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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



By
Bill Cox
NAICC
President

**EVERY CONSULTANT
NEEDS A
GARY SHIFLETT**

I have always been of the opinion that God created three kinds of people: Those who were born to farm, those who can farm, and everyone else. In my 30+ years in the consulting business I have had the pleasure to work for 3 growers who fit the "born to farm" category.

Gary Shiflett is doing what he was born to do. He knew it from the time he was a kid. He graduated from high school, married his sweetheart and got on a tractor.

I have worked for Gary since the day he started. I was working for Gary's father and had watched Gary grow up, so I was eager to help him develop the talent that was already evident.

Large-scale vegetable farming requires a tremendous amount of work and management. Gary farms about 1400 acres. He grows onions, Chile peppers, watermelons, squash, corn and alfalfa on fields that are irrigated by subsurface drip systems. In addition to the farming, Gary runs an onion packing facility that packs and ships in excess of 700,000 bags of onions a year. His

dehydration plant handles in excess of 2,000,000 pounds of dehydrated pepper products each year and his watermelon packing facility ships around 7,000 tons of watermelons per year. The farm also grows and ships between 5,000 and 7,000 tons of fresh, green Chile peppers each year. The corn and alfalfa grown on the farm is converted to milk in the 1200 cow dairy. It hasn't always been easy for Gary. He has had challenges like most farmers, but has handled them with grace and dignity. In the spring of 2002, Gary's father died suddenly from complications of heart surgery. Gary finished his father's crop that year and it was a spectacular tribute that showed the depth of his love for his dad. This year, Gary's brother was diagnosed with cancer, so Gary jumped in and took on his operation. His workload more than doubled in a week's time but the quality of the operation did not suffer a bit.

Gary is eager to try new methods and new crops and constantly challenges me to help him come up with new and better ways of doing things. No idea is too wild for Gary if he sees the logic behind it. He depends on me a lot, but I don't think he realizes that I depend on him also. He confirms my ideas and reinforces my theories.

Gary is the reason I am still a consultant. His farming ability and quest for perfection provides me with the challenge that I need to maintain my dedication to the profession.

I am a harsh taskmaster when it comes to farming. I expect things to get done and I don't hesitate to voice my displeasure when I think folks aren't working hard enough. Many of my customers refer to my weekly reports as "nasty notes" or "report cards".

Gary's "notes" are not nasty and his "report card" shows all A's. He is the standard that I use to measure everyone else's operation. I know what to expect when I get to his farm every Friday and I can't remember the last time that I was surprised by something that had been overlooked or neglected.

Gary Shiflett is the "gold standard" by which all farming in this area is measured. I have watched him grow up and turn into a successful husband, father and agribusiness man. I like to think that I have played a part in his success but I think that he is the kind of individual that would have succeeded regardless of my efforts. Gary and Sandy Shiflett are quality folks and the kind of people that make the long hours worthwhile.

I nominated Gary for the American Vegetable Grower Magazine's Grower Achievement Award this year. He didn't win, but was named as one of four national finalists. I have no doubt that the judges would have made him the unanimous choice if only I could have done a better job describing the influence that his dedication to farming has had on this area.

I hope this article reminds you of one of your growers. Every consultant needs a Gary Shiflett.

**2005 NAICC
Annual Meeting
January 19-22
Sheraton Universal Hotel
333 Universal Hollywood Drive
Universal City, CA 91608
(818) 980-1212**

Industry Update

Update on Helena R&D Activities

By Robert E. Mack, Manager, Research and Development, Helena Chemical Company

Change seems to be the common denominator in today's ag and non-ag industries alike. And not just change itself but the speed of change! The same applies to Helena.

In August, 2003, I accepted the position

of Manager, R&D for the Proprietary Products Department of Helena. At the same time Jim Thomas, who formerly held the position, accepted the newly created position of Marketing Manager, Seed Treatments

and Application Technology.

Also in November, Bobby Alford and Roger Bowman joined our staff as R&D Specialists.

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Bridging the Continents

AICC Re-visited

By Al Averitt, CPCC-I



Even though January is a very hectic month for crop consultants to re-educate themselves, it certainly was worth the time to visit the **Association of Independent Crop Consultants** during their 2004 Annual Meeting in the UK. I must say again it was like coming to our own annual meeting with the sensations of friends, family and reunion. I was very comfortably welcomed back.

