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### Its great to be a Boilermaker again!

I received my MS and PhD degrees from here and now I'm back after nearly 17 years on the faculty at the University of Arkansas. It is wonderful to be working among the most outstanding Agronomy faculty and staff in the country. I am excited to be part of a department that has such a rich history of outstanding students, alums, and friends of Agronomy. Our strength depends upon your continued support.



It is a difficult task as the new department head to follow such a class act as Bill McFee. He has been such a strong leader and avid supporter of this department and staff. I have enjoyed and appreciated his mentoring during this time of transition.

I have found Purdue Agronomy folks to be friendly and filled with incredible energy, just like they were in the seventies and early eighties. Some things have changed though. I was reminded of this when Marion Baumgardner, Jim Ahlrichs (both retired) and some other oldtimers gathered to celebrate the 85th birthday of Tom Odle (custodian emeritus). There is a story inside about Tom that you will enjoy reading. Yes, things have changed since many of you last visited, with the addition of excellent new staff and remodeled laboratories, but the congeniality, the commitment to students and the excellence in research and extension are still here and going strong. I am proud to be back and look forward to visiting with each of you. Remember to put the Ag Tailgate (Homecoming) and departmental reunion on your calendar for this fall, October 27th.

*Craig Beyoritz*

### John D. Axtell

Lynn Distinguished Professor of Agronomy

February 5, 1934 - December 2, 2000

**Dr. John Axtell** joined the faculty of Purdue University, Department of Agronomy in 1967. Professor Axtell made a broad range of contributions to the agricultural sciences during his 34 years at Purdue University. His international contributions through basic research findings, germplasm development, graduate education, and scientific leadership in plant breeding and genetics were enormous. He was an eloquent advocate for agricultural research and international agricultural development. His greatest passion had been for long-term institution building and for human capital development, tools he believed to be essential for making a difference in the lives of the poor in developing countries.



Professor Axtell was an extraordinary family man, a great mentor and invaluable colleague to many, a research statesman, and a distinguished scientist. He will be greatly missed.



**SPRING 2001**

## Our Roots/Recollections....

### From our past: George Hoffer (1887-1963)

The man was bent with years. His beaten-up Dodge coupe was equally aged. He walked to the farm house and told Kristina, "Tell Pete that I left a bag of potash." The year was 1958; the farm was rundown land which Prof. Peterson had just purchased. (Kristina is the wife of Jim Ahlrichs.)

The old man was the much respected George Hoffer and the bag of potash was symbolic of his fame. Eastern USA corn on "new" land grew like a tree and yielded 60-100 bu/A. Then, after a few years, corn would decline to sickly growth with root rots, lodged stalks and very low (<30 bu/A) yields. Native Americans had the same problem (observed by the first colonists in the 1600s). After about eight years they moved to a new site with its new soil.

Hoffer, a chemist, came to Purdue to be a botanist. He led a merry chase starting with black flecks appearing in canned corn and ending with discovery of extreme K deficiency in the soil. The black flecks were iron oxides. The corn kernels were two times normal in iron. The nodes on the stalks had black zones very high in iron. The soils were acid and low in P but liming and phosphorus did little good. There was a lot of fungus in the plant, but that wasn't the problem. Finally a North Carolina farmer pleaded for help. His 75 bushel corn fields were now yielding very little. Hoffer suggested including some crude sulfate of potash in a simple field experiment. Presto...the K tripled yields and it eliminated the flecks, the dark discolored nodes, the lodged stalks, and the prolific fungus growth.

Hoffer spread the word. K was deficient in all soils east of the Mississippi River. Rainfall is high and K can be leached out. Well, not everyone learned this lesson; so Hoffer, in his eighties still needed to push potash; "Tell Pete I left a bag of potash for him."

He and his close neighbor, George Scarseth (another great Purdue Agronomist) now are adjacent in the Grandview Cemetery. Surely the two still discuss their success in rejuvenating the ancient and leached soils of eastern USA. And, we Purdue types sample our soils with our "Hoffer" tubes while the rest of the world simply calls them sampling tubes.

*Hunger Fighters* 1928 by Paul deKrief writes of this and other great early Agricultural pioneers.

