

# New Jersey News

## Melick's Town Farm Adds New Cold Storage and Production Building

Win Cowgill

*Professor Emeritus Rutgers University, Win Enterprises International, LLC*

Melick's Town Farm has a long-planned construction project under way to add cold storage and production space to the Oldwick operation. See photos. Melick's is the largest apple grower in New Jersey with 25,000 apple trees and 5,000 peach, nectarine, plum, and pear trees. Their orchards cover 120 acres of their 650 acres in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. <https://www.melickstownfarm.com/>.

The farm is run by 10th generation farmers, siblings Peter, Rebecca, and John Melick with the continued support of their parents George and Norma.

John Melick indicated that "we needed more cold storage space for the past 25 years and this new addition will meet our



needs now and for the future." The building is designed to have cold storage for 1000 apple bins plus additional cold storage for the hard cider products. In addition, the building will be equally divided between production/grading/staging space, a new hard cider production facility, and cold storage.

Photo credits: John Melick.

# William J. Roberts, World Renowned Rutgers University Agricultural Engineer Passed May 21, 2020

William J. Roberts, a lifelong resident of New Monmouth, passed away on May 21 at the age of 88.

Bill was famous for his invention of the air-inflated double-layer polyethylene greenhouse. This greenhouse technology revolutionized production and was adopted around the world. The impact of his life's work is amazing.

In 1999, there were approximately 23,125 acres of air-inflated double-layer polyethylene greenhouses in production in the USA and 1,705,125 acres worldwide. Approximately 65% of all commercial greenhouses in the United States use the air-inflated system.

He was born on his family's farm to the late Thomas S. and Helen (Conover) Roberts. At a Rutgers Cook College retire luncheon January 2020 I got to visit with my friend Bill Roberts for 15 minutes or so. One of the stories he shared was that he still lived on the family farm. He said he could look out his window at the original farmhouse and see the window to the bedroom he was born in.

Bill graduated from Leonardo High School in 1949 and earned his Bachelor and Masters of Science degrees in Agricultural Engineering at Rutgers University. Having completed ROTC, he served his country from September 1953 to July 1955 serving in the Far East Command in Japan as a First Lieutenant. He then taught at Cook College, Rutgers University, where he achieved Professor II status, served as a Department Chairman for 23 years, and worked as a Professional Engineer and extension specialist in bioresource engineering. Bill retired from Rutgers in 1999 after a distinguished 41- year career.

His work and passion has left an indelible imprint across the globe in the form of the air-inflated, double-layer polyethylene greenhouse, an innovation that

revolutionized the greenhouse industry worldwide. When asked about this project, Bill would modestly say, "everyone has a good idea once in a while."

The site of the original greenhouse at Rutgers was designated a national agricultural (ASABE) historic

landmark in 2004. As a Professor Emeritus at Rutgers, he received the Distinguished Service in Agriculture Award from the New Jersey Farm Bureau, the Agribusiness Heritage Award and the Gold Medallion Award from the New Jersey Agricultural Society. He was named a Fellow for his national professional association, the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers. These are only a few of the awards for his outstanding contributions to New Jersey and global agriculture. Throughout his life, Bill was an active member of New Monmouth Baptist Church and



proud to be the great-great-grandson of its founding pastor. His devotion to his Lord and Savior was evident to all who knew him. For over 65 years, he served the church in various roles.

Along with his wife, Dottie, he was a youth leader for twenty years and led a Wednesday night Bible study for over forty years until his death. Over the years, they also led mission trips to Appalachia and Ecuador and were active members of the church choir. He taught a Sunday School class beginning while in Japan and continuing on until the present as well. He was a deacon for over fifty years, exemplifying servant leadership and mentoring younger church leaders who now serve throughout the world. He will also be remembered specifically for his hugs, jokes, and stories. Bill also served as the faculty advisor for Campus Crusade at Rutgers and on multiple mission boards, including Farms International and Chapin Living Waters. His love, faithfulness, and hospitality impacted countless

lives as he strove to follow Christ. The resurrection of Christ was the foundation of all Bill did and the source of hope for his future.

Bill is predeceased by his brother and sister-in-law, John and Elizabeth Roberts. Surviving are his beloved wife of 66 years, Dorothy (Stevens) Roberts, his loving daughter and son-in-law, Deborah Roberts and James Marcantonio, his cherished granddaughter, Jillian Roberts Marcantonio, and his dear brother and sister-in-law, Thomas and Patricia Roberts. Also surviving are his nieces and nephews, Douglas Roberts and his wife Ann,

Betty Cardinale and her husband Carl, Jean Herholdt and her husband Dan, and John Roberts and his wife Lori, as well as his cousin, Gertrude Lindemann.

