

The following was presented by Board Member, Don Maurer, at the Hall of Distinction Ceremony of the Dover Historical Society on Sunday May 1, 2022.

Richard (Rich) W. Benson

Rich Benson has always been proud to call Dover, Ohio his hometown. While growing up there as an only child the friendships, the “small town atmosphere”, the sandlot sports, and the values of the community left a mark that he always appreciated. As perhaps a bit of foreshadowing, Rich referenced William Wordsworth’s quote: “The Child is the Father of the Man”, in his valedictory to the Dover High Class of 1965.

Rich was born in Dover in 1947 and was an only child- that “first and only” designation set high standards and his parents always expected excellence- whether it was in school or on the Little League Baseball diamond where his 60 mph fastball was pretty good for a 10-12 year old, but not so good as he got older, the pitching mound moved back, but the fastball’s speed remained the same.

In those simpler days, he left the home in the morning, played ball in the vacant lot next door, then played games with neighborhood friends until dusk while attending the “old South School”. He was in the first class to move into the “new school” in the early 1950s where we all got our sugar cubes with polio vaccine- thank you, Dr. Salk.

With the influence of supportive and motivating teachers, Rich expanded his enjoyment of learning and seized the opportunities of the High School, graduating as Valedictorian in 1965. With the encouragement of great teachers, Rich was accepted to Princeton University and embarked on the study of chemical engineering, graduating with Magna Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa, and Tau Beta Pi honors.

As a lifelong learner, he earned a Masters in Chemical Engineering, a Master’s in Business Administration, and Certificates in New Product Development to broaden his perspective and skills.

In his career, Rich was fortunate to work with talented colleagues in innovative businesses. With collaboration, hard work, and luck, all combined to result in some meaning full contributions to our quality of life.

Rich’s first assignment at Proctor and Gamble in the 1970s was to reduce phosphorus in detergents, leading to improved water quality in our lakes and streams. Next was the creation of Dawn detergent which revolutionized

dishwashing as well as provided a way to remove oil spill pollution from the wildlife.

In the 1980s his focus shifted to foods and the coffee business where his team invented a way to add coffee aroma to instant coffee to improve the “wake up” experience for many! The similarities of coffee and cocoa technology led Rich to leave P&G and move into the chocolate business with Mars.

There his team improved the processes for making chocolates and confectionery products. In the mid-1980s, Mars ventured into the ice cream business and appointed Rich to lead the initial transformation of the candy brands into the form of ice cream novelties like Snickers, M&M, Twix, Milky Way, 3 Musketeers and the new Dove Chocolate brands. Learning dairy technology and merging it with confectionery technology was a challenge, but a rewarding result!

After retirement from Mars in 2004, Rich has worked with other chocolate companies worldwide and has consulted with ice cream and confectionery entrepreneurs to establish a number of consumer products.

He is proud of the values he developed in his youth in Dover that have served him well in raising his family and is very humble to be recognized for inclusion in the Hall of Distinction.