Not knowing when or if I would ever have another opportunity to visit my friends in the U.K., I set aside a few extra days for the trip to be sure I got my boots muddy. And that I did!

I flew into London and then directly up to Edinburgh, Scotland, to meet our friend **Allen Scobie**. Allen lives in Dundee along the east coast of Scotland. This is the crop side of Scotland where a very narrow band of soil is farmed along the coastline and inland less than 100 miles in most cases.



Allen drove us to Glamis Castle near Dundee. He works on the estate's farm so he arranged for a private off-season tour of the castle. The long drive to the castle was lined with pastures and Highland cattle and pheasants running across the road. The tour was wonderful.

Later we met with Allen's client and talked about it being time for the geese patrol to begin (sleepless nights spent scaring the geese off the wheat fields). And guess what? We went to the field to walk some wheat (they call it field-walking instead of scouting) and my boots did get muddy. They have this amazingly wonderful soil over there. It is very silty yet very porous. They farm slopes that I could not believe – with almost no erosion.

The second day in Scotland was spent with Gordon Rennie. Gordon is a farmer and consultant near a little fishing village called Pittenweem. (Gordon held the world wheat record yield for a number of years when he lived south of Edinburgh – somewhere around the equivalent of 200 bushels per acre on a whole field basis). Allen says

the soils on that farm are so rich they could be sold as fertilizer.

When Gordon picked me up I was prepared to get muddy again but he said "Al, you got a suit and tie? Then put them on; we are in for a treat today. One of my clients, Peter Foster, is taking us to lunch at the Royal and Ancient Club on the eighteenth hole of St. Andrews Golf Course." I still can't fully appreciate the privilege that it was. Bill Gates would have that opportunity on invitation only. I believe the term "black-balled" originated here because new member candidates are voted down by a single black golf ball during the candidate processing.

The third day Allen drove me back to Edinburgh for a flight to England. Before departure we toured the Edinburgh Castle where the great grandfather of one of my clients (John Balfour) was the botanist. At the castle I learned that "side-burns" on a Scotsman's face meant that the rifle had burned his cheeks from its powder blast. The hair they grew on the side of their faces to protect them from the burns later became known as "side-burns."

I departed afterward for England to visit Stephen Harrison, who lives near Bath. Stephen had a reservation for me at a Bed-and-Breakfast owned by Prince Charles. I was shown Christmas cards from him, some which included a picture of the Princess and sons. (It's increasingly common for farmsteads in the U.K. to let out homes as Bed-and-Breakfasts.)

The next day Stephen took me to visit one of his clients, Lord Allister. He called him Lord Al. He was a very innovative



farmer. His operation was very diversified, and part of it was organic. On his estate there was an old church building which he maintained. We went inside and climbed to the top of the bell tower and had a spectacular view of his farm. (Stephen is a big man, so going up the two-foot wide circular staircase behind him put me in total darkness!)

We had lunch at Lord Allister's house. His

young kids were fascinated by this American stranger with the funny accent, even trying to mimic my actions. Later that afternoon we went to Bath to see the Roman baths. Stephen had never been to the spas himself. I did not realize at the time that we were a short distance from Stonehenge. That night we had dinner at a local pub - quaint and cozy. Across the small valley from the pub we could see the church where Stephen's kids go to school.

The next day was Sunday. Stephen picked me up for lunch at his house. Then we were off to the meeting near Daventry.

AICC held their 2004 meeting at a very nice golf course resort. I really felt at home as I do at our own meetings. Sometimes the cereal fungicide discussions were way over my head and one certainly needs a conversion calculator to make any sense of the discussion. However, their government relations topics were not all that different from our own. All aspects of their meeting were dove-tailed together very well.

On a side note, I had the opportunity to be on the bowling team with their high-ranking government agricultural official guest, Andrew Kuyk, Head of the Arable Crops Division of DEFRA. We all enjoyed that social event. Andrew spoke before me, and when our presentations were copied to the podium computer Andrew ran into a problem. He had his presentation on a 3.5 inch floppy disk and the computer had no 3.5 drive. The media contractor made light of the fact that their government always has obsolete equipment. Andrew said, "Al, what's it like with the U.S. government, isn't it the same?" I said as the norm, yes.

Starting an Exchange Program

Allen Scobie and I have been charged with starting an exchange program whereby we can have annual or bi-annual tours for the consultants and farmers of each group to visit and learn from one another. I think this would be great opportunity. The hardest part seems to be deciding what season for each country! If you have any ideas or want to help this committee, please contact me or Allison Jones.