A private service for the family has been held at Fair View Cemetery, where Bill served as a trustee for many years. A public celebration of life will follow at a later date. Memorial donations may be sent in Bill's memory to New Monmouth Baptist Church, 4 Cherry Tree Farm Road, Middletown, NJ 07748. Checks made out to New Monmouth Baptist Church, memo line: Roberts Memorial Fund.

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## **John “Jack” J. Kupcho Long-term Chair of the Rutgers Agricultural Agents Department Passed on May 11, 2020**

John J. (Jack) Kupcho, 83, died on May 11, 2020 at the Christian Healthcare Center in Wyckoff, NJ. Private Services were held.

As Chairman of the Department of Agricultural and Resource Management Agents at Rutgers' Cook College, he was responsible for providing program leadership and staff development for 57 agents and program associates in 20 New Jersey counties.

Jack began his career as the Essex County Agricultural Agent at Rutgers Cooperative Extension in 1963, a time of great change and development in the North Jersey agriculture industry. Jack assisted commercial vegetable growers in Bergen, Essex, Morris and Passaic counties in changes to their production methods to maximize resources. Jack developed the Master Gardener Program for Northeastern New Jersey. He organized leaf composting and ground water education programs for community leaders.

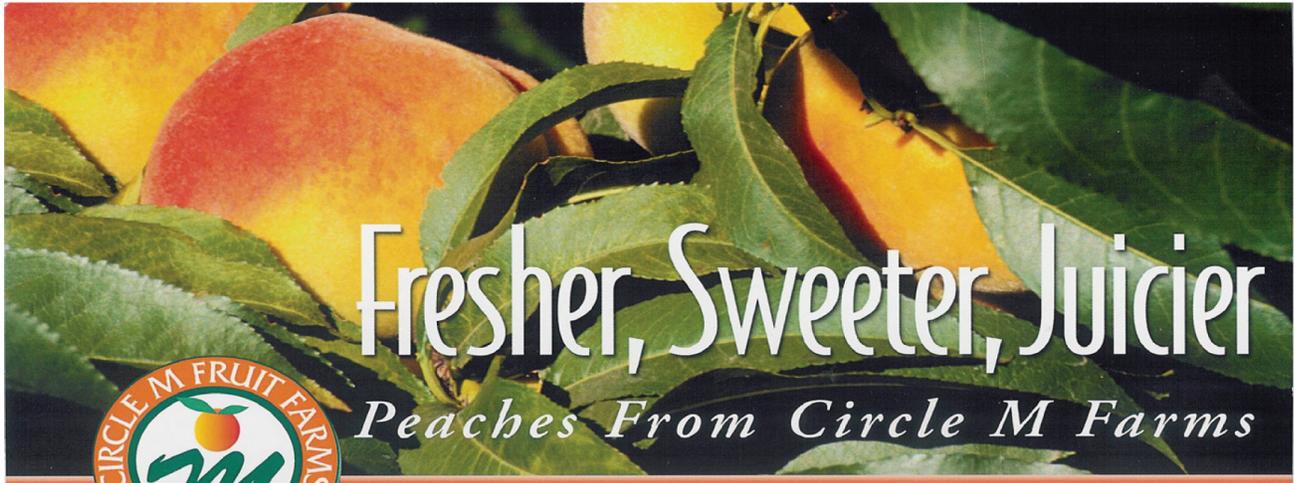
Jack was active in many agricultural organizations –the Essex County Board of Agriculture, National As-

sociation of County Agricultural Agents, Agricultural Agents Association of New Jersey, Northeast Agricultural and Natural Resource program Leaders Committee, Northeast Community Resource Development Program Leaders Committee, and Northeast Center for Rural Development.

For his 51 years of service to teaching, advising and improving New Jersey agriculture, Jack received the 2015 New Jersey State Board of Agriculture's Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award.

Active locally, Jack was involved with the West Caldwell Environmental Commission, where last August he was honored by having the West Caldwell Community Gardens named after him.

Jack is survived by his wife, Helen Januszewski Sabo Kupcho; his daughters Terri Schwenker (Donald), Mary Ellen Will (Brad), Kathy Lynn Canale (Gary), Colleen Tocci (Craig) and grandchildren Madison, Lauren, Claudia, Rachel, Megan, Julia, Abby, Caitlin, Kylie, and Jack.



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