

# John McCrea, 86, Marks 50 Years Today As City Grain Inspector

certainly, somewhere along the line, a longevity record of his nature was set today in John C. McCrea, semi-retired at 86 years of age, re-

corded his 50th year on the job at the McCrea city grain inspection business at 96 18th Pl. (right at the back door of Clinton Corn Processing Co.)

The grain inspection business — which Mr. McCrea firmly points out is an independent private enterprise licensed by the U. S. Department of Agri-

culture — is decidedly a family affair.

Son Dick now owns and runs the business. Mr. McCrea (who is called Pa by everyone at work) and his wife, Ethel, provide daily assistance. Six additional people are also employed.

"I was the first government-licensed grain inspector in Clinton when I began work in late February of 1918," Mr. McCrea said. "Most of my business was with Clinton Corn Processing Co. which then was called the Clinton Sugar Refining Co. and was owned by the National Candy Co. out of St. Louis."

"Then," he went on, "Clinton Corn was grinding some 15,827 bushels of corn a day. Now the grind is 100,000 bushels a day which means we inspect and grade an average of 50 boxcars of corn daily."

The bulk of the grain inspected by the McCreas is corn consigned to Clinton Corn though they also inspect and grade corn and soybeans (the law reads that all shipments of grain be inspected by a licensed grain inspector at point of origin or

destination) shipped by barge from Froning's in Clinton and Bunge in Albany down the Mississippi river.

"I remember before 1918," Mr. McCrea said. "When corn was tested by picking kernels willy-nilly from boxcars and putting the kernels in a saucer of water. The ones that sank represented a 'good' car of corn and the ones that floated were 'bad' corn."

To get an overall accurate gauge of the quality of a boxcar of corn, Dick McCrea uses a special probe stick which he pokes into the top of

a load of corn in five different spots. This stick has a "twist" knob at its top which allows the inspector to get an accurate sampling of corn at the various depths in the boxcar.

The samples of corn are then fitted into one of six grades after a series of instruments and machines test the corn for moisture content, weight, odor, color, etc.

"You don't see it anymore," Mr. McCrea said. "But, in the old days, maybe 30 years ago or so, you would occasionally find a few cars that looked pretty

as a picture to the eye but under those top layers, there was a damaged batch of corn." Such cars were called "plug" cars.

Formerly Mr. McCrea had his inspection offices in the Clinton plant which he remembers as running fairly steadily during the hard times of the depression. He moved to the present site in 1946 when he began inspecting soybeans for Pillsbury Co. "Pillsbury was going pretty strong during 1946, 1947 and

1948," he recalls.

Mr. McCrea, who lives at 1880 Circle Drive S., had promised or "threatened" to go into total retirement on his 50th anniversary. "Maybe to relax and just putter around the house and do some

work on the lawn."

However now that the time's arrived, he's undecided. After all these years of working daily (far over 50 years, for that matter), he's not sure he's ready for a life of leisure and retirement.



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