Jerry Plunkett, Ph.D. recalls early years in Dixon

Jerry Plunkett's parents, Charlie and Ethel Plunkett, were Dixon residents, with Charlie serving as Frisco RR Depot Agent for 22 years - 1944-1966.

Jerry Plunkett's career working in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics) field started at Dixon, MO when he accepted a position as axeman with the Frisco Railroad engineering department. He held this position from May 1945 until February 1946. This job consisted of carry in and drive surveyor's stakes to mark the Dixon and Crooked Hill new railway route alignments. Also, most of the time was spent in actually cutting brush for the surveyors.

"It was hard work that made Air Force basic training physically a low energy affair," commented Plunkett.

On his return from Air Force duty of nearly two years, just before Thanksgiving in 1948, Plunkett made his home in Dixon and worked for the Frisco R.R. until the end of August 1949. In September he entered Missouri School of Mines, at Rolla. He graduated with a Bachelors Degree in May 1943, and a Masters Degree in February 1954. Both degrees were in Ceramic Engineering. He entered MIT the same month and completed the Ph.D. program and received this degree in June 1961.

Plunkett served as a Material and Energy Consultant for many years. From 1972-1976 Plunkett assisted the Majority Leader of the U.S. Senate as a private energy advisory/consultant. Previously he had provided testimony to Senator Scoop Jackson before the Senate in Washington, D.C. in August 1972 on new energy sources, ie., wind, solar, geothermal, ocean thermal gradient, etc. Now called "green energy."

Today, at the age of 91, Plunkett resides in the Dixon area. He currently oversees Missouri Structural Composites and is creating a non-profit organization devoted to increasing recognition of women and children in areas of innovation while providing competitions and other knowledge building formats.

In April 1973, Senator Tyding's Committee offered him the opportunity to discuss the topic of energy efficiency in use.

In 1996 Plunkett designed and built a bridge as a prototype, three miles west of Russell, Kansas, made out of Reinforced Polymers. It has served very well and is still in use today. The load test capacity remains the same after 23 years.