



assigned to the U.S. Army Air Corps and was sent to a school in Glendale, California where I studied to become a propeller specialist. After training I spent much of my time in the service at Fairfield Susan Army Air Base in California. However I spent about 4 months in Okinawa and another 4 months in India before returning to the U.S. and completing my 3 years of service at West Palm Beach, Florida.

**Veterinary School:** After one year of pre-veterinary studies, and thanks again, I believe, because of the recommendation of Don Corbett, Dr. Frank Witter and others, I was accepted into Michigan State University College of Veterinary Medicine against heavy odds. Once again, timing was with me. I was in the last class that was able to graduate in only 5 years of college.

**Chickens:** Between my sophomore and junior years in Veterinary school, I returned to Winslow and had another challenge from Don Corbett. He had bought an old mill building in Benton Falls that had to be made ready to brood 20,000 baby chicks arriving on July 6 to be raised as broilers. At the time, this was probably one of the largest flocks of chickens in the U.S. So without warning, I was introduced to chickens and also chicken diseases. Because of that experience, I took special interest in learning more about poultry diseases in my junior and senior years in college. The regular curriculum had very little about poultry diseases.

**Personal Life:** While a student at Michigan State University, I met and dated Shirley Ann Jedele. We were married on March 19, 1950 while I was a junior in college. Our first son, David, was born exactly nine months later. We both graduated from MSU in June 1951. After moving to Maine, we had two more sons, Donald on Sept. 7, 1954 and Richard on May 31, 1957. We built our first (small) house on Upper Main Street in Waterville in 1953 and our second (large) house on Outer Western Avenue in Waterville in 1965, where we lived for 23 years. In 1988 we built our retirement home on Outer Clinton Avenue in Winslow, overlooking the Sebasticook River. We have two lots with a total of 8 acres of land. We even have our own cemetery with three headstones dating from the 1800's. Our ashes will be buried here. In 1993 I bought the old Lipman Hatchery building at an auction. This building is almost across the street from our home. This also included a 100-year-old, one room schoolhouse which had been used for storage. We refurbished the old schoolhouse as a historic building and as a painting studio for Shirley and her friends.

**Employment:** When I graduated from veterinary school in 1951, I made a decision, after checking available job opportunities, that I would venture into chickens (Avian Medicine) which nobody else was interested in. I was hired by the South New Jersey Poultry Diagnostic Lab. I drove to Vineland, New Jersey with Shirley and our 6 month old son, David, with all of our possessions in a small trailer. We spent a not so good year there until I was offered a job with the State Veterinarian's office in Indianapolis, Indiana. I was the first veterinarian in Indiana (and probably in the U.S.) to be assigned to avian regulatory medicine. I was given free range to cover the State and to set up poultry disease control programs. It was a good experience, although I don't believe I accomplished very much in the year that I spent there. After about a year in Indianapolis, Don Corbett appeared once more. At that time, the Maine poultry industry and Don's company (Fort Halifax Poultry Co.) were growing rapidly in the production of broiler chickens. He convinced me to return to Winslow to manage his broiler growing company. He

was a great innovator and with his guidance we had a very successful operation. In my three years with the company, production grew by several times over.

**Maine Biological Laboratories, Inc. (MBL):** During my time in Maine, I worked closely with Dr. Harold Chute, a professor and poultry pathologist at the University of Maine in Orono. As the poultry industry grew, so did disease problems. Without a great deal of forethought, in 1957 we decided to produce poultry vaccines, and started Maine Biological Laboratories (MBL). We started by servicing the large Maine poultry industry but after two years we were granted a federal USDA license permitting national sales of our vaccines. The company was sold to Norwich Pharmaceutical Company in 1966. Under their management the company was not doing well so I was able to buy it back in 1975, with John Osbourne as my partner. John had been MBL's first employee and production manager since starting MBL.

MBL was the first manufacturer of poultry vaccines to develop killed virus vaccines. Although they were highly effective, they were not well accepted by the poultry industry because of their high cost of production and they had to be injected into each bird. In the late 1970's, MBL developed a killed virus vaccine against Infectious Bursal Disease which was far superior to other vaccines that were used to control this disease and it gained wide acceptance. This led to the acceptance of a number of other MBL killed virus vaccines and combinations thereof. Within a few years killed virus vaccines were being marketed worldwide. Over the following years, MBL had three major expansion projects and developed a major international business and employed about 70 people. In 1981, MBL appointed TriBio Labs of State College, Pennsylvania to distribute MBL vaccines in the U.S. As this association grew, I acquired a minority interest in TriBio Labs in 1985 and served on their Board of Directors until TriBio Labs was sold in 1998. I sold MBL to the GHEN Corporation of Japan in 1998. I stayed on as president for 5 years until my retirement in 1993 at the age of 69.

