association which will benefit the commodity corn, as well as those who grow, transport, handle, sell, feed, process, export or otherwise come in contact with it.

Prior to a corn organization being formed, Rollie Main had several private discussions with Dr. Dale Butz, head of the Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB) Commodities Division and Harold Steele, president of IFB because there were some within Farm Bureau who had the desire to bring corn under the IFB family. Rollie's biggest concern was that since the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), IFB and Iowa Farm Bureau were the strongest farm organizations in the country, it would be hard for them to represent different commodities, such as dairy and corn, and be fair to each one. So even though Illinois Farm Bureau had done more for Illinois farmers than anyone else, Rollie believed corn growers should have an independent corn organization because it was their primary source of income. This organization could involve more people and have greater representation. Rollie felt that Dale Butz was probably the bedrock of what ultimately happened because he helped immensely.

In Rollie's words, "As an organization, corn growers were as poor as church mice in the formative years." Rollie didn't want to have a turf war over this organization so he made it clear that if IFB started this and wanted to take that name, they would just turn it over to them. Rollie's philosophy was that it needed to be a united organization for those who raise corn. He further noted, "Corn is the number one crop grown in the United States in relation to dollars of products bought, seed purchased and all the inputs it takes. In life there has to be a balance and you have to share things. When everyone wants to be number one, it really poses a challenge. There was a lack of team spirit for the first two or three years the organization began, because everyone wanted it 'my' way. It was just like it is today with our 'me' society instead of a 'we' society."

Larry Groce, who was hired by IFB in July of 1970 as the Assistant Director of the IFB Commodities Division for grain, was assigned to work with ICGA as a staff support in late 1972. In an interview with Larry, he thought it interesting to remind people of some of the history of events which took place in the late 60's and early 70's: Viet Nam War, man landed on the moon in 1969 and returned, assassinations during the 1968 presidential campaign with Robert Kennedy, lost people through various tragedies in that era, the country was struggling in many ways and there were huge carryover stocks at that time. The developing countries around the world offered opportunities for the United States to build those markets, to create markets, and to plant more grains. In the early 70's there were set-asides with about 50 million acres which were not planted, and more than half of that was devoted to corn. If you wanted to be in the USDA farm program, there were various supports which you needed to adhere to, including not planting all of your acres. That changed totally by the years 1973 and 1974, because of grains sales to Russia. In July of 1972 there were 700 million bushels of grain in total shipped to the former Soviet Union, and that dried up and then farmers began to farm fence row to fence row. Set-asides were eliminated, prices rose, and there was a great inflation period, with interest rates going from 5 or 6 percent up to 15 percent for mortgages by the early 1980's.

### **1972-73**

The first meeting of the Illinois Corn Growers Association was held at the Knox County Farm Bureau Building in Galesburg, IL on Friday, February. 18, 1972. Incorporators present were John Block, Rolland E. Main, John W. Curry, Don Love and Housel Roberts. John Block was chosen as

chairman of the meeting and Robert Tracy as secretary. The first office for the association was at the Knox County Farm Bureau building, and John Campen was the Knox County Farm Bureau manager. In an interview with John, he noted that Knox County Farm Bureau kept track of the membership records and all the other records when ICGA was first organized. Then when the ICGA signed a contract with the Illinois Agricultural Association (IAA) for management services, all the record keeping was moved to the IAA Building in Bloomington.

Officers were elected at the second meeting of the association held February 9, 1973. They included: John Block, President; Rolland E. Main, Vice President; and Robert Tracy, Secretary-Treasurer. Initial members of the newly formed group included: John Block, Rolland E. Main, John W. Curry, Don Love, Housel Roberts, Al Lambin, Ralph Froelich and Robert Tracy. Rollie Main noted, "In the early days the walk was frail and board members had to be strong in their philosophy, beliefs, and faith. The initial board was a good group of people who came in with the right attitude. All their expenses were paid on their own, as they received no per diem or compensation for travel reimbursement. The level of commitment and dedication was good."

The third meeting of ICGA was held October 1, 1973, and a working relationship agreement between ICGA and the Illinois Farm Bureau was discussed and was formally approved on December 11, 1973. Gerald R. Kleine was named acting Executive Secretary. Larry Groce, who was the Assistant Director of the IFB Commodities Division for grain, was assigned to work with ICGA. Larry was very instrumental in getting the framework started for the first board of directors which consisted of 18 members, 1 director for each of the 15 director districts with 3 at-large directors, one of which being an interlocking director from IFB. Larry drew up the districts for ICGA based on an agreement between IFB and ICGA using a hand calculator. Taking into consideration the corn production by county using a 5-year average, the state was grouped into districts to more or less represent production on somewhat of a balanced approach. Larry noted it was somewhat difficult to do because they were trying to consider whether this was a good match-up for these counties as far as working well together and ease of travel from one county to the next within the district. The original agreement stated that all directors were to be Farm Bureau members in good standing and that IFB would provide management for ICGA.

Next, the organization needed to get some members and adopted annual membership dues of \$10.00 for corn producers and \$25.00 for non-corn producers. It should be noted that at this period in time, ICGA was organized outside the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) umbrella, which meant that Illinois Corn members were not members of NCGA. DeKalb and Macon Counties were very instrumental in helping to get the membership going for ICGA

## **1973-74**

At a meeting held on March 15, 1974, new bylaws were adopted to replace the original bylaws of the association, and it was decided to set the first annual membership meeting for April 5, 1974, in Bloomington. Larry L. Groce was named as Coordinator for ICGA.

The first election of ICGA board members was done at the annual meeting, and they were as follows: Jim Carmichael, Bill Fordham, Rolland Main, Orin Taylor, Emil Steiner, Dain

Back row l-r: Lewis Asher,  
Orin Taylor, Richard Stone,  
John Ford, Marvin Campbell,  
Housel Roberts, unidentified;  
front row: Bill Furry, Harold  
Mooberry, Rolland Main,  
unidentified, Bill Fordham,  
Dain Friend



Picture provided by IFB Family of Companies

Friend, Harold Mooberry, Lewis Asher, Ken Gorden, Bill Furry, John Ford, Ken Stumpf, Marvin Campbell, Richard Stone, Housel Roberts, Jack Young, and Morris Barnard. The first committee structure appointed was three standing committees: Programs, Membership and Communications. Minutes recorded the total membership numbers on April 14, 1974, at 365, representing 48 counties. Of this total, 17 were associate members. Election of members to the board was done through caucuses held in each district. Following the annual meeting regular board meetings were held. (insert picture from Chapter One Pictures/A1-ICGA Officers 1974)

During the early years the board concentrated on building membership and held several membership drives. Many times, these membership drives were conducted within counties. Information on their activities was published in the “News for Corn Growers,” which was distributed four times per year.

At the July 15, 1974 meeting of the board, the following action was approved: to publish “Corn Grower News” four times per year, to request membership in the U.S. Feed Grains Council, to work for consent for a corn checkoff, to exhibit at the Illinois State Fair, and to set ICGA’s annual meeting to be in conjunction with the IAA annual meeting in December, 1974 in Chicago. President Main was directed to meet with IFB President Harold Steele concerning ICGA’s need for information services, stressing the importance of the same to Farm Bureau and pointing out the financial inability of ICGA to pay for such services.

### *Highlights from Larry Groce*

Larry noted that in addition to his work with ICGA, he also worked with the Illinois Soybean Association in trying to get the soybean checkoff passed. He was there for a failed checkoff referendum and then the one which passed in the winter or early spring of 1974, about the time the initial statewide ICGA Board was elected. As a sidebar, Larry noted that in his years of running the Ag Companies Export Division, he hired Lyle Roberts who had been with Growmark. Larry left IFB in the spring of 1979 and later Lyle Roberts moved to Illinois Soybeans.

*Pictures provided by IFB Family of Companies*



Larry Groce



Larry Groce on a crops tour

Larry related he attended the National Corn Growers annual meeting held in Des Moines, IA in March of 1974. He noted that he was probably not the most popular person there, because at that time ICGA had not joined with National. He met with Walter Goepfinger, who was the first chairman of the USFGC, in 1960-61 and was a long-time leader. Larry noted that he had the honor of serving on the USFGC for over twenty years and was chairman in 1993-94 with Eldon Gould as vice chairman representing the Illinois Corn Marketing Board. The first USFGC chairman from Illinois Corn was Maurice Gordon from Rantoul in 1989. Other chairs for the organization, now called the U.S. Grains Council (USGC), from Illinois included: Eldon Gould, Terry Wolf, and Wendell Shauman with Ron Gray in the officer chain to become chairman in 2014

## 1974-75

The second annual meeting of ICGA was held December. 12, 1974 in the Adams Room at the Palmer House in Chicago. The estimated U.S. corn crop production was 4.6 billion bushels and Illinois was at 860 million bushels. Membership at the end of the year was listed at 497.

