

DEDICATION OF THE NOBLE PACE
SEED TECHNOLOGY LABORATORY

Dr. William A. Giles^{1/}

Most of the progress man has made in modern times has resulted from capable planning based upon accumulated knowledge and principles. At times, however, products and institutions of great worth come into being without regard for and, indeed, almost in defiance of logic and reason.

This Seed Technology Laboratory is an excellent example of what has just been said. Why, of all places, should there have been developed at Mississippi State University a program in seed production, processing, and handling with world-wide following?

True, Mississippi has been involved in an international cotton planting seed business since the 1840's. However, the reasons the program was established and flourished here were first, there was a need for reliable information on seed production, processing, and handling; second, on the staff here were some imaginative people who recognized an opportunity to be of service to a vital segment of the agricultural industry; third, there was an interested and influential group of individuals outside the University who "blew on the coals" to keep the idea alive.

At approximately the midway point of the Civil War, President Lincoln signed into law the legislation which created the Land-Grant Colleges in the United States. The idea of federally and state supported colleges to teach agriculture and the mechanical arts had been debated in Congress for more than a decade. To a vast majority of the people who lived on farms or were engaged in other aspects of developing the resources of the nation, it was evident that lack of knowledge was and would continue to limit growth.

Soon after the Land-Grant Colleges were established it became apparent to faculties in agriculture and engineering that there were no well organized bodies of knowledge in these broad areas. There were more questions than answers. Even where answers were given, there were few hard facts to support them. Many of the answers were opinions based on casual observation. What was needed, the professors said, was sound experimentation to furnish facts for teaching and for building a solid scientific base for agriculture, engineering, and other fields of knowledge.

^{1/}Dr. Giles is President of Mississippi State University and was the first Director of the Seed Technology Laboratory.

As the teachers discussed problems with farmers and industrialists, need for educational programs outside the classroom became evident. Young men and women who had not started careers could come to the colleges to be taught. For heads of families busily engaged in making a living going to college was impossible; yet they too needed to be educated.

Somehow, the Land-Grant people thought, a way must be found to extend the classroom beyond the boundaries of the colleges. After a period of development there emerged the highly effective extension programs supported with federal, state, and county funds.

After more than a hundred years of experience, the objectives of the Land-Grant institutions are accomplished through teaching, research, and service.

This brief account of some of the motivating forces associated with the growth and maturity of Land-Grant universities is given because some of the same needs and responses have influenced the Seed Technology Laboratory.

Conservation consciousness in the United States evolved from massive federal programs of soil and water conservation initiated prior to World War II. After the War thousands of veterans enrolled in Colleges of Agriculture. Professors, students, and farmers on the land were interested in enterprises which would conserve the soil resource, yet produce saleable products. The logical result was a widespread interest in grassland agriculture.

Among other things, grassland agriculture requires large quantities of seed of grasses and small-seeded legumes. In the late 1940's and the decade of the fifties, seedsmen were handling larger volumes of seed than ever before and were faced with more and different seed separation problems than they had ever known.

Each seed processor had his own receipts for various separations of weed seed from grass and legume planting seed. Nowhere was there a fund of knowledge to help the troubled seedman. Neither was there a single place to turn to for help. Although seedsmen met and discussed problems, the art of making certain seed separations was regarded as a trade secret.

Sometime before 1949 the late Noble Pace, a progressive seedsmen in Cleveland, Mississippi, decided that the industry needed a training and research program to help solve its technical problems. After many conversations with administrators at Mississippi State, Pace succeeded in convincing them that a program of teaching and research for the seed industry was desperately needed.

Noble Pace never ceased working for the advancement of the Seed Laboratory. He made converts wherever he went. He inspired all of us who were connected with the program.

The seed technology program became a joint venture between the Departments of Agricultural Engineering and Agronomy. Seedsmen in the state influenced the Legislature to appropriate funds to get the project started. Later regional research funds through the Experiment Station provided a major share of support.

During the early stages of its development, manufacturers of seed processing machinery contributed to the laboratory through the loan of equipment. In this same beginning era publicity given the program by seed trade journals was invaluable in building confidence in the laboratory.

Just as the professors in the new Land-Grant Colleges found that there was a shortage of factual material to use in teaching agriculture, so the staff in seed technology found when the program was started.

The first teaching service venture of the laboratory was a seminar for seedsmen in the summer of 1951. Noble Pace was chief advisor for planning the program and locating lecturers. Response to the seminar exceeded expectations. Representatives of the seed industry from many states were present. Even more encouraging was an expression for expanded programs on an annual basis.

Under Dr. Louis Wise's direction, the Laboratory joined A.I.D. in contracts to help several nations develop programs in seed production and processing. Later a worldwide contract was approved which has been the basis for scientists here working in some 36 different countries.

Dr. Dean Bunch brought to the Laboratory a solid experience and training in seed production and processing. Dr. Delouche with his fine background in seed physiology and seed analysis has completed the circle of highly qualified talent which focus the present staff.

Thinking about the dedication caused me to review the accomplishments of the seed technology program and to list contributions to the seed industry.

The following seem worthy of note:

1. The program through Short Courses for Seedsmen has provided a forum for free discussion of technical problems in the industry. By bringing together seedsmen, manufacturers of processing machinery, and scientists problems have been more clearly defined for better understanding. In addition, sharing problems and solutions has helped to break down most of the barriers of secretiveness which marked the industry. Changes which have taken place as a result of the openness and candor moved the seed industry from a guild to a profession.

2. By developing a staff of experienced scientists and engineers the Laboratory provides a knowledge and research resource for the seed

industry world wide.

3. Through the undergraduate and graduate programs trained personnel are being provided the industry.

4. Working in underdeveloped countries has contributed in a major way toward helping solve the world food problem.

5. Primarily through the efforts of Dean Bunch, the development of the seed industry in Brazil is a monumental accomplishment.

We are dedicating a building here today -- the Noble Pace Seed Technology Laboratory; yet the building is really a symbol for an idea that grew and was fruitful.

"A sower went out to sow his seed; -----

And some fell into good soil and grew,

and yielded a hundredfold."

Luke 8: 5 and 8



