

--- CHIT CHAT ---

By JOE COWLEY
Mail Tribune Farm Editor

Things were pretty quiet last week. The Democrats temporarily had ceased to stir up their witches brew of trouble for the Republicans and the Republicans were sitting fat and happy. So-o, having a little time we dropped out to the Southern Oregon Branch Experiment station near Jacksonville to find out what, if anything was going on. The following remarks are the result of an interview with Supt. Harold White.

Q-What are you boys doing to keep you busy this winter? With the crops all harvested and no livestock to feed and care for looks as if your schedule should be fairly smooth during the winter months.

A-"Does look like a prolonged vacation doesn't it?" White said chewing on a well-worn pipe stem. "But, actually this is the toughest season of the year for us," he answered, smoothing back his thinning black hair, and settling back in his office chair.

Q-In what way?
A-Well, during the spring, summer and fall a research man executes in the field plans that are developed during the winter. These plans for experimentation in the field are carefully developed specifications, and if done right, are as carefully drawn and as detailed as a contractor's building plans.

These plans or specifications must take into account the results of similar or related research previously done here or elsewhere to be really effective and accomplish the research objective at the lowest possible cost in time and money. So we have to summarize and evaluate the work done during the past year before we can develop plans for the next year.

Q-Is that what this stack of tables and charts is?
A-Yes, that's part of it. These charts and tables are the boiled down final figures from a lot of the observations, measurements, weights, etc. taken in the field from the day the crop was planted until it was harvested, planned, and weighed. In many cases it doesn't stop there. Samples of the product from the different treatments have to be analyzed to determine their difference in composition, quality, etc. which can logically and accurately be credited to the particular treatment it received during the experiment.

Q-Then what? What becomes of these data?
A-Well first the researcher must take a good look at it, subject it to statistical analysis which is a mathematical tool that points out the significant difference, if any, to a degree far more accurate than any observation, average or mean.

From this analytical study, the researcher's notes and observations, he prepares a narrative statement of the way this work was done and his conclusions as to the meaning or value of the treatment being studied.

Q-You still haven't told me what becomes of these data, does it just go into the files to become a mass of government data?
A-Yes and no. Yes, these data go into the files and are known as progress reports data for on experiments for the particular year in which it was run. In the metal files along the wall are all the records of the tests, trials and experiments we have conducted on agronomic crops and soils in Jackson and Josephine counties since I came here in 1947 to initiate the agronomic research work.

Those files contain not only the summary results but the record of where it was conducted whether on station loaned or off station on the farms of the cooperating farmers. It shows the soil type, chemical analysis of the soil, management practices such as dates of plowing, seeding and other information which might affect results. There is also a drawing or plans of the experimental layout.

So much for those files. Now see those notebooks on the shelf? The blue ones constitute a series. There are eight of them. No. 1 contains summary reports on the 12 years of work we have done on wheat, oats and barley grown for feed grain. No. 2 contains the same type of material for corn, milo and sorghum. No. 3 relates to work on forages (hay, pasture, range). No. 4 deals with seed crops, No. 5 with fertilization, No. 6 with chemical weed control, No. 7 with truck crops, and No. 8 with new crops and miscellaneous tests.

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and trials. These are maintained so the researcher can, with a little time, make a quick review of the most important data needed in his planning or in making recommendations or answering questions for farmers.

Q-What's in that series of black books?
A-Much the same data only each book is a year's work.

Q-But how does this information get beyond your office - to the farmers who need it and help pay the bill of research?
A-That also is a part of the overall plan of research as conducted by the Oregon Agricultural Experiment station of which the Southern Oregon station is a branch. You see, we do not function as a separate organization going our own way as we please, but we must function within the framework of the Oregon system.

In reality, we are a field laboratory of the Oregon Agricultural Experiment station, located here to work on problems of production which are important to the economy of the southern Oregon area. Obviously because of soil and climatic differences in this very large and varied state the conclusions reached at Corvallis where our central station and headquarters is located are not always valid or reliable for this area. The same applies to the coast region and to all six of Oregon's agricultural regions.