At the February 1975 meeting, President Main and Coordinator Groce were authorized to prepare a statement calling for an immediate end to the U.S.D.A. monitoring system on corn. It was at this meeting that Larry Groce announced he would have limited time to function as coordinator for ICGA and Jeff Gain, who was the Director of Marketing Programs for IFB, offered his services until a replacement could be hired. There was also discussion at the meeting about moving the ICGA office from the Knox County Farm Bureau.

In March of 1975 Article V of the ICGA Articles of Incorporation were changed to make the purposes of ICGA substantially similar to the purposes of IFB so that services could be given on a free or less than cost basis to ICGA by IFB. Coordinator Groce announced that the IRS had granted ICGA tax exempt status under Section 501 c (5). President Main reported that there was

no problem with keeping the ICGA office in the Knox County Farm Bureau Building. IFB hired Mike Wagner in the IFB Commodities Division to work with ICGA, Illinois Contract Marketing Association (IMA) and Illinois Milk Producers Association (IMPA). Larry Groce resigned as Coordinator to become Assistant Manager of the Illinois Agricultural Service Company's Export Division. There was a problem identified for explaining the ICGA and NCGA relationship, and President Main agreed to prepare a uniform statement for the board to consider.

Other action approved in March included: 1) to be a sponsor of the 1975 Legislative Breakfast, and ICGA participated in that event annually after that; 2) encouraged the forming of county organizations; 3) to consider a voluntary checkoff program on corn production; 4) to develop a slide presentation to inform members and potential members of the successful market development programs carried out by USFGC; 5) to consider more frequent disseminations of Corn Grower News. The NCGA 1975 Annual meeting was scheduled to be at the Fort Des Moines Hotel, Des Moines, IA on April 2-4, 1975.

It was at the meeting held in April 1975 that the board voted to promote the concept of a checkoff for seed corn. But not until August of 1977 did, they officially authorize President Main to initiate negotiations for a seed corn checkoff. This was one of Rollie Main's original goals, because he thought a checkoff on seed corn wouldn't be political since they already collect from everyone. However, in the interview with Rollie, he noted that he lost that battle due to the influence of Owen Newlin from Pioneer.

Action taken by the board at their June 1975 meeting included moving the office from Knox County Farm Bureau to the Illinois Agricultural Association (IAA) Building, effective July 1, 1975; changing the title for Mike Wagner to Manager. They also sent a letter to Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz, supporting his action in the investigation of a grain inspection scandal. In the interview with Mike Wagner, he indicated his first action for ICGA was moving the ICGA office from Knox County Farm Bureau to the IAA Building. At that time, John Campen was Knox County Farm Bureau Manager. During this same time period, a statewide membership campaign was started which was supported by IFB.

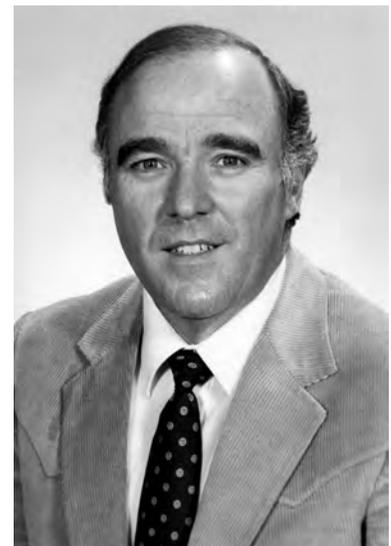
*Picture provided by IFB Family of Companies*

It was at the July 2, 1975, meeting of the board that there was discussion of the possibility of a national organization for corn. A suggestion was made to call it National Corn Growers Association.

The first travel mission approved by the board was to cooperate with the Illinois Soybean Association to sponsor a trip to Brazil. In order to increase membership, it was decided to hold a membership drive from December 1, 1975, through May 31, 1976, with a goal of recruiting 2800 members.

### *Highlights from Mike Wagner*

When Mike started working with corn growers, he and Jeff Gain from the IFB Commodities Division helped to get the original



Mike Wagner

structure for ICGA's relationship with IFB set up. IFB played a crucial role in getting the corn growers association going by offering a contract for office space and management for ICGA, and they were influential in getting the story out to the grassroots on why a state corn grower organization would be helpful. There were questions regarding the relationship and signing of a contract, including: What if ICGA and IFB had a different view on farm policy, and each was on a different side? So, it was put into the contract that each organization would notify the other if there was a disagreement and that satisfied those who had some qualms. This contract remained in place until 2021, when ICGA put its own management contract in place.

Rollie Main was president at the time Mike Wagner was working with ICGA, and Mike couldn't say enough about Rollie. As Mike stated, "Rollie was the most important leader in his forward thinking of where corn growers, both in the state and nationally, are today." In the beginning, ICGA had no funds for Rollie to attend any U.S. Feed Grains Council meetings or any other travel, and Rollie paid his own way to attend USFGC meetings and his own travel expenses. He spent a lot of time and effort in his role.

*History of National Corn* as related by Mike Wagner – As noted previously, the national organization in the beginning really consisted of Walter Goeppinger and a few of his friends. Mike drove the ICGA car to Boone, IA and picked up the national records from Walter and moved them to Illinois as they made the transfer to the new structure for National Corn Growers Association. The two states most involved and who put in the most time and effort in restructuring the national organization were Iowa and Illinois under the leadership of Therman Gaskill from Iowa and Rollie Main from Illinois. Mike noted, "Both of these states are really important to NCGA today. It was Rollie's idea to spend a weekend a month, usually in Chicago, to figure out the structure of the new National Corn Growers Association. One of the hardest parts was getting the two groups in Iowa to agree. Rollie was the person that led the compromise, had the thick skin, and did all that, although other states involved were Wisconsin, Indiana and Nebraska. At the end of the year, they had a structure that is similar to the organization today. The number of votes was based on participation or money, although this all took place prior to the checkoff in Illinois. Rollie Main, along with John Bill Curry, volunteered to have the first annual meeting of the NCGA in Illinois. The only stipulation was that Mike Wagner be in charge of the meeting in doing the planning and that he report to Rollie and Bill. So, the first meeting was held in Peoria, IL, with the first delegate session on December 15, 1977. Mike approached John Deere and got \$10,000 from them for the trade show and the opening reception to put on the meeting. That was the core of starting the National Corn Growers." Other states came to the meeting and Mike worked with the hotel to allow each state president a suite at no extra cost.

The other area in which Mike was involved was laying the groundwork for getting the Illinois checkoff passed. When Mike took Jeff Gain's place as Director of Commodity Programs with IFB under Dr. Dale Butz, John Campen became manager of ICGA, with corn growers being under Mike's administration in his position with IFB. ICGA played a vital role after getting the national organization started and in growing their membership to lay the groundwork and the need for a checkoff.

If you look from the early 1970's up through the next 25 years, Mike believes there are three individuals from Illinois who served in key leadership roles either in the state organization or the national organization who were responsible for taking the history of corn growers to where it is today. Those individuals were Rollie Main, Bill Mullins and Eldon Gould. In the beginning, Illinois had no funds and at one of the meetings Bill Mullins challenged all the board members by writing a check for \$10,000 and asked everyone to follow him. As Mike said, "that was a commitment and that statement and check really put a fire under the ICGA. Those three guys take the history of Illinois Corn up to modern days. Eldon and Rollie's foresight and understanding of agriculture put the wheels under the organization."

