

profile...

Born in the early post-World War II days, this company has spread across the country with nine plants, a complete line of ag chemicals, and the ground and air equipment with which to apply them

UNITED-HECKATHORN has come from nowhere to a multimillion dollar enterprise in just 10 years. Started in 1947, the company now handles, as a formulator, distributor, and applicator, a complete line of chemicals for agriculture—including both pesticides and fertilizers. Registered products sold under United brands now number over 250. The staff—two in 1947—also is now over 250; there are eight producing plants and 30 full time salesmen. And each year has brought bigger business than the year before.

The company got its start back in the early postwar days when R. J. Prentiss & Co., a New York chemical company, sent Eugene Heckathorn out West to build and run a DDT-grinding plant in Richmond, Calif. This was intended to be a one-shot deal. Heckathorn was scheduled to return to New York when the job was done.

But he liked the West. With his partner Louis R. Moretti, he bought the little plant from Prentiss and set out on his own as Heckathorn & Co. He had no real product line, no work force other than his partner, and little capital. Hunting around for jobs to keep his plant operating, Heckathorn soon built a reputation for doing the jobs no one else wanted.

One of his better customers was United Chemical Co., a California distributor of agricultural chemicals. Soon the advantages of combining forces became obvious to both concerns; Heckathorn had a plant and little sales force, while United had a sales force and no plant.

The merger was completed in 1952, with Heckathorn as president, Ivor R. Burden from United Chemical as executive vice president and sales manager, and Moretti as secretary-treasurer of the new company. The three officers are the principal owners.

Since then, United-Heckathorn has expanded both by buying small local

distributors, formulators, and applicators, and by opening branches wherever attractive openings appeared. Now the company has eight plants operating, with the ninth under construction. Locations: main plant at Richmond; others at Glendora, Corona, Five Points, Soledad, El Centro, and Blythe in California, and at Robbinsville, N. J. The ninth—at Garfield, Utah—is scheduled for completion this summer, and will produce metal fluorides for industrial as well as agricultural uses. It also has insecticide blending facilities.

The company has sales offices in Fresno, Salinas, Sacramento, Woodland, Bakersfield, Brentwood, Chino, Corona, and Visalia in California, at Magna, Utah, and in New York City. A unique development is its portable (trailer-mounted) liquid-blending plant which can produce 50,000 gallons of insecticide concentrate per day. This plant has been all over the country working on federal as well as state pest control projects.

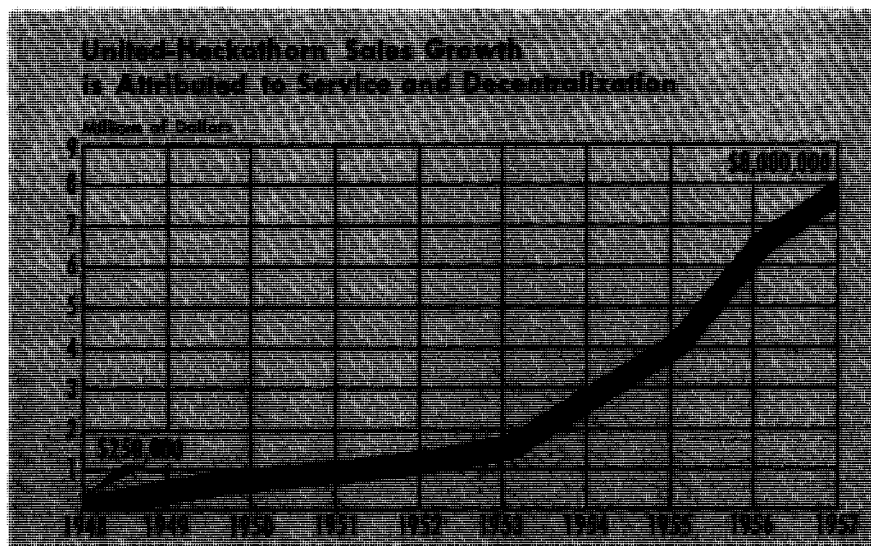
At the same time, United-Heckathorn has built up a large air arm. It has some 25 planes of its own, ranging from little Stearmans to two-engined C-82 box cars. It leases others when needed. Its main airport is south of Oakland at Hayward, Calif., where the company has complete maintenance shops for both aircraft repairs and radio repairs.

