

John Jackson

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

The plane is arriving. Here are the passengers. There are no hugs or handshakes for these passengers, because these air passengers are beef cattle being transported from the U.S. halfway around the globe to Abadan, Iran. The man who helped arrange this project is John M. Jackson, an international agricultural consultant based in Great Bend, Kansas. It's today's Kansas Profile.

John Jackson is the founder of Agricultural Management Group, Inc. (AMG) which specializes in agriculture and agribusiness, private enterprise development and resource management.

John grew up in Illinois and studied agriculture at Western Illinois University. There he met and married Sharon, his future business partner and wife.

One day on campus, John saw a booth for the Peace Corps. Recognizing the opportunity to experience another culture and to put their skills to good use, John and Sharon both decided to join. Six months later, they were on a plane to Iran to help a village that had been destroyed by an earthquake and had no water or electricity. John and Sharon helped the local people to rebuild. He also learned to speak Farsi, the language of Iran.

After two years in the Peace Corps, John and Sharon returned for a second two-year period. When Iran launched a major agricultural project, John was hired to join the team because of his knowledge of agriculture and Farsi. John helped develop a large-scale farm and bring in livestock. "We brought the first beef cattle to Iran," John said. "We brought in 450 head of Brahma and Brahma cross heifers and 15 bulls. They came in two stretch DC-8s."

After that project, they returned to Illinois. In 1982, John joined the American Society of Agricultural Consultants (ASAC) whose members included both domestic and international consultants. Connections with ASAC led John to join a seed company for which he became district sales manager for central Kansas. He and Sharon relocated to the rural community of Great Bend, population 15,535 people. Now, that's rural. While supporting John's consulting projects, Sharon provided accounting services to international and local businesses, including agriculture and tribal enterprises in the western U.S.

In 1994, the seed company sent John to do market development in eastern Europe. He had responsibility for sales in Ukraine, Moldova and Romania. In 1995 when the project ended, he began consulting with other international clients and expanded AMG, with offices at the time in Moldova, Ukraine, and Great Bend.

In 1998, John was President of the American Society of Agricultural Consultants. He worked in the U.S. and overseas with such clients as Native American tribes, agribusinesses, U.S. Agency for International Development, World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UN Development Program, and more.

John has also been involved with numerous projects involving Dr. Robert (Bob) Julian, agricultural administrator of K-State's Food and Feed Grain Institute. One was the Cochran fellowship program under which agricultural specialists and administrators from emerging democracies around the world are brought to the U.S. for training.

Through this program, John and his team helped bring several teams of international visitors to K-State.

“I’ve worked with people in 40-some countries and 40-some states, from Hawaii to Florida,” John said. At some periods of his career, he has been overseas for 90 percent of the year, often living in countries experiencing conflict. He remembered visiting Kiev, and reading 60 days later that 105 demonstrators were shot on the very streets where he had been walking, only a 20-minute walk from AMG’s office.

One famous advertisement states that the Peace Corps is looking for volunteers with “a good back, strong stomach, level head, and a big heart.” John fit that bill when he joined, as he does now. John has found that people around the world have much in common, especially as they become interested in technology to benefit their people.

For more information, go to www.amg-logistics.com.

It’s time to leave this plane which brought these cattle halfway around the globe. We commend John and Sharon Jackson, Dr. Bob Julian, and all those who are making a difference by enhancing agricultural technology around the world. I’m glad to see these enterprises take off.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.