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Grasselli's general manager keeps the machine running smoothly, sales growing, and research expanding

IF you dial Extension 4197," goes a saying in Du Pont's Grasselli Chemicals Department, "you'd better be ready to start talking right to your point." For it is more than likely that your call will be answered not by an assistant or a secretary but by Grasselli's general manager himself, Clark W. Davis.

Answering his own telephone is no mere idiosyncrasy with Davis; it is evidence of the direct, no-red-tape approach he employs in all his dealings as head of one of Du Pont's 11 industrial departments.

The Grasselli organization, founded in 1839 and a part of the Du Pont company since 1928, is a large operation with a broad spectrum of manufacturing and sales activities. It produces more than 100 different chemicals. Roughly one third of these are agricultural chemicals, which account for a proportionate share of the department's dollar sales. (Fertilizer materials are not included; they are handled by the Polychemicals Department.)

Farm Background

Davis entered the Grasselli department as assistant general manager in 1942, after 25 years in Du Pont's Explosives Department. He was appointed general manager nine years later. He brought to his new position a happy combination of farm background and technical training and experience. Reared on a farm near Omaha, Neb., trained as a chemical engineer, and experienced in the development and production of useful chemicals, Davis has more than a nodding acquaintance with the everyday problems of the farmer and with the technologies that are now contributing so importantly to the solution of those problems. It is doubtless more than

coincidence that Grasselli's most vigorous growth in the agricultural chemicals field has occurred during the period of Davis's leadership.

Influence on Sales

While some of his associates feel that his major contribution has been made through his influence on sales activities, others point to his strong encouragement of research and development, and still others to his general administrative and organizational ability. Each group can cite sound evidence to support its point of view. Sales have shown excellent growth, solid and expanding research and development programs continue to bring forth new and improved products, and from the administrative point of view, the "machine runs smoothly."

Perhaps a symbol of Davis's administrative approach is the large desk in his office. The top is uncluttered, and usually free of papers. Those items that reach his desk each day are handled with dispatch and sent on their way. Large volumes of small detail are not a part of his routine, for he is a practicing proponent of the philosophy that both responsibility and authority should be delegated. Yet he keeps a careful watch on what goes on throughout his department.

Within the Davis desk are records and data bearing on all aspects of the department's operation. With remarkable speed, Davis is able to produce from his storehouse of information answers to questions about the department's history, its products, its processes, or its personnel.

Davis has several patents to his credit, among them one on platinum-rhodium gauze for ammonia oxidation in nitric acid manufacture. The invention represented an outstanding advance in nitrogen technology, and



Clark W. Davis

Born Oct. 17, 1896, Gilmore, Neb. B.A., Chem. Eng., Swarthmore (1917). Chemist, Explosives Dept., Du Pont 1917-28. Special Asst. to Chem. Director, Explosives Dept., 1928-30. Sales, Explosives Dept. 1930-33. Mgr., Contractors' Sec.; Asst. Director, Mfg. Div.; Mgr., Mfg. Div.; Mgr. Military Explosives, 1933-42. Asst. Gen. Mgr., Grasselli Chem. Dept., 1942-51. Gen. Mgr. 1951 to date. Member, Sigma Xi, Delta Upsilon.

was widely licensed in the United States and abroad.

Several years ago, Davis was invited by the national officers of Future Farmers of America to attend an FFA dinner in Philadelphia. He accepted, and was so impressed by the boys' discussions and activities that he immediately became one of their most active supporters. He has remained so ever since, serving as Du Pont representative in FFA activities and attending and participating in meetings. In 1956, he very successfully handled the chairmanship of the sponsoring committee of the Future Farmers of America Foundation, Inc.

Davis is a member of Sigma Xi, honorary society for scientific research, and is international president of Delta Upsilon fraternity. Among his recreational interests are hunting, fishing, trap and skeet shooting, and golf.

He is also an active gardener, although the pressure of increasing responsibilities has forced him in recent years to reduce somewhat the scale of his green-thumb operations. Some years ago, however, he was a gardener on a "very extensive" basis, trying everything new, and testing firsthand all of his department's new products. Then as now, his praise of chemicals for agriculture constituted far more than lip-service.