Numbered among U-H's aerial jobs have been the Florida campaign against the Mediterranean fruit fly, the Northeast's gypsy moth fight, large grasshopper projects in California, New Mexico, Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana, California's beet leafhopper campaigns, and Montana's spruce budworm campaigns. During 1956 and 1957, United-Heckathorn treated over 8 million acres with its large multi-engine equipment. It stands ready to spray from the air anywhere in the country, and needs only a few days to prepare for any job.

United-Heckathorn is a large supplier of DDT 75% wettable powder to the United Nations. During the past few years it has produced and exported 25 million pounds to the Near East in support of the malaria control program.

United-Heckathorn does not owe its success merely to the health of the postwar economy, nor even to its willingness to tackle the unusual. Heckathorn himself attributes it to—besides these two factors—two basic tenets of his: service and decentralization. To some extent these go together; the best way to give service to a customer, according to Heckathorn, is to give each man in your organization the greatest possible freedom consistent with your maintaining over-all control.

Thus, a United-Heckathorn man's



job is not done when he makes a sale. First, he has the power to make that sale any way he can—as a standard product, as a new product, or “as applied.” He then shepherds the order through the plant, ensures that it is delivered on time, and if sold “as



The President . . .

Eugene Heckathorn

Plans Entry into Allied Fields

applied,” watches over the application itself. If it is a new formulation, he is usually the one who makes sure, by laboratory test, that the company can make it in its equipment.

Each geographic subdivision functions autonomously, except for purchasing and accounting. Each is expected to show a profit. And each man is expected to be able to do many things; this follows from the freedom he is given and the responsibilities he carries with that freedom.

The home office backs up the efforts of the field men as well. At the Richmond plant, the company has a laboratory completely equipped with miniatures of all plant grinding and mixing equipment. If a product cannot be made in this lab, it certainly cannot be made in the plant itself.

The development lab provides, in addition to its liquid handling equipment, apparatus and personnel for experimental work with formulations of current products, and it constantly tries to come up with more effective ways to use these products. On demand, it tries out special formulas requested by customers with special needs.

United-Heckathorn fully intends to progress as rapidly in the future as it has in the past. Plans are now being made to enter allied chemical fields, especially in industrial chemicals used in the food processing industry.

Letters . . .

Another Answer For Organic Gardener

DEAR MR. HADER:

We have read with much interest the letter of Mr. Robert Rodale, Editor of *Organic Gardening and Farming*, which was reproduced on page 252 of your April issue.

Mr. Rodale makes no mention in this article of the great number of published statements of responsible and unbiased university and USDA technicians, to the effect that commercial fertilizer and chemical pesticides, properly used, are boons to modern-day mankind.

We realize that this particular letter is directed to the pesticide industry, but we have seen several of the pronouncements on the use of chemical fertilizer, which are just as opposed to the public interest as is the article in question.

We have in our files copies of statements, made by responsible public servants in our universities and in the USDA, to the effect that chemical fertilizers do no harm to animal or

vegetable life, when properly used. Further, these people state, the plant does not know the difference between organic and inorganic plant food, since the organic materials which he espouses must be changed by action of the soil bacteria to the same chemical composition as the chemical materials in commercial fertilizers before the plants can assimilate them.

It is a well-known fact that in the case of crop residues, especially the woody types such as cotton stalks, decomposition, brought about by action of soil bacteria, is speeded considerably when these bacteria are fed the chemical fertilizers which they require for their appointed task—bringing about decomposition.

We feel that these scientifically unsupported attacks upon our very important industries should be met head on, as a public service, and that the position of our public-supported scientists should be made public property.

SIDNEY H. BIERLY
General Manager
California Fertilizer Association
San Marino, Calif.

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