Mike's tenure as the staff support for ICGA was important in a lot of ways. He helped get NCGA where it is today, and he stayed involved even after moving to Ohio. He noted that when Missouri wanted to pass a national corn checkoff, ICGA Executive Director Scott Bidner, offered to fund the cost for printing a letter to all National Corn Grower members explaining their opposition to a national corn checkoff. Then Ohio Corn Growers mailed the letter and helped to defeat the initiative

### *Highlights from Rollie Main*

In relation to the national organization, Rollie noted there was an infamous meeting held at the Amana Colonies in Iowa. He had submitted a recommendation ahead of the meeting to change the image of the national corn growers, because it was known as the Walter Goeppinger Corn Club. In addition, he further recommended that this needed to be a federated organization with charters from states who belonged to the organization. Unbeknownst to Rollie, Mr. Goeppinger had lobbied all his friends to not support this recommendation, because he could see the end of his dominance. So, when the recommendation went to vote, it was defeated. However, over lunch Rollie visited with everyone, including Earl Foot from Kansas and Clayton Nichols from Wisconsin, who he considered to be a supportive father figure, noting that it was voted



Rollie Main

unanimously a year ago to start a federated organization but today they had defeated that decision. Rollie offered to tender his resignation because he felt in all good conscience he couldn't serve. After the meeting reconvened, Mr. Foot moved to reconsider the motion, Mr. Nichols seconded it and the motion carried. With this humbling experience, Rollie felt his actions were transparent and he committed to work hard to see that Illinois was committed to the national organization.

When the organization first began, Rollie noted one of the first important things to do was to hold a board meeting in Washington, DC to help the board members understand where decisions are made, how and why. Len Gardner from IFB helped set this up. Prior to going to DC, the effort was made to get a picture of a corn field to take to the representatives from Illinois as a way to get corn growers introduced on the national scene. They also focused on the benefits of having a true team in national corn growers.

In August of 1974, Larry Groce and Rollie attended the summer meeting of the USFGC which was held at a ski resort in the mountains of Vermont. ICGA was going to join the Council because they finally had enough money from membership dues. Two days before they left, Rollie's youngest son was involved in an accident and in critical condition. Rollie called Larry and said he couldn't go, but Larry thought he should be there. After talking with the doctor and his wife, Rollie decided to go ahead and attend the meeting because his son was going to be in intensive care for three more days. When he arrived at 1:30 in the morning, they didn't have a room for him, but did find a place for him to sleep. The next evening at the banquet, a TV was brought in which showed Richard Nixon resigning. Rollie noted, "He had never seen such chaos, because there were no outside lines except for three pay phones, and everyone was standing in line."

Another interesting chapter of Rollie's involvement with ICGA occurred in the early 80's when John Block was the Illinois Director of Agriculture. After the November election, Rollie found out that Earl Foot was instrumental in the reconsideration of the federated corn growers. He was also a close friend of Bob Dole from Kansas who was President Reagan's right-hand man on agricultural issues. Mr. Foot became a close personal friend of Rollie and called him every Monday to see how his crops were. Earl liked John Block and asked Rollie if Jack would be a good U.S. Secretary of Agriculture. Rollie indicated that he would be, as he was a farmer. The rest is history and John Block was an influential player at that point in time. When Mr. Foot passed away, Bill Mullins and Rollie chartered a plane, along with two past presidents of National Corn Growers Association, to go to the funeral. While standing in a lengthy line at the visitation, they noticed Bob Dole in line six people ahead of them. As Rollie noted, "It is surprising at how the world turns."

Another incident happened in planning a national meeting in Lincoln, NE. They needed a very visible keynote speaker. Earl Foot, who was later chairman of Kansas Corn Growers, said he thought he could get Mr. Dole to come if they would like to have him. However, there was one stipulation and that was that his travel would be at the expense of corn growers. Earl checked into the cost and noted it would be \$5,000. Earl put a check for \$500 in the hat and passed it around, and they raised enough money. That was quite a thing, to get that kind of money. It really showed the dedication, commitment and spirit of the organization. One historic thing Rollie noted was, "Farmers are independent and have their own identity, but sometimes that is an albatross."

When Rollie served as Chairman of the Public Relations Committee for National Corn, they were looking for a way to help inspire membership and create a team organization. A meeting was held at the O'Hare Hilton in Chicago, and this was at each person's expense. Rollie asked each person to bring a sample of their best corn in a zip lock bag to the meeting, noting that it couldn't have any personal identification such as confetti or die or anything like that. Then everyone was told there would be a contest announced after everyone arrived. Rollie indicated he would personally pay \$1,000 to anyone who could draw a perfect 3 7/16 circle free hand. Of course, no one did this; and Rollie said that proved no one is perfect. There was even an engineer present with all the tools. Then they broke for lunch, and Rollie requested that they leave their bags of corn by their nametag. The corn was then put in a bowl with the identification on the bottom of the bowl. Rollie stated, "Everyone thinks they have brought the best corn. Anyone that can pick out their own corn and do that without cheating gets \$1,000." Of course, that didn't happen either. Rollie then stated, "Therefore, at least for this group, in the eyes of God all committed that none of us is perfect. In other words, corn is not better in Nebraska than Indiana. So we have to accept the fact that all of us have to be team players – it is a 'we' thing, not a 'me' thing." This was the message Rollie didn't want them to ever forget.

Another situation Rollie remembered was the time when Walter Goeppinger wanted him to go to DC to give testimony at a congressional hearing. Rollie was to testify right after the wheat millers and bakers' union who had their presidents, CEO's and whole entourage of support present. Rollie was to give testimony that had been prepared by Walter and had already been submitted to the members of the committee. So, Rollie indicated to those present that he could read the testimony; but he felt it was redundant in his opinion because everyone had a copy. He further indicated he was a producer from Illinois, affiliated with National Corn Growers and had a problem with the process of talking about farm programs when the people present didn't begin to understand all of this. Rollie further indicated that rather than telling them what to do he would be glad to share his opinions. He thought it was the government's role to support the constitution and create an environment that could be competitive. The chairman of the committee indicated that Rollie didn't need to read the testimony, but he did have a couple of questions. This created the most pleasant environment, because Rollie then had a dialogue with the committee. When they were through with their questions, the chairman asked Rollie to come out and shake hands with the committee members. This was something that was never done, and that blew Rollie's mind.

Since Rollie was unable to get a seed corn checkoff put into place, he wanted to get a checkoff created in Illinois. However, in order to start a checkoff in Illinois, permissive legislation needed to be obtained from the legislature. (A note of information - Kansas had the first checkoff program and Iowa the second.) After a lot of work on the legislation, it was finally passed, and the date had been set for a referendum vote. Rollie was at a meeting in Bloomington and was driving home when he heard on the radio that President Jimmy Carter had just imposed the corn embargo. After all the challenging work to get the checkoff legislation passed, this was devastating news; and in Rollie's words, "He knew they were dead in the water to pass a checkoff vote, as he knew enough about politics to know it would be voted down. So, he had to put on a game face, but this was the last straw." He thought in 10 years with the organization he had given his best shot and it was now time to move on. Not only did he lose the seed corn checkoff but now the corn checkoff. At about

*Pictures provided by IFB Family of Companies*



Rolland Main



USDA official, Lewis Asher, George Anselm, unidentified, Dain Friend

that time, Bill Mullins came on the scene from DeKalb County, and he was what Rollie called his lifesaver.

In summary, Rollie noted that serving on the ICGA was very satisfying and he had the opportunity to meet so many interesting people. Some of the benchmarks noted above are memories Rollie will never forget.

Even though Rollie didn't accomplish his goals for the organization, it should be noted that he laid the groundwork for the organization, which is going strong today.

## 1975-76

The third annual meeting was held December 11, 1975, at the Palmer House in Chicago in conjunction with the IFB Annual Meeting. Awards were presented to the top three counties for outstanding membership: Bureau, Tazewell and Christian, and a meritorious service award was presented to Knox County for their work in the formative years.

The committee structure was changed at the January 1976 meeting to three new committees called membership, research and market development. The legislative breakfast for this year was scheduled in Springfield for April 14, 1976, and the board sent a letter to the Department of Ag expressing concern with the date being during planting season. At the February meeting there was discussion about the pros and cons for a checkoff, and three distinct types of checkoffs were identified: legislative, volunteer and seed corn. It was suggested to contact soybeans, Iowa Corn, sorghum and wheat to get copies of their programs.

The board decided to meet in Washington, DC February 29-March 2, 1976, to do legislative visits but it was noted the cost of the trip would be paid by the board members. The manager was encouraged to make more concerted efforts to get wider media coverage. Also, at this meeting

it was noted that Harold Mooberry, Housel Roberts and Rolland Main had met with Iowa Corn Growers Association and Bill Curry, NCGA President, about forming a structurally improved National organization.

