

# profile...

**Although disturbed by present nitrogen surplus, the sales vp. of Spencer is confident demand will soon catch up with supply**

I HAVE never 'sold' a thing in my life. But I learned soon after I entered sales work that if I could relate myself pleasantly to the other fellow, sooner or later he would probably buy from me."

Much of the philosophy of Joseph E. Culpepper, vice president in charge of sales for Spencer Chemical Co., is embodied in this statement. And although Joe Culpepper probably has never attempted to formulate his "philosophy of life," his talent for relating himself pleasantly to others is an important feature not only in his selling activities, but in every other aspect of his business and personal life. It has made him a favorite among men who have worked under him, over him, and beside him, and has helped to gain him solid respect in the plant food industry.

A Mississippian by birth, and a 1929 graduate of Mississippi State College with a B.S. in agricultural economics, Culpepper started his professional career as an agronomist. It was not the most propitious time to be entering the business world; the depression which began with the market crash in October 1929, and deepened in the early '30's, altered the young agronomist's plans and "made a drummer of me," says Culpepper.

His promotional activities as an agronomist with Synthetic Nitrogen Products Corp., an importing firm and the United States distribution arm for the German I. G., were almost immediately stretched to embrace selling as well. It was in this period that Culpepper learned, much to his pleasure, that salesmen need not be hard-drinking, back-slapping extroverts. It was a discovery that he still likes to relate to young men who are wondering whether, lacking the storied qualities of the traditional salesman, they should attempt to enter sales work.

As a salesman who helped purchasers make up their minds to buy, Culpepper made out reasonably well in those early days. But at the height of the depression, fertilizer simply was not being bought. All salesmen at Synthetic Nitrogen were released, and Culpepper left the company in September of 1932. "I was not fired,"

recalls Culpepper, "I was just taken off the payroll."

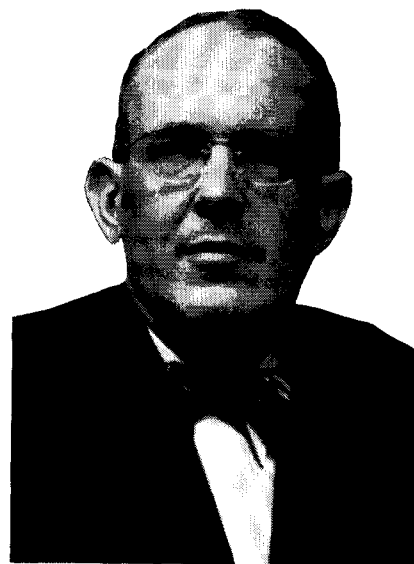
A job with no salary had little appeal to a young man recently married and struggling to establish a home and family. Culpepper found a position with the John Hancock Life Insurance Co., with the assignment of looking after several million dollars' worth of farm properties which the company's financial department had gradually acquired because of the depression. He remained with Hancock for a year.

In October of 1933, Culpepper saw a chance to return to his trade and joined American Cyanamid, selling nitrogen fertilizer in Mississippi, Arkansas, and Tennessee. By this time, fertilizer was again moving at an accelerated pace, and the entire agricultural picture seemed much improved. The association with Cyanamid was interrupted after a year, however, when Culpepper joined the Union Central Life Insurance Co. as supervisor of its farm selling program in 11 southern states. Union Central had been forced to acquire a great deal of property through foreclosures in the early '30's, but by 1934 the situation had stabilized considerably and farmers were again buying farms. Culpepper spent a year helping the organization to liquidate its extensive holdings, dealing primarily with large plantations and farms.

Returning to Cyanamid, Culpepper progressed from salesman to district manager of fertilizer sales. In his second hitch with Cyanamid, he remained nine years. In October of 1944, he returned to Synthetic Nitrogen Products as general sales manager, remaining this time for two years.

On June 1, 1946, just one day before Spencer Chemical was formally established as such, Culpepper joined the Spencer organization which during the war years had operated the Military Chemical Works at Pittsburg, Kan., on a cost-plus-fixed-fee basis. Spencer had leased the Military works in 1946; the company later purchased the plant, and has since established manufacturing operations at several other locations.

Culpepper joined Spencer as director of fertilizer sales. Selling nitrogen for agricultural use constitutes the



**Joe E. Culpepper**

Vice President-Sales, Spencer Chemical Co. Born Aug. 26, 1903, Quitman, Miss. B.S., Ag. Econ., Miss. State Coll., 1929. Affiliated with various segments of nitrogen industry since 1929. District sales mgr., Amer. Cyan., 1940-44. Gen. Sales Mgr., Synthetic Nitrogen Products Corp., 1944-46. With Spencer since 1946. Director, Spencer Chemical, NPFI.

bulk of his experience and is still his first choice of occupations, but his present over-all responsibilities allow him little time for direct activity along this line. In his 10 years with the company he has progressed to the position of vice president in charge of sales for the entire Spencer organization, and he has recently been elected to the board of directors and the executive committee.

Culpepper has long been active in organizations devoted to the promotion of more widespread and more intelligent use of fertilizers. He is a member of the board of directors of the National Plant Food Institute, having worked energetically in both of the organizations which amalgamated last year to form the NPFI. He is active also in the work of the Middle West Soil Improvement Committee, of which Spencer is a charter member.

A man not given to rash actions, Culpepper is somewhat disturbed by some of the—to him—hasty competitive actions which have attended the recent development of surplus nitrogen producing capacity. The surplus capacity, of course, is disturbing to any man whose job is to see that his company's nitrogen production is sold. In this sense, Culpepper is as disturbed as the next man, although he predicted the surplus as early as three years ago, and did what he could to prepare for it. For the long range, he is confident that demand will again catch up with supply and that the future for fertilizers is a promising one.