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"Nothing is more basic and nothing is more sure than nitrogen," declares Commercial Solvents' manager of agricultural chemicals



Clyde T. Marshall

General manager, agricultural chemicals division, Commercial Solvents Corp. Born 1908, Winthrop, Iowa; Cornell College, premedical; service supervisor, Monowatt Co., 1929; Chicago office manager, 1930-32; western manager, 1932-42; U. S. Navy 1942-45, Lt. Commander; assistant to president, Monowatt Co., 1946-48; vice president and marketing manager, 1948-52; member, board of directors, Agricultural Ammonia Institute, 1932-55; member, board of directors, American Plant Food Council 1953-54

Clyde Marshall, a relative newcomer to the agricultural chemicals industry, has caught on fast. Although he was born on a farm and, as a youngster, worked as a farm hand, he didn't really develop an active interest in chemicals and technical agriculture until 1952. That was the year he joined Commercial Solvents as general manager of its agricultural chemicals department.

He went with Commercial Solvents after serving for 23 years in a totally unrelated field. As a member of the General Electric organization through those years, his prime concern there was electrical equipment. How has he found the transition to ag chemicals? "It's been easy," he says. "After all, whether you're selling wall outlets to Woolworth or plant food to Armour or Swift, it's still merchandizing."

Back in 1928, when he was starting his junior year at Cornell College in Iowa, Marshall was given a chance to enter General Electric's business training program. He grabbed the opportunity. After some preliminary training, he was assigned the job of a service supervisor in the Bridgeport, Conn., office of the Monowatt Co., an affiliate of GE that manufactured a line of electrical wiring devices, including switches, sockets, cord sets, and electrical specialties.

In 1930, Marshall became manager of the company's Chicago office. Not long afterward, he was named western manager, with territory extending from Ohio to California. Company sales in that area tripled while he was manager.

With the outbreak of World War II, he accepted a commission as Lieutenant in the Navy. At the Naval Bureau of Supplies and Accounts, one of his major projects was a survey of storage facilities needed to support the nation's aircraft programs. Later, he developed an inventory control plan for aviation supplies that found effective use both during and after the war.

Leaving military service in 1945 as a Lieutenant Commander, Marshall rejoined Monowatt, where he advanced from assistant to the president (1946-48) to vice president and marketing manager

(1948-51). Monowatt's sales volume during that five-year period was more than doubled.

During those same five years, lively activity was also evident at Commercial Solvents. In 1946, for example, CSC purchased from the Government the \$17 million anhydrous ammonia plant it had built and operated for the Government at Sterlington, La., during World War II. To this 160-ton-a-day ammonia facility was added a 45,000-gallon-a-day methanol plant in 1948.

Old Industry—New Talent

When J. Albert Woods, an old hand as a leader in the fertilizer industry, stepped into the presidency of CSC in 1950, there was prompt effect. Woods decided to expand the company's production for agriculture. A major step was taken by doubling the Commercial Solvents' ammonia capacity in order to produce ammonium nitrate and nitrogen solutions. About \$20 million was invested in doubling the Sterlington plant. This was the first postwar expansion, through construction, in the U. S. ammonia industry.

In seeking a man to develop markets and sell this new production, Woods reached outside the fertilizer industry and brought in new blood. Clyde Marshall, who had established his ability as vice president and marketing manager in the electrical industry, was hired. He was given the job of directing the company's production and marketing not only of nitrogen products, but also of insecticides (benzene hexachloride at Terre Haute, Ind.; Dilan at Peoria, Ill.; and metaldehyde at Agnew, Calif.).

In recent years, Commercial Solvents has been a leader in the production of anhydrous NH_3 for direct application to the soil, especially in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Georgia. In 1952, CSC began producing nitrogen solutions for use by manufacturers in ammoniating their superphosphate fertilizer and, in 1953, launched production of a new free-flowing crystalline form of ammonium nitrate fertilizer by its own Stengel process. In all this, Marshall has had a guiding hand.

"Nothing is more basic and nothing is more sure than nitrogen," says Marshall, who speaks of the value of plant food with complete conviction. The fact that vast farm areas of the U. S. are treated with little or no fertilizer both disturbs and stimulates him. "The story of fertilizers has been told over and over again," he says, "but, as far as tens of thousands of farmers are concerned, it hasn't been heard or it hasn't been read and certainly it hasn't been understood."

Marshall is convinced that the prime job of plant food producers today is not to promote one type of material as opposed to some other type, but to sell the basic fertilizer *idea*—the value of all plant food. But he warns against over-promoting a worthy product, the flaunting of extravagant advertising claims, and arm-waving programs. "Stay with the truth," he emphasizes, "even if it hurts." For one thing, he's opposed to broad-scale campaigns to encourage application in the fall, if, in many specific instances, application in the spring is really better. "Our job is to serve the farmer, not to suit our own convenience."

The industry, he feels, will miss a major opportunity if it follows a traditional approach and is content to live on merely competing for shares of the existing and naturally growing market. There is a bigger market possible through effective development, but it will need a new approach. This is the philosophy that will drive CSC's movements in selling its chemicals to agriculture.