In June of 1976 it was voted to adopt a Market Development and Research Fund and a committee was appointed to manage the fund. One of the first actions was to fund \$1,000 toward Lowell Hill's research project at the University of Illinois.

When the board met in July of 1976, it was announced that the U.S. Feed Grains Council had a tour scheduled to the Far East – Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Philippines, Malaysia and Hong Kong—on August 27-September 17. A meeting was to be scheduled with the states of Wisconsin, Kansas, Nebraska, Indiana and Illinois to discuss the possibilities of a national organization. Resolutions were recommended to be presented to the IFB Tentative Resolutions Committee.

Total membership listed at the August meeting was 1736. Bureau County had inquired about the possibility of sending out their own dues notices and keeping their own records. The board voted to authorize a pilot project for those counties interested in doing their own billings to have the State Office send the notices to the county. The county would send them out and collect the money and would then transmit the dues to the State Office on a monthly basis. A cost analysis would be done for this process. It was also voted to change the dues. A change in the membership dues was announced. A regular membership would increase from \$10 to \$20 and an associate membership from \$20 to \$25, with all new members signed as of August 1, 1976, paid through 1977. An incentive program for signing new members included: 1 member = corn top pen; 5 members = thermometer or briefcase; and a goal for the annual meeting was for each director to sign 10 new members and a goal of 100 new members per district.

It was noted that proposed bylaws for a National Corn Growers Association had been drafted, and a couple of meetings of states had been held.

### *Highlights from William (Bill) Mullins*

Bill indicated he got started with Illinois Corn Growers because of the low price for corn and the lack of profitability. His dad was president of DeKalb County Farm Bureau for eighteen years. Illinois Farm Bureau had a Corn Committee, but Bill felt it was important for corn to be represented as a commodity themselves. IFB was supportive of ICGA in the fact that they gave them the first staff support – Larry Groce. Eventually, the organization grew away from IFB and became a stand-alone organization and hired their own executive director. Both IFB and ICGA



Bill Mullins speaking at Past Director Event in 2012

were important, as IFB could have a general impact on agriculture, while ICGA could have a specific impact on the corn commodity.

Bill's dad always said if you want to get something done, you need to begin doing it. Since Bill was interested, he started DeKalb County Corn Growers. The first director from DeKalb County on the ICGA board was Joe Faivre. Bill served as president of DeKalb County and later as secretary of ICGA.

Bill always thought it was a promising idea to affiliate with National Corn Growers, but he felt it needed to be a true national format. Bill Curry was the first president of National before the new structure began. The NCGA bylaws adopted June 16, 1981, put in director terms of 3 three-year terms. At that time, there were forty-six people on the NCGA Board. Bill served as Legislative Vice President in 1979 and then became president and later the first chair of the National Corn Development Foundation (NCDF). He felt that he tried to represent Illinois while serving on National. However, he noted he did have to be careful publicly that it didn't appear he was in a click with the Illinois group. When Bill served as president, he had a spot for everyone in the organizational structure, because they didn't have any staff. He felt that's how you learned who the dedicated leaders were. It was an interesting time. Bill stated that a lot of farmers don't have the capability, knowledge and experience to put things into wording, so staff can do the research to help with that. However, you need involvement of both the grower and staff.

Bill noted that at the end of 1979 National Corn Growers Association had a loss of \$69,000 and had to borrow money to pay their staff. So, as has been noted earlier in this document, Bill borrowed \$60,000 in 1980 and co-signed the loan with the NCGA board. At this time, there was a lot of support from agri-industry as they saw value in corn growers being represented in Washington. For example, someone from Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) cannot be as effective as corn growers in speaking for an issue related to the corn industry. As long as there was agreement with the issue, National would make an effort to go out and support agri-industry. Staley and Cargill took Bill to Washington in their private plane a couple of times to testify to give extra support.

Representation of states to National was based on production and membership. It was important that Illinois increase their membership to get grassroots producers on the board. The Corn Yield Contest used to be the generator for finances for NCGA, and it still is a key factor today, but the grassroots needed to be involved as well. The people serving on the national board are representing both production and politics, which are both important. Bill made several trips to Des Moines, IA because Iowa withdrew twice from NCGA. According to Bill, with Iowa being one of the few states with a checkoff, they became frustrated with other states telling them what to do when they didn't have the resources to support NCGA. The concession to get Iowa back within the NCGA fold was to move the office to Des Moines, IA. However, the other states weren't comfortable with that, and a survey was conducted. From the survey, it was determined that St. Louis was the geographic center of corn belt production and Missouri took more of a neutral position on issues; so, the office was moved to St. Louis. Bill had to convince Iowa they were much stronger united than as separate entities. Bill said he can't imagine how much Illinois, Iowa and National Corn have made farmers. They improved their profitability and things that had to be done.

What concerned Bill the most was when the checkoff grew and NCGA got money, they hired more staff. The growers then tended to be more complacent because the staff was doing things. However, a good balance of staff was needed to keep the organization professional, and growers were needed to keep the grassroots flavor. Also, because the checkoff dollars could not be used for legislative work, which made it necessary to split NCGA leadership between membership and checkoff, thus creating NCGA and the National Corn Development Foundation (NCDF). In DC, NCGA had an executive director (Mike Hall) and one secretary (Maude) who both did a tremendous job. The organization today has professional staff, but they also have committed grower participation.

As Bill noted, "Illinois passing the checkoff helped with the balance in the National organization because of our size and it neutralized Iowa. Nebraska and Minnesota were strong, and Wisconsin came in with good leadership. It just kind of healed some of the wounds that were there. Therman Gaskill was very instrumental in getting the Iowa checkoff program. Originally, there were two Iowa corn grower organizations and Jack Parsons from Burlington, Iowa was the president of the group, which accepted affiliation with National. He was more of a unity type thinker. In the two Iowa organizations, there was an old guard in one place and new guard in another. Therman got control of Iowa corn growers and brought in some of the old guard which became more effective in the transition. "

On January 4, 1980, President Carter put on the grain embargo to the Soviet Union. Bill was out in Secretary of Agriculture Bergland's office at the time, and Secretary Bergland was not aware President Carter was going to put the grain embargo on. As a result of the embargo, all the representatives that had sales to Russia didn't have a buyer for their corn and the farmers were in a financial bind because the price of corn went down at a time when it was not profitable to raise corn. Bill noted, "NCGA got permission to go to Moscow, without any governmental authority, to try to open the lines of communication and Mike Hall and I met with the Export Club (purchase entity for Russia at that time). This was in October and the embargo was put on in January. They were anxious to meet with them and were treated very nicely. The protocol was to go to the Ag Attaché from the United States, who claimed he had not received any communication from the Export Club. However, the next morning the Ag Attaché was in the Export Club office and that opened up the opportunity to begin trying to heal the wound, fix the problem, and build trade back again." Bill gives Corn Growers a lot of credit for taking the initiative to do that.

During Bill's term on NCGA, he made thirty trips to Washington in two years testifying and meeting with different people. Following Bill's return from Russia, there was too much corn in government storage, which depressed the prices even more. Bill had an appointment with John Block from Illinois, who had been appointed Secretary of Agriculture and he remembers sitting in Secretary Block's office and saying, "We need to do something about set-aside." Block indicated he didn't have the budget for it. Bill said to him, "You have 6 billion bushels of corn, you loaned the money out, and now you have received the corn and are storing corn which is going out of condition. It's costing you to store it. Why don't you give that corn to the farmer for not producing corn this year?" That was the beginning of the payment in-kind and how the government got funding to create that program. Block wanted to be more conservative and implemented a two-year effort to get back to a reasonable carryover. Then there was a drought the

same year as the payment in-kind so in the end, that all happened in one year. Then, according to Bill, corn prices were up to \$5.00 from \$2.00. He noted that Corn Growers had a big part of making that happen.

In Bill's words, "One of the big projects to come from Corn Growers was creating the ethanol industry in the United States. Iowa Corn had one of the first checkoff programs, and they had done a lot of research on ethanol. The corn from Iowa was kind of land locked, making them one of the last ones to sell because geographically, Illinois corn was closer to the river. National was promoting individual states to have checkoffs so that they could fund on a national basis. Illinois fought hard to get the Illinois checkoff passed." In Bill's opinion, the first vote failed because Illinois was going for a bigger checkoff at ½ cent per bushel. This was a higher rate than any of the other states with a checkoff. Bill did show me a published article from the NCGA annual meeting in Minnesota that talked about Illinois going for a bigger checkoff. (Note: Although I could not find documentation of the ½ cent rate, it appears that the rate may have later gotten changed in the Enabling Legislation to ¼ cent. From what I could gather, this may have been a compromise to get other organizations in the state to be supportive of a checkoff program.)

