



Alumni Spotlight

Earl Biggers, Jr.

Class of 2009
Manager, Price Risk Management
Dairy Farmers of America
Kansas City, Missouri



by Mark Seitz

The Alumni Spotlight focuses on MAB alumni and is written by Mark Seitz, a 2003 graduate.

MAB alum is passionate about dairy industry

Earl Biggers is an Ohio native, growing up in northwest Ohio. Earl is the son of a Methodist minister and his mother's family was in the dairy business. His grandfather and two uncles were dairy farmers and he grew up always wanting to be a dairy farmer or to be involved in the dairy business. His mother's family's connection to dairy is what sparked his interest and it has kept him involved throughout his career.

Earl attended Penn State University with the intention of earning a degree and going into the dairy business. Upon graduation many years ago (he did not say when) he moved to Yoder, in central Kansas and ran a 45-cow dairy farm for 12 years. He chose central Kansas because land was cheaper than in Ohio and he felt there was a lot of community understanding and support for the dairy business, and agriculture in general compared to other places he has lived. While he loved the lifestyle, milking cows, raising his kids on the farm, etc., the economic reality of being a small dairy farmer, working a full-time job in town, age, time and other factors took their toll. He said, "I do miss the cows and will always be a dairyman at heart".

Earl sold the cows in 2000 and went to work in field service for Dairy Farmers of America in Ohio for several years. Eventually he accepted

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a supervisor's position in South Dakota. In 2011, he was promoted to Manager of Price Risk Management to help their dairy farmer members find ways to decrease the level of risk they endure in marketing milk and running dairy farms.

Today, he works at the Dairy Farmers of American headquarters and lives in Kansas City (on the Missouri side). He says successfully completing the MAB program has helped to get him to where he is today. As a risk management manager, Earl feels the MAB program and his experience as a dairyman have been valuable assets to assist his members bridge the gap between the realities

volatility. He says managing volatility is a critical factor for those who will stay in the business. The tools he learned in MAB have helped him help his members be better managers.

Although he spends most of his days on the phone, Earl enjoys meeting DFA members face to face more than anything else in his job because it helps him better understand their needs. Even more so because it gets him out of the office and close to the cows and the dairy farms he loves so much. For him, if he cannot milk cows himself, helping those that are still doing it is the most gratifying aspect of the work he does.

Regarding his time in the MAB program, Earl enjoyed the experience.

"I was thrilled to have the opportunity to be part of the collegiate structure and be part of the total learning experience. I loved having the opportunity to be



Earl at the DFA office in Kansas City, MO

of their farming operations and what goes on at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. Forward contracting of milk is relatively new and for many dairy producers, it is an entirely new concept. He says his job is all about helping DFA members manage

around so many people from across the agriculture industry. I loved hearing the different perspectives they had on our industry and that I had the chance to share in their knowledge. I greatly appreciated those in my MAB class who had the knowledge and skills they did. I felt that the national and international perspectives my classmates brought to the table, from a myriad of agribusiness

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backgrounds, made it the best broad-spectrum experience I could have asked for. It made me realize that no matter how demanding my job was, we all have a lot in common. I was able to see the similarities in the problems between industries and the vast differences, but most of all I relished the chance to engage in conversation with everyone. At every one of the class sessions I was the last one to leave, almost wishing I could have another day to learn more. Driving home from the on-campus sessions gave me a better high than I could have gotten from any amount of caffeine I might have consumed."

As a fellow MAB alumni (Class of 2003) I really enjoyed having a chance to chat with Earl to write this story. It by no means begins to capture the details of our conversation, but his insight into the MAB program and his knowledge about the dairy industry brought back a lot of great memories for me. Not enough to want to re-enroll in MAB a second time, but enough to remind myself of how incredibly knowledgeable and talented the individuals are who go through the program but how much you gain as you go through.

In closing, I think I can speak for Earl when I say every MAB alumnus owes the K-State MAB faculty a great big thank you for their foresight to create the program, for keeping it fresh and up to date and for attracting the best and brightest people from around the world to learn from and be part of it.

MAB Alum returns to program as Assistant Professor

Keith Harris completed the Master of Agribusiness program in 2006 and has returned to the program as an Assistant Professor. Harris is taking over the Applied Agribusiness Economics (AGEC 700) course from Dr. Michael Langemeier, who has left Kansas State University.

"I am excited to return to Kansas State University and I look forward to providing an academic and a practitioner's perspective to your agribusiness learning experience. 'One's work may be finished some day, but one's education never' (Alexander Dumas, c 1856)," Harris said.



Keith Harris, Class of 2006

After graduating from the MAB program, Harris entered the Ph.D. program at the University of Missouri-Columbia in the Division of Applied and Social Sciences. He taught courses in Agribusiness Management Strategy and Managerial Economics.

Prior to an academic career, Harris worked in commodity risk management, international procurement, and supply chain management strategy for General Mills, Sara Lee Foods, and Farmland Foods. He has also been a Peace Corps Volunteer. He served as an Agribusiness Advisor to the Honduran Ministry of Natural Resources where he helped develop agribusiness opportunities for tropical agriculture.

Students complete thesis projects

To read current or previous thesis projects, go to <http://krex.k-state.edu/dspace/> and search by author, title or keywords (no log-in required). To read a thesis written before 2008 or view thesis defense, log onto K-State On-Line, www.online.ksu.edu, with your eID and password. Go to the MAB Community Page, go to Files & Content and click on Theses.

Muhin Abdi, class of 2012, *Comparative Analysis of Errors in Pre-Pick and Bulk Order Volumes at Frito-Lay*

Mauro Bergerman, class of 2009, *New Grain Discharge Terminal at Santos Port, Brazil*

Brent Johnson, class of 2004, *Benefits of Flour Storage as Related to Process Efficiencies in Milling*

Kevin Newkirk, class of 2012, *Financial Performance Comparison for ABC Farm*

Christy Pepple, class of 2012, *Foreign Direct Investment Decision Making Using an Investment Index*