



Meet the Board – Liz Garst



One of the original members of the Riley Resource Group Advisory Board is Liz Garst. If that name sounds familiar - it should. Garst is one of the most respected names in agriculture in Iowa and all around the United States.

Liz's grandfather, Roswell Garst, was a friend of the future Vice President Henry Wallace. In 1930 Garst and Wallace entered into a partnership with Garst agreeing to produce and distribute hybrid seed corn in the western corn-belt. Garst and Thomas Hybrid Seed Company sold Pioneer seed for more than 50 years.

Roswell Garst is also famous for hosting Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev on his farm near Coon Rapids, Iowa, on September 23, 1959. To appreciate what a historic event that was you must remember at that time the United States and the Soviet Union were in the middle of the Cold War. It was a very tense period of distrust and military rivalry between the two countries.

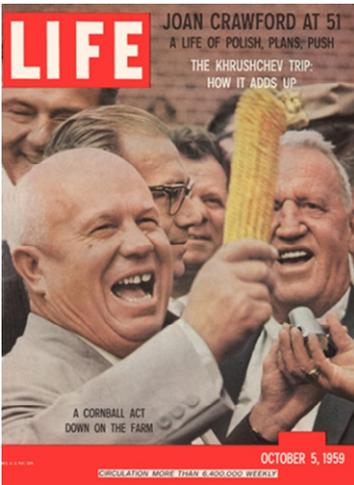
So, why would Garst invite an enemy of the US to come visit his farm and offer to help a communist country out?

Liz credits her grandfather for making a very profound observation – “Hungry people are dangerous people”. At that time agriculture in the Soviet Union was backward and Iowa corn was far superior to Ukrainian corn. Many in the Soviet Union were starving. Garst thought that if he could help the country improve their corn crops they would be less of a threat to the US. Liz said, “Roswell represented the first thaw in the Cold War.”

Liz is the oldest of the six children. Her parents are Stephen and Mary Garst - Stephen was Roswell and Elizabeth's oldest son. Liz grew up on the Garst family farm and went on to have a very impressive resume. She has BA from Stanford University in English Literature, a M.S. from Michigan State in Agriculture Economics and a M.B.A. from Harvard.



Back row 6th from right Mrs. Khrushchev, 5th & 4th Roswell & Elizabeth Garst, 3rd Khrushchev – front row right Liz Garst



October 5, 1959 cover of LIFE Magazine Khrushchev's visit

Today Liz manages the family 3,000 acre farm where they grow corn and soybeans with some of the farm in grassland pasture. She also manages the families' three community banks. She has had a thirty year significant other relationship with Darwin Pierce, Manager of Operations for the Garst farm.

Liz is one of the original members of the Riley Resource Group Advisory Board. Liz and Bob Riley have known each other all of their lives – their parents were close friends. When asked what she feels she brings to the board Liz said, "I bring a wealth of experience in farming, banking and working with family owned businesses to the Riley Resource Group Advisory Board."

Liz is a big supporter of Feed Energy's new products that help reduce the use of antibiotics in swine and poultry. She said, "Feed Energy is on the cutting edge in this area with the introduction of Antibiotic Free Advantage and the R2 line of products."

In 2004 the Garst Family formed Whiterock Conservancy, a non-profit land trust. The Garst family has donated 4,000 acres to the Conservancy with a three part mission; First - protecting and restoring natural resources. Second - sustaining agriculture with a primary goal of improving soil health and soil protection, Third - making the land open for people to come visit and learn about sustainable agriculture and natural resources.

Liz serves on the board of Whiterock Conservancy where her passion for protecting the soil and the Conservancy's mission converge. She is a tireless advocate for protecting our soil from erosion and degradation. She said that in order to stop erosion we must improve the soil health. Liz said, "Intensive tillage is breaking down the aggregate soil structure to the point where it can no longer hold moisture so it turns to dust and is washed away."

Liz said Jerry Hatfield, Laboratory Director USDA Agriculture Research Service, has made the alarming prediction that under current practices the soil in western Iowa will be completely gone in 35 years and central Iowa's will be gone in 80 to 100 years. She said, "What we're doing to protect our soil is way too slow in the face of our high intensity rains."

Bob Riley, Chairman of the Board RRG, is very proud to have Liz on his board. Bob said, "When I was looking for people with the attributes that we would like to have on our board, Liz checked many boxes: Agriculture, finance, banking, policy, sustainability, family business, management, board experience, Ms. degree, Community organizing, and many more. And, she speaks truth no matter the circumstances. Valuable attributes each, combined in one person. Liz is an invaluable member of our board."

Liz just received the well-deserved honor of being named as one of the 2019 Business Record Women of Influence honorees. Liz Garst – proudly carrying on the famous Garst name as a farm manager, banker, activist and tireless advocate for sustainable agriculture.



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