The NCGA convention in 2013 had 6,000 people, which is now a combined meeting including corn, soybeans, wheat and sorghum. As Bill noted, a lot of our membership belongs to both ICGA and Illinois Soybean Association. Allen Aves from Illinois was president of American Soybean Association (ASA) when Bill was president of NCGA, and they saw each other more at the airport than when they were back in their own county.

To show how industry and corn worked together, Bill showed me a picture of John Block meeting with President Reagan, himself and Martin Andreas who served on the Corn Grower Industry Committee. Bill had indicated it would be good for them to get together and talk to each other before talking to President Reagan, so Martin paid for a room for this discussion, although he was not present in the meeting. Others included in the meeting were the IFB President, Soybean President, and Wheat Growers President. It was decided the President was going to go around the room to let each farm organization or commodity group make a statement of their industry. All of them made statements that could be agreed upon by the others so that there were no controversial issues. When it came time for a press conference, Bill and the IFB President had previously agreed that IFB would be the spokesman instead of having each of the commodity groups speak and that's what happened.

Bill also noted that Orion Samuelson from WGN was instrumental in helping corn growers communicate with their constituents. It was a two-way street with Bill communicating with Orion and Orion communicating with Bill any time they had a meeting or something newsworthy. Bill knew that by contacting Orion the



ORION SAMUELSON

WGN-720

Orion Samuelson, media



John Block on right talking with attendees



Dinner at NCGA Convention in 1977

*Pictures provided by IFB Family of Companies*

information would get out. Bill would call him before his flight back from Washington to give him fresh news. In turn, Corn Growers got big coverage because Orion was the top farm broadcaster for the Midwest, and Bill thought working with industry and getting communication out was good.

By serving in the corn organizations, Bill stated that he gained a broader perspective of how state and national organizations work, how Springfield and Washington work politically, and gained leadership experience in serving in the offices of secretary on the ICGA board, NCGA legislative chair and NCDF president. All of this was a big learning experience and made him feel like anyone who is willing to participate, is in the right place at the right time, and has a good opportunity can make some changes as a result.

Some of the most prominent issues which Bill felt happened during his term were: passing the Illinois checkoff, re-establishing trade with Russia, helping to create the payment in-kind, the set-aside program, expanding the ethanol industry and building NCGA to an effective entity in the corn industry. Building membership for the national organization was a priority, and Illinois helped to start county organizations, which made Illinois more effective. Promoting the yield contest made it easier to get memberships.

Larry Groce and Mike Wagner helped the ICGA get started. Bill remembers an Illinois convention in Bloomington (or Springfield) where they had a square-dancing activity in the parking garage of the hotel. It was quite well attended.

## **1976-77**

In November of 1976, the board voted to contract with a company called Comco to produce their newsletter on an issue-by-issue basis. It was noted that ICGA would host a Korean Swine Industry Team on Nov. 10-13.

The fourth annual meeting was held on December 9, 1976, at the Palmer House in Chicago. It was voted to affiliate with the newly organized National Corn Growers Association and to send \$10 per member to NCGA.

Mike Wagner was directed at the January 1977 meeting to send out ICGA activity information to all the county farm bureaus on a monthly basis.

At the February meeting, it was voted to have President Main appoint a committee to meet with the Land of Lincoln Soybean Association to discuss the possibility of a joint annual meeting of ICGA and Land of Lincoln Soybean Association, but later in the year Soybeans indicated they were not interested. The board met in DC on February 21, 1977, for legislative visits. The membership total at that time was listed at 1157. DeKalb Ag Research gave ICGA \$4,000 to use for programming and the board allocated \$1,000 to Lowell Hill's BCFM research project. The board came up with a cost of production per bushel of \$2.28.

Gerald Carney reported on meetings he had attended regarding Lock and Dam 26. A board member attendance policy was adopted.

In July of 1977, the board voted to change their agreement with IFB in regard to a conflict with ICGA and IFB policies and gave the Executive Committee the authority to make the final approval of a new manager. However, it was noted that Dale Butz and IFB would screen the applicants. John Campen was hired as the new manager to replace Mike Wagner.

Checkoff Discussion – Bill Mullins reported on the checkoff committee discussion at the August 1977 meeting, and he listed the possibilities for checkoffs. At the November meeting it was voted to give President Main authorization to instruct the Executive Committee of ICGA to bring forth a plan on a corn checkoff program.

NCGA - With the newly formed NCGA, the board had to determine who would be delegates to the meeting. It was determined that the first twelve delegates would come from the ICGA Board, the 13th delegate would be appointed from the largest membership county, the 14th delegate would be an ICGA board member, the 15th delegate would be from the second largest member county, the 16th delegate an ICGA board member, etc. Terms for the NCGA directors were drawn by lot with the following results: 1-year terms for George Anselm and John Curry, 2-year terms for Harold Mooberry and Rolland Main and 3-year terms for Dain Friend and William Mullins. It was voted to invoice NCGA for those transferred from National to State membership at \$5 per member.

Pictures provided by IFB Family of Companies



Shows tallying of votes for the referendum



John Campen

### *Highlights from John Campen*

When Mike Wagner moved to a different position within the Commodities Division, someone was needed to work with ICGA, and John expressed an interest and was subsequently hired by IFB. At that time, Jeff Gain was the number two man within the Commodities Division with Dale Butz being the Commodities Division director. Then Jeff Gain was hired by American Soybean Association (ASA) as executive director. Mike Wagner moved to his position, and John moved to Mike's position as manager for ICGA.

John noted when he was hired, he was the only paid staff for Illinois Corn. Secretarial help was provided by the Commodities Division of IFB. During the time of promoting the second referendum vote for the checkoff, a communications person was hired by the name of Melody Taylor to help put together a campaign to get a favorable vote. Melody and John went down to Springfield to watch the tally of votes for the referendum.

To get a checkoff program in Illinois, enabling legislation had to be approved in Springfield which ultimately had to be signed by the governor. The first step for the ICGA board was drafting the enabling legislation, and that process took a couple of years. Then the legislation was introduced and passed in the legislature. It was noted that at this time in history, Jack Fisher was in the Commodities Division of IFB as well as Richard Clemmons and the Division was headed up by Dean Sears. All of these people helped to get the legislation passed.

As previously noted, the original board members and original leaders footed the cost for their own expenses for attending ICGA board meetings, USFGC meetings, and any other meetings attended on behalf of ICGA. These were dedicated leaders to use their own funds to work for the association and also to get the checkoff put into place. This was their contribution to get the organization started, and John noted this is probably not recognized often enough. In fact, no expenses were funded to board members until after the checkoff referendum program was put into place.

Funding for both the first and second referendum votes was obtained from independent agribusiness members of the U.S. Feed Grains Council (USFGC), primarily the seed industry and companies such as ADM. In John's opinion, the major impact on the failed vote in the first referendum was the 1980 grain embargo. This affected the general attitude of farmers. The first referendum vote was a walk-in vote at County Extension Offices and the second was done by mail-out ballot to around 250,000 producers. About 70,000 ballots were returned. This was probably one of the largest statewide mail-out ballots done by the IL Department of Agriculture, who handled the referendum using an ASCS list. The Department spent a lot of time weeding out all of duplicates from Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) list, and it was quite an undertaking. One thing that helped to pass the second referendum was the timing and the fact that 1982 was a huge production year and it appeared there would be a huge surplus of corn. Growers had more of an attitude that they needed to have a checkoff to find a home for all the surplus corn. Also, the general attitude of producers with the mail-out ballot approach was key in getting the referendum passed. More producers were favorable toward the checkoff at this time but like everyone else, producers could get busy and not have time to drive to a polling place, or even forgot to make the effort on a certain date.

After the enabling legislation was passed, the Illinois Director of Agriculture appointed a Temporary Corn Marketing Committee to help the Department of Ag set up the logistics. This committee then created the Illinois Corn Marketing Act which spelled out how the board would be set up and was the governing document and basis of the formation of the ICMB and the districts it would use. Those appointed to serve on the Temporary Committee were Director of Ag Larry Werries, Lou Faivre from Malta, Clarence Buchanan from Lawrenceville, William Keltch from Clifton, Dain Friend from Warrensburg, William Fordham from Ohio, Gerald Carney from Girard and Marvin Campbell from Coulterville.

