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The board chairman of the National Plant Food Institute came into fertilizer industry through the related field of food processing. An accomplished trouble shooter, he was a leader in trade association merger negotiations

EDWIN A. GEOGHEGAN, one of the fertilizer industry's prominent leaders, came into that industry through a closely related field, food production. He was trained virtually from his teens in the ramifications of the cotton oil business and grew up with more interest in the cottonseed cake fed to cattle than in the chemicals fed to crops. But his work led him into the fertilizer business. The prestige he has achieved in that field is reflected in his recent election as first chairman of the board of the newly formed National Plant Food Institute.

Mr. Geoghegan's father, A. D. Geoghegan, was in the cottonseed and oil business in partnership with A. Q. Petersen, now president of Wesson Oil and Snowdrift Co., Inc. In Geoghegan's youth, the state agricultural extension services had not yet educated American farmers to the value of cottonseed cake as a feed for cattle and most of the cake was sold in Europe, particularly Scandinavia and the low countries. In view of this, the young Geoghegan's father sent him to England and other parts of Europe for an education which would train him for dealing with Europeans.

The elder Geoghegan believed that his son should learn the business from the bottom. When Edwin returned to the U. S. in 1931, his father sent him to a mill of the South Texas Cotton Oil Co., at Corpus Christi, Texas. There he learned such basic operations as proper sampling of carlots of cottonseed and the art and techniques of seed buying.

The next step in his development was a stint in the more technical end of the cotton oil business at a Savannah refinery of Southern Cotton Oil Co. This background prepared him for his succeeding position as a manufacturer's technical representative, working with the company's sales department throughout the U. S. His training was thus expanded to give him an understanding of selling problems of the depression era and the servicing of customers' accounts.

By the time he had completed a turn at this job, he had a view of the cottonseed picture from the farmer who grows

cotton to the baker who uses highly refined products from the oil pressed out of the seed. To use his foundation of experience, he turned his energies to sales analysis, promotion, and development at the New Orleans office of Southern Cotton Oil.

In 1940 Geoghegan became assistant to Petersen, president of Wesson Oil and Snowdrift Co. His work at that time was described as trouble shooting.

Company trouble shooting was interrupted by a shooting war and Geoghegan joined the Transportation Corps to make use of some of his extracurricular knowledge. He knew boats and was an experienced sailor, holding an operator's license before World War II. He put his marine knowledge to service for the war effort in directing operation of ships at ports of embarkation.

Foods to Fertilizers

Emerging from the army as a major, Geoghegan went back to work as assistant to Petersen until 1947, when he moved, within the company, into a different area of interest. When Wesson Oil and Snowdrift was formed, in 1925, as a holding company to purchase cottonseed mills now integrated as Southern Cotton Oil Co., it also purchased several fertilizer plants along with the pressing mills. In 1947, Geoghegan became manager of the fertilizer department. This included mixing and application operations. He took an old and inefficient department of the company and made it into a very profitable phase of the operation.

Geoghegan, now thoroughly acquainted with the fertilizer industry, is optimistic over its future. Such factors as our having reached nearly the limits of tillable land in the U. S. and the fact that most farmers have not yet come near to the maximum productivity of their land are very real and actively influential factors, he believes. He has faith in the farmer's making increasing use of the advice and information from the extension service and the county agents.



E. A. Geoghegan

Vice president and director, Wesson Oil and Snowdrift Co., Inc., and subsidiaries. Born 1908, New Orleans, La. Formal education after high school, Eton House, Townbridge, England. Employed Wesson Oil and Snowdrift Co. and subsidiaries as follows: Cattle Food Supply Co., England, 1928-30; South Texas Cotton Oil, 1931-33; Southern Cotton Oil Co., Savannah mills, 1933-34; manufacturers technical representative, 1934-36; sales promotion and analysis, 1936-40; assistant to president, 1940-42, 1945-47; Major U. S. Army, 1942-45; manager, fertilizer department, Southern Cotton Oil Co., 1947-50; vice president, 1950-date; director, Southern Cotton Oil Co. and Wesson Oil and Snowdrift Co., 1950-date; vice president, Wesson Oil and Snowdrift Co., 1953-date; chairman of the board, National Plant Food Institute, 1955.

A selling job and constant bettering of public relations are foremost aims of the National Plant Food Institute which recently elected Geoghegan board chairman and his friend Joseph Howell, of Virginia-Carolina Chemical Co., president. The consolidation of the National Fertilizer Association and the American Plant Food Council into one organization, the National Plant Food Institute, has been a matter of interest and a subject of attention for Geoghegan for quite some time. He deserves a generous share of the credit for the accomplishment.

With a thorough grounding in industrial management and a knowledge of the food and feed producing industry, as well as of fertilizer production and use, coupled with the scope and perspective that comes with service as board chairman of the plant food industry's big association, Geoghegan has an exceptional background. It makes quite reasonable an assumption that a great deal more in the way of major accomplishment may be expected of this 47-year-old leader in agricultural and food producing industries.