

Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station Research Reports

Volume 8
Issue 8 *Western Kansas Agricultural Research*

Article 8

2022

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Recommended Citation

Rogers, D.; Aguilar, J.; and Tomlinson, A. R. (2022) "A Tribute to Freddie R. Lamm," *Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station Research Reports*: Vol. 8: Iss. 8. <https://doi.org/10.4148/2378-5977.8336>

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A Tribute to Freddie R. Lamm

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Freddie Lamm, who positively impacted many through his life and career, passed away on May 26, 2022.

Kansas State University and the agricultural irrigation research community lost a great contributor to their field. Lamm was the research irrigation engineer at the Northwest Research-Extension Center in Colby, Kansas. He passed away sooner than his family, friends, and colleagues were ready for—before his planned retirement from his remarkable career.

Mourning his passing include his wife Donna of Colby; children Elaine, Brooklyn, New York; Henry Silas IV, Naperville, Illinois; Rachel (Chelston Ketting), stationed at Hurlburt Field, Florida; and Sarah, Lawrence, Kansas; siblings; nieces and nephews; and many friends, which include many colleagues throughout Kansas, the US, and other countries.

According to his obituary, “One of Freddie’s proudest moments of 2022, would be completing his 43rd year working at the Kansas State University Northwest Research-Extension Center.”

“Freddie came to northwest Kansas in 1979 to begin his career as a K-State instructor and research engineer at the Colby Branch Experiment Station, now the Northwest Research-Extension Center, armed with agricultural engineering degrees from the University of Missouri,” said Danny Rogers, a K-State Professor Emeritus and Extension Agricultural Engineer. “He was raised on a farm in central Missouri. During his tenure, Freddie became a licensed Professional Engineer (PE) in 1987 and completed a Ph.D. from K-State in 1990, both accomplished while maintaining an active research program. At the time of his death, he had at least 10 active irrigation related research projects underway. His dedication to detail continued from his hospital room with checking on project progress and sending instructions.”

Lamm was a pioneer in irrigation research and contributed to internationally-recognized technologies such as subsurface drip irrigation. His accomplishments were also commended through his Irrigation Association Man of the Year award and being named a Fellow of the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers (ASABE).

Terry Howell, a retired research leader for the USDA-Agricultural Research Service in Bushland, Texas, continues, “Freddie Lamm’s early promotion of precise, highly controlled subsurface drip irrigation is a hallmark for K-State’s Northwest Research-Extension Center that caught not only research colleagues’ attention, but it quickly gained notoriety with producers facing increasing pressures to use less irrigation water and to still maintain profitable crop productivity. His experiments aided other researchers across the US Central Plains well into Texas, where producers were facing even less available groundwater for irrigation.”

“Freddie will be missed for his integrity and the great person he was,” said Bill Kranz, an Emeritus Professor in Biological Systems Engineering at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. “While research was his career, I was very appreciative that he crossed over to participate in and become a founding member of the Central Plains Irrigation Association. The association’s annual conference is one of the longest running of its kind due to his and his wife Donna’s unwavering support.”

Jonathan Aguilar, an Associate Professor and Water Resource Engineer at K-State’s Southwest Research-Extension Center, who worked with Lamm, also recalls, “As a relatively junior irrigation engineer, I have utmost respect to Freddie who guided me through the tenure process, particularly in conducting field research and in navigating through scientific publications. A couple of things that I could definitely attribute to him is the proper hand harvesting/sampling of plots and for guiding me to become an effective associate editor of the ASABE journal. I will definitely miss his words of wisdom and guidance.”

Lamm was a valuable asset to his department and a helping hand to many. He will be greatly missed. Beyond his career, Lamm was a man who loved to help others.