

The Beginning – Did You Know?

by Richard Tenney

Nearly forty years ago I was researching the background for my Master's thesis at Penn State University. The title of the thesis was to be, "The Influence of the International Farm Youth Exchange Experience on the Educational Development and Occupational Choice of the United States Delegates." The introductory chapter, which included information about the historical background of IFYE, contained the following sentences:

"In 1946, four students at Cornell University, all of whom had been 4-H members, got together and discussed how 4-H could help bring world peace. They felt that the 4-H type program would be wanted and enjoyed by youth in other countries and that understanding was a key to peace."

In early November 2005, I received an E-mail that stated: *"I found this morning through the IFYE website that you are the Secretary of the IFYE Foundation Board of Directors. Back when I was a student, four of us had a little to do with the beginnings of IFYE. It would be nice to meet you..."* So recently, nearly sixty years after that beginning, Mary Lou and I got the opportunity to talk to one of those "four students" and learn the details of what has been recognized as the beginnings of the IFYE program. Bernard "Bud" Stanton, Professor Emeritus of Agricultural Economics at Cornell University (and his wife Lara) came to our home for lunch and we discussed what happened in 1946.

In 1946 a campus 4-H organization existed at Cornell University. As was typical of the times, they held regular meetings and then square danced. As they got to know each other they began to reflect on what the future held following the end of World War II. One evening when they were together, Bud, Anne Dickinson, Donald Sullivan and Germain Marion discussed their belief that understanding was a key to world peace.

Bud was from a dairy farm in Albany County and was studying agricultural economics. Anne was preparing for a career in Home Economics Extension work. Don and Gerry were both from dairy farms in St. Lawrence County in northern New York. Gerry was an Animal Science major. Don, a war veteran, though from the farm, was in the College of Arts and Sciences and wanted to go into government work.

They shared their discussion with Martha Leighton, Assistant State 4-H Leader, who was the faculty advisor to the Campus 4-H Club. Bud said, "she probably talked about their discussion with Al Hoefler, New York State 4-H Leader." Within a week they were invited to meet with Al and share their thoughts with him. In Al's office they talked about their idea of the need for peace and understanding and raised the idea of living with families in other countries. Al asked, "How would you fund it?" They didn't have an answer to the question but felt that if the idea was good enough the money would come.

Al talked to Ed Aiton (the "Father of IFYE") and the next weekend they found themselves together in a car with Al and headed for Washington, DC. On the trip to Washington they found

plenty of time to explore and discuss their ideas. In Washington they met Ed Aiton, and had meetings with their elected representatives, various foreign attachés and State Department and Department of Agriculture personnel.

Their idea was “good enough” and, in the atmosphere of the need for greater international understanding and cooperation following World War II, the money was found to start the IFYE program. The Ford Foundation was a major donor to the program and its start. The IFYE program began as a two-way program in 1948, with seventeen youth from the United States going to seven countries of Western Europe, while six young Europeans came to the US.

From this beginning, the IFYE program has grown to involve nearly 4,900 participants/members of the IFYE Association today. There have been exchanges with over 110 countries; nearly all states have sent delegates; there are more than 150 IFYE couples; and countless participants have held important positions in government and business - both in the US and abroad.

“What”, you ask, “of those people who were key players back in 1946?” None of them became IFYEs. Martha Leighton was assigned the position of New York State IFYE Coordinator. Anne Dickinson Murray worked in Home Economics Extension at the University of Delaware and in Maryland. Gerard Marion earned his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin, worked in Kansas for many years before returning to Wisconsin and became a nationally recognized cattle judge. Donald Sullivan went on to graduate work at Princeton and went into the diplomatic corps of the Department of State with numerous overseas assignments in the foreign service program. Bud Stanton earned his M.S. in Agricultural Economics from the University of Minnesota, received a one year fellowship to Oxford University, earned a Ph.D. at Minnesota and then joined the faculty at Cornell University. In addition to chairing the Department of Agricultural Economics, he has worked with the World Bank in Iran and taught a semester in China and at the National University of Australia.

As Mary Lou and I sat talking to Bud and his wife, we realized how much he and others, that we don't even know, have influenced our lives and that of thousands of other IFYEs. We were so happy to be able to thank him personally, on behalf of all IFYEs everywhere, for the inspiration that he and three other young students shared and acted upon to help bring “Peace Through Understanding”.

Photograph caption:

Dick, Ohio-France '59, and Mary Lou, Ohio-Colombia '60, bring Bud Stanton up-to-date on IFYE and give him a copy of the latest *IFYE News*.