After the referendum passed, the first board of directors was elected which included a director to represent each of the fifteen districts. Upon commencement of the first board, they had no funds until they started collecting them from the first purchasers. Therefore, the ICGA used their own budget to cover the refunds for several months and for covering costs of printing forms sent to the elevators and all the mailings. Once ICMB received their money from the first purchasers, they reimbursed ICGA. ICGA's main source of income at that time would have been membership dollars.

When the Illinois Corn Marketing Board began, ICGA submitted projects to ICMB just like other organizations requesting funding. Within the first year or so of the ICMB's existence, they got involved with funding of national organizations such as NCGA, USFGC, and U. S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF). The main focus for checkoff dollars was to be used for utilization focused research rather than production research. One of the significant research projects that John Campen recalled was on grain quality with a researcher from the University of Illinois by the name of Lowell Hill. At that time, the U of I had a major program in the whole quality area. Other projects John recalled were with Western Illinois University (WIU) on doing better marketing of corn and a couple of projects with Southern Illinois University (SIU) with one on fructose and one on livestock.

## 1977-78

Membership reported at the January meeting was 1900. Membership drives were scheduled between January and March 1978 with the same incentives. At the June meeting it was voted to change the membership dues to \$30 for regular members for 1 ½ years and \$37.50 for associate members for 1 ½ years effective June 20, 1978.

Dale Butz from IFB presented a proposal to the board on Commodity Group Relations at the June meeting. Rather than accept the proposal, the board recommended a study committee made up of ICGA, Land of Lincoln Soybean Association and IAA to look at improving our effectiveness in representing our respective organizations. At the July meeting, the board voted to pursue the development of a policy communication committee between IFB and Illinois commodity groups. Consequently, the IAA Business Services Committee met with members of ICGA and the Land of Lincoln Soybean Association (LOLSA). At its November 14 meeting, ICGA voted to adopt the proposal on the IFB Commodity Group Relationship.

Market Development – Action taken at the July meeting was to accept resolutions to support the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) of USDA for invaluable assistance in foreign market development programs, to urge Congress to appropriate more funds for market development and urge FAS and USDA to present more aggressive budget requests.

At the April meeting it was voted to hold a joint annual meeting with LOLSA at the Annual Corn-Soybean Conference and that was later scheduled for Jan. 31-Feb. 2, 1979, in Champaign. Advance registration for the conference was \$35 for a couple and \$25 for a single. The ICGA board voted to give an award for the most innovative new use for corn.

The Legislative Committee reviewed the NCGA resolutions at the July 1978 meeting and the board accepted resolutions on target price, energy, farm organization cooperation, transportation, foreign markets, grain agreements, gasohol, aflatoxin, crop rotating and chemicals.

*Checkoff* – The executive committee had met and discussed a legislative seed corn checkoff with no referendum with the producer being able to receive a refund upon request. The board voted at their January meeting to pursue a checkoff. At the February meeting, it was noted that Bureau and DeKalb Counties had sent letters to ICGA asking for a corn checkoff. Rollie Main reported at the March meeting that he had met with Funk Seeds Company concerning a corn checkoff. A corn checkoff proposal was presented to the Business Services Committee noting that this would be at the first point of sale via referendum, proceeds would be refundable upon request, and there would be a producer referendum. It was voted at this meeting to proceed with a corn checkoff program as outlined. In April, the board reviewed the legislative public act which had to be passed by the General Assembly in regard to a corn checkoff and suggested some changes. Bill Mullins reported at the June meeting that things were moving slowly in regard to the checkoff, and it was voted to embark on a course of action to change the IFB policy to read that a referendum was not required prior to the effective date of a corn checkoff. Then in July approval was given for Jack Young to ask for suitable wording of benefits of no referendum, before pursuing a legislative checkoff. He was also to recommend a time schedule, costs, and availability of refund for the proposed checkoff program.

At the August 2, 1978 meeting, the board voted to support a legislated corn checkoff for market promotion, development, research and education, if such legislation provided for the following: producers could get a refund, the program was to be administered by a board with a majority to be bona fide producers, a provision that checkoff monies could be spent for the purpose intended, and a provision calling for producers to periodically vote or in some way indicate whether the program should be continued.

Further discussion regarding the corn checkoff took place at the November 14, 1978, meeting. A meeting was held the day prior to the board meeting with Dick Davidson. Then at the December meeting John Campen reviewed the checkoff enabling legislation and the board voted to make some changes including setting the maximum rate at  $\frac{1}{4}$  cent per bushel and require a producer referendum in subsequent years to raise the rate above  $\frac{1}{4}$  cent per bushel, suggested some wording for Section 16 in regard to the checkoff rate, and a change in Section 6 to read: "a proposed amendment to an existing corn marketing program may be requested by petition to the Director by five percent (5%) of the affected producers from each respective district".

NCGA - ICGA was entitled to 15 delegates to the NCGA annual meeting. The board reappointed John Curry and George Anselm to three-year terms on NCGA and also added Bill Furry as a director. At the November meeting, the board voted to send \$100 to NCGA to defray expenses of Russ Arndt's trip to the Multilateral Trade Negotiations in Geneva.

## 1978-79

The Annual Meeting Committee was authorized to go ahead with plans for the 1980 Annual Meeting. At the April meeting, it was voted to set up a separate account for promotion funds. The board voted to participate with LOLSA in an Annual Soy-Corn conference at their June 1979 meeting, and the tentative date was set for Feb. 6-8, 1980.

In regard to membership, each director was challenged to take one county in his district and sign 100 new members, coordinating that with someone on the county farm bureau board. Each county farm bureau would receive a \$5 refund per new member.

The USFGC meeting was scheduled for Aug. 19-22 in Vail, CO; and the board voted to oppose the suggested changes in the USFGC bylaws.

*Checkoff* - Both old and new members of the Executive Committee met with Leonard Gardner and Wilbert Engelke from IFB on February 8, 1979, to discuss the checkoff. Representative Richard H. Brummer, a Democrat from the 54th District introduced the legislative bill, HB903, into the Illinois House of Representatives on March 14, 1979. Legislation language listed the checkoff assessment at  $\frac{1}{4}$  cent per bushel with a provision that after 5 years of operation, a vote of  $\frac{2}{3}$  majority of the entire corn marketing board could increase the rate not to exceed  $\frac{1}{2}$  cent per bushel. (A copy of this legislation is on file at the State Office.) Senate sponsors of the legislation were Senator Terry Bruce (Democrat-54th district) and Senator Stanley B. Weaver (Republican-52nd district). An article published in the February 25, 1980, IFB FarmWeek publication, along with the photo below, noted that Governor Thompson had received 102 bushels of corn, 1 bushel



Rollie Main, Governor Thompson  
and Director of Ag John Block

*Pictures provided by IFB Family of Companies*

from each county in the state, symbolizing the amount of corn produced in the state annually. Money from the sale of the corn was donated to the University of Illinois for use in corn quality research. The article also noted that the governor had proclaimed March 3-7 as “King Corn Week.”

John Campen gave a checkoff update at the April 5 meeting, and there was discussion on the checkoff amendments and Friday’s hearing. The board voted at their June 13, 1979, meeting to empower President Main to make a recommendation to the Director of Agriculture for temporary corn marketing committee members. It was noted members should be composed of four ICGA members and one representative from each of the following organizations: American Agricultural Movement (AAM), IFB and Illinois Farmers Union (IFU). In a checkoff update at the July meeting, John Campen noted that IAA was supportive of the checkoff program. Overall support was good, and the governor would possibly sign the bill next week. On August 14, the governor signed the legislation. At the August meeting which was held at the Illinois Department of Agriculture in Springfield, minutes noted that the publicity plan and revised timetable for the checkoff were reviewed.

NCGA – The board voted to continue with the past policy for selection of delegates to the NCGA annual meeting. Rollie Main and Harold Mooberry were elected to another one-year term on NCGA, and Maurice Gordon was elected to replace John Curry for his unexpired three-year term. The NCGA resolutions were reviewed by the board.

