



Photo provided by Joel Del Bosque

Joe L. Del Bosque: A Modern Farmer with a Heart and Love for Work

Joe L. Del Bosque is a farmer businessman with a lifelong love for farming. He is a California native, born in the Imperial Valley and grew up on a farm in Firebaugh on the Westside of Fresno County. Joe learned his love for farming from his father who was a migrant farm laborer in the 1930's and 40's. In 1953 his father became a farm manager and Joe grew up working for his father on the farm.

When he was about 9 years old Joe began working on the farm doing field work. By the time he turned 10 he was proudly driving a tractor in the fields. He grew to love farm work and his father instilled in him a work ethic which demanded 100% or more. "He taught me to be proud to work in the fields, to see the value of farm work because growing food was the most important work possible."

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Although Joe grew up as a hardworking youth laboring in the fields there was an expectation that he would attend college after graduating from high school. He credits his older sister Priscilla as the one who instilled in him the desire to further his education. After graduating from Dos Palos High school in 1967, he enrolled in California State University, Fresno, declaring a pre-dental major. However, his love for farming soon got the best of him and after some self-evaluation changed his major to Agronomy/ Plant Science. After a four-year hiatus to help his father, he graduated in 1975.

AFTER GRADUATING FROM COLLEGE

Joe returned home and went to work on the farm his father managed. After working with his father for 10 years he became restless and decided to invest in a farming business on his own. Joe admits to receiving advice from seasoned farmers not to enter as a self-employed ag-businessman because in the mid 1980's many farms were failing and going bankrupt. Nevertheless, in 1985 he forged ahead with diligence and eventually became owner and president of Del Bosque Farms. Today, the Del Bosque Farms is a leader in farm ag-business, specializing in a variety of crops, such as cantaloupes, organic honeydews and watermelons, almonds, processing tomatoes, and cherries.

Joe attributes his success in ag-business both to his family, especially his wife Maria Gloria, and to his experience growing up working on a farm. The work ethic he learned as a youth working in the fields helped sustain him during the rough times while getting established in the farming business. Further, Joe stated he loves growing crops and working outdoors. “Being in business for myself is very fulfilling; a dream come true. Today's farming is a science and requires an education, high-tech methods, tools and skills.”

As in most success stories a team effort is required. This is true in his case. He states his wife Maria Gloria is the major reason for the Del Bosque Farms success story. She has been a great partner, and without her love, support and business management skills they could not have achieved success. Maria Gloria learned to work in her youth, as a field laborer, when her family migrated to the U.S. “Today, we work together, and she is my right hand. Her ability to work with people is much better than mine, so she complements me in the business. We have six daughters (four married) and five grandchildren. I am proud to say our daughters and our sons-in-law share our work ethics, and are excellent parents.”

Joe is concerned for today's youth. He believes an academic education in a school setting is not enough to build a successful business. “Young people need work experience to form ethics and values. The chores we did on the farm while growing up were beneficial in teaching responsibilities. Joe believes today's youth need role models who can teach work skills to help bring success. Youth must be given an opportunity to work, even if it seems menial or if it pays little. “I worked my first three years without pay; the experience was invaluable.”

Today, Joe is a leader in farming agribusiness. He is chair of AgSafe, a non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention of injuries and illnesses of workers in agriculture, and he is a member of the California Water Commission, (appointed by former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger). He is also a member of the California Latino Water Coalition, the Western Growers Association, the California Melon Research Board, and the California Farm Bureau.

RETIREMENT IS NOT AN OPTION FOR JOE.

Although, he plans to integrate his family in assuming responsibilities for the business, he wants to continue his passion for farming and the improvement in farm worker conditions. He believes in the American dream and wants to do all he can to see that the coming generation will have the opportunity to pursue it as well. “The American dream is still achievable, but can only be attained through preparation and hard work.” ■