ARTHUR JOSEPH HEISDORF

30.12.1912 – 5.9.1992

How to write about our founder and do his life`s work justice?

A man who revolutionized chicken breeding worldwide. Wisconsin born American. With a Bachelor degree in Poultry Science and Genetics from the University of Wisconsin in 1936, and an honorary Doctor of Science degree in 1977.

It's both easy and difficult to write about Arthur J. "Art" Heisdorf. Most people addressed him by his shortened first name.

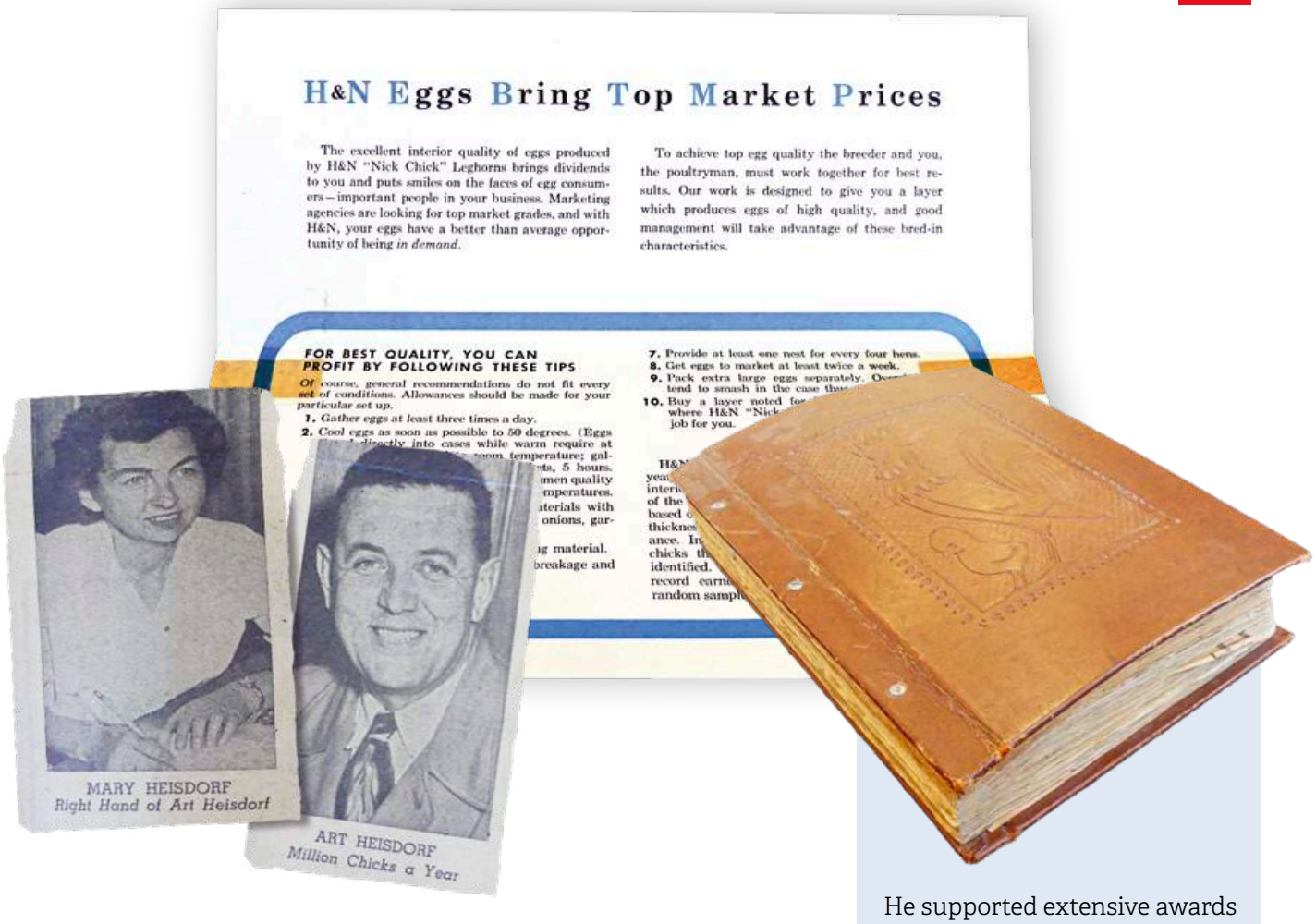
Much has been written about him to quote from Dr. Margaret Elsinor Derry, adjunct professor in the Department of History at the University of Guelph, does so very interestingly in her book titled *"Art and Science in Breeding: Creating Better Chickens"*, Published by University of Toronto Press, 21. January 2012.

And he himself, upon becoming somewhat like a pope of poultry breeding, too, was writing articles frequently and attending poultry shows and egg producers' meetings.

You can't write about Arthur J. "Art" Heisdorf without mentioning his wife Mary G. Heisdorf, because it's also on her shoulders a global business stands on today. Not only H&N International but basically all the customers that receive parent stock that originated and blossomed from a revolutionary idea and new technique in 1945: to select the pure line families of chicks based on the performance of their commercial offspring.

In memory of Mary G. Heisdorf, Art established the "The Mary G. Heisdorf Memorial Scholarship" to honour his wife, partner and co-founder of Heisdorf & Nelson Farms in Kirkland, Washington.

Old photos suggest that he surely was a man with broad shoulders: because so many stand on these shoulders today



Mary was an integral part of the business, helping Art first on the farm and in the hatchery, then with the financial end of the business, and finally receiving visitors from around the world who became distributors of their products.

Recognizing the role of the systematic application of genetic principles to both the number of eggs produced and the survival of the hen herself Arthur Heisdorf developed the system of Reciprocal Recurrent Selection (RRS).

This system relied on nicking alone and would allow for less complicated and cheaper breeding than the usual hybridization method.

Many geneticists remained skeptical until the 1960, because the groundbreaking nature of Heisdorfs' RSS was, that it did not aim at synthetic or pure lines, but solely at combining good nicking abilities of two lines.

Introducing more abilities into breeding usually means to open the doors for more variable and unpredictable results – but also for better and stronger criteria in the following generations as opposed to weakened inbred lines.

Aside the breeding revolution, Art also was seen as visionary manager. He assembled a staff of well-trained scientists and distributed the results of their efforts to more than 70 countries.

He supported extensive awards programs and encouraged his employees to be active in civic and trade organizations.

Prof. Dietmar Flock, who knew and worked with him personally for many years, speaks of him very highly. He liked Arts' attitude of working and involving people.

> *"It felt very much like being part of the family"*, Flock recalls.

"It was a privilege for me to work with Art Heisdorf and learn from his philosophy of combining dedicated work with service in the scientific and local community".

The family-feeling is yet another quality of Arts arts, that still survives today.