

ANSC Alumni Bill Davenport Interview

UConn: What was your major and year of graduation?

1985 BS in Animal Science

1986: MS in Animal Science, plus Agriculture Teacher Certification

Who else in your family graduated from UConn?

Brother Jim and sister in law Karen

Brother Scott, Animal Science major, works at Pfizer in Groton for the past 15 years.

Wife Jill Marie Perham, BS in Animal Science, 1987 (met her at UConn)

Were you involved in any extracurricular clubs/organizations that helped you while at UConn?

Very involved with Dairy Club and Block and Bridle

Was Vice President and President of the Dairy Club

Showed in four Dairy shows (champion twice, 1983 and 1985) and showed beef in four Little International shows as well

Was there a professor who really helped you as a student?

Our class of 1985 was one of the last fortunate ones who were blessed to be taught by the UConn legends including but not limited to Dr. Kinsman, Dr. Cowan, Dr. Gaunya, Dr. Hale, Dr. Malkus, Dr. Riesen, Dr. Brown, Dr. Stitts and some great younger (just starting their teaching careers at that time) ones including Dr. Darre and Dr. Hoagland.

All of these fine gentlemen gave me an incredible base of knowledge from which I have built my teaching career around, leading by their example.

Dr. Kinsman opened up my eyes to the meats industry which helped me to this day teaching meat science and coaching over 15 FFA State Meats Judging Teams to the national level over the years, thanks to the foundation of information I learned from Dr. Kinsman. I am very proud to say that one of my former students who was on one of my National meats judging teams back in 1993 is now a UConn professor, Dr. Rich Mancini, who started off raising two market hogs in his tiny backyard in Bethlehem. Dr. Mancini came to Nonnewaug wanting to be an equine veterinarian, took my Agriculture Production class, became interested in meats, raised two hogs, butchered them in my class as a sophomore, and the rest is history.

Also, Jeff Semler, a graduate student and my dairy judging coach when I was on the UCONN team in 1983, did a great job at preparing me and since then I have coached many successful dairy judging teams (over 20 state champion FFA Dairy judging teams) and I give Jeff credit for training me to be able to accomplish this. Ironically, three of these teams placed in the top 5 nationally (2nd, 4th and 5th) which qualified them to travel to Europe for a 12 day tour of Scotland, England, Luxemburg, Germany, France and Ireland. On my most recent Europe trip in 2012, my old dairy judging coach Jeff Semler also attended this same trip since he had worked with Maryland's 4-H Dairy judging team that year and they

qualified to go on this trip as well. So I got to spend the trip with the guy who helped prepare me to have successful dairy judging teams so many years later.

Do you have any stories about your experience at UConn, fond memories while here as a student?

By far the best years of my life were spent at UConn. All of my closest friends, including my wife Jill, were UConn Aggies and I met them all there while at UConn. Being active in Dairy Club and Block and Bridle really enhanced my entire college experience as well. Some of my fondest memories were organizing a trip for both clubs to the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto each fall, helping “borrow” the MILK 1 license plate off the front of Dr. Cowan’s Cadillac in the middle of the night for an animal science scavenger hunt (we put it back before he noticed, I think...) painting the inner walls of the Ratcliffe Hicks Arena, playing volleyball in the arena at night, preparing for and showing in the Dairy Show and “Little I” for all four years, Dairy Club and Little I banquets, living in Hicks Hall, and the list could go on and on. Again, I spent the best years of my life at UConn, and would give anything to go back.

What does the Davenport farm raise/ produce etc.? Feel free to mention your business and who is a part of that.

My brother Jim milks 65 registered Holsteins (and 8 to 10 registered Ayrshires) in Ancram, NY, and I own about 20 Ayrshires and Holsteins in the herd and try to get to the farm as much as possible to help on weekends. It helps keep me involved and up to date with the dairy industry which helps me keep what I teach relevant because I am still connected with the industry. I also still enjoy showing cows at local, regional and national shows along with my 15 year old daughter Megan, who is a freshman in the high school agriculture program and active in the Busy Farmers 4-H Dairy Club.

What did you do following graduation as far as a job/career and how did UConn prepare you, if at all, with what you pursued post-graduation?

I graduated in May of 1986 with my masters and agriculture teaching certificate, then got hired on July 1, 1986 in Region 14, Nonnewaug High School, and 29 years later, I am still there. I also became Director of the Agriscience Program in 2004. My education and experience at UConn was instrumental in my success as an agriscience teacher and FFA advisor at Woodbury for the past 29 years.