During my time with MBL, I traveled extensively to the major poultry growing areas of the U.S., working with poultry companies and poultry disease research laboratories and attending scientific conferences on poultry diseases. I presented 22 scientific papers at such conferences. In 1979, MBL made an agreement with Venkateshwara Hatcheries in Pune, India to train their technicians in poultry vaccine production and to help them establish their laboratory in India. Over the next nine years, I made a number of trips to India for consulting and to speak at poultry disease meetings throughout India. After selling MBL to the GHEN Corporation, I made several trips to Japan for consultations and conferences.

**Maine Poultry Services (MPS):** In the early 1960's, there were hundreds of small commercial poultry flocks in Maine. Vaccination of these flocks was quite new. To encourage vaccination, I set up a vaccination service for poultry farms. As this grew, I solicited Thomas Teague as a partner and started Maine Poultry Services. It employed several crews that traveled to broiler farms and vaccinated and debeaked hundreds of thousands of young broiler chicks each week. Later they distributed poultry equipment. Tom Teague was totally responsible for operating this company and I later sold my interest to him. With the demise of the poultry industry in Maine, his company became Teague Distributors in Fairfield which distributes lawn and garden equipment.

**Maine Poultry Consultants (MPC) and Northeast Laboratory Services (NEL):** In 1961, I solicited Dr. William Gerencer, who was a former classmate at Michigan State School of Veterinary Medicine, to join me and we established Maine Poultry Consultants (MPC). This company provided poultry disease diagnostic services to the Maine poultry industry and also distributed poultry vaccines and pharmaceuticals. As the demands of the poultry industry for services grew, we started a new company named Northeast Laboratory Services (NEL) to provide analytical services in the areas of microbiology and chemistry. This soon grew to include these types of services to other industries and we later manufactured microbiological supplies for sale to hospitals and clinics. NEL and MPC were located on the China Road close to MBL. With the demise of the Maine poultry business in 1973, MPC was merged with NEL. By 1998, NEL had been expanded four times and employed 55 people. At that time, it was sold to BINAX, Inc. of Portland, Maine and I was elected to the Board of Directors of BINAX, Inc. This didn't work out well for them, and rather than see the company close, I bought it back in March of 2001. Rodney (Beau) Mears joined NEL as a partner and CEO to manage the company. As of this time (Nov. 5, 2005), the company employs about 70 people and is doing business nationally. The future looks bright.

**American Association of Avian Pathologists (AAAP):** I have been a member of AAAP almost since its inception. I attended my first annual AAAP scientific meeting in Dallas, Texas in 1967, and have attended every annual meeting since then until 2003. The AAAP scientific meetings have played an important role in my professional life. I have met and worked with the best poultry professionals from universities, businesses and federal labs. They were often the source of information that greatly helped me develop new and improved vaccines and to grow my business. I credit AAAP as being a major factor in the rapid development of avian medicine. I have served on several AAAP committees over the years, most notably the audit committee which I chaired for many years. I had always been concerned about the lack of teaching of avian medicine in most veterinary colleges. Most veterinary students had no idea of the potential for a career in the huge poultry industry. Therefore, in 1988, I funded the Kenneth H. Eskelund Preceptorship program through the AAAP Foundation. The stated purpose of this program is to provide financial support to enable veterinary students to obtain practical experience in various aspects of poultry medicine to encourage them to consider careers in this field. The program has funded an average of six students annually, many of whom now are pursuing successful careers in avian medicine. A few years later, I also funded a similar program, the MSU Summer Internship at Michigan State University which funds one student annually to gain avian health experience.

**Miscellaneous:** During my working years, I did not have much time for social clubs. However, I was a member of the Lions Club for several years and later the Kiwanis Club for several years. I served on the Waterville School Board for four years in the early 70's. In 1967, I was elected to the Board of Directors of Federal Trust Company in Waterville. When this bank was sold to the Merrill Trust Company of Bangor, I was elected to their Board of Directors. When Merrill merged with Fleet Bank of Maine, I became a member of the Fleet Board. This Board was disbanded in 1987 when Fleet merged with Norstar Bank.

**Retirement:** I retired from MBL in 1993 but have kept very busy ever since. I have devoted a lot of my time working with charities. My favorite is the Boys and Girls Club/YMCA at the Alford Youth Center, a nine million dollar facility in Waterville, Maine. I have been active on their Board of Directors since 1998 and have been honored in many ways including the naming of the Kenneth and Shirley Eskelund “Kids Room” which is the after school room where some 200 kids from 4 to 8 years of age receive a hot meal each school day. Both Shirley and I have been named to their Hall of Fame and I am a member of their Heritage Circle. Although I retired from their board in June of 2005, I have remained active on their Endowment Committee and in other ways.