*Jim Ahlrichs, Professor Emeritus*

## Around Agronomy...

Agronomy has two Distinguished Ag Alumni this year; **Dr. Henry Shands** and **Dr. McArthur Floyd** who will be on campus April 19 and 20, 2001.

**Dr. McArthur (Mac) Floyd** has made outstanding contributions to the research and education advancement of Alabama A&M University. Mac had a key role in transforming Alabama A&M's School of Agriculture and Environmental Science (SAES) into a first-rate education and research organization. After obtaining both his MS and PhD degrees from the Purdue Department of Agronomy, Mac returned to Alabama A&M to teach and conduct research in soil and environmental microbiology. He has been a master of education, research, and administration at Alabama A&M. He received two awards for outstanding teaching and mentored numerous graduate students. He became acting Associate Dean for Research in 1983 and Associate Dean in 1985. He is currently the Research Director, at A&M, Associate Director for the statewide Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station, and chair of ESCOP, National Experiment.



**Dr. Henry Shands** has had a profound influence on the future food supply of the world. He has encouraged, guided, and directed activities aimed at ensuring the future accessibility of germplasm needed for the maintenance of our major food crops. He has worked in universities, private industry, and federal government and international organizations in his efforts to improve the resource base used in plant breeding. His current position as Director of the National Seed Storage Laboratory allows him to have unparalleled influence on the policy and procedures needed to insure preservation and availability of our genetic resource base. Dr. Shands has led several US delegations to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations to debate genetic resource issues critical to the availability of germplasm worldwide.



### Schedule of Seminars-Distinguished Ag Alums

**Thursday, April 19:**

**1:30 pm, Seminar, LILY 2425, Henry Shands, "Germplasm as a Natural Resource"**

**Friday, April 20:**

**2:00 pm, Seminar, LILY 2425, McArthur Floyd, "Exploring Opportunities for Mutually Beneficial Activities between Alabama A&M and Purdue Universities"**

**3:00-4:00 pm, Departmental Reception, LILY 2425,**

## Staff News:

**Bret Rush** was appointed Associate Director of Development. He will spend half of his time developing funding for the Agronomy Department, and half of his time developing funding for the Turfgrass Science Program. Bret graduated from Purdue in 1982 with a degree in Agronomy with a turfgrass science emphasis.

**Brad Lee** (Assistant Professor in Soils and Land Use) joined the department in January. He is originally from Kansas, receiving the BS and MS degrees from Oklahoma State, and the PhD from the University of California at Riverside. For the last year Brad has been working for Calfed, an environmental consulting group in the Sacramento area.

**Steve Jones** joined the Agronomy Research Center (Agronomy Farm) staff in February. His degree is from Wisconsin State at Platteville. He formerly worked with Westland Co-op and White County Co-op.

**Janis Gosewehr** is the new Genomics secretary for our faculty in Whistler Hall. Janis has 10 years experience, most recently as a secretary in the School of Pharmacy.

Congratulations to **Dan McFtridge** for receiving the Indiana Crop Improvement Association Special Recognition Award at the ICIA Annual Conference in Indianapolis on February 8. **Jim Uphaus** received the Indiana Seed Industry Scholarship Award.

**Jim McBee** replaced **Mike Jasper** as Business Manager for the departments of Agronomy, Animal Sciences, and Botany and Plant Pathology. Mike Jasper accepted the position as Manager of Parking Facilities.

The following Agronomy staff were recognized for years of service at Staff Recognition Programs: **Phyllis Graves**– 35 years, **Sherron Myers** and **Bob Hutchinson**– 25 years, **Judy Lindell**, **Lou Jones** and **Jerry Powell**– 20 years, **Connie Foster**– 15 years, **Cliff Keifer**, **Dan Weisenberger** and **Chuck Mansfield**– 10 years.

Congratulations to **Suzanne Cunningham** and **Chuck Mansfield** who recently advanced in professional rank.

**Ben Carter** accepted the position as Assistant Director of the Crop Diagnostic Training Center working for **Greg Willoughby**.