## 1979-80

President Main appointed the following to a Special Funding Study Committee: Lou Faivre, Chairman; LeRoy Rieke, Maurice Gordon, Gerald Carney, and Ken Dalenberg. The committee reported at the September meeting that they were placing a strong emphasis on seed corn companies' representation hoping to sign up all seed corn dealers as members. Lou Faivre was authorized to approach DeKalb Ag with an offer of \$30 per farmer-dealer or no less than \$20. This same committee also met with IAA regarding the relationship between ICGA and IAA.

The membership total reported at the Nov. 20, 1979, meeting was 1477. The 1980 membership program was adopted, noting the intent to return funds to county farm bureaus or county corn grower organizations, providing they showed an interest in the program. A membership plaque was awarded to Will County for their outstanding efforts in their membership drive. At the June meeting, the board adopted a membership program for a ½ year membership as of July 1, 1980. They also discussed the county organizations and voted to give them one-half of the state's share of dues collected, provided they met the goal of the membership drive. At the July meeting, it was voted to support the NCGA dues increase.

At the November meeting, guidelines on the Farm Bureau-Commodity Group relationships were discussed and the revised guidelines approved.

At the Jan. 4, 1980, meeting, it was voted to send a telegram to President Carter, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Bergland and our senators concerning the embargo. Also, the board voted to support the bill to eliminate the sales tax on farm machinery. In August, the board voted to send a letter to Ken McMillan expressing ICGA's appreciation for his support on the sales tax bill.

The board approved sending a letter to USFGC asking them to change the name of their organization so as not to imply a government agency. It was also decided to cooperate with LOLSA and Iowa on a Corn-Soybean tour to be held Aug. 20-21, 1980.

One of the promotional programs begun this year was on fructose. The board voted to proceed with some fructose promotions – one in the quad Cities as a co-sponsor with the Iowa Corn Promotion Board and the other at a Physician's Practice Opportunity Fair by preparing a folder on fructose. John Campen was asked to inform county farm bureau marketing committees and women's committees of the availability of our fructose promotion program. Further, Mr. Campen was requested to explore a program with ADM and/or Batterlite to design a fructose promotion presentation for High School Home Economics classes.

*Checkoff* – John Campen reported on the “fly-around” and other aspects of the checkoff publicity plan. The first referendum vote on the checkoff held on March 6, 1980, was unsuccessful. The voting was done by a “walk-in” vote at the county extension offices. The vote was: yes - 6,272 (30%) and no – 14,635 (70%). The Board voted to thank the IAA Board of Directors and the Agribusiness Committee for their support and cooperation on the corn checkoff referendum.

At the March board meeting, President Main appointed a committee consisting of the members of the Executive Committee and chairmen of each committee (members were Rolland Main, Dain Friend, Louis Faivre, Maurice Gordon, George Anselm, Gerald Carney and Richard Faivre) to

develop plans for a voluntary checkoff. The committee's proposal for the voluntary checkoff was approved at the April 8, 1980, meeting.

NCGA - Dain Friend and Williams Mullins were elected to another term on the NCGA Board.

## **1980-81**

At the June meeting, the Executive Committee was authorized to negotiate for management services for the yield contest, National office and NCGA Annual Meeting. In December, it was approved to pay for the basic hotel room expense to the 1982 NCGA Annual Meeting for the group of directors signing the most new members.

*Membership* - In November, the board voted to increase Illinois' membership dues to \$30 effective January 1, 1981. In addition, the board approved supporting county corn grower organizations with \$5 for each new member signed and \$1 for each renewal, upon request by that county and provided the board deemed they had conducted a worthwhile program. The board also approved pursuing a membership program through seed corn company dealer lists and to request \$5 from the company or dealer. John Campen presented a progress report on the membership expansion program, showing a letter which was sent to seed corn dealers. The possibility of getting a list of names of corn growers state-wide which could be used for a direct mailing was discussed, but there was some concern about limiting the number to be practical. It was voted to change the bylaws at the July 7, 1981, meeting in regard to dues. This was to change the membership year to be payable on or before the first day of the member's membership year and to add a three-year membership for annual dues of \$75.

A successful membership drive was held in Champaign County recruiting 115 new paid members. Other counties which had membership drives were Knox, Ogle and Lee. A new incentive for signing members was a vest to be given to those signing ten new members. In December, there was an emphasis placed on organizing county associations in all counties, especially those with a membership over 50. Counties identified were Bureau, Champaign, Christian, Coles, DeKalb, Henry, Knox, Lee, Macon, Ogle, Tazewell and Will. ICGA would provide up to \$5 toward a meal for each member attending an organizational meeting up to a maximum of \$500. However, this kick-back would supersede the counties right to the normal \$1 and \$5 return of dues. The board voted to hold county membership drives in Districts 5, 9, 11 and 14, and assigned the respective district directors to serve as the chair for each of these drives along with other directors in their area as assigned.

It was approved to send a telegram to the Secretary of Agriculture and the President of the United States supporting the lifting of the grain embargo. In addition, it was recommended that letters addressed to President Reagan, Secretary Block and Secretary Haigh, along with petitions, be sent to members, farm equipment dealers and elevators requesting an end to the embargo with the letter to be forwarded through NCGA.

Plans were presented for the third annual Soy-Corn Conference to be held Feb. 3-5, 1981. The state yield contest winners were to be honored, ADM was to be recognized for a special award of



Fructose exhibit



Board members - front row: Floyd Schultz, Jerry Carney, Tim Trotter, Fred Werts, Maurice Grodon, John Campen, Melody Taylor; back row: George Anselm, Norris Lesley, Dain Friend, David Gaines, Rolland Main, Lou Faivre, John Beatty, Lewis Asher, Ernie Linden, Bob Frazee, Jim Hoeft, Gary Bohn, Bill Furry

the recapturing of CO<sub>2</sub> and recycling it for use in hydroponics and a Distinguished Service Award was to be presented to Senator Percy (this award was done jointly with LOLSA).

Several board members met with Doug Schneider and Marty Andreas of ADM to discuss ways of increasing the visibility of ICGA.

Fructose promotions were held in different areas, and the board voted to promote fructose at the summer meeting of the Home Economics Association. The board approved the design and purchase of placemats to be used for various promotions and it was decided to send fructose samples and placemats to each director. Also, the board voted to send letters to county farm bureau managers, women's committee chairwomen, marketing committee chairpersons and seed dealers about the availability of fructose information.

*NCGA* - It was decided to use the same procedure as in the past for selecting delegates to the *NCGA* Annual Meeting. In July, George Anselm, William Furry and Maurice Gordon were elected for another three-year term on the *NCGA* Board. It was also approved to have the Illinois delegates present a resolution to the *NCGA* Annual Meeting that National Corn Growers be willing to adopt a dues structure for three- year memberships, or at least give a one-year notice for

dues change. In addition, the board voted to encourage NCGA to request a study by the USDA on the effects of the embargo on American agriculture and the economy. At the August meeting, the board approved to run the NCGA Corn Yield Contest beginning in 1982.

## **1981-82**

Rollie Main announced his decision to resign from the board within the next few months to pursue other goals. With the election of officers at the February 4, 1982, meeting, a new succession of presidents for the association began with Dain Friend being elected. Dain indicated that he had a goal of passing a corn checkoff referendum by the end of 1983.

The board voted at their July meeting to hire additional personnel until January 31, with subsequent employment to be reviewed at a later date and authorized the Executive Committee to act on the manager's recommendation. Melody Taylor was hired for this position. At the September meeting, the board approved reimbursement of partial expenses to each ICGA board member attending the USFGC meeting and also to reimburse all expenses relating to checkoff activities. It was approved at the November meeting to purchase D & O insurance in the amount of \$3,000,000 for one year.

Extension Ex-Officio Directors - Charles Engelhardt was the original ex-officio member from Extension serving on the board. At the September meeting it was announced he had resigned and would be replaced by Bob Frazee from Marshall-Putnam County Extension. Walt Townsend replaced Bob Frazee in 1986, Mike Plumer replaced Walt in 1992 and served through 2010, and Russ Higgins replaced Mike in 2011.

Checkoff - Dain Friend announced the Executive Committee would be meeting with the IFB Business Services Committee on March 17. On the same date they also met with Keith Heffernen of the Iowa Corn Growers Association regarding background on Iowa's corn referendum. It was approved to continue to pursue preparation for a checkoff and to form an Agri-Business Advisory Committee. Dain Friend noted that a meeting had been scheduled with Director Werries for March 23.