Thank you for allowing me to represent you abroad as your AICC liaison. I have developed several friendships that I truly value. Our organizations are mirror images of one another. I encourage you to visit the U.K. during one of their annual meetings or if you plan to travel to the U.K., let me put you in contact with some of their members.

Bridging the Continents

Reflections on the Big Easy

By Allen Scobie, Past Chairman of the U.K.'s Association of Independent Crop Consultants (AICC). Allen is an Honorary Member of the NAICC and has participated in the last two NAICC Annual Meetings.



I was delighted to be asked back to speak at your Annual Meeting in New Orleans in January, 2004. I think I learned more this year than I did in Washington in 2003!

It was a great tour, which included a trip to North Carolina with **Al Averitt**. I could write a book on it, but you'll be pleased to know that I will only subject you to a few thousand words. There were many special moments but I would like to recall just a few things that stand out as extra special. (Please forgive me if I don't mention everybody I visited with or this short note could turn into a roll call of NAICC members!)

I arrived in New Orleans late Monday night and went straight to bed. When I went down for breakfast Tuesday morning, I met **Bruce and Sheryl Niederhauser** who asked me to join them. We sat and talked in a relaxed fashion and then Al Averitt joined us. Country people are the same the world over – honest, friendly, polite and welcoming. I immediately felt like I had driven 500 miles to an AICC meeting in England, not flown 3,000 miles to Louisiana.

On Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning I was invited to sit with your Executive Board. The issues they dealt with were so similar to AICC issues that it made me smile. There appeared so many things we could learn from each other.

Your Annual Meeting is a great social and educational event, and I think NAICC has the balance just right. You certainly know how to party!

The President's Luncheon on Friday was great fun, and many thanks to **Bill Cox** for allowing us to smoke the "Pipe of Peace" again. (The pipe is back on the wall in pride of place at AICC's head office in Hampshire, England.) Bill is a great guy and I am sure he will do a lot for NAICC in 2004. We in AICC all wish him and his new board every success.

The Mardi Gras Party on Friday night was fantastic with **Mr. Ray** and Miss Dorothy stealing the show with their outfits. Has no one offered Mr. Ray a recording contract to sing Cannon Ball?

The dialogue I had with NAICC members during my stay made me reflect on many issues and I would like to share just a few of them with you.

1. Politicians and their policy makers on both sides of "The Pond" can, on occasions,

be devoid of ideas. For example:

- 1980's U.S. Farm bill introduced a conservation program, which included setting land aside.
- 1992 European Union introduced a set aside program for farmers.
- 1996 U.S. introduced the Freedom to Farm bill, which included decoupling payments to farmers from production.
- 2002 European Union announced that farmers will receive a single farm payment decoupled from production.
- 2002 U.S. Farm bill introduced Counter Cyclical Payments to try to reduce fluctuations in commodity prices and farmer cropping patterns.

Any guess as to what Europe might do next and can you see a pattern emerging here? In the 1950's Britain had a system of deficiency payments (similar to your Counter Cyclical Payments). Is European farm policy a decade behind the U.S. or is the U.S. five decades behind the U.K.? (Sorry, my sick U.K. humor is coming out again!).

I think the reality is that government policy is rarely new and could be likened to the fashion industry. My son and daughter are now wearing flared trousers similar to the ones that I wore in the 1970's!

2. I think you can teach us a great deal about precision farming. In Europe we need to learn how to use precision farming methods, not just for maximum production, but to comply with the demands of environmental legislation.

For example, if we could convert yield maps into gross margin maps this would help farmers highlight areas of land which are not worth cropping. In 2005 when the Single Farm Payment is introduced and farmers receive payments regardless of whether they grow a crop or not, there will be areas of the farm which might not be profitable to crop.

These non-profitable areas may also be eligible for other money under environmental schemes (trees, wild flower meadows, etc.). The Single Farm Payment will be reduced each year to help finance environmental schemes. Farmers need to find ways of winning this money back by signing up to these environmental schemes.

3. I spoke to **Brent Wright** and **Gary Coukell** about Natreon/Nexera canola lines, which are being marketed for the first time in the U.K. in 2004. We have no experience with them in the U.K. but these guys put me in touch with someone from **Dow AgroSciences**, the breeder. This is valuable information that is not readily available to us.