Q-Now you have gotten around Jones' barn what about getting data out into channels of use?
A-Well, Jones has another barn and maybe we should circle it. Being a part of a system has both advantages and disadvantages. For the researcher who wants to stand out, the system may cramp his style. Under the Oregon system the research team of any part of the overall system can and does work on any particular problem that may arise in any part of the state. Research is done by teams assigned to the problem.

For example, we are now working on a research program designed to develop reliable fertilizer recommendations for the various agronomic crops in the southern Oregon area. That team consists of John Yungen and myself from the local experiment station staff, a specialist from the soils department and one from the crops department of OSC. Primary responsibility or leadership rests on the local staff but the other members of the team have a definite part and have to be thoroughly familiar with what is going on and how it is done.

So these progress report data you inquire about must go to each member of the team. Each checks to see if they are consistent with similar lines of work done elsewhere or that there is a justifiable difference due to local conditions.

At least once a year usually in February, the combined staff of soils and crops and local branch station staffs meet in conference for two or three days and review the work done and determine what next needs to be undertaken and formulate recommendations based on the best knowledge gathered in from the research data. These recommendations are put into bulletins or circulars released by the college and made available to the public through the local extension offices.

Grower meetings are used also to spread the information so painstakingly gathered by the research team. Others using the information are the Soil Conservation Service, vocational agriculture teachers, and occasionally, when time permits, and you press hard enough, you get a summary of some phase of our program for your local paper. The county extension agents probably use the information most directly and frequently. A complete file of the summaries of the work done on the local station is given to the area's county agents each year. Josephine and Jackson county agents are asking now for copies of the 1959 data to be used in the 1960 crop year.

Q-How about the off-station work? What is that?
A-Well, southern Oregon soils are badly mixed up. We do not have broad plains like other parts of the country. There are 43 different soil types in Jackson county and 17 separate phases; 20 types in Josephine county plus three separate phases. Also, there are wide variations in elevation and even in moisture supply. These things affect the performance of a variety of crops, action of fertilizer, or effectiveness of a chemical to mention a few

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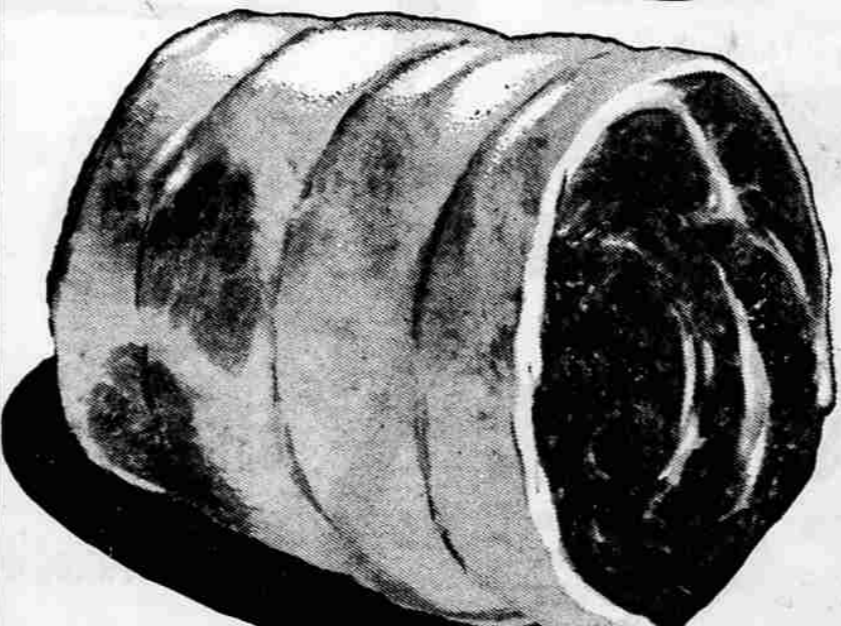
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