

Meet the Members

Interview with Steve and Peg Sullivan

By Ruth Moorhead

Many of you know personally, or have seen the names of Steve and Peg Sullivan.

Steve is the originator and director of the Indiana Gourd Society Pure Seed Project, has served on the Board of Directors as 1st vice-president, finished Richard Harshman's presidency term in 2000, and was elected to the IGS Roll of Honor in 2008. Steve is our official photographer, so you have probably seen him at the state show, the state fair, and our spring and fall meetings documenting IGS activities. Both he and Peg have worked on many projects, chairmanships, and served in many capacities for IGS over the years.

Steve was born in 1928 in Fort Wayne, graduated from Peru High School and went to Purdue, where he earned a degree in Agronomy, the study of crops and soil. After a time in the Army he worked for Purdue as a member of the Seed Certification Service. His work as a field inspector, educator, and publicist has helped many farmers across the state with their soil and plant problems.

Here's what you may NOT know.

Steve served in the U.S. Army from 1952-1955 having been recruited by the Army Counter Intelligence Corps, the CIC, while at Purdue.

He went to "CIC School" in Baltimore learning the techniques of an Intelligence Analyst, and then taught Counter Intelligence to soldiers. Counter Intelligence worked to prevent the wrong guys from learning what they shouldn't find out about us and effectively counter such effort. .

While still with the CIC, he married Peg, his Peru High School classmate, in February of 1953, and they've been married for 56 years. Of course it was Peg who learned how to stretch that army paycheck by canning, and preserving the goodies from the garden. Their family includes a boy, now at Nyona Lake in Indiana, and a girl in Marshall, Minnesota, so "they got their seed back". (What else would a seed specialist say !)

They have a 60 acre farm near Logansport, with 4 acres in garden, to oversee seed/plant projects at

home.

Their first involvement with the gourd society was attending the shows at IUPUI in Kokomo in 1997 and 98. They were encouraged to attend by Teresa Williams, and went purely out of curiosity. What they saw blew their minds. The variety of gourd shapes and sizes, and the artwork and creativity had them hooked.

Talking about his passion for pure seeds, Steve saw the need in the society for true varieties, had the background and experience to oversee such a project, and enjoys immensely the hands on experience. As Steve explained it, there are four ways to work toward developing pure seed:

- 1.) Hand pollinate to cross male and female blossoms from the same plant, for seven generations.
- 2). Or grow one variety in isolation, so that it cannot cross with another variety, and repeat for seven years. Isolation should be a minimum ¼ mile from other gourds.
- 3). Between generations use visual selection of each variety of gourd, concentrating on accuracy of size and shape. Discard off types. Grow succeeding generations only from parent gourds expressing correct genetic characteristics.
- 4). Use visual selection of seeds from correct gourds choosing mature seeds only, and discarding immature, discolored, and off type or irregularly-shaped seeds.

Successfully continuing these processes for seven generations will result in seed having 99% genetic purity for a given variety. IGS can sell these certifiable genetically pure seed, and be sure that they will produce true to type gourds for those who purchase IGS "Pure Seed".

Those who wish to create a new variety will have "known and pure seeds" to choose from, and to plant, and thus make their blossom crosses to create a "hybrid" from known parents.

For the last two years, Steve has done the germination rate tests on all varieties of gourd seed that IGS sells.

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