I think there would be great value for members of both of our organizations if we could create a link on our Web sites to an international bulletin board so that we can all talk to each other. (Is this a forlorn hope? I see y'all use your bulletin board about as much as AICC members use theirs!)

I would also like to organize some future farm tours with my good friend Al Averitt, provided they meet with the approval of the NAICC and AICC boards.

Can I finish by saying thanks to you all for making me an "Honorary Member" of NAICC? I regard this as a great privilege and will endeavor to remain worthy of it. If anyone wants to know what is going on over here, just send me an e-mail at a.scobie@scottishagronomy.co.uk

Thanks also to your Executive Board for making me feel so at ease in their meetings and a special thanks to **Allison Jones** for being attentive and listening to my requests for help regardless of her own relentless schedule to keep the conference on track.

I wish you all a successful growing season and a good harvest and I hope it is not too long before we meet again.



Industry Update (continued from pg. 1)

Bobby recently graduated from the University of Tennessee – Martin. While pursuing his degree, he worked for four summers as a Field Technician at BASF. He will assist in daily activities associated with the Crop Protection segment of our proprietary products testing. (This includes our value-added pesticide products, adjuvants and seed treatments.)

Roger received his M.S. degree from the University of Arkansas. Roger spent several years with the university's Extension Service and was most recently a Field Technician for **Bayer Agricultural Sciences**. Roger will assist with product testing activities in the Crop Production segment of our department. (These products include value-added nutritionals and bioscience products.)

Although each individual within our corporate R&D Staff has specific areas of responsibility, each of us is expected to handle any R&D opportunity that presents itself. So please contact any of us as follows:

Bob Mack - Manager, R&D

Phone: 901-752-4436, Fax: 901-758-2817
MackR@HelenaChemical.com

Bobby Alford - R&D Specialist

Phone: 901-752-4402, Fax: 901-758-2817
AlfordB@HelenaChemical.com

Roger Bowman - R&D Specialist

Phone: 901-752-4433, Fax: 901-758-2817
BowmanR@HelenaChemical.com

Another new asset to Helena is David Cheetam, hired by the company's Western Business Unit. Dave comes to Helena from the University of California - Davis. He will be responsible for various R&D projects funded by the Western Division Proprietary Product Managers. In addition, Dave will be working with the Western Business Unit basic manufacturers. Located in Chico, California, he can be contacted as follows:

Dave Cheetam - R&D Specialist

Phone: 530-345-6140, Fax: 530-892-9259
DCheetam@HelenaResearch.com

Over the past five years, Helena proprietary products have been growing rapidly and diversifying as market opportunities have allowed. Our primary corporate budget is used to support new product development in six major product groups. These groups are broadly defined as adjuvants, value-added nutritionals, seed treatments, bioscience products, value-added pesticide products and specialty products. Also, a portion of the budget supports new uses for existing products.

When you consider that these monies support all new and existing products for six major product groups, four business

units, 15 sales divisions, 20 proprietary product managers and three nutritional specialists on over 100 cropping systems, you can see we need to be conscientious in allocating our R&D resources. These resources are carefully administered on a yearly basis by the Marketing Managers of each of the major product groups.

One of the functions that differentiates Helena from the other Formulators/Distributors is that we do not generate our own bio-efficacy/crop injury trial results/data. All of our replicated research is contracted to third party providers. Relying on professional contractors, consultants, academics, Land Grant Universities, basic manufacturers and others to generate all the data to support our new product development and sales and marketing activities has served as well. In this area you have played – and we hope that you will continue to play – an important role for us.

We thank you very much for all of your past efforts on our behalf. We look forward to your continuing efforts as we progressively change our R&D activities to support new product development – efforts designed to provide customers with effective, safe products that help them generate suitable returns on their investments.



**National Alliance
of Independent
Crop Consultants**

349 E. Nolley Drive • Collierville, TN 38017

Allison Jones Executive Vice President
Brenda Weber Managing Editor

349 E. Nolley Drive / Collierville, TN 38017
Phone: (901) 861-0511 / Fax: (901) 861-0512
E-mail: JonesNAICC@aol.com
www.naicc.org

William D. Cox President
4625 Northwind Road / Las Cruces, NM 88005
(505) 644-2830 / Fax: (505) 524-6771
E-mail: coxco@zianet.com

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