I have also been on the Advisory Board of the Muskie Center, the Senior Spectrum Agency on Aging for since 1996. I have been delivering Meals on Wheels for them for over 10 years. I have been a major supporter of this organization. In 2002, I personally conducted a capital campaign to build an addition on their building to gain much needed space. This has been named the Kenneth and Shirley Eskelund Solarium.

I have been serving on the Board of Directors of Thomas Teague Biotechnology Park (an incubator) since its inception (about 2000). This is on land donated by my ex-partner of MPC. The main road through the park has been named Eskelund Drive. I was told that this was done because I have been credited with introducing biotechnology to Central Maine. Actually, at the time (over 40 years ago), I don't think that I had ever heard the word – “biotechnology.”

**Awards and Honors:** The most prestigious honor that I have ever received was the Distinguished Alumni Award presented at Michigan State University on October 20, 2005. Distinguished Alumni Award. The plaque which I received states:

*“This honor is awarded by Michigan State University Alumni Association to alumni that have attained the highest level of professional accomplishments, demonstrated exemplary voluntary service on a local, state, national or international level, and posses the highest standards of integrity and character to positively reflect and enhance the prestige of Michigan State University.”*

In 1996, I was elected to Life Membership of the American Association of Avian Pathologists.

In 2001, I was awarded the Philanthropy Day Award for “Outstanding Philanthropist of the State of Maine”, presented annually by the Northern New England Chapter of the Association of Fund-raising Professionals. One person is chosen annually as the leading philanthropist for the State of Maine.

At the 2000 annual meeting of the American Association of Avian Pathologists (AAAP), I was awarded their Special Service Award. This is awarded to one person annually “..... for the lifetime service to the organization and for accomplishments that benefit the poultry health industry.” This is the highest award of AAAP.

In June of 2001, I was elected into Honorary Membership in the American College of Poultry Veterinarians in recognition of “.... Philanthropy and exceptional service to the profession and the poultry industry for more than 50 years”.

In September of 2000, Shirley and I were awarded the Revered George F. Hinkley Humanitarian of the Year Award by Good Will - Hinkley School. This award is presented to “..... Individuals who exhibit dedication and loyalty to enriching the lives of others through tremendous service to their community”.

In March 1994, I received a Certificate of Appreciation from the New England Poultry Health Conference “For contributions of time and expertise for the betterment of the poultry industry of New England.”

In January 1986, I received an Outstanding Service Award from the National Pigeon Association for the development of a vaccine against a serious pigeon disease (I believe that I am the only non-pigeon person to ever receive this award).

In the past Shirley and I have been honored as follows:

- Naming of the Kenneth and Shirley Eskelund Conference Center Building on the campus of the Maine Children’s Home for Little Wanderers. This is Shirley’s project.
- Naming of the Kenneth and Shirley Eskelund After-School Program Room (the Kids Room) at the new Alford Youth Center (Boys & Girls Club/YMCA) in Waterville, Maine. (1998)
- Membership in the Good Will - Hinkley Heritage Society of the Good Will Hinkley Home for Boys and Girls - “Providing a legacy for future generations”. (1995)
- Appreciation for Leadership Gift for the new Harold and Bibby Alford Youth Center - Waterville Area Boys & Girls Club/YMCA (1999)
- Membership in the Edgar Allen Founders Society of Easter Seals (2000)
- Membership in the Founders Club of the Kennebec Valley Mental Health Center
- Naming of the Kenneth & Shirley Eskelund Outpatient Conference Room at the Kennebec Valley Mental Health Center in Waterville, Maine.
- Naming of the main drive through the Thomas Teague Biotechnology Park in Fairfield, Maine as Eskelund Drive (July 1999)
- Naming of the Kenneth Eskelund Lane, next to Maine Biological Labs. This is a short dead end road that was cut off by the construction of another major perpendicular road behind MBL. (2002)
- Names on the Inspirational Hall of Fame - Waterville Area Boys & Girls Club (1994 Ken, 2002 Shirley)

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*Biography solicited by the Committee on the History of Avian Medicine, American Association of Avian Pathologists.*

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*Additional biographical materials may be available from the AAAP Historical Archives located at Iowa State University. Contact information is as follows:*

*Special Collections Dept. & University Archives*

*403 Parks Library*

*Iowa State University*

*Ames, IA 50011-2140*

*Phone: (515) 294-6648*

*Fax: (515) 294-5525*

*WWW: <http://www.lib.iastate.edu/spcl/index.html>*