

# profile...

## American Cyanamid's western entomologist has seen agricultural chemicals change the farm scene

IT TOOK a world war to get A. F. "Kirk" Kirkpatrick started in agriculture, but the attachment proved to be a durable one, running now more than four decades. He was 20 years of age in 1918 when he left his job as telegrapher with the Santa Fe Railroad and returned to his father's citrus orchard in Tulare County, Calif., to await induction. But he never did become a doughboy. The armistice came, and he stayed on to run the orchard.

This experience whetted his interest in farm problems, and two years later he took a job as pest control deputy with the Tulare County agricultural commissioner's office. At that time, the big thing in pest control was cyanide fumigation, and Kirk soon became an expert at it. In 1926, American Cyanamid came looking for him, hired him to set up a laboratory at Azusa, Calif., to investigate resistance to cyanide of scale pests on the citrus trees in that area. He has been with American Cyanamid ever since, serving the company's agricultural division as western entomologist.

His work is so varied that he can't accurately describe a typical day. Basically, though, Kirk is concerned with evaluating pesticidal materials and developing the best means for using them. This is field work, not laboratory work. It brings him into contact with farmers, government employees, and state college personnel. Kirk likes to think of himself as the link between these people and American Cyanamid's central laboratories in Stamford, Conn. He accumulates field data regarding toxicity, potency, and effectiveness of new pesticides. This information serves as the basis for acceptance of these materials by the Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration. He also compiles instructions for using the new materials; he is known as a stickler on safety when it comes to handling agricultural chemicals.

### Mr. Cyanide

During Kirk's early association with American Cyanamid, many of the people he worked with called him "Mr.

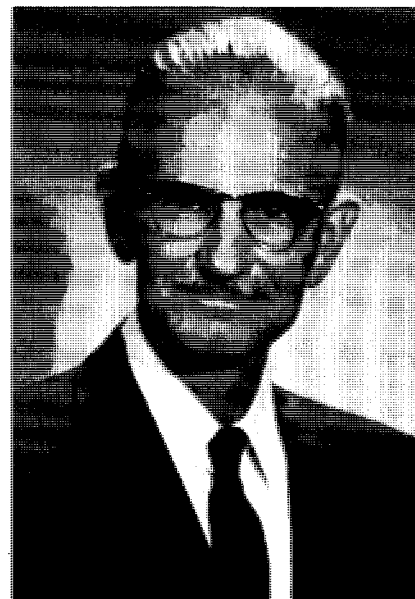
Cyanide." With the rapid changes in pesticide development following World War II, he was successively known by associates as "Mr. Parathion" and later as "Mr. Malathion." He has spent a good deal of time in testing and evaluating parathion and other phosphates, was one of the first to conclude that malathion most nearly fulfilled the role of the ideal pesticide—a compound with high pesticidal activity and low mammalian toxicity.

Though Kirk is a busy man, he is not all business. A closely knit family—wife, three children, five grandchildren—shares a good deal of his leisure. He often spends a part of his vacation fishing in the warm waters off Mexico. He goes "just for fun," but seldom has he missed the thrill of landing one of the giant marlin so famous in that area. Now and then, Kirk manages to get up to the Sierra in California for some trout fishing, too. Autumn occasionally finds him deer hunting in that area.

An important secondary interest is his bustling 66-acre farm in Tulare County. Within these acres, incidentally, is his father's old citrus orchard, heavy each year with large navel oranges. Olives, peaches, tomatoes, beans, and satsuma mandarines also grow there. One of Kirk's sons operates the farm through the year, but when he goes on vacation it's Dad who takes over the job. Kirk enjoys this annual stint immensely, although it includes all the arduous aspects of farming—even operating heavy machinery.

Apart from the fact that the farm pays its own way, it is of value to Kirk in another way. "It's a big help to me in my job to be a farmer," he says. "It helps me in my dealings with the people I meet in the ag industry."

When Kirk retires (he's 61 now), he'll depend on the farm to keep him physically active, and alert to new developments on the farm scene. And he firmly believes there will be changes. "I've seen what the development of better agricultural chemicals has done toward increasing farm productivity in the face of a steadily decreasing farm labor force. And I remember well my early days when entire orchards, tree by tree, had to be



**Albert F. Kirkpatrick**

Born, 1898, De Kalb County, Ill. Pest Control Deputy, Tulare County, Calif., 1920-26. American Cyanamid, 1926 to date. Member: Entomological Society of America, Northern California Entomology Club. Board Member, Western Agricultural Chemicals Association. Vice president, Central California Agricultural Forum.

covered with heavy canvas before fumigating." He frequently invites new acquaintances to join his "Thousand Year Club." Says he: "I want to be here a thousand years from now to see the technological advances that have come to pass in solving the farm problems we face today."

For younger men just getting a foothold in the agricultural industry, Kirk offers a bit of advice. "In order to be happy and enjoy your work, you've got to be honest. By facing the facts, you most quickly establish confidence in the people you deal with. They are eager for the facts and want to believe them."

A well known personal trait of the pipe-smoking entomologist is his straightforwardness—"speaking his piece," as he puts it. One smoldering peeve concerns the public's apathy toward agricultural problems, which problems he feels stem mainly from "too much wet-nursing of the farmer by governmental agencies."

Kirk was born in 1898 in De Kalb County, Ill. He is past president and now a member of the board of the Western Agricultural Chemicals Association, a member of the Entomological Society of America, past president of the Northern California Entomology Club, charter member and vice president of the Central California Agricultural Forum, and a member of the Masonic Lodge.