At the meeting in June, Dain Friend and Lou Faivre updated the board on referendum activities, noting that the legislation was on the governor's desk for signature. Twenty-five hundred signatures of producers were needed to support the referendum and were necessary to ask the Director to appoint a temporary board. The board moved to proceed to initiate a corn checkoff referendum and it was noted that IFB & ICGA would work together to make all the plans for the referendum. Fred Werts suggested a letter be drafted to Harold Dodd of Illinois Farmers Union indicating that ICGA was proceeding with plans for a checkoff referendum and that we would like to meet with his organization for their help in developing the program. After discussion, it was suggested this letter also be sent to all farm organizations and committee groups stating ICGA's intentions to sponsor a corn checkoff, asking for their support and seeking dates to sit down with their executive committees to resolve any differences for the betterment of agriculture in Illinois. Also, it was voted to send letters and petitions to county farm bureau managers and the ICGA membership announcing that ICGA was pursuing the establishment of a corn checkoff program



Director of Ag Larry Werries  
pictured with checkoff ballots

*Pictures provided by IFB Family of Companies*

in Illinois. SB1212 was the legislative bill for the Corn Marketing Program, and it was suggested letters be sent to Senator John Maitland, Representative Gordon Ropp, and Dean Sears and his staff, thanking them for all their help in getting this passed in the House and Senate.

At the September meeting, the referendum backgrounder was distributed to each board member. It was announced that informational hearings on the checkoff would be held Sept. 13-16, 1982, and a statewide hearing was scheduled for Sept. 20, 1982, in Springfield. The board approved support of the Proposed Marketing Program established for the Temporary Corn Marketing Board. It was decided to conduct the referendum vote by a mail-out ballot. Therefore, a list was obtained from the ASCS office and ballots were mailed to 250,000+ producers on November 24, 1982. Ballots were to be returned to the Department of Ag by December 15. The referendum passed by a 59.1 percent margin with 38,811 “yes” votes and 26,856 “no” votes.

*NCGA* - At the December 1, 1981 meeting, Lou Faivre was elected to the *NCGA* Board.

### *Highlights from Dain Friend*

Dain first got involved in the Macon County Farm Bureau, which helped form Macon County Corn Growers. Macon County was one of the counties who helped get membership for the Illinois Corn Growers Association, and Bob Muehling was the manager of the Macon County Farm Bureau at that time. From Dain’s recollection, all of the county farm bureaus helped to select the original board members for the Illinois Corn Growers Association, and Dain was one of those.

An organization was needed to represent corn growers on issues concerning them as well as promoting the product, because everyone growing corn thought they were not getting enough return on their time, effort, and investment. In the early days there was a lot of IFB involvement, especially with staff, and there was a lot of discussion



Dain Friend

about whether corn growers should stay under IFB. The Illinois Soybean Association was in place several years before ICGA started. IFB had an organization that represented all kinds of Ag issues in Illinois, but there was a substantial difference in philosophies between livestock and corn. Over time as commodity prices had declined, land values had followed suit.

One of the biggest issues Dain recalled was some very heated discussions on ethanol, and it took a long time for ethanol to become a true national product. Dain recalls a big event encouraged by Iowa Corn Growers Association, and held at ADM, focused on ethanol and its potential use in gasoline. A lot of people, including Illinois Farmers Union, participated in this event trying to kick off the use of ethanol. There was a lot of ethanol discussion, but no action steps resulted.

Dain reiterated that ICGA participated in getting the National Corn Growers formulated into a true national organization, as it was a challenge to get it moved away from Walter Goeppinger and his cronies. The general process started at the county level, to the state level, and up to the national level. A great deal of time was spent in negotiations to get the national organization formed. Illinois and Iowa corn growers were instrumental in that effort with Illinois somewhat leading the charge, because national was based in Iowa for a long time. A lot of time was spent traveling to Iowa during this time.

When it came time to work on the checkoff program, the board had a lot of discussions in trying to draft the legislation. There was quite a bit of debate among ICGA, IFB, and Harold Dodd, President of Illinois Farmers Union (IFU) because each organization's philosophies were different. Dain believed one of the reasons the first referendum for the checkoff was defeated was because of negative publicity put out by IFU. Prior to the second referendum vote, meetings were held with IFB to gain support, and one of the factors which made it favorable to IFB was the right to refund. Dain remembers presenting testimony at a congressional hearing held in Springfield and people didn't like his statement that all the corn that was to be shipped to Russia should be dumped in the ocean. The corn market was depressed for a long time. Dain noted, "At that time, everyone believed it was the role of the government to market the corn. The country really needed an aggressive push finding new markets and that was one of the big themes used in promoting the checkoff. The USFGC was instrumental in getting money for the referendum from their member companies, and the Council was incredibly involved in promoting the checkoff. Pioneer was supportive with a lot of their senior staff involved, as well as other seed companies. Of course, the USFGC knew they would be benefactors which made them very supportive. Several meetings were held with them before things got going. Other companies involved with helping support the checkoff effort included Bill Stolle, senior executive from John Deere, and Monsanto. Support from the University of Illinois was solicited as it was pointed out they would benefit in research dollars coming to them. Most of the U of I research was focused on production research and how to grow more corn. However, the checkoff legislation said dollars could only be used for utilization research. The Farm Broadcasters were supportive throughout the campaign on the checkoff referendum. When the checkoff passed, Rick Tolman of USFGC was the contact person who spent a lot of time in giving advice and was the go-between in getting the money to fund the referendum vote. There were two referendum votes before the checkoff program passed."

*Pictures provided by IFB Family of Companies*



Director of Ag Larry Werries with Dain Friend



Mike Hennenfent and Dain Friend

In summary, Dain noted that it took quite a while to get the organization off the ground. Then the next focus was on getting the checkoff. In Dain's opinion, there were challenges in getting ICMB up and going, and they didn't want to have much to do with ICGA. It took quite awhile for some people to come around to the fact that everything was for Illinois corn. Some of the people on ICMB had never been involved in any farm organization, so it was an educational process for them. According to Dain, "This all created a little strife early on, but every organization has growing pains."

### **1982-83**

It was announced at the November 1982 meeting that Sheila Taylor had been hired as a new staff person to help with office operations.

Effective January 1, 1982, there were 322 memberships which had expired. Therefore, the committee felt more emphasis needed to be put on retaining current members. Upcoming membership drives were scheduled in Grundy, Madison, St. Clair, McLean, and Douglas Counties with optional drives for Randolph, Livingston and Edgar Counties. It was noted that Illinois did offer to manage membership for NCGA, but Iowa had a lower bid. A membership incentive program was approved at the November meeting, offering a free registration to the Soy-Corn Conference for any member who signed up ten new members.

It was decided to pursue the idea of sending the newsletter to more than just the membership. The board also approved participation in the National Association of Farm Broadcasters meeting in Indiana by the manager and three directors. A news release was to be sent out urging farmers to participate in the set-aside program.



John Campen visiting with John Block at a reception with Meredith Worner at back left and Ila Asher back right

At the June meeting, it was approved to sponsor a new program presented by Art Sechrest from WJBC Radio called “News for Corn Growers”. This was a radio program with distribution to a Legislative action approved during the year included: sending a letter to the membership urging support of the Reduced Acreage Program (RAP); sending a press release on ICGA’s position on the Schnittker Report and Reduced Acreage Program; sending the Schnittker Report to Illinois Congressmen along with a cover letter; supporting compliance of present farm programs and supporting any new and innovative programs that would help support the surplus we have.

Ray Stanhope with A.E. Staley Manufacturing Company met with the board at their June meeting. He noted that Staley’s was working on a dry corn sweetener which should be available in five years, as they believed the liquid sweetener was much too sticky and not economical to use.

The board voted to send a letter to the entire membership inviting them to join the corn-soybean tour, but it would be on a first-come basis since there was a limited number that could be accommodated.

During this year, there was discussion at more than one meeting regarding the elevator bankruptcy legislation. Fred Werts had suggested the possibility of a checkoff for a grain recovery fund, but the board voted to let a private insurer be responsible for individual losses due to elevator failures. Maurice Gordon suggested the possibility of meeting with the ASCS concerning the Uniform Certification date.

NCGA - Harold Mooberry and Rolland Main were elected to the NCGA Board. It was noted that NCGA expects attendance at their annual meeting to be between 2,000 and 2,500 with approximately 250 booths. The board recommended that NCGA manage the convention.