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THE MADISON-MORGAN CULTURAL CENTER HONORS Marvin Ruark

 Editor |  April 11, 2015 |  Featured, News | No comments

By Tia Lynn Lecorchick Managing Editor

Marvin Ruark, a local icon in the cotton industry, honored at the Madison-Morgan Cultural Center (MMCC) by the Cotton Commission and the Madison-Morgan Conservancy for his 30 years of service on the Cotton Commission board and his work in the agricultural sphere throughout the state of Georgia.

The event drew out over 125 people to celebrate the life and work of Marvin Ruark. “Cotton may be King, but Marvin Ruark is one of the quiet men of integrity behind the industry. Thank you Marvin for your years of service to the Georgia Cotton Commission and for being a patron farmer of Morgan County,” said Christine McCauley, executive director of the Madison-Morgan Conservancy. Ruark was moved at his community’s kind gesture. “I wasn’t expecting it,” said Ruark.

“It was really nice and I really appreciated what they did for me.” Cotton has been an integral part of Ruark’s life and hopes the industry survives in this region for generations to come. “It was very important to me. I was raised on a cotton farm that goes back about three or four generations,”

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remembered Ruark. “Hopefully we can continue in this part of the country for a little while longer, for as long as it’s still feasible.” Ruark was pleased with the location of the event, because it provided the opportunity for out of town attendants to tour the MMCC, which features exhibits Ruark helped assemble.

“It was a very appropriate place since the Cotton Commission helped install the old cotton gin in the cultural center. A lot of people came from far away and got to tour the whole cultural center. They were very impressed.” “Marvin served as a producer member of the Commission for 35 years. During this time, he also served on the boards of a number of cotton organizations. During his tenure he was and still is an advocate for the cotton industry. The many contributions to the cotton industry and the Madison-Morgan community were celebrated in last weekend’s event.

A large group of industry representatives, friends, and family attended to honor his service and contributions,” said Richey Seaton, executive director of the Cotton Commission, who spoke at the event. According to McCauley, executive director the Madison-Morgan Conservancy, the time had come to commemorate “Marvin Ruark and his lifelong contribution to agriculture in Georgia.” According to a conservancy press release, “[Ruark] has played an important role in cultivating the cotton industry in Georgia and is best known locally for his work in ginning cotton in Bostwick. Mr. Ruark also serves, or has served, as a board member of both the Morgan County Farm Bureau and the Georgia Farm Bureau, as a District Supervisor for the Piedmont Soil and Water Conservation District, as Secretary/Treasurer of the Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation, and as a member of the Health, Safety and Environmental Quality Committee of the National Cotton Council. He and his wife, Bebe, are members of Gibbs Memorial Baptist Church and are an active part of Bostwick’s community.”

“The Ruark family has been in the cotton business for over 100 years. Marvin and his brother Gene have been farming together for over 50 years. They carried on the family tradition and bought the Bostwick Cotton Gin in the 1970s. Marvin’s son, John, and Gene’s son, Mark, have joined them in the business, as has Marvin’s grandson, Andrew Ruark (the fifth generation).

“The Madison-Morgan Conservancy is honored to have been a part of this celebration. Mr. Ruark and his family have been lynchpins in Morgan County’s agricultural industry and leaders in agritourism, a combination of our two leading industries of agriculture and tourism...His influence reaches beyond Morgan County – he has made significant contributions to the ag industry throughout the Southeast. We are pleased but not surprised that his kind of leadership comes from Morgan County, and we were thrilled to see his service celebrated at the Cultural Center by the Cotton Commission,” said Christine McCauley. “They did a wonderful job. I thoroughly enjoyed it and I think everybody else did, too,” said Ruark.

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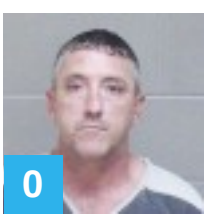


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