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The general manager of Fertilizer Mfg. Co-op is a businessman whose hobby is research and experimentation

THE VISITORS' sign-in book at Fertilizer Mfg. Cooperative would be a good start—more than that—for anyone who wanted to compile a "Who's Who" of the fertilizer industry. But the compiler would have to give due credit to Albert Spillman, general manager of the Baltimore plant. For he's the man these hundreds of visitors have come to see.

When they leave his waterfront plant, most feel as if they had been re-educated in the fertilizer trade. In the person of a thoroughly progressive, yet modest, executive, they have seen one of the top men in their profession.

The FMC fertilizer plant has facilities to make 60,000 tons of run-of-pile superphosphate and 75,000 tons of granular and conventional mixed fertilizers a year. Shipments are approximately 75% granular, mostly concentrated formulas. It is owned by Cooperative GLF Exchange, Southern States Cooperative, and the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau Cooperative Association. But despite the three-way division of ownership, Spillman is the guiding light.

"I'm a technician—always dabbling to find out new things," he says. And that's just the way the ownership wants it, it seems. For instance, if Spillman decides to launch a new project, even a possibly risky one, he need not go to the board of directors for approval. Perhaps his "I don't scare easily" attitude carries over to the board. In any event an automatic sanction appears to be at hand for whatever he wants to try.

Research Booster

Since research beats the sometimes perilous path to new commercial projects, Spillman is one of its biggest boosters. Research is a form of trial and error, he claims. And if you succeed once in 25 attempts, you've done well, he quickly adds. His associates and much of the industry strongly suspect his batting average is much better than that, though. Something in the range of a Willie Mays or Ted Williams seems more likely.

Spillman is by nature never satisfied. "I figure things can always be done better." This philosophy has

been rewarding; some say FMC has done more than any other firm to develop fertilizer technology in the U. S.

He did some of the industry's "missionary" work in modern packaging, switching from burlap to paper bags. FMC was among the first to use liquid nitrogen materials, in the early 1930's. It was among the pioneers in granulation. Its plant was first to use a gas dryer in the granulation process. It also did the major evaluation work on the relatively new Sackett Star granulator. These achievements adequately back up Spillman's statement: "Research and experimenting through the years have been my real hobby . . . Each fertilizer plant is a potentially good laboratory; therefore it should be used for experimental work whenever possible."

Other Spillman observations: Fertilizer production is gradually changing from an art into a science, and evolution of the latter will make techniques more and more efficient. Concerning plant food use, the near future will bring more demand for granulated mixtures, more for concentrated formulas, less for conventional low-analysis grades.

Spillman's statesmanlike utterances are widely known, and they are attention getters. One of his favorite sounding boards is the Fertilizer Round Table. Founded by Vincent Sauchelli of the National Plant Food Institute, Spillman, and others, the round table has grown into an impressive forum for airing ideas about all aspects of fertilizer manufacturing technology. Spillman serves on the round table's executive committee with Sauchelli, H. L. Marshall of Olin-Mathieson, and J. E. Reynolds of Davison Chemical.

Fellow committeeman Sauchelli, having worked closely with Spillman, echoes what others say of him.

"Spillman is a progressive fellow who hasn't hesitated to adopt new methods," Sauchelli says. "He has been a sincere student of fertilizer technology." And K. D. Jacob of USDA's Plant Industry Station at Beltsville, Md., has nothing but kudos for Spillman: "He's right up at the



Albert Spillman

Born May 4, 1898, New York City. Graduated, bus. admin., Sadler's Business College, Baltimore, 1916. Taught evening classes, Sadler's, 1917-18. Various office jobs, 1918-25. Office, secretarial positions, assistant to plant mgr., Summers Fertilizer Co., 1925-32. Assistant to plant mgr., Cooperative GLF Exchange, Baltimore, 1932-33. Plant mgr., 1933-44. Fertilizer production mgr., GLF, 1934-44. Consultant on fertilizer manufacturing technology, GLF Fertilizer Division, 1944 to date. Gen. mgr., Fertilizer Mfg. Cooperative, Inc., 1938 to date.

top of his profession, one of the most cooperative in the industry."

Both Sauchelli and Jacob stress a single point. Visitors are always welcome at the FMC plant. Spillman himself is fast to agree. "Anybody can come in." We have no secrets, he says. And this is literally true. FMC technology, much of it coming from long, expensive development, is free to all. So widely known is the value of a tour of the FMC plant that industry leaders from 27 different countries have dropped in on Spillman.

Spillman is a 1916 graduate of a business college. After teaching briefly and holding several office jobs, he joined Summers Fertilizer in 1925. He became associated with the fertilizer cooperative business when the GLF Exchange leased the Summers plant in Baltimore from 1932 to 1938. He has been in it ever since, having reached his present post in 1938.

Dabbler Spillman gives an impression of eagerness for meeting new people, exploring new ideas, finding out new things. And as he continues to carry out these functions, his guest list will doubtless grow along with his professional stature.