**The 2001 Midwest Turf Expo** was held January 9 and 10 in Indianapolis. Almost 1400 turf professionals attended workshops and education sessions. The trade show consisted of over 90 companies displaying turf equipment and products. The Midwest Regional Turf Foundation (MRTF) mission is to support turfgrass research and education at Purdue University. MRTF presented a check to the Department of Agronomy for \$186,000 for annual support of the Turfgrass Program.

**Marion Baumgardner**, professor emeritus of Agronomy, is offering a course traveling in Central Europe May 15-26. As a seasoned traveler to more than 120 countries he is anxious to share his expertise on Central Europe. He has traveled extensively in Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Germany, and has witnessed the remarkable transition that has occurred in Central Europe.

**Clark Throssell**, Professor of Agronomy, recently accepted the position of Director of Research for the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America in Lawrence, Kansas. He will be heading efforts to improve funding of turfgrass research, as well as coordinating the competitive research grant program.

## Student News:

Congratulations to **Corinne Ackerman**, **Missy Arends**, **Antonio Azevedo**, **Kess Berg**, **Darrin Haagenon**, **Scott McCoy**, **Kenton Ross**, **Jim Uphaus**, and **Xinhua Yin** who were the 2000 Scarseth Award recipients.

**Jamie Bultemeier** was selected to receive the 2000 Harry J. Larsen/Hydro Memorial Scholarship. The scholarship is administered by the American Society of Agronomy and funded through the Agronomic Science Foundation.

The Purdue Soils Team placed 2nd at the Region 3 Collegiate Soils Contest. **Andy Pitstick** placed 6th Individual; **Andy Linvill**, 8th Individual; and **Natalie Stoops** 9th Individual. Other team members who helped achieve the 2nd place finish were **Kristi Kahlenbeck**, **Ryan McAninch** and **Phyllis Robinson**.

The following students were nominated from the department for the 2000-2001 Outstanding Undergraduate Students to be awarded in April: Senior– **Amy Joy**, Junior– **Krista Echterling**, Sophomore– **Geneva Rawlins**, Freshman– **Ryan McAninch**.

New Agronomy club officers for 2001 are the following: President– **Kristi Kahlenbeck**, Vice-president– **Liz Popowski**, Treasurer– **Eric Ott**, Recording Secretary– **Krista Echterling**, Corresponding Secretary– **Westin Rink**, Business Manager– **Frank Helt**, Asst. Bus. Mgr. (crops)– **Corey Green**, Asst. Bus Mgr. (soil)– **Andy Pitstick**, Historian– **Jonathan Chamberlin**.

The Crops Judging Team, **Kyle Ross**, **Jeremy Kelly** and **Jessy Gilsinger**, competed in Kansas City in November finishing 6th out of 11 schools competing. **Kyle Ross** was 10th overall and 6th in seed analysis.

Eleven members of the Agronomy Club attended the National ASA meetings in November. Congratulations to **Liz Popowski** for placing 5th in the speech contest, and to **Ann Kline** for placing 5th in the manuscript contest. The club also won \$500 in the Achievement Contest.

The Soils and Crops Judging Teams, and student trips are supported by the **Agronomy Student Activity Fund**. Contributions are always appreciated.

**Holly Hudson**— '85 NRES returned to campus to speak to the NRES seminar about her work as an aquatic biologist with the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission.

**Mark Stacy**— '84 NRES gave an interesting talk on reclamation of strip-mine areas to the NRES sophomore seminar in March. He is with IDNR, Department of Reclamation.

The current edition (April) of the SCA News included an article and pictures of 46 seniors that received awards through the national Agronomy Student Recognition Program of 2000-2001. Congratulations to **Amy S. Joy**, a senior in Agronomy. In the same issue **Sherry Fulk-Bringman** was listed as the SAS-ASA Division A-1a Advisor.



Pictured above, Agronomy and Environmental Science club members carry burlap bags of "Soilermaker" soil up onto the eroded hillside in Happy Hollow Park in West Lafayette. They anchored the bags with stakes and planted shade tolerant materials to stabilize and revegetate the slopes. In the Purdue Soilermaker Project, "waste" materials such as coal ash, biosolids (sludge), grass clippings, wood chips, and poor mineral soil are mixed and composted to make a highly desirable soil.

**Grad Student News:** Congratulations to **Missy Arends** who placed first, and **Scott McCoy** who placed third in the graduate student poster competition at the North Central Branch ASA meetings held in Peroria, Illinois in March.

Fifteen grad students and a few staff participated in a two-day excursion involving a canoe trip and camping at Turkey Run State Park. Nobody drowned and fun was had by all. **Dan Weisenberger** won the "chubby bunny" contest by stuffing eleven really big marshmallows into his mouth. In the early fall, a picnic was held at Horticulture Park to welcome new graduate students. Only one Frisbee was lost in the woods. In December a fundraising dinner was held in memory of the late **Dr. John Axtell**. All proceeds were donated to the John Axtell Memorial Fund. In late January an ice cream social was held to welcome **Dr. Craig Beyrouy**, new department head. Nearly fifty graduate students had an opportunity to meet and interact with Dr. Beyrouy. **Chris Baxter** ate FOUR bowls of ice cream (with sprinkles).



*Don Livingstone, Oleksandr Moskalenko and Missy Arends enjoying the food at the grad student picnic.*

### **Upside Down or Downside Up....?**

**Cheryl Bawhey**, a post-doctoral research assistant with **Rich Grant** is from Adelaide, Australia. She has found that in Lafayette the sun is in the wrong place (it should be in the north), the light switches go the wrong way, and people drive on the wrong side of the road. Even the salt and pepper shakers are the wrong way round!

Several Agronomy staff put together a special birthday party on February 15, 2001 to celebrate **Tom Odle's** 85th birthday. Tom was on the Purdue Service Staff from 1958 until his retirement in 1979. He served as custodian on the third floor, west wing of Lilly. He came to know every faculty member and every graduate student. Not only did he know them; he and **Nelly** invited them to their country home many times for picnics, fishing, country music hoedowns, weekend retreats, and any other excuse they could think of to provide an enjoyable environment for graduate students from around the world. The party participants enjoyed swapping tall tales of the remarkable array of practical jokes which occurred during Tom's tenure.



*Seated: Tom Odle, Joy Odle Beckett, Nellie Odle, Marion Baumgardner. Standing: Craig Beyrouy, John Graveel, Bill McFee, George Van Scoyoc, Don Franzmeier, Jim Ahlrichs.*

# HORIZONS

*...alumni news, this and that, and miscellaneous*

**Morrill T. Vittum**— '44 PhD (retired from Cornell's Geneva research station) wrote to point out that our story about department heads in the last issue failed to mention **George Scarseth** and **Norm Volk** who both served briefly in the 40s. Morrie was a student under George Scarseth.

**James Spain**— '60 PhD, MS, and his wife **Joy** spent their professional careers in Latin America, many years at CIAT (International Center of Tropical Agriculture) and more recent years in Brazil. They are now retired and living in Corvallis, Oregon.

**Jack Fenwick**— '77 PhD, MS, BS, along with his wife **Ann**, and daughters **Brooke** and **Meghan**, stopped by over the Thanksgiving break to check out the new Crops Teaching Labs with **Jim Vorst**. Jack is at Colorado State University.

**James F. Parr**— '61 PhD, MS has been retired since 1994 after 37 years of federal service with the US Department of Agriculture. During his professional career Jim had the opportunity to travel extensively throughout the world. He had a wonderful visit with **Jean Marais** in South Africa.

**Jean N. Marais**— '61 PhD, was born and reared in South Africa, completed his professional career there and is now retired. He would greatly appreciate hearing from old friends from Purdue grad school days.

**Bob Harter**— '66 PhD wrote to say he is retired and enjoying traveling very much with his wife, **Nancy**. They spent several months in Florida with a couple of weeks in the Everglades and another week in the Okefenokee Swamp.

**Leroy Svec**— '70 PhD, MS stopped by during the holidays to say hello. Leroy is Regional Research Manager for Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc., in York, Nebraska.

**Dennis Carnahan**— '75 was appointed by Governor O'Bannon to the Indiana Commission for Agriculture and Rural Development. His term expires in July '04.

**Jim Teigen**— '75 PhD, MS is still farming and just harvested his sunflower crop from last year. He wonders if grad students of the early 70s can meet at the Agronomy Tailgate Party this fall?

**Scot Haley**— '91, NRES, has taken a post as field soil scientist working for NRCS in Wisconsin on several first time soil surveys. Scot will be stationed in Spooner, Wisconsin— as Scot calls it the "frozen (very frozen) tundra."

**Eduardo Escalante**— '92 PhD, MS is titular professor at the Universidad de Los Andes in Venezuela. He retired in 1998 after 30 years teaching, but is still active in post graduate teaching and research. He is coordinator of research for a project in the Amazon Forest in South Venezuela. Eduardo worked with **Byron Blair** while earning his MS, and **Jim Wilcox** while obtaining his PhD.

**Charles Fort**— '92 is now at Oak Point Country Club, Brighton, Michigan.

**Chris Frank**— '94 has moved to the Country Club of Detroit.

**Chad Watts**— '94, NRES, formerly with IDNR has accepted a position with The Nature Conservancy, as Tippecanoe River Project Manager in Winamac, Indiana. This is a newly formed community based watershed project.

**Travis**— '95 MS and **Leta Barber Murray**— '95 MS welcomed **Trinity Lynn Murray** on Aug. 20, 2000. Leta has quit work at U.S. Sugar to stay home and be a mother.

**Darrick Robbins**— '95 MS and his wife, **Kristi**, have a new son, **Mason Joshua Robbins** born October 19, 2000.

**Pat McEvoy**— '96 accepted a position as a special agent with the United States Secret Service in Newark, NJ.

**Kris Singer**— '96 is now living in Liberty, IN and working with Green Prairie Sod Farms.

**Albert Cox**— '97 Albert works at the Research and Development Complex of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago. He manages the soil science laboratories, conducts research in beneficial use of biosolids, and provides technical support to the biosolids marketing program. **Ache** is doing Postdoctoral research in Biology at Lake Forest College. In August she will join the faculty at Chicago State University teaching and doing research in plant genetics.

**Brian Riggs**— '99 ABE, and his wife **Chanda**, welcomed a son **Cameron** in December. Brian worked as a student assistant for **Ellsworth Christmas** for three years before graduation.

**Stella Salvo**— '00 E-mailed from Colorado State University in Fort Collins. She is program assistant at the Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory and coordinator for the International Biodiversity Observation Year 2001-2002 promoting a world-wide initiative for biodiversity conservation.

# HORIZONS

...alumni news, this and that, and miscellaneous



**Javad Bazargani, Maralee Baumgardner, Marion Baumgardner, Brad Bazargani.** The carpet, with the Acacia symbol was woven by an artisan in Iran and presented by Javad to the Acacia Fraternity after Javad had returned to Iran in 1964.

**Javad Bazargani**— '64 PhD, made a surprise visit to the **Baumgardners** in February. Upon graduation from Purdue, Javad returned to Iran to begin his professional career. We last heard from Javad during a visit to campus in 1976. For twenty-five years Javad's many Purdue friends wondered if he survived the Islamic revolutionary forces who have controlled Iran since 1979.

Javad's older son, **Brad**, is now an American citizen working in Louisiana. His son's American citizenship makes it easier for Javad and other members of his family to obtain visas for immigration to the US. Javad is now in Iran working on this project. He hopes to spend a week at Purdue during Homecoming Week this fall.

**Mark Evans**— '90, Clean Water Indiana, takes his life in his hands by portraying Bobby Knight at the annual Ag Fish Fry held in January!



## Bill McFee Honored at Party:

February 16, the department celebrated the leadership years of **William W. McFee** as Head, Department of Agronomy. The "banquet" consisted of hor d'oeuvres, desserts (preferably chocolate) and submarine sandwiches...all chosen for the menu because of Bill's favorite foods.

**Jeff Volenec** led an "Agronomy Staff Meeting," the kind held when Bill was not present. Various staff members presented Bill with "gifts" and made suggestions for the running of the department. The gifts consisted of things like a ticket for a "slow boat to China," a large Purdue umbrella to protect him on the third floor where the roof leaks, a schedule for use of the UNISEX bathrooms, a stack of OSHA reports, a chain saw to cut down the ginkgo tree, etc. The mind set of creative minds was much in evidence.

As a testament to Bill, many staff, students, friends from out-of-state, and from other departments were represented in the crowd. Serious moments were few, and the laughter profuse! Join us in enjoying some of the pictures.

## The Ballad of Bill McFee

(Sung to the theme from the *Beverly Hillsbillys*)

words by Sherry-Fulk Bringman

*Come and listen to our story 'bout a prince named Bill  
Born like Elvis on a Tenn-es-see hill.  
One had the army, was King of Rock 'N Roll.  
The other flew planes, was the King of Soil.  
Dirt that is, gravel pits, Hoffer tubes!*

*With kids in the Dodge and Anella by his side  
Came to Purdue, Agronomy to guide.  
Taught loads of students, grew trees & played ball.  
He's back where he started on the 3rd floor hall.  
Ginkgo fruit, good folks, leak'in roof!*

**CHORUS:** -to the tune of *Davy Crockett*

*Billy, our McFee  
King of A-gron-o-me.*

# HORIZONS

...alumni news, this and that, and miscellaneous



**Ben Southard and Jeff Volenec** review the harassment statement.



**Ellen Offenbach** handles her chain saw with skill!



**Ed Stath** brushes off dust and dirt, and ceiling tile, as his coughing fit tells the story of the building renovation.



**Jeff Volenec** dresses up for the occasion.

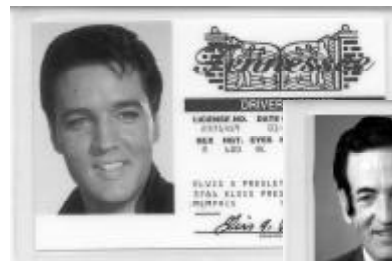
Photography by Ben Southard and Charles Roth



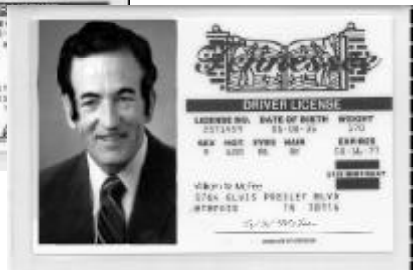
**Sherry Fulk-Bringman** sings the Ballad of Bill McFee.



**Craig Beyrouthy and Bill McFee** share a laugh.



**Bill McFee and Elvis Presley** really do share a common birthday!



**Bill McFee and Jim Ahlrichs** compare Bill's drivers license with Elvis Presley's.



AG Tailgate &  
Agronomy Harvest Reunion  
October 27, 2001

**FYI** Commencement: Friday May 11, 8:00 pm

**Farm Progress Show:** Sept. 25, 26, 27.

**Distinguished Ag Awards Ceremony:** April 19, 20.

**Ag Tailgate, Homecoming:** October 27.

*IN MEMORIAM*

**Dr. John Axtell**, Professor of Agronomy died unexpectedly December 2, 2000.

**Dr. Bill Treese**, retired Purdue Agronomist, died Sunday, February 10 in Vincennes, Indiana.

**Ray Cross** died in 2000. Ray was a technician at the Agronomy Research Center before retirement.

**Alumni Newsletter Committee:** Sandy Spitznagle, Jim Ahlrichs, Don Franzmeier, Dan Weisenberger, Ed Stath, Tom Housley, Sherry Fulk-Bringman, Lou Jones, Bill McFee  
Ben Southard (photographer).

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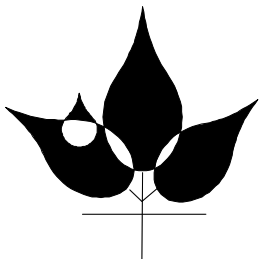
E-MAIL: [sspitz@purdue.edu](mailto:sspitz@purdue.edu)

**Walter H. Wischmeier** died Saturday February 10, 2001 in Lafayette, Indiana at the age of ninety. He was the leader of the National Erosion Data Center from 1954 until his retirement in 1976. He was a developer of the Universal Soil Loss Equation (USLE) that was instrumental in the establishment of effective conservation plans on farms throughout the eastern United States. He greatly improved our approach to conservation and will always be remembered for his contributions.

This newsletter and back issues are available on the Web:

<http://www.agry.purdue.edu/